CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin
by Christopher Fetherstone

Monergism Books

Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles

John Calvin

Original text in the public domain.

Editorial material, annotations, and original cover artwork © 2026 Monergism Books, where applicable.

Scripture quotations retain the wording and references found in the original text unless otherwise indicated.

Individual copies may be downloaded, printed, and shared for personal, church, classroom, and other noncommercial educational use. Except as permitted by law, this Monergism edition may not be sold, publicly reposted, systematically redistributed, or incorporated into another website, digital library, database, retrieval system, artificial-intelligence system, or application. Please link directly to Monergism.com.

Published by Monergism Books
www.monergism.com

Contents

Editor's Preface ix
Title Page to Featherstone Translation x
Featherstone Dedication xi
Featherstone's To the Reader xiii
Calvin's Dedication xiv
The Argument xxi

Commentary 2
Chapter 1 2
Acts 1:1-2 . . . 2
Acts 1:3-5 . . . 5
Acts 1:6-8 . . . 10
Acts 1:9-11 . . . 14
Acts 1:12-14 . . . 17
Acts 1:15-22 . . . 20
Acts 1:23-26 . . . 27
Chapter 2 31
Acts 2:1-4 . . . 31
Acts 2: 5-12 . . . 35
Acts 2:14-21 . . . 37
Acts 2:22-24 . . . 44
Acts 2:25-31 . . . 49
Acts 2:32-36 . . . 55
Acts 2:37-39 . . . 60
Acts 2:40-42 . . . 66
Acts 2:43-45 . . . 69
Acts 2:46-47 . . . 71
Chapter 3 74
Acts 3:1-11 . . . 74
Acts 3:12-16 . . . 79
Acts 3:17-21 . . . 83
Acts 3:22-24 . . . 87

Acts 3:25-26 90
Chapter 4 94
Acts 4:1-4 94
Acts 4: 5-12 96
Acts 4:13-18 101
Acts 4:19-23 103
Acts 4:24-31 106
Acts 4:32-37 111
Chapter 5 115
Acts 5:1-6 115
Acts 5:7-11 119
Acts 5:12-16 121
Acts 5:17-26 123
Acts 5:27-28 127
Acts 5:29-33 128
Acts 5:34-39 133
Acts 5:40-42 136
Chapter 6 139
Acts 6:1-6 139
Acts 6:7-10 146
Acts 6:11-15 148
Chapter 7 153
Acts 7:1-4 153
Acts 7: 5-8 157
Acts 7:9-16 161
Acts 7:17-19 164
Acts 7:20-29 166
Acts 7:30-34 170
Acts 7:35-37 176
Acts 7:38-41 178
Acts 7:42-43 183
Acts 7:44-50 186
Acts 7: 51-53 191
Acts 7:54-58 195
Acts 7:58-61 199
Chapter 8 203
Acts 8:1-4 203
Acts 8:5-13 208
Acts 8:14-17 212
Acts 8:18-25 215
Acts 8:26-31 220
Acts 8:32-35 225
Acts 8:36-40 229

Chapter 9 233
Acts 9:1-5 . . . 233
Acts 9:6-9 . . . 237
Acts 9:10-12 . . . 239
Acts 9:13-16 . . . 241
Acts 9:17-19 . . . 243
Acts 9:19-25 . . . 244
Acts 9:26-31 . . . 248
Acts 9:32-35 . . . 252
Acts 9:36-38 . . . 253
Acts 9:39-43 . . . 255
Chapter 10 259
Acts 10:1-6 . . . 259
Acts 10:7-16 . . . 266
Acts 10:17-23 . . . 271
Acts 10:23-29 . . . 273
Acts 10:30-33 . . . 278
Acts 10:34-38 . . . 280
Acts 10:39-43 . . . 286
Acts 10:44-48 . . . 290
Chapter 11 293
Acts 11:1-18 . . . 293
Acts 11:19-24 . . . 299
Acts 11:25-26 . . . 303
Acts 11:27-30 . . . 304
Chapter 12 308
Acts 12:1-5 . . . 308
Acts 12:6-11 . . . 311
Acts 12:12-19 . . . 313
Acts 12:19-25 . . . 316
Chapter 13 321
Acts 13:1-3 . . . 321
Acts 13:4-12 . . . 326
Acts 13:13-15 . . . 331
Acts 13:16-23 . . . 333
Acts 13:24-26 . . . 338
Acts 13:27-31 . . . 340
Acts 13:32-37 . . . 344
Acts 13:38-42 . . . 350
Acts 13:42-45 . . . 354
Acts 13:46-52 . . . 357
Chapter 14 365
Acts 14:1-4 . . . 365

Acts 14:5-10 . . . 368
Acts 14:11-13 . . . 370
Acts 14:14-18 . . . 372
Acts 14:19-22 . . . 378
Acts 14:23-28 . . . 382
Chapter 15 386
Acts 15:1-5 . . . 386
Acts 15:6-11 . . . 394
Acts 15:12-18 . . . 406
Acts 15:19-21 . . . 412
Acts 15:22-29 . . . 414
Acts 15:30-35 . . . 419
Acts 15:36-41 . . . 421
Chapter 16 425
Acts 16:1-5 . . . 425
Acts 16:6-10 . . . 429
Acts 16:11-15 . . . 432
Acts 16:16-22 . . . 436
Acts 16:23-28 . . . 443
Acts 16:29-34 . . . 445
Acts 16:35-40 . . . 448
Chapter 17 451
Acts 17:1-4 . . . 451
Acts 17:5-10 . . . 455
Acts 17:11-15 . . . 459
Acts 17:16-21 . . . 462
Acts 17:22-25 . . . 468
Acts 17:26-29 . . . 475
Acts 17:30-34 . . . 481
Chapter 18 486
Acts 18:1-5 . . . 486
Acts 18:6-11 . . . 489
Acts 18:12-17 . . . 494
Acts 18:18-23 . . . 496
Acts 18:24-28 . . . 499
Chapter 19 505
Acts 19:1-7 . . . 505
Acts 19:8-12 . . . 509
Acts 19:13-17 . . . 512
Acts 19:18-22 . . . 514
Acts 19:23-28 . . . 516
Acts 19:29-34 . . . 519
Acts 19:35-40 . . . 521

Chapter 20 524
Acts 20:1-6 . . . 524
Acts 20:7-13 . . . 525
Acts 20:14-21 . . . 528
Acts 20:22-27 . . . 534
Acts 20:28-32 . . . 538
Acts 20:33-38 . . . 544
Chapter 21 547
Acts 21:1-6 . . . 547
Acts 21:7-14 . . . 549
Acts 21:15-25 . . . 552
Acts 21:26-30 . . . 558
Acts 21:31-40 . . . 560
Chapter 22 564
Acts 22:1-5 . . . 564
Acts 22:6-11 . . . 567
Acts 22:12-15 . . . 569
Acts 22:17-22 . . . 573
Acts 22:23-30 . . . 575
Chapter 23 578
Acts 23:1-5 . . . 578
Acts 23:6-9 . . . 583
Acts 23:10-16 . . . 588
Acts 23:17-24 . . . 591
Acts 23:25-35 . . . 593
Chapter 24 596
Acts 24:1-9 . . . 596
Acts 24:10-21 . . . 599
Acts 24:22-27 . . . 605
Chapter 25 610
Acts 25:1-8 . . . 610
Acts 25:9-12 . . . 612
Acts 25:13-21 . . . 614
Acts 25:22-27 . . . 617
Chapter 26 619
Acts 26:1-8 . . . 619
Acts 26:9-18 . . . 622
Acts 26:19-23 . . . 627
Acts 26:24-32 . . . 630
Chapter 27 634
Acts 27:1-8 . . . 634
Acts 27:9-20 . . . 636
Acts 27:21-32 . . . 638

Acts 27:33-44 642
Chapter 28 646
Acts 28:1-6 646
Acts 28:7-14 649
Acts 28:15-20 652
Acts 28:21-24 655
Acts 28:25-31 658

Indexes **664**
Greek Words and Phrases 664
Hebrew Words and Phrases 667
Index of Scripture Commentary 668
Index of Scripture References 677
Latin Words and Phrases 699

Editor's Preface

EDITORS PREFACE

THE present COMMENTARY, necessarily partaking of the character of the Book which it is designed to illustrate, is more historical than doctrinal; and hence does not contain so much profound theological discussion as some of Calvin's other Commentaries. The leading topic is the progress of the Gospel under the inspired teachers to whom its first propagation was entrusted, and, in immediate connection with this, the Constitution of the Apostolic Church, and the privileges enjoyed by its members. To this latter point the attention of the religious world is now more especially directed; and whatever be the views entertained with regard to it by any reader into whose hands this Commentary may fall, if he feels aright, he will not think that his study of the controversy is complete until he has made himself acquainted with what has been said upon it by such a man as Calvin.

A work of talent need not be either the less interesting or the less instructive that it advocates views at variance with our own. If our opinions have been deliberately and candidly formed, it is a satisfactory test of their soundness when they continue unshaken by all that the ablest opponent can urge against them.

The Translation appears to be well executed. It is, perhaps, not so strictly literal as that of the Commentary on the Romans, which the CALVIN SOCIETY has already published; but any difference, in this respect, is more than compensated by the general superiority of its style. There are occasional obscurities or mistranslations which the Editor has endeavored, as in the Commentary on the Romans, to remove by foot-notes; but, on the whole, it is believed that the present Translation will not suffer by comparison with that of any Theological Translation of the same period.

H. B.

Title Page to Featherstone Translation

THE COMMENTARIES
of M. JOHN CALVIN
upon the Actes of the Apostles
Faithfully translated out of Latin into English for the great profit of our countrymen, By Christopher Fetherstone
student in Divinity.
LONDON,
Impensis G. Bishop.
1585.

Featherstone Dedication

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD HENRY,
EARL OF HUNTINGTON,

LORD HASTINGS, ETC.,

Knight Of The Most Honorable Order Of The Garter, And Lord President Of The Queen's Majesty's Counsel Established In The North Parts,

CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE WISHETH INCREASE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS, LONG LIFE, AND HAPPY DAYS.

If that (Right Honorable) I should prefix any long and tedious preface before this work in commendation of your honor, — I should of some be suspected of flattery; if in praise of these learned Commentaries, — it should seem a thing superfluous, seeing they sufficiently commend themselves; if in excuse of those faults which are by me in translating hereof committed, — some censuring Cato would condemn me, because I would take in hand a work so weighty, being not able to be without fault, and by craving pardon for faults laying open my folly. Omitting, therefore, those things which might carry with them such inconveniences, I hasten unto that whereof I am chiefly to speak; namely, to lay open the causes moving me to dedicate this my simple translation unto your honor.

Your deserts of God's church, your singular zeal, your unfeigned faith, your sincere profession, your especial care to advance God's glory, and to root out Papistry, your faithfulness towards your prince, have been such, that this realm generally, but my countrymen in the north parts, my native soil, specially, have, and shall have, great cause to praise God for you in the day of their visitation, even when it shall please God of his great mercy to behold them with favor-able countenance, and to take from them in greater measure that blindness and superstition, wherein they had been long time nousled, and being fast bred by the bone, is not yet (through want of means) gotten out of the flesh. Seeing all these virtues are in you to be found; seeing both this church and country have found you so beneficial, whom ought not these things to provoke to show all thankfulness towards your honor?

Again, when this history of the Acts of the Apostles was first penned in Greek by Luke, it was dedicated to noble Theophilus. When M. Calvin did the second time publish his Commentaries thereupon in Latin, he presented them unto one who was in mind a noble Theophilus. Lest, therefore, this work, now published in English, should by dedication be any whit debased, I have made choice of your honor, being no less a noble Theophilus than those before mentioned.

Another thing, which is not so much a cause as an encouragement, is that courtesy which your honor showeth to those which present unto you any exercises of learning, how simple soever they be, whereof I have had full good experience even in my tender years; namely, at such time as I was trained up in the city of Carlisle, under that man, in his calling painful, and to the commonwealth profitable, M. Hayes, whom for that duty which to him I owe I name. At which time, though those exercises which unto your honor we then presented were simple, yet were they so courteously of you received, that the remembrance thereof doth even now encourage me to presume to offer unto you some weightier matter.

The last, but not the least, is, the consideration of that great and undeserved kindness, which all my friends in general, but especially my brother, your honor's servant, have found at your hands, which, to rip up at large, would be too tedious. In their behalf, therefore, Right Honorable, as also in mine own, as a small testimony of a thankful heart, I present unto your honor this work; simple, if you respect the translation, but most excellent, if you consider the matter. And thus, humbly craving pardon for my boldness, and much more humbly beseeching the Lord to bless you in the reading hereof, I conclude, fearing prolixity. The Lord of heaven bless you, and grant that: as you have been heretofore a good Theophilus, so you may continue to the glory of God, the increasing of his Church, and the profit of this commonwealth.

From Maighfield in Sussex, this 12th of October, 1585.

Your Honor's most humble and obedient,
and in Christ at commandment,

CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE.

Featherstone's To the Reader

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

THOU hast at length, (Christian reader,) through the blessing of God, wherewith he hath blessed my labors, those learned Commentaries of M. Calvin upon the Acts of the Apostles, though simply, yet faithfully, turned into English; and though of many I was the unmeetest to attempt this travail, yet such was the earnest request of my godly friends, that unless I should have taken it in hand, I should have seemed void of courtesy, and also of care to profit God's Church. I will not stand to rip up those commodities which thou by reading these Commentaries mayest reap, but I leave them to thine own experience. What my travail hath been in this work, those who have endured like toll can best judge. And forasmuch as I know well, that after great painstaking some things have escaped me, I beseech thee, (gentle reader,) condemn me not rashly, but rather amend them friendly. If thou shalt grow forward in *knowledge* by reading this work, then praise God, who hath by this means made thee profit. God give thee good success in reading, that thereby thou mayest both be better learned, and also better lived.

Thine in the Lord,
CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE.

Calvin's Dedication

TO THE MOST RENOWNED PRINCE, THE LORD NICOLAS RADZIWILL, DUKE IN OLIKA,

COUNTY PALATINE OF VILNA, CHIEF MARSHAL, AND HEAD CHANCELLOR OF THE GREAT DUKEDOM OF LITHUANIA, ETC.,

HIS LORD HIGHLY TO BE REVERENCED,

JOHN CALVIN.

WHEREAS I have made mention of the names of those kings unto whom I had dedicated these my Commentaries, lest the change incur the crime of lightness among certain unskillful men, I must briefly render some reason thereof. For although both the remembrance of the father, who is dead, doth retain that reverence with me which it deserveth, and I do also, as becometh me, reverence the son; yet the importunities of certain did enforce me to put out [1] their names in this second edition, who, being incensed against me with a furious hatred and fear, lest the majesty of kings do purchase some favor to my writings, do boast abroad that they did conceive sore displeasure, that their name was mixed with the doctrine of the sacraments which they themselves disallow. I leave it indifferent whether that be true or no, neither do I pass; [2] forasmuch as I did neither hunt after any private gain, nor yet seek to win favor. But because it seemed to me an indecent and filthy thing to enforce those books upon men which are unwilling to entertain them, which do find willing readers enough, it was worth the declaring now, that I never did think any thing less; but that I did hope for more courtesy than I found. In that truly there can be no offense, if withdrawing myself from the contempt of those who loathe my dutifulness, I suffer them to enjoy those delights of theirs which they desire, and wherein they delight.

Of you, most famous prince, have I made choice, not without good cause, whom I might put in the place of two; both because I think you most worthy to have your name appear in the spiritual building of Christ's temple; neither do I fear but that my book shall find the same friendship at your hands, which you did vouchsafe to declare towards me in your most gentle letters. But, omitting at this time the respect of private good-will, I will stay in another thing. Moreover, I may full well apply unto you that speech which I had before with another. Neither am I determined in this place to commend those most excellent virtues wherewith you have purchased great authority

[1] "Expungere," to expunge.

[2] "Neque vero mea interest," indeed, I have no interest in it.

and singular favor with the King [3] of Polonia; I am rather bent unto an exhortation, the sum whereof shall be this, that with the like readiness and joyfulness wherewith you have at the beginning received the pure doctrine of the Gospel, that with the like stoutness of courage wherewith you have hitherto endeavored to maintain the true worship of God, you do with the same constancy prosecute this course unto the end.

It was surely a point of rare virtue, that whereas you did know that many did hate nothing more than the frank profession and free study of godliness, yet, so soon as the truth of the Gospel of Christ did once shine and appear unto you, you did not fear by giving your name to provoke their hatred against you. Neither do those offices and good turns deserve small praise, which you did not cease to bestow upon the cherishing and increasing of the first beginnings of the Church; although this your diligence did purchase unto you great envy amongst many noblemen, which did not allow the same. But, because you have no less hard straits to pass through, you must oftentimes stir up and encourage yourself to overcome them all, until you have finished the last act; and, so much the more carefully, because many princes, although they see the estate of the Church filthily corrupt, yet dare they attempt no remedy; because that danger which they fear will proceed from innovation, when evils must be driven out of their old and quiet possession, doth hinder and keep them back from doing their duty. Other some think it to be an absurd and foolish thing to touch (or set hand to) diseases which are incurable. Other some (I cannot tell through what forwardness) do flee from and abhor all manner of reformation. But to intreat of those lets wherewith you are environed on every side, it were superfluous, especially seeing you know them well enough. Yet, howsoever Satan doth assault you, and with what combats soever he doth exercise you, you cannot, without great wickedness, be weary of this holy warfare, which you have professed under Christ his banner. Furthermore, although you be forward enough of yourself, yet I hope it will neither be troublesome, nor yet unprofitable for you, to have your prosperous course of your earnest study, holpen and furthered with this help which God doth offer unto your hands by me. [4]

So often as we see things tossed to and fro, and, as it were, turned topsy-turvy in the world, there can no more fit and sure prop be found to establish and stay our weak consciences, than when as setting before our eyes the kingdom of Christ, as it doth now appear, we consider what hath been [5] the estate and condition of the same from the beginning. When we speak of the kingdom of Christ, we must respect two things; the doctrine of the gospel, whereby Christ doth gather unto himself a church, and whereby he governeth the same, being gathered together; secondly, the society of the godly, who

[3] "Serenissimum regem," most serene king.

[4] "Tibi per manum meam," to you by my hand.

[5] "Ratio ejus et natura," the nature and method, omitted.

being coupled together by the sincere faith of the gospel, are truly accounted the people of God. Both which things, how lively they are expressed by Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, it is better to know by the reading of the whole book, than to believe either my commendation, or the commendation of any man else. For although the Son of God hath always reigned, even from the first beginning of the world, yet after that, being revealed in the flesh, he published his gospel, he began then to erect a more famous tribunal-seat than before, whence he doth now appear most plainly, and to be also most glorious. If we turn our eyes hither, they shall be fed, not with a vain picture, (as Virgil saith of his AEneas) but with the sound knowledge of those things from which we must fetch life. And to the end I may return unto that whereof I determined to speak, this is the best refuge for the conscience of men, where they may quietly rest amidst these troublesome tempests wherewith the world is shaken. Finally, this meditation alone shall bring to pass, that that shall never befall us, which too too many experiments do prove to have been truly spoken by Ennius in times past of the more part of men, that *wisdom is driven away so often as the matter is handled by violence.* For if, in the greatest and most vehement heat of combats, the sweet harmony of instruments was of such force amongst the Lacedemonians, that it did assuage that furiousness and fierceness which was engendered in that warlike people, and did temper that violence which doth then out of measure rage in those natures which are otherwise impatient, how much more shall the kingdom of Christ do this by the heavenly pleasant tune of the Holy Ghost, which doth not only tame most cruel beasts, but maketh also lambs of wolves, lions, and bears; which turneth spears into hooks, and swords into ploughshares?

Therefore, seeing that, most noble prince, I offer unto you such kind of temperature as the necessity of times requireth, I hope that this duty of mine shall not be unwelcome to your highness; so that, indeed, you shall perceive this kind of confirmation to be very profitable and fit to look into the beginning of the Church, as it is described of Luke, wherein appeareth both wonderful power of God under the reproach of the cross, and also most valiant patience of the servants of God, under the huge burden of troubles, and the success itself incredible to the judgment of the world, bringeth forth most plentiful fruit of both. But that I may omit other things which you had better set [seek] out by reading of Luke himself, I will touch one thing which is proper to earthly princes, and the chief governors of kingdoms and countries; to wit, that seeing that (the power of the whole world gainsaying, and all men which were then in authority being armed to oppress the gospel) a few men, obscure, unarmed, and contemptible, trusting only to the aid of the truth and the Spirit, did labor so stoutly in spreading abroad the faith of Christ, did refuse no pains nor danger, did stand stoutly against all assaults, until at length they got the victory; there remaineth no excuse for Christian nobles, who are of any dignity, seeing God hath furnished them with the

sword to defend the kingdom of his Son, unless they be at least as constant and bold to take upon them such an honorable office.

Furthermore, it is not my part to declare how faithfully and uprightly I have behaved myself in interpreting this history. I hope, surely, my labor shall be fruitful to all men. And as for you, most worthy prince, I must again request and beseech you, that you do both privately addict yourself wholly unto Christ his government, as you have of late happily begun; and that you would also become not only a faithful helper, but also a most stout and valiant standard-bearer in furthering the kingdom of Christ unto so many noble men, whom not only the renown of their stock and lineage, but also the excellency of their virtues, doth commend. God hath vouchsafed to bestow upon the realm of Polonia a singular privilege of honor, that the better part of the nobility, bidding adieu to wicked superstitions, which are as many corruptions and pollutions of the worship of God, should desire with one consent a true form of godliness, and a well framed and reformed order of the Church. It is well known that these men were not a little aided by your authority. But there remain more combats both for you and also for them, than that, like overworn [6] soldiers, you should give yourselves to idleness and rest.

First, although no foreign enemy trouble you, you shall have business enough to withstand those evils which are at home with you. You have sufficiently tried with how many sleights Satan is furnished, that he may work some policy to overthrow that holy concord amongst brethren, wherein consisteth the safety of the Church; that befalleth you which is common everywhere, for troublesome men to thrust in themselves when things are out of order; who, whilst they see a few, and those weaklings troubled by a great multitude, and that they do with much ado defend the truth, which is covered with the thick clouds of false accusations, they do more easily come upon them unawares [7] And by this subtlety doth that chief worker of all deceit and guile seek the ruin of the Church, not only by cutting, mangling, and pulling in pieces the unity of the faith, but by burdening the name of Christ with false envy; because the companies of the godly, amongst whom these wicked knaves mix themselves, seem to be certain receptacles and sinks of all filthiness.

So, whilst that Stancarus, a man of a troublesome nature, doth, through that ambition wherewith he is wholly set on fire, spread abroad amongst you his dotings, hereupon brake out that contention which threateneth some scattering abroad; and you were laid open unto the slanders of many, because it was thought that his sect did spread itself farther. Behold, on the other side, a certain physician, called George Blandrata, worse than Stancarus, because his error is more detestable, and because he hath in his mind more secret poison. For which cause these also are the more worthy to be reproved,

[6] "Emeriti," discharged veterans.

[7] "Quasi per cuniculos," as by burrowing.

at whose hands the ungodliness of Servetus hath found such favor of such a sudden. For although I am persuaded that they are far from those perverse and sacrilegious opinions, yet they should have taken better heed, and not have suffered this fox craftily to creep into their company. Because such plagues will never be wanting, neither will Satan ever cease to bring abroad into the forefront such champions as have given over themselves to serve him, that he may trouble the beginnings of the gospel, it is for you to be continually in a readiness; and to the end you may prevent greater evils, you must set down right and godly manner of government, which is the faithful keeping of holy peace. For as it is manifest that purity of doctrine is the soul of the Church, so we may full well compare discipline unto the sinews, wherewith the body being bound and knit together, doth maintain his [its] strength.

Now, on the other side, the ungodliness of other enemies ought to sharpen your study (and earnestness,) I mean the preachers of Antichrist of Rome, who, to the end they may deceive the ignorant, do continually, with shrill voice, sound out the name of the Church. There is no controversy amongst us about the Church, but all grant that the authority thereof ought to be reverenced of all the children of God; save only that they, under false color of honor, do make the shadowish name of the Church subject to their lusts; we do so reverence the Church from our heart, that we account it great wickedness to profane the sacred name thereof. That I may omit other godly ministers of pure and sound doctrine, I myself have again and again heretofore in many places handled this question. When mention is made of the Church, whose head is the Son of God, and which he, who is the fountain of life eternal, doth always quicken by his Spirit, how ridiculous a thing it is to bring forth a body without a head, and, secondly, a dead carcass.

The hireling flatterers of the Pope do cry out that they have the Church; but we can know by no means better, whether this be true or no, than when we look unto the head. As for that, it is manifest that it is cut off by their sacrilegious violence. For how shall Christ retain the place of the head, being despoiled of all his power, thrown down from his government, deprived of his dignity? Upon this condition hath the heavenly Father made him the head of the Church, that he may govern all men from the greatest to the least, by the doctrine of his gospel; that he may be the only priest to reconcile the Father continually, as he hath once appeased his wrath by the sacrifice of his death; that his death may continually purge our sins; that his blood may be the only washing; that his obedience may be a perfect satisfaction; that he may be a (continual and) sole intercessor, through whose means our prayers may be heard; that he may be a faithful defender and tutor, that he may, by his aid, defend us; that (the vices of our flesh being tamed) he may reform us unto righteousness and holiness; that he alone may begin and finish in us a blessed life. If the Papists have left him any of these things, let them have the Church on their side. But if the Pope, oppressing men's consciences with

his fierce and more cruel tyranny, have disannulled and taken away Christ his government; if he have brought in a form of government altogether contrary to the gospel; if he have invented a new and strange priesthood, that he may thrust-in himself, being but a mortal man, to be the mediator between God and the world; if he have forged daily sacrifices, that he may trot them in Christ's place; if he have invented a thousand satisfactions for sins; if he have brought reigned washings from the lake of hell, to make dry the blood of the Son of God; if he have put in his place infinite patrons; if he have torn in a thousand pieces that righteousness which must be set [sought] wholly from him; if, instead of the Holy Ghost, he have erected man's free-will; it is, without all question, that the true Christ is banished far from Papistry. For this cause have I said that the Papists make boast of a dead carcass instead of the lively body of Christ, because, though they have extinguished the doctrine of the gospel, (which is the true soul of the Church, and which duly doth quicken the same,) yet they do greatly boast of a shadowish and trifling kind of Church.

We make it full well known how corrupt the purity of doctrine is amongst them, yea, with what monstrous errors it is polluted. They do not only cover all their corruptions under the shadow of the Church, but also complain that we do great injury to the Church, because we say that the same doth err. But they should first have examined the doctrine, that the Church might thereby be known. These just and honest judges will have the reigned title of doctrine to have sufficient force of prejudice to cover and suppress the difference, and that not to deceive men. For with what sleights and legerdemain would they assay to blear even dazzling eyes in so great light? But because they account this liberty of lying a part of their tyranny, they think they reign not as they would, unless they reproachfully mock miserable souls.

That we may set an example no farther, we have seen in our times, sometimes the Tridentine Fathers, sometimes the Fathers of Bononia, who, although they were even at daggers drawing among themselves, yet did they foam out their vain canons on both sides. And surely if men assent to their principles, the triumph shall be prepared on both sides. There sit there I cannot tell how many bishops and abbots, peradventure an hundred horned beasts. If the most fine flower of all the nation should shine there, yet should it be nothing else but a wicked conspiracy against God. And now after that the Pope hath gathered together the bran and chips of his unclean and filthy rotten flock, shall the representative Church suddenly appear there? And are they not yet ashamed to call that an holy, general, and lawful Council, which doth not deserve so much as to be called a vain and comical visor of a Council? But as for us, to whom the promise is made, that Antichrist, who sitteth in the temple of God, shall be destroyed with the breath of the Lord's mouth; let not us (I say) cease to refute this filthy and whorish impudency, with that most sacred word which they so boldly mock, that all men may see what difference there is between the chaste spouse of Christ and the stink-

ing whore of Belial; between the sanctuary of God and the brothel-house of Satan; between the spiritual house of the godly and the stye of hogs; and, finally, between the true Church and the court of Rome. There can no more certain or plain demonstration be brought concerning this matter either by Euclid, either yet by Archimedes, than if the Church, as Luke describeth it, be compared with the Popish synagogue. Neither am I so strait that I would have that confused lump, being altogether repugnant unto the order of nature and manner of humanity, to be agreeable in all points to the rule of the Apostles, which is angelical and heavenly. If they can show any thing wherein they are like unto them, [8] they may triumph for me; but forasmuch as all things are contrary, and although the more part of men become blind willingly, at least wise, [still] seeing the whole heavens do allow [9] us, we may not only contemn their brain-sick pride without any fear, but also freely speak evil of the same.

In the mean season, we have no small consolation to support us, that howsoever the Papists do set against us with stern countenance [10] the name and title of the Church, yet we know that we fight only against the professed enemies of Christ. We ought above all things to desire, that the most renowned king, who, according to his wisdom, hath long ago spied out the subtle sleights of the Romish court, commanding those vain bulls to avoid, [11] wherein the council boasteth afar off, may at length more freely apply his mind unto the earnest and perfect restoring of the Church; yet ought no lingering to keep you back, but every one of you must, with might and main, endeavor to enlarge and spread abroad those beginnings which are begun to arise so happily.

Farewell, most excellent lord and right renowned prince. The Lord always govern you with his Spirit, amplify by all means your dignity, and bless your godly enterprises even unto the end.

At Geneva, the 1st of August, 1560.

[8] "Sibi affine," have an affinity with them.
[9] "Plaudente," applauding.
[10] "Superciliose," superciliously, haughtily.
[11] "Evanescere," to vanish, disappear.

The Argument

THE ARGUMENT
UPON
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

To the intent that all godly men may, with more diligence, read this history, and also be more desirous thereof, it shall not be without profit briefly to note what commodity they shall reap thereby.

This is the chiefest praise that a profane history hath, namely, that it is the mistress of life. If that narration of famous deeds, which only teacheth men what they ought to follow, or what they ought to eschew, in their common actions, deserve such a title, of how great praise are the divine histories worthy, which do not only frame the outward life of man that he may win praise by virtue, but also (which is more) which declare unto us that God, from the beginning, hath had a special regard always of his Church, (and faithful congregation,) that he hath been always a most just revenger of all wrongs done unto those that have betaken themselves unto his tuition, and have committed themselves unto his custody; that he hath showed himself favorable and merciful unto most miserable and wretched sinners; and, lastly, by teaching us faith, raised us high above the heavens. I say nothing of this, that they do everywhere set forth the providence of God, that they distinguish the true worship of God from the false, and never err in the difference of vice and virtue; although I omit now also those worthy praises which used most commonly to be attributed unto the sacred histories, intending only shortly to touch those which are proper to this book which we have taken in hand.

Those things which Luke setteth before us in this place to be learned are not only great, but also of rare profit; for, first, in that he showeth that the Spirit of God was sent unto the apostles, he doth not only prove that Christ was faithful (and true) in keeping his promise made unto his apostles; but also he certifieth us, that he is always mindful of his, and a perpetual governor of his Church, because the Holy Spirit did descend from heaven to this end; whereby we learn that the distance of place doth no whit hinder Christ from being present with those that be his at all times. Now, here is most lively painted out the beginning of Christ's kingdom, and as it were the renewing of the world; for although the Son of God had gathered together, by his preaching, a certain Church, before such time as he departed out of the world, yet, nevertheless, that was the best form of the Church which began then, when as the apostles, having new power given them from above,

began to preach that that only Shepherd did both die and also rise again, that through his conduct all those which were dispersed, far and wide, (upon the face of the whole earth,) might be gathered unto one sheepfold. Here is, therefore, set down both the beginning and also the increasing of the Church of Christ after his ascension, whereby he was declared to be King both of heaven and earth.

Furthermore, therein appeareth, as well the marvelous power of Christ, as the great force and efficacy of the gospel itself; for in that Christ, by a sort of simple souls, (and of no reputation amongst men,) being indued also with no eloquence at all, hath subdued the whole world so easily, by the only voice of the gospel, whereas, notwithstanding Satan did resist him with so many lets, he hath showed a most manifest token of his divine power and might therein. And also, we see in the same the incredible force of the gospel, that it did not only come forth and show itself, although the whole world did say nay, but also with great glory and majesty, make all that which did seem stubborn to be obedient unto Christ. Therefore, these few and simple creatures did more prevail against the troublesome tumults of the world, with the base and simple sound of their mouth, than if God should openly have thrown down lightnings [12] from heaven. And, on the other side, the Spirit of God teacheth us, that the kingdom of Christ beginneth never sooner to flourish, but by and by Satan opposeth himself most furiously against the same, and useth all his engines either utterly to overthrow or sore to shake the *same.* Neither are we only taught, that Satan doth resist Christ as an enemy, but also that the whole world doth furiously rage together against him, that he may not reign over them. Yea, furthermore, that is to be set down as a thing most certain, that wicked men, whilst they do so rage against the gospel, do both fight under Satan's banner, and are pricked forward by him into so blind fury. Hereupon do arise so many uproars, so many plaguy conspiracies, so many devilish endeavors of the reprobate to overthrow the gospel, (and to hinder the free passage of the same,) which Luke setteth down almost in every place.

Lastly, like as the apostles have indeed tried, [13] that the doctrine of the gospel is a fire and a sword, so may we learn by their experience that it will always come to pass, not only by the obstinate malice of Satan, but also by the fatal stubbornness of men, that the gospel shall suffer many conflicts, and that thereby many tumults shall be raised. But, on the other side, he declareth that the apostles, (with a stout stomach,) with a lively courage and invincible violentness [force] of mind, did, notwithstanding, execute the office which they knew was enjoined them by God; and also, what innumerable troubles they suffered with great perseverance, what wearisomeness they passed over, how patiently they sustained most cruel persecution; and, lastly, how meekly they suffered reproach, sorrow, and calamity of all sorts.

[12] "Fulminasset," have thundered.
[13] "Experto sunt," have experienced.

And we must learn patience by such examples, seeing the Son of God hath pronounced that the cross and tribulation shall always accompany his gospel; we must not pamper and cherish ourselves with a vain hope, as though the state and condition of the Church should be quiet (prosperous) and flourishing here upon earth. Let us, therefore, address ourselves to suffer the like things. And that is added as no small comfort for us, that as God hath marvelously delivered his Church in times past, being afflicted and oppressed so many ways, so he will at this day be present with us also. For, surely, seeing that in this book is declared how that God, by his mighty hand and outstretched arm alone, doth continually defend his Church, being amidst continual deaths: God himself, by this means, setteth before our eyes his continual providence in procuring the safety thereof.

Furthermore, here are set down certain sermons of the apostles which intreat in such sort of the great mercies of God, of the grace of Christ, of the hope of blessed immortality, of the calling upon God, of repentance and the fear of God, and also of other principal points of Christian doctrine, that we need not seek the whole sum of godliness anywhere else.: But that I may now omit the declaration of sound and pure doctrine, — if that be a thing most needful to be known, namely, to understand how the Church of Christ first began; how the apostles began to preach the gospel; what success they had in the same; what cruel combats they suffered; how manfully they passed through so many lets and impediments; how courageously they triumphed over all the pride of the world under the reproach of the cross; how wonderfully God was present with them: then must we highly esteem of this book, which, unless it were extant, the knowledge of so great things should either be quite buried, or greatly obscured, or wrapped in divers doubts. For we see that Satan used all his engines, that he might so bring to pass, that never any of the acts of the apostles might come to light, but such only as were mixed with lies; to the end he might bring into suspicion what thing soever was spoken of them, and so by that means might pluck out of the minds of the godly all the remembrance of that age. For he always raised up, either doting fools or crafty flouters, [14] that they might spread abroad a sort of filthy fables under the names of other men; the blockishness whereof did much discredit even the true histories.

So in those books of Peter and Paul, which are reigned to be of Linus his doing, are contained such a sort of stinking trifles, that they cause the wicked to laugh at them, and the godly to loathe them. So that reigned disputation of Peter with Simon Magus is so ridiculous, that it doth discredit the name of a Christian. The same opinion must we have of all that mingle-mangle, [15] which is set before the Recognitions and Councils of Clement, and recited of Gratianus in his Fragments. They beguile the unskillful under color of ancient names; the wicked boast of those as of oracles, no less boldly than

[14] "Subsannatores," scoffers.

[15] "Farragine," farrago.

impudently, when as, indeed, they are filthy toys. Satan did use such liberty to lie, that we might have no certain thing left us after Christ's ascension. So that unless this work [16] of Luke were extant, it might seem that Christ being taken up into heaven, left no fruit of his death or resurrection upon earth. For all should have vanished away with his body. We should not know that Christ was so received into his celestial glory, that, nevertheless, he beareth rule in all the world; we should not know that the gospel was published by the apostles, and so came from them unto us, though by the means of others; [17] we should not know that they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, lest they should teach anything but that which was divine, to the end our faith might be grounded only upon the infallible verity of God. Last of all, we should not know that that prophecy of Esaias was fulfilled, wherein he foretold that the law should come out of Sion, and the Word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.

Seeing this book proceeding, no doubt, from the Spirit of God, taketh from us all doubting of these things, we must count the same as a great treasure, as I have said before not without cause, and now again confirm the same.

[16] "Monumentum," monument, memoir.

[17] "Per varias manus," through various hands.

Commentary

Chapter 1

COMMENTARY
UPON
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.
CHAPTER 1

Acts 1:1-2

Acts 1:1-2

1. The former speech truly have we had, O Theophilus, of all things which Jesus began to do and teach, 2. Even until that day, wherein, after he had given commandment by the Holy Ghost to the apostles, which he had chosen, he was taken up.

That he may pass over unto those things which followed the ascension of Christ, he briefly gathereth the sum of all those which before he had handled in the former book, that he may annex this thereunto. And he briefly setteth down this description of the history of the gospel, that it is a narration of those things which Christ did and said so long as he was conversant upon earth. Furthermore, whereas they interpret this commonly, that there was first in Christ purity of life, before such time as he began to preach, it maketh nothing unto Luke's mind. Truth it is, that the manners of a good and godly teacher ought so to be framed, that he speak first with his life, then with his tongue, otherwise he should differ nothing from a stage-player. But Luke hath respect rather unto that which he had said about the end of his gospel, (Luke 24:19,) namely, that Christ was a prophet mighty in deed and word, that is, such a one as did excel no less in deeds than in words; although there be but small difference betwixt these two places. For the mightiness of works which is commended there doth belong unto his miracles, but this, *to do,* doth reach further in my opinion, namely, that under the same are comprehended all the famous acts which were proper unto his ministry, wherein his death and resurrection are the chiefest. For the office of the Messias did not only consist in doctrine, but it was also behoveful that he should make peace between God and man, that he should be a Redeemer of the people, a restorer of the kingdom, and an author of everlasting felicity. All these things, I say, as they were promised of the Messias, so were they looked for at his hands.

Now we see that the sum of the gospel consisteth of these two parts, namely, of the doctrine of Christ, and of his acts; forasmuch as he did not

only bring unto men that embassage which was given him in charge of his Father, but also performed all things that could be required of the Messias. He began his kingdom, he pacified God with his sacrifice, he purged man's sins with his own precious blood, he subdued death and the devil, he restored us unto true liberty, he purchased righteousness and life for us. And to the end that whatsoever he either did or said might be certain, he proved himself by miracles to be the Son of God. So that this word, *to do,* is extended unto his miracles also; but it must not be restrained only unto the same. Here must we note, that those which have only the bare knowledge of the history have not the gospel; unless the knowledge of the doctrine which maketh manifest the fruits of the acts of Christ be adjoined thereunto. For this is a holy knot which no man may dissolve. Therefore, whensoever mention is made of the doctrine of Christ, let us learn to adjoin thereunto his works, as seals whereby the truth thereof is established and confirmed, and the effect declared. Furthermore, that we may reap commodity by his death and resurrection, and also that miracles may have their use, we must always have respect unto him that speaketh. For this is the true rule of Christianity.

1. *Of all things which he began* I do not greatly mislike the interpretation which some give of this place that Luke said rather of *all* than *all;* because it is possible in some measure to intreat of the works and doctrine of Christ, but to set down the whole course, that the narration may be perfect, were a matter of great [18] weight. Like as John doth declare that the world could not contain the books, (John 21:25.) That is also to be noted that Luke saith, that he began his history at the beginning of the works of Christ. But so soon as he hath declared the nativity of Christ, he passeth over unto the twelfth year of his age (Luke 2:42;) and after he had briefly spoken of his disputation had in the temple with the doctors, passing over eighteen years without speaking any thing of them, he entereth [on] the just narration of the works of Christ. It is, therefore, manifest that those works and sayings only which make any thing unto the sum of our salvation are noted in this place. For, after that Christ came abroad into the world clothed with our flesh, he lived privately at home until he was thirty years of age, at which time his Father put upon him another manner of person. God would have him to lead the former part of his life obscurely, to this end, that the knowledge of these things might be more excellent which do edify our faith.

The former speech. It seemed good to me to translate this on this wise, because {λογον} {ποιεισθὰι}, is the same with the Grecians, which *verba facere,* or to speak, is with the Latins, as Budaeus doth note. And we must understand the contrariety of the second part, which he taketh in hand, that we may know that the evangelist determined with himself afresh to write, having new matter whereupon to write.

2 *Even until that day.* Therefore, the ascension of Christ is the end of the history of the gospel. For he hath ascended, saith Paul, that he might

[18] "Nimiae," too great.

fulfill all things, (Ephesians 4:10.) Our faith gathereth other fruit thereby; but it shall be sufficient to note in this place, that our redemption was fully complete and finished then when Christ did ascend unto his Father; and, therefore, that Luke did fully perform his duty in this narration, as touching the doctrine and works of Christ. And he is said to be taken up, that we may know that he is truly departed out of this world, lest we should consent unto their dotings who think that in his ascension there was no alteration of place made.

Commandment by the Holy Ghost Luke showeth in these words, that Christ did not so depart out of the world that he did no longer care for us; for in that he hath ordained a perpetual government in his Church, he thereby declareth that he had a care to provide for our salvation; yea, he hath promised that he will be present with his to the end, (Matthew 28:20,) like as, indeed, he is always present by his ministers. Luke, therefore, doth show unto us, that Christ did no sooner depart hence, but straightway he provided for the government of his Church; whence we may gather that he is careful for our salvation. And this his providence hath Paul plainly noted in the place lately cited, when he saith, That he hath fulfilled all things, making some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors, etc. But these commandments, which the evangelist saith Christ gave unto his disciples, do I interpret of the preaching of the gospel; like as ambassadors use to be instructed with certain precepts before they go of their embassage, lest they should rashly attempt any thing contrary to his will and mind that sendeth them. And all this is spoken in commendation of that doctrine which the apostles taught. The which that it may appear more manifestly, every thing is to be marked in order as it lieth. First of all, he saith they were elect and chosen of Christ, that we may be certain of their calling unto that function. Neither doth he in this place set God's election against man's merits, but only affirmeth that they were raised up by God, and that they did not rashly take upon them this function. That is true, indeed, that they were freely chosen; but now have we to inquire what is Luke's drift in this place. I say that he hath respect unto nothing else, but that we may be certain of the calling of the apostles, that we may learn not to have respect unto men, but unto the Son of God, the author thereof, because this must always be a maxim in the Church, that no man usurp any honor. Secondly, he saith, that they were instructed of Christ what they should do. As if he should say, that they uttered not their own inventions, but they delivered that sincerely and faithfully which was enjoined them by their heavenly Master. And to the end that that which Christ taught them might be the more reverenced, he addeth this, that this was done by the direction of the Holy Ghost. Not because the Son of God had any need to be guided by any other, who is eternal wisdom, but because he was also man, lest any man should think that he did deliver those things unto his disciples which he delivered by man's wit and reason, he calleth us back expressly unto the divine authority. Like as the Lord

himself doth so often affirm, that he taught nothing but that which he had received of his Father; and therefore he saith, that his doctrine was not his own. Therefore, he signifieth that in the preaching of the gospel there is nothing which issueth from man's brain, but that it is the divine ordinance of the Spirit, whereunto the whole world must be subject.

Acts 1:3-5

Acts 1:3-5

3. To whom also he showed himself alive, after that he had suffered, in many proofs, while that he is seen of them by the space o f forty days, and he intreateth of the kingdom of God. 4. And when he had gathered them together, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but that they should wait for the promise of the Father; whereof, saith he, ye have heard of me: 5. Because John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, after a few days.

3. *Unto whom, etc* He addeth this, that he might make the resurrection to be believed, as a thing most necessary to be known, and without the which the whole gospel falleth flat to the ground, neither remaineth there any more faith. And that I may omit to speak of other discommodities that come by being ignorant of the resurrection of Christ, the gospel loseth his whole authority, unless we know and be also fully persuaded that Christ being alive, speaketh unto us from the heavens. Whereunto Luke hath chiefest respect in this place. Therefore, that the truth hereof might not be called in question, he saith that it was proved by many signs and tokens. Those which Erasmus, following an old interpreter, doth call arguments, I have translated proofs. For Aristotle doth call that {τεκμηριον}, in the first book of his *Rhetorics,* which is necessary in signs. This is, therefore, that which I said before, that Christ did make manifest his resurrection unto his apostles by evident tokens, which did serve instead of necessary proofs, lest they should doubt of the same. Furthermore, he doth not reckon up those tokens and signs, saving only that he saith, that Christ did appear unto them about the space of a month and one-half oftentimes. If he had but once appeared unto them, it might have been somewhat suspicious, but in showing himself so often unto them, he dissolveth all doubts which might arise in their minds, and by this means, also, he putteth away the reproach of the ignorance which he said was in the apostles, lest it discredit their preaching.

He intreateth of the kingdom of God He telleth us again that the apostles themselves were well taught [19] before such time as they took upon them to teach others; therefore, whatsoever things they uttered and brought to light, either by word or by writing, touching the kingdom of God, they are those speeches which Christ himself uttered. And hereby doth he briefly set down the end of the doctrine of the gospel; namely, that God may reign

[19] "Ab unico magistro," by the only master, omitted.

in us. Regeneration is the beginning of this kingdom, and the end thereof is blessed immortality; the middle proceedings are in a more ample going forward and increase of regeneration. But that this thing may appear more evidently, we must first note, that we are born, and that we live aliens and strangers from the kingdom of God, until such time as God doth fashion us again unto a new life. Therefore, we may properly set the world, the flesh, and whatsoever is in man's nature against the kingdom of God, as contrary to it. For the natural man is wholly occupied about the things of this world, and he seeketh felicity here; [20] in the mean season, we are as it were banished from God, and he likewise from us; but Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, doth lift us up unto the meditation of the life to come. And to the end he may the better bring this to pass, he reformeth all our earthly affections, and so having striped us out of the vices of our flesh, he separateth us from the world. And, like as eternal death is prepared for all those which live after the flesh, so in as much as the inward man is renewed in us, that we may go forward in the spiritual life, we draw nearer unto the perfection of the kingdom of God; which is the society of the glory of God. Therefore, God will reign in and amongst us now, that he may at length make us partakers of his kingdom. Hereby we gather that Christ did principally intreat of the corruption of mankind; of the tyranny of sin, whose bond-slaves we are; of the curse and guiltiness of eternal death, whereunto we all are subject, and also of the means to obtain salvation; of the remission of sins; of the denying of the flesh; of spiritual righteousness; of hope of eternal life, and of like such things. And if we will be rightly instructed in Christianity, we must apply our studies to these things.

4. *Gathering them together, he commanded, etc* They had before done the duty of Apostles; but that lasted but a while; and, secondly, so far forth that they might with their preaching awake the Jews to hear their Master. And so that commandment to teach, which Christ had given them, (Matthew 10:7,) whilst he lived with them upon earth, was, as it were, a certain entrance into their apostleship which was to come, for which they were not yet ripe. Therefore, their ordinary function was not laid upon them, until such time as Christ was risen again; but they stirred up their nation (as I have said) like criers, that they might give ear to Christ. And then at length, after the resurrection, they were made Apostles, to publish abroad throughout the whole world that doctrine which was committed to them. And whereas after they were made Apostles, Christ commandeth them as yet to abstain from their office, that is done not without just cause; yea, many causes may be alleged why it should be so. That filthy forsaking of their Master was yet fresh; many notes and tokens of unbelief were yet fresh. Whereas, they had been so thoroughly taught, and had so suddenly forgotten all, they showed a manifest token of their great dullness of wit. Neither were they free from sluggishness, which could not otherwise fitly be purged, than by deferring

[20] "Et ultimum bonum," and it is his final good, omitted.

the promised grace, that he might the more sharpen their desire. But this cause is chiefly to be noted, that the Lord did appoint a certain time for the sending of the Spirit, that the miracle might be the more apparent. Again, he suffered them to rest a while, that he might the better set forth the greatness of that business which he was about to commit unto them. And thereby is the truth of the gospel confirmed, because the Apostles were forbidden to address themselves to preach the same, until they should be well prepared in succession of time.

And they were commanded to stay together, because they should all have one spirit given them. If they had been dispersed, the unity should not have been so well known. Though they were scattered abroad afterwards in divers places, yet because they brought that which they had from one and the same fountain, it was all one, as if they always had had all one mouth. Furthermore, it was expedient that they should begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, that the prophecy might be fulfilled,

"There shall a law go out of Zion,
and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem," (Isaiah 2:3.)

Although the participle {συναλιζομενος}, may be diversely translated, yet Erasmus his translation did please me best, because the signification of *gathering together* will agree better with the text, [context.]

They should wait for the promise It was meet that these should be accustomed to obey first, who should shortly after lay Christ's yoke upon the neck of the world. And surely they have taught us by their example, that we must work and rest at the Lord's pleasure alone. For if, during our life, we go on warfare under his banner and conduct, surely he ought to have no less authority over us than any earthly captain hath in his army. Therefore, as warlike discipline requireth this, that no man wage unless he be commanded by the captain, so it is not lawful for us either to go out, or to attempt any thing, until the Lord give the watchword; and so soon as he bloweth the retreat, we must stay, [halt.] Moreover, we are taught that we are made partakers of the gifts of God through hope. But we must mark the nature of hope as it is described in this place. For that is not hope which every man feigneth to himself unadvisedly, but that which is grounded on the promise of God. Therefore Christ cloth not suffer his apostles to look for whatsoever they will, but he addeth expressly the promise of the Father. Furthermore, he maketh himself a witness thereof; because we ought to be so sure and certain, that although all the engines of hell gainstand us, yet this may remain surely fixed in our minds, that we have believed God. I know, saith Paul, whom I have believed, (2 Timothy 1:12.) And here he putteth them in mind of those things which are written in John 14:15, 16,

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may continue with you; I say the Spirit of truth," etc.

Again,

"I have spoken these things unto you while I am with you." "And the

Spirit, whom my Father shall send in my name, shall teach you all things," (John 14:25, 26,) etc.

And again,

"When the Spirit of truth shall come, whom I will send from my Father, he shall bear witness of me," (John 15:26.)

And again,

"If I shall go hence, I will send you the Comforter, who shall reprove the world," (John 16:7.)

And he had said long before,

"He which believeth in me, out of his belly
shall flow rivers of living water,"
(John 7:38.)

5. *Because John truly* Christ repeateth this unto his apostles out of John's own words. For some part of them had heard that at John's mouth, which the Evangelists report, "I truly baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Now Christ pronounceth that they shall well perceive that that is true indeed which he said. Furthermore, this serveth greatly to confirm the sentence next going before, for it is an argument drawn from the office of Christ. And that thus: John was sent to baptize with water, he fulfilled his function as it became the servant of God. The Son of God is sent to baptize with the Holy Ghost; it remained, therefore, that he do his duty. Neither can it be otherwise but he must do that which his Father hath commanded him to do, and for which also he came down into the earth. But it seemeth a very absurd thing to restrain that unto the visible sending of the Holy Ghost, which was spoken universally of regeneration. [21] I answer, that Christ did not then only baptize with the Holy Ghost, when as he sent him under the form of fiery tongues; for he had baptized his apostles before this; and he baptizeth all the elect thus daily. But because the sending of the Holy Ghost after so glorious a sort was a token of the hidden grace wherewith he doth daily inspire his elect, he doth fitly apply thereunto the testimony of John. And truly this was as though it had been the common baptism of the Church. For besides that the apostles did not receive the Spirit for themselves only, but for the use of all the faithful, there was also declared the universal favor of Christ towards his Church, while that he poured out thereupon the gifts of his Spirit in great abundance.

Although, therefore, he doth daily baptize the elect of his Father, yet was this no let why he might not show forth this token to be remembered above all others, that the apostles might know that they were only entered by John; and that not in vain, seeing their perfection was hard at hand. And that is frivolous which some gather out of this place most commonly, [22] namely, that the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ were diverse.

[21] "Generaliter de gratia regenerationis," generally of the grace of regeneration.

[22] "Ex hoc loco et similibus vulgo colligunt," commonly gather out of this and similar

For here doth not he dispute in this place of baptism, but maketh only a comparison betwixt the person of John and the person of Christ. When as John did say that he did baptize with water only, he did not reason of what sort his baptism was; but what he himself was; lest he should arrogate that unto himself which was proper to Christ. As also, the ministers in these days ought not to speak otherwise of themselves; but they must acknowledge Christ to be the author of all those things which they do prefigure in the outward baptism, and leave nothing to themselves save only the outward administration. For when as these titles are attributed unto baptism, namely, that it is the laver of regeneration, (Titus 3:5,) a washing away of sins, the fellowship of death, and burying with Christ, (Romans 6:4,) and a grafting into the body of Christ, it is not declared what man, being the minister of the outward sign, doth; but rather what Christ doth, who only giveth force and efficacy unto the signs. We must always hold fast this distinction, lest, whilst we deck man too much, we take from Christ. [23]

But here may a question be moved, why he doth rather name John here than any other; first, It is manifest enough that John did profess himself to be the minister of the outward sign, namely, of water, and that Christ was the author of the spiritual baptism; secondly, Because it was meet that John should decrease and Christ increase; and, thirdly, Because the apostles did so much esteem of John, (John 3:30,) it might have been that thereby the glory of Christ might have been obscured. Therefore, Christ, to the end he might reclaim them to himself, telleth them that John did only minister unto them the external baptism; notwithstanding, he confirmeth them also, lest they should doubt of the promise; for they did attribute very much unto John, and therefore were they persuaded that the baptism which they had received by him was not in vain. Now, if that the verity and force thereof must be looked for at Christ's hands, then ought the apostles to hope that that shall surely be fulfilled which John prefigured.

So must we, in like manner, think that we are not in vain baptized with water by men, because Christ, who commanded the same to be done, will fulfill his office, and baptize us with the Spirit. So faith draweth a consequent from the outward sign unto the inward effect; yet doth it not attribute any more than is meet, either to the sign or to the minister thereof, because in the sign it only looketh unto the promise, which is Christ's, and doth acknowledge him to be the only author of grace. Let us, therefore, use such a mean that we do in no part diminish Christ's honor; and yet, nevertheless, let us hope for that fruit by our baptism which is noted in this place. By assigning so short a time our Savior maketh them more joyful to hope well. Whereupon it followeth, that that death was not to be lamented which brought with it presently so precious fruit. And let us note this also, that this word baptism is used improperly in this place, that the contrariety may

passages.

[23] "Christum spoliemus," we rob Christ.

be full. After the same sort, Paul, in his Epistle unto the Romans, (Romans 3:26,) after he hath set down the law of works, to the end that the contrary may answer on the other side, he useth the law of faith for faith itself.

Acts 1:6-8

Acts 1:6-8

6. And when they, were gathered together, they asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel? 7. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath placed in his own power. 8. But you shall receive power when as the Spirit shall come up. on you: and you shall be witnesses unto me, as well at Jerusalem as in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the farthest part of the earth.

6. He showeth that the apostles were gathered together when as this question was moved, that we may know that it came not of the foolishness of one or two that it was moved, but it was moved by the common consent of them all; but marvelous is their rudeness, that when as they had been diligently instructed by the space of three whole years, they betray no less ignorance than if they had heard never a word. There are as many errors in this question as words. They ask him as concerning a kingdom; but they dream of an earthly kingdom, which should flow with riches, with dainties, with external peace, and with such like good things; and while they assign the present time to the restoring of the same. they desire to triumph before the battle; for before such time as they begin to work they will have their wages. They are also greatly deceived herein, in that they restrain Christ's kingdom unto the carnal Israel, which was to be spread abroad, even unto the uttermost parts of the world. Furthermore, there is this fault in all their whole question, namely, that they desire to know those things which are not meet for them to know. No doubt they were not ignorant what the prophets did prophesy concerning the restoring of David's kingdom, they had oftentimes heard their Master preach concerning this matter. Lastly, It was a saying common in every man's mouth, that, in the most miserable captivity of the people, they should all be comforted, with the expectation of the kingdom that should be. Now, they hoped for the restoring hereof at the coming of the Messias, and hereupon was it that so soon as the apostles saw their Master Christ risen from the dead, they straightway began to think thereupon; but, in the meantime, they declared thereby how bad scholars they were under so good a Master. Therefore doth Christ briefly comprehend [24] in this short answer all the errors whereinto they fell in this their question, as I shall straightway declare. To restore, in this place, doth signify to set up again that which was fallen, and through many ruins grown out of fashion; for out of the dry stock of Isai [Jesse] should spring a Branch, and the tabernacle

[24] "Perstringit," reprimand.

of David, which was laid waste, [25] should be erected and set on foot again.

7. *It is not for you to know, etc.* This is a general reprehension of the whole question. For it was too curious for them to desire to know that whereof their Master would have them ignorant; but this is the true means to become wise, namely, to go as far forward in learning as our Master Christ goeth in teaching, and willingly to be ignorant of those things which he doth conceal from us. But forasmuch as there is naturally engendered in us a certain foolish and vain curiosity, and also a certain rash kind of boldness, we must diligently observe this admonition of Christ, whereby he correcteth both these vices. But to the end we may know what his meaning is hereby, we must mark the two members which he joineth together. "It is not for you" (saith he) "to know those things which the Father hath placed in his own power." He speaketh, indeed, of the times and seasons; but seeing there is the like reason in other things, we must think this to be a universal precept, That being contented with the revelation of God, we think it an heinous crime to inquire any further. This is the true mean between the two extremes. The Papists, that they may have somewhat wherewith to cloak their gross ignorance, say for themselves, that they omit the hidden mysteries of God, as though our whole faith and religion did consist upon any thing else than upon the hidden mysteries of God; then may we take our leave of Christ and his gospel, if we must abstain utterly from the hidden mysteries of God. But we must keep, as I said before a mean herein; for we must be desirous to learn so far as our heavenly Master doth teach us; but as for such things as he will have us ignorant of, let mine be so bold as to inquire after them that we may be wise with sobriety. Therefore, so often as we are vexed with this foolish desire of knowing more than we ought, let us call to mind this saying of Christ, "It is not for you to know." For unless we will burst in against his will and commandment, this shall have force and strength enough to restrain the outrageousness of our wits.

Now, as touching the foreknowledge of times, Christ condemneth only the searching out thereof which reacheth beyond the measure of God's revelation; and that is to be noted out of the second member, as before I have said, "which the Father hath placed in his own power." Truth it is, that God hath in his own power winter and summer, and the rest of the seasons of the year, cold and heat, fair weather and foul. But because he hath testified that the course of the years shall be perpetual, (Genesis 1:14,) he is said not to have placed that in his own power which he hath revealed unto men. What thing soever the philosophers or husbandmen do comprehend or understand by art, by learning, by judgment, or experience, all that doth God not retain unto himself, because he hath after a certain sort revealed it unto them, (Genesis 8:22.) The same opinion must we have of the prophets; for it was their office to know those things which God did reveal. But we must be ignorant of the secret events of things, as touching the time to come; for

[25] "Misere dissipatum," miserably laid waste.

there is nothing which may make us more slack in doing our duties, than too careful an inquisition herein, for we will always take counsel according to the future event of things; but the Lord, by hiding the same from us, doth prescribe unto us what we ought to do. Here ariseth a conflict, because we will not willingly suffer God to have that which is his own, namely, the sole government and direction of things which are to come; but we cast ourselves into a strange and inordinate carefulness. To conclude, Christ forbiddeth us to apply those things unto ourselves, which God doth challenge as proper to himself alone. Of this sort is the foreknowledge of those things which God hath taken to himself to govern and direct, according to his own pleasure, far contrary to our opinion, and otherwise than we could invent. [26]

8. *You shall receive power.* Our Savior Christ doth here call them back as well unto the promise of God as also unto his commandment, which was the readiest way to bridle their curiosity. Curiosity doth rise almost always either of idleness or else of distrust; distrust is cured by meditating upon the promises of God. And his commandments do tell us how we ought to occupy ourselves and employ our studies. Therefore, he commandeth his disciples to wait for the promise of God, and to be diligent in executing their office whereunto God had called them. And in the mean season he noteth [27] their great hastiness, in that they did preposterously catch at those gifts which were proper unto the Holy Spirit, when as they were not as yet endued with the same. Neither did they take the right way herein, in that being called to go on warfare, they desire (omitting their labor) to lake their ease in their inn. [28] Therefore, when he saith, *you shall receive power,* he admonisheth them of their imbecility, lest they follow before the time those things whereunto they cannot attain. It may be read very well either way, You shall receive the power of the Spirit; or, The Spirit coming upon you; yet the latter way seemeth to be the better, because it doth more fully declare their defect trod want, until such time as the Spirit should come upon them.

You shall be my witnesses He correcteth two errors of theirs in this one sentence. For, first, he showeth that they must fight before they can triumph; and, secondly, that the nature of Christ's kingdom was of another sort than they judged it to have been. Therefore, saith he, *You shall be my witnesses;* that is, the husbandman must first work before he can reap his fruits. Hence, nay we learn that we must first study how we may come unto the kingdom of God, before we begin to dispute [29] about the state of the life to come. Many there be which do curiously inquire what manner [of] blessedness that shall be which they shall enjoy after they shall be received into the everlasting kingdom of heaven, not having any care how they may come to enjoy the same. [30] They reason concerning the quality of the life to come, which they

[26] "Supra ingenii nostri captum," beyond the reach of our minds.
[27] "Perstringit," reprimandeth.
[28] "Molliter quiescere," to take soft repose.
[29] "Subtiliter philosophemur," we subtlely philosophize.
[30] "Atqui in primis renunciandum erat mundo," but they ought, in the first instance, to

shall have with Christ; but they never think that they must be partakers of his death, that they may live together with him, (2 Timothy 2:11.) Let every man, therefore, apply himself in his work which he hath in hand; let us fight stoutly under Christ's banner; let us go forward manfully and courageously [31] in our vocation, and God will give fruit in due time (and tide.) There followeth another correction, when he saith, that they must be his *witnesses.* For hereby he meant to drive out of his disciples' minds that fond and false imagination which they had conceived of the terrestrial kingdom, because he showeth unto them briefly, that his kingdom consisteth in the preaching of the gospel. There was no cause, therefore, why they should dream of riches, [32] of external principality, or any other earthly thing, whilst they heard that Christ did then reign when as he subdueth unto himself (all the whole) world by the preaching of the gospel. Whereupon it followeth that he doth reign spiritually, and not after any worldly manner. And that which the apostles had conceived of the carnal kingdom proceeded from the common error of their nation; neither was it marvel if they were deceived herein. [33] For when we measure the same with our understanding, what else can we conceive but that which is gross and terrestrial? Hereupon it cometh, that, like brute beasts, we only desire that which is commodious for our flesh, and therefore we rather catch that which is present. Wherefore, we see that those which held opinion, that Christ should reign as a king in this world a thousand years [34] fell into the like folly. Hereupon, also, they applied all such prophecies as did describe the kingdom of Christ figuratively by the similitude of earthly kingdoms unto the commodity of their flesh; whereas, notwithstanding, it was God's purpose to lift up their minds higher. As for us, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, lest we be entangled in like errors, which prepareth a place in our hearts for the kingdom of Christ. [35]

In all Judea Here he showeth, first, that they must not work for the space of one day only, while that he assigneth the whole world unto them, in which they must publish the doctrine of the gospel. Furthermore, he refuteth [36] the opinion which they had conceived of Israel. They supposed those to be Israelites only which were of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Christ testifieth that they must gather thereunto all Samaria; which, although they were nigh in situation, yet were they far distant in mind and heart. He showeth that all other regions far distant, and also profane, must be united unto the holy people, that they may be all partakers of one and the same grace. It is evident (John 4:9) how greatly the Jews did detest the

renounce the world, omitted.

[31] "Indefessis animis," with unwearied minds, indefatigably.

[32] "Delicias," dainties.

[33] "Hac in parte omnes fuisse hallucinatos," that they all labored under this hallucination.

[34] "Chiliastas," the Chiliasts.

[35] Transpose thus: As for us, lest we be entangled in like errors, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, (a preached gospel,) which prepareth a place in our heart for the kingdom of Christ.

[36] "Oblique refutat," indirectly refuteth.

Samaritans. Christ commanded that (the wall of separation being broken down) they be both made one body, (Ephesians 2:14,) that his kingdom may be erected everywhere. By naming Judea and Jerusalem, which the apostles had tried [37] to be full of most deadly enemies, he foretelleth them of the great business and trouble which was prepared for them, that he may cause them to cease to think upon this triumph which they hoped to have been so nigh at hand. [38] Neither could they be a little afraid to come before so cruel enemies, more to inflame their rage and fury. And here we see how he giveth the former place unto the Jews, because they are, as it were, the first-begotten, (Exodus 4:22.) Notwithstanding, he calleth those Gentiles one with another, which were before strangers from the hope of salvation, (Ephesians 2:11.) Hereby we learn, that the gospel was preached everywhere by the manifest commandment of Christ, that it might also come unto us.

Acts 1:9-11

Acts 1:9-11

9. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up on high, and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10. And while they looked up steadfastly into heaven, as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11. Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him go into heaven.

9. The readers may learn out of our Institutions what profit we reap by the ascension of Christ. Notwithstanding, because it is one of the chiefest points of our faith, therefore doth Luke endeavor more diligently to prove the same; yea, rather, the Lord himself meant to put the same out of all doubt, when as he hath ascended so manifestly, and hath confirmed the certainty of the same by other circumstances. For, if so be it he had vanished away secretly, then might the disciples have doubted what was become of him; [39] but now, sith that they, being in so plain a place, [40] saw him taken up with whom they had been conversant, whom also they heard speak even now, whom they beheld with their eyes, whom also they see taken out of their sight by a cloud, there is no cause why they should doubt whither he was gone. Furthermore, the angels are there also to bear witness of the same. And it was needful that the history should have been set down so diligently for our cause, that we may know assuredly, that although the Son of God appear nowhere upon earth, yet doth he live in the heavens. And this seemeth to be the reason why the cloud did overshadow him, before such time as he

[37] "Experti sunt," experienced.

[38] "Ut de propinquo triumpho cogitare desinant," that they may cease to think of a near triumph.

[39] "Haesissent attoniti," might have stood astonished.

[40] "Quam in edito et undique experto ac patente loco et constituti," when they were standing on an elevated spot, open on all sides, with nothing to interrupt the view.

did enter into his celestial glory; that his disciples being content with their measure [41] might cease to inquire any further. And we are taught by them that our mind is not able to ascend so high as to take a full view of the glory of Christ; therefore, let this cloud be a mean to restrain our boldness, as was the smoke which was continually before the door of the tabernacle in the time of the law.

10. *Two men* He calleth them so by reason of their form. For although it might be that they had the bodies of men in deed, concerning which thing I will not greatly stand in defense of either part, yet certain it is they were not men; but because this *metonymia* is commonly used in the Scriptures, especially in the First Book of Moses, I will not greatly stand thereupon. Their *white garments* were a token of rare and excellent dignity. For God meant by this, as by an evident token to distinguish them from the common sort of people, that the disciples might give better ear unto them; [42] and that at this day we also may know that this vision was showed them of God.

11. *Ye men of Galilee, etc.* I am not of their opinion who think that this name was given the apostles after an opprobrious sort, as if the angels meant to reprehend the slowness and dullness of the apostles. In my opinion, it was rather to make them more attentive, in that men, whom they did never see before, did name them as though they had perfectly known them. But they seem to reprehend without cause, for looking up into heaven. For where should they rather seek for Christ than in heaven? Doth not the Scriptures also oftentimes exhort us thereunto? I answer, that they were not reprehended because they looked up towards heaven; but because they coveted to see Christ, when as the cloud which was put between them and him did keep them from seeing him with their bodily senses: Secondly, because they hoped that he would return again straightway, that they might enjoy the sight of him again, when as lie did ascend to stay in the heavens until such time as he should come [43] to judge the world. Wherefore, let us first learn out of this place that we must not seek Christ either in heaven, either upon earth, otherwise than by faith; and also, that we must not desire to have him present with us bodily in the world; for he that doth [44] either of those two shall oftentimes go farther from him. So this their admiration is reprehended, not simply, but inasmuch as they were astonied by the strangeness of this matter; like as we are oftentimes carried unadvisedly into a wonderful great wondering at God's works; but we never apply ourselves to consider for what end and purpose they were done.

Jesus, which is taken up into heaven There are two members in this one sentence. The first is, that Christ was taken up into heaven, that they may not henceforth foolishly desire to have him any longer conversant with them upon earth. The other is straightway added as a consolation concerning his

[41] "Modulo," little measure.
[42] "Ad eorum dicta attentiores," might be more attentive to what they said.
[43] "Secundo," a second time, omitted.
[44] "Haerebit," shall cling to.

second coming. Out of these two jointly, and also severally, is gathered a firm, stable, and strong argument, to refute the Papists, and all other which imagine that Christ is really present in the signs of bread and wine. For when it is said that Christ is taken up into heaven; here is plainly noted the distance of place. I grant that this word *heaven* is interpreted divers ways, sometimes for the air, sometimes for the whole connection [45] of the spheres, sometimes for the glorious kingdom of God, where the majesty of God hath his [its] proper scat, howsoever it doth fill the whole world. After which sort Paul doth place Christ above all heavens, (Ephesians 1:22,) because he is above all the world, and hath the chiefest room in that place of blessed immortality, because he is more excellent than all the angels, (Ephesians 4:15.) But this is no let why he may not be absent from us bodily, and that by this word *heavens,* there may not be signified a separation from the world. Let them cavil as much as they will, it is evident that the heaven whereinto Christ was received is opposite to the frame of the world; therefore it doth necessarily follow, that if he be in heaven, he is without [beyond] the world.

But, first, we must mark what the purpose of the angels was, for thereby we shall more perfectly know what the words mean. The angels' intent was to call back the apostles from desiring the carnal presence of Christ. For this purpose was it that they said that he should not come again until he came to judge the world. And to this end serveth the assigning of the time, that they might not look for him in vain before that same time. Who seeth not that in these words is manifestly showed that he was bodily absent out of the world? Who seeth not that we are forbidden to desire to have him upon the earth? But, they think they escape safe with that crafty answer, when as they say that then he shall come visibly; but he cometh now invisibly daily. But we are not here to dispute of his form; only the apostles are taught that Christ must abide in heaven until such time as he appear at the latter day. For the desiring of his corporeal presence is here condemned as absurd and perverse. The Papists deny that he is present in the sacrament carnally, while that his glorious body is present with us after a supernatural sort, and by a miracle; but we may well enough reject their inventions concerning his glorious body, as childish and frivolous toys. They feign unto themselves a miracle not confirmed with any testimony of Scripture. The body of Christ was then glorious, when as he was conversant with his disciples after his resurrection. This was done by the extraordinary and secret power of God; yet, notwithstanding, the angels do forbid to desire him afterward after that sort, and they say that he shall not come unto men in that sort (before the latter day.) Therefore, according to their commandment, let us not go about to pull him out of the heavens with our own inventions; neither let us think that we call handle him with our hands, or perceive him with our other senses, more than we can see him with our eyes. I speak always of his body. For in that they say it is infinite, as it is all absurd dream, so is it safely to

[45] "Complexa," system.

be rejected. Nevertheless, I willingly confess that Christ is ascended that he may fulfill [fill] all things; but I say that he is spread abroad everywhere by the power of his Spirit, not by the substance of his flesh. I grant, furthermore, that he is present With us both in his word and in the sacraments. Neither is it to be doubted, but that all those which do with faith receive the signs of his flesh and blood, are made truly partakers of his flesh and blood. But this partaking doth nothing agree with the dotings of the Papists; for they feign that Christ is present in such sort upon the altar as Numa Pompilius did call down his Jupiter Elicitus, or as those witches did fetch down the moon from heaven with their enchantments. But Christ, by reaching us the bread in his Supper, doth will us to lift up our hearts into heaven, that we may have life by his flesh and blood. So that we do not eat his flesh grossly, that we may live thereby, but he poureth into us, by the secret power of his Spirit, his force and strength.

He shall so come I have said before, that by this consolation all sorrow which we might conceive, because of Christ's absence, is mitigated, yea, utterly taken away, when as we hear that he shall return again. And also the end for which he shall come again is to be noted; namely, that he shall come as a Redeemer, and shall gather us with him into blessed immortality. For as lie doth not now sit idle in heaven, (as Homer signifieth, that his gods be busied only about their bellies;) so shall not he appear again without profit. Therefore, the only looking for Christ's coming must both restrain the importunate desires of our flesh, and support our patience in all our adversities; and, lastly, it must refresh our weariness. But it worketh this only in the faithful, which believe that Christ is their Redeemer; for it bringeth unto the wicked nothing but dread, horror, and great fearfulness. And howsoever they do now scoff' and jest when as they hear of his coming, yet shall they be compelled to behold him sitting upon his tribunal-seat, whom now they will not vouchsafe to hear speak. Furthermore, it were but frivolous to move any question about his apparel wherewith he was then clothed, whether he shall come again being clothed with the same or no. Neither am I now determined to refute that which Augustine, in his Epistle unto Consentius, doth touch, *(August. ad Con.* Epist. 146;) notwithstanding, it is better for me to omit that thing which I cannot unfold.

Acts 1:12-14

Acts 1:12-14

12. Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mountain which is called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, being distant about a Sabbath-day's journey. 13. And, coming in, they went up into an upper chamber, where abode Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14. These all abode together with one

accord in prayer and supplication, with the wives, (or women,) and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

12. That he may pass over unto another history, he showeth that the disciples being returned unto Jerusalem, dwelt together in one parlor. For it was the upper part of the house, which used to be let out unto those which did hire houses; [46] for the most commodious places were reserved unto them that were masters of the house, (for their own use.) Wherefore, by this word Luke doth signify that they were driven into a strait room; [47] and yet, notwithstanding, though this commodity were great, yet they did not part asunder. They might have been more commodiously asunder, yet might they not part company before they had received the Spirit. In that he noteth here the distance of place, it bringeth credit unto the history. Unless, peradventure, he meant hereby to declare that they were not terrified with any fear of danger, but that they did all return and kept company together in one house, which was not so large, but that the company being greater than the place could well contain, it might breed some rumor (or noise.) A Sabbath-day's journey was two miles, and that account doth well agree with the place of John 11:18, where he saith, "that Jerusalem was distant from Bethany almost fifteen furlongs;" which containeth about a thousand and nine hundred paces. And the mount Olivet was at the side of Bethany. There was no Sabbath-day's journey prescribed in the law; for the Lord doth command them simply to rest upon the Sabbath-day in the law. [48] But because the Jews could not easily be ruled, but that they would run abroad about their business upon the Sabbath-day, (as the Lord himself doth complain, "that they did bear burdens out at the gates,") (Jeremiah 17:24,) therefore, it is to be thought that it was determined by the priests, [49] (to the end they might restrain such enormities,) that no man should travel upon the Sabbath-day above two miles. Although Jerome, in his Answers unto Algasia, doth say that this tradition did come from two Rabbins, namely, from Atriba, and from Simon Heli.

13. *Where they abode* Some translate it, *where they did abide;* as though they did use to dwell there. But I am of that opinion, that they did then first of all use that hired room to dwell together in, until such time as the Holy Spirit was come upon them. Too, too ridiculous are the Papists, which go about to prove Peter his supremacy [50] hereby, because he is reckoned up first of all the apostles. Although we do grant that he was the chiefest of the apostles, yet it doth not follow hereupon that he was the chiefest ruler of all the world. But if he be, therefore, the chief of all the apostles, because his name is first in the catalogue of the apostles' names, I will again conclude, that the mother of Christ was inferior unto all the rest of the women, because

[46] "Inquilinis," tenants or lodgers.

[47] "In angustum locum fuisse constrictos," were confined to a narrow space.

[48] More properly, For the Lord doth in the law command, etc.

[49] "Communi sacerdotum concilio," by the common council of the priests, the Sanhedrim.

[50] "Primatum," primacy.

she is [here] reckoned the last; which they will in no case admit, as indeed it were a thing too absurd. Wherefore, unless they will set their Papacy to be laughed at of all men, as hitherto they have done, they must leave off to adorn it with such foolish toys. But what is their intent? Forsooth, they will prove out of the Scriptures that there was a secondary head of the Church, inferior to Christ; whereas there is no syllable in the Scripture which is consenting unto this their foolish invention. No marvel is it, therefore, if they do snatch here and there certain places, which, although no man smite them out of their hands, they will let fall of their own accord. But omitting them, let us mark what is Luke's purpose in this place. Because the disciples had fallen away, and filthily fled from their Master Christ, every man whither fear did drive him, (Matthew 26:56,) they did deserve, like forsakers of their masters, or run-agates, to be deprived of honor. Therefore, that we may know that by the appointment of the Lord they were gathered together again, and restored to their former degree, Luke reckoneth up all their names.

14. *With their wives* Some translate it *women;* and they think that he speaketh of those which accompanied Christ. As I will not contend with any man concerning this matter, so have I not doubted to prefer that which I thought was more probable. I grant that the word which Luke useth may be interpreted both ways. But this is my reason, why I do think that he speaketh rather of wives, because, seeing that they used afterward to carry their wives about with them, as Paul doth testify, (1 Corinthians 9:5,) it is not likely that they were then asunder. For they might more easily rest together in one place, than by wandering to and fro oftentimes to change their abiding; and, secondly, seeing that they did look for the coming of the Holy Ghost, which was even then at hand, what reason was there why they should deprive their wives of so great goodness? Peter's wife was about to be a helper unto him shortly after, which we must also think of the rest of the wives. These women had need of heroical fortitude and constancy, lest they should faint. Who would, therefore, think that they were excluded from their husbands whilst they look for the coming of the Spirit? But if they will stick to the general word, it standeth with reason that there were married women in the company. Howsoever it be, it is Luke's mind to tell us by the way how greatly they had changed their minds. [51] For whereas before the men, being afraid, had fled away, the women are gathered together with them now, neither do they fear any danger. He doth reckon up the mother of Jesus with the other women, whom, notwithstanding, John is said to have kept at his own house. But, as I have said before, they met altogether now only for a short season; for it is not to be doubted but that they departed one from another afterwards. It is well known that amongst the Hebrews all kinsfolk are comprehended under this word *brethren.*

All these did continue. Here he showeth that they did diligently look for the coming of the Holy Spirit.; For this was the cause of their prayer,

[51] "In melius," for the better.

that Christ would send his Spirit, as he had promised. Whereupon we may gather that this is the true faith which stirreth us up to call upon God. For the security of faith doth much differ from sluggishness. Neither doth God, therefore, assure us of this grace, that our minds may straightway become careless, but that he may rather sharpen our desire to pray. Neither is prayer any sign of doubting, but rather a testimony of our (sure hope and) confidence, because we ask those things at the Lord's hands which we know he hath promised. So it becometh us also (after their example) to be instant in prayer, [52] and to beg at God's hands that he will increase in us his Holy Spirit: [53] increase, (I say,) because before we can conceive any prayer we must needs have the first-fruits of the Spirit. For as much as he is the only Master which teacheth us to pray aright, who doth not only give us utterance, (Romans 2:25,) but also governs our inward affections.

Furthermore, Luke doth express two things which are proper to true prayer, namely, that they did persist, and that they were all of one mind. This was an exercise of their patience, in that Christ did make them stay a while, [54] when as he could straightway have sent the Holy Spirit; so God doth oftentimes drive off, [55] and, as it were, suffer us to languish, that he may accustom us to persevere. The hastiness of our petitions is a corrupt, yea a hurtful plague; wherefore it is no marvel if God do sometimes correct the same. In the mean season (as I have said) he doth exercise us to be constant in prayer. Therefore, if we will not pray in vain, let us not be wearied with the delay of time. As touching the unity of their minds, it is set against that scattering abroad, which fear had caused before. Yet, notwithstanding, we may easily gather, even by this, how needful a thing it is to pray generally, in that Christ commandeth every one to pray for the whole body, and generally for all men, as it were, in the person of all men: Our Father, Give us this day, etc., (Matthew 6:9.) Whence cometh this unity of their tongues but from one Spirit? Wherefore, when Paul would prescribe unto the Jews and Gentiles a right form of prayer, he removeth far away all division and dissension. That we *may,* (saith he,) being all of one mind, with one mouth glorify God, (Romans 15:6.) And truly it is needful that we be brethren, and agree together like brethren, that we rightly call God Father.

Acts 1:15-22

Acts 1:15-22

15. In those days, Peter standing up in the midst of the disciples, said, (and the company of names together was almost an hundred and twenty,) 16. Men and brethren, it was expedient that this Scripture should be fulfilled,

[52] "Ut precibus nostris concedat," that he would grant our prayers.

[53] "Ut quotidiana Spiritus augmenta impetremus," that we may obtain daily increase of the Spirit.

[54] "Suspensos tenuit," kept them in suspense.

[55] "Differt," defer or delay.

which the Holy Ghost foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, which was guide unto them which took Jesus: 17. Which was adopted into the number of us, and had obtained part [lot] of this ministry. 18. And he truly hath [had] possessed [or gotten] a field with the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, he burst in sunder in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out. 19. And this was known unto all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that that field is called, in their tongue, Aceldama, that is, The field of blood. 20. For it is written in the book of the Psalms, Let his habitation be void, and let there be none to dwell therein, and let another man take his bishopric. 21. Of all those, therefore, which were gathered together with us all that time wherein the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us, 22. Beginning from the baptism of John, until that day wherein he was taken up from us, must one be made a witness together with us of his resurrection.

15. It was meet that Matthias should be chosen into the place of Judas, lest, through the treachery of one man, all that might seem to have been made of none effect which Christ had once appointed. He did not unadvisedly choose the twelve in the beginning, as principal preachers of his gospel. For when he said that they should be judges of twelve tribes of Israel, Luke 6:13, John 6:70; he showeth here that it was done of set purpose, that they might gather together the tribes of Israel unto one faith. But after that the Jews had refused the grace offered unto them, it was behoveful that the Israel of God should be gathered together out of all countries.

This, therefore, was, as it were, a holy number, which, if it should have been diminished through the wickedness of Judas, then should the preaching of the gospel both have had, and also have, less credit at this day, if the beginning thereof had been imperfect. [56] Although, therefore, Judas would (as much as in him lay) have disappointed the purpose of Christ, yet nevertheless it stood firm and stable. He perished as he was worthy, yet did the order of the apostles remain whole and sound.

The company of names It is uncertain whether he meaneth the men who only have the name properly, seeing the women are comprehended under the name of the men; or whether he taketh names simply for all the heads, as the Hebrews call them souls. This may also be called in question, whether they were wont daily to frequent that parlor in which the apostles did dwell, or they did continually dwell there with them. For the place was scarce able to contain so great a multitude, to serve them for all necessary uses. Surely it seemeth to me a thing more like to be true, that Luke doth in this place express the number of them, that we may know that they were all gathered together when Peter made this sermon. Whereby we may guess that they were not always present there. Although I dare not affirm any certain thing concerning this matter, yet being moved with a probable conjecture, I do rather lean unto this part, that the church was gathered together them because they had to intreat of a serious matter, and to this end also tendeth

[56] "Ut ita loquar claudicaret," had been, so to speak, lame, defective.

this word *rising*, [standing up.]

16. *It was meet that the Scripture should be fulfilled.* Because Peter doth speak in this their assembly, therefore the Papists will have him to be the head of the church. [57] As though no man might speak in any assembly of the godly but he should straightway be Pope. We do grant, that as in every assembly there must be some which must be chief, so in this assembly the apostles did ascribe this honor unto Peter. But what maketh this unto (the proving of) their Papacy? Wherefore, bidding them adieu, [58] let us consider what the Spirit doth speak by the mouth of Peter. He saith That the Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, lest any man's mind should be troubled with that horrible fall of Judas. For it seemed a strange thing that he which was chosen by Christ unto so excellent a function, should so filthily fall in the beginning of his course. Peter removeth this stone of stumbling, when he saith that it was foretold by the Scripture. Whence we may gather an admonition very necessary for daily practice; namely, that we ought to attribute this honor unto the prophecies of the Scriptures, that they are able to appease all such fear as we conceive of the sudden event of things. For there is nothing which doth more trouble us than when we stay still in our own sense and understanding, and procure unto ourselves lets and doubts, [59] which the Lord would be ready to cure, if so be that we would hold fast this one thing, that nothing is absurd which he hath foreseen, appointed, and foretold, that he might make us more strong. Neither was Judas therefore excusable, because that which befell him was foretold, seeing that he fell away, not being compelled by the prophecy, but only by the malice of his own heart. The oration of Peter hath two parts. For, in the first place, he putteth away the offense which godly minds might have conceived by reason of the fall of Judas; whence also he gathereth an exhortation that the rest may learn to fear God. Secondly, he telleth them that it remaineth that they choose another into his place, both which he proveth by testimony of Scripture.

Which the Holy Ghost foretold Such manner of speeches bring greater reverence to the Scriptures, whilst we are taught by them that David and all the rest of the prophets did speak only as they were directed by the Holy Ghost; so that they themselves were not the authors of their prophecies, but the Spirit which used their tongues as an instrument. Wherefore, seeing that our dullness is so great, that we ascribe less authority unto the Scriptures than we ought, we must diligently note such manner of speeches, and acquaint ourselves with them, that we may oftentimes remember the authority of God to confirm our faith withal.

17. *Adopted.* It is word for word *reckoned.* And he saith that he was one of the number, that he might signify unto them that it was needful

[57] "Universae Ecclesiae," the Universal Church.

[58] "Illis valere jussis," omitting these things.

[59] "Offendicula," small scandals.

that the empty place should be filled, to the end that the number might continue whole. And to this propose serveth that which followeth, that he had obtained a part in the ministry. For thereupon it doth follow that the body should be, as it were, lame, if that part should be wanting. Surely it was a thing which might make them greatly amazed, that he whom Christ had extolled unto so high dignity should fall headlong into such destruction. Which circumstance doth increase the cruelty of the fact, [60] and teacheth the rest to take heed unto themselves. [61] Neither is it to be doubted but that the disciples did remember Judas with great grief and sorrow. But Peter doth here express by name the excellency of his function, that he might make them more attentive and more careful to provide a remedy.

18. *And he truly* It seemeth unto me a thing like to be true, that this narration of the death of Judas was put in by Luke; therefore, it seemeth good to me to include it within a parenthesis, that it may be separated from Peter's sermon. For to what end should Peter here reckon up unto the disciples those things which they already knew well enough?

Secondly, it should have been an absurd thing to have spoken after this among them, that the field which was bought with the money that was given to betray Christ was called of the Hebrews, in their own mother tongue, *Aceldama.* But whereas some do answer, that Peter spoke this unto the Galileans, whose speech did disagree with the Jewish tongue, it is but vain and frivolous. In very deed they did somewhat disagree in pronunciation; yet not so much but that they did well understand one another; like as do these of Paris and the men of Rouen.

Furthermore, how could this be a fit word for Jerusalem, where Peter made his sermon? To what end should he interpret in Greek among the Hebrews their own mother tongue? Therefore doth Luke of himself put in this sentence concerning the death of Judas, lest Peter's words might seem strange [62] through ignorance of that history.

He possessed a field This word hath a double signification, which, in my opinion, doth rather signify in this place to possess than to get; yet because it skilleth little whether way we read it, I leave it indifferent. And he speaketh after this sort, not because Judas had the use of the field, or that he himself did buy it, seeing it was bought after his death. But Luke's meaning was, that his burial was the perpetual note of ignominy; was the reward which he had for his falsehood and wicked act. Neither did he so much sell Christ for thirty pieces as his apostleship. He enjoyed not the money; [63] he only possessed the field. Furthermore, it came to pass through the marvelous providence of God, that the very common name of the field should be a note of infamy for the priests, which had bought (the) innocent blood of [from] the traitor. He saith that the Hebrews did call it by that name in their tongue,

[60] "Atrocitatem sceleris," the atrocity of the crime.
[61] "Ut sibi caveant et metuani," to be cautious and fear.
[62] "Lectoribus obscura essent," might be obscure to his readers.
[63] "Argento potitus non est," he did not obtain the money.

because he himself was a Grecian born; and he calleth that the Hebrew tongue which the Jews did use after the captivity of Babylon, namely, such as was mixed of the Assyrian tongue and of the Chaldean tongue.

It is written in the book of Psalms He taketh away, by authority of Scriptures, all offense which might have happened by reason of the falling away of Judas. Yet might this place seem to be greatly wrested: First, in that David did not wish that these things might befall any particular person, but (in the plural number) he wisheth them unto his enemies. Secondly, it seemeth that Peter doth apply these things amiss unto Judas, which were spoken of the enemies of David. I answer, that David doth there speak after this [afterwards] of himself, that he may describe the condition and state of Christ's kingdom.

In that Psalm (I say) is contained the common image of the whole Church, which is the body of the Son of God. Therefore, the things which are there set down must needs have been fulfilled in the head, which are indeed fulfilled, as the evangelists do testify, know, if any man object that those things which there were spoken against the enemies of David do not fitly agree unto Judas, we may easily gather that they do so much the rather agree with him, because David doth not respect himself as being separated from the body of the Church; but rather as he was one of the members of Christ, and so taking upon him his image, he steppeth forth in his name.

Whosoever shall mark that this singular person was attributed to David, that he should be a figure of Christ, will not marvel if all these things be applied unto him which were prefigured in David. Although, therefore, he doth comprehend the whole Church, yet he beginneth at the head thereof, and doth especially describe what things Christ should suffer by the hands of the wicked. For we learn out of Paul's doctrine, that whatsoever afflictions the godly suffer, they are part of the afflictions of Christ, and serve to the fulfilling of the same, (Colossians 1:14.) This order and connection did David observe, or rather the Spirit of God, who meant by the mouth of David to instruct the whole Church. But as touching the persecutors of Christ, all that which is commonly spoken of them is by good right referred unto their standard-bearer; whose impiety and wickedness, as it is most famous, so his punishment ought to be made known unto all men. If any man do object again, that that which is recited in the Psalm is only certain cursings, and not prophecies; and that, therefore, Peter doth gather improperly that it was of necessity that it should be fulfilled, it is soon answered. For David was not moved with any perverse or corrupt affection of the flesh to crave vengeance; but he had the Holy Spirit to be his guide and director. Therefore, what things soever he prayed for there, being inspired with the Holy Ghost, they have the same strength which prophecies have, because the Spirit doth require no other thing than that which God hath determined with himself to perform, and will also promise unto us. But whereas Peter doth cite out of the Scriptures two diverse testimonies; by the first is meant, that Judas,

together with his name and family, should quite be extinguished, that his place might be empty; the other, which he fetcheth out of the 109th Psalm, tendeth to this end, that there should be another chosen to supply his place. These seem at first to be contrary; namely, a waste habitation and succession. Yet, because the Spirit saith only, in the former place, that the adversaries of the Church should be taken away, that their place might be empty, and without one to dwell therein, in respect of themselves, this is no let why another may not afterward supply their empty place. Yea, this doth also augment their punishment, in that the honor, after it was taken from him that was unworthy thereof, is given to another.

And his bishopric The Hebrew word could not be translated more fitly. For {פכודה{ *(pecudah)* doth signify a jurisdiction or government, so called of the overseeing and beholding of things. For as for those which interpret it *wife,* the text [64] refuteth them; for it followeth in the next verse, of his wife, that she may be made a widow. Therefore, after that he had wished that the wicked may be deprived of his life, he addeth, moreover, that he may be spoiled of his honor; neither doth he stay here, but also he desireth that another may succeed him, whereby, as I have said before, his punishment is doubled. In the meanwhile, he noteth by the way, [65] that this false, treacherous, and wicked person, whereof he speaketh, should not be some one of the common sort, but such an one as should be indued with honor and dignity; from which, nevertheless, he shall fall. And out of this place must we learn, that the wicked shall not escape scott free, which have persecuted the Church of God; for this miserable and wretched end is prepared for them all.

21. *We must therefore.* This which he bringeth in might seem, at the first sight, to be far set [fetched.] For if so be it David did speak of transposing [66] Judas's bishopric, it did not thereupon straightway follow that the disciples should choose another to be his successor; yet, because they knew that they had this charge given them to order the Church, so soon as Peter had told them that it did please the Lord that it should be so, he gathereth thereupon that they ought to do it. For whensoever God will use as means, [67] to maintain the government of his Church, so soon as we know what his will is, we must not linger, but stoutly perform whatsoever is required in our ministry (and function.) That was, without all controversy, what was the duty of the Church; like as, at this day, when we hear that those must be put from their office which behave themselves ungodly and wickedly, and that others must be chosen in their rooms, the Church must take this charge in hand. Wherefore, it was superfluous to move any question about a thing that was not to be doubted of. Therefore, let us always remember to consider what we have to do, that we may be ready to obey the Lord. Furthermore,

[64] "Contextus," context.
[65] "Oblique," indirectly.
[66] "Transferendo," transferring.
[67] "Quum opera nostra uti velit Deus," since God is pleased to use our agency.

when as he intreateth of the making of an apostle, he saith, He must be a witness of the resurrection; which signifieth that the apostleship is not without the preaching of the gospel. Whence it may appear how vain and frivolous the Popish bishops are, which having on only dumb visors, brag that they are the successors of the apostles; but wherein are they like unto them? I grant that Peter doth here require such a witness as saw the Lord after his resurrection, of which sort John professeth himself to be one, when he saith, "He which saw it beareth witness," (John 19:35.) For this did serve for the confirmation of faith; yet, nevertheless, Peter maketh it a thing necessary in him and the rest of his fellows in office, that they should teach, whilst he maketh them and himself preachers or witnesses of the resurrection.

He nameth the resurrection, not because they must bear witness thereof alone; but because, first, under this is comprehended the preaching of the death of Christ; secondly, because we have the end of our redemption therein, and the accomplishment thereof, and also it bringeth with it the celestial government of Christ, and the power of the Spirit in defending his, in establishing justice and equity, in restoring order, in abolishing the tyranny of sin, and in putting to flight all the enemies of the Church. Let us know, therefore, that those things are not excluded by this word which are necessarily knit together. Nevertheless, let us note that the resurrection is here named before other things, as being the chief point of the gospel, as also Paul teacheth, (1 Corinthians 15:17.)

But were the apostles alone witnesses of the resurrection? Was not this also common to the rest of the disciples? For Peter seemeth to challenge this as proper only to the apostles. I answer, that this title is therefore attributed unto them, because they were chosen peculiarly unto that function, and because they had the chief room amongst those which did bring this embassage; therefore, though they were the chief of those which were assigned, yet were not they only appointed thereunto.

All that time. He beginneth at that time when Jesus began to show himself unto the world, which is diligently to be observed, as before I have said; for he lived privately until such time as he was almost thirty years of age. For he would not make himself known further than was needful for our salvation. Therefore, when the time was come wherein he must go about that business which his Father had appointed him, he came abroad like a new man, and one that was but lately born. Every man may easily perceive what great force this hath to bridle our curiosity. The whole life of Christ might have been a mirror most marvelous, [68] of more than absolute perfection; and yet, notwithstanding, that he might keep us occupied in the study and meditation of those things which were most needful to be known, he would lead the better part of his life obscurely and in secret. [69] Who dare now wander without Christ, seeing that he doth apply the knowledge

[68] "Admirable speculum," an admirable mirror.

[69] "Quasi sepultam," as it were buried.

of himself to the edifying of faith?

The Hebrews take this, to go in and out, for to be conversant and to lead the life among men. In which sense, citizens are said to go in and out by the gates of their city; so John 10:9,

"If any man enter in by me, he shall go in and out,
and shall find pasture."

Although, in the Second Book of the Chronicles, the first chapter, and tenth verse, it seemeth to be a token of rule and government.

Acts 1:23-26

Acts 1:23-26

23. Then they presented two, Joseph, whose sirname was Barsabas, which was called Justus, and Matthias. 24. And when they had prayed, they said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25. That he may take the room of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas is fallen, that he might go unto his place. 26. And they gave in their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was by common consent counted with the eleven apostles.

23. They were to choose one only into the room of Judas; they present two. Here may a question be asked, Why they were not contented with one only? Was it because they were so like, that they could not discern whether was more fit? This truly had been no sufficient reason why they should suffer it to be decided by lots. And also it seemeth that Joseph was of greater estimation otherwise; or was it because they were diversely affectioned? But this seemeth scarce probable, neither is this to be admitted as true, because of that most excellent testimony which Luke did give a little before of their unity and agreement. Lastly, It had been very absurd for them to have polluted the election of the apostle with such strife and contention. [70] But for this cause did they use the casting of lots, that it might be known that Matthias was not only chosen by the voices of men, but also that he was made by the determination and judgment of God.

For there was this difference between the apostles and the pastors, that the pastors were chosen simply by the Church, the apostles were called of God. In which respect Paul, in the preface of his Epistle to the Galatians, (Galatians 1:2,) doth profess himself to be an apostle, "neither of men, neither made by man." Therefore, like as the dignity of this function was excellent, so was it meet that in the choosing of Matthias, the chief judgment should be left unto God, howsoever men did their duty. Christ by his own mouth did appoint the rest; therefore, if Matthias had been chosen only by man to be one of them, he should have had less authority than they. This was very orderly done, [71] that the disciples should present unto God those

[70] "Tali dissidio," with such dissension.

[71] "Medium fuit temperamentum." a middle course was adopted.

whom they thought to be the best; and he should choose to himself whom he knew to be most fit, so that God, by the fall of the lot, doth pronounce that he did allow of the apostleship of Matthias. But the apostles might seem to have dealt very rashly and disorderly, which laid so great and weighty a matter upon a lot; for what certainty could they gather thereby? I answer, that they did it only as they were moved thereunto by the Holy Spirit; for although Luke doth not express this, yet, because he will not accuse the disciples of rashness, but rather doth show that this election was lawful and approved of God; I say, therefore, that they went this way to work, being moved by the Spirit, like as they were directed in all the action by the same Spirit. But why do they not pray that God would choose whom he would out of the whole multitude? Why do they restrain his judgment unto two? Is not this to rob God of his liberty, when as they tie him, and, as it were, make him subject unto their voices and consents? [72] But whosoever shall quietly ponder the matter shall plainly perceive, by the drift of Luke, that the disciples durst do nothing but that which they knew was their duty to do, and was commanded them by the Lord. As for the contentious, let them go shake their ears. [73]

24. *In praying, they said.* Word for word it is, Having prayed, they said; but there is no obscurity in the sense, because his meaning was to speak as followeth, that they prayed; and yet he doth not reckon up all the words, being content briefly to show the sum. Therefore, although they were both of honest conversation, yea, although they did excel in holiness and other virtues, yet because the integrity of the heart, whereof God is the alone knower and judge, is the chief, the disciples pray that God would bring that to light which was hidden from men. The same ought to be required even at this day in choosing pastors; for howsoever we are not to appoint two for one, yet because we may oftentimes be deceived, and the discerning of spirits cometh of the Lord, we must always pray unto God, that he will show unto us what men he will have to be ministers, that he may direct and govern our purposes. Here we may also gather what great regard we must have of integrity and innocency in choosing pastors, without which both learning and eloquence, and what excellency soever can be invented, are as nothing. [74]

25. [75] *Of the ministry and apostleship.* Because the word ministry was base, he addeth apostleship, wherein there is greater dignity; although the sense shall be more plain if you expound it, "the ministry of the apostleship." For the figure *hypallage* is common in the Scriptures. Assuredly Luke meant to join with the burden the excellency of the office, that it might have the greater reverence and authority; and yet this was his intent also, to declare that the apostles are called unto a painful function.

[72] "Suis suffragiis," their suffrages.

[73] "Valere sinamus," let us leave them alone, bid them good day.

[74] "In fumum abeunt," go to smoke.

[75] There is here a transposition in the translation. The 26th verse precedes the 25th.

26. *They gave in their lots* We will not, in this place, make any long disputation about lots. Those men who think it to be wickedness to cast lots at all, offend partly through ignorance, and partly they understand not the force of this word. There is nothing which men do not corrupt with their boldness and vanity, whereby it is come to pass that they have brought lots into great abuse and superstition. For that divination or conjecture which is made by lots is altogether devilish. But when magistrates divide provinces among them, and brethren their inheritance, it is a thing lawful. Which thing Solomon doth plainly testify, when he maketh God the governor of the event.

"The lots (saith he) are cast into the bosom, and the judgment of them cometh forth from the Lord," (Proverbs 16:33.)

This ordinance or custom is no more corrupt and depraved by corruption, than the corrupt vanity of the Chaldeans doth corrupt true and natural astrology. Whilst the Chaldeans go about, with the name of astrology, to cloak and color their wicked curiosity, they defame a science both profitable and praiseworthy. The same do those which tell men their destinies (as they call them) by casting lots; but it is our duty to discern the lawful use from the corruption. He saith the lots were given, that being put into a pot, or one of their laps, they might afterwards be drawn out. And here we must also note that this word *lot is* diversely taken in this place; for when he said before that Judas had obtained a lot of the ministry, his meaning was, (according to the common custom of the Scripture,) that he had a portion given him of the Lord. He speaketh afterwards properly, and without any figure of a lot, yet is it likely, forasmuch as the word {גראל}, *(goral)* is commonly used by the Hebrews for both things, that Peter meant to allude unto that which they were about to do, and that Luke had respect unto the self-same thing.

The lot fell upon Matthias. It came to pass as no man would have looked for; for we may gather by that which goeth before, that there was not so great account made of Matthias as of the other; for, besides that Luke gave him the former place, the two sirnames which Barsabas had do show that he was in great estimation. He was called Barsabas, (that is, *the son of an oath,* or *of rest,)* of the thing itself, as if he were some mirror, either of faithfulness and innocency, or of a quiet and modest nature. The other sirname did import singular honesty. This man, therefore, in men's judgment, was the former, [superior;] but God did prefer Matthias before him. Whereby we are taught that we must not glory if we be extolled unto the skies in the opinion of men, and if by their voices and consents [76] we be judged to be most excellent men; but we must rather have regard of this, to approve ourselves unto God, who alone is the most lawful and just judge, by whose sentence and judgment we stand or fall. And we may oftentimes mark this also, that God passeth over him which is the chiefest in the sight of men, that he may throw down all pride which is in man. In that he addeth, that *he was reckoned amongst*

[76] "Eorum suffragiis," by their suffrages.

the rest, he wipeth away all sinister note of rashness from the casting of lots, because the Church did embrace him as chosen by God on whom the lot fell.

Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2

Acts 2:1-4

Acts 2:1-4

1. And when the day of Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all with one accord gathered together: 2. And there was made from heaven suddenly a sound, as it were when a violent wind breaketh in, and it filled all the house where they sat: 3. And they saw cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them. 4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with strange tongues, even as the Spirit gave them to speak.

1. *And when. To be fulfilled* is taken in this place for *to come.* For Luke beareth record again of their perseverance, when he saith that they stood all in one place until the time which was set them. Hereunto serveth the adverb, *with one accord* Furthermore, we have before declared why the Lord did defer the sending of his Spirit a whole month and a half. But the question is, why he sent him upon that day chiefly. I will not refute that high and subtle interpretation of Augustine, that like as the law was given to the old people fifty days after Easter, being written in tables of stone by the hand of God, so the Spirit, whose office it is to write the same in our hearts, did fulfill that which was figured in the giving of the law as many days after the resurrection of Christ, who is the true Passover. Notwithstanding, whereas he urgeth this his subtle interpretation as necessary, in his book of Questions upon Exodus, and in his Second Epistle unto Januarius, I would wish him to be more sober and modest therein. Notwithstanding, let him keep his own interpretation to himself. In the mean season, I will embrace that which is more sound.

Upon the feast day, wherein a great multitude was wont to resort to Jerusalem, was this miracle wrought, that it might be more famous. And truly by means hereof was it spread abroad, even unto the uttermost parts and borders of the earth. [77] For the same purpose did Christ oftentimes go up to Jerusalem upon the holy days, [78] (John 2, 5, 7, 10, 12,) to the end those miracles which he wrought might be known to many, and that in the greater assembly of people there might be the greater fruit of his doctrine.

[77] "Ut more videbimus," as we shall by and by see, omitted.

[78] "Festis diebus," on feast days, or festivals.

For so will Luke afterward declare, that Paul made haste that he might come to Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost, not for any religion's sake, but because of the greater assembly, that he might profit the more, (Acts 20:16.) Therefore, in making choice of the day, the profit of the miracle was respected: First, that it might be the more extolled at Jerusalem, because the Jews were then more bent to consider the works of God; and, secondly, that it might be bruited abroad, even in far countries. They called it the fiftieth day, beginning to reckon at the first-fruits.

2. *And there was made* It was requisite that the gift should be visible, that the bodily sense might the more stir up the disciples. For such is our slothfulness to consider the gifts of God, that unless he awake all our senses, his power shall pass away unknown. This was, therefore, a preparation that they might the better know that the Spirit was now come which Christ had promised. Although it was not so much for their sake as for ours, even as in that the cloven and fiery tongues appeared, there was rather respect had of us, and of all the whole Church in that, than of them. For God was able to have furnished them with necessary ability to preach the gospel, although he should use no sign. They themselves might have known that it came to pass neither by chance, neither yet through their own industry, that they were so suddenly changed; but those signs which are here set down were about to be profitable for all ages; as we perceive at this day that they profit us. And we must briefly note the proportion of the signs. The violence of the wind did serve to make them afraid; for we are never rightly prepared to receive the grace of God, unless the confidence (and boldness) of the flesh be tamed. For as we have access unto him by faith, so humility and fear setteth open the gate, that he may come in unto us. He hath nothing to do with proud and careless men. It is a common thing for the Spirit to be signified by wind, (or a blast,) (John 20:22.) For both Christ himself, when he was about to give the Spirit to his apostles, did breathe upon them; and in Ezekiel's vision there was a whirlwind and wind, (Ezekiel 1:4.) Yea, the word Spirit itself is a translated word; for, because that *hypostasis,* or person of the Divine essence, which is called the Spirit, is of itself incomprehensible, the Scripture doth borrow the word of the wind or blast, because it is the power of God which God doth pour into all creatures as it were by breathing. The shape of tongues is restrained unto the present circumstance. For as the figure and shape of a dove which came down upon Christ, (John 1:32,) had a signification agreeable to the office and nature of Christ, so God did now make choice of a sign which might be agreeable to the thing signified, namely, that it might show such effect and working of the Holy Ghost in the apostles as followed afterward.

The diversity of tongues did hinder the gospel from being spread abroad any farther; so that, if the preachers of the gospel had spoken one language only, all men would have thought that Christ had been shut up in the small corner of Jewry. But God invented a way whereby it might break out, when

he divided and clove the tongues of the apostles, that they might spread that abroad amongst all people which was delivered to them. Wherein appeareth the manifold goodness of God, because a plague and punishment of man's pride was turned into matter of blessing. For whence came the diversity of tongues, save only that the wicked and ungodly counsels of men might be brought to naught? (Genesis 11:7.) But God doth furnish the apostles with the diversity of tongues now, that he may bring and call home, into a blessed unity, men which wander here and there. These cloven tongues made all men to speak the language of Canaan, as Isaiah foretold, (Isaiah 19:18.) For what language soever they speak, yet do they call upon one Father, which is in heaven, with one mouth and one spirit, (Romans 15:6.) I said that that was done for our sake, not only because the fruit came unto us, but because we know that the gospel came unto us not by chance, but by the appointment of God, who to this end gave the apostles cloven tongues, lest any nation should want that doctrine which was committed unto them; whereby is proved the calling of the Gentiles; and, secondly, hereby their doctrine doth purchase credit, which we know was not forged by man, seeing that we hear that the Spirit did dwell in their tongues.

Now, it remaineth that we declare what the *fire* meaneth. Without all doubt, it was a token of the (force and) efficacy which should be exercised in the voice of the apostles. Otherwise, although their sound had gone out into the uttermost parts of the world, they should only have beat the air, without doing any good at all. Therefore, the Lord doth show that their voice shall be fiery, that it may inflame the hearts of men; that the vanity of the world being burnt and consumed, it may purge and renew all things. Otherwise they durst never have taken upon them so hard a function, unless the Lord had assured them of the power of their preaching. Hereby it came to pass that the doctrine of the gospel did not only sound in the air, but pierce into the minds of men, and did fill them with an heavenly heat (and burning.) Neither was this force showed only in the mouth of the apostles, but it appeareth daily. And, therefore, we must beware lest, when the fire burneth, we be as stubble. Furthermore, the Lord did once give the Holy Ghost under a visible shape, that we may assure ourselves that his invisible and hidden grace shall never be wanting to the Church.

And it sat. Because the number is suddenly changed, it is to be doubted whether he speaketh of the fire. He said that there appeared tongues as it had been of fire. It followeth by and by, *and it sat upon them.* Notwithstanding, I refer it unto the Spirit. For the Hebrews use commonly to express the substantive of the verb in the second member, which they did omit in the former. Wherefore we have an example in this place: *It sat* upon them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And we know that although Luke did write in Greek, yet is he full of those phrases which the Hebrews use. [79] Now, whereas he calleth the tongues the Holy Ghost, it is according to the

[79] "Hebraismis," Hebraisms.

custom of the Scripture. For John calleth the dove by the same name, (John 1:32,) because the Lord would testify and declare the presence of his Spirit by some such sign. If it were a vain sign, it should be an absurd naming (to call the sign by the name of the thing signified;) but where the thing is annexed, the name of the thing is fitly given to the sign which offereth the same unto our senses to be perceived. The fullness of the Spirit, wherewith he saith every one was replenished, doth not express the [an] equal measure of gifts in every one, but that excellence which should be meet for such a calling. [80]

4. *They began to speak* He showeth that the effect did appear presently, and also to what use their tongues were to be framed and applied, But because Luke setteth down shortly after, that strangers out of divers countries did marvel, because that every one of them did hear the apostles speaking in their own tongue, some think that they spoke not in divers tongues, but that they did all understand that which was spoken in one tongue, as well as if they should hear their natural tongue. [81] Therefore, they think that one and the same sound of the voice was diversely distributed amongst the hearers. Another conjecture they have, because Peter made one sermon in the audience of many gathered together out of divers countries, who could not understand his speech (and language,) unless another voice should come unto their ears than that which proceeded out of his mouth. But we must first note that the disciples spoke indeed with strange tongues; otherwise the miracle had not been wrought in them, but in the hearers. So that the similitude should have been false whereof he made mention before; neither should the Spirit have been given so much to them as to others. Again, we hear how Paul giveth thanks to God, that he speaketh with divers tongues, (1 Corinthians 14:18.) Truly he challengeth to himself both the understanding, and also the use thereof. Neither did he attain to this skill by his own study and industry, but he had it by the gift of the Spirit. In the same place he affirmeth that it is an especial gift, wherewith all men are not endued. I suppose that it doth manifestly appear hereby that the apostles had the variety and understanding of tongues given them, that they might speak unto the Greeks in Greek, unto the Italians in the Italian tongue, [82] and that they might have true communication (and conference) with their hearers. Notwithstanding, I leave it indifference whether there was any second miracle wrought or no, so that the Egyptians and Elamites did understand Peter speaking in the Chaldean tongue, as if he did utter divers voices. For there be some conjectures which persuade me thus to think, and yet not so firm but that they may be refuted. For it may be that they spoke with divers tongues, as they light upon this man or that, and as occasion was offered, and as their languages were diverse. Therefore, it was a manifest

[80] "Excellentiam quae obeundo muneri par futura esset." but that excellence which might be sufficient to enable each to execute his office.

[81] "Nativum," native.

[82] "Latine," in Latin.

miracle, when they saw them ready to speak divers languages. As touching Peter's sermon, it might be understood of the greater part of men whereso-ever they were born; for it is to be thought that many of those which came to Jerusalem were skillful in the Chaldean tongue. Again, it shall be nothing inconvenient if we say that he spoke also in other tongues. Although I will not much stand about this matter; so that this be out of doubt, that the apostles changed their speech. [83]

Acts 2: 5-12

Acts 2: 5-12

5. And there were at Jerusalem Jews abiding, godly men, out of every nation of those which are under heaven. 6. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and was astonished: because every one heard them speak in his own tongue. 7. And they wondered all, and marveled, saying amongst themselves, Behold, are not all these which speak men of Galilee? 8. And how do we every one hear them speaking in his own language, wherein we were born? 9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabiters of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, of Pontus and Asia, 10. And of Phrygia and Pamphylia, of Egypt, and of the parts of Libya towards Cyrene, and strangers of Rome; 11. Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12. Therefore they were all amazed, and marveled, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, They are full of sweet wine. [84]

5. *And there were at Jerusalem.* When he calleth them godly or religious men, he seemeth to give us to understand that they came to Jerusalem that they might worship God; like as God, in all ages, after the scattering abroad, did gather together into that city some seed which remained, having, as it were, set up his banner, because as yet the temple did serve to some use. Yet, nevertheless, he showeth, by the way, who those be which profit by those miracles, whereby God doth declare his power. For wicked and profane men do either laugh at them, or else pass [care] not for them, as we shall see by and by. Furthermore, he meant to cite those as witnesses, which may the better be believed for their religion and godliness. When he said, *out of every nation,* he meaneth out of divers countries, whereof one is far from another. For he doth also afterwards reckon up those lands whereof one was far distant from another, of which sort are Libya and Pontus, Rome and Parthia, and Arabia, and such like. This serveth to increase the greatness of the thing. For the Cretians and men of Asia, dwelling so near together, might have some likelihood and agreement in speech; [85] but the same could not be betwixt

[83] "Vere mutasse," truly changed.
[84] "Musto," must, new wine.
[85] "Linguae commercium," interchange of speech.

the Italians and the men of Cappadocia, betwixt the Arabians and those of Pontus. Yea, this was also a work of God worthy to be remembered and wondered at, that in so huge and horrible a scattering abroad of the people, he did always reserve some relics, yea, he caused certain strangers to adjoin themselves unto a people which was in such misery, and, as it were, quite destroyed. For although they lived here and there in exile in far countries, and being one far from another, did, as it were, inhabit divers worlds, yet did they hold among themselves the unity of faith. Neither doth he call them unadvisedly, and without good consideration, godly men, and men fearing God.

6. *When this was noised abroad.* Luke saith thus in Greek, *This voice being made;* but his meaning is, that the fame was spread abroad, whereby it came to pass that a great multitude came together. For if one after another in divers places, and at divers times, had heard the apostles speaking in divers tongues, the miracle had not been so famous; therefore they come altogether into one place, that the diversity of tongues may the better appear by the present comparison. There is a further circumstance also here to be noted, that the country (and native soil) of the apostles was commonly known, and this was also commonly known, that they never went out of their country to learn [86] strange tongues. Therefore, forasmuch as one speaketh Latin, another Greek, another the Arabian tongue, as occasion was offered, and that indifferently, and every one doth also change his tongue, the work of God appeareth more plainly hereby.

11. *The wonderful works of God.* Luke noteth two things which caused the hearers to wonder; first, because the apostles being before ignorant and private persons, [87] born in a base corner, [88] did, notwithstanding, intreat profoundly of divine matters, and of heavenly wisdom. The other is, because they have new tongues given them suddenly. Both things are worth the noting, because to huddle out [utter] words unadvisedly and foolishly, should not so much have served to move their minds; and the majesty of the things ought the more to have moved them to consider the miracle. Although they give due honor to God, in that they are astonished and amazed, yet the principal and of the miracle is expressed in this, that they inquire, and thereby declare that they are prepared to learn; for otherwise their amazedness and wondering should not have done them any great good. And certainly we must so wonder at the works of God, that there must be also a consideration, and a desire to understand.

12. *Others mocking* Hereby it appeareth how monstrous as well the sluggishness, as also the ungodliness of men is, when Satan hath taken away their mind. If God should openly (and visibly) descend from heaven, his majesty could scarce more manifestly appear than in this miracle. Whosoever hath

[86] "Ut peregrinas linguas discere potuerint," so as to be able to learn foreign tongues.
[87] "Idiotae," unlearned.
[88] "Nati in contempto angulo," born in a district of no repute.

any drop of sound understanding in him must needs be stricken with the only hearing of it. How beastly, then, are those men who see it with their eyes, and yet scoff, and go about with their jests to mock the power of God? But the matter is so. There is nothing so wonderful which those men do not turn to a jest who are touched with no care of God; because they do, even upon set purposes, harden themselves in their ignorance in things most plain. And it is a just punishment of God, which he bringeth upon such pride, to deliver them to Satan, to be driven headlong into blind fury. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should marvel that there be so many at this day so blind in so great light, if they be so deaf when such manifest doctrine is delivered, yea, if they wantonly refuse salvation when it is offered unto them. For if the wonderful and strange works of God, wherein he doth wonderfully set forth his power, be subject to the mockery of men, what shall become of doctrine, which they think tasteth of nothing but of that which is common? Although Luke doth signify unto us that they were not of the worst sort, or altogether past hope, which did laugh (and mock;) but he meant rather to declare how the common sort was affected when they saw this miracle. And truly it hath been always so in the world, for very few have been touched with the true feeling of God as often as he hath revealed himself. Neither is it any marvel; for religion is a rare virtue, and a virtue which few men have; which is, indeed, the beginning of understanding. Nevertheless, howsoever the more part of men, through a certain hard stiff-neckedness, doth reject the consideration of the works of God, yet are they never without fruit, as we may see in this history.

Acts 2:14-21

Acts 2:14-21

14. But Peter, standing with the eleven, lift up his voice, and spoke unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye which dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known unto you, and with your ears hear my words. 15. For these men are not drunk as ye suppose; for it is the third hour of the day. 16. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, 17. And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your elders shall dream dreams: 18. Verily, I will pour out of my Spirit in those days upon my servants, and upon mine handmaids, and they shall prophesy. 19. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs upon the earth beneath, blood and fire, and vapor of smoke. 20. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord do come. 21. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord he shall be saved.

14. *And Peter, standing* By this word *standing* he did signify, that there was a grave sermon made in the assembly; for they did rise when they spoke

unto the people, to the end they might be the better heard. The sum of this sermon is this, he gathereth that Christ is already revealed and given by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they saw. Yet, first, he refuteth that false opinion, in that they thought that the disciples were drunk. This refutation consisteth upon a probable argument; because men use not to be drunk betimes in the morning. For, as Paul saith,

"Those which are drunk are drunk in the night,"
(1 Thessalonians 5:7.)

For they flee the light for shame. And surely so great is the filthiness of this vice, that for good causes it hateth the light. And yet this argument were not always good; for Esaias doth inveigh in his time against those which did rise early to follow drunkenness. And at this day there be many who, like hogs, so soon as they awake, run to quaffing. But because this is [89] a common custom amongst men, Peter saith, that it is no likely thing. Those which have but even small skill in antiquity do know that the civil day, from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof, was divided into twelve hours; so that the hours were longer in summer, and shorter in winter. Therefore, that which should now be the ninth before noon in winter, and in summer the eighth, was the third hour amongst the old people. [90] Therefore, whereas Peter doth only lightly remove the opinion of drunkenness, he doth it for this cause, because it had been superfluous to have stood about any long excuse. [91] Therefore, as in a matter which was certain and out of doubt, he doth rather pacify those which mocked, than labor to teach them. And he doth not so much refute them by the circumstance of time, as by the testimony of Joel. For when he saith that that is now come to pass which was foretold, he toucheth briefly their unthankfulness, because they do not acknowledge such an excellent benefit promised unto them in times past which they now see with their eyes. And whereas he upbraideth the fault of a few unto all, [92] he doth it not to this end, that he may make them all guilty of the same fault; but because a fit occasion was offered by their mocking to teach them altogether, he doth not foreslow the same. [93]

17. *It shall be in the last days* By this effect he proveth that the Messiah is already revealed. Joel, indeed, doth not express the last days, (Joel 2:29;) but for as much as he intreateth of the perfect restoring of the Church, it is not to be doubted but that that prophecy belongeth unto the last age alone. Wherefore, that which Peter bringeth doth no whit dissent from Joel's meaning; but he doth only add this word for exposition sake, that the Jews might know that the Church could by no other means be restored, which was then decayed, but by being renewed by the Spirit of God. Again, because

[89] "Abhorret," differs from.

[90] "Veteribus," the ancients.

[91] "Anxia excusatio," anxious excuse.

[92] "Quod autem omnibus exprobrat paucorum vitium," as to his upbraiding all with the fault of a few.

[93] "Eam non negligit," he does not neglect it.

the repairing of the Church should be like unto a new world, therefore Peter saith that it shall be in the last days. And surely this was a common and familiar thing among the Jews, that all those great promises concerning the blessed and well-ordered state of the Church should not be fulfilled until Christ, by his coming, should restore all things. Wherefore, it was out of all doubt amongst them, that that which is cited out of Joel doth appertain unto the last time. Now, by the last days, or fullness of time, is meant the stable and firm condition of the Church, in the manifestation or revealing of Christ.

I will pour out my Spirit He intendeth to prove, (as we have already said,) that the Church can be repaired by no other means, saving only by the giving of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, forasmuch as they did all hope that the restoring drew near, he accuseth them of sluggishness, because they do not once think upon the way and means thereof. And when the prophet saith, "I will pour out," it is, without all question, that he meant by this word to note the great abundance of the Spirit. And we must take *I will pour out of my Spirit* in the same sense, as if he had said simply, I will pour out my Spirit. For these latter words are the words of the prophet. But Peter followed the Grecians, who translate the Hebrew word {n{, *(cheth,)* {απο} Therefore, some men do in vain more subtlely play the philosophers; because, howsoever the words be changed, yet must we still retain and keep the prophet's meaning. Nevertheless, when God is said to pour out his Spirit, I confess it must be thus understood, that he maketh manifold variety and change of gifts to flow unto men from his Spirit, as it were out of the only fountain, the fountain which can never be drawn dry. For, as Paul doth testify, there be divers gifts, and yet but one Spirit, (1 Corinthians 12:4.) And hence do we gather a profitable doctrine, that we can have no more excellent thing given us of God than the grace of the Spirit; yea, that all other things are nothing worth if this be wanting. For, when God will briefly promise salvation to his people, he affirmeth that he will give them his Spirit. Hereupon it followeth that we can obtain no good things until we have the Spirit given us. And truly it is, as it were, the key which openeth unto us the door, that we may enter into all the treasures of spiritual good things; and that we may also have entrance into the kingdom of God.

Upon all flesh It appeareth, by that which followeth, of what force this generality is; for, first, it is set down generally, *all flesh;* after that the partition is added, whereby the prophet doth signify that there shall be no difference of age or kind, but that God admitteth all, one with another, unto the partaking of his grace. It is said, therefore, *all flesh,* because both young and old, men and women, are thereby signified; yet here may a question be moved, why Clod doth promise that unto his people, as some new and unwonted good thing, which he was wont to do for them from the beginning throughout all ages; for there was no age void of the grace of the Spirit. The answer of this question is set down in these two sentences: "I will pour out,"

and, "Upon all flesh;" for we must here note a double contrariety, [94] between the time of the Old and New Testament; for the pouring out (as I have said) doth signify great plenty, when as there was under the law a more scarce distribution; for which cause John also doth say that the Holy Ghost was not given until Christ ascended into heaven. *All flesh* cloth signify an infinite multitude, whereas God in times past did vouchsafe to bestow such plenty of his Spirit only upon a few.

Furthermore, in both comparisons we do not deny but that the fathers under the law were partakers of the self, same grace whereof we are partakers; but the Lord doth show that we are above them, as we are indeed. I say, that all godly men since the beginning of the world were endued with the same spirit of understanding, of righteousness, and sanctification, wherewith the Lord doth at this day illuminate and regenerate us; but there were but a few which had the light of knowledge given them then, if they be compared with the great multitude of the faithful, which Christ did suddenly gather together by his coming. Again, their knowledge was but obscure and slender, and, as it were, covered with a veil, if it be compared with that which we have at this day out of the gospel, where Christ, the Sun of righteousness, doth shine with perfect brightness, as it were at noon day. Neither doth that any whit hurt or hinder that a few had such an excellent faith, that peradventure they have no equal at this day. For their understanding did nevertheless smell or savor of the instruction and schoolmastership [95] of the law. For that is always true, that godly kings and prophets have not seen nor heard those things which Christ hath revealed by his coming. Therefore, to the end the prophet Joel may commend the excellency of the New Testament, he affirmeth and foretelleth that the grace of the Spirit shall be more plentiful in time thereof; and, again, that it shall come unto more men, (Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24.)

And your sons shall prophesy By the word *prophesy* he meant to note the rare and singular gift of understanding. And to the same purpose tendeth that partition which followeth afterwards, *"your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;"* for we gather out of the twelfth chapter of Numbers, that these were the two ordinary ways whereby God did reveal himself to the prophets. For in that place, when the Lord exempteth Moses from the common sort of prophets, he saith,

"I appear unto my servants by a vision, or by a dream; but I speak unto Moses face to face,"
(Numbers 12:6.)

Therefore, we see that two kinds are put after the general word for a confirmation; yet this is the sum, that they shall all be prophets so soon as the Holy Ghost shall be poured out from heaven. But here it is objected, that there was no such thing, even in the apostles themselves, neither yet in the

[94] "Antithesis," antithesis.
[95] "Paedagogiam," tutelage.

whole multitude of the faithful. I answer, that the prophets did commonly use to shadow under tropes most fit for their time, [96] the kingdom of Christ. When they speak of the worship of God, they name the altar, the sacrifices, the offering of gold, silver, and frankincense. Notwithstanding, we know that the altars do cease, the sacrifices are abolished, whereof there was some use in time of the law; and that the Lord requireth some higher thing at our hands than earthly riches. That is true, indeed; but the prophets, whilst they apply their style unto the capacity of their time, comprehend under figures (wherewith the people were then well acquainted) those things which we see otherwise revealed and showed now, like as when he promiseth elsewhere that he will make priests of Levites, and Levites of the common sort of men, (Isaiah 66:21,) this is his meaning, that under the kingdom of Christ every base person shall be extolled unto an honorable estate; therefore, if we desire to have the true and natural meaning of this place, we must not urge the words which are taken out of the old order [97] of the law; but we must only seek the truth without figures, and this is it, that the apostles, through the sudden inspiration of the Spirit, did intreat of the heavenly mysteries prophetically, that is to say, divinely, and above the common order.

Therefore, this word *prophesy* doth signify nothing else save only the rare and excellent gift of understanding, as if Joel should say, Under the kingdom of Christ there shall not be a few prophets only, unto whom God may reveal his secrets; but all men shall be endued with spiritual wisdom, even to the prophetical excellency. As it is also in Jeremiah,

"Every man shall no longer teach his neighbor; because they shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest,"
(Jeremiah 31:34.)

And in these words Peter inviteth the Jews, unto whom he speaketh, to be partakers of the same grace. As if he should say, the Lord is ready to pour out that Spirit far and wide which he hath poured upon us. Therefore, unless you yourselves be the cause of let, ye shall receive with us of this fullness. And as for us, let us know that the same is spoken to us at this day which was then spoken to the Jews. For although those visible graces of the Spirit be ceased, yet God hath not withdrawn his Spirit from his Church. Wherefore he offereth him daily unto us all, by this same promise, without putting any difference. Wherefore we are poor and needy only through our own sluggishness; and also it appeareth manifestly, that those are wicked and sacrilegious enemies of the Spirit which keep back the Christian common people from the knowledge of God; and forasmuch as he himself doth not only admit, but also call by name unto himself, women and men, young and old.

18. *Upon my servants.* In these words the promise is restrained unto the worshippers of God. For God doth not profane his Spirit; which he should

[96] "Suo seculo," for their own age.
[97] "OEconomia," economy.

do, if he should make the stone common to the unbelieving and despisers. It is certain that we are made the servants of God by the Spirit; and that, therefore, we are not, until such time as we have received the same; but, first, whom God hath adopted to be of his family, and whom he hath framed by his Spirit to obey him, those doth he furnish with new gifts afterward. Again, the prophet did not respect that order of thee, but his meaning was to make this grace proper to the Church alone. And forasmuch as the Church was only among the Jews, he calleth them honorably the servants and handmaids of God. But after that God did gather unto himself on every side a Church, the wall of separation being pulled down, so many as are received into the society of the covenant are called by the same name. Only let us remember, that the Spirit is appointed for the Church properly.

19. *And I will show wonders* We must first see what is meant by this great day of the Lord. Some do expound it of the former coming of Christ in the flesh; and others refer it unto the last day of the resurrection, I do allow neither opinion. For, in my judgment, the prophet comprehendeth the whole kingdom of Christ. And so he calleth it the *great day,* after that the Son of God began to be revealed in the flesh, that he may lead us into the fulfilling of his kingdom. Therefore, he appointeth no certain day, but he beginneth this day at the first preaching of the gospel, and he extendeth the same unto the last resurrection. Those which restrain it unto the time of the apostles are moved with this reason, because the prophet joineth this member and that which goeth next before together. But in that there is no absurdity at all, because the prophet doth assign the time when these things began to come to pass, howsoever they have a continual going forward even until the end of the world. Furthermore, whereas he saith that the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, they are figurative speeches, whereby he doth give us to understand thus much, that the Lord will show tokens of his wrath through the whole frame of the world, which shall bring men even to their wit's end, as if there should be some horrible and fearful change of nature wrought. For as the sun and moon are unto us witnesses of God's fatherly favor towards us, whilst that by course they give light to the earth; so, on the other side, the prophet saith, that they shall be messengers to foreshow God's wrath and displeasure. And this is the second member of the prophecy. For after that he had intreated of the spiritual grace which should be abundantly poured out upon all flesh, lest any man should imagine that all things should be quiet and prosperous together, therewithal he addeth that the estate of the world shall be troublesome, and full of great fear under Christ; as Christ himself doth more fully declare, Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

But this serveth greatly to the setting forth of grace, that whereas all things do threaten destruction, yet whosoever doth call upon the name of the Lord is sure to be saved. By the darkness of the sun, by the bloody streaming of the moon, by the black vapor of smoke, the prophet meant

to declare, that whithersoever men turn their eyes, there shall many things appear, both upward and downward, which may make them amazed and afraid, as he hath already said. Therefore, this is as much as if he should have said, that the world was never in a more miserable case, that there were never so many and such cruel tokens of God's wrath. Hence may we gather how inestimable the goodness of God is, who offereth a present remedy for so great evils; and again, how unthankful they are towards God, and how froward, which do not flee unto the sanctuary of salvation, which is nigh unto them, and doth meet them. Again, it is out of all doubt, that God meaneth by this so doleful a description, to stir up all godly men, that they may with a more fervent desire seek for salvation. And Peter citeth it to the same end, that the Jews may know that they shall be more miserable unless they receive that grace of the Spirit which is offered unto them. Yet here may a question be asked, how this can hang together, that when Christ is revealed, there should such a sea of miseries overflow and break out therewithal? For it may seem to be a thing very inconvenient, [98] that he should be the only pledge of God's love toward mankind, in whom the heavenly Father doth lay open all the treasure of his goodness, yea, he poureth out the bowels of his mercy upon us, and that yet, by the coming of the same, his Son, his wrath should be more hot than it was wont, so that it should, as it were, quite consume both heaven and earth at once.

But we must first mark, that because men are too slow to receive Christ, they must be constrained by divers afflictions, as it were with whips. Secondly, forasmuch as Christ doth call unto himself all those which are heavy laden and labor, (Matthew 11:28,) we must first be tamed by many miseries, that we may learn humility. For through great prosperity men do set up the horns of pride. And he cannot but despise Christ fiercely, whosoever he be, that seemeth to himself to be happy. Thirdly, because we are, more than we ought, set upon the seeking of the peace of the flesh, whereby it cometh to pass that many tie the grace of Christ unto the present life, it is expedient for us to be accustomed to think otherwise, that we may know that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Therefore, to the end God may teach us that the good things of Christ are heavenly, he doth exercise us, according to the flesh, with many miseries; whereby it cometh to pass that we do seek our felicity without the world. Moreover, men do bring miseries upon themselves through their unthankfulness; for the servant which knoweth his master's will, and doth not obey, is worthy of greater and more stripes, (Luke 12:47.) The more familiarly that God doth communicate with us in Christ, the more doth our ungodliness grow and break out into open contumacy, so that it is no marvel if, when Christ is revealed, there appear many tokens of God's vengeance on the other side, forasmuch as men do hereby more grievously provoke God against them, and kindle his wrath through wicked contempt. Surely, in that the day of Christ is fearful, it is an accidental thing; whether

[98] "Absurdum," absurd.

God will correct our slothfulness, to bring us under, which [who] are yet inapt to be taught, or whether he will punish our unthankfulness. For it bringeth with it of itself nothing but that which is pleasant; but the contempt of God's grace doth provoke him to horrible anger not without cause.

21. *Whosoever shall call upon* An excellent place. For as God doth prick us forward like sluggish asses, with threatenings and terrors to seek salvation, se, after that he hath brought darkness upon the face of heaven and earth, yet doth he show a means whereby salvation may shine before our eyes, to wit, if we shall call upon him. For we must diligently note this circumstance. If God should promise salvation simply, it were a great matter; but it is a far greater when as he promiseth the same amidst manifold dungeons of death. Whilst that (saith he) all things shall be out of order, and the fear of destruction shall possess all things, only call upon me, and ye shall be saved. Therefore, howsoever man be swallowed up ill the gulf of miseries, yet is there set before him a way to escape. We must also note the universal word, *whosoever* For God admitteth all men unto himself without exception, and by this means doth he invite them to salvation, as Paul gathereth in the tenth chapter to the Romans, and as the prophet had set it down before,

"Thou, Lord, which hearest the prayer,
unto thee shall all flesh come,"
(Psalm 65:2.)

Therefore, forasmuch as no man is excluded from calling upon God, the gate of salvation is set open unto all men; neither is there any other thing which keepeth us back from entering in, save only our own unbelief. I speak of all unto whom God doth make himself manifest by the gospel. But like as those which call upon the name of the Lord are sure of salvation, so we must think that, without the same, we are thrice miserable and undone. And when as our salvation is placed in calling upon God, there is nothing in the mean season taken from faith, forasmuch as this invocation is grounded on faith alone. There is also another circumstance no less worthy the noting; in that the prophet doth signify, that the calling upon God doth properly appertain and agree unto the last days. For although he would be called upon in all ages, notwithstanding, since that he showed himself to be a Father in Christ, we have the more easy access unto him. Which thing ought both the more to embolden us, and to take from us all sluggishness. As he himself doth also reason, that by this privilege our forwardness to pray is doubled to us: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive;" as if he should say, theretofore, although I did not yet appear to be a mediator and advocate in the faith, yet did ye pray; but now, when you shall have me to be your patron, with how much more courage ought ye to do that?

Acts 2:22-24

Acts 2:22-24

22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man showed towards you of God, by powers and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know: 23. Him, I say, have ye taken, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, by the hands of wicked men, and have slain him, having fastened him to the cross. 24. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the sorrows of death, forasmuch as it was impossible that he should be holden of it.

22. *Jesus of Nazareth* Now doth Peter apply unto his purpose the prophecy of Joel; namely, that the Jews may thereby know that the time of restoring was present; and that Christ was given them for this purpose. For this promise was no otherwise to be fulfilled, save only by the coming of the Mediator. And this is the right use of all those gifts which we have by Christ, whilst that they bring us unto Christ, as unto a fountain. But he cometh hither by little and little. For he doth not by and by in the beginning affirm that Jesus was Christ; but he saith only that he was a man sent of God; and that doth he prove by his miracles. Afterward he addeth, that he rose from death when he was slain. Whereby it appeareth more certainly and more fully that he was not one of the prophets, but the very Son of God, who was promised to be the repairer of all things. Let this, therefore, be the first member, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God by manifest testimonies, so that he could not be despised as some base and obscure person. The old interpreter did not evil [99] translate {ὑποδεδειγμενον} *approved.* And Erasmus is deceived, who thinketh that he did read it otherwise; and he himself did not express Luke's mind, when as he translated it given. [100] For, seeing that word doth signify among the Grecians *to show,* whereupon the mathematicians also call those arguments whereby they set a thing, as it were, before a man's eyes, {αποδειξεις}, or *demonstrations,* Luke meant to say, that Jesus came not unknown, and without any testimony or approbation, but that those miracles which God showed by him served to this end, that he might be famous and excellent. Therefore he saith that he was showed toward the Jews; because God would have his Son to be accounted excellent and great among them; as if he should say, that miracles were not appointed for other nations, but for the Jews, that they might know that Jesus was sent unto them of God.

By great works. He calleth miracles by these three names. And because God doth show forth his power in them after a new and unwonted sort, or doth, at least, procure greater admiration, they are, for good causes, called *great works.* [101] For we are commonly more moved when any extraordinary thing doth happen. In which respect they are also called *wonders,* [102] because they make us astonished. And for this cause are they called *signs,* because the Lord will not have men's minds to stay there, but to be lifted up

[99] "Male," ill, improperly.
[100] "Exhibitum," exhibited.
[101] "Virtutes."
[102] "Prodigia," prodigies.

higher; as they are referred unto another end. He put in three words, to the end he might the more extol Christ's miracles, and enforce the people, by his heaping and laying of words together, to consider the same. Furthermore, he maketh not Christ the chief author, but only the minister; because, as we have already said, he determined to go forward by degrees. Notwithstanding, here may a question be asked, whether miracles do suffice to be a sufficient and just approbation [proof] or no? Because by this means inchanters might cause their legerdemain [103] to be believed. I answer, that the juggling casts of Satan do much differ from the power of God. Christ saith elsewhere, that the kingdom of Antichrist shall be in wonders, but he addeth by and by, *in lying wonders,* (2 Thessalonians 2:9.) if any man object, that we cannot easily discern, because he saith that they shall have so great color that they shall deceive (if it could be) the very elect; I answer again, that this error proceedeth only from our own want of wit, because we are so dull; for God doth show his power manifestly enough. Therefore, there is sufficient approbation of the doctrine and of the ministry in the miracles which God doth work, so that we be not blind. And whereas it is not of sufficient force among the wicked, because they may now and then be deceived with the false miracles of Satan, this must be imputed unto their own blindness; but whosoever hath a pure heart, he doth also know God with the pure eyes of his mind, so often as he doth show himself. Neither can Satan otherwise delude us, save only when, through the wickedness of our heart, our judgment is corrupt and our eyes blinded, or at least bleared through our own slothfulness.

23. *Him have ye slain.* He maketh mention of the death of Christ for this cause chiefly, that the resurrection might the more assuredly be believed. It was a thing full well known among the Jews that Christ was crucified. Therefore, in that he rose again, it is a great and wonderful token of his Divine power. In the mean season, to the end he may prick their consciences with the feeling of sin, he saith that they slew him; not that they crucified him with their own hands, but because the people, with one voice, desired to have him put to death. And although many of the hearers unto whom he speaketh did not consent unto that wicked and ungodly cruelty, yet doth he justly impute the same to the nation; because all of them had defiled themselves either with their silence, or else through their carelessness. Neither hath the cloak and color [104] of ignorance any place, forasmuch as he was showed before of God. This guiltiness, therefore, under which he bringeth them, is a preparation unto repentance.

By the determinate counsel He removeth a stumbling-block; because it seemeth, at the first blush, to be a thing very inconvenient, [unaccountable,] that that man whom God had so greatly adorned, being afterward laid open to all manner of mocking, doth suffer so reproachful a death. Therefore,

[103] "Suis imposturis fidem facerent magi," magians might procure credit for their impostures.

[104] "Praetextus," pretext.

because the cross of Christ doth commonly use to trouble us at the first sight, for this cause Peter declareth that he suffered nothing by chance, or because he wanted power to deliver himself, but because it was so determined (and appointed) by God. For this knowledge alone, that the death of Christ was ordained by the eternal counsel of God, did cut off all occasion of foolish and wicked cogitation's, and did prevent all offenses which might otherwise be conceived. For we must know this, that God doth decree nothing in vain or rashly; whereupon it followeth that there was just cause for which he would have Christ to suffer. The same knowledge of God's providence is a step to consider the end and fruit of Christ's death. For this meeteth us by and by in the counsel of God, that the just was delivered [105] for our sins, and that his blood was the price of our death.

And here is a notable place touching the providence of God, that we may know that as well our life as our death is governed by it. Luke intreateth, indeed, of Christ; but in his person we have a mirror, which doth represent unto us the universal providence of God, which doth stretch itself throughout the whole world; yet doth it specially shine unto us who are the members of Christ. Luke setteth down two things in this place, the *foreknowledge* and the *decree* of God. And although the foreknowledge of God is former in order, (because God doth first see what he will determine, before he doth indeed determine the same,) yet doth he put the same after the counsel and decree of God, to the end we may know that God would nothing, neither appointed anything, save that which he had long before directed to his [its] end. For men do oftentimes rashly decree many things, because they decree them suddenly. Therefore, to the end Peter may teach that the counsel of God is not without reason, he coupleth also therewithal his foreknowledge. Now, we must distinguish these two, and so much the more diligently, because many are deceived in this point. For passing over the counsel of God, wherewith he doth (guide and) govern the whole world, they catch at his bare foreknowledge. Thence cometh that common distinction, that although God doth foresee all things, yet doth he lay no necessity upon his creatures. And, indeed, it is true that God doth know this thing or that thing before, for this cause, because it shall come to pass; but as we see that Peter doth teach that God did not only foresee that which befell Christ, but it was decreed by him. And hence must be gathered a general doctrine; because God doth no less show his providence in governing the whole world, than in ordaining and appointing the death of Christ. Therefore, it belongeth to God not only to know before things to come, but of his own will to determine what he will have done. This second thing did Peter declare when he said, that he was delivered by the certain and determinate counsel of God. Therefore, the foreknowledge of God is another thing than the will of God, whereby he governeth and ordereth all things.

Some, which are of quicker sight, confess that God doth not only foreknow,

[105] "Morti addictum," subjected to death.

but also govern with his beck what things soever are done in this world. Nevertheless, they imagine a confused government, as if God did give liberty to his creatures to follow their own nature. They say that the sun is ruled by the will of God, because, in giving light to us, he doth his duty, which was once enjoined him by God. They think that man hath free-will after this sort left him, because his nature is disposed or inclined unto the free choice of good and evil. But they which think so do feign that God sitteth idle in heaven. The Scripture teacheth us far otherwise, which ascribeth unto God a special government in all things, and in man's actions. Notwithstanding, it is our duty to ponder and consider to what end it teacheth this; for we must beware of doting speculations, wherewith we see many carried away. The Scripture will exercise our faith, that we may know that we are defended by the hand of God, lest we be subject to the injuries of Satan and the wicked. It is good for us to embrace this one thing; neither did Peter mean anything else in this place. Yea, we have an example set before us in Christ, whereby we may learn to be wise with sobriety. For it is out of question, that his flesh was subject to corruption, according to nature. But the providence of God did set the same free. If any man ask, whether the bones of Christ could be broken or no? it is not to be denied, that they were subject to breaking naturally, yet could there no bone be broken, because God had so appointed and determined, (John 19:36.) By this example (I say) we are taught so to give the chiefest room to God's providence, that we keep ourselves within our bounds, and that we thrust not ourselves rashly and indiscreetly into the secrets of God, whither our eyesight doth not pierce.

By the hands of the wicked Because Peter seemeth to grant that the wicked did obey God, hereupon followeth two absurdities; [106] the one, either that God is the author of evil, or that men do not sin, what wickedness soever they commit. I answer, concerning the second, that the wicked do nothing less than obey God, howsoever they do execute that which God hath determined with himself. For obedience springeth from a voluntary affection; and we know that the wicked have a far other purpose. Again, no man obeyeth God save he which knoweth his will. Therefore, obedience dependeth upon the knowledge of God's will. Furthermore, God hath revealed unto us his will in the law; wherefore, those men [107] do obey God, who do that alone which is agreeable to the law of God; and, again, which submit themselves willingly to his government. We see no such thing in all the wicked, whom God doth drive hither and thither, they themselves being ignorant. No man, therefore, will say that they are excusable under this color, because they obey God; forasmuch as both the will of God must be sought in his law, and they, so much as in them lieth, do [108] to resist God. As touching the other point, I deny that God is the author of evil; because there is a certain noting of a

[106] "Ex duobus absurdis alterutrum," one of two absurdities.
[107] "Demum," only.
[108] "Cupiant," desire.

wicked affection in this word. For the wicked deed is esteemed according to the end whereat a man aimeth. When men commit theft or murder, they offend [109] for this cause, because they are thieves or murderers; and in theft and murder there is a wicked purpose. God, who useth their wickedness, is to be placed in the higher degree. For he hath respect unto a far other thing, because he will chastise the one, and exercise the patience of the other; and so he doth never decline from his nature, that is, from perfect righteousness. So that, whereas Christ was delivered by the hands of wicked men, whereas he was crucified, it came to pass by the appointment and ordinance of God. But treason, which is of itself wicked, and murder, which hath in it so great wickedness, must not be thought to be the works of God.

24. *Having loosed the sorrows of death.* By the sorrows of death I understand some farther thing than the bodily sense or feeling. For those which duly consider the nature of death, because they hear that it is the curse of God, must needs conceive that God is angry in death. Hence cometh marvelous horror, wherein there is greater misery than in death itself. Furthermore, Christ died upon this occasion that he might take upon him our guiltiness. That inward fear of conscience, which made him so afraid that he sweat blood when he presented himself before the throne and tribunal seat of God, did more vex him, and brought upon him greater horror, than all the torments of the flesh. And whereas Peter saith, that Christ did wrestle with such sorrows, and doth also declare that he had the victory, by this it cometh to pass that the faithful ought not now to be afraid of death; for death hath not the like quality now which was in Adam; because by the victory of Christ the curse is swallowed up, (1 Corinthians 15:54.) We feel, indeed, yet the pricking of sorrows, but such as do not wholly wound us, whilst that we hold up the buckler of faith against them. He added a reason, because it was impossible that Christ should be oppressed by death, who is the author of life.

Acts 2:25-31

Acts 2:25-31

25. For David saith of him, I saw the Lord before me always, because he is on my right hand; lest I should be moved. 26. For this my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover, my flesh shall rest in hope: 27. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. 28. Thou hast made known unto me the ways of life, thou shalt fill me with gladness with thy face. 29. Men and brethren, seeing that I may boldly speak unto you of the patriarch David, because he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher remaineth with us until this day. 30. Therefore, seeing he was a prophet, and did know that God had sworn unto him with an oath that it should come to pass, that Christ should rise of the

[109] "Peccant," they sin.

fruits of his loins, concerning the flesh, who should sit upon his throne; 31. He knowing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.

25. The resurrection, [110] which was both declared and witnessed by certain and evident testimonies, and which might also have been gathered out of the continual doctrine of the prophets, was to be proved to the Jews as some new and strange thing. And no marvel. For we see that although Christ had oftentimes beat [111] the same into his disciples' heads, yet did they profit but a little. And yet did they retain certain principles of true doctrine, which might have made a way for them unto the knowledge of Christ, as we shall see by and by. Therefore, because the gift of the Spirit was a fruit of the resurrection of Christ, he proveth by the testimony of David that Christ must needs have risen again, that the Jews may thereby know that he was the author of the gift. For he taketh it as a thing which all men grant, that he was raised up from death, that he may live not for himself, but for his. Now we see Peter's drift; that that ought to seem no strange thing which was foretold so long before; and that Jesus is also Christ, because David did prophecy of him, as of the tied of the Church.

First of all, we must see whether this place ought altogether to be understood of Christ, as Peter affirmeth; that done, if there be any thing in the words worth noting, we will in order discuss it. Peter denieth that that agreeth with David which is said in this place:

"Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,"
(Psalm 16:10,)

because David's carcass was corrupt in the grave. It seemeth at the first blush to be but a light argument. For a man might easily object, that the word is not to be urged, forasmuch as David meant nothing else, save only to exempt himself from destruction. Therefore, howsoever corruption did touch him, yet doth that no whit hinder but that he may easily say that he was safe from the danger thereof, because he knew that the Lord would deliver him. Yea, it seemeth to be a repetition of the former sentence, according to the common custom of the Hebrew tongue. Which if it be so, the sense shall be plain, that God will not suffer him to be oppressed with death, or that death should consume him. And this interpretation is confirmed by that where we read *hell,* it is in Hebrew {סל{, *(seol;)* where we read *corruption,* there it is {שחת{, *(shachat;)* both these words do signify the grave. By this means David should say twice, that he shall be delivered from death by the grace of God. Finally, he saith the same thing in this place, which he saith, (Psalm 49:15,) "God shall redeem my soul from the hand of hell." Like as, on the other side, when he speaketh of the reprobates, he is wont to take *"going* down into the grave" for destruction. I answer briefly, that there is some greater thing expressed in this place than the common redemption or*

[110] "Christi," of Christ.
[111] "Inculcasset," inculcated.

deliverance of the godly. David, indeed, doth promise that God will be his eternal deliverer, as well in life as in death. Neither had he been much better for this, to have been once delivered from one danger, unless he had hoped that he should be safe even unto the end through God's protection; but he speaketh of such safety as is not common. [112] *And surely the words do sound that he speaketh of some new and singular privilege. Admit I grant that it is a repetition, and that there is all one thing uttered in these two members, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell;" and, "Thou shalt not suffer me to see corruption;" yet do I deny that it is simply to be understood that God will deliver his Holy One from eternal destruction; for freedom from corruption is promised by name. Neither do I pass for this, that* {שחת} (shachat)* doth signify the grave, as {סל}, *(seol,)* which is put in the former member. For although I do not stand nor contend about the words, yet must we respect the etymology. Therefore, forasmuch as the grave is called {שחת}, *(shachat)* because it doth corrupt man's body with rottenness, it is not to be doubted but that David meant to note that quality. Therefore, the place is not so much expressed by this word, as the condition of rotting. So that the sense is, that God will not suffer him of whom the Psalm speaketh "to rot or corrupt in the grave." And forasmuch as David was not free from this necessity, it followeth that the prophecy was neither truly nor perfectly fulfilled in him.

And that the Psalm ought altogether to be expounded of Christ, the thing itself doth prove. For seeing that David was one of the sons of Adam, he could not escape that universal condition and estate of mankind,

"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,"
(Genesis 3:19;)

the grave standeth open (I say) for all the children of Adam, that it may swallow them up, and consume them; so that no man can exempt himself from corruption. So that, beholding ourselves apart from Christ, we see the grave prepared for us, which threateneth to us corruption. Wherefore, if David be separated from Christ, that shall not belong to him which is here said, that he shall be preserved from the grave. Therefore, when he boasteth that he shall be free from the grave, as touching corruption, without all doubt he placeth himself in the body of Christ, wherein death was overcome, and the kingdom thereof abolished. But and if David do promise himself exempting from the grave in another respect, save only so far forth as he is a member of Christ, hereby it appeareth that this freedom must begin at Christ as at the head. What man soever shall be of sound judgment shall easily know that this is a good argument. God did put all mankind under corruption; therefore, David, inasmuch as he was of the number of men, could not be free from the same. Neither is it to be doubted, but that the Jews, before whom this sermon was made, forasmuch as without question that maxim was of force amongst them, that they were to hope for the restoring of things at the hands of Christ alone, did the more readily

[112] "Superiorem communi sorte," superior to the common lot.

stay themselves upon [113] the words of Peter; because they saw that that could no otherwise be which the words do import, unless they should apply it to the Messias. For they were not come to that point of impudence, at least those of whom mention is made here, that they durst cavil in matters which were evident; for God had then offered unto his disciples those which were godly hearers, and apt to be taught. They sought the Messias in the Old Testament. They knew that David was a figure of him. There was amongst them some religion and reverence of the Scriptures then; but now the impudency of all the whole nation almost is desperate. Howsoever they be urged, they wrench themselves out one way or other. [114] Where there is no way to escape, yet they break through; although they be overcome, yet will they not yield; neither is it to be doubted but that this their shameless forwardness is a punishment for their ungodliness. But let us return unto Peter's sermon.

Seeing that David doth not only affirm that God also shall be his deliverer, but doth express a singular way and means; namely, that he shall not be subject to the corruption of the grave, Peter doth for good causes gather, that that doth not properly appertain unto him, for that his body was corrupt in the grave. And now, because this had been somewhat hard to be spoken among the Jews, he mollifieth the hardness with a circumlocution. For he doth not flatly deny in one word that that was fulfilled indeed in David, but doth only by the way [115] signify so much unto them, because he lieth consumed in the grave after the common custom of other men. And David did so prophesy of Christ, that he did both apply this consolation unto himself privately, and' also extend the same unto the whole body of the Church. For that which is sound and perfect in the head is spread abroad, being afterward poured out into all the members. Neither is it to be denied but that David spoke of himself in this place; yet only so far forth as he beheld himself in Christ, as in the mirror of life. First, he hath respect unto Christ; after that he turneth his eyes toward himself, and others the faithful. So that we have a general doctrine prescribed unto us in this plate, concerning the nature of faith, the spiritual joy of conscience: and the hope of eternal deliverance.

I saw We must hold this principle. If we will have God present with us, we must set him before our eyes; and that before he do appear; for the prospect of faith pierceth far further than unto the present experience. Therefore faith hath this property, to set God always before it as a guide in all dangers and confused matters. For there is nothing that doth so much hold us up, as when we know that God is present with us; as the opinion of his absence doth often cast us down, and at length quite discourage us. David addeth, That he took not heed in vain unto the direction of God. "He is (saith he)

[113] "Acquieverint," acquiesced in.
[114] "Eludunt," they evade, practice evasion.
[115] "Oblique," indirectly.

at my right hand;" whereby he doth signify that we need not to fear lest we be deceived, [116] when as we set him before us at present; for we shall always feel his help most ready. Faith, in hoping for the help of God, ought to prevent and overgo [117] all experience, and whatsoever is perceived by the sense; but so soon as it shall give this glory to God, that it doth behold him in his Word, although he be absent, and so, consequently, invisible, it shall be overcome with the effect of the thing. For the measure of faith is not able to comprehend the infinite greatness of the power and goodness of God. He draweth a similitude from those which, when they will underprop the weak, or strengthen the fearful, do join themselves unto their side. Not to be moved, is not to be thrown down from their degree, but to remain firm in their estate; like as also Psalm 46:5, God is in the midst of it, therefore shall it not be moved. For although it come to pass sometimes that the godly be sore shaken, yet because they come to themselves again, they are said to continue firm. Therefore, there is no cause why they should be afraid of falling, who are upholden by the help of God. Like as, on the other side, those which place their strength anywhere else save only in God, they shall be like to fall at every blast of wind, but at any mean wind of temptation they shall fall to the ground.

26. *For this my heart rejoiced* Joy of the soul, gladness of the tongue, and quietness of all the whole body, do ensue upon sure hope and confidence; for unless men be quite past feeling, [118] they must needs be careful and sorrowful, and so, consequently, miserably tormented, so long as they feel themselves destitute of the help of God. But that sure trust which we repose in God doth not only deliver us from carefulness, [119] but doth also replenish our hearts with wonderful joy (and gladness.) That is the joy which Christ promised to his disciples should be full in them, and which he testified could not be taken from them, (John 16:22; 17:13.) He expresseth the greatness of the joy when he saith, That it cannot be kept in, but that it will break forth into the gladness of the tongue. [120] {כבוד{, doth signify, indeed, *glory,* but it is taken in that place, as in many others, for *the tongue* And so the Grecians have truly translated the same. The rest of the *flesh* doth signify the quietness of the whole man, which we have through the protection of God. Neither is this any let, because the faithful are continually out of quiet and tremble; for as in the midst of sorrows they do nevertheless rejoice; so there are no troubles so great that can break them of their rest. If any man object, that the peace of the faithful doth consist in the spirit, and that it is not in the flesh: I answer, that the faithful do rest in body; not that they

[116] "Non esse periculum ne unquam nos ac fidem nostram frustratur," there is no danger of his deceiving us or our faith.

[117] "Antevertere," outstrip.

[118] "Stupeant," be stupid or stunned.

[119] "Anxietate," anxiety.

[120] "Quin erumpat in linguae exultationem," but will burst forth into the language of exultation.

are free from troubles, but because they believe that God careth for them wholly, and that not only their soul shall be safe through his protection, but their body also.

27. *Because thou shalt not leave* To leave the soul in hell is to suffer the same to be oppressed with destruction. There be two words used in this place, both which do signify the grave amongst the Hebricians. Because {שאול}, doth signify *to require,* I suppose it is called {סול}, because death is insatiable; whence also cometh that translation, Hell hath enlarged her soul. Again, they set open their mouth like hell. And because the latter {שחת}, is derived and set for *corruption,* or *consumption,* that quality is to be considered, as David meant to note the same. Those things which are disputed in this place by divers, concerning the descending of Christ into hell, are in my judgment superfluous; because they are far from the intent and purpose of the prophet. For the word *anima,* or *soul,* doth not so much signify the spirit being of an immortal essence as the life itself. For when a man is dead, and lieth in the grave, the grave is said to rule over his life. Whereas the Grecians translate it *holy,* it is in Hebrew {חסת}, which doth properly signify *meek,* or *gentle,* but Luke did not much regard this, because it doth not much appertain unto the present purpose. Furthermore, gentleness and meekness is so often commended in the faithful, because it behoveth them to imitate and resemble the nature of their Father.

28. *Thou hast made known.* He meaneth, that he was restored from death to life by the grace of God. For in that he was, as it were, a man raised from death to life, he acknowledgeth that it was a great good gift of God. This was in such sort fulfilled in Christ, that there wanted nothing unto perfection. As for the members they have their measure. Therefore Christ was far from corruption, that he may be the first-fruits of those which rise from death, (1 Corinthians 15:23.) We shall follow him in our order at length, but being first turned into dust, (1 Corinthians 15:42.) That which followeth, that *he was filled with gladness,* with the countenance of God, agreeth with that: Show us thy face, and we shall be safe. And, again, The light of thy countenance is showed upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart. For it is only the pleasantness of God's countenance, which doth not only make us glad, but also quickens us; again, when the same is turned away, or troubled, we must needs faint.

30. *Therefore, seeing he was a prophet* He showeth, by two reasons, that it is no marvel if David do speak of things that should come to pass long after his time; the former is, because he was a prophet. And we know that things to come, and such as are removed far from the knowledge of men, are revealed unto the prophets. Therefore, it were wickedness to measure their speeches according to the common manner and order which we use in measuring the speeches of other men, forasmuch as they go beyond the long courses of years, having the Spirit for their director. Whereupon they are also called seers; because being placed, as it were, upon an high tower,

[121] they see those things which, by reason of great distance, are hidden from other men. Another reason is, because Christ was promised to him peculiarly. This maxim was so common amongst the Jews, that they had ever now and then the son of David in their mouth, so often as there was any mention made of Christ. They be no such arguments, I confess, as do necessarily prove that this prophecy is to be expounded of Christ; neither was that Peter's intent and purpose; but first he meant to prevent the contrary objection, whence David had such skill to foretell a thing which was unknown. Therefore he saith, That he knew Christ, both by prophetical revelation, and also by singular promise. Furthermore, this principle was of great (Romans 10:4) force amongst the better-minded sort which Paul setteth down, that Christ is the end of the law. [122] No man, therefore, did doubt of this, but that this was the mark whereat all the prophets did aim, to lead the godly unto Christ as it were by the hand. Therefore, what notable or extraordinary thing soever they did utter, the Jews were commonly persuaded that it did agree with Christ. Furthermore, we must note, that Peter doth reason soundly, when he gathered that David was not ignorant of that which was the chiefest point of all revelations.

He had sworn with an oath God swore not only to the end he might make David believe his promise, but also that the thing promised might be had in greater estimation. And to this end, in my judgment, it is here repeated, that the Jews may think with themselves of what great weight the promise was, which God did make so notable (and so famous.) The same admonition is profitable for us also. For we need not to doubt of this, but that the Lord meant to set forth the excellency of the covenant by putting in a solemn oath. In the mean season, this is also a fit remedy for the infirmity of our faith, that the sacred name of God is set forth unto us, [123] that his words may carry the greater credit. These words, "according to the flesh," do declare that there was some more noble thing in Christ than the flesh. Therefore Christ did so come of the seed of David as he was man, that he doth nevertheless, retain his divinity; and so the distinction between the two natures is plainly expressed; when as Christ is called the Son of God, according to his eternal essence, in like sort as he is called the seed of David according to the flesh.

Acts 2:32-36

Acts 2:32-36

32. This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses. 33. He being therefore exalted by the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Ghost of the Father, he hath now shed forth that which ye now see and hear. 34. For David is not ascended into heaven: But

[121] "Specula," watch tower.

[122] "Hoc principium quod Paulus tradit Christum esse finem legis," etc., this principle which Paul delivers, viz., that Christ was the end of the law, was of great force, etc.

[123] "Pignoris instar," like a pledge, omitted.

he saith, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, 35. Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 36. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for a surety, that God hath made this Jesus Lord, and the same Christ, whom ye have crucified.

32. *This Jesus* After that he had proved by the testimony of David, that it was most requisite that Christ should rise again, he saith, that he and the rest of his fellows were such witnesses as saw him with their eyes after his resurrection. For this text [124] will not suffer this word *raised up* to be drawn into any other sense. Whereupon it followeth that that was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth which David did foreshow concerning Christ. After that he intreateth of the fruit or effect. For it was requisite for him to declare that first, that Christ is alive. Otherwise it had been an absurd and incredible thing that he should be the author of so great a miracle. Notwithstanding he doth therewithal teach us, that he did not rise for his own sake alone, but that he might make the whole Church partaker of his life, having poured out the Spirit.

33. *He being therefore exalted by the right hand of God* The right hand is taken in this place for the hand or power, in like sort as it is taken everywhere in the Scripture. For this is his drift, to declare that it was a wonderful work of God, in that he had exalted his Christ (whom men thought to be quite destroyed by death) unto so great glory.

The promise of the Spirit for the Spirit which was promised. For he had oftentimes before promised the Spirit to his apostles. Therefore Peter doth signify, that Christ had obtained power of God the Father to fulfill the same. And he maketh mention of the promise in plain words, to the end the *Jews* may know that this came not to pass suddenly, but that the words of the prophet were now verified, which went long time before the thing itself.

Furthermore, whereas it is said that he obtained it of *the Father,* it is to be applied to the person of the Mediator. For both these are truly said, that Christ sent the Spirit from himself and from the Father. He sent him from himself, because he is eternal God; from the Father, because in as much as he is man, he receiveth that of the Father which he giveth us. And Peter speaketh wisely according to the capacity of the ignorant, lest any man should move a question out of season concerning the power of Christ. And surely forasmuch as it is the office of Christ to direct us unto his Father, this is a most apt form of speaking for the use of godliness, that Christ being placed, as it were, in the midst between God and us, doth deliver unto us with his own hand those gifts which he hath received at the hands of his Father. Furthermore, we must note this order that he saith, that the Spirit was sent by Christ after that he was exalted. This agreeth with those sentences:

"The Spirit was not yet given,
because Christ was not yet glorified,"

[124] "Contextus," context.

(John 7:39.)

And again,

"Unless I go hence, the Spirit will not come,"

(John 16:7.)

Not because the Spirit began then first to be given, wherewith the holy fathers were endued since the beginning of the world; but because God did defer this more plentiful abundance of grace, until such time as he had placed Christ in his princely seat; which is signified by this word *poured out,* as we saw a little before. For by this means the force and fruit of Christ his death and resurrection is sealed; and we do also thereby know, that we have lost nothing by Christ his departing out of the world; because, though he be absent in body, yet is he present with us after a better sort, to wit, by the grace of his Holy Spirit.

34. *For doubtless David* Although they might easily gather by the very effect which they saw with their eyes, that the principality was granted and given to Christ, yet to the end his glory may carry the greater credit, he proveth, by David his testimony, that it was so appointed in times past by God, that Christ should be lifted up unto the highest degree of honor. For these words, to "sit at the right hand of God," import as much as to bear the chief rule, as we shall afterward more at large declare. Yet before he reciteth the prophecy, he saith that it agreeth only to Christ. Therefore, to the end the sense may be more manifest, the sentence must thus run. David pronounceth that it was decreed by God that a king should sit at his right hand. But this doth not appertain unto David, who was never extolled unto so great dignity. Therefore lie speaketh this of Christ. Furthermore, that ought to have seemed no strange thing unto the Jews which was foretold by the oracle of the Holy Ghost. Hereby it appeareth in what sense Peter denieth that David ascended into heaven. He intreateth not in this place of the soul of David, whether it were received into blessed rest, and the heavenly dwelling or no; but the ascending into heaven comprehendeth under it those things which Paul teacheth in the Epistle to the Ephesians, (Ephesians 4:9), where he placeth Christ above all heavens, that he may fulfill all things. Wherefore the disputation concerning the estate of the dead is altogether superfluous in this place. For Peter goeth about to prove no other thing but this, that the prophecy concerning the sitting at the right hand of God was not fulfilled in David, and that, therefore, the truth thereof must be sought elsewhere. And forasmuch as it can be found nowhere else save only in Jesus Christ, it resteth that the Jews [125] do know that that is showed to them in Christ which was foretold them so long before. That is true, indeed, that David reigned, God being the author hereof, and, in some respect, he was God's vicegerent; yet not so that he might be above all creatures. Wherefore, this sitting agreeth to none, unless he excel and be above all the whole world.

The Lord said unto my Lord. This is the most lawful manner of ruling,

[125] "Prophetia admoniti," admonished by prophecy, omitted.

when as the king (or by what other title soever he be called) doth know that he is ordained of God, therefore David pronounceth that the commandment to reign was given unto Christ by name, (Psalm 110:1.) As if he should say, He took not the honor to himself rashly, but did only obey God when he commanded him, (Hebrews 5:5.) Now must we see whether Peter's reason be sound enough or no. He gathereth that the words concern Christ, because the sitting at the right hand of God doth not agree to David. It seemeth that this may be refuted, because David did reign by the peculiar commandment, name, and help of God; which is to sit at the right hand of God. But Peter taketh that for a thing which all men grant, which is true, and which I have already touched, that a greater and more royal government is here spoken of than that which David did enjoy. For howsoever he was God's vicegerent and did, as it were, represent his person in reigning, yet is this power far inferior to that, to sit even at the right side of God. For this is attributed to Christ, because he is placed above all principality, and above every name that is named, both in this world, and in the world to come, (Ephesians 1:21.) Seeing that David is far inferior to the angels, he doth possess no such place that he should be counted next to God. For he must ascend far above all heavens, that he may come to the right hand of God. Wherefore no man is said to sit at it, rightly and properly, save only he which doth surpass all creatures in the degree of honor. As for him which is resident amongst the creatures, although he be reckoned in the order of angels, yet is he far from that highness. Again, we must not seek the right hand of God amongst the creatures; but it doth also surpass all heavenly principalities.

Furthermore, there is great weight even in the sentence itself. The king is commanded to bear the chiefest rule, until God have put all his enemies under his feet. Surely, although I grant that; he name of such an honorable sitting may be applied unto earthly lordship: yet do I deny that David did reign until such time as all his enemies were subdued. For we do hereby gather that the kingdom of Christ is eternal. But the kingdom of David was not only temporal, but also frail, and of a small continuance.

Moreover, when David died, he left many enemies alive here and there he got many notable victories, but he was far from subduing all his enemies. He made many of those people which were round about him tributaries to him; some did he put to flight and destroyed; but what is all this unto all? Finally, we may prove by the whole text of the Psalm, that there can nothing else be understood save only the kingdom of Christ. That I may pass over other things: that which is here spoken touching the eternal priesthood is too far disagreeing from David's person. I know that the Jews do prattle, that kings' sons are called elsewhere *cohenim.* But he intreateth here of the priesthood as it is ascribed by Moses to the king Melchizedek. And there is established by a solemn oath a certain new kind of priesthood. And, therefore, we must not here imagine any common or ordinary thing. But it had been wickedness for David to thrust himself into any part of the priest's office.

How should he then be called *cohen,* greater than Aaron, and consecrated of God for ever? But because I do not intend at this present to expound the whole Psalm, let this reason suffice which Peter bringeth: That he is made Lord of heaven and earth, which sitteth at the right hand of God. As touching the second member of the verse, read those things which I have noted upon the fifteenth chapter (1 Corinthians 15:25) of the former Epistle to the Corinthians, concerning the putting of his enemies under his feet.

36. *Therefore, let all the house of Israel know* The house of Israel did confess that that Christ should come which was promised; yet did they not know Who it was. Therefore, Peter concludeth, that Jesus: whom they had so spitefully handled, yea, whose name they did so greatly detest: is he whom they ought to acknowledge to be their Lord, and whom they ought to reverence. For, (saith he,) God hath made him Lord and Christ; that is, you must look for none other than him whom God hath made and given. Furthermore, he saith, That he was made, because God the Father gave him this honor. He joineth the title Lord with the word Christ, because it was a common thing among the Jews, that the Redeemer should be anointed upon this condition, that he might be the Head of the Church, and that the chiefest power over all things might be given him. He speaketh unto the whole house of Israel; as if he should say, Whosoever will be reckoned among the sons of Jacob, and do also look for the promise, let them know for a surety, that this is he and none other. He useth the word *house,* because God had separated that name and family from all other people. And he saith {ασφαλως}, or for a surety, not only that they may repose their sure confidence and trust in Christ, but that he may take away all occasion of doubting from those which do oftentimes willingly doubt even of matters which are certain and sure. In the end of his oration he upbraideth unto them again, that they did crucify him, that being touched with greater grief of conscience, they may desire remedy.

And now, forasmuch as they know that Jesus is the Anointed of the Lord, the governor of the Church, and the giver of the Holy Ghost, the accusation hath so much the more force. For the putting of him to death was not only full of cruelty and wickedness, but also a testimony of outrageous disloyalty against God, of sacrilege and unthankfulness, and, finally, of apostasy. But it was requisite that they should be so wounded, lest they should have been slow to seek for medicine. And yet, notwithstanding, they did not crucify him with their own hands; but this is more than sufficient to make them guilty, in that they desired to have him put to death. And we also are accused by this same voice, if we crucify him in ourselves, being already glorified in heaven, making a mock of him, as saith the Apostle, (Hebrews 6:6.)

Acts 2:37-39

Acts 2:37-39

37. And when they heard these things, they were pricked in heart, and said unto Peter and to the other apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38. Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39. For the promise appertaineth unto you, and unto your children, and unto all which are far off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call.

37. *They were pricked in heart.* Luke doth now declare the fruit of the sermon, to the end we may know that the power of the Holy Ghost was not only showed forth in the diversity of tongues, but also in their hearts which heard. And he noteth a double fruit; first, that they were touched with the feeling of sorrow; and, secondly, that they were obedient to Peter's counsel. This is the beginning of repentance, this is the entrance unto godliness, to be sorry for our sins, and to be wounded with the feeling of our miseries. For so long as men are careless, they cannot take such heed unto doctrine as they ought. And for this cause the word of God is compared to a sword, (Hebrews 4:12,) because it doth mortify our flesh, that we may be offered to God for a sacrifice. But there must be added unto this pricking in heart readiness to obey. Cain and Judas were pricked in heart, but despair did keep them back from submitting themselves unto God, (Genesis 4:13; Matthew 27:3.) For the mind being oppressed with horror, can do nothing else but flee from God. And surely when David affirmeth that a contrite spirit and an humble heart is a sacrifice acceptable to God, he speaketh of voluntary pricking; forasmuch as there is fretting and fuming mixed with the prickings of the wicked. Therefore, we must take a good heart to us, and lift up our mind with this hope of salvation, that we may be ready to addict and give over ourselves unto God, and to follow whatsoever he shall command. We see many oftentimes pricked, who, notwithstanding, do fret and murmur, or else forwardly strive and struggle, and so, consequently, go furiously mad. Yea, this is the cause why they go mad, because they feel such prickings against their will. Those men, therefore, are profitably pricked alone who are willingly sorrowful, and do also seek some remedy at God's hands.

38. *Peter said* Hereby we see that those do never go away empty which ask at the mouth of the Lord, and do offer themselves unto him to be ruled and taught; for that promise must needs be true, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you, (Matthew 7:7.) Therefore, whosoever shall be rightly prepared to learn, the Lord will not suffer his godly desire to be in vain; for he is a most faithful master, so that he hath scholars which are apt to be taught and studious. Wherefore, there is no cause why he should fear, lest he suffer us to be destitute of sound counsel, if we be attentive and ready to hear him, and do not refuse to embrace whatsoever he shall teach us. And let us suffer

ourselves to be governed by the counsel and authority of those men whom he offereth unto us to teach us, for this ready obedience cometh thence so suddenly in those which addict themselves unto the apostles, because they are persuaded that they are sent of God, to show them the way of salvation.

Repent. There is greater force in the Greek word, for it doth signify the conversion of the mind, that the whole man may be renewed and made another man, which thing must be diligently noted, because this doctrine was miserably corrupted in the time of Popery; for they translated the name of repentance almost unto certain external rites. They babble somewhat, indeed, about the reigned contrition of the heart; but they touch that part very slightly, and they stand principally upon the external *exercises* of the body, which were little worth; yea, though there were in them no corruption; but they urge nothing else in a manner but reigned trifles, wherewith men are wearied in vain. Wherefore, let us know that this is the true repentance, when a man is renewed in the spirit of his mind, as Paul teacheth, (Romans 12:2.) Neither need we to doubt of this; but that Peter did preach plainly of the force and nature of repentance; but Luke doth only touch the chief points, and doth not reckon up the words of the oration which he made. We must, therefore, know thus much, that Peter did at the first exhort the Jews unto repentance; and that done, he lifted them up with hope of pardon; for he promised them forgiveness of sins, which two things are the two parts of the gospel, as we know full well; and, therefore, when Christ will briefly teach what the doctrine of the gospel doth contain, he saith, that repentance and remission of sins (Luke 24:47) must be preached in his name. Furthermore, because we are reconciled unto God only by the intercession of Christ's death, neither are our sins otherwise purged, [126] and done away, save only by his blood, therefore, Peter calleth us back unto him by name. He putteth baptism in the fourth place, as the seal whereby the promise of grace is confirmed.

Wherefore, we have in these few words almost the whole sum of Christianity, namely, how a man renouncing himself and taking his farewell of the world, may addict himself wholly to God; secondly, How he may be delivered by free forgiveness of sins, and so adopted into the number of the children of God. And forasmuch as we can obtain none of all these things without Christ, the name of Christ is therewithal set forth unto us, as the only foundation of faith and repentance. And we must also note this, that we do so begin repentance when we are turned unto God, that we must prosecute the same during our life; therefore, this sermon must continually sound in the Church, *repent,* (Mark 1:15;) not that those men may begin the same, who will be counted faithful, and have a place already in the Church; but that they may go forward in the same; although many do usurp the name of faithful men, which had never any beginning of repentance. Wherefore, we must observe this order in teaching, that those which do yet live unto

[126] "Expiantur," expiated.

the world and the flesh may begin to crucify the old man, that they may rise unto newness of life, and that those who are already entered the course of repentance may continually go forward towards the mark. Furthermore, because the inward conversion of the heart ought to bring forth fruits in the life, repentance cannot be rightly taught unless works be required, not those frivolous works which are only in estimation amongst the Papists, but such as are sound testimonies of innocence and holiness.

Be baptized every one of you. Although in the text and order of the words, baptism doth here go before remission of sins, yet doth it follow it in order, because it is nothing else but a sealing of those good things which we have by Christ that they may be established in our consciences; therefore, after that Peter had intreated of repentance, he calleth the Jews unto the hope of grace and salvation; and, therefore, Luke well afterwards, in Paul's sermon, joineth faith and repentance together in the same sense, wherein he putteth forgiveness of sins in this place, and that for good considerations; for the hope of salvation consisteth in the free imputation of righteousness; and we are counted just, freely before God, when he forgiveth us our sins. And as I said before, that the doctrine of repentance hath a daily use in the Church so must we think of the forgiveness of sins, that the same is continually offered unto us; and surely it is no less necessary for us during the whole course of our life, than at our first entrance into the Church, so that it should profit us nothing to be once received into favor by God, unless this embassage should have a continual course; be-reconciled unto God, because

"he which knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him,"
(2 Corinthians 5:20.)

Moreover, the Papists do so corrupt this other part of the gospel, that they quite exclude the remission of sins, which was to be obtained by Christ. They confess their sins are freely forgiven in baptism, but they will have them redeemed with satisfactions after baptism; and although they mix the grace of Christ together therewithal, yet because they inwrap the same in men's merits, they do by this means overthrow the whole doctrine of the gospel; for, first, they take from men's consciences the certainty of faith; that done, forasmuch as they part the forgiveness of sins between the death of Christ and our satisfactions, they do altogether deprive us of Christ's benefit. For Christ doth not reconcile us unto God in part, but wholly, neither can we obtain remission of sins by him, unless it be whole and perfect. But the Papists are much deceived therein, who restrain baptism unto the nativity and former life, as if the signification and force thereof did not reach even unto death.

Let us know, therefore, that forgiveness of sins is grounded in Christ alone, and that we must not think upon any other satisfaction [127] save only that which he hath performed by the sacrifice of his death. And for this cause, as

[127] "Expiatione," expiation.

we have already said, doth Peter express his name, whereby he doth signify unto us, that none of all these things can be rightly taught, unless Christ be set in the midst, to the end the effect of this doctrine may be sought in him. That needeth no long exposition where he commandeth them to be baptized for the remission of sins; for although God hath once reconciled men unto himself in Christ" by not imputing unto them their sins," (2 Corinthians 5:19,) and doth now imprint in our hearts the faith thereof by his Spirit; yet, notwithstanding, because baptism is the seal whereby he doth confirm unto us this benefit, and so, consequently, the earnest and pledge of our adoption, it is worthily said to be given us for the remission of sins. For because we receive Christ's gifts by faith, and baptism is a help to confirm and increase our faith, remission of sins, which is an effect of faith, is annexed unto it as unto the inferior mean. Furthermore, we must not fetch the definition of baptism from this place, because Peter doth only touch a part thereof. Our old man is crucified by baptism, as Paul teacheth, that we may rise unto newness of life, (Romans 6:4, 6.) And, again, we put on Christ himself, (1 Corinthians 12.) and the Scripture teacheth every where, that it is also a sign and token of repentance, (Galatians 3:27.) But because Peter doth not intreat in this place openly of the whole nature of baptism, but speaking of the forgiveness of sins, doth, by the way, declare that the confirmation thereof is in baptism, there doth no inconvenience follow, if ye do omit the other part. [128]

In the name of Christ. Although baptism be no vain figure, but a true and effectual testimony; notwithstanding, lest any man attribute that unto the element of water which is there offered, the name of Christ is plainly expressed, to the end we may know that it shall be a profitable sign for us then, if we seek the force and effect thereof in Christ, and know that we are, therefore, washed in baptism, because the blood of Christ is our washing; and we do also hereby gather, that Christ is, the mark and end whereunto baptism directeth us; wherefore, every one profiteth so much in baptism as he learneth to look unto Christ. But here ariseth a question, Whether it were lawful for Peter to change the form prescribed by Christ? The Papists do think, at least feign so, and thence do they take a color of liberty to change or abrogate the institutions of Christ. They confess that nothing ought to be changed, as touching the substance, but they will have the Church to have liberty to change whatsoever it will in the form. But this argument may easily be answered. For we must first know that Christ did not indite and rehearse unto his apostles magical words for enchanting, as the Papists do dream, but he did, in few words, comprehend the sum of the mystery. Again, I deny that Peter doth speak in this place of the form of baptism; but he doth simply declare that the whole strength [129] of baptism is contained in

[128] "Nihil absurdi est si partem alteram praetereat," there is no absurdity, there is nothing strange, in his omitting the other part.

[129] "Virtutem," virtue or efficacy.

Christ; although Christ cannot be laid hold on by faith without the Father by whom he was given us, and the Spirit by the which he reneweth and sanctifieth us. The answer consisteth wholly in this, that he intreateth not in this place of the certain form of baptizing, but the faithful are called back unto Christ, in whom alone we have whatsoever baptism doth prefigure unto us; for we are both made clean by his blood, and also we enter into a new life by the benefit of his death and resurrection.

Ye shall receive the gift of the Spirit. Because they were touched with wondering when they saw the apostles suddenly begin to speak with strange tongues, Peter saith that they shall be partakers of the same gift if they will pass over unto Christ. Remission of sins and newness of life were the principal things, and this was, as it were, an addition, that Christ should show forth unto them his power by some visible gift. Neither ought this place to be understood of the grace of sanctification, which is given generally to all the godly. Therefore he promiseth them the gift of the Spirit, whereof they saw a pattern in the diversity of tongues. Therefore this doth not properly appertain unto us. For because Christ meant to set forth the beginning of his kingdom with those miracles, they lasted but for a time; yet because the visible graces which the Lord did distribute to his did shoe, as it were in a glass, that Christ was the giver of the Spirit, therefore, that which Peter saith doth in some respect appertain unto all the whole Church: ye shall receive the gift of the Spirit. For although we do not receive it, that we may speak with tongues, that we may be prophets, that we may cure the sick, that we may work miracles; yet is it given us for a better use, that we may believe with the heart unto righteousness, that our tongues may be framed unto true confession, (Romans 10:10,) that we may pass from death to life, (John 5:24) that we, which are poor and empty, may be made rich, that we may withstand Satan and the world stoutly. Therefore, the grace of the Spirit shall always be annexed unto baptism, unless the let be in ourselves.

39. *For the promise appertaineth unto you.* It was requisite that this should be expressly added, that the Jews might certainly think and persuade themselves that the grace of Christ did belong as well to them as to the apostles. And Peter proveth it thus, because the promise of God was made unto them. For we must always look unto this, because [that] we cannot otherwise know the will of God save only by his word. But it is not sufficient to have the general word, unless we know that the same is appointed for us. Therefore Peter saith, that those benefits which they see in him and his fellows in office were in times past promised to the Jews; because this is required necessarily for the certainty of faith, that every one be fully persuaded of this, that he is comprehended in the number of those unto whom God speaketh. Finally, this is the rule of a true faith, when I am thus persuaded that salvation is mine, because that promise appertaineth unto me which offereth the same. And hereby we have also a greater confirmation, when as the promise is extended unto those who were before afar off. For

God had made the covenant with the Jews, (Exodus 4:22.) If the force and fruit thereof come also unto the Gentiles, there is no cause why the Jews should doubt of themselves, but that they shall find the promise of God firm and stable.

And we must note these three degrees, that the promise was first made to the Jews, and then to their children, and last of all, that it is also to be imparted to the Gentiles. We know the reason why the Jews are preferred before other people; for they are, as it were, the first begotten in God's family, yea, they were then separated from other people by a singular privilege. Therefore Peter observeth a good order, when he giveth the Jews the pre-eminence. Whereas he adjoineth their children unto them, it dependeth upon the words of the promise: I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee, (Genesis 17:7,) where God doth reckon the children with the fathers in the grace of adoption.

This place, therefore, doth abundantly refute the manifest error of the Anabaptists, which will not have infants, which are the children of the faithful, to be baptized, as if they were not members of the Church. They espy a starting hole in the allegorical sense, [130] and they expound it thus, that by children are meant those which are spiritually begotten. But this gross impudency doth nothing help them. It is plain and evident that Peter spoke thus because God did adopt one nation peculiarly. And circumcision did declare that the right of adoption was common even unto infants. Therefore, even as God made his covenant with Isaac, being as yet unborn, because he was the seed of Abraham, so Peter teacheth, that all the children of the Jews are contained in the same covenant, because this promise is always in force, I will be the God of your seed.

And to those which are afar off. The Gentiles are named in the last place, which were before strangers. For those which refer it unto those Jews which were exiled afar off, (and driven) into far countries, they are greatly deceived. For he speaketh not in this place of the distance of place; but he noteth a difference between the *Jews* and the Gentiles, that they were first joined to God by reason of the covenant, and so, consequently, became of his family or household; but the Gentiles were banished from his kingdom. Paul useth the same speech in the second chapter to Ephesians, (Ephesians 2:11,) that the Gentiles, which were strangers from the promises, are now drawn near, through Jesus Christ, unto God. Because that Christ (the wall of separation being taken away) hath reconciled both (the Jews and Gentiles) unto the Father, and coming, he hath preached peace unto those which were nigh at hand, and which were afar off. Now we understand Peter's meaning. For to the end he may amplify the grace of Christ, he doth so offer the same unto the Jews, that he saith the Gentiles are also partakers thereof. And therefore he useth this word *call,* as if he should say: Like as God hath gathered you

[130] "Effugium in allegorico sensu captant," they attempt evasion by giving an allegorical meaning.

together into one peculiar people heretofore by his voice, so the same voice shall sound everywhere, that those which are afar off may come and join themselves unto you, when as they shall be called by a new proclamation.

Acts 2:40-42

Acts 2:40-42

40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Be ye saved from this froward generation. 41. Those, therefore, which willingly embraced his words were baptized: and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42. And they continued in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers.

40. *And with many* Although in these things which we have had hitherto, Luke did not recite the words of St Peter, but did only briefly touch the chief points; notwithstanding he telleth us again in this place, that Peter did not use doctrine only, but did add the pricks of exhortations. And he expresseth plainly that tie stood much [131] hereupon. Whereas he saith, that he did exhort and beseech, he noteth therein his earnestness. For it was not so easy a matter for them by and by [132] to take their leave of those errors wherewith they were of late infected, and to shake off the government of the priests whereunto they were accustomed. Therefore it stood him upon to pull them violently out of this mire. The sum was this, that they should beware of that froward generation. For they could not be Christ's unless they would depart from his professed enemies. The priests and scribes were then in great authority, and forasmuch as they did cover themselves under the visor [mask] of the Church, they did deceive the simple, this did hinder and keep back a great many from coming to Christ. Also some might waver, and other some might fall away from the right faith. Therefore Peter plainly declareth that they are a froward generation, howsoever they may boast of the title of the Church. For which cause he commandeth his hearers to separate themselves from them, lest they entangle themselves in their wicked and pestiferous fellowship. Whereas he saith, Be ye saved, he signifieth unto them that they shall surely perish if they couple themselves with such a plague. And surely experience doth teach us, how miserably those men are tossed to and fro who cannot discern the voice of their pastor from the voice of other men; [133] and again, what an hindrance softness and sluggishness is to a great many, whilst they desire to stand in a doubt. [134] Therefore he commandeth them to depart from the wicked if they will be saved. And this point of doctrine is not to be neglected. For it were not sufficient to have Christ set before us, unless we were also taught to flee those things

[131] "Multum institisse." insisted much.
[132] "Protinus," forthwith.
[133] "Alienorum," of strangers or aliens.
[134] "Medii stare," to hold a middle course, remain undecided.

which do lead us away from him. And it is the duty of a good shepherd to defend his sheep from the wolves. So at this day, to the end we may keep the people in the sincere doctrine of the gospel, we are ever now and then enforced to show and testify how much Papistry differeth from Christianity, and what a hurtful plague it is to be yoked with the unfaithful enemies of Christ. Neither ought Peter to be accused of railing, because he calleth the reverend otthers, who had the government of the Church [135] in their hands at that day, a *froward generation* For those dangers which may draw the soul unto destruction are to be showed by their names. For men will not beware of poison, unless they know that it is poison.

41. *They, therefore, which willingly.* Luke showeth more plainly how fruitful this one sermon which Peter made was: to wit, that it gained unto Christ about three thousand men. And therewithal he declareth the nature and force of faith when he saith, that with a prompt and ready [136] mind they embraced his word. Therefore, faith must begin with this readiness and willing desire to obey. And because many do show themselves at the first very willing, who afterward have in themselves no constancy or continuance, lest we should think that it was some sudden pang [137] which by and by fell away, Luke doth also afterward commend their constancy, who (as he said) did willingly embrace this word of the apostles, showing that they were joined unto the disciples, or that they were engrafted into the same body, and that they continued in their doctrine. Therefore we must neither be slow to obey, nor yet swift to leap back; but we must stick fast, and stand stoutly to that doctrine which we did forthwith (without any tarriance [delay]) embrace. Furthermore, this example ought to make us not a little ashamed. For whereas there was a great multitude converted unto Christ with one sermon, an hundred sermons can scarce move a few of us; and whereas Luke saith that they continued, there is scarce one amongst ten that doth show even a mean desire to profit and go forward, yea, rather, the more part doth soon loathe our doctrine. Woe be, therefore, to the sluggishness and lightness of the world!

42. *In their doctrine* Luke doth not only commend in them the constancy of faith or of godliness, but he saith, also, that they did constantly give themselves to those exercises which serve to the confirmation of faith; to wit, that they studied continually to profit by hearing the apostles; that they gave themselves much to prayer; that they did use fellowship and breaking of bread very much.

As touching prayer and doctrine the sense is plain. Communication or fellowship, and breaking of bread, may be taken diversely. Some think that breaking of bread doth signify the Lord's Supper; other some do think that it signifieth alms; other some that the faithful did banquet together [138] among

[135] "Ordinarium Ecclesiae regimen," the ordinary government of the Church.
[136] "Ililari," cheerful.
[137] "Impetum," impulse.
[138] "Communiter," in common.

themselves. Some do think that {κοινωνια}, doth signify the celebrating of the Holy Supper; but I do rather agree to those others who think that the same is meant by the breaking of bread. For {κοινωνια}, unless it have somewhat added unto it, is never found in this sense; therefore, I do rather refer it unto mutual society and fellowship, unto alms, and unto other duties of brotherly fellowship. And my reason why I would rather have breaking of bread to be understood of the Lord's Supper in this place is this, because Luke doth reckon up those things wherein the public estate of the Church is contained. Yea, he expresseth in this place four marks whereby the true and natural face of the Church may be judged. Do we then seek the true Church of Christ? The image thereof is lively depainted and set forth [139] unto us in this place. And he beginneth with doctrine which is, as it were, the soul of the Church. Neither doth he name all manner of doctrine, but the doctrine of the apostles, that is, that which the Son of God had delivered by their hands. Therefore, wheresoever the pure voice of the gospel doth sound, where men continue in the profession thereof, where they exercise themselves in hearing the same ordinarily that they may profit, without all doubt there is the Church.

Hereby we may easily gather how frivolous the boasting of the Papists is, whilst that they carelessly [140] thunder out with fall mouth the name of the Church; whereas, notwithstanding, they have most filthily corrupted the doctrine of the apostles. For if it be duly examined, we shall find no sound part at all; and in most points they do as much dissent from the same, and have as little agreement therewith as light with darkness. The rule of worshipping God, which ought to be fetched out of the pure Word of God alone, is only made and patched together [141] amongst the Papists, of the superstitious inventions of men. They have translated unto the merits of works the hope of salvation, which ought to have rested in Christ alone. The invocation of God is altogether polluted with innumerable profane dotings of men. Finally, whatsoever is heard amongst them, it is either a deforming of the apostles' doctrine, or else a clear overthrowing (and destroying) of the same. Therefore, we may as easily refute the foolish arrogancy of the Papists, as they can cloak their dealings with the title of the Church. For this shall be the state, [142] whether they have retained the purity of doctrine, from which they are as far as hell is from heaven. But they are wise enough in that point, because they will have no controversy moved about doctrine. But we, as I have said, may freely contemn that vain visor, [mask,] forasmuch as the Spirit of God doth pronounce that the Church is principally to be (esteemed and) discerned by this mark, if the simplicity or purity of the doctrine delivered by the apostles do flourish (and be of force) in the same.

In fellowship. This member and the last do flow from the first, as fruits

[139] "Ad vivum depicta," painted to the life.
[140] "Secure," confidently.
[141] "Conflata est," compounded.
[142] "Hic enim erit status," for the state (of the question) shall be.

or effects. For doctrine is the bond of brotherly fellowship amongst us, and doth also set open unto us the gate unto God, that we may call upon him. And the Supper is added unto doctrine instead of a confirmation. Wherefore, Luke doth not in vain reckon up these four things, when as he will describe unto us the well-ordered state of the Church. And we must endeavor to keep and observe this order, if we will be truly judged to be the Church before God and the angels, and not only to make boast of the name [143] thereof amongst men. It is certain that he speaketh of public prayer. And for this cause it is not sufficient for men to make their prayers at home by themselves, unless they meet altogether to pray; wherein consisteth also the profession of faith.

Acts 2:43-45

Acts 2:43-45

43. And there came fear upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were wrought by the apostles. 44. And all those which believed were joined together, and had all things common. 45. And they sold their possessions and substance, and did part them to all men, as every man had need.

43. *And there came.* He signifieth unto us that the show and sight of the Church was such, that it made others afraid which did not consent unto [its] doctrine; and that was done for the preserving and furthering of the Church. When there ariseth any seen all men set themselves stoutly against the same; and as novelty is odious, the Jews would never have suffered the Church of Christ to stand one minute of an hour, [144] unless the Lord had restrained them with fear as with a bridle. Furthermore, Luke noteth the manner of fear, that it was no such fear as bringeth men unto the obedience of Christ, but such as causeth men to stand in a doubt, and so, consequently, doth, as it were, so bind them hand and foot, [145] that they dare not hinder the Lord's work. Like as there be some at this day who will willingly be ignorant of the gospel; or, at least, are so holden [146] with the cares of this world, that they cannot thoroughly join themselves unto Christ; and yet they are not so hard-hearted but that they confess that the truth is on our side; and, therefore, they rest, as it were, in the middle way, neither do they favor the cruelty of the wicked, because they are afraid to strive against God. And whereas he saith, *Every soul,* he speaketh thus by *synecdoche.* For it is certain that many did contemn the hand of God, and that other some were stricken with no great fear, but that they did furiously rage together against the Church. [147] But Luke's meaning was this, that there appeared such power of God in

[143] "Inane…nomen," the empty name.

[144] "Momentum," moment.

[145] "Sed qui suspensos tenet adeoque constrictos," but which keeps them in suspense and restrained.

[146] "Impliciti," entangled.

[147] "Alios nullo metu fuisse deterritos quin furiose adversus Ecclesiam saevirent," that

the Church, that the people for the most part had not one word to say. [148]

And many wonders. This member serveth also to the showing of the cause. For the miracles served to make them afraid, together with other works of God, although this was not the only reason, but one of many, why they were afraid to set themselves against God, who was on that side, as they did gather by the miracles; whence we gather that they are not only profitable for this to bring men to God, [149] but also to make the wicked somewhat more gentle, and that they may tame their furiousness. Pharaoh was a man of desperate stubbornness, (Exodus 8:8, etc. 19,) and yet we see how miracles do sometimes pierce his obstinate heart. He forgetteth them by and by; but when the hand of God is heavy upon him, he is compelled through fear to yield. To be brief, Luke teacheth that the Jews were by this means kept back, that the Church, which might easily have been destroyed, might have got up her head. [150] Which thing we have oftentimes tried [151] even in our time. And he doth not only declare that they were bridled with fear, lest they should be so bold as to attempt so much as they lusted to do hurt to the Church, but that they were also humbled with reverence to the glory of the gospel.

44. *And all* Whereas I have translated it *joined together,* it is word for word in St Luke, *Into the same, or into one,* which may be expounded of the place; as if he should have said that they were wont to dwell together in one place. Notwithstanding, I had rather understand it of their consent (and agreement;) as he will say in the fourth chapter, "That they had one heart," (Acts 4:32.) And so he goeth forward orderly, when, as he beginneth with their mind, he addeth afterward their bountifulness, as a fruit proceeding thence. Therefore, he giveth us to understand that they were rightly joined together with brotherly love amongst themselves, and that they did indeed declare the same, because the rich men did sell their goods that they might help the poor. And this is a singular example of love, and therefore doth Luke record the same, to the end we may know that we must relieve the poverty of our brethren with our plenty.

But this place hath need of a sound exposition, because of fantastical [fanatical] spirits, which do feign a commonalty or participation together of goods, whereby all policy or civil government is taken away; as in this age the Anabaptists have raged, because they thought there was no Church unless all men's goods were put and gathered together, as it were, in one heap, that they might all one with another take thereof. Wherefore, we must in this point beware of two extremes. For many, under color of policy, do keep close and conceal whatsoever they have; they defraud the poor, and they think that they are twice righteous, so they take away no other men's goods. Other

others were not deterred by any fear from raging against the Church.

[148] "Obmuteceret," stood dumb.

[149] "In obsequium Dei," into obedience to God.

[150] "Emergeret," might emerge, or raise her head.

[151] "Subinde sumus experti," have ever and anon experienced.

some are carried into the contrary error, because they would have all things confused. But what doth Luke? Surely he noteth another order, when he saith that there was choice made in the distribution. If any man object that no man had any thing which was his own, seeing all things were common, we may easily answer. For this community or participation together must be restrained unto the circumstance which ensueth immediately; to wit, that the poor might be relieved as every man had need. We know the old proverb, "All things are common amongst friends." When as the scholars of Pythagoras said thus, they did not deny but that every man might govern his own house privately, neither did they intend to make their own wives common; so this having of things common, whereof Luke speaketh, and which he commendeth, doth not take away household government; which thing shall better appear by the fourth chapter, whereas he nameth two alone which sold their possessions of so many thousands. Whence we gather that which I said even now, that they brought forth and made common their goods in no other respect, save only that they might relieve the present necessity. And the impudency of the monks was ridiculous, who did profess that they did observe the apostles' rule, because they call nothing their own; and yet, nevertheless, they neither sell any thing, neither yet do they pass for any man's poverty; [152] but they stuff their idle bellies with the blood of the poor, neither do they regard any other thing in their having of things common, save only that they may be well filled and daintily, although all the whole world be hungry. Wherein, then, are they like to the first disciples, with whom they will be thought to be able to compare? [153]

Acts 2:46-47

Acts 2:46-47

46. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart, 47. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added daily unto the congregation those which should be saved.

46. *Continuing in the temple* We must note that they did frequent the temple for this cause, because there was more opportunity and occasion offered there to further the gospel. Neither were they drawn with the holiness of the place, seeing they knew that the shadows of the law were ceased; neither meant they to draw others by their example to have the temple in any such reverence; [154] but because there was there great concourse of people, who having laid aside their private cares, wherewith they had been drawn away elsewhere, [155] did seek the Lord; they were continually in the temple,

[152] "Nec solliciti sunt si quisquam egeat," nor are solicitous if any man want.

[153] "Quorum aemuli haberi volunt," whose rivals they would be thought.

[154] "Ad templi cultum," to worship the temple.

[155] "Quibus alibi magis distracti fuissent," with which elsewhere they might have been more distracted.

that they might gain such unto Christ. There might be another reason which might induce them hereunto, that they might have a mutual conference and imparting of doctrine amongst themselves, which they could not have done so conveniently in a private house, especially seeing they were so, many.

Breaking bread from house to house. Luke signifieth unto us, that they did not only show some token of true godliness publicly, but that the course and tenor of their private life was alone in that respect. For whereas some do think that in this place, by breaking of bread is meant the Holy Supper, it seemeth to me that Luke meant no such thing. He signifieth, therefore, unto us, that they used to eat together, and that thriftily. [156] For those which make sumptuous banquets do not eat their meat together so familiarly. Again, Luke addeth, *in singleness of heart;* which is also a token of temperance. In sum, his meaning is to declare, that their manner of living was brotherly and sober. Some do join simplicity and gladness with the praise of God; and both texts may well be allowed. [157] But because there can be no singleness of heart in praising God, unless the stone be also in all parts of the life, therefore it is certain, that there is mention made thereof in this sense, that the faithful did always use the same in all places. [158] And we must also note the circumstance of time, that, being environed and beset with many dangers, they were merry and joyful. The knowledge of God's love toward us, and the hope of his protection, do bring us this goodness with them, that we praise God with quiet minds, whatsoever the world doth threaten. And as Luke spoke a little before of the public estate of the Church, so he declareth now what form and manner of life the faithful did use; that we may learn by their example a thrifty fellowship in our manner of living, and in all our whole life to embrace singleness, to enjoy the spiritual joy, and to exercise ourselves in the praises of God. Furthermore, the singleness of heart reacheth far; but if you join it in this place with breaking of bread, it shall signify as much as sincere love, where one man dealeth plainly with another, neither doth any man craftily hunt after his own profit. Yet had I rather set the same against that carefulness, wherewith worldly men [159] do too much torment themselves. For when as we do not cast our care upon the Lord, this reward hangeth over our heads, that we tremble and quake even when we take our rest.

47. *Having favor.* This is the fruit of an innocent life, to find favor even amongst strangers. And yet we need not to doubt of this, but that they were hated of many. But although he speak generally of the people, yet he meaneth that part alone which was sound, neither yet infected with any poison of hatred; he signifieth briefly, that the faithful did so behave themselves, that the people did full well like of them for their innocency of

[156] "Frugaliter," frugally.
[157] "Et probabilis est uterque contextus," and the context makes this probable.
[158] "Eam ubique coluerunt," did cultivate it everywhere.
[159] "Providi homines," the provident, or over careful.

life. [160]

The Lord added daily. He showeth in these words that their diligence was not without profit; they studied so much as in them lay to gather into the Lord's sheepfold those which wandered and went astray. He saith that their labor bestowed herein was not lost; because the Lord did increase his Church daily. And surely, whereas the Church is rather diminished than increased, that is to be imputed to our slothfulness, or rather forwardness. [161] And although they did all of them stoutly labor to increase the kingdom of Christ, yet Luke ascribeth [162] this honor to God alone, that he brought strangers into the Church. And surely this is his own proper work. For the ministers do no good by planting or watering, unless he make their labor effectual by the power of his Spirit, (1 Corinthians 3.) Furthermore, we must note that he saith, that those were gathered unto the Church which should be saved. For he teacheth that this is the means to attain salvation, if we be incorporate into the Church. For like as there is no remission of sins, so neither is there any hope of salvation. [163] Furthermore, this is an excellent comfort for all the godly, that they were received into the Church that they might be saved; as the Gospel is called the power of God unto salvation to all that believe, (Romans 1:16.) Now, forasmuch as God doth gather only a part, or a certain number, this grace is restrained unto election, that it may be the first cause of our salvation.

[160] "Populo grati atque probati essent," that they were agreeable to, and approved by, the people.

[161] "Praxitati," wickedness.

[162] "Vendicat," claimeth.

[163] "Extra eam," out of it, (the Church,) omitted.

Chapter 3

CHAPTER 3

Acts 3:1-11

Acts 3:1-11

1. Now, [or almost at that time,] Peter and John went up together into the temple, about the ninth hour of prayer. 2. Furthermore, a certain man, which was lame from his mother's womb, was carried; whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, that he might ask alms of those which entered into the temple. 3. When he saw Peter and John draw near to the temple, he asked an alms. 4. And Peter, beholding him earnestly with John, said, Look on us. 5. And he gave heed unto them, thinking that he should receive somewhat of them. 6. And Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk. 7. And when he had taken him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. 8. And leaping up he stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9. And all the people saw him walking, and praising God. 10. And they knew him, that it was he which was wont to sit for the alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple. And they were filled with wondering, and were astonied at that thing which was come unto him. 11. Moreover, when the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran amazed unto them, into the Porch which is called Solomon's.

1. We saw before that many signs were showed by the hands of the apostles; now Luke reciteth one of many for example's sake, after his common custom; namely, that a lame man, which was lame of his feet from his mother's womb, was perfectly restored to his limbs. And he doth diligently gather all the circumstances which serve to set forth the miracle. If it had been that his legs had been out of joint, or if it had been some disease coming by some casualty, it might have been the more easily cured. But the default of nature [164] could not have been so easily redressed. When as he saith that he was carried, we gather thereby that it was no light halting, but that this man did lie as if his legs had been dead. Forasmuch as he was wont daily to ask alms, hereby all the people might the better know him. In that being healed, he walked in the temple at the time of prayer, this served to

[164] "Naturae autem vitium," but a natural defect.

spread abroad the fame of the miracle. Furthermore, this doth not a little set forth the same, that being lifted up and set upon his feet, he leapeth up therewithal, and walketh joyfully.

Went up together Because these words, {επι} {το} {αυτο}, doth no more signify place than time, this latter sense seemeth better to agree with the text of Peter, yet, because it is of no great importance, I leave it indifferent. That it is called the ninth hour of prayer, when as the day began to draw towards night. [165] For seeing the day from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof had twelve hours, as I have said elsewhere, all that time was divided into four parts. So that by the ninth is meant the last portion of the day; as the first hour did continue unto the third, the third unto the sixth, the sixth unto the ninth. Hence may we gather, by a probable conjecture, that that hour was appointed for the evening sacrifice. Furthermore, if any man ask, whether the apostles went up into the temple that they might pray according to the rite of the law, I do not think that that is a thing so likely to be true, as that they might have better opportunity to spread abroad the gospel. And if any man will abuse this place, as if it were lawful for us to use and take up superstitious worshippings, whilst that we are conversant amongst the ignorant and weak, his reason shall be frivolous. The Lord appointed that the Jews should offer sacrifice morning and evening, (Exodus 29:41.) By this exercise were they taught to begin and end the day with calling upon the name of God, and with worshipping him, [166] (Numbers 28:2.) Therefore Peter and John might freely come into the temple, which was consecrated to God; neither did they pollute themselves, seeing they called upon the God of Israel, that they might thereby declare their godliness. First, in that the Lord would have the older people to observe the appointed hours, [167] we gather thereby that the Church cannot be without certain discipline. And even at this day, were it profitable for us to have such meetings daily, unless our too [too] much sluggishness did let us. And whereas the apostles go up at that hour, hereby we gather that we must foreslow [neglect] no opportunity that is offered us for the furtherance of the gospel.

3. *He asketh an alms.* We see how God restored this lame man to his limbs contrary to his expectation. Because he thought that his disease was incurable, he was only careful for maintenance. That is given him which he durst never have asked. In like sort God doth oftentimes prevent us, neither doth he stay until he be provoked. [168] And hence can we not gather any occasion of slothfulness, as if the Lord did therefore meet us of his own accord, that being idle and slothful we may suffer the Lord to do good unto us. For we are commanded to pray, and therefore let us not foreslow [neglect] our duty. [169] But, first of all, under the person of the lame man, we have set

[165] "Ad vesperum," towards evening.
[166] "Ab invocatione et cultu Dei," with invocation and worship of God.
[167] "Statas horas," stated hours.
[168] "A nobis povocetur," until he is urged by us.
[169] "Partes nostras non omittamus," let us not omit our part.

before us an example of a man that is not yet illuminated by faith, that he may know how to pray aright. Such doth God prevent, as it is needful, even of his own accord. Therefore, when as he restoreth our souls not only to health, but also to life, he himself is to himself the cause hereof. For this is the beginning of our calling, that he may make those things to be which are not; that he may show himself unto those who seek not after him, (Romans 4:17.) Furthermore, howsoever we be already taught by faith to pray unto God, yet, because we do not always feel our miseries, it cometh not into our mind to seek for remedy; therefore the Lord bringeth the same freely and unlooked for. Finally, howsoever we be bent to pray, yet doth he exceed our hope and petitions with his goodness.

4. *Look upon us.* Peter doth not thus speak before he be certain of the purpose and intent of God. And surely in these words he commandeth him to hope for some singular and unwonted benefit; yet here may a question be moved, whether they had power to work miracles so often as they would? I answer, that they were ministers of God's power in such sort, that they did attempt nothing of their own will or proper motion, but the Lord wrought by them, when he knew that it was expedient it should be so. Hereby it came to pass that they healed one and not all. Therefore, as in other things, they had the Spirit of God to be their guide and director, so also in this point. Therefore, before such time as Peter commandeth the lame man to arise, he did east and fasten his eyes upon him; this steadfast looking upon him was not without some peculiar motion of the Spirit. Hereby it cometh to pass that he speaketh so surely (and safely, without all fear) of the miracle. Furthermore, he meant by this word to provoke the lame man to receive the grace of God; yet doth he look for nothing but for an alms.

6. *Silver and gold.* Peter doth truly excuse himself, that he doth want that help which the lame man did require. And therefore doth he declare, that if he were able to relieve his poverty he would willingly do it; like as every man ought to consider with himself what the Lord hath given him, that he may therewith help his neighbors. For what store soever God giveth to every man, he will have the same to be an instrument and help to exercise love. Therefore he saith, that he giveth that which he hath. This was at the first a trick of mockage, [170] in that Peter beginneth to speak of his poverty, after that he had brought the lame man into a rare hope, as if he meant to mock a gaping crow; but he comforteth him immediately, to the end the miracle might be had in greater estimation by the comparison. That is horrible wickedness, in that the Pope, when as he is created, doth most unshamefastly [shamelessly] abuse this place, making thereof a comical, or rather a scoffing play. There be two cells, or places made of stone, in the one whereof when he sitteth, and the people ask an alms, using these words of Peter, he casteth abroad crosses in the air with his fingers. When he is brought into the next tell, or place, he hath bags full of money. Then his

[170] "Principio quidem erat hoc clusorium," at first, indeed, this was illusory.

angels cry unto him,

"He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor,"
(Psalm 112:9.)

I have made mention hereof, to the end all men may see that Satan doth questionless reign there, where they do so manifestly mock the sacred Word of God. And to the end I may return unto the former sentence, it is evident enough that Peter was instructed by a certain and sure revelation, when as he saith that he hath the gift of healing.

In the name of Jesus. He saith that this is the work and benefit of Christ, that he restoreth to the cripple the use of his feet, for *name* is taken for power and empire, or government. Neither must we dream that there is any magical force in the sounding or pronouncing of the word, as the Jews do dote about the word Jehovah. To be short, Peter meant to declare that he was nothing but a minister, and that Christ was the author of the miracle. For this ought to have been, and was his care, that Christ might be made known unto the world, and that his name might be sanctified. But why doth he give Christ this epithet, or title, *of Nazareth?* I leave to other men their own judgment; but I think thus: Forasmuch as Christ was thus called in contempt, Peter meant of set purpose to express that that Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified, and whose name was despised and without glory amongst the Jews, and was to the most of them detestable, was nevertheless the Messias promised of God, and that all power was given unto him of the rather; as Paul saith, that he preacheth Christ and him crucified, (1 Corinthians 2:2.)

Arise and walk. This might seem to be a very ridiculous thing. For the cripple might have readily objected, Why hast thou not first given me legs and feet? For this is a plain mock, when as thou biddest a man without feet to go. But he believed Peter's words; and he, which was at the first so slow, doth now with a ready and joyful mind embrace God's benefit. Whereby appeareth both the force of the word, and also the fruit of faith. The force of the word is double, both in that the cripple is so touched that he doth forthwith obey without delay; and in that it giveth strength to his dead members, and doth, after a sort, renew the man. And faith also hath her reward, in that the cripple obeyeth him which commandeth him to rise not in vain. Therefore we see how God worketh by his Word, to wit, when he giveth success to the preaching thereof, that it may pierce into the minds of men; secondly, when he giveth those things with his hand which are promised there. Moreover, he suffereth not faith to be void, but she doth indeed truly enjoy all those good things which she looketh for, and which are offered unto her in the same Word. And we must remember that which I have already said, that we have in this history a type [171] or figure of our spiritual restoring; namely, that as the Word, laid hold on by faith, did restore the cripple to his limbs, so the Lord pierceth into our souls by the Word, that he may restore

[171] "Universalem typum," universal type.

the same. And, first of all, he speaketh by man's mouth, and pricketh us forward by the obedience of faith; that done, he moveth our hearts inwardly by his Spirit, that the Word may take lively root in us; finally, he reacheth out his hand, and by all means he finisheth his work in us. We gather out of Matthew that miracles must be thus handled.

9. *And all the people saw.* He beginneth now to declare the fruit of the miracle, to wit, that the cripple began to show his thankfulness by praising God, and that all the people were brought into great wondering. And here is a double fruit. For he which was healed doth acknowledge and set forth the benefit of God; on the other side, the people is moved, and the fame is spread abroad, many come to see it. And whereas Luke saith that they were filled with wondering, it doth only declare a preparation, which a more full proceeding [172] (and going forward) did at length follow. For it was necessary that they should go forward, because this their wondering had served to no end of itself, but did rather make them astonied and amazed, than bring them (from their own proceedings) unto God.

Therefore it was, as it were, the foundation of the building which was to come, in that the people was touched with amazedness. For if we pass over the works of God contemptibly or carelessly, we shall never be able to profit by them. Furthermore, this place doth teach us what miracles do work of themselves in men; to wit, that they breed a confused amazedness. For although the Lord doth call us straightway unto himself, by showing plainly his goodness and power there, yet such is the weakness of our nature, that we stumble or faint in the midway, until such time as we be holpen by doctrine.

Let us, therefore, learn reverently to consider the works of God, that the wondering at them may make an entrance for doctrine. For when doctrine is cold and unprofitable with us, God doth justly punish our unthankfulness by this means, because we have despised the glory of his works. Again, because we are not so quick of sight, that we can see so much in the works of God alone, as is sufficient, let us learn to join therewithal the help of doctrine. [173] To be brief, the one ought not to be separated from the other. Which thing experience doth sufficiently teach us. For hereby it came to pass that the world did so wickedly abuse miracles.

The Papists do object unto us miracles again and again. Let us suppose that they be true, whereof they make such boast, yet do they greatly err in this, that they wrest them to a wrong end; to wit, that they may darken the name of God, and infect the pure truth of the gospel with their inventions. For whence come so many superstitious worshippings of saints, save only from the abuse of miracles? For when any miracle is wrought, men must needs be moved. And because they are deaf when they should hear the Word, and do not mark what God cloth mean, Satan doth craftily take an occasion

[172] "Profectus," progress, or profiting.

[173] "Si volumus ad scopum pervenire," if we would attain to the mark, omitted.

of superstition by our amazedness. [174] As, for example, I will acknowledge the power of God in a miracle. If it were wrought by Peter, Satan will by and by put this in my head, and will say thus: [175] Dost thou not see that this is a man of God? [176] therefore thou dost owe unto him divine honor. The same thing had befallen the Jews when they were amazed, unless Peter's sermon had called them back into the right way. But in Popery, where none did call them back or reprove them, [177] the preposterous wondering of men did easily get the upper hand. Wherefore, we must so much the more [178] seek for medicine out of the Word, that doctrine may direct us unto the right end, being lifted up [179] with the miracles.

11. *In the porch.* It is like that there was a porch built in that place where Solomon's porch was sometimes, and that it took the name therefrom. For the old temple was pulled down, but Zerubbabel and Ezra, ill the re-edifying and new building of the same temple, had imitated the same, so nigh as they could possibly devise. Afterward Herod renewed the same, and made it far more gorgeous, but that vain cost which he had bestowed had not yet blotted out the remembrance of Solomon in the hearts of the people. And Luke nameth the same as a most famous place, whereunto the people ran together (by heaps, to celebrate their feasts unto God at the times appointed.)

Acts 3:12-16

Acts 3:12-16

12. And when Peter saw that, he made answer unto the people, Men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so steadfastly on us, as if by our own power or godliness we have made this man walk? 13. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye have delivered, and whom ye have denied before the face of Pilate, when he had judged him to be loosed. 14. But ye have denied the holy, the just, and have desired to have a murderer given you. 15. But ye have murdered the Prince of life: whom God hath raised up from the dead; whereof we are witnesses: and in the faith of his name, his name hath strengthened this man, whom ye have seen and known. 16. And the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in presence of you all.

12. *Men of Israel* He beginneth his sermon with a reproving of the people. And yet doth he not simply reprove them because they wonder; for that was altogether profitable and worthy praise; but because they do wickedly ascribe unto men that praise which is due to the work of God. As if he should say,

[174] "Ex nostro stupore," from our stupor, or stupidity.
[175] "Suggeret mihi," will suggest to me.
[176] "Divinum hominem," a divine man.
[177] "Ubi nullus ecarguebat superstitionem," where none condemned the superstition.
[178] "Magis sollicite," the more anxiously.
[179] "Erectos," when we are lifted up, or aroused by.

Ye do amiss, in that you stay in us, and stand gazing upon us, whereas you ought rather to look upon God and Christ. Therefore, this is to be amazed evilly, when as our minds do stay in men. And we must note that he condemneth the respect of men; as if, saith he, we by our own power and virtue had done this. Therefore there is an error and corruption in this, if we attribute that unto the godliness and power of men which is proper to God and Christ. And, as concerning power, no man will deny that it cometh of God; yet when they have confessed this in one word, they do not cease to take from God his right, to the end they may adorn the creatures with that which they take from him; as we see the Papists place the power of God in the saints; yea, they include his power in a stone or stock of wood, so soon as the image is consecrated to Barbara or Chrysogonus. But, notwithstanding, let us suppose that they do not offend in that former member; yet do they foolishly think that they have done their duty toward God, when as they leave him the power, and assign the miracles unto the godliness of saints. For why do they run unto them, when they will obtain either rain or fair weather, or be delivered from diseases, unless they do imagine that they have by their godliness deserved that God should grant them this right and privilege? This is, therefore, but a childish starting-hole, [180] when they confess that God is the author of the power; but they thank the godliness of saints for those benefits which they have received. Howsoever they color the matter, we must always know this, that Peter doth generally condemn those which do so look unto men in miracles, that they think that their holiness is the cause thereof. This is the first part of the sermon, wherein he reproveth superstition. And we must note his manner and order of teaching. For because men are inclined to nothing more than to fall from God unto the creatures, it is very expedient to prevent this vice in time. And if the people were forbidden to look unto the apostles, much more doth the Spirit draw us away from calling upon every petty saint.

13, 14. *The God of Abraham.* He addeth a remedy now in calling them back unto Christ. And the sum is this, That this is God's purpose in those miracles which he worketh by the apostles to set forth the glory of his Christ; whereupon it followeth that all those do deal disorderly who set up Peter, or any other, whatsoever he be, forasmuch as all men must decrease, and Christ alone must be excellent, (John 3:30.) Here appeareth a manifest difference between Christ and the apostles. First of all, he is the author, they are only the ministers; secondly, this is the lawful end, that he alone may have the glory; and as for them there is no respect to be had of them as concerning glory; for certainly they which do glorify any in miracles besides Christ, they set themselves flatly against the counsel of God.

He maketh mention of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the end he may declare unto the people that he meaneth nothing less than to lead them away from the old and ancient worship of the true God, which they had

[180] "Effugium," evasion or subterfuge.

received of the fathers. Furthermore, God hath given himself this title, that he might (dissever and) distinguish himself by some mark from idols; for we do not comprehend God in his essence, which cannot be seen, and which is infinite; therefore, he useth such means as agree best with us, to bring us to the knowledge of him. The Turks do boast that they do worship God, which is the creator of heaven and earth; but before they come at heaven they vanish away. Therefore, to the end God might keep his people from vain and erroneous inventions, he kept them in his covenant; therefore, when he calleth himself the God of Abraham, he did briefly teach that which Moses declareth more at large, (Deuteronomy 30:12,)

"Say not, Who shall ascend into heaven? Who shall go down into the depth? Or who shall sail over the seas? The word is nigh," etc.

Furthermore, as amongst the Jews the name of the holy fathers was in high estimation, so Peter doth closely [181] tell them, that they were no better than other men, without the only begotten Son of God. And at this day God will be known by a more evident mark yet, when as he calleth himself the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us now return unto Peter; he saith that he bringeth in no new religion, that. he may draw away the people from the law and the prophets; for if he should attempt this, God had forbidden them to hear him, (Deuteronomy 13:3.) Like as Paul teacheth, that we must retain one foundation in the spiritual building, (1 Corinthians 3:11,) because, so soon as we depart even but a little from Christ, there can nothing ensue but ruin. And hereby also we may easily discern in what sense he calleth God the God of the fathers; for neither doth he take this for a general maxim, that what manner of worship soever the fathers had, we must continue the same, as the Papists do foolishly vaunt that they do follow the manner of worshipping which was used amongst the fathers; for Peter doth expressly reckon up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom true religion did proceed, and by whom it was divinely delivered; whereby he doth signify unto us, that we must not follow all fathers, whereof many did grow out of kind, and became altogether unlike to the first fathers; that this honor is due to the children of God alone, and that others are to be refused; which thing the prophets do also beat in [182] everywhere:

"Walk not in the ways of your fathers," etc.,
(Ezekiel 20:18.)

Whom ye have delivered He mingleth with doctrine a most sharp chiding, according as the matter did require; for it was impossible to bring them truly unto God, unless they were first brought to the knowledge of their sins; neither doth he only lightly touch them, but he doth very gravely show them the horribleness of that offense which they had committed. To this end tendeth that comparison, that they delivered him to be put to death,

[181] "Tacite admonet," tacitly reminds them.
[182] "Inculcant," inculcate.

whom Pilate would have loosed; and again, that, pardoning a murderer, they put the Prince of life to death; that they did reject the just and holy. Men must be so stricken, that being brought to know their guiltiness, they may earnestly fly unto the remedy of pardon. Such vehemence and earnestness did Peter also use in his first sermon; he saith afterward that *God raised him up,* whereby they ought to know that, in putting Christ to death, they did strive against God; although Peter had respect unto an higher thing, to wit, that their cruelty did no whit impair the glory of Christ, because God had nevertheless restored him to life. When as he saith, that he and his fellows in office were witnesses of the resurrection, his meaning is, that they saw it with their eyes, (Luke 24:48.) Therefore, this is referred not only unto the apostolical function, but because they saw Christ with their eyes after that he was risen from the dead; although I do also grant that this second thing is comprehended under these words, because it is likely that Peter doth make mention of that function which was committed unto him, to the end he may purchase the greater authority.

16. *And in the faith of his name.* When as he saith *in the faith of his name, and his name;* and again, the *faith which is by him;* this repetition is a token of a fervent affection, for because he was wholly given to set forth the glory of Christ, he beateth in [inculcateth] the same thing oftentimes. Moreover, we see that when Paul is occupied about the showing and setting forth of the grace of Christ, he thinketh that he hath never spoken enough touching the same; and surely such is the wicked nature of men, that Christ cannot be so highly extolled, and so preached, that his honor can remain sound unto him. Let us, therefore, remember that Peter did use such variety and plenty of words, to the end he might stay us in Christ. As touching the phrase, when as he saith, *his name in the faith of his name hath strengthened,* he showeth both the cause and the manner; the power of Christ had healed the cripple but by faith. When as he saith, *the faith which is by him, by* this word he signifieth unto us that our faith cannot arise up unto God unless it be grounded in Christ, and se, consequently, that this our faith doth look unto Christ and stay itself upon him, and so he showeth that there cat be no right faith in God when we pass over this mean.

Furthermore, as he said before, that he and the other apostles were witnesses of Christ's life, so he doth now declare that this life was manifestly proved unto the Jews by a sign or effect, because they see the cripple healed, in whom they had an excellent and evident token of the Divine power of Christ. And when as in this last member he maketh faith the cause of this soundness, he layeth unthankfulness to their charge by the way, unless they give faith her due praise; and although faith may be referred as well unto the man that was healed as unto the apostles, yet we need not to stand much about this manner, because the power of the gospel is set forth by *synecdoche.*

Acts 3:17-21

Acts 3:17-21

17. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. 18. And God hath fulfilled all things which he had spoken by the mouth of his prophets, that Christ should suffer. 19. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be forgiven, 20. When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send him that was preached before, Jesus Christ: 21. Whom heaven must contain until the time that all things be restored, which he hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the beginning of the world, [or set before your eyes and represented.]

17. Because it was to be doubted, lest, being cast down with despair, they should refuse his doctrine, he doth a little lift them up. We must so temper our sermons that they may profit the hearers, for unless there be some hope of pardon left, the terror and fear of punishment doth harden men's hearts with stubbornness; for that of David is true, That we fear the Lord when we perceive that he is unto us favorable, and easy to be pacified, (Psalm 130:4.) Thus doth Peter lessen the sin of his nation, because of their ignorance; for it had been impossible for them to have suffered and endured this conscience, if they had denied the Son of God, and delivered him to be slain, wittingly and willingly; and yet will he not flatter them, when as he saith that they did it through ignorance; but he doth only somewhat mitigate his speech, lest they should be overwhelmed and swallowed up of despair. Again, we must not so take the words as if the people did sin simply of ignorance, for under this there did lie hid hypocrisy; but as wickedness or ignorance doth abound, the action is named of the one or the other. This is, therefore, Peter's meaning, that they did it rather through error and a blind zeal, than through any determined wickedness; but a question may be moved here, if ally man have offended wittingly and willingly, whether he shall surely fall into despair or not? I answer, that he doth not make mention in this place of all manner of sin; but only of the denying of Christ, and of the extinguishing of the grace of God, so much as in them did lie. If any man be desirous to know more concerning this, he may read the first chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy, (1 Timothy 1:13.)

As did also your rulers. First, this seemeth to be an improper comparison, for the scribes and the priests were carried headlong with a wonderful madness, and they were full of wicked unfaithfulness; [183] but the perverse study and zeal of the law did prick forward the people. Again, the people were incensed against Christ, inasmuch as their rulers did provoke them thereunto. I answer, that they were not all of one mind, for without doubt many of them were like unto Paul, unto whom that doth truly appertain, which he writeth elsewhere of the princes and rulers of this world, if they

[183] "Perfidia," perfidy.

had known the wisdom of God they would never have crucified the Lord of glory; therefore, he speaketh not generally of all the rulers; but if any of them be curable, them doth he invite to repentance.

18. *And God* Hereby it appeareth more plainly to what end he made mention of ignorance; for when he telleth them that God hath accomplished those things which he had foretold, he doth so touch their offense in the death of Christ, that it turneth to their salvation. Ignorance, saith he, hath made you guilty, yet God hath brought that to pass which he had determined, that Christ should redeem you by his death. This is a most notable consideration, when as we ponder and consider with ourselves, that through the wonderful counsel of God our evils are turned to another end to us, yet this doth no whir excuse us, for so much as in us lieth we cast away [184] ourselves by sinning; but that conversion whereof I have spoken is a notable work of God's mercy, whereof we must speak, and which we must extol with humility. The Jews did what they could to extinguish all hope of life in the person of Christ; and yet, nevertheless, that death gave life as well to them as to the whole world. We must also remember that which we saw elsewhere, lest there should any false and absurd opinion creep in, that Christ was laid open to the lust of the wicked, that God is made the chief author by whose will his only Son did suffer.

19. *Repent* We must note, that when he exhorteth unto repentance, he doth also declare that there is remission of sins prepared for them before the face of God. For, as I said of late, no man can be stirred up to repentance, unless he have salvation set before him; but he which doth despair of pardon, being, as it were, given over unto destruction already, doth not 'fear to run headlong against God obstinately. Hereby it cometh to pass that the Papists cannot deliver the doctrine of repentance. They babble, indeed, very much concerning the same; but because they overthrow the hope of grace, it cannot be that they should persuade their disciples unto the study of repentance. Moreover, I confess that they babble a little touching forgiveness of sins; but because they leave men's souls in doubt and in fearfulness, and, furthermore, do cast them as it were into a labyrinth, (or place out of which they know not how to come,) this part of the doctrine being corrupt, they confound the other also.

20. *That when* If we follow Erasmus and the old interpreter, this sentence shall be unperfect, [185] which may be made perfect, thus: *When the time of refreshing shall come, you may also enjoy this refreshing;* when Christ shall come to judge the world, you may find him a redeemer and not a Judge. But because Beza doth fitly translate it, *After that they shall come,* it is better to retain that which is not so racked; [186] so you resolve it thus: That sins are so forgiven against the day of the last judgment; because, unless we

[184] "Perdimus," destroy.
[185] "Ecliptica," elliptic.
[186] "Coactum," forced.

be cited to appear before God's judgment-seat we are not greatly careful to pacify God. First of all, we must note, that he setteth before them the day of judgment, to the end the former exhortation may take the greater effect. For there is nothing which doth more prick us, than when we are taught that we must once give an account. For so long as our senses are holden and kept in this world, they are drowned, as it were, in a certain drowsiness, [187] that I may so call it. Wherefore the message of the last judgment must sound as a trumpet to *cite* us to appear before the judgment-seat of God. For then at last being truly awaked, we begin to think of a new life. In like sort, when Paul preached at Athens, God saith, that he doth now will all men to repent; because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, (Acts 17:30, 31.) The sum is this, that Christ, who is now unto us a Master, when as he teacheth us by the gospel, is appointed of the Father to be a Judge, and shall come in his due time; and that, therefore, we must obey his doctrine betimes, that we may gather the fruit of our faith then.

But some man may object, that Peter speaketh otherwise of the last day. For this doth not serve to make them afraid, when he saith, *the time of refreshing.* I answer, that there is a double prick, wherewith the faithful are pricked forward when as they are told of the last judgment. For the profit of faith doth not appear in this world, yea rather it seemeth to go well with the despisers of God; but the life of the godly is full of miseries. Therefore our hearts should oftentimes faint and quail, unless we should remember that the day of rest shall come, which shall quench all the heat of our trouble, and make an end of our miseries. The other prick whereof I spoke is this, when as the fearful judgment of God causeth us to shake off delicacy and drowsiness. So Peter mixeth in this place threatenings with promises, partly to the end he may allure the Jews unto Christ, and partly that he may prick them forward with fear. Furthermore, this is a thing much used in the Scripture, as it speaketh either unto the reprobate, or unto the elect, sometimes to make the day of the Lord doleful and fearful, sometimes to make the same pleasant and to be wished for. Peter therefore doth very well, who, whilst that he putteth the Jews in good hope of pardon, doth make the day of Christ pleasant to them, to the end they may desire the same.

And shall send him. He saith expressly that Christ shall be Judge, to the end they may know that the contempt of the gospel shall not be unpunished. For how should not Christ punish the same? In the meanwhile, this doth greatly comfort the faithful, when as they know that it shall be in his hand to give salvation, who doth now promise and offer the same. He addeth, moreover, that he shall come who is now preached unto them. Whereby he taketh away all excuse of ignorance. As if he should say, Christ is preached unto you now before he come to judge the world; to the end that those who will embrace him may receive the fruit of their faith at that

[187] "Quodam, ut ita loquar veterno obruti sunt," are oppressed, so to speak, with a kind of lethargy.

day; and to the end that others, who shall refuse him, may be punished for their unbelief. Although the Grecians do read this two ways; for some books [188] have {προκεκηρυγμενον}, that is, *preached before;* and other some {προκεχειρισμενον}, that is, *showed, or set before their eyes.* But both have one sense, to wit, that Christ is not offered unto them in vain now by the doctrine of the gospel; because he shall be sent the second time by his Father to be a Judge, armed and prepared to render vengeance, unless they embrace him now for their Redeemer.

21. *Whom the heaven must contain.* Because men's senses are always bent and inclined towards the gross and earthly beholding of God and Christ, the Jews might think with themselves that Christ was preached, indeed, to be raised up from the dead, yet could they not tell where he was; for no man did show them where he was. Therefore Peter preventeth them, when he saith that he is in heaven. Whereupon it followeth that they must lift up their minds on high, to the end they may seek Christ with the eyes of faith, although he be far from them, [189] although he dwell without the world in the heavenly glory. But this is a doubtful [190] speech; because we may as well understand it that Christ is contained or comprehended in the heavens, as that he doth comprehend the heavens. Let us not therefore urge the word, being of a doubtful signification; but let us content ourselves with that which is certain, that we must seek for Christ nowhere else save only in heaven, whilst that we hope for the last restoring of all things; because he shall be far from us, until our minds ascend high above the world.

Until the time of restoring As touching the force and cause, Christ hath already restored all things by his death; but the effect doth not yet fully appear; because that restoring is yet in the course, and se, consequently, our redemption, forasmuch as we do yet groan under the burden of servitude. For as the kingdom of Christ is only begun, and the perfection thereof is deferred until the last day, so those things which are annexed thereunto do now appear only in part. Therefore, if at this day we see many things confused in the world, let this hope set us upon foot and refresh us, that Christ shall once come that he may restore tall things. In the mean season, if we see the relics of sin hang on us, if we be environed on every side with divers miseries, if the world be full of wasting and scattering abroad, let us bewail these miseries, yet so that we uphold with the hope of restoring. And this is the reason why Christ doth not appear by and by, [191] because the warfare of the Church is not yet full, [192] whose time, seeing it is appointed by God, it is not for us to prevent the same. [193]

[188] "Codices," manuscripts.

[189] "Quamvis immensa locorum distamia sit remotus," although, in respect of place, he is at an immense distance from them.

[190] "Ambigua lequtio," an ambiguous expression.

[191] "Statim," immediately.

[192] "Completa," complete.

[193] "Antivertere," anticipate.

Which he spoke. I do not expound this of the times alone, but I refer it unto the whole period; so that the sense is this: That whatsoever he had spoken before of the kingdom of Christ is witnessed by all the prophets. Certes, the gospel doth win no small credit hereby, that so soon as God began to show himself to the world, he did always set Christ before them; after that he began to speak unto the fathers, he did always lay this foundation of doctrine. By the same argument Paul commendeth the gospel, both in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, (Romans 1:1,) and also in the end, (Romans 16:25,) to wit, that it is no new thing, but promised even from the beginning. [194] This is true antiquity, which is able to purchase credit to doctrine: when as God himself is the author, the holy prophets the witnesses, and the continual course of times confirmeth the testimony. This confirmation was especially necessary for the Jews, who being brought up in the doctrine of the law, ought to admit nothing but that which agreeth therewith. Therefore Peter doth command them only to mind those things which the prophets have testified of Christ.

Acts 3:22-24

Acts 3:22-24

22. Moses truly said unto the fathers, The Lord your God shall raise up a Prophet unto you of your brethren, [like unto me;] him shall ye hear, according to all things which he shall speak unto you. 23. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which shall not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed of the people. 24. And all the prophets from Samuel, and thenceforth, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold these days.

22. By this argument he proveth that he goeth not about to cause them to revolt from Moses, because it is a part of the law to take heed to and obey this chief teacher. Here might a doubt arise, why Peter thought it more convenient to cite this testimony of Moses than others, seeing there were many others in readiness far more plain; but he did this for this cause, because he intreateth in this place of the authority of doctrine; and this was the best way to bring the Jews to be Christ's disciples. For he should have preached in vain of all other things, unless they had been persuaded that his doctrine was reverently to be received. This is therefore the thing which Peter aimeth at, to bring them to hear Christ willingly, as the master whom God hath appointed to teach them.

But here ariseth a question, which hath in it great difficulty; to wit, in that Peter applieth that unto the person of Christ which Moses spoke generally of the prophets. For although he make mention of a prophet in the singular number, yet the text [context] doth plainly declare, that he speaketh not of one alone; but that this word is put indefinitely. For after that Moses had forbidden the people to give themselves unto the superstitions of the

[194] "Ab ultima aetate," from the remotest age.

Gentiles, by turning aside unto enchanters and soothsayers, he showeth them therewithal a remedy, whereby they may avoid all vanity; to wit, if they depend wholly upon the Word of God alone. By this means he promiseth that God will be careful at all times to send them prophets, that they may teach them aright. As if he should say, God will never suffer you to be destitute of prophets, of whom you may learn whatsoever shall be profitable for you to know. And Moses saith expressly, *of thy brethren,* to the end the Jews may know that the oracles of God are to be sought and set no where else, seeing that God had appointed unto them teachers of the kindred of Abraham. He addeth further, *like unto me* that they may know that they were not to hear God only at one time, or by the mouth of one man; but as God proceedeth to teach us by divers ministers throughout the continual course of time, so must we hold on in the obedience of the word. Now, the Jews were wont to reverence Moses; therefore, he will have them to give like honor to the prophets. I know that many would fain restrain it unto Christ. They catch at this word, whereas Moses doth testify that the prophet shall be like unto him, (Deuteronomy 18:15,) whereas, notwithstanding, it is written, that there arose none like unto Moses. I confess that there is in both places the same note of likeness, yet in a diverse sense. For, in the second place, the likeness or equality is expressed, as it doth plainly appear. They catch also at another thing, that the prophet shall far excel Moses, of whom he beareth witness as a crier or herald. But this is never a whit stronger, because Moses goeth about to bring to pass that the word of God may be believed by whomsoever it be brought.

Therefore, there is no cause why we should set ourselves to be laughed to scorn by the Jews, by wresting the words of Moses violently, as if he spoke of Christ alone in this place. Yet we must see whether Peter doth cite the testimony fitly, whose authority ought to serve for a sound reason. I say; that in Peter's speech there is nothing which is not most convenient. For he saw that which all men ought to grant, that this testimony doth so appertain unto the other prophets, that yet notwithstanding it doth chiefly commend Christ, not only because that he is the prince and chief of all the prophets, but because all other former prophecies were directed toward him, and because God did at length speak absolutely by his mouth, For God spoke in divers manners, and at sundry times in times past3 unto our fathers by the prophets, he addeth the conclusion at length, in the last days in his only begotten Son, (Hebrews 1:1, 2.) Therefore, it came to pass, that they wanted prophets for a certain years [195] before his coming; which thing is plainly gathered out of the words of Malachi, who, after he hath commanded the people to be mindful of the law, he passeth over by and by unto John Baptist and unto Christ, as if he should say, that the prophecies are now ended until the last revelation come, (Malachi 4:4-6;) according to that,

"The law and the prophets prophesied until John; after that the kingdom

[195] "Aliquot…saecula," for some ages.

of God is preached,"
(Matthew 11:13.)

And that was so common amongst the people, that the woman of Samaria could say, according to the common fame and opinion,

"We know that the Messias shall come,
who will teach us all things,"
(John 4:25.)

Therefore, we know that after the return of the people all the prophets ceased, to the end they might be made more attentive to hear Christ, by that silence or intermission of revelations. Therefore, Peter did not wrest this place, or abuse the same through ignorance, but he took that doctrine which all men had received for a principle; that God had promised to teach his people at the first by his prophets as by means, [196] but at length principally by Christ, at whose hands they were to hope for the perfect manifestation and laying open of all things. And to this purpose serveth that excellent testimony or commendation wherewith his Father setteth him forth, "Hear him," (Matthew 17:5.)

23. *Every soul.* Here, by a most grievous punishment against the rebellious, the authority of all the prophets, but most of all of Christ, is established; and that for good causes. For seeing there is nothing that God doth account more precious than his word, it cannot be that he should suffer the same to be freely contemned. Therefore, if any man despised the law of Moses, he was adjudged to die the death. And hereunto Moses had respect when he said, "He shall be put away from among the people." For God had adopted the stock and kindred of Abraham unto himself, upon this condition, that this might be sufficient for them unto the chiefest felicity to be *reckoned* in that number, as it is said in the Psalm, "Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord." And in another place, "Blessed is the nation whom the Lord hath chosen to be his inheritance." Wherefore it is not to be doubted, but that he pronounceth that he shall be blotted out of the book of life whosoever shall refuse to hear Christ. For he is not worthy to be accounted one of the Church, whosoever he be that refuseth to have him to be his Master, by whom alone God doth teach us, and by whom he will have us to hear himself; and he cutteth himself away from the body, whosoever he be that refuseth to be under the Head.

24. *And all* When as he saith that all the prophets do with one consent send their scholars unto Christ, that appeareth more plainly hereby, which I said, that the commendation of the gospel is contained under that testimony of Moses, and so, consequently, that the conclusion of prophecies is principally noted. Again, this maketh much for the certainty of the gospel, that all the prophets, for a long time, [series of ages,] do yet, notwithstanding, so temper their form of teaching with one consent, that they do testify altogether that men ought to hope for a certain, better, and more perfect

[196] "Velut intermedios." as intermediate.

thing. Therefore, whosoever will believe Moses and the prophets, he must needs submit himself unto the doctrine of Christ, without which all that is lame and imperfect which they taught, (John 5:47.)

Acts 3:25-26

Acts 3:25-26

25. You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shalt all families of the earth be blessed. 26. God raised up unto you first his Son Jesus, and he sent him, blessing you, whilst that he doth turn away every one from his sins.

25. *You are the children.* He signifieth that the grace of the covenant was appointed principally for them, which covenant God made with their fathers. And so as he pricked them forward to obey the gospel, by terrifying them with the terror of punishment, so he allureth them now again to receive the grace which is offered them in Christ; so that we see how that God omitteth nothing whereby he may bring us unto himself. And it is the duty of a wise minister so to prick forward the sluggish and slow bellies, that he do lead those gently which are apt to be taught; we must also note diligently this course of teaching, where Peter showeth that the gospel is assigned and appointed unto the Jews. For it is not sufficient to have the mercy of God preached unto us generally, unless we also know that the same is offered unto us by the certain ordinance of God. For this cause is it that Paul standeth so much upon the avouching of the calling of the Gentiles, (Romans 15:18; Ephesians 3:3, 4;) because, if any man should think that the gospel came unto him by chance, when as it was scattered here and there, faith should quail; [197] yea, there should be a doubtful opinion instead of faith. Therefore, to the end we may steadfastly believe the promise of salvation, this application (that I may so term it) is necessary, that God doth not cast forth uncertain voices, that they may hang in the air, but that he doth direct the same unto us by his certain and determinate counsel. Peter telleth the Jews, that Christ is promised unto them after this sort, to the end they may more willingly embrace him. And how proveth he this? because they are the children of the prophets and of the covenant. He calleth them the children of the prophets, which were of the same nation, and therefore were heirs of the covenant, which did belong unto the whole body of the people. For he argueth thus: God made his covenant with our fathers; therefore we, which are their posterity, are comprehended in the covenant.

Whereby the doubting [doting] subtlety of the Anabaptists is refuted, who do expound the children of Abraham only allegorically; as if God had had no respect to his stock, when he said, "I will be the God of thy seed," (Genesis 17:7.) Certainly Peter doth not speak in this place of the shadows of the

[197] "Vacillaret," vacillate or waver.

law; but he affirmeth that this is of force under the kingdom of Christ, that God doth adopt the children together with the fathers; and so, consequently, the grace of salvation may be extended unto those which are as yet unborn, (Romans 9:7.) I grant, indeed, that many which are the children of the faithful, according to the flesh, are counted bastards, and not legitimate, because they thrust themselves out of the holy progeny through their unbelief. But this doth no whit hinder the Lord from calling and admitting the seed of the godly into fellowship of grace. And so, although the common election be not effectual in all, yet may it set open a gate for the special elect. As Paul intreateth in the 11th to the Romans, (Romans 11:23,) whence we must set [seek] an answer for this question.

And in thy seed He proveth that the covenant was made with the fathers, because God said unto Abraham,

"In thy seed shall all nations be blessed," (Genesis 22:18.)

But if we admit Paul's interpretation, this testimony shall make nothing for the present cause. Paul teacheth that Christ is this seed, (Galatians 3:16.) If the blessing be promised to all mankind by Christ, what is this to the especial or particular privilege of one nation? Secondly, Peter himself seemeth shortly after to subscribe to this exposition of Paul, when as he saith that Christ was sent, that in him the *Jews* may be blessed. For this could not *be,* unless Christ were that blessed seed. I answer, When Paul referreth it unto Christ, he standeth not upon the word *seed,* but he hath respect to an higher tiling; to wit, that it cannot be one seed, unless it be united and knit together in Christ, as in the Head. For Ismael and Isaac, although both of them be the sons of Abraham, yet do they not make one seed, because they be divided into two people. Therefore, though many be estranged from the family of Abraham, which came of hint according to the flesh, yet Moses noteth one certain body, when he promiseth the blessing unto the seed of Abraham. And whence cometh the unity, save only from the Head, which is Christ? In this sense doth Paul understand this word *seed* of Christ, although it be a noun collective; because, if you depart from hint, the posterity of Abraham shall be as torn members, neither shall there be any thing else in them, save only mere wasteless and scattering abroad. Peter agreeth with that doctrine, because he doth so extend the blessing unto all the people, that he doth, nevertheless, seek the fountain in Christ.

Secondly, forasmuch as the Jews do what they can to wring [wrest] from us this testimony, the godly readers must arm themselves against their cavils; and so much the rather, because Christian writers have been too slack in this point, as I have said in the Epistle to the Galatians. First, as touching the word *seed,* there is no cause wily they should prattle that Paul doth not rightly restrain it unto Christ; for he doth not this simply, but in that respect whereof I have spoken. In which point, I confess, both our Latin and Greek interpreters have erred. Now, we must see what this manner of speech doth import. The Gentiles shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham. Our

men think that there is some cause noted; to wit, that through that seed the Gentiles shall be blessed. The Jews toss this to and fro, because this phrase signifieth every where in the Scriptures, an example or similitude; as, on the other side, [198] to be cursed in Sodom, in Israel, or in another people, is to take them for a notable example of a curse. I answer, that it is a doubtful speech, and taken diversely, according to the circumstance of the places, which the Jews do craftily dissemble. For they gather many places, out of which they prove that there is a comparison made; as if it should be said, The Gentiles shall desire to be blessed, like to the seed of Abraham. But when as the Scripture saith elsewhere, "They shall bless themselves in the living God," as Jeremiah 4:2; Isaiah 65:16; and again, "Do bless in the name of the Lord," (Deuteronomy 10:8,) and in other such like places; who doth not see that there is a cause expressed? Therefore, I say that this form of speech ought to be understood according to the circumstances of the places.

And now, forasmuch as I have declared that the seed of Abraham can be found nowhere else save only in Christ, it remaineth that we consider of what sort the office of Christ is. So shall it appear, undoubtedly, that he is not made a bare example or pattern, but that the blessing is truly promised to him; because without him we be all accursed. Yet there remaineth one doubt; for certain both these are spoken in one sense, They shall be blessed in thee, and in thy seed; but Abraham was nothing else but a type or mirror of the blessing. I answer, that in the person of Abraham, that body is also noted out, which dependeth upon one head, and is knit together in the same.

All the families The Jews do grossly expound this, That all nations shall desire to be blessed, as the seed of Abraham. But we say otherwise, That they shall be engrafted into the society. For the name of Abraham tendeth to this end, because it should come to pass that God should gather all people [199] unto him. Also, when the prophets will declare the force hereof, they foretell everywhere that the inheritance of salvation shall be common to the Gentiles. And hereby it appeareth that the covenant of God, which was then proper to the Jews alone, is not only common to all men, but is made with us expressly; otherwise, we could not conceive that hope of salvation which is firm enough out of the gospel. Therefore, let us not suffer this promise to be wrung from us, which is, as it were, a solemn declaration, whereby the Lord maketh us his heirs together with the fathers. Whereunto Peter also had respect, when as he saith shortly after, that Christ was first sent unto the Jews; for he doth signify that the Gentiles also have their order, though it be secondary.

26. *He hath raised up his Son.* He gathereth out of the words of Moses that Christ is now revealed. But the words do seem to import no such thing; yet doth he reason fitly thus, because the blessing could no otherwise be, unless the beginning thereof did flow from the Messias. For we must

[198] "Converso," conversely.
[199] "Populos," nations.

always remember this, that all mankind is accursed, and, therefore, there is a singular remedy promised us, which is performed by Christ alone. Wherefore, he is the only fountain and beginning of the blessing. And if so be that Christ came to this end, that he may bless the Jews first, and, secondly, us, he hath undoubtedly done that which was his duty to do; and we shall feel the force and effect of this duty in ourselves, unless our unbelief do hinder us.

This was a part of the priest's office under the law, to bless the people; and, lest this should be only a vain ceremony, there was a promise added; as it is, (Numbers 6:27.) And that which was shadowed in the old priesthood was truly performed in Christ, (Hebrews 7:1, 6.) Concerning which matter we have spoken more at large in the seventh chapter to the Hebrews. I like not Erasmus's translation; for he saith, *when he had raised him up,* as if he spoke of a thing which was done long ago. But Peter meaneth rather, that Christ was raised up, when he was declared to be the author of the blessing; which thing, since it was done of late and suddenly, it ought to move their minds the more. For the Scripture useth to speak thus, as in the last place, of Moses, whereunto Peter alludeth. To raise up a prophet, is to furnish him with necessary gifts to fulfill his function, and, as it were, to prefer him to the degree of prophetical honor. And Christ was raised up then, when he fulfilled the function enjoined him by his Father, but the same thing is done daily when he is offered by the gospel, that he may excel amongst us. We have said that in the adverb of order, first, is noted the right of the first-be-gotten, because it was expedient that Christ should begin with the Jews, that he might afterward pass over unto the Gentiles.

Whilst that he turneth. He doth again commend the doctrine of repentance, to the end we may learn to conclude under the blessing of Christ newness of life, as when Esaias promiseth that a "Redeemer should come to Zion," he addeth a restraint; [200] "Those which in Jacob shall be turned from their iniquities." For Christ doth not do away the sins of the faithful, to the end they may grant liberty to themselves to sin under this color; but he maketh them therewith all new men. Although we must diligently distinguish these two benefits which are linked together, that this ground-work may continue, that we are reconciled to God by free pardon, I know that other men turn it otherwise; but this is the true meaning of Luke; for he speaketh thus word for word, "In turning every one from his wickedness."

[200] "Restrictionem," a reservation.

Chapter 4

CHAPTER 4

In this narration we must consider three things chiefly. That so soon as the truth of the gospel doth once appear, Satan setteth himself against the same on the other side, so much as he is able, and attempteth all things that he may smolder the same in the very first beginnings. Secondly, That God doth furnish his children with invincible force and strength, [201] that they may stand steadfast and unmovable against all assaults of Satan, and not yield unto the violence of the wicked. And, last of all, we must note the event and end, that howsoever the adversaries seem to bear the chiefest swing, and they themselves do omit nothing which may serve to blot out the name of Christ; and, on the other side, howsoever the ministers of sound doctrine be as sheep in the mouths of wolves, yet doth God spread abroad the kingdom of his Son; he fostereth the light of the gospel which is lighted; and he is the protector of his children. Therefore, so often as the doctrine of the gospel ariseth, and divers motions do rise on the other side, and the course thereof is letted divers ways, there is no cause why godly minds should faint or quail, as at some unwonted thing; but they ought rather to remember, that these are ordinary endeavors of Satan, so that we must think upon this well before it come to pass, that it cannot otherwise be but that Satan will spew out all his might and main, so often as Christ doth come abroad with his doctrine. And therewithal let us consider that the constancy of the apostles is set forth unto us for an example, lest, being overcome either with any perils, or threatenings, or terrors, we leap back from that profession of faith which the Lord requireth at our hands. And, moreover, let us comfort ourselves with this, that we need not to doubt but that the Lord will give prosperous success when we have done our duty faithfully.

Acts 4:1-4

Acts 4:1-4

1. And as they spoke unto the people, the priests and the governor of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2. Taking it grievously that they taught the people, and preached, in Jesus' name, the resurrection from the dead. 3. And they laid hands on them, and they put them in prison until the morrow. For it was now even. tide. 4. And many of those which heard the word believed; and the number of men there was about five thousand.

[201] "Fortitudine," fortitude.

1. *And as they spoke* Hereby it appeareth how watchful the wicked be, because they are always ready at an inch to stop the mouth of the servants of Christ. And, undoubt edly, they came together, as it were, to quench some great fire; which thing Luke signifieth, when as he saith that the ruler or captain of the temple came also; and he addeth, moreover, that they took it grievously that the apostles did teach. Therefore, they came not upon them by chance, but of set purpose, that, according to their authority, they might restrain the apostles, and put them to silence. And yet they have some show of law and equity; for if any man did rashly intrude himself, it was the office of the high priest to repress him; and also in like sort, to keep the people in the obedience of the law and the prophets, and to prevent all new doctrines. Therefore, when they hear unknown men, and such as had no public authority, preaching unto the people in the temple, they seem, according as their office did require, and they were commanded by God, to address themselves to remedy this. And surely, at the first blush, it seemeth that there was nothing in this action worthy of reprehension, but the end doth at length declare that their counsel was wicked, and their affection ungodly.

Again, it was a hard matter for the apostles to escape infamy and reproach, because they, being private and despised persons, did take upon them public authority; to wit, because, when things are out of order, many things must be essayed to [against] the common custom, and especially, when we are to avouch and defend religion and the worship of God, and the ringleaders themselves do stop all ways, and do abuse that office against God, which was committed unto them by God. The faithful champions of Christ must swallow up and pass through this ignominy in [under] Popery. For a thousand summers will go over their heads before any reformation or amendment will wax ripe amongst them for the better. Therefore, Luke standeth upon this point, when as he saith that they were grieved because the resurrection was preached in the name of Christ. For hereupon it followeth that they did hate the doctrine before they knew the same. He expresseth the Sadducees by name, as those which were more courageous [202] in this cause. For they were almost [usually] a part of the priests; but because the question is about the resurrection, they set themselves against the apostles more than the rest. Furthermore, this was most monstrous confusion amongst the Jews, in that this sect, which was profane, was of such authority. For what godliness could remain, when as the immortality of the soul was counted as a fable, and that freely? But men must needs run headlong after this sort, when they have once suffered pure doctrine to fall to the ground amongst them. Wherefore, we must so much the more diligently beware of every wicked turning aside, lest such a step do follow immediately.

Some men think that the ruler of the temple was chosen from among the priests, but I do rather think that he was some chief captain of the Roman

[202] "Animosiores," more zealous.

army; for it was a place which was fortified both naturally and artificially. Again, Herod had built a tower there, which was called Antonia; so that it is to be thought that he had placed there a band of soldiers, and that the Roman captain had the government of the temple, lest it should be a place of refuge for the Jews, if they had stirred up any tumult, which we may likewise gather out of Josephus. And this agreeth very well, that the enemies of Christ did crave the help of the secular power, under color of appeasing some tumult. In the mean season, they seek favor at the hands of the Romans, as if they were careful to maintain the right of their empire.

4. *And many of them which heard* The apostles are put in prison, but the force of their preaching is spread far and wide, and the course thereof is at liberty. Of which thing Paul boasteth very much, that the Word of God is not bound with him, (2 Timothy 2:9.) And here we see that Satan and the wicked have liberty granted them to rage against the children of God; yet can they not (maugre their heads [203]) prevail, but that God doth further and promote the kingdom of his Son; Christ doth gather together his sheep; and that a few men unarmed, furnished with no garrisons, do show forth more power in their voice alone, than all the world, by raging against them. This is, indeed, no common work of God, that one sermon brought forth such plentiful fruit; but this is the more to be wondered at, that the faithful are not terrified with the present danger, and discouraged from taking up the cross of Christ together with the faith. For this was a hard beginning for novices. Christ did more evidently declare by this efficacy and force of doctrine that he was alive, than if he should have offered his body to be handled with hand, and to be seen with the eyes. And whereas it is said that the number of those which believed did grow to be about five thousand, I do not understand it of those which were newly added, but of the whole church.

Acts 4: 5-12

Acts 4: 5-12

5. And it came to pass, that the next day their rulers, and elders, and scribes, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 6. And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and so many as were of the kindred of the priests, 7. And when they had set them before them, they asked them, In what power, or in what name, have ye done that? 8. Then Peter, being filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9. If we be judged this day for healing the man which was lame, by what means he is made whole: 10. Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of. Nazareth, whom ye have crucified, whom God hath raised up from the dead, this man standeth before you whole. 11. This is the stone which was refused of you

[203] "Omnia machinando," by all their machinations.

the builders; it is placed in the head of the corner. 12. Neither is there salvation in any other. Neither is there any other name given under heaven unto men, wherein we must be saved.

5. It is a thing worthy to be noted in this place, that the wicked do omit no subtilty that they may blot out the gospel and the name of Christ, and yet do they not obtain that which they hoped for; because God doth make their counsels frustrate. For they make an assembly, wherein they do all things so tyrannously, that yet, notwithstanding, lust beareth a show of right, and liberty is driven far away, and at length the truth may seem to be condemned by good right. But the Lord bringeth upon them a sudden fear, so that they dare not do that which they can, and which they do most of all desire. Whatsoever the apostles shall bring in defense of their cause, that shall remain buried and shut up with the walls, where there is none which doth bear them any favor. And therefore there is no place left for the truth. Yet we see how the Lord bringeth their counsel to nought, whilst that being kept back with fear of the people, they stay themselves and bridle their fury, to the end they may avoid envy. But I marvel much why Luke doth make Annas the highest priest in this place, seeing that it appeareth by Josephus, that this honor was not taken from Caiaphas until Vitellius had entered Jerusalem to bear rule, after that Pilate was commanded to depart unto Rome. All men grant that the Lord was crucified in the eighteenth year of Tiberius. And that empire [the reign of Tiberius] did continue four years longer. And it must needs be, that there were three years complete, after the death of Christ, before Pilate was put from the office of the pro-consul. For when Tiberius was dead he came to Rome; so that Caiaphas was high priest yet three years after the death of Christ. Wherefore it is to be thought, that that whereof Luke speaketh in this place did not happen immediately after the resurrection of Christ; although the doubt cannot thus be answered. [204] For Josephus reporteth, that Jonathas was chosen into the place of Caiaphas; but because this Jonathas was the son of Annas, it is a thing not unlike to be true, that the son was called by the name of the father; as Caiaphas also had two names; for they did also call him Joseph.

7. *In what power* They do yet seem to have some zeal of God. For they feign that they are careful that the honor due unto God may not be given to any other. *Name* is taken in this place for authority. In sum, they deal as if they were most earnest defenders and maintainers of God's glory. In the mean season, their importunateness is wonderful, in that they go about to drive the apostles to make denial, by asking many questions concerning a manifest matter, and to wring out by fear some other thing than they had confessed. But God doth bring their crafty wiliness to nought, and maketh them hear that which they would not.

8. *Peter, being filled with the Holy Ghost* It is not without great cause that

[204] "Quanquam nec sic quidem soluta erit tota difficultas," although not even in this way will the whole difficulty be solved.

Luke addeth this, to the end we may know that Peter spake not with such a majesty of himself. And surely, seeing he had denied his Master, Christ, being afraid at the voice of a silly woman, (Matthew 26:70,) he should have utterly fainted in such an assembly, when he did only behold their pomp, unless he had been upholden by the power of the Spirit. He had great need of wisdom and strength. [205] He excelleth in both these so much, that his answer is indeed divine. He is another manner of man here than he was before. Furthermore, this profiteth us two manner of ways. For this title, or commendation, is of no small force to set forth the doctrine which shall follow immediately, when it is said that it came from the Holy God, [Spirit.] And we are taught to crave at the hands of the Lord the Spirit of wisdom and strength, when we make profession of our faith, to direct our hearts and minds. The fullness of the Spirit is taken for a large and no common measure.

9. *If we be judged.* Undoubtedly Peter layeth tyranny to the charge of the priests and the scribes, because they examine them unjustly concerning a benefit which deserveth praise, as if he and his fellow had committed some heinous offense. If, saith he, we be accused for this cause, because we have made a sick man whole. Peter hath in this place more respect unto the wicked affection of the mind than unto the very order of the question. For if, under color of a miracle, the apostles would have drawn away the people from the true and sincere worship of God, they should have been worthily called to answer for themselves; because religion doth far excel all the good things of this present life. But seeing they (having no cause at all) did wickedly make an offense of that which they ought to have honored, Peter, being supported with this confidence, doth at the first gird them wittily with a taunting preface, because they sit as judges to condemn good deeds. Yet he toucheth this point but lightly, that he may pass over unto the matter.

10. *Be it known unto you.* Peter might (as I have already said) have turned aside unto many starting-holes, [206] if he would not have entered the cause; [207] but because the miracle was wrought, to this end, that the name of Christ might be glorified, he descendeth by and by unto this. For he knew that he was the minister of such excellent power of God, that he might have a seal to confirm his doctrine. In the meanwhile, the wicked, will they, nil they, are enforced to hear that which they would have had buried full deep. When they have done what they can, this is all; they cause Peter to avouch and object to their faces, that wherewith they were so grieved, when it was spoken to others. And, first he maketh Christ the author of the miracle. Secondly, because it seemed to be an absurd and incredible thing, that a dead man should be endued with divine power, he testifieth that Christ is alive, because God hath raised him up from the dead, howsoever they

[205] "Fortitudine et prudentia," prudence and fortitude.

[206] "Subterfugia," subterfuges.

[207] "Si noluisset causam ingredi," if he had been unwilling to enter upon the cause.

had crucified him. So that the miracle giveth him occasion to preach the resurrection of Christ. And by this testimony Peter meant to prove that he was the true Messias. He saith that they had crucified him, not only to the end he may upbraid this unto them, that they may acknowledge their fault; but also that they may understand that they have in vain striven against God; and so, consequently, cease to rage so unluckily and with such deadly success.

11. *This is the stone.* He confirmeth by testimony of Scripture that it is no new thing that the ringleaders [208] of the Church, which have glorious titles given them, and have the chief room in the temple of God, have, notwithstanding, wickedly rejected Christ. Therefore he citeth a place out of the 118th Psalm, (Psalm 118:22,) where David complaineth that he is rejected of the captains [leaders] of the people, and yet, notwithstanding, he boasteth that he was chosen of God to have the chief room. Moreover, he compareth the Church, or the state of the kingdom, by an usual metaphor to a building, he calleth those which have the government the masters of the work, [209] and he maketh himself the principal stone, whereon the whole building is stayed and grounded. For that is meant by the head of the corner. Therefore, this is David's comfort, that howsoever the captains have rejected him, so that they would not grant him even the basest place, yet did not their wicked and ungodly endeavors hinder him from being extolled by God unto the highest degree of honor. But that was shadowed in David which God would have perfectly expressed in the Messias. Therefore Peter dealeth very aptly when as he citeth this testimony, as being spoken before of Christ, as they knew full well that it did agree properly to him. Now we know to what end Peter did cite the Psalm; to wit, lest the elders and priests being unadvisedly puffed up with their honor, should take to themselves authority and liberty to allow or disallow whatsoever they would. For it is evident that the stone refused by the chief builders is placed by God's own hand in the chief place, that it may support the whole house.

Furthermore, this happeneth not once only, but it must be fulfilled daily; at least it must seem no new thing if the chief builders do even now reject Christ. Whereby the vain boasting of the Pope is plainly refuted, who maketh his boast of the bare title, that he may usurp whatsoever is Christ's. Admit we grant to the Pope and his horned beasts that which they desire, to wit, that they are appointed to be ordinary pastors of the Church, they can go no farther at length than to be called chief builders with Annas and Caiaphas. And it is evident what account ought to be made of this title, which they think is sufficient to mix heaven and earth together. Now let us gather out of this place some things which are worth the noting. Forasmuch as they are called master-builders who have government of the Church, the name itself putteth them in mind of their duty. Therefore, let them give

[208] "Praesules," prelates.

[209] "Architectos," the architects.

themselves wholly to the building of the temple of God. And because all men do not their duty faithfully as they ought, let them see what is the best manner of building aright, to wit, let them retain Christ for the foundation; that done, let them not mix straw and stubble in this building, but let them make the whole building of pure doctrine; as Paul teacheth in 1 Corinthians 3:12. Whereas God is said to have extolled Christ, who was rejected of the builders, this ought to comfort us, when as we see even the pastors of the Church, or, at least, those which are in great honor, wickedly rebel against Christ, that they may banish him. For we may safely set light by those visors which they object against us; so that we need not fear to give Christ that humor which God doth give to him. But if he wink for a time, yet doth he laugh at the boldness of his enemies from on high, whilst they rage and fret upon earth. Furthermore, though their conspiracies be strong and well guarded with all aids, yet must we always assure ourselves of this, that Christ's honor shall remain safe and sound. And let the fruit of this confidence ensue also, that we be valiant and without fear in maintaining the kingdom of Christ, whereof God will be an invincible defender, as he himself affirmeth.

We have already spoken of Peter's constancy, in that one simple man, having such envious judges, and yet having but one partner in the present danger, showeth no token at all of fear, but doth freely confess in that raging and furious company, that thing which he knew would be received with most contrary minds. And whereas he sharply upbraideth unto them that wickedness which they had committed, we must let [seek] from hence a rule of speech when we have to deal with the open enemies of the truth. For we must beware of two faults on this behalf, that we seem not to flatter by keeping silence or winking; for that were treacherous silence, whereby the truth should be betrayed. Again, that we be not puffed up with wantonness, or immoderate heat as men's minds do oftentimes break out more than they ought in contention. Therefore, let us use gravity in this point, yet such as is moderate; let us chide freely, yet without all heat of railing. We see that Peter did observe this order. For at the first he giveth an honorable title; when he is once come to the matter he inveigheth sharply against them; neither could such ungodliness as theirs was be concealed. Those which shall follow this example shall not only have Peter to be their guide, but also the Spirit of God.

12. *Neither is there salvation in any other.* He passeth from the *species* [salvation] unto the *genus,* [or more particular,] and he goeth from the corporal benefit unto perfect health, [or general.] And assuredly Christ had showed this one token of his grace, to the end he might be known to be the only author of life. We must consider this in all the benefits of God, to wit, that he is the fountain of salvation. And he meant to prick and sting the priests with this sentence, when as he saith that there is salvation in none other save only in Christ, whom they went about to put quite out of

remembrance. [210] As if he should say, that they are twice damned who did not only refuse the salvation offered them by God, but endeavor to bring the same to nought, and did take from all the people the fruit and use thereof. And although he seemeth to speak unto deaf men, yet doth he preach of the grace of Christ, if peradventure some can abide to hear; if not, that they may at least be deprived of all excuse by this testimony.

Neither is there any other name He expoundeth the sentence next going before. Salvation (saith he) is in Christ alone, because God hath decreed that it should be so. For by *name* he meaneth the cause or mean, as if he should have said, forasmuch as salvation is in God's power only, he will not have the same to be common to us by any other means than if we ask it of Christ alone. Whereas he saith *under heaven,* they do commonly refer it unto creatures, as if he should say, that the force and power to save is given to Christ alone. Notwithstanding, I do rather think that this was added, because men cannot ascend into heaven, that they may come unto God. Therefore, seeing we are so far from the kingdom of God, it is needful that God do not only invite us unto himself, but that reaching out his hand he offer salvation unto us, that we may enjoy the same. Peter teacheth in this place, that he hath done that in Christ, because he came down into the earth for this cause, that he might bring salvation with him, Neither is that contrary to this doctrine, that Christ is ascended above all heavens, (Ephesians 4:10.) For he took upon him our flesh once for this cause, that he might be a continual pledge of our adoption. He hath reconciled the Father to us for ever by the sacrifice of his death: by his resurrection he hath purchased for us eternal life. And he is present with us now also, that he may make us partakers of the fruit of eternal redemption; but the revealing of salvation is handled in this place, and we know that the same was so revealed in Christ, that we need not any longer to say, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" (Romans 10:6.) And if so be this doctrine were deeply imprinted in the minds of all men, then should so many controversies concerning the causes of salvation be soon at an end, wherewith the Church is so much troubled. The Papists confess with us, that salvation is in God alone, but by and by they forge to themselves infinite ways to attain unto the same. But Peter calleth us back unto Christ alone. They dare not altogether deny that we have salvation given us by Christ; but whilst they feign so many helps, they leave him scarce the hundredth part of salvation. But they were to seek for salvation at the hands of Christ wholly; for when Peter excludeth plainly all other means, he placeth perfect salvation in Christ alone, and not some part thereof only. So that they are far from understanding this doctrine.

Acts 4:13-18

Acts 4:13-18

[210] "Extinguere," to extinguish or annihilate.

13. And when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and considered that they were men unlearned and ignorant, they wondered; and they knew them, that they had been with Jesus. 14. And when they saw the man that had been healed standing with them, they could not say against it. 15. But when they had commanded them to depart out of the council, they consulted among themselves, 16. Saying, What shall we do to these men? For a manifest sign is done by them, and it is openly known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; neither can we deny it. 17. But lest it be noised any farther among the people, in threatening let us threaten them, that they speak not henceforth to any man in this name. 18. And then when they had called them, they charged them that they should not speak at all, or teach, in the name of Jesus.

13. Here may we see an evil conscience; for being destitute of right and reason, they break out into open tyranny, the hatred whereof they had essayed to escape. Therefore, he doth first declare that they were convict, that it may appear that they did war against God wittingly and willingly like giants. For they see a manifest work of his in the man which was healed, and yet do they wickedly set themselves against him. In as much as they know that Peter and John were men unlearned and ignorant, they acknowledge that there was somewhat more than belongeth to man in their boldness; therefore they are enforced to wonder whether they will or no. Yet they break out into such impudence, that they fear not to seek some tyrannous means to oppress the truth. When as they confess that it is a manifest sign, they condemn themselves therein of an evil conscience. When they say that it is known to all men, they declare that passing over God they have respect unto men only. For they betray their want of shame thereby, that they would not have doubted to turn their back if there had been any color of denial. And when they ask what they shall do, they make their obstinate wickedness known unto all men. For they would have submitted themselves unto God, unless devilish fury had carried them away to some other purpose. This is the spirit of giddiness and madness, therewith God doth make his enemies drunk. So when they hope shortly after that they can by threatenings bring it about, that the same shall go no farther, what can be more foolish? For after they have put two simple men to silence, shall the arm of God be broken?

17. *In threatening let us threaten.* Here may we see what a deadly evil power void of the fear of God is. For when that religion and reverence which ought doth not reign, the more holy the place is which a man doth possess, the more boldly [211] doth he rage. For which cause we [should] always take good heed that the wicked be not preferred unto the government of the Church. And those which are called to this function must behave themselves reverently and modestly, lest they seem to be armed to do hurt. But and if it so happen they abuse their honor, the Spirit declareth there, as in a glass,

[211] "Audacius," audaciously.

what small account we ought to make of their decrees and commandments. [212] The authority of the pastors hath certain bounds appointed which they may not pass. And if they dare be so bold, we may lawfully refuse to obey them; for if we should, it were in us great wickedness, as it followeth now.

Acts 4:19-23

Acts 4:19-23

19. And Peter and John answered them, and said, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than to God, judge ye. 20. For we cannot but speak those things which we have seen and heard. 21. And when they had threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing. for which they might punish them, because of the people; for all men did glorify God because of that which was done. 22. For the man was more than forty years old on whom the sign of healing was showed. 23. Furthermore, when they were let go, they came to their fellows, and told them whatsoever things the priests and elders had said.

19. *Whether it be right.* Let us remember to whom they make this answer. For this council did undoubtedly represent the Church; but because they do abuse their authority, the apostles say flatly that they are not to be obeyed. And (as men use to do in an evident matter) they refer over the judgment unto their adversaries for a reproach unto them. Furthermore it is worth the noting, that they set the authority of God against their decrees; which thing should be done out of season, unless they were the enemies of God, who notwithstanding, were otherwise the ordinary pastors of the Church. Moreover, the apostles express a farther thing also to wit, that the obedience which men use toward evil and unfaithful pastors, howsoever they hold the lawful government of the Church, is contrary to God. This question doth the Pope answer pleasantly, [213] because he saith that all those things are divine oracles whatsoever it hath pleased him to blunder out un-advisedly. [214] By this means the danger of contrariety is taken away. But the bishops can challenge no more at this day than God had given then to the order of the priests. Therefore, this is a toy too childish, [viz.] that they can command nothing but that which is agreeable to the commandment of God. [215] Yea, rather the thing itself declareth evidently that there shall be no conflict then if they suffer their vain and unbridled lust to range freely, having vanquished and renounced the doctrine of Christ.

Therefore, by what title soever men be called, yet must we hear them only upon this condition, if they lead us not away from obeying God. So

[212] "Quam pro nihilo ducendum sit quicquid decernunt et jubent," that whatever they order and decree ought to be held as null.

[213] "Hanc quaestionem lepide diremit Papa," the Pope wittily disposes of this question.

[214] "Effutire," to babble forth.

[215] "Non posse eos nisi ex Dei mandato praecipere," that no command can possibly proceed from them without being agreeable to the will of God.

that we must examine all their traditions by the rule of the Word of God. We must obey princes and others which are in authority, yet so that they rob not God (who is the chief King, Father, and Lord) of his right and authority. If we must observe such modesty in politic [civil] government, it ought to be of far more force in the spiritual government of the Church. And lest, according to their wonted pride, they think that their authority is abated, when God is extolled above them, Peter draweth them away from such pleasant flattering of themselves, telling them that this matter must be determined before the judgment-seat of God; for he saith plainly *before* [in the sight of] God; because, howsoever men be blinded, yet will God never suffer any man to be preferred before him. And surely the Spirit did put this answer in the mouth of the apostles, not only to the end he might repress the furiousness of the enemies, but that he might also teach us what we ought to do, so often as men become so proud, that having shaken off the yoke of God, they will lay their own yoke upon us. Therefore, let us then remember this holy authority of God, which is able to drive away the vain smoke of all man's excellency.

20. *For we cannot* Many things which are found out by hearing and seeing may, yea, ought to be concealed, when as the question is concerning the redeeming of peace. For this is a point of discourtesy and of wicked stubbornness to move and raise a tumult about unnecessary matters; but the apostles do not speak generally, when as they say they cannot but speak. For the gospel of Christ is now in hand, wherein consisteth both the glory of God and the salvation of men. It is an unmeet thing, and sacrilegious wickedness, that the same should be suppressed by prohibitions and menacings [216] of men; for God commandeth that his gospel be preached, especially since they did know that they were chosen to be witnesses and preachers of Christ, and that God had opened their mouth. Therefore, whosoever putteth them to silence, he endeavoreth so much as he is able to abolish the grace of God, and fordo [destroy] the salvation of men. And if so be that a prohibition so wicked do stop our mouths, woe be to our sluggishness. Now, let all men see what confession God requireth at their hands, lest, when they keep silence because of men, they hear a fearful voice proceed out of the mouth of Christ, whereby their unfaithfulness shall be condemned. And as for those which are called unto the office of teaching, let them be terrified with no threatenings of men, with no color of authority, but let them execute [217] that office which they know is enjoined them by God. Woe be unto me, saith Paul, if I preach not the gospel, because the function is committed unto me, (1 Corinthians 9:10.) Neither ought we only to set this commandment of God against the tyrannous commandments of men, but also against all lets which Satan doth oftentimes thrust in to break off and hinder the course of the gospel. For we have need of a strong buckler to bear off such sore assaults, which all the

[216] "Interdictis," the interdicts.
[217] "Libere," freely, omitted.

ministers of Christ do feel; but howsoever we speed, this is a brazen wall, that the preaching of the gospel doth please God, and therefore that it can for no cause be suppressed.

21. *And when they had threatened them.* And here is the end of sedition, that the wicked cease not to breathe out their fury, yet are they bridled by the secret power of God, so that they cannot tell how to do any hurt. [218] How is it that being content with threatenings, they do not also rage against their bodies, save only because the power of God doth bind them as a chain? Not that the fear of God doth prevail with them, for it is the regard of the people alone which hindereth them; but the Lord doth bind them with his bonds, though they be ignorant thereof. Luke commendeth unto us the providence of God in preserving his children; and though it be hidden from the wicked, yet we may behold the same with the eyes of faith, Furthermore, the wonderful counsel of God doth show itself here, in that the glory of Christ is furthered by those which are his most deadly enemies. For whereas the priests do assemble themselves together, it is not done without great rumor. All men wait for some rare and singular event; the apostles depart, being let loose and acquitted. Therefore, the adversaries are not only vanquished, but they confirm the gospel against their will. Notwithstanding, it is expedient for us to mark again, that the faithful do so get the victory, that they are always humbled under the cross. For they are threatened again, and straitly charged, that they teach not henceforth in the name of Christ. Therefore, they do not so get the upper hand that they do not triumph, save only under the reproach of the cross. Whereas Luke saith that they did *all glorified God,* he noteth the fruit of the miracle now the second time, although it may be that they were not all brought unto the perfect end. For that man which is touched with the feeling of the power of God, and doth not come unto Christ, neither hath his faith confirmed by the miracle he stayeth, as it were, in the midway. Yet this was some thing, though not all, that the power of God was acknowledged in the healing of the man, so that the adversaries being ashamed, did cease off from their fury, or at least give back a little.

23. *Furthermore when they were let go.* It shall appear by and by to what end they declared to the other disciples what things had befallen them, to wit, that they might be the more emboldened and encouraged by the grace of God hereafter; secondly, that they might arm themselves with prayer against the furious threatenings of their enemies; and thus must the children of God do, one must prick forward another, and they must join hand in hand, that they may vanquish the common adversary fighting under Christ's banner. They consider [219] with themselves what dangers hang over their heads, to the end they may be the more ready to enter [220] the same, although they see their enemies press sore upon them; yet lest it should grieve them [221]

[218] "Ut illis nocendi via non pateat," that they have no means of doing harm.
[219] "Reputent," let them consider.
[220] "Obcundis," to obviate or face them.
[221] "Ne pigeat," let it not grieve them.

to have a new combat ever now and then, they assure [222] themselves that they shall be invincible [223] through the same power of God whereby they got the victory before. And it is to be thought (although Luke makes no mention thereof) that the apostles being contented with their former answer, did not contend with those furies, [furious men;] and yet we must persuade ourselves that they were not so forgetful of their former constancy that they did submit themselves unto their ungodly decree like slaves. [224]

Acts 4:24-31

Acts 4:24-31

24. And when they had heard it, they lifted up their voice unto God with one accord, and said, Lord„ thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things which are therein; 25. Which by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why have the heathen raged together, and why have the people imagined vain things? 26. The kings of the earth have stood up, and the rulers have met together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27. For of a truth, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, have come together in this city against thy holy Son, Jesus, 28. That they might do whatsoever thine hand and thy counsel had decreed before to be done. 29. And now, O Lord, look upon the threatenings of these men; and grant unto thy servants that they may speak thy word with boldness; 30. Reaching out thine hand to this end, that healing, and signs, and wonders, may be done by the name of thy only Son, Jesus. 31. And when they had prayed, the place moved wherein they were assembled: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and did speak the word of God with boldness.

We are taught by this example what is our duty to do when our adversaries do imperiously threaten us; for we must not carelessly laugh in time of danger, but the fear of danger ought to drive us to crave help at the hands of God, and this is a remedy to comfort and set us up on foot, lest, being terrified with threatenings, we cease off from doing our duty. Here is a double fruit of this history, that the disciples of Christ do not jest when they hear that their enemies do threaten them so sore and press so sore upon them, as careless and sluggish men use to do; but being touched with fear, they fly to seek help at the hands of God; and again, they are not terrified, neither yet do they conceive any immoderate fear; [225] but crave of God [226] invincible constancy with right godly petitions.

24. *Thou art God, which hast created.* Although this title and commendation of God's power be general, yet it ought to be referred unto the present

[222] "Confidant," let them confide.
[223] "Semper inexpugnabiles," always invincible.
[224] "Ut serviliter excipient," as servilely to submit.
[225] "Qui eos ab efficio abducat," which might draw them off from their duty.
[226] "Eniti," struggle after.

matter, for they do in such sort acknowledge the power of God in the creation of the whole world, that they apply the same therewithal unto the present use. In like sort, the prophets do oftentimes commend the same, to the end they may redress that fear which troubleth us when we behold the power of our enemies; secondly, they add thereunto the promise, and they make these two foundations of their boldness whereby they are emboldened to pray. And surely our prayers are such as they ought to be, and acceptable to God only then, when as staying ourselves upon his promises and power, we pray with certain hope to obtain that for which we pray, for we cannot otherwise have any true confidence unless God do will us to come unto him, and promise that he is ready to help us; and, secondly, unless we acknowledge that he is able enough to help us; wherefore let the faithful exercise themselves in this double meditation so often as they address themselves unto prayer. Furthermore, we gather hereby after what sort we ought to consider the creation of the world; to wit, that we may know that all things are subject to God, and ruled by his will, and when that the world hath done what it can, there shall no other thing come to pass but that which God hath decreed; yea, that the wantonness of the wicked is monstrous, as if the clay should resist the potter; for this is the meaning of the faithful generally, that whatsoever dangers hang over their heads, yet can God prevent the same infinite ways, forasmuch as all things are in his hand, and that he is able to make all the parts of heaven and earth (which he hath created) to obey him.

25. *Who by the mouth of David.* They descend now into the second member, that they ask nothing but that which God hath promised to perform, so that his will and power are joined together, to the end they may fully assure themselves that they shall obtain their requests; and because the kingdom of Christ is now in hand, they make rehearsal of the promise of God, wherein he promiseth to defend and maintain the same, so that when the whole world hath done what it can to overthrow it, yet all shall be in vain; and herein their godliness and sincere zeal, in that they are not so much careful for their own safety, as for the increasing and advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

Why have the Gentiles raged? We must need confess that David speaketh of himself, who after he was chosen king by the Lord, and anointed by Samuel the prophet, did enjoy the kingdom very hardly, [227] because his enemies withstood him on every side. We know how the rulers and people conspired together with Saul and his family; after that the Philistines, and other strange enemies, despising him when he came newly to the crown, made war against him, striving who should begin first, wherefore it is not without cause that he complaineth that the kings rage and take counsel together, and that the people do go about divers things; nevertheless, because he knew that God was the supporter of his kingdom, he derideth their foolish enterprises, and affirmeth that they are vain; but because his kingdom was

[227] "Per summas difficultates regno potitus est," came to the kingdom through the greatest difficulties.

established, that it might be a figure or image of the kingdom of Christ, David doth not stay still in the shadow itself; but he apprehendeth the body, yea, the Holy Ghost, as the apostles do truly repeat the same, doth sharply reprove the foolish and ridiculous madness of the world, in that they dare invade the kingdom of Christ which God had esta-blished, as well in the person of David as of Christ himself. And this is a singular comfort, in that we hear that God is on our side, so long as we go on warfare under the kingdom of Christ. Hereby we may persuade ourselves, that howsoever all men, both high and low do wickedly conspire together against this kingdom, yet shall they not prevail, for what is all the whole world compared with God? But we must first of all know and assure ourselves of this, that God will continually maintain the kingdom of his Son, whereof he himself is the author, so that we may set his decree (which shall not be broken) against the rashness of men, that trusting to the help of his hand, we may not doubt to despise all the preparation and furniture of men, though they be terrible; and he doth diligently express how great the bands of the adversaries are; he saith, that they attempt all things, he doth also reckon up their counsels, lest any of these do terrify us. Furthermore, when as the Psalm teacheth, that the kingdom of Christ shall endure, maugre the heads of the adversaries, it doth also show that there shall be many adversaries, which shall endeavor to overthrow the same. On the one side, he bringeth in the kings raging, on the other, the people all out of quiet, [228] whereby he signifieth that all estates shall be offended at it; [229] and no marvel, because nothing is more contrary to the flesh than the spiritual sword of the gospel wherewith Christ killeth us, that he may make us obey him, (Romans 15:16.) Therefore, we must know this for a surety, that the kingdom of Christ shall never be quiet in the world, lest when we are to fight, we be afraid as at some strange thing.

26. *Against the Lord, and his Christ.* The Spirit teacheth by this word, that all those do make war against God which refuse to submit themselves to Christ; they do full little think this oftentimes, notwithstanding it is so that because God will reign in the person of his Son alone, we refuse to obey him so often as we rebel against Christ, as the Lord himself saith in John, "He which honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father." Wherefore let the hypocrites profess a thousand times that they mean nothing less than to make war against God, yet shall they find this true, that God is their open enemy, unless they embrace Christ with his gospel. The use of this doctrine is double, for it armeth us against all the terrors of the flesh, because we must not fear, lest they get the victory of God which withstand the gospel. Again, we must beware, lest, through the contempt of godly doctrine, we advance ourselves against God to our own destruction.

27 *Have met together in this city.* They declare that this prophecy was proved to be true by the event, to the end they may believe the same more

[228] "Tumultuantes," in tumult.
[229] "Infensos illi," hostile to it.

assuredly, for the sense is, Lord, thou hast spoken it and we have in truth tried [experienced] the same to be true; and they call to mind that which was done four years before, or thereabout. In like sort, it is expedient for us to apply the events of things which are foretold to the confirmation of our faith; but because it might seem that the matter fell out far otherwise then than the Psalm pronounceth, forasmuch as they raged not in vain, neither were the assaults of the enemies frustrate when they had put Christ to death; and their violence went further afterwards after a fearful manner. The faithful remove this offense, and say that the enemies could do no more than God had appointed; therefore, howsoever the wicked did suppose that Christ was quite taken away by death, and did now vainly triumph, yet the faithful confess that their rage was all but vain. But here may a question be moved, why he calleth them the Gentiles and people of Israel, seeing there was but one body? I think that the diversity of countries is noted in this place, out of which the Jews came together to the feast, as if they should have said, that the Jews which were born in divers places, having made, as it were, a concourse, did assault the kingdom of Christ, yet was their fury frustrate and of none effect.

Thy holy Son Jesus. The Grecians use the very same word which I translated even now, *servant,* when mention was made of David, for they call [{παῖδα}] sometimes a servant sometimes a son; and David is so called, because he was the minister of God, as well in ruling the people as in the office of a prophet; but this word, *son,* agreeth better with the person of Christ, unless some man had liefer take it thus, that Luke meant to allude unto that likelihood [resemblance] which David had with Christ when he setteth down a word of a double signification. It is expressly said, that God hath anointed his Son, that that may truly agree to him which is in the Psalm, for in anointing him God made him a King, and yet we must note therewithal what anointing this was, for we know that he was not anointed with visible oil, but with the Holy Ghost.

28. *That they might do.* I have already declared to what end this is spoken; that the kingdom of Christ was so far from being overrun by that conspiracy, that in truth it did then flourish. Notwithstanding herein is contained a singular doctrine, that God doth so govern and guide all things by his secret counsel, that, he doth bring to pass those things which he hath determined, even by the wicked. Not that they are ready willingly to do him such service, but because he turneth their counsels and attempts backward; so that on the one side appeareth great equity and most great righteousness; on the other appeareth nought but wickedness and iniquity. Which matter we have handled more at large in the second chapter. Let us learn here, by the way, that we must so consider the providence of God, that we know that it is the chief and only guider of all things which are done in the world, that the devil and all the wicked are kept back with God's bridle, lest they should do us any harm; that when they rage fastest, yet are they

not at liberty to do what they list, but have the bridle given them, yet so far forth as is expedient to exercise us. Those men which do acknowledge the foreknowledge of God alone, and yet confess not that all things are done as it pleaseth him, are easily convict by these words, That God hath appointed before that thing to be done which was done. Yea, Luke being not contented with the word *counsel,* addeth also *hand,* improperly, yet to the end he might the more plainly declare that the events of things are not only governed by the counsel of God, but that they are also ordered by his power and hand.

29. *And now O Lord.* They do very well extend that unto themselves which they cited concerning Christ; because he will not, be separated from the gospel; yea, what trouble so ever befalleth his members, he applieth that to his own person. And they crave at God's hands that he will beat down the cruelty of the adversaries; yet not so much for their own sake that they may live quietly and without vexation, as that they may have liberty to preach the gospel in all places. Neither was it for them to desire a life which they might spend idly, having forsaken their calling. For they add, "Grant unto thy servants, O Lord, that they may speak boldly." And by the way we must note this speech, that the Lord would behold their threatenings. For seeing it belongeth properly to him to resist the proud, and to throw down their lofty looks; the more proudly they brag and boast, the more do they undoubtedly provoke God to be displeased with them, and it is not to be doubted but that God, being offended with such indignity and cruelty, will redress the same. So Ezechias, to the end he may obtain help in extremity, declareth before the Lord the arrogancy of Sennacherib and his cruel threatenings, (Isaiah 37:14 and 17.) Wherefore let the cruelty and reproaches of our enemies rather stir up in us a desire to pray, than any whit discourage us from going forward in the course of our office.

30. *Grant unto thy servants.* Seeing that one miracle had stinged the enemy so sore how is it that these holy men do desire to have new miracles done daily? Therefore we gather that hence which I have already touched, that they make so great account of the glory of God, that in comparison of this, they set light by all other things. They have respect unto this one thing only, that the power of God may be declared by miracles, which the godly ought always to desire, although the adversaries burst, and all the whole hell do rage. The same must we also think of boldness to speak. They knew that the wicked could abide nothing worse than the free course of the gospel; but because they know that that is the doctrine of life which God will have published whatsoever befall; they do undoubtedly prefer the preaching thereof before all other things, because it is acceptable to God. And we are taught that we do then rightly acknowledge the benefits of God as we ought, if by this occasion we be pricked forward to pray, that he will confirm that which he hath began. The apostles had showed a token of heroic fortitude; now again they pray that they may be furnished with boldness. So Paul desireth the faithful to pray unto the Lord that his mouth may be opened,

whereas, notwithstanding, his voice did sound everywhere (Ephesians 6:19.) Therefore, the more we perceive ourselves to be holpen by the Lord, let us learn to crave at the hands of God that we may go forward hereafter; and especially seeing the free confession of the gospel is a singular gift of God, we must continually beseech him to keep us in the same.

31. *And when they had prayed.* Luke declareth now that God did not only hear this prayer, but did also testify the same by a visible sign from heaven. For the shaking of the place should, of itself, have done them small good; but it tendeth to another end, that the faithful may know that God is present with them. Finally, it is nothing else but a token of the presence of God. But the fruit followeth, for they are all filled with the Holy Ghost, and endowed with greater boldness. We ought rather to stand upon this second member. For whereas God did declare his power then by shaking the place it was a rare and extraordinary thing; and whereas it appeared by the effect, that the apostles did obtain that which they desired, this is a perpetual profit of prayer, which is also set before us for an example.

Acts 4:32-37

Acts 4:32-37

32. And the multitude which believed had one heart and one soul; and no man did say that any of those things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33. And the apostles did bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ with great power; and great grace was upon them all. 34. For there was one among them that kicked: for so many as possessed lands or houses, setting them, they brought the price of those things which were sold, 35. And they laid it at the feet of the apostles: and it was distributed to every man according as he had need. 36. And Joses, which was suremined of the opostles Barnabas, (which is, the son of comfort,) a Levite, of the country of Cyprus, 37. Whereas he had land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

32. *And the multitude.* In this place there are three things commended; that the faithful were all of one mind; that there was a mutual partaking of goods amongst them; that the apostles behaved themselves stoutly in announcing the resurrection of Christ. He saith that the multitude *had one heart;* because this is far more excellent than if a few men should have a mutual consent. And heretofore he hath declared, that the Church did grow to be about five thousand. And now he saith that there was wonderful concord in so great a multitude, which is a very hard matter.

And surely where faith beareth the chief sway, it doth so knit the hearts of men together, that all of them do both will and nill one thing. For discord springeth hence because we are not all governed with the same Spirit of Christ. It is well known that by these two words, *heart* and *soul,* he meaneth the will. And because the wicked do oftentimes conspire together to do evil,

this concord was laudable and holy therefore because it was amongst the faithful.

And no man did say. This is the second member; that they coupled this love with external benefits. But we shall see anon, after what sort they had their goods common. This is now worth the noting in the text of Luke that the inward unity of minds goeth before as the root, and then the fruit followeth after. And surely even we ought to observe the same order, we must love one another, [230] and then this love of ours must show itself by external effects. [231] And in vain do we boast of a right affection, unless there appear some testimony thereof in external offices. Moreover, Luke declareth therewithal, that they were not of one mind for any respect of their own commodity, forasmuch as the rich men, when they did liberally bestow their goods, sought nothing less than their own gain.

33. *And with great power.* This third member appertaineth to doctrine. For Luke doth signify that the zeal which the apostles had to preach the gospel was so far from being diminished, that they were rather endowed with new power. Whereas he doth only name the resurrection of Christ, it is *synecdoche;* for this part is put for the whole gospel. But Luke maketh mention of the resurrection alone, because it is, as it were, the furnishing or fulfilling of the gospel; and, secondly, because they had endured a sore combat for the same, and the Sadducees were sore grieved at it, who aid then bear the chief swinge, [sway.]

And great grace was He signifieth that this served not a little to the spreading abroad of doctrine, in that, by helping the poor so bountifully, they found favor at the hands of strangers. For he saith that they were beloved, because they were beneficial. [232] Therefore, there is a showing of a reason in these words, No man amongst them did lack. Although we need not doubt of this, but that their honesty, and temperance, and modesty, and patience, and other virtues, did provoke many to bear them good-will. He declareth [233] afterward, after what sort they had their goods common, which he had touched before, to wit, that the rich men sold their lands and houses, that they might relieve the poverty of the poor,

34. *For so many as were.* Although this be an universal speech, yet is it all one as if it were indefinite. And assuredly it is to be thought that there were many which did not diminish their possessions, and that may be gathered out of the text, [context.] For when he speaketh of Joses anon, undoubtedly he meant to note a notable example, passing all others. Therefore he saith, that all did that which many did every where; neither doth this disagree with the common use of the Scripture. Again, he meaneth not that the faithful

[230] "Sincero cordis affectu," with sincere affection of heart, omitted.

[231] "Nam et externa beneficentia nisi oriatur ex corde, nihili est coram Deo," for even an external beneficence, if it comes not from the heart, is of no value in the sight of God, omitted.

[232] "Benefici," beneficient.

[233] "Latius exponit," expoundeth more at large.

sold all that they had, but only so much as need required. For this is spoken for amplification's sake, that the rich men did not only relieve the poverty of their brethren of the yearly revenue of their lands, but they were so liberal, that they spared not their lands. And this might be, though they did not rob themselves of all, but only a little diminish their revenues; which we may gather again out of the words of Luke, for he saith that this was the end, that no man might lack. He showeth further, that they used great wisdom, [234] because it was distributed as every man had need. Therefore the goods were not equally divided, but there was a discreet distribution made, lest any should be out of measure oppressed with poverty. And, peradventure, Joses hath this commendation given him by name, because he sold his only possession. For by this means he passed all the rest.

Hereby it appeareth what that meaneth, that no man counted anything his own, but they had all things common. For no man had his own privately to himself, that he alone might enjoy the same, neglecting others; but as need required, they were ready to bestow upon all men. And now we must needs have more than iron bowels, seeing that we are no more moved with the reading of this history. The faithful did at that day give abundantly even of that which was their own, but we are not only content at this day wickedly to suppress that which we have in our hands, but do also rob others. They did and faithfully bring forth their own; we invent a thousand subtile shifts to draw all things unto us by hook or by crook. They laid it down at the apostles' feet, we fear not with sacrilegious boldness to convert that to our own use which was offered to God. They sold in times past their possessions, there reigneth at this day an insatiable desire to buy. Love made that common to the poor and needy which was proper to every man; such is the unnaturalness of some men now, that they cannot abide that the poor should dwell upon the earth, that they should have the use of water, air, and heaven. [235]

Wherefore, these things are written for our shame and reproach. Although even the poor themselves are to blame for some part of this evil. For seeing goods cannot be common after this sort, save only where there is a godly agreement, and where there reigneth one heart and one soul; many men are either so proud or unthankful, or slothful, or greedy, or such hypocrites, that they do not only so much as in them lieth quite put out the desire to do well, but also hinder ability. And yet must we remember that admonition of Paul, that we be not weary of well-doing, (Galatians 6:9.) And whereas, under color of this, the Anabaptists and fantastical [fanatical] men have made much ado, as if there ought to be no civil property of goods amongst Christians, I have already refuted this folly [236] of theirs in the second chapter.

[234] "Adhibitam fuisse prudentiam," that prudence was used.

[235] "Ut communem terrae habitationem, communem aquae, aeris, et coeli usum pauperibus invideant," that they envy the poor a common dwelling on the earth, the common use of water, air, and sky.

[236] "Delirium," delirium.

For neither doth Luke in this place prescribe a law to all men which they must of necessity follow, while that he reckoneth up what they did in whom a certain singular efficacy and power of the Holy Spirit of God did show itself; neither doth he speak generally of all men, that it can be gathered that they were not counted Christians which did not sell all that they had.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Acts 5:1-6

Acts 5:1-6

1. And a certain man called Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2. And he kept back part of the price, his wife knowing thereof, and bringing part, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3. And Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the ground? 4. Did it not, remaining, remain to thee? and, being sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast put this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. 5. And when Ananias heard these words, falling, he yielded up the ghost; and there came great fear upon all those which had heard these things. 6. Furthermore, the young men which were present gathered him up, and, carrying him out, they buried him.

1. Those things which Luke hath reported hitherto did show that that company, which was gathered together under the name of Christ, was rather a company of angels than of men, Moreover, that was incredible virtue, that the rich men did despoil themselves of their own accord, not only of their money, but also of their land, that they might relieve the poor. But now he showeth that Satan had invented a shift to get into that holy company, and that under color of such excellent virtue; for he hath wonderful wiles of hypocrisy to insinuate himself. This way doth Satan assault the Church, when as he cannot prevail by open war. But we must specially in this place have respect unto the drift of the Holy Ghost. For in this history he meant to declare, first, how acceptable singleness of heart is to God, and what an abomination hypocrisy is in his sight; secondly, how greatly he alloweth [approves] the holy and pure policy and government of his Church. For this is the principal point, the punishment wherewith punished Ananias and his wife. As the greatness thereof did at that time terrify them all, so it is unto us a testimony that God cannot abide this unfaithfulness, when as bearing a show of holiness where there is none, we do mock him contemptibly. For if, having weighed all the circumstances, we be desirous to know the sum, Luke condemneth no other fault in Ananias than this, that he meant to deceive God and the Church with a reigned offering. Yet there were more evils packed under this dissimulation: the contempt of God, whom he feareth

not, though he knew his wickedness; sacrilegious defrauding, because he keepeth back part of that which he professeth to be holy to God; perverse vanity and ambition, because he vaunteth himself in the presence of men, without having any respect unto God's judgment; want of faith, because he would never have gone this way to work, unless he had mistrusted God; the corrupting of a godly and holy order; furthermore, the hypocrisy itself was a great offense of itself. [237] The fact of Ananias did bear a goodly show, [238] although he had given only the half of his land. Neither is this a small virtue, for a rich man to bestow the half of his goods upon the poor; but the sacrifices of the ungodly are an abomination to God, (Proverbs 15:8;) neither can any thing please him where the singleness of heart is wanting. For this cause is it that Christ maketh more account of the two mites offered by the widow, than of the great sums of others, who of their great heaps gave some part, (Luke 21:2.) This is the cause why God doth show an example of such sharp punishment in Ananias. Now, let us note every point by itself. *He laid it at the feet of the apostles.* Lo, what ambition doth! Ananias is ashamed not to be accounted one of the best; therefore, although he be greedy of money, yet to the end he may purchase a name amongst men, he depriveth himself of some part of his riches. In the meanwhile, he doth not consider that he lieth and deceiveth in the sight of God, and that God will punish this lie. So it is, that he honoreth the apostles' feet more than God's eyes. Wherefore, we must take good heed, that when we do well, we do not seek to be praised of the bystanders; [239] and it is not without cause that Christ saith, that it is profitable for us when we give our alms, to have the left hand ignorant of that which the right hand doth.

3. *And Peter said.* How did Peter know Ananias' fraud (and purloining?) Undoubtedly by the revelation of the Spirit. Therefore, Luke signifieth unto us, that the apostles did after a sort represent God's person, and supply his room. If the Spirit of God, by the mouth of a mortal man, do so sore urge an hypocrite, being otherwise painted with the beautiful color of virtues, how shall the reprobate abide the voice of God himself, with the sound of the trumpet, when they shall appear before his judgment-seat? Furthermore, Peter pointeth out the cruelness and horribleness of the offense [240] by his question, when he saith, that Satan had filled the heart of Ananias. For there is no man whose heart is not pricked with the pricks of Satan, and all men are also many ways tempted, yea, these temptations pierce into their minds; but where Satan possesseth the heart, he reigneth in the whole man, having, as it were, expelled God. This is a sign of a reprobate, to be so addicted and given over to Satan, that the Spirit of God hath no place. That which followeth afterward concerning lying may have a double sense;

[237] "Accedit huc quoque obstinata mentiendi audacia," to this was also added an obstinate audacity in lying, omitted.

[238] "Praeclarum in speciem et memorabile," in appearance noble and memorable.

[239] "Theatri plausum appetamus," long for the plaudits of a theatre.

[240] "Criminis atrocitatem," the atrocity of the crime.

either that he did falsely bear a show of the Spirit, or that he lied against the Spirit. And, indeed, it is word for word *mentiri Spiritum;* but forasmuch as the Greek word [{ψευδεσθαι}] is joined with a double accusative case and that doth better agree with the text [context,] I am rather of this mind, that Ananias is reprehended, because he did lie falsely to the Holy Ghost. Which he confirmeth shortly after, when he upbraideth this unto him, that he hath lied unto God, and not unto men. Wherefore we must take great heed, that hypocrisy reign not in us, which hath this wickedness proper to it, to go about to deceive God, and, as it were *cornicum oculos configere.* To go about to make blind those which are most wise; [241] which cannot be without a disloyal and unseemly mock. Wherefore it is not without cause that Peter saith, that where this cometh to pass the heart is possessed of Satan. For who durst (unless he were void of reason) so blaspheme God? Therefore Peter asketh him as of some wonder, because such blindness is horrible.

4. *Did it not remaining.* This amplifieth the offense because he sinned, being enforced by no necessity. For seeing it is no just or lawful excuse to have been provoked by some other means, how much worse is it to run headlong unto wickedness willingly, and, as it were of set purpose to pull down God's vengeance? We gather out of this, that no man was enforced to sell his goods or lands. For Peter saith, that Ananias had free liberty to keep both his land and his money; because in the second member, the field which was sold is taken for the price itself. Therefore he should nevertheless have been counted faithful, though he had kept that which was his own. Whereby it appeareth that they are men destitute of their right wits, who say that it is not lawful for the faithful to have anything of their own.

Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. Although the words be diversely construed, yet do I not doubt but that this confirmeth the former sentence. For hypocrites do so enwrap themselves in so many shifts, that they think they have nothing to do with God. And Peter speaketh thus expressly, because Ananias had deceived the Church. But he ought to have considered, that

"where two or three be gathered together in the name of Christ, he is present there as the chief governor,"
(Matthew 18:20;)

yea, he ought to have behaved himself no otherwise in that assembly, than if he should have seen God with his eyes. For seeing that God will reign in the Church, if we give him any reverence, we must reverence that rule and government religiously which he exerciseth by his Word. The apostles were indeed men, but not private men, because God had put them in his stead. Furthermore, we must note, that he saith that he lieth to God who doth lie to the Holy Ghost. For the divinity of the Holy Ghost is manifestly proved

[241] "Veluti cornici, uti proverbio dicitur, configere oculos," and as the proverb says, "put out the eyes of the crow."

by this form of speech. In like sort Paul saith, "Ye are the temples of God, because his Spirit dwelleth in you," (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; and 6:19.)

5. *When Ananias heard these things.* The death of Ananias doth, indeed, declare and prove the force of the word, which Paul cloth highly extol; to wit, that it is the savor of death unto death to those which perish, (2 Corinthians 2:16.) He speaketh, indeed, of the spiritual death of the soul, but there was a visible sign in the body of Ananias of that punishment which cannot be seen with the eyes of men. He was not slain with sword, by force, nor hand, but was stricken dead with the only hearing of the voice. When we hear this, let the threatenings of the gospel terrify us, and humble us in time, lest we also feel the like effect. For that which is spoken of Christ,

"He shall slay the wicked with the breath of his mouth."
(Isaiah 11:4,)

doth not only appertain to the head of the wicked, but also to every member. For those which refuse the salvation offered in his word, it must needs be deadly to them, which was naturally wholesome. But and if any man do think it an absurd thing that the apostle did punish Ananias bodily, first, I answer, that this was an extraordinary thing; secondly, that this was one of the gifts of the Spirit, as it appeareth by the 19th chapter of the First to the Corinthians, (verse 10.) After which sort we shall afterward see Elymas, the sorcerer, stricken with blindness by Paul, (Acts 13:8.) Therefore, Peter did nothing which was impertinent to his function, when he did in time shoot that dart which the Holy Ghost had given him. And whereas some think that this was too cruel a punishment, this cometh to pass, because, weighing Ananias' sin in their own and not in God's balance, they count that but a light offense which was a most great and grievous crime, being full of such heinous offenses as I have already declared. Other some do think that this was nothing so, because they see many hypocrites escape scot free daily, which do no less mock God than did Ananias; yea, because they themselves being most gross contemners of God, are yet notwithstanding unpunished for their wickedness. But as God hath poured out visible graces upon his Church in the beginning, to the end we may know that he will be present with us by the secret power of his Spirit, yea, he showed that openly by external signs, which we feel inwardly by the experiment of faith; so he declared by the visible punishment of two, how horrible a judgment remaineth for all hypocrites, which shall mock God and his Church.

And there came great fear This was the Lord's purpose, by punishing one to make the rest afraid, that they might reverently beware of all hypocrisy. And that which Luke saith, that *they feared,* doth appertain unto us also. For God meant to give all ages a lesson at that time, that they may learn to deal sincerely and uprightly with him. In the mean season, the punishment of this wicked person ought to have encouraged the godly hereafter to consecrate their goods more freely to God and the poor; because they might gather how precious alms was in the sight of God, seeing the profaning thereof was so

punished. [242]

Acts 5:7-11

Acts 5:7-11

7. And there was passed about the space of three hours, when his wife came in, ignorant of that which was done. 8. And Peter said unto her, Tell me, sold ye the field for so much? She answered, Surely, for so much. 9. And Peter said unto her, What is this that ye are agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those which have buried thy husband are at the door, which shall carry thee out. 10. And immediately she fell down at his feet, and gave up the ghost. Furthermore, when the young men came in, they found her dead, and when they had carried her out, they buried her beside her husband. 11. And there came great fear upon all the church, and upon all which heard these things.

7. That punishment wherewith the Lord punished Sapphira containeth no new thing, save only that the example was the more confirmed thereby. And it came to pass by the certain providence of God, that the Church should see apart the obstinate wickedness and treacherous mind of them both. Seeing their faults were alike, they might have been known together; but this was more fit and profitable for the Church, that they might severally bewray their own wickedness. Neither was Sapphira provoked by the sight of her husband to dissemble, (as it falleth out oftentimes,) that the fault could be ascribed to shamefacedness, but of her own accord, and being pricked forward by no other means, she seemeth to be no better than her husband. Moreover, their wickedness in lying was like, forasmuch as she may see by Peter's interrogation that their guile was found out.

8. *Tell me.* We see that God doth not by and by [243] punish her, but first he trieth the matter thoroughly, lest he should send vengeance upon any save the obstinate, and those which will not be pardoned. [244] For although Sapphira did know that the matter was hidden, she ought to have been stricken with this question of Peter, no otherwise than if she had been cited to appear before the judgment-seat of God. She hath a time granted her to repent; yea, this is, as it were, a pleasant [245] inviting unto repentance. But she, in holding on so carelessly, [246] doth declare that she was incurable, because she is touched with no fear of God.

And hereby are we taught to labor diligently to bring sinners into the way. For the Spirit of God keepeth this moderation; but when as stubbornness and the stubborn contempt of God is added unto the offense, it is now high time to punish. Therefore, those men are too arrogant who are displeased with

[242] "Tam graviter," so grievously, severely.
[243] "Subito impetu," by sudden impulse.
[244] "Qui sibi veniam praecidunt," who cut themselves off from pardon.
[245] "Placida," calm.
[246] "Pergendo secure," in proceeding securely.

the immoderate rigor of God. It is rather our duty to consider how we shall in time to come [247] stand before the judgment-seat of God; although this is too much to despise his holy power and majesty, if we will have him mocked freely without any punishment. Moreover, so many circumstances, which before I have gathered, do sufficiently prove that Ananias and Sapphira were not worthy of one death only. For, first of all, hypocrisy is of itself very abominable to God. Secondly, whereas they are determined to lie unto God, this ariseth of great contempt, in that they do not reverence and fear Christ, being the Chief Governor of those amongst whom they were. It is ungodliness joined with impudency; because, so they can escape shame and reproach amongst men, before whom they were determined to vaunt and brag, they pass not to deny their manifest wickedness unto God. Whereas they do stubbornly deny their offense, this doth, as it were, make up the heap and measure. And whereas innumerable hypocrites do no less mock God and the Church daily, who, notwithstanding, are not punished with death, I have already showed why this ought to seem to be no inconvenient thing. [248] Forasmuch as God is the only Judge of the world, it belongeth to him to punish every man at his pleasure, when and how it seemeth good to him. Wherefore we must not prescribe unto him a certain mean and manner of punishment. But the greatness of the spiritual judgment, which is as yet hid, hath been set before us in the bodily punishment of two, as in a mirror. For if we consider what it is to be cast into eternal fire, we shall not judge that this is the greatest evil and punishment of all, to fall down dead before men. Look the 10th chapter of the First to the Corinthians, verse 5.

9. *To tempt the Spirit.* He uttereth the same thing in other words which he had said before; to wit, that they did mock God unreverently and contemptibly. But he said that they *tempted* the Spirit, because they had cunningly packed their fraud, as if the Spirit of God were not the knower of the hearts. For it was a point of too great carelessness, seeing the one made the other privy to their wickedness, to make their match between themselves, having, as it were, excluded God. For the Scripture saith, that God is tempted either when his power is taken from him, or the knowledge of all things is denied him. Furthermore, he meaneth that Spirit which governed the Church by the apostles. For when Christ saith, When the Spirit cometh, he shall judge the world, he noteth no other kind of authority than that which he exerciseth by the ministry of the Church.

11. *And there came fear.* He saith, again, that the punishment of one was a lesson to all. But he plainly expresseth in this place a double fear. He saith that the Church feared, because the faithful do never so perfectly fear God, but that they profit yet more, being admonished by his judgments. Therefore, by all those punishments which we read have been laid upon men in times past, and do daily see to be laid upon them, doth God call us back

[247] "Olim," one day.

[248] "Absurdum," absurd or strange.

from the enticements and liberty of sinning. For our flesh must be bridled every now and then after this sort, because one bridle will scarce serve the turn. There was another manner [of] fear in the strangers, yet no such fear as brought them unto the sincere worship of God; yet, notwithstanding, it was such as caused them to give the glory to God.

Acts 5:12-16

Acts 5:12-16

12. And by the hands of the apostles were done many signs and wonders amongst the people. And they were all with one accord in the Porch of Solomon. 13. And of the other durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14. And the multitude of those that believed in the Lord, both of men and women, grew more and more. 15. So that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them in beds and couches, that at the least way the shadow of Peter, as he came, might shadow some of them. 16. And a multitude of the next cities came together to Jerusalem, bringing their sick, and those which were vexed with unclean spirits, which were all healed.

12. He returneth to miracles of another sort, which are more proper to the gospel; to wit, whereby Christ doth not only declare his power, but also his goodness; to the end he may allure men unto himself with the sweetness of his grace. For he came to save the world, and not to condemn it. Therefore, whereas the sick are healed, and others are delivered from devils, these benefits done to the body do represent the spiritual grace of Christ; and therefore they agree with his natural [249] office that I may so speak. That fearful sign which was showed in Ananias and Sapphira came to pass extraordinarily [250] Luke saith that the Church was increased by miracles, because they serve for faith, [251] (as we have said,) to prepare some, to confirm others. Whereby that is proved again, which I have said elsewhere that miracles must never be separated from the word. Luke showeth the multitude of miracles by this, in that the sick were brought forth everywhere, that they might be healed. For God meant thus to set forth the gospel of his Son, especially at the beginning; that he, might for a certainty testify to the Jews, that that restoring of all things was present, which was so often promised, and in which all their hope was reposed, as they themselves did pretend, (and make semblance.) It is well known that couches were certain little beds in which the men of old were wont to rest at noon. Because they might the more easily carry them out, they laid the sick in them.

And they were all with one accord. He signifieth unto us that they were wont to meet together at certain hours, not only for doctrine and prayers'

[249] "Genuino," genuine.
[250] "Quasi accidentale erat," was, as it were, accidental.
[251] "Fidei subserviunt," are subservient to faith.

sake, but that they might win others unto the Lord, as occasion was given. For every man lived at home at his own house, but they had their meetings there, as assuredly no body of the Church can otherwise continue. For if every man will be his own teacher, and pray apart by himself, and if there be no meetings and assemblies, how excellently soever the Church be ordered and appointed, yet must it needs decay and come to nought. He saith that they were all of one mind, to the end we may know that they did all keep that order willingly, that no man was so disordered as to keep himself at home, [252] neglecting the public assembly. Wherein they showed a token, not only of modesty, but also of constancy. For they could not do this without danger, seeing the place was so famous. For which cause, the agreement of them all to put themselves in hazard was so much the more worthy of commendation.

13. *And of other durst no man.* This was the second fruit of the miracles, in that these which believed not, being convict with the excellent power of God, dare not despise the apostles, but are rather enforced to reverence the Church. Yet that might seem an absurd thing, that being terrified with miracles, they flee from God and his people. I answer, that they were letted through their own fault from coming; and it is not to be doubted but that God doth call us unto himself by miracles. Therefore, whosoever they be that go not so far, as willingly to embrace the grace of God which shineth in them, they are letted and hindered by their own perverse and evil conscience. Yet this is some fruit, in that God wringeth some fear out of them; although Luke doth ascribe this not only to the miracle, but rather comprehendeth all together which might serve to the increasing of the dignity of the Church. For all things were so ordered, that there shined there a certain divine majesty; for they did no less differ from the other than angels from men.

For there is a certain secret majesty in holy discipline and in sincere godliness, which doth even fast bind the wicked whether they will or no. But we know not at this day of what sort the same is; yea, rather, we cause ourselves to be despised together with the gospel, through our profane liberty of evil living. Furthermore, the punishment of Ananias and his wife did not a little terrify the wicked, and keep them from breaking in unadvisedly into the company of those men, where God had showed himself so sharp a Judge. Yet we must note that he speaketh of men which were indifferent in this place, and of those which were not of the worst sort; for there were at that time many at Jerusalem, whom neither the reverence of signs, neither yet of the angelic holiness of the godly, could move. Therefore Luke meaneth moderate men, in whom there are some seed of the fear of God; like as we see at this day certain, whom the vanity of the world keepeth back from submitting their necks unto the yoke of Christ; yet because they smell out some divine thing in our doctrine, [253] they dare not despise the same; yet we

[252] "Intra privates parietes se teneret," as to keep himself within a private buildings.

[253] "Sed quia illis divinum aliquid subolet nostra doctrina," but because our doctrine has

may see also in what deadly grins [gins] Satan insnareth all those which have not the Spirit of Christ, that they do not only fear to provide for themselves, but purposely avoid those remedies which are offered them unto salvation. They both see and allow those things which are both holy and profitable, and yet, notwithstanding, they are either carried headlong unto things which are worse, or else they wax drowsy in their filthiness.

15. *The shadow of Peter, as he came.* The Papists abuse this text, [as a pretexts] not only to the end they may commend reigned miracles, which they say are done at the graves of martyrs, but also that they may boast of their relics. Why (say they) shall not the grave, or garment, the touching of the bones of Peter, have power to heal, as well as his shadow had this power? I answer, we must not by and by think that that is right which Luke saith was done by ignorant men, and those which knew not the pure faith. Yet we have a more certain answer in readiness than this. For the apostles were endued with such power for this cause, because they were ministers of the gospel. Therefore they used this gift, inasmuch as it served to further the credit of the gospel; yea, God did no less show forth his power in their shadow than in their mouth. Those miracles whereof the Papists babble are so unlike to these, that they are rather altogether contrary. For this is the end of their miracles, to lead away the world from Christ unto saints.

Acts 5:17-26

Acts 5:17-26

17. And the high priest rose, and all that were with him, that is to say, the sect of the Sadducees, and were. filled with zeal, [or indignation.] 18. And they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19. And the angel of the Lord opened the door of the prison in the night season, and bringing them out, said, 20. Go, and standing, speak in the temple unto the people all the word, of this life. 21. When they heard this early in the morning, they entered into the temple and taught. But when the high priest came, and those which were with him, they called a council, and all the whole senate of the children of Israel, and sent into the common prison to fetch them. 22. But when the ministers came, they found them not. Therefore they returned and told, saying, 23. The prison truly found we shut with all diligence, and the keepers standing at the door; but when the prison was opened, we found none within. 24. When the chief priest, and the captain of the temple, and the priests, heard these sayings, they doubted of these things, what this would be. 25. Furthermore, a certain man coming told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye had put in prison stand in the temple, teaching the people. 26. Then the captain going with the ministers, brought them without violence. For they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.

somewhat of a divine savor to them.

17. Luke hath hitherto declared that the Church was wonderfully increased, that it was furnished [254] with divers gifts, that it excelled in miracles; finally, that the kingdom of Christ did flourish there by all means. Now he beginneth to show that the fury of the wicked was kindled with these things, so that they raged sorer afresh. [255] Whence we may gather with what blind fury and rage Satan driveth them forward, when as they are so little terrified with such evident power of God, that they run headlong more boldly, and with greater force, and bend all their force, as it were, to overthrow the very heaven. As this so great blindness is a horrible punishment of Almighty God, so ought it to teach all men to submit themselves betimes to God, lest that they themselves, being taken with the spirit of giddiness, (whilst they run against the hand of God,) be broken in pieces with the same. Nevertheless, let us know that God will so increase his Church with spiritual good things, that yet, notwithstanding, he suffereth the same to be vexed of the wicked. Therefore we must alway be ready for the combat; for our estate at this day is not unlike to theirs. Especially the knowledge of the gifts of God, whereby he testifieth that he is present with us, ought to encourage us, lest the fury and boldness of the wicked do terrify and dismay us. For this is no small comfort, when we know that God is present with us.

Which were with him. He meaneth those which were most familiar, and the highest linked in friendship with the chief priest, whose counsel he was wont to use, and whom he had, being, as it were, gathered and culled out of the whole order, not for judgment, or discretion, but for the love of his faction; as they did then contend among themselves shamelessly, like mortal enemies. Furthermore, Luke saith again, that the Sadducees did bear the greatest swing at that day; to the end we may know that the government was then confused with horrible wasteness; [256] when as such a sect could bear rule. But God suffered the synagogue to be drowned in such extreme reproach, after that he had separated his Church from it, to the end they might have the less excuse, who despising the gospel, did continue in such a sink of filthiness. In the mean season, what did enforce and drive forward those swine, who were touched with no care of the life to come, save only mere ambition, and desire to keep that lordship and pre-eminence which they had gotten?

They were filled with zeal. I had liefer keep the Greek word still (especially seeing it is common enough otherwise) than to translate it *emulation* (or *indignation;)* for he speaketh generally of the perverse and violent force wherewith hypocrites are carried and inflamed to maintain their superstitions; whereby it appeareth what account God maketh of zeal, and what praise it deserveth, when as it is not governed by reason and wisdom, that is, when it is not led and guided by the Spirit of God. We see at this day

254 "Magnifice ornatum," magnificently furnished.

255 "Ut de integro violentius saevirent," so that they anew become more violently enraged.

256 "Totem Ecclesiae gubernationem horrenda vastitate tunc fuisse confusam," that the whole government of the Church was then confused and lying waste.

those men moved and stirred with devilish fury, who will be counted the most devout of all men, who rage horribly to shed innocent blood. Nevertheless, let us note that he speaketh not in this place of an unadvised or blind zeal, which was in many of the Jews, as Paul affirmeth, but we understand rather a hot and unbridled violence; for although the wicked be accused of their own consciences, because they wittingly resist godliness, yet do they deceive themselves with a false show of zeal, because it is lawful to prevent new things. [257] So at this day almost in all Popery they boast only of zeal, whereas notwithstanding they are zealous for their belly. But admit we grant that that is true which they pretend, how can this excuse the heat of their cruelty whereunto they are enforced by their blindness? as if this were a chief virtue to grant liberty to their wrath, [258] to be avenged of that which displeaseth them; but this was former in order, to make a difference between good and evil, lest any thing be dissolved [259] unadvisedly.

19. *The angel of the Lord.* The Lord brought the apostles out of prison, not because he would rid them quite out of the hands of their enemies, for he suffered them afterwards to be brought back again, and to be beaten with rods; but he meant to declare, by this miracle, that they were in his hand and tuition, to the end he might maintain the credit of the gospel; partly that the Church might have another confirmation thereby, partly that the wicked might be left without excuse wherefore we must not hope always, nay, we must not always desire that God will deliver us from death; but we must be content with this one thing, that our life is defended by his hand, so far as is expedient. In that he useth the ministry of an angel, in this he doth according to his common custom; for he testifieth every where in the Scriptures, that the angels are ministers of his goodness towards us. Neither is that a vain speculation, for this is a profitable help for our infirmity, that we know that not only God doth care for us, but also that the heavenly spirits do watch for our safety. Again, this was no small pledge of God's love towards us, that the creatures of all other most noble are appointed to have regard of our safety. The angel openeth the prison in the night, because he would not work the miracle when the wicked might see him, although he would have the same being wrought known by the event itself.

20. *Speak in the temple.* This is the end of their deliverance, that they employ themselves stoutly in preaching the gospel, and provoke their enemies courageously, until they die valiantly. For they were put to death at length when the hand of God ceased, after that they had finished their course; but now the Lord openeth the prison for them, that they may be at liberty to fulfill their function. That is worth the marking, because we see many men, who, after they have escaped out of persecution, do afterwards keep

[257] "Novis rebus," a revolution.

[258] "Frena iracundiae suae laxare," to give loose reins to their wrath.

[259] "Atqui hoc ordine prius erat, habere boni et mali discrimen, ne temere quicquam improbetur," but the first thing in order was to observe the distinction between good and evil, that nothing might be rashly disapproved.

silence, as if they had done their duty towards God, (and were no more to be troubled;) other some, also, do escape away by denying Christ; but the Lord doth deliver his children, not to the end they may cease off from the course which they have begun, but rather that they may be the more zealous afterward. The apostles might have objected, It is better to keep silence for a time, forasmuch as we cannot speak one word without danger; we are now apprehended for one only sermon, how much more shall the fury of our enemies be inflamed hereafter, if they shall see us make no end of speaking? But because they knew that they were to live and to die to the Lord, they do not refuse to do that which the Lord commanded; so we must always mark what function the Lord enjoineth us. There will many things meet us oftentimes, which may discourage us, unless being content with the commandment of God alone, we do our duty, committing the success to him.

The words of this life. A singular commendation of the gospel, that it is a lively doctrine, bringing salvation unto men; for the righteousness of God is revealed unto us in it, (Romans 1:17;) and in it Christ offereth himself unto us with the sacrifice of his death, with the Spirit of regeneration, with the earnest of our adoption. And this is spoken expressly to the apostles, to the end they may the more courageously enter all manner of combats for the gospel, forasmuch as they hear that they are ministers of eternal salvation. The demonstrative is added for the more certainty, as if the angel did point out life with his finger, as assuredly we need not to seek the same far, when we have the word in our mouth and in our heart; unless peradventure some man had rather take it by *hypallage, the words of this life,* for these words, which I do not reject, yet that former sense me thinks is better, for it was a new revelation of Christ wherein they had life present.

21. *And when the chief priest came.* The chief priest calleth all the council together now, lest, if giving the honor to his own sect, he omit others, and be not able to bear the burden; therefore, he is enforced by fear to call the multitude together, notwithstanding they observe diligently and straitly the form of law. The elders are called who did govern, that nothing may be done but according to the sentence and authority of the council. Who would not have hoped for a moderate end, seeing they began thus? and surely they pretend what color they can, lest they seem to oppress the truth violently and tyrannously; but when they hear that the apostles teach in the temple, howsoever they know that they came not out by deceit of man, but miraculously, yet they hold on still in their purpose; where appeareth, together with the ungodliness of behavior and contempt of God, horrible fury and want of reason. Therefore, the beautiful colors of right and equity [260] do never so cover hypocrites, but that they do at length betray their wickedness. They must need certainly gather by all circumstances, that it is the work of God that the prison was opened, yet they do not doubt openly to rage against God.

[260] "Speciosi juris praetextus," the specious pretexts of law.

These things are also meet for our time. We know how proudly the Papists boast of that maxim of theirs, that lawful councils must be obeyed, because they represent the Church. Moreover, they call those lawful councils, and they will have them so accounted, wherein nothing is wanting touching the external form, and such a council was this whereof Luke speaketh in this place; and yet, notwithstanding, we know that it was gathered to put out [261] the name of Christ; for although the priests did then creep in unto honor by subtlety, or by inordinate suit, [262] to win the favor of men, or by other wicked policies, or whether they burst in unto the same by bribery, or murder, [263] yet the dignity of the priesthood did continue as yet until Christ was revealed. There was in the assembly of the elders a representing of the Church; but where the truth of God is not sought, all outward appearance is nothing else but a mere visor. Therefore, it is in vain for the Papists to cover their abominations with the shadow of this buckler, because it is not sufficient for those to be gathered together who are rulers of the Church, unless they do this in the name of Christ, otherwise forasmuch as it is an usual policy of Satan to transform himself into an angel of light, (2 Corinthians 11:14,) we will grant him as fit a covert under the title of the Church as he can wish.

He brought them without violence. We have spoken somewhat before of the captain of the temple. For I do not think [264] that it was lawful for the Jews to set and appoint whom they would to rule the temple, but that the president of the province did appoint one to have the government of the temple. And he saith, that they were brought without violence, that is, that they were not drawn violently, lest any tumult should arise, so that, whereas they neither fear nor *reverence* God, they are afraid of men. The apostles also do show their modesty in that, that whereas they are guided with a great number of men, yet do they suffer themselves to be led away by the officers, lest they should be authors of any tumult.

Acts 5:27-28

Acts 5:27-28

27. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council; and the chief priest asked them, 28. Saying, Did not we, in commanding, command you, that you should not teach in this name? And behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and you will bring the blood of this man upon us.

28. The chief priest layeth two crimes to the charge of the apostles, for he accuseth them of contumacy or stubbornness, [265] because they obeyed not the decree of the council. In the second member he betrayeth an evil

[261] "Extinguendam," to extinguish.
[262] "Ambitu," by intrigue.
[263] "Mutuis caedibus," mutual slaughter.
[264] "Neque enim mihi probabile est," for it does not seem to me probable.
[265] "Inobedientiae et contumaciae," of contumacy and disobedience.

conscience, or, at least, he showeth that he handled rather a private business than any public cause, for he complaineth that the apostles will cause the priests and the scribes to be hated for the death of Christ. Behold, therefore, what that is which nettleth them, because they fear the revenge and punishment of wicked murder. He pretendeth, at the first, doctrine; but we may gather out of the end that he was not so careful for doctrine. In the mean season, he accuseth the apostles of sedition; for he taketh that for a thing which all men, for the most part, did grant, [266] that Christ was put to death justly. Notwithstanding this is the principal point of the accusation, that they did not obey the commandment of the priests. It was an heinous offense not to obey the chief priest; how much more heinous was it, then, to despise the whole order? But the chief priest doth not consider what is his duty towards God and the Church; [267] he abuseth his authority tyrannously, as if the same were not under any laws, as the Pope dealeth with us at this day; for seeing that he taketh to himself an unbridled authority and government, he feareth not to condemn us for schismatics, so soon as he seeth us refuse his decrees; for he catcheth at these sentences: "He which despiseth you despiseth me," (Luke 10:16;) and thereupon he concludeth that we will rebel [268] against God. But if he will be heard as the ambassador of Christ, he must speak out of the mouth of Christ.

Now, forasmuch as he doth manifestly play the minister of Satan, he borroweth authority, without shame and color, of the name of Christ; yea, the very form of speech which the chief priest useth doth prove how carelessly spiritual tyrants who usurp such authority and lordship as is not subject to the word of God, dare grant liberty to themselves to attempt whatsoever pleaseth them. With a commandment (saith he) have we commanded. Whence cometh such strait rigor, save only because they think that all that must be received without exception which they shall command?

Acts 5:29-33

Acts 5:29-33

29. And Peter and the apostles answering, said, We ought rather to obey God than men. 30. The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him upon a tree. 31. Him God hath lifted up with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. 32. And we are his witnesses of these words [or things,] and the Holy Ghost also, whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33. And when they heard these things, they were cut in sunder, and would slay them.

29. This is the sum of their answer, It is lawful for them, nay, they ought to prefer God before men. God commandeth us to bear witness of

[266] "Pro confesso sumit," he takes for granted.
[267] "Vicissim," in his turn, is omitted in the translation.
[268] "Esse rebelles," are rebels.

Christ; therefore it is in vain for you to command us to keep silence. But I have declared before in the third chapter, when this sentence taketh place, that we ought rather to obey God than men. God doth set men over us in such sort with power, that he keepeth still his own authority safe and sound. Therefore, we must obey rulers so far, that the commandment of God be not broken. Whereas power and authority is lawfully used, then it is out of season to make comparison between God and man. If a faithful pastor do command or forbid out of the Word of God, it shall be in vain for men which are stubborn to object that we ought to obey God; for God will be heard by man. Yea, man is nothing else but an instrument of God. If a magistrate do his duty as he ought, a man shall in vain say that he is contrary to God, seeing that he dissenteth in nothing; yea, rather the contrary rule is then in force. We must obey God's ministers and officers if we will obey him. [269] But so soon as rulers do lead us away from the obedience of God, because they strive against God with sacrilegious boldness, their pride must be abated, that God may be above all in authority. Then all smokes of honor vanish away. For God doth not vouchsafe to bestow honorable titles upon men, to the end they may darken his glory. Therefore, if a father, being not content with his own estate, do essay to take from God the chief honor of a father, he is nothing else but a man. If a king, or ruler, or magistrate, do become so lofty that he diminisheth the honor and authority of God, he is but a man. We must thus think also of pastors. For he which goeth beyond his bounds in his office, (because he setteth himself against God:) must be despoiled of his honor, lest, under a color or visor, he deceive. The office of a pastor is very excellent, the authority of the Church is great, yet so that no part of God's power and Christ's mastership be diminished. Whence we may easily gather that the pride of the Pope is ridiculous, who, when as he treadeth under foot the whole kingdom of Christ, and doth set himself openly against God, will yet, nevertheless, lie hid under the name of Christ. [270]

30. *The God of our fathers.* They descend unto the matter whereof they are to speak, that they may declare that they made small account of the commandment of the priests, not without cause, nor yet unadvisedly. For (as I have already said) the comparison between God and man taketh no place save only when there is some contrariety. Therefore they prove by this, that they are enforced by the fear of God to refuse the commandment of the priests; because God commandeth that which they forbid. Therefore, first of all, they say that God had raised up Christ, after the common custom of the Scriptures. For this speech is common, that God raised up prophets or judges, or rather ministers, whom he determined to use into some great work; which importeth as much as that all excellency of nature is weak, unless God do furnish those with singular gifts whom he preferreth unto

[269] "Eadem in parentibus et dominis ratio," the same holds in parents and masters, omitted in the translation.

[270] "Dei," of God.

any excellent office. Peradventure, also they allude unto that famous place of Moses, which Peter cited in his first sermon, (Deuteronomy 18:15, above 3:22.) They cite the *God of the fathers* by name, as the author, that they may declare that they bring in no new form of religion, neither yet will they enforce upon the people any new god. For they were to make answer to that false slander, that they went about to lead away the people from the law and the prophets. Not that they allow all that worship which was used by the fathers, as profane men are content with this only argument, that the fathers taught thus, that they do all things according to the custom and decree of their ancestors; but the apostles speak in this place of those fathers with whom God hath made his covenant, who followeth right and pure doctrine, who embraceth the promise of salvation with true faith; finally, who had their beginning of the heavenly Father, and who, through the only begotten Son of God, were the children of God together with their posterity.

Whom ye. In this member the apostles declare unto them plainly that they were the enemies of God who would have the chief honor given them as unto the governors and prelates of the Church. Whereupon it followeth that they are unworthy even of the smallest authority. Although there is also a prevention, being a token of boldness, when as he speaketh of that thing boldly and freely which they did account a shameful thing, to wit, lest any part of Christ's glory should seem to be diminished because he suffered a slanderous [271] death upon the cross; as if it had been said, You have slain him. Neither was your cruelty satisfied with a plain and common death; for he was hanged upon a tree. But neither could death extinguish his power; neither could that shame and reproach which he suffered amongst you take away his honor. Therefore the calling of God continueth firm and stable. Therefore, as the apostles hit the priests in the teeth with that wickedness and heinous offense which they had committed, so they prevent, by a granting, to express the manner of the reproachful death which Christ suffered, lest the authors of the wickedness triumph as having gotten the victory.

31. *Him has God lifted up.* Therefore the apostles do signify that whatsoever the wicked do go about, it did not hinder and keep back Christ from fulfilling his function which was enjoined him by his Father. The *right hand of God* is taken for his power. Neither is the same metaphor used in this place, which we had before, chapter 2, and which is common elsewhere, when Christ is said to be lift up unto the right hand of the Father; but the meaning of this place is, that Christ, which was slain by the hand of men, was lifted up on high by the power of God, that he might bear rule over angels and men. And this seemeth secretly to be set against all the enterprises of Satan and the world; as if he should say that they shall have no good success, because they shall never climb so high as to hinder the hand of God, whereby he hath both wrought mightily already in his only begotten Son, neither will he ever cease to work. Yet the end is added also, that he may be a captain

[271] "Ignominosam," ignominious.

and Savior. For so often as God did put his people in hope of salvation, he was wont to promise a prince or a king, by whose hand he would restore all things. The apostles do testify that this principality was granted to Christ. Notwithstanding they do more plainly express his office by the other adjunct. [272] The sum is this, that Christ is placed in the highest degree of honor, that he may govern the people of God, and not that only, but that he may show himself to be a saving captain, or the author of salvation.

To give repentance. They show in this place how Christ reigneth to save the people, to wit, when he bringeth his own to repentance, and doth reconcile them unto God through the remission of sins. Furthermore, we know that the sum of the gospel is contained in these two things. Wherefore the apostles do not only stand upon the defense of their cause, but they preach the office of Christ plentifully, [273] that they may win even some of the mortal enemies of Christ, [274] if it may be. Furthermore, we have declared before what the word *repentance* doth signify, to wit, that it is an inward turning of man unto God, which showeth itself afterwards by external works. For Christ giveth us the Spirit of regeneration for this cause, that he may renew us inwardly; to the end that a new life may afterward follow the newness of the mind and heart. And if it belong to Christ to give repentance, then it followeth that it is not a thing which is in man's power. And surely, seeing that it is a certain wonderful reformation, (or fashioning again,) which maketh us new creatures, repaireth in us the image of God, bringeth us out of the bondage of sin unto the obedience of righteousness; it is a thing as impossible for men to convert themselves as to create themselves. Repentance is, I grant, a voluntary conversion, but whence have we this will, save only because God changeth our heart, that it may be made fleshy of a stony heart; flexible, of hard and stubborn; and, finally, righteous of wicked, (Ezekiel 11:19.) And this cometh to pass when Christ regenerateth thus by his Spirit. Neither is this given in a moment, but it must be increased daily during our whole life, until we be fully joined to God; which shall be then when we have put off our flesh.

This is, indeed, the beginning of repentance, when a man, who before was turned away from God, renounceth the world and himself, and doth purpose to lead a new life. But because when we have entered the way, we are far from the mark, we must needs go forward continually. We have [275] a both through the benefit of Christ. For as he beginneth repentance in us, so doth he also give us perseverance. This is an inestimable grace; but it should do us but a little good, unless it were coupled with forgiveness of sins. For Christ doth both find us the enemies of God at the first, and also there are always vices remaining in us, which cause disagreement between him and us; so that he may justly be offended with us, rather than merciful unto us. And

[272] "Epitheto," epithet.
[273] "Luculenter," clearly.
[274] "Pietatis," of piety.
[275] "Consequimur," obtain.

therein doth our righteousness consist, if God do not impute our sins unto us. Therefore, this latter grace must never be separated from them. Yea, rather the gospel shall be lame [276] and corrupt, unless it consist upon [of] these two members, that is, unless men be taught that they are reconciled to God by Christ by the free imputation of righteousness, and that they are fashioned again unto newness of life by the Spirit of regeneration. So that we understand briefly how we must obtain salvation in Christ.

32. *And we are his witnesses.* After that they have declared that their doctrine came from God, they descend now unto the other part that they speak as they were commanded by God, lest they seem to attempt anything unadvisedly. For this also was a necessary defense, as it is for all the ministers of the gospel, to wit, that they make this openly known to all men that they teach nothing but that which they have received of God. Secondly, that they are called hereunto, so that they cannot avoid the necessity of teaching, unless they will resist God. Luke putteth *words* in this place, instead of *things,* according to the Hebrew phrase. Although if any man had rather understand it of the speech itself, I do not deny but that it may be so. The sum is, seeing they are brought forth by God to be witnesses, they may not give back, [277] but they must publish things which he hath commanded.

And also the Spirit. They confirm their calling by the effect; for this was a seal to approve their doctrine, seeing that God gave the Holy Spirit to those which believed. Forasmuch, as it appeared manifestly by this, that he allowed the faith of the gospel, and it was acceptable to him. In that they say *to those which obey him,* I refer it unto Christ, as if they should have said, those which believe in Christ are plentifully rewarded for their obedience. Therefore God will have Christ obeyed. Wherefore even our ministry doth please him in that thing. Yet here may a question be moved, Seeing that we have saith by the revelation of the Spirit, how is it said in this place, that the same is given after faith? I answer, that the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of interpretation, of healing, and such like, are spoken of in this place, wherewith God did beautiful his Church. As Paul saith, where he asketh the Galatians, whether they received the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith, (Galatians 3:2.) Therefore the illumin-ation of the Spirit goeth before faith, because it is the cause thereof; but there follow other graces afterward, that we may go forward, according to that, "To him that hath shall be given," (Matthew 13:12.) And if we will be enriched *every* now and then with new gifts of the Spirit, let us hold out unto God the lap of faith. [278] But the reward wherewith our want of faith is rewarded at this day is far unlike; [279] for the most part being destitute of the Spirit of God doth neither see nor understand anything.

[276] "Mutilum," mutilated.

[277] "Tergiversari," turn their back, backslide.

[278] "Fidei sinum aperiamus Deo," let us open a bosom of faith to God.

[279] "Sed longe diversum praemium hodie reportat nostra incredulitas," but our incredulity in the present day receiveth a very different recompence.

33. *They were cut in sunder.* The priests ought to have been thoroughly moved, though they had had hearts of iron, but they burst. [280] Whence we gather that no reasons can prevail with the reprobate, to bring them unto the obedience of Christ; for unless God speak within, the outward doctrine shall be able to do nothing else but to beat the ears. The apostles were able so to overcome their enemies, that they should not have had one word to say; but their fury was so untamed, and unbridled that they do rather go mad. Yet we must therewithal note the force of the word, because although the reprobate are not thereby changed, that they may become better, yet it pierceth into their hearts, so that it urgeth their consciences; for thence springeth their fury, because they saw themselves [281] urged by their judge. They would gladly mock all the gospel, as they attempt whatsoever they can, that they may count it as nothing; but there is in the same a certain hidden majesty, which driveth away mightily all their delicacy. [282] And chiefly when they are cited by the sound of the trumpet to appear before the judgment-seat of God, then appeareth their madness and fury.

Acts 5:34-39

Acts 5:34-39

34. And a certain Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, precious to all the people, rising in the council, commanded the apostles to be carried out a little space. 35. Then he said unto them, Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do touching these men. 36. For before these days there arose one Theudas, saying, that he was some great man, to whom consented a number of men, about four hundred, who perished; and they were all scattered abroad which had obeyed him, and were brought to nought. 37. After him arose one Judas of Galilee, in the days of the tribute, and led away much people after him, and he likewise perished; and all which had obeyed him were scattered abroad. 38. Now, therefore, I say unto you, Abstain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it shall come to nought: 39. But if it be of God, you cannot destroy it; lest, at any time, ye be found to fight with God.

34. Luke showeth now after what manner God brought to nought the fury of the wicked. They were purposed to put the apostles to death; Gamaliel standeth up amidst them, to break off that mad consultation. Furthermore, he noteth the circumstances, to the end we may know how it could be, that one man could prevail so much against so many. He saith he was a Pharisee which sect was in great estimation, as we know. He saith that he was in price, or honored amongst the people; and they feared the people. Hereby it cometh to pass that they are the more afraid to do any thing

[280] "Sed rumpuntur," but they burst (with rage.)

[281] "Se sentiunt," they feel themselves.

[282] "Quae omnes illorum delicias violenter discutit," which, with a strong hand, dispels all their delights.

contrary to his mind. So God doth oftentimes set sudden terrors against his enemies, (when they look not for them,)to stay their violence. Furthermore, Gamaliel commandeth the apostles to go aside, lest they should be the more emboldened by his words. For we must not think that he spake thus, because he did allow [283] the doctrine of the gospel, or that he meant to defend the same; but because he saw all the rest inflamed with fury, he being a man moderate and courteous, doth with sober speech temper that excess.

But if we consider all things well, this judgment and opinion is unmeet for a wise man. I know that many count it as an oracle, but it appeareth sufficiently hereby that they judge amiss, because by this means men should abstain from all punishments, neither were any wicked fact any longer to be corrected. Yea, all helps of life were to be refused, which we cannot prolong one moment. [284] Both things are true, that no endeavor of men can destroy that which is of God; and that that which is of men is not so strong that it can stand. But he gathereth amiss hence, that men must sit still and say nothing in the mean season. We must rather mark what God commandeth us to do, and he will have us to restrain wickedness. To this end hath he appointed magistrates, and armed them with the sword; to this end hath he set elders over his Church, to bring the froward in order, and that they may not suffer sin licentiously to rage without punishment. Therefore it is gathered amiss that we must refrain from punishing, because God is sufficient of himself to take away evils. Although his whole counsel is such, Gamaliel willeth the scribes and elders to take heed that they make not open war against God. And he speaketh as it were touching a doubtful matter; whereby it appeareth that he hath no certainty from the foundation, when as he doubteth in the quality of the cause, neither dare set down whether it be good or evil, but doth only command to defer it for a time, until the cause appear more plainly.

In sum, Gamaliel setteth an evil consequent from true grounds; [285] because he applieth that amiss unto the external office and manner of doing which ought to serve for faith only. On the other side, let this be our logic, That which is of God must needs stand, though all the world say nay; therefore faith must stand without all fear, against all the assaults of Satan and men, seeing faith is under-propped and supported with the eternal truth of God; although heaven fail, our salvation is safe, which hath God to be the author and keeper thereof; because God doth defend the kingdom of Christ, it can never be overthrown with any violence; because the doctrine of the gospel is grounded in God, howsoever men resist or shake the same, yet shall it nevertheless continue firm. Again, although the wicked attempt whatsoever they can, and seek all means [286] to destroy the Church, although they

[283] "Probaret," he approved.

[284] "In arbitrio nostro," at our pleasure.

[285] "Ex veris principiis perversam consequentiam deducit," deduces a false consequence from true principles.

[286] "Nullosque non moveant lapides," and leave not a stone unturned.

furiously strive against Christ and his Church so much as they are able, yet they shall not prevail, because it is the property of God to bring the counsels of men to nought; and by this means doth he punish their rashness. We see that both members are well applied to faith. But, in the mean season, there is no cause why the servants of Christ should be less diligent in maintaining the truth; why they should suffer the Church to decay through their fault; [287] why they should carelessly wink at their wickedness who endeavor to turn all things topsy-turvy.

36. *There arose one Theudas.* If we credit Josephus, Gamaliel altereth in this place the true course of the history. For he reporteth that Judas Gaulanites, who was born in Gamala, at such time as Quirinius, or Cyrenius, was proconsul, did raise a tumult with his adherents, because they would not have their goods taxed; [288] and that Theudas, at such time as Cuspius Fadus was procurator, did boast that he was a prophet of God. And Fadus was sent into Judea by Claudius Caesar. The former history is recorded in the Eighteenth Book of Antiquities; and the other in the Twentieth. But I think that when Luke saith, *After him was there one Judas,* he meant not to note the course of time, as if he were the latter; but forasmuch as Gamaliel brought in two like examples, he might put the one in place of the other, [289] without having respect of time. Therefore the word *post* is as much as *moreover,* or *besides.*

Furthermore, even these examples wherewith Gamaliel confirmeth his opinion do not sufficiently agree with the present cause. For, because they did not by and by resist Judas, that sedition which he had raised was the occasion of many murders, and at length he was vanquished with hand and weapon. Theudas also had done far more hurt, unless he had been put to flight in time by Cuspius Fadus. But Gamaliel hath respect unto this alone, that men have unlucky success when as they advance themselves unadvisedly; and that cometh to pass by the just judgment of God. But because the priests refuse to hearken when God giveth them good counsel, they are worthy to be made amazed by man with frivolous reasons, wavering hither and thither through foolish perplexity. Furthermore, if we cast the time, we shall find that it was twelve years at least after the death of Christ before the apostles were beaten. For unto the five years which remained of the government of Tiberius, we must add three and a half which Caligula reigned. Fadus was not sent by Claudius into Judea before the second or third year of his reign. Gamaliel rehearsed not the act within a day or two after. Therefore that space of time is complete whereof I spake. Wherefore the constancy of the apostles was the more excellent, who, though they be so evil rewarded for those long pains which they had endured, yet are they not discouraged, neither do they cease to hold on as they had begun.

[287] "Ignavia," sluggishness.

[288] "Ne census ageretur," to prevent a census from being taken.

[289] "Promiscue miscere," mix promiscuously, confound the two.

That he was some great man. Some books [290] have, Saying that he was somebody; yet both carry one sense. For he boasted that he was such a prophet that he could dry up Jordan, that those which were with him might go over dry foot. Nevertheless, we see how far Gamaliel is from true knowledge, who compareth the holy ministers of Christ unto seducers and robbers; although he mitigateth his words afterward, and, inclining toward the better part, leaveth it indifferent whether they have taken this matter in hand, having God for their author or no. Yet he speaketh doubtfully, because he provideth [291] only for quietness, all inquiry being set apart. This is only to be allowed [292] in his speech, that he feareth [deterreth] the wicked from wicked boldness, because there is nothing more to be feared than to strive against God.

Acts 5:40-42

Acts 5:40-42

40. And they obeyed him. And when they had called the apostles, having beaten them, they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus; and they let them go. 41. Therefore they went rejoicing from the face of the council, because they were counted worthy to suffer reproach for his name. 42. And they did not cease daily in the temple, and in every house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus.

40. *Having beaten them, they commanded.* He saith that Gamaliel's counsel was allowed; yet the apostles are beaten, and forbidden to preach. [293] Hereby we gather how great the rage of the enemies was, who being now pacified, or at least mitigated, do yet, notwithstanding, rage immoderately. [294] And it appeareth also what evil success those doubtful counsels have, wherein men alone are respected, and the truth of God set aside. Gamaliel obtaineth thus much, that the lives of the apostles may be saved; [295] but, in the mean season, the Son of God is blasphemed and slandered in their person; the truth of the gospel is buried in eternal silence, so much as in the enemies lieth, God surely doth by this means wonderfully spread abroad his word; yet that counsel ceaseth not to be evil. Which we must note for this cause, because most men at this day do think, that they do not a little obey God, if they save the lives of those men which come in hazard for the doctrine of the gospel, or somewhat appease [296] the enemies who are otherwise bloody. In the mean season, they are not afraid to drive them unto the wicked denial of Christ, the confessing of whom is far more precious in the sight of God

[290] "Codices," manuscripts.
[291] "Consulit," consulteth.
[292] "Probandum," to be approved.
[293] "Docere," to teach.
[294] "Adeo tamen intemperanter se gerunt," yet conduct themselves to intemperately.
[295] "Parcatur," may be spared.
[296] "Flectant ad lenitatem." incline to lenity.

than the life of all men. But what could they do who, casting away all care of godliness, go about to redeem God's favor with the duty of courtesy? [297]

41. *Then they went rejoicing.* We must not think that the apostles were so senseless but that they felt some shame and did also lament, when they felt the punishment; for they had not quite put off nature; [298] but when they considered the cause, then joy got the upperhand. So the faithful must be two manner of ways affectioned so often as they suffer persecution for the gospel; they must be touched with the bitterness of punishments, [299] yet so that they overcome this sorrow with spiritual joy. For they should have (changed their mind, and) stricken sail by and by, unless they had been strengthened and encouraged by that joy. [300] And it is not to be doubted, but that even death was sweet, and pleasant to Peter on this fashion, which, notwithstanding the Lord doth testify shall be bitter unto him. Let us, therefore, learn that we must wrestle with sorrow and care, [301] that we hold on courageously to suffer the cross, and that we bear the same when it is laid upon us.

That they were counted worthy. This might seem at the first blush absurd, in that Luke placeth honor in reproach; [302] but the disagreement which is between God and the world causeth this, that that which is counted amongst men most reproachful, excelleth in dignity and glory in the sight of God and his angels. We know that the kind of death which Christ suffered was of all other most shameful, and yet did he triumph most nobly upon the cross; so, when we are made like unto him, we may worthily boast that it is a point of singular excellency, that we suffer rebuke in the sight of the world. Thus doth Paul boast of the marks of Christ, (Galatians 6:17.) For we must here respect the cause which doth associate us unto Christ, [303] who doth not only swallow up the shame of the world with his glory, but doth also turn reproaches, slanders, and mocks of the world, into great honor. Wherefore, it is no marvel that there be so few found which are strong and stout to bear the cross, because we are almost all drowned and overwhelmed with the sense of the flesh; and there is scarce one amongst an hundred which considereth that the reproach of Christ doth far excel all the triumphs of the world, which is the only matter of comfort. Wherefore, we must use the greater diligence in thinking upon this sentence; that we are at this day

[297] "Humanitatis officio se qpud Deum redimere volunt," would purchase the favor of God to themselves by an act of humanity.

[298] "Ac dolerent etiam mali sui sensu; neque enim naturam prorsus exuerent," and were not insensible to their suffering; for they did not altogether divest themselves of their natural feelings.

[299] "Malorum," sufferings.

[300] "Nam mox retro vela flexissent, nisi novum vigorem dedisset ex gaudio nata alacritas," for they would immediately have altered their sails, (changed their course,) had not the alacrity produced by joy given them new vigor.

[301] "Anxietate," anxiety.

[302] "Dedecore," disgrace.

[303] "Filio Dei," the Son of God.

made partakers [304] of the sufferings of Christ, that we may be partakers of his glory.

42. *They ceased not.* Constancy did also accompany their Joy. For how is it that we are discouraged with persecution, save only because none lifteth up himself unto Christ, that he may in mind lay hold upon the fruit of victory, and so be pricked forward unto patience? But that man which thinketh with himself that he is happy when he suffereth for Christ's sake, shall never faint, though he must suffer hard conflicts. Therefore the apostles are, after a sort, armed with stripes, so that they valiantly make haste unto death. Therefore, woe be to our daintiness, who, having suffered a little persecution, do by and by resign up the light [305] to another, as if we were now old worn soldiers.

[304] "Socii et consortes," companions and sharers.

[305] "Facem resignamus," resign the torch.

Chapter 6

CHAPTER 6

Acts 6:1-6

Acts 6:1-6

1. And in those days, when the number of the disciples grew, there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because their widows were despised in the daily ministry. 2. Therefore, when the twelve had called unto them the multitude of the disciples, they said, It doth not please [or it is not good] that we should serve tables, having left the word of God. 3. Therefore, brethren, look out seven men of you, of known honesty, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over this business, 4. And we will give ourselves unto prayer, and to the ministration of the word. 5. The speech pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost; and Philip, and Prochorus, [Nicanor,] and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch; 6. These did they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

1. Luke declareth here upon what occasion, and to what end, and also with what rite, deacons were first made. He saith, When there arose a murmuring amongst the disciples, it was appeased by this remedy, as it is said in the common proverb, Good laws have taken their beginning of evil manners. And it may seem to be a strange thing, seeing that this is a function so excellent and so necessary in the Church, why it came not into the apostles' minds at the first, (before there was any such occasion ministered,) to appoint deacons, and why the Spirit of God did not give them such counsel which they take now, being, as it were, enforced thereunto. But that which happened was both better then, and is also more profitable for us at this day, to be unto us an example. If the apostles had spoken of choosing deacons before any necessity did require the same, they should not have had the people so ready; they should have seemed to avoid labor and trouble; many would not have offered so liberally into the hands of other men. Therefore, it was requisite that the faithful should be convict [convinced] by experience that they might choose deacons willingly, whom they saw they could not want; and that through their own fault.

We learn in this history that the Church cannot be so framed by and by, but that there remain somewhat to be amended; neither can so great a

building be so finished in one day, that there may not something be added to make the same perfect. Furthermore, we learn that there is no ordinance of God so holy and laudable, which is not either corrupt or made unprofitable through the fault of men. We wonder that things are never so well ordered in the world, but that there is always some evil mixed with the good; but it is the wickedness and corruption of our nature which causeth this. That was, indeed, a godly order, whereof Luke made mention before, when the goods of all men being consecrated to God, were distributed to every man as he had need; [306] when as the apostles, being, as it were, the stewards of God and the poor, had the chief government of the alms. But shortly after there ariseth a murmuring which troubleth this order. Here appeareth that corruption of men whereof I have spoken, which doth not suffer us to use our good things. We must also mark the subtilty [307] of Satan, who, to the end he may take from us the use of the gifts of God, goeth about this continually, that it may not remain pure and sound; but that, being mixed with other discommodities, it may, first, be suspected, secondly, loathed, and, lastly, quite taken away. But the apostles have taught us, by their example, that we must not yield unto such engines (and policies) of Satan. For they do not think it meet (being offended with the murmuring) to take away that ministry which they know pleaseth God; but rather invent a remedy whereby the offense may be taken away, and that may be retained which is God's. Thus must we do. For what offenses soever Satan raise, [308] we must take good heed that he take not from us those ordinances which are otherwise wholesome.

The number increasing. We ought to wish for nothing more than that God would increase his Church, and gather together many [309] on every side unto his people; but the corruption of our nature hindereth us from having any thing happy in all points. For there arise many discommodities also, even of the increasings of the Church. For it is a hard matter to keep many hypocrites from creeping into the multitude, whose wickedness is not by and by discovered, until such time as they have infected some part of the flock with their infection. Moreover, many wicked, froward, and dissolute persons do insinuate themselves under a false color of repentance. And that I may pass over innumerable things, there is never such agreement amongst many, but that, according to the diversity of their manners, their opinions are also diverse, so that one thing cannot please all alike. This offense causeth many to be desirous to choose a few for a Church; it causeth them to loathe or else to hate a multitude. But no trouble, no irksomeness, ought so much to prevail, but that we must always be desirous to have the Church increased; but that we must study to enlarge the same; but that we must cherish so much as in us lieth unity with the whole body.

[306] "In commune," in common.
[307] "Artificium," artifice.
[308] "Quotidie," daily, omitted.
[309] "Quam plurimos," as many as possible.

A murmuring of the Greeks. Hereby it appeareth that they were not fully regenerate by the Spirit of God, to whom the diversity of nation and country ministereth occasion of disagreement. For in Christ there is neither Jew nor Grecian, (Galatians 3:28.) Therefore, this indignation smelleth [310] of the flesh and the world. Wherefore we must take good heed that the like fault be not found in us. [311] There is another fault in that they declare their indignation by murmuring. Furthermore it is uncertain whether the complaint were true or no. For when Luke saith that the Greeks murmured, because their widows were not honored, he showeth not what was done in deed, but what they thought was done. And it may be that forasmuch as the apostles did prefer the Jews, [312] because they were better known, the Greeks did think (though falsely) that their widows were despised as strangers. And this seemeth to be more like to be true. Furthermore the word *ministering* may be expounded two manner of ways, actively or passively. For we know that at the first there were widows chosen unto the ministration. [313] Notwithstanding, I do rather think that the Greeks did complain, because their widows were not so liberally relieved as they wished. So that the ministration shall be that daily distribution which was wont to be made.

2. *The twelve having the multitude called unto them* It is a point [proof] of patience and meekness that the apostles are no more moved. [314] It is a point of prudence and godly carefulness, in that they prevent the evil which began to arise, [315] without deferring the remedy. For after that every dissension and division hath gathered strength, it is a wound hard to be cured. By this assembly it appeareth that the Church was governed by order and reason, so that the apostles had the chiefest authority, and that they did impart their counsels and purposes unto the people. [316] Again, we must note that the faithful, or Christians, are in this place called disciples, in whom that of Isaiah must be fulfilled, "That they were all taught of God." And again, that of Jeremiah, "They shall all know God, from the least to the greatest."

It pleaseth not. It is in Greek [{ουκ} {αρεστον}] By which word, the Grecians do now express every opinion or decree which is better than another, or which is to be preferred as being better. [317] I do rather think that the apostles declare what is profitable, than simply what they have decreed. But

[310] "Resipit," savors.

[311] "Nobis obrepat," creep in upon us.

[312] "Judaeas," the Jewish widows.

[313] "Ad diaconiam," for ministering, as deaconnesses.

[314] "Quod non magis excandescunt apostoli," that the apostles are not more inflamed or offended.

[315] "Quod mature nascenti malo occurrunt," that they quickly meet the growing evil.

[316] "Cum plebe tamencommunicarent sua consilia," yet did communicate with the people as to their purpose.

[317] "Quo nominie Graeci nunc quod aliis praestat, et tanquam melius praeferendum est nunc quodvis placitum designant," by which term the Greeks designate sometimes "whatever is better than, or is to be preferred to, other things;" and at others, "any thing whatever that pleases," or "any decree."

if it be not expedient for them to meddle with this business, [318] they seem [now] to acknowledge some fault in that they ministered hitherto. And surely that is true, that use is the father of wisdom. [319] Wherefore there shall be no absurdity if we shall say, that the apostles desire of the Church to be unburdened of that function, after that they have tried [experienced] that it is not meet for them. But if there were any fault, it ought rather to be ascribed unto necessity than unto them; for they took not this burthen upon them greedily, but seeing there was no other way as yet, they had better burthen themselves out of measure than that the poor should be forslowed. [320] And when as they say that it is not meet that they should be occupied in providing for the poor, their meaning is, that are unable to endure both burthens, so that they must needs let the one alone. For it is as if they should say, If thou wilt enjoy our ministry in the preaching of the gospel, deliver us from the charge of the poor, because we are not able to do both. But this seemeth to be spoken out of season by them, because they had not left the charge of teaching before, although they had the oversight of the alms. I answer, forasmuch as the administration was confused, they were so enwrapped, [321] that they could not wholly attend upon doctrine as was meet. Therefore, they refuse that function which draweth them away from the free and perfect [322] charge of teaching. Notwithstanding, we may not think that they had quite cast away all care of the poor, but that they did only seek somewhat to be lightened and eased, that they might attend upon their office. And, in the mean season, they declare that the ministry of the word is so painful [323] that it requireth a whole man, neither will it suffer him to be occupied about any other business; which, if it had been well considered, there had been a far other order taken in the Church.

The Popish bishops did suck [324] up great riches under color of the ministration or deaconship; nevertheless, they entangled themselves in divers businesses, which they were scarce able to overcome, [325] though every one of them had had ten heads. Notwithstanding, such is their wickedness, that they say that there can be no church unless it be drowned in this depth; [326] neither do they cease to brag and boast that they are the successors of the apostles, whereas there is nothing which appeareth to be more contrary. They were careful for this, that they might not be occupied about serving of tables, and so be compelled to leave their own banquets. For whosoever is careful for his own table, he taketh leave to be vacant [327] from other men's

[318] "Hac cura involvi," to be involved in such business.
[319] "Prudentiae usum esse patrem," that use (or experience) is the parent of prudence.
[320] "Negligi," neglected.
[321] "Sic fuisse implicitos," were so encumbered by it.
[322] "Solida," entire.
[323] "Operosum," laborious.
[324] "Ingurgitarunt," ingulf, swallow up.
[325] "Quibus vix sufficerent," for which they could hardly suffice.
[326] "Abysso," abyss.
[327] "Vacationem sibi sumit," keepeth himself free.

tables.

But omitting these things, let us mark this sentence. We know what a holy thing it is to be careful for the poor. Therefore, forasmuch as the apostles prefer the preaching of the gospel before if we gather thereby that no obedience is more acceptable to God. Notwithstanding, the hardness is also declared, [328] when as they say that they cannot discharge both these duties. Surely we are not better than they. Therefore, let every one of us that is called unto the function of teaching addict himself wholly to order this his estate well. [329] For we are inclined to nothing more than to fall to slothfulness. Again, the flesh ministereth goodly cloaks and colors, so that those men cannot see by and by that they are led away from their calling which enwrap themselves in strange business. Wherefore, to the end ministers may prick forward themselves to do their duty, let them remember this saying of the apostles oftentimes, wherein they declare that, forasmuch as they are called unto the function of teaching, they must not any longer take charge of the poor. Therefore, what excuses have profane affairs [330] (taken in hand even for some private gain) where that is set aside, which is otherwise accounted no small part of the worship of God.

3. *Therefore, brethren, look out.* Now we see to what end deacons were made. The word itself is indeed general, yet is it properly taken for those which are stewards for the poor. Whereby it appeareth how licentiously the Papists do mock God and men, who assign unto their deacons no other office but this, to have the charge of [331] the paten and chalice. Surely we need no disputation to prove that they agree in no point with the apostles. But if the readers be desirous to see any more concerning this point, they may repair unto our Institution, chapter 8. As touching this present place, the Church is permitted to choose. For it is tyrannous if any one man appoint or make ministers at his pleasure. [332] Therefore, this is the (most) lawful way, that those be chosen by common voices [333] who are to take upon them [334] any public function in the Church. And the apostles prescribe what manner [of] persons ought to be chosen, to wit, men of tried honesty and credit, [335] men endued with wisdom [336] and other gifts of the Spirit. And this is the mean between tyranny and confused liberty, [337] that nothing be done without [338] the consent and approbation of the people, yet so that the pastors moderate

[328] "Difficultas monstratur," the difficulty is shown.

[329] "Spartae suae ornandae, (ut est in proverbio,") to adorn his own Sparta, (as the proverb expresses it.)

[330] "Occupationes," occupation.

[331] "Tractent," to handle.

[332] "Constituat suo arbitrio," constitute at his own pleasure.

[333] "Elegi communibus suffragiis," be elected by the common suffrages.

[334] "Obidentia," are to perform.

[335] "Probate fidei," of tried faith.

[336] "Prudentia," wisdom or prudence.

[337] "Licentiam," licentious freedom.

[338] "Nisi ex," except by.

and govern (this action, [339]) that their authority may be as a bridle to keep under the people, [340] lest they pass their bounds too much. In the mean season, this is worth the noting, that the apostles prescribe an order unto the faithful, lest they appoint any save those which are fit. For we do God no small injury if we take all that come to hand [341] to govern his house. Therefore, we must use great circumspection that we choose none [342] unto the holy function of the Church unless we have some trial of him first. The number of seven is applied [343] unto the present necessity, lest any man should think [344] that there is some mystery comprehended under the same. Whereas Luke saith, *full of the Spirit and wisdom,* I do interpret it thus, that it is requisite that they be furnished both with other gifts of the Spirit, and also with wisdom, [345] without which that function cannot be exercised well, both that they may beware of the leger-demain [346] of those men, who being too much given unto begging, require [347] that which is necessary for the poverty of the brethren, and also of their slanders, who cease not to backbite, though they have none occasion given them. For that function is not only painful, but also subject to many ungodly murmurings. [348]

4. *And we will give ourselves unto prayer.* They show again that they have too much business otherwise, wherein they may exercise themselves during their whole life. For the old proverb agreeth hereunto very fitly, which was used sometimes in the solemn rites, *do this.* Therefore, they use the word [{προσκαρτερησαι}] which signifieth to be, as it were, fastened and tied to anything. Therefore, pastors must not think that they have so done their duty that they need to do no more when they have daily spent some time in teaching. There is another manner of study, another manner of zeal, another manner of continuance [349] required, that they may [350] indeed boast that they are wholly given to that thing. They adjoin thereunto prayer, not that they alone ought to pray, (for that is an exercise common to all the godly,) but because they have peculiar causes to pray above all others. There is no man which ought not to be careful for the common salvation of the Church. How much more, then, ought the pastor, who hath that function enjoined him by name to labor carefully [anxiously] for it? So Moses did indeed exhort

[339] "Pastores tamen moderentur," let pastors, however, moderate.

[340] "Ad cohibendos plebis impetus," to curb the impetus (precipitancy or violence) of the people.

[341] "Si fortuito quoslibet accipimus, "if we receive all persons whatsoever fortuitously.

[342] "Summa religio ne quis sumatur," the greatest care that none be chosen.

[343] "Accommodatus fuit," was accommodated.

[344] "Ne quis putet," let no man suppose.

[345] "Prudentia."

[346] "Imposturis et fraudibus," the imposition and fraud.

[347] "Exsugunt," suck up.

[348] "Non laboriosa modo, sed obnoxia sinistris murmuribus," is not only laborious, but liable to sinister murmurings.

[349] "Aliud studium, alius fervor, alia assiduitas exigitur," another kind of zeal, another kind of fervor, another kind of assiduity, is required.

[350] "Possint," may be able to.

others unto prayer, but he went before them as the ringleader [351] (Exodus 17:11.) And it is not without cause that Paul doth so often make mention of his prayers, (Romans 1:10.) Again, we must always remember that, that we shall lose all our labor bestowed upon plowing, sowing, and watering, unless the increase come from heaven, (1 Corinthians 3:7.) Therefore, it shall not suffice to take great pains in teaching, unless we require the blessing at the hands of the Lord, that our labor may not be in vain and unfruitful. Hereby it appeareth that the exercise of prayer [352] is not in vain commended unto the ministers of the word.

5. *Stephen, full of faith.* Luke doth not, therefore, separate faith from the Spirit, as if it also were not a gift of the Spirit; but by Spirit he meaneth other gifts wherewith Stephen was endued, as zeal, wisdom, uprightness, brotherly love, diligence, integrity of a good conscience; secondly, he expresseth the principal kind. Therefore, he signifieth that Stephen did excel first in faith, and, secondly, in other virtues; so that it was evident that he had abundance of the grace of the Spirit. He doth not so greatly commend the rest, because undoubtedly they were inferior to him. Moreover, the ancient writers do, with great consent, affirm that this Nicholas, which was one of the seven, is the same of whom John maketh mention in the Revelation, (Revelation 2:15,) to wit, that he was an author of a filthy and wicked sect; forasmuch as he would have women to be common. For which cause we must not be negligent in choosing ministers of the Church. For if the hypocrisy of men do deceive even those which are most vigilant and careful to fake heed, what shall befall the careless and negligent? Notwithstanding, if when we have used such circumspection as is meet, it so fall out that we be deceived, let us not be troubled out of measure; forasmuch as Luke saith that even the apostles were subject to this inconvenience. Some will ask this question, then, what good shall exhortation do? to what use serveth prayer, seeing that the success itself showeth that the election was not wholly governed by the Spirit of God? I answer, that this is a great matter that the Spirit directed their judgments in choosing six men; in that he suffereth the Church to go astray in the seventh, it ought to seem no absurd thing. For it is requisite that we be thus humbled divers ways, partly that the wicked and ungodly may exercise us; partly that, being taught by their example, we may learn to examine ourselves thoroughly, lest there be in us any hidden and privy starting-corners of guile; [353] partly that we may be more circumspect to discern, and that we may, as it were, keep watch continually, lest we be deceived by crafty and unfaithful men. Also it may be that the ministry of Nicholas was for a time profitable, and that he fell afterward into that monstrous error. And if so be it he fell in such sort from such an honorable degree, the higher that every one of us shall be extolled, let him submit

[351] "Antesignanus," as a standard-bearer or leader.
[352] "Precandi studium," zeal in prayer.
[353] "Occulti fraudis recessus," hidden recesses of guile.

himself unto God with modesty and fear.

6. *Having prayed, they laid their hands upon them.* Laying on of hands was a solemn sign of consecration under the law. To this end do the apostles now lay their hands upon the deacons, that they may know that they are offered to God. Notwithstanding, because this ceremony should of itself be vain, they add thereunto prayer, wherein the faithful commend unto God those ministers whom they offer unto him. This is referred unto the apostles, for all the people did not lay their hands upon the deacons; but when the apostles did make prayer in the name of the Church, others also did add their petitions. Hence we gather that the laying on of hands is a rite agreeing unto order and comeliness, forasmuch as the apostles did use the same, and yet that it hath of itself no force or power, but that the effect dependeth upon the Spirit of God alone; which is generally to be thought of all ceremonies.

Acts 6:7-10

Acts 6:7-10

7. Furthermore, the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples increased greatly at Jerusalem, and a great company of the priests obeyed the faith. 8. And Stephen, full of faith and power, wrought wonders and great signs amongst the people. 9. But there arose certain of the synagogue, which was called the synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians, and of Alexandria, and of those which were of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10. And they could not resist the wisdom and spirit wherewith he spake.

Luke setteth forth again the increasing of the Church, to the end he may the better declare the power of God and his grace in the continual going forward thereof. This was an excellent work of God that the Church should suddenly, and, as it were, in a moment, be raised up; but this is worthy no less admiration, in that he furthereth that work which he had begun amidst so many lets, in that the number of these is increased, whom to diminish, and so, consequently, to destroy the whole stock, the world doth so greatly labor. In that he saith that *the Word of God did grow,* his meaning is, that it was spread further abroad. The Word of God is said to grow two manner of ways; either when new disciples are brought to obey the same, or as every one of us profiteth and goeth forward therein Luke speaketh in this place of the former sort of increasing, for he expoundeth himself by and by, when he speaketh of the number of the disciples. Notwithstanding, he restraineth this so great an increasing of faith unto one city. For although it be to be thought that the disciples were scattered abroad elsewhere, yet was there no certain body save only at Jerusalem.

And a great company. Seeing that (in speaking properly) our faith doth obey the doctrine of the gospel, it is a figurative speech, uttered by *metonymia,* when Luke saith. That they obeyed the faith; for the word *faith*

is taken by him for the Word of God, and the very profession of Christianity. And he reckoneth up the priests by name, because they were for the most part enemies; for which cause it was a wonderful work of God that some should be converted, and much more wonderful that many. For at the first they raged against Christ with this brag, "Hath any of the rulers believed in him? But this multitude, which knoweth not the law, are accursed."

8. *And Stephen* Luke reciteth in this place a new combat of the Church, whereby it appeareth that the glory of the gospel was always joined with the cross and divers troubles. And this is the sum, that the Church was assaulted in the person of one man. Whereby it came to pass that the enemies were the more bold, and being imbrued with innocent blood, did rage sorer than they had wont; for they had not gone as yet beyond the prison and rods. But to the end we may know that the name of Christ was glorified as well in the life as in the death of Stephen, Luke saith at the first, that he was *full of faith and power.* Whereby he signifieth that his faith was excellent, and that he excelled in power to do miracles. Neither ought we to imagine perfection of faith, because he is said to be full of faith; but this manner of speaking is much used in the Scripture, to call those full of the gifts of God who are abundantly endued with the same. I take *power* (without question) for ability to do miracles. *Faith* comprehendeth not only the gift of understanding, but also the ferventness of zeal. Forasmuch as his name was famous by reason of his excellency, it came thereby to pass that the rage of the wicked was bent against him, as it were, with one consent, to overthrow him. [354] For so soon as the force and grace of the Spirit doth show itself, the fury of Satan is by and by provoked.

And it shall appear by the text that Stephen was diligent and courageous in spreading abroad the doctrine of the gospel; but Luke passeth over that, being content to have commended his faith, which could not be slothful and sluggish.

9. *And there arose certain.* This was the beginning of persecution, because the wicked, after that they have essayed in vain to set themselves against Christ by disputing, when they saw that that former attempt did take none effect, they fly unto slanders, (caviling,) and tumults, and at length they break out into violence and murder. Therefore, Luke meaneth by the word *rise,* that those of whom he speaketh did assault the gospel with their tongue, and did not, by and by, bring Stephen before the judgment-seat, but did first set upon him, by disputing against him. Furthermore, he signifieth that they were strangers, which lived in Judea, either that they might exercise merchandise, or else get learning. Therefore he saith that some of them were Cyrenians, some of Alexandria, some of Cilicia, some of Asia. He saith that they were all of the synagogue of the Libertines. It is to be thought that the free men of the citizens of Rome had caused a synagogue to be builded of

[354] "Uno quasi impetu in eum versa fuerit," was, as it were, with one impulse directed against him.

their own charges, that it might be proper to the Jews which came together out of the provinces. [355]

Therefore, those which were brought thither by the grace of God, and ought to have embraced Christ so much the more willingly, assault him first, and inflame the fury of others, as it were with a trumpet. Also Luke will in many other places afterward declare that the Jews, which were scattered abroad in the provinces, were most deadly enemies to sound doctrine: and most venomous [356] in moving tumults. He reckoneth up many, to the end the victory of the truth may be more famous, whilst that in any, gathered of divers countries, depart, being vanquished by one man; and it is not to be doubted but that they were enforced to hold their peace with shame. Stephen had already won great favor, and gotten great dignity by miracles. [357] He answereth the disputers now in such sort that he getteth the upper hand much. He putteth not that *wisdom and spirit* which he saith his adversaries could not gainstand, as divers things. Therefore resolve these words thus: They could not resist the wisdom which the Spirit of God gave him. For Luke meant to express that they fought not on both sides as men; but that the enemies of the gospel were therefore discouraged and overcome, because they did strive against the Spirit of God, which spake by the mouth of Stephen. And forasmuch as Christ hath promised the same Spirit to all his servants, let us only defend the truth faithfully, and let us crave a mouth and wisdom of him, and we shall be sufficiently furnished to speak, so that neither the wit, neither yet the babbling of our adversaries, shall be able to make us ashamed. So the Spirit was as effectual in our time in the mouth of the martyrs which were burnt, and it uttereth the like force now daily, that though they were ignorant men, (never trained up in any schools,) yet did they make the chief divines which maintained Popery no less astonished with their voice only, than if it had thundered and lightned. [358]

Acts 6:11-15

Acts 6:11-15

11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard this man speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. 12. And they moved the people, and the elders, and the scribes. And invading him, they took him and brought him into the council. 13. And they brought forth false witnesses) which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. 14. For we have heard him say, That this Jesus

[355] "Quae peculiaris esset Judaeis qui Jerosolymam ex provinciis comeabant," that it might be appropriated to Jews coming to Jerusalem form the provinces.

[356] "Virulentos," virulent.

[357] "Fides et miracula," faith and miracles.

[358] "Ut quum homines essent idiotae, summos Papatus theologes sola voce non minus quam fulmine attonitos redderent," that though they were unlearned men, they, by their voice alone, astonished the chief theologians of the Papacy, as much as if it had been by a thunderbolt.

of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the ordinances which Moses hath given us. 15. And when all which sat in the council had beholden him, they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

12. Being overcome with the power of the Spirit, they give over disputing, but they prepare false witnesses, that with false and slanderous reports, they may oppress him; whereby it appeareth that they did strive with an evil conscience. For what can be more unmeet than in their cause to lean unto lies? [359] Admit he were a wicked man, and guilty, yet he must not have false witness borne against him. [360] But hypocrites, which shroud themselves under zeal, do carelessly grant themselves leave to do that. We see how the Papists at this day corrupt manifest places of Scripture, and that wittingly, whilst that they will falsely wrest testimonies against us. I confess, indeed, that they offend for the most part through ignorance; yet can we find none of them which doth not grant himself liberty to corrupt both the sense and also the words of the Scripture, that they may bring our doctrine into contempt; [361] yea, they slander us monstrously even in the pulpit. If you ask these Rabbins, whether it be lawful to slander a man or no, they will deny that it is lawful generally; but when they come unto us, good zeal doth excuse them, because they think that nothing is unlawful which may burden us or our cause; therefore they flatter themselves in lying, falsehood, and dogged impudence. Such hypocrisy did also blind them of whom Luke speaketh in this place, which used false witness to put Stephen to death; for when Satan reigneth, he doth not only prick forward the reprobate unto cruelty, but also blind their eyes, so that they think that they may do whatsoever they will. We are specially taught by this example, how dangerous the color of good zeal is, unless it be governed by the Spirit of God; for it breaketh out always into furious madness, and, in the mean season, it is a marvelous visor to cover all manner of wickedness.

14. *We have heard* It shall full well appear by Stephen's defense, that he never spake anything touching Moses or the temple without reverence; and yet, notwithstanding, this was not laid to his charge for nothing, for he had taught the abrogating of the law. But they are false witnesses in this, and suborned to lie, because they corrupt purposely those things which were well and godly spoken. So Christ was enforced to clear himself, that he came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law; because, when he had preached of abrogating the ceremonies, the wicked wrested this unto another purpose, as if he meant to abolish and take away the whole law. Furthermore, they wrested that wickedly unto the temple of Jerusalem, which he spake of his body. What, was it not objected to Paul, that he taught, "That evil is to be done, that good may come thereof?"

[359] "Quam in mendaciis causae suae praesidium constituere," than to place the defense of their cause in lies.

[360] "Non tamen falsis testimoniis est oppremendus," he ought not to be borne down with false testimony.

[361] "Ut doctrinam nostram reddant odiosam," that they may bring odium on our doctrine.

Therefore, there is no cause why we should wonder at this day that that is so falsely misconstrued which we teach godly, well, and profitably; yea, we must rather persuade ourselves thus, that the doctrine of the gospel can never be handled so warily and moderately, but that it shall be subject to false accusations; for Satan, who is the father of lying, doth always bestir himself in his office. Again, because there be many things which are contrary to the reason of the flesh, men are inclined to nothing more than to admit false reports, which corrupt the true and sincere sense of doctrine. This malice of Satan, and the sleights, ought to make us more wary and more circumspect that no preposterous thing, or anything that is improperly spoken, escape us, wherewith they may be armed to fight against us; for we must carefully cut off from the wicked that occasion whereat they snatch. And if we see that, doctrine, which is by us well and godly delivered, corrupted, deformed, and torn in pieces with false reports, we must not repent that we have begun, neither yet is there any cause why we should be more slack hereafter; for it is not meet that we should be flee from the poisoned and venomous bitings of Satan, which the Son of God himself could not escape. In the mean season, it is our part and duty to dash and put away those lies wherewith the truth of God is burdened, like as we see Christ free the doctrine of the gospel from unjust infamy. Only let us so prepare ourselves that such indignity and dishonest dealing may not hinder us in our course.

Because we teach that men are so corrupt, that they are altogether slaves unto sin and wicked lusts, the enemies do thereupon infer this false accusation, that we deny that men sin willingly, but that they are enforced thereunto by some other means, so that they are not in the fault, neither bear any blame; yea, they say farther, that we quench altogether all desire to do well. Because we deny that the works of holy men are for their own worthiness meritorious, because they have always some fault or imperfection in them, they cavil that we put no difference between the good and the evil.[362] Because we say that man's righteousness consisteth in the grace of God alone, and that godly souls can find rest nowhere else, save only in the death of Christ; they object that by this means we grant liberty to the flesh, (to do whatsoever it will,) that the use of the law may no longer remain. When as we maintain the honor of Christ, which they bestow as it pleaseth them here and there, after that they have rent it in a thousand pieces like a prey; they feign that we are enemies to the saints, they falsely report that we seek the licentiousness of the flesh instead of the liberty of the Spirit. Whilst that we endeavor to restore the Supper of the Lord unto his pure and lawful use; they cry out impudently that we overthrow and destroy the same. Others also which take away all things, as did the Academics, because that doth not please them which we teach concerning the secret predestination of God, and that out of the Scriptures, lay to our charge despitefully, that we

[362] "Bonorum et malorum discrimen a nobis tolli," that we destroy the distinction between good and evil.

make God a tyrant which taketh pleasure in putting innocent men to death, seeing that he hath already adjudged those unto eternal death which are as yet unborn, and other such things as can be said on this behalf; whereas, notwithstanding, they are sufficiently convicted that we think reverently of God, and that we speak no otherwise than he teacheth with his own mouth. It is a hard matter to endure such envy, yet must we not therefore cease off to defend a good cause. For the truth of God is precious in his sight, and it ought also to be precious unto us, although it be unto the reprobate the savor of death unto death, (2 Corinthians 2:16.)

But now I return unto Stephen's accusation, the principal point whereof is this, that he blasphemed God and Moses. They do, for good considerations, make the injury common to God and to Moses, because Moses had nothing in his doctrine which was his own or separated from God. They prove this, because he spake blasphemously against the temple and the law; furthermore, they make this the blasphemy, because he said that the coming of Christ had made an end of the temple and the ceremonies. It is not credible that Stephen spake thus as they report; but they maliciously wrest those things which were spoken well and godly, that they may color their false accusation; but although they had changed nothing in the words, yet Stephen was so far from doing any injury to the law and the temple, that he could no way better and more truly praise the same. The Jews did suppose that the temple was quite dishonored, unless the shadowy estate thereof should endure for ever, that the law of Moses was frustrate and nothing worth, unless the ceremonies should be continually in force. But the excellency of the temple and the profit of the ceremonies consist rather in this, whilst that they are referred unto Christ as unto their principal pattern. Therefore, howsoever the accusation hath some color, yet is it unjust and wicked. And although the fact come in question, that is, whether the matter be so as the adversaries lay to his charge, notwithstanding the state [of the question] is properly [one] of quality, for they accuse Stephen, because he taught that the form of the worship of God which was then used should be changed; and they interpret this to be blasphemy against God and Moses; therefore the controversy is rather concerning right (as they say) than the fact itself; for the question is, Whether he be injurious and wicked against God and Moses, who saith, that the visible temple is an image of a more excellent sanctuary, wherein dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead, and who teacheth that the shadows of the law are temporal?

This Jesus of Nazareth. They speak thus of Christ disdainfully, as if the remembrance of him were detestable. Nevertheless, it may be gathered out of their accusations, that Stephen did, in the abrogating of the law, set the body against the shadows, and the substance against the figure; for if ceremonies be abolished by Christ, their truth is spiritual. The Jews, which would have them continue for ever, did consider nothing in them but that which was gross, carnal, earthly, and which might be seen with the eyes.

Briefly, if the use of ceremonies were continual, they should be frail and should vanish away, because they should have nothing but the only external show, so that they should have no soundness. Therefore, this is their true perpetuity, when as they are abrogated by the coming of Christ; because it followeth hereupon that the force and effect thereof doth consist in Christ.

Shall change the ordinances. It is out of all doubt that Stephen meant this of the ceremonial part only; but because men are wont to be more addicted to external pomp, these men understand that which was spoken, as if Stephen would bring the whole law to nothing. The principal *precepts* of the law did indeed concern the spiritual worship of God, faith, justice, and judgment; but because these men make more account of the external *rites,* they call the rites which are commanded concerning the sacrifices, *ordinances of Moses,* by excellency. This was bred by the bone from the beginning of the world, and it will never out of the flesh so long as it lasteth. [363] As at this day the Papists acknowledge no worship of God save only in their visors; although they differ much from the Jews, because they follow nothing but the frivolous invention of men for the ordinances of God.

15. *And when they had beheld.* Men do commonly in places of judgment turn their eyes toward the party arraigned, when as they look for his defense. He saith that Stephen appeared like to an angel; this is not spoken of his natural face, but rather of his present countenance. For whereas the countenance of those which are arraigned useth commonly to be pale, whereas they stammer in their speech, and show other signs of fear, Luke teacheth that there was no such thing in Stephen, but that there appeared rather in him a certain majesty. For the Scripture useth sometimes to borrow a similitude of angels in this sense; as 1 Samuel 24:9; 2 Samuel 14:17; 2 Samuel 19:27

[363] "Hoc ab initio mundi fuit ingenium, et erit usque in finem," this has been the disposition from the beginning of the world, and will be even to the end.

Chapter 7

CHAPTER 7

Acts 7:1-4

Acts 7:1-4

1. And the chief priest said, Are these things so? 2. He answered, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3. And he said unto him, Come out of thy country, and from amongst thy kindred, and come into the land which I will show thee. 4. Then he came out of the land of the Chaldees, and dwelt in Charran. After that his father was dead, God brought him thence into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

1. There appeareth as yet some color of equity in the high priest and in the council; and yet, notwithstanding, there is a most unjust prejudice in his words; for he asketh him not what cause he had to teach thus, neither doth he admit him unto the defense of right, (which was, notwithstanding, the chief;) but he demanded precisely whether Stephen uttered these words, whatsoever they were; as the Papists at this day will not demand what doctrine it is, and whether it can be proved out of the Scriptures; but they inquire [364] whether any man durst mutter against their superstitions, that so soon as he is convict, they may forthwith burn [365] him. Furthermore, Stephen's answer may seem at the first blush absurd and foolish. He beginneth first at the very first beginning; afterwards he maketh a long narration, wherein there is no mention made, in a manner, of the matter in hand; and there can be no greater fault than to utter many words which are nothing appertinent unto the matter; [366] but whosoever shall thoroughly consider this long speech, he shall find nothing therein which is superfluous; and shall full well perceive that Stephen speaketh very ap-pertinently, [367] as the matter requireth. He was accused as an apostate (or revolt,) which did attempt the overthrow of religion and the worship of God; therefore, he beateth in [368] this diligently, that he retaineth that God which the fathers have always worshipped, so that he turneth away the crime of wicked backsliding; [369] and declareth that

[364] "Sed tanum hoc quaerint," but the only thing they ask is.
[365] "Vulcano devoveant," devote him to Vulcan, (to the flames.)
[366] "Et extra rem vagari," and wander from the subject.
[367] "Apposito," appositely.
[368] "Sedulo igitur inculcat," he therefore strenuously maintains.
[369] "Ita impiae defectiones cremen avertit," he thus repels the charge of impious defection

his enemies were pricked forward with nothing less than with the zeal of the law, for they bear a show that they were wholly determined [370] to increase the glory of God; therefore, he wringeth from them this false boasting, and because they had the fathers always in their mouths, because they were puffed up with the glory of their nation, Stephen declareth also that they have no cause to be proud of this, but rather that the corruptions of the fathers were so great and so many, that they ought to be ashamed and humbled.

As concerning the principal state of the cause, because the question was concerning the temple and the ceremonies, he affirmeth plainly that their fathers were elected of God to be a peculiar people before there was any temple, and before Moses was born; and to this end tendeth that *exordium* or beginning which is so far fet, (fetched.) Secondly, he telleth them that all external rites which God gave by the hand of Moses were fashioned according to the heavenly pattern.

Whereupon it followeth, that the ceremonial law is referred unto another end, and that those deal foolishly and disorderly who omit the truth, and stay only in the signs. If the readers shall refer the whole oration of Stephen unto these points, they shall find nothing therein which agreeth not very well with the cause, as I shall declare again briefly in the end; nevertheless, that scope of the whole oration shall not hinder but that we may discuss all things briefly which are worth the noting.

2. *Men, brethren, and fathers.* Although Stephen saw that those which sat in the council were, for the most part, the sworn enemies of Christ, yet because the ordinary government of the people did belong to them, and they had the oversight of the Church, which God had not as yet cast off, therefore, he is not afraid, for modesty's sake, to call them fathers. Neither doth he flatteringly purchase favor hereby; but he giveth this honor to the order and government appointed by God, until such time as the authority should be taken from them, the order being altered. Nevertheless, the reverence of the place which they had doth not hinder him nor stop his mouth; but that he doth freely dissent from them, whereby it appeareth how ridiculous the Papists are who will have us so tied unto bare and vain invented titles, that they may enforce us to subscribe unto their decrees, though they be never so wicked.

The God of glory. By this beginning, he declareth that he doth not disagree or dissent from the fathers in true religion which they followed; for all religion, the worship of God, the doctrine of the law, all prophecies, did depend upon that covenant which God made with Abraham; therefore, when Stephen confessed that God appeared to Abraham, he embraceth the law and the prophets, which flow from that first revelation as from a fountain; moreover, he calleth him the *God of glory,* that he may distinguish him from

or revolt.

[370] "Simulabant enim nihil sibi esse propositum quam," for they pretended that their only object was.

the false and reigned gods, who alone is worthy of glory.

When he was in Mesopotamia. It is well known that that is called by this name which lieth between the river Tigris and Euphrates; and he saith before, he dwelt in Charran, because Abraham, being warned by an oracle, fled [371] from Chaldea to Charran, which is a city of Mesopotamia, famous by reason of the slaughter of Crassus and the Roman army; although Pliny saith that it was a city of Arabia; and it is no marvel that Chaldea is in this place comprehended under the name of Mesopotamia, because, although that region, which is enclosed with Tigris and Euphrates, [Mesopotamia,] be properly the country between two rivers, yet those which set down any description of countries [372] do call both Assyria and Chaldea by this name.

The sum is this, that Abraham being commanded by God, did forsake his country, and so he was prevented with the mere goodness of God when as he sought that which was offered him at home of the [its] own accord. Read the last chapter of Joshua; but it seemeth that Moses' narration doth somewhat disagree with this, for after that, about the end of the 11th chapter of Genesis, he had declared, that Abraham doth [did] go into another country to dwell, having left his house, he addeth, in the beginning of the 12th, that *God spake unto Abraham.* This is easily answered, for Moses reciteth not in this latter place what happened after the departure of Abraham; but lest any man should think that Abraham wandered into other countries, having unadvisedly forsaken his own house, (as light and indiscreet men [373] used to do sometimes,) he showeth the cause of his departure, to wit, because he was commanded by God to flit into another place. And thus much do the words of the oracle import. For, if he had been a stranger in another country, God could not have commanded him to depart out of his native soil, forsaking his kinsmen and father's house. Therefore, we see that this place agreeth wondrous well with the words of Moses. For after that Moses hath said that Abraham went to Charran, to the end he may show that this journey was taken in hand, not through any lightness of man, but at the commandment of God, he addeth that afterwards which he had before omitted, which manner of speaking is much used of the Hebrews.

3. *Come out of thy country.* God useth many words, to the end he may the more wound the mind of Abraham, as if it were not a thing sharp enough of itself to be banished out of his own country. And that served to try his faith; even as that other thing also, that God assigneth him no land wherein he may dwell, but maketh him stand in doubt, and wait for a time. Wherefore the obedience of Abraham was so much the more to be commended, because the sweetness of his native soil keepeth him not back from going willingly, as it were, into exile; and in that he doubteth not to follow God, although there appear no certain resting-place, but is commanded to wander to and

[371] "Migravit," migrated.

[372] "Geographi," geographers.

[373] "Leves et inconsiderati homines," fickle and inconsiderate.

fro for a time. Whereas, the showing of the land is deferred, it differeth not much from deceiving of him. [374]

Furthermore, we learn continually by our own experience how profitable it was for Abraham thus to be exercised, and, as it were, trained by little and little. Many men are carried with a godly affection to attempt great things, but by and by, so soon as their heat is waxen cold, it repenteth them of their purpose, and they would gladly slip their necks out of the collar. [375] Therefore, lest Abraham should faint when he was in the midst of his course, through the remembrance of those things which he had left behind him, God sifteth and trieth his mind thoroughly, immediately after he had begun, lest he take anything in hand lightly and unadvisedly. To this purpose serveth the parable which Christ setteth before us concerning the building of the tower, (Luke 14:28.) For he teacheth that we must first cast the charges, lest with shame we be enforced to leave off building after we have begun. And though this were a particular thing in Abraham in that he was commanded to go out of his own country, and to go into a far country, in that God carried him from place to place, yet, notwithstanding, there is in these words some figure of the calling of us all. We are not all simply commanded to forsake our country, but we are commanded to deny ourselves; we are not commanded to come out of our father's house, but to bid adieu to our own will, and to the desires of our own flesh. Again, if father and mother, wife and children, hinder us from following God, we must forsake them all. The commandment is given simply to Abraham to flit; but we are commanded to do the stone upon condition. For if in any place we cannot serve God, we must rather make choice of exile than to stay in our nest, being slothful and sluggish. Therefore, let us have the example of Abraham always before our eyes. He is the father of the faithful, he was tried all manner of ways. Doth he forget his country, his friends, and himself, that he may give over himself unto God? (Romans 4:16,17.) If we will be counted the children of God, we must not degenerate from him.

Which I shall show thee. We must note that which I touched a little before, that Abraham is kept in doubt, to the end his patience may be tried. And this must we also apply to our own use, that we may learn to depend wholly upon God. And surely this is a principal exercise of our faith to put our trust in God, even when we see nothing. God, indeed, will oftentimes show us a land wherein he granteth us an abiding-place; yet, notwithstanding, because we are strangers in the world, we have no certain and continual place of abode anywhere. Again, our life, as Paul saith, is hid, (Colossians 3:3;) and being like unto dead men, we hope for salvation, which is hid in heaven. Therefore, as touching our perpetual habitation, God doth cause us to depend upon his providence alone, when he commandeth us, as it were, to wander in a strange country. Lest such deferring discourage us, we must hold

[374] "A frustratione," from a frustrating of him, from rendering his journey vain.

[375] "Ac libentor cursum reflecterent," and they would willingly retrace their steps.

this general rule of faith, that we must go whither God calleth us, howsoever he do not show that which he promiseth.

4. *Then going out.* The readiness and willingness of faith is commended in these words. For when he is called he maketh no delay, but maketh haste [376] and subdueth all his affections, that they may obey the holy commandment of God. It is uncertain for what cause he stayed at Charran; yet it may be that the weakness of his father caused him to tarry there, who, as we read, died there shortly after; or else, because he durst go no further, until such time as the Lord had told him whither he should go. It is more like to be true in mine opinion, that he was stayed there a while with the wearisomeness and sickness of his father, because Stephen saith plainly that he was brought thence after the death of his father.

Acts 7: 5-8

Acts 7: 5-8

5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not the breadth of a foot; and promised that he would give it to him to possess, and to his seed after him, when as he had no son. 6. And God spake after this manner, Thy seed shall sojourn in a strange land; and they shall bring it into bondage, and shall evil entreat it four hundred years. 7. But the nation whom they shall serve will I judge, said God. And afterwards they shall come out, and shall worship me in this place. 8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so he begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

5. We must note three firings in this place; that God exercised the patience of his servant, because, after that he had brought him out of his own country, he dwelt in the land of Canaan as a stranger.

[First,] For Abraham possessed not one foot's-breadth, save only that which he bought to bury in. And that is counted no possession which serveth not for the uses of this life. Secondly, forasmuch as that field was bought, Stephen doth for good causes say, that God gave Abraham nothing. For that could not be gotten either with money, or by any other means which man could invent, which Abraham did hope for of the promise.

Secondly, we must note, that though God did not show Abraham the thing itself as yet, yet did he uphold him by his word. And this is our stay, when God promiseth that that is laid up for us which as yet we possess not. Therefore, when as the thing, that is, the possession of the land, was wanting, Abraham had for his help and stay the promise of God; and being content with the same alone, he desired nothing in the land of Canaan save only an uncertain resting-place wherein he might sojourn.

For as much as [{επαγγελλεσθαι}] signifieth simply to promise, I thought

[376] "Non procrastinat, sed moras omnes rampit," he does not procrastinate, but breaks off all delay.

there was no cause why, with Erasmus, I should translate it in this place, to *promise again.* For I resolve it adversatively, *although he had promised,* that by the way we may note as it were, a show of deceiving, [377] unless peradventure some man be disposed to apply it unto the promises which are oftentimes repeated. [378]

Thirdly, we must note that the promise was such that it did not much differ from a mere mock. God promised the land to the seed of Abraham when he was fourscore years old, and had to wife one that was barren, neither had he any hope to have any issue. This seemeth to be more than frivolous. For why doth he not rather promise that he will give him seed? But this was a notable trial of faith, in that Abraham, without asking any question, or any curious disputation, did obediently and meekly embrace that which he had heard proceed out of the mouth of the Lord. Therefore, let us remember that God doth so lift up and comfort his servant with his word, that he doth not only defer the giving of the thing, [379] but also he may seem after a sort to mock him; as he dealeth with us also in some respect. For, although he call us the heirs of the world, (James 2:5,) he suffereth us oftentimes to want even a competent living and necessary helps. And this doth he of set purpose, that he may bring the wisdom of the flesh to nought, seeing that we do not otherwise give due honor to his word.

6. *Thy seed shall be a stranger.* Stephen putteth the Jews in mind in how miserable and reproachful an estate their fathers were in Egypt; and showeth that this their servitude, wherewith they were oppressed, came not by chance; because it was foretold long before by the oracle of God. This history ought to have been of great force, partly to tame their lofty courages, [380] and to teach them modesty; partly to set forth the grace of God, because God had always had a care of that nation. For this is a singular benefit, in that the people are restored wonderfully, as it were, from death to life. In the mean season, the Jews are taught that the Church of God was elsewhere than in the land wherein they dwelt; that the fathers were chosen to be a peculiar people, and that they were kept safe under the tuition of God, before ever the temple was built, or the external ceremonies of the law were instituted.

These things appertain unto the general scope or drift of the sermon. But hence may we gather a profitable admonition. Bondage is of itself hard and bitter; but when cruelty of masters is added thereunto, it seemeth to be intolerable. Wherefore, it must needs be that the mind of the godly man was sore wounded, when he heard that his seed should serve, and be villanously and cruelly entreated, Moreover, this was no small trial; forasmuch as these things were, to look to contrary—the inheritance of the land of Canaan which was now promised, and bondage in a strange country. For who would not

[377] "Ut oblique species frustrationis," that a species of frustration may be indirectly noted.
[378] "Quod liberum relinquo," I leave the point open, omitted.
[379] "Exhibitionem," the exhibition, or manifestation.
[380] "Feroces illorum spiritus," their fierce tempers.

have thought that God had, as it were, forgotten his former promise, when as he telleth Abraham that his seed shall endure miserable bondage? He saith, at the first, that he will give his seed the land. But he had as yet no seed; yea, all hope of seed was now cut off. But when doth he promise that he will give it? After his death. By and by he saith, that that seed should be carried away to another place, that it may serve strangers. And how long? Four hundred years. Doth he not seem, by this means, to pull back his hand, that he may not perform that which he had promised?

Let us know that this was done, (not once only,) for God dealeth oftentimes with us thus, so that he may seem contrary to himself; and he speaketh also in such sort as that he may seem to call back [381] that which he had promised. Therefore, it cannot be but that flesh will judge that he is contrary to himself; but faith doth know that his words do agree well together amongst themselves, and with his works. And this is the purpose of God, to the end he may extend the sight of our faith the farther, to show his promises afar off, as it were, a long place [space] being put between. Therefore it is our duty to go forward, and to strive to attain unto that salvation which is set before us through many straits, [382] through divers lets, through long distance, through the midst of deeps, and, finally, through death itself. Furthermore, seeing that we see that the people which God had chosen did serve the Egyptians, and was uncourteously [383] afflicted, we must not be discouraged if the like condition be prepared for us at this day. For it is no new thing, neither any unwonted thing, for the Church of God to lie oppressed under tyranny, and to be, as it were, trodden under foot of the wicked.

7. *The nation whom they shall serve.* This judgment is joined with the deliverance of the people. For, whereas God doth punish the cruelty and tyranny of the wicked Egyptians, he doth that for his people's sake, whom he took into his tuition, that it may be seen that he is the deliverer of his Church. Therefore, so often as we are unjustly afflicted by the wicked, let us remember that God is the Judge of the world, who will let no injuries be unpunished. Let every man thus think with himself, Seeing that I am under the tuition of God, who is the Judge of the world, and to whom it belongeth to punish all injuries, those shall not escape his hand who trouble me now. There is the like place in Deuteronomy 32:43, where God saith that vengeance is his. Whence Paul gathereth that we must give place to wrath, (Romans 12:19;) as if he should say, that this ought to serve to reform impatience, and to bridle our evil affections, in that God promiseth that he will revenge; for he which revengeth himself doth take God's office from him. And let us still remember that which I have already said, that God is touched with an especial care to revenge injuries done to his children, as it is in the Psalm, "Hurt not mine anointed, and be not troublesome to my prophets."

[381] "Retractare," to retract.
[382] "Per innumeros anfractus," though innumerable wanderings.
[383] "Inhumaniter," inhumanly.

They shall come thence and serve me. Therefore their deliverance went before the temple and the worship of the law; whereupon it followeth, that the grace of God was not tied to ceremonies. Nevertheless, Stephen noteth the end of their deliverance, that God chose both a peculiar people and a peculiar place for the true worship of his name. Whence we gather again, that we must regard what he commandeth and alloweth. Other nations also were determined to worship God; but because their rites were corrupt and bastardly, [384] God doth separate the Jews from the rest, and assigneth them a place where he will have them to worship him sincerely and duly as they ought. This place teacheth us, that God's benefits must be referred to this end, that men might be brought to addict and give over themselves wholly to him. Now, since that God hath dispersed the treasures of his grace throughout the whole world, we must endeavor to sanctify him, by worshipping him purely and holily, in what country soever we dwell.

8. *He gave him the covenant.* When as he confesseth that circumcision is the covenant of God, he cleareth himself sufficiently of that crime which was laid to his charge; but, in the mean season, he showeth that the Jews deal amiss, if they place the beginning of their salvation in the external sign. For if Abraham was called, and the land and redemption promised to his seed before such time as he was circumcised, it appeareth that the glory of the whole stock cloth not depend upon circumcision. Paul useth the same argument in the 4th chapter to the Romans, (Romans 4:11.) For, seeing that Abraham obtained righteousness, and pleased God before he was circumcised, he gathereth thence that circumcision is not the cause of righteousness. Therefore we see that Stephen frameth no vain and idle narration; because this was very much appertinent unto the cause, that the Jews might remember how God had adopted them with their fathers, and it is to be thought that Stephen did plainly express both things; that although circumcision was given by God, that it might be a sign of grace, yet was the adoption before it both in order and in time. But we have no need to dispute any longer in this place concerning the nature and force of circumcision. Only let us note this, that God doth first promise those things to Abraham which he confirmeth afterward by circumcision, that we may know that the signs are vain and nothing worth, unless the word go before. Let us also note, that there is a profitable doctrine contained in the word *covenant,* to wit, that God maketh his covenant with us in the sacraments, that he may declare his love toward us; which thing, if it be true, first, they are not only works of external profession amongst men, but they gave great force inwardly before God, to confirm the faith. Secondly, they are no vain figures; because God, who is true figureth nothing there which he doth not perform.

[384] "Degeneres," degenerate.

Acts 7:9-16

Acts 7:9-16

9. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt. Notwithstanding, God was with him; 10. And he delivered him out of all his afflictions: and he gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt, and over all his house. 11. And there came a famine upon all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; neither did our fathers find food. 12. And when Jacob had heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent our fathers thither first. 13. And at the second coming Joseph was known of his brethren; and the kindred of Joseph was made known to Pharaoh. 14. Then Joseph sent, and called out his father Jacob and all his kindred, seventy-five souls. 15. And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, and our fathers; 16. And they were carried into Sychem, and they were laid in the sepulcher which Abraham had bought for money of the sons of Hemor, the son [father] of Sychem.

9. Now followeth the greatest wickedness of the nation of Israel, that they conspired [385] together to oppress their innocent brother, which cruelty is contrary [386] to nature. Neither could the Jews object that it was a private fault of a few; for the infamy reacheth unto all the people. Forasmuch as all the patriarchs, Benjamin excepted, had polluted themselves with that treachery; therefore in that Stephen vouchsafeth to give them an honorable name that redoundeth to the greater reproach of the nation. They boasted proudly of their fathers; he showeth what manner [of] persons the chief of them were; to wit, murderers of their brother, [387] so much as in them laid. For, besides that slavery was a kind of death, we know what they went about at the first and, secondly, what cruel punishments Joseph suffered, of all which his brethren were guilty. Hereby it appeareth that God was bountiful and merciful to those which were, as it were unwilling, and which did resist him. For him (who was about to be the author of health and help [388]) would they have destroyed. Wherefore they did what they could to renounce all the benefits of God. So he will declare afterward that Moses was rejected when he was offered of God to be a redeemer. Therefore, the Jews have small cause to brag of the excellency of their kindred; but this alone remaineth for them, that, being ashamed, [389] they confess that whosoever they are, they have the same through the mere mercy of God, and that they consider that the law was given to set forth the same.

God was with him. God was not so with him that he did always show forth his power in helping him. For that is no small thing which is said in the Psalm, (105:18,) "That the iron went through his soul." Surely, it must

[385] "Impia et nefaria conspiratione," by a nefarious and impious conspiracy.
[386] "Abhorret," is abhorrent from.
[387] "Fratricidae," fratricides.
[388] "Salutis minister," the minister or instrument of their safety.
[389] "Pudore confusi," confounded with shame.

needs be that he was in great heaviness, [390] when, being destitute of all help, he suffered reproach also together with bonds and the punishment of an ungodly and wicked man; but God useth oftentimes to be present with his in such sort, that he lieth hid for a time. And the end was an evident [391] token of his presence, which Joseph saw not at the first. Furthermore, we ought to remember this every now and then, that Joseph was not delivered because he had called upon God in the [a] temple but afar off in Egypt.

10. Stephen addeth the means, because God gave him favor in the sight of Pharaoh. God could have delivered him by some other means, but his counsel had respect unto a farther thing, that Joseph, being ruler of the kingdom, might entertain his father and all his family. In these two words, *favor* and *wisdom,* there is the figure *hypalloge.* For the wisdom wherewith Joseph was endued was the cause that he found favor; although I confess that they were two distinct benefits. For, though Joseph were a faithful interpreter of dreams, and did excel in divine wisdom, yet the proud tyrant would never have brought him to so great honor, unless God had bent the mind of Pharaoh unto a certain unwonted love; yet, notwithstanding, we must consider that order whereby God useth to bring him into favor. [392] *Wisdom* doth not only signify the gift of prophecy in interpreting dreams, but prudence in giving counsel; for Moses putteth in both. That which Stephen reporteth of one man in this place is extended unto all. For what aptness and readiness [393] soever is in men, it ought to be reckoned amongst the gifts of God, and that his special gifts. [394] And it is he that giveth good success as it pleaseth him, that his gifts may be profitable to that end for which it seemed good to him to give them. Therefore, although Joseph be made chief ruler of Egypt by Pharaoh, yet is he lifted up to so great honor properly by the hand of God. [395]

11. *There came a famine.* Hereby it appeareth that the deliverance of Joseph was such a benefit as was common to all the family of Jacob. For, seeing the famine drew on, [396] Joseph was sent before in due time to provide sustenance to feed the hungry; as he himself doth acknowledge the wonderful counsel of God in that point. Nevertheless, the free goodness of God appeareth plainly in the person of Joseph, whilst that he is appointed to nourish and feed his brethren, who had sold him, and by that means sent him far away, and thought that he was gone away quite [397] out of the world. He putteth meat in their mouths who had thrown him into a pit, and had deprived him of the air and the common breath. Finally, he nourisheth

390 "Ingenti moerore confundi," overwhelmed with deepest sorrow.
391 "Illustre," illustrious.
392 "Illi Deus gratiam conciliat," procureth favor for him.
393 "Dexteritas," dexterity.
394 "Pro modo inaequali," according to the unequal mode of distribution, omitted.
395 "Non nisi Dei manu," by nought but the hand of God.
396 "Ventura esset," was about to come.
397 "Prorsus exterminatum," completely exterminated.

and preserveth their life who were not afraid [398] to take from him his life. In the mean season, Stephen putteth the Jews in mind of this, that the patriarchs were enforced to depart out of that land which was given them for an heritage, and that they died in another place. Therefore, forasmuch as they were sojourners in it, they are at length banished out of the same. [399]

14. Whereas he saith that Jacob came into Egypt with seventy-five souls, it agreeth not with the words of Moses; for Moses maketh mention of seventy only. Jerome thinketh that Luke setteth not down, word for word, those things which Stephen had spoken, or that he took this number out of the Greek translation of Moses, (Genesis 46:27,) either because he himself, being a proselyte, had not the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, or because he would grant the Gentiles this, who used to read it thus. [400] Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the Greek interpreters set down this number of set purpose, or whether it crop [crept] in afterward through negligence, [mistake;] which (I mean the latter) might well be, forasmuch as the Grecians used to set down their numbers in letters. Augustine, in his 26th book of City of God, *[De Civitate Dei,]* thinketh that Joseph's nephews and kinsmen [401] are comprehended in this number; and so he thinketh that the words *went down* doth signify all that time which Jacob lived. But that conjecture can by no means be received. For, in the mean space, the other patriarchs also had many children born to them. This seemeth to me a thing like to be true, that the Seventy Interpreters did translate that truly which was in Moses. And we cannot say that they were deceived; forasmuch as [in] Deuteronomy 10, where this number is repeated, they agree with Moses, at least as that place was read without all doubt in the time of Jerome; for those copies which are printed at this day have it otherwise. Therefore, I think that this difference came through the error of the writers which wrote out the books. [402] And it was a matter of no such weight, for which Luke ought to have troubled the Gentiles which were accustomed with the Greek reading. And it may be that he himself did put down the true number; and that some man did correct the same amiss out of that place of Moses. For we know that those which had the New Testament in hand were ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, yet skillful in [403] the Greek,

Therefore, to the end [that] the words of Stephen might agree with the place of Moses, it is to be thought that that false number which was found in the Greek translation of Genesis was by them put in also in this place; concerning which, if any man contend more stubbornly, let us suffer him to be wise without measure. Let us remember that it is not without cause that

[398] "Non dubitaverant," had not hesitated.
[399] "Exulant," become exiles.
[400] "Apud quas recepta erat illa lectio," among whom that reading was received.
[401] "Nepotes ac pronepotes," grandsons and great-grandsons.
[402] "Librariorum," copyists.
[403] "Familiariter," familiar with.

Paul doth forbid us to be too curious about genealogies. This, so small a number, is purposely expressed, to the end the power of God may the more plainly appear, in so great an enlarging of that kindred, which was of no long continuance. For such a small handful of men could not, by any human manner of engendering, grow to such an infinite multitude as is recorded in Exodus 12:37, within two hundred and fifty years. We ought rather to weigh the miracle which the Spirit commendeth unto us in this place, than to stand long about one letter, whereby the number is altered. There arise other questions (and those which are more hard to be answered) out of the rest of the text, [context.]

16. Stephen saith, that the patriarchs were carried into the land of Canaan after they were dead. But Moses maketh mention only of the bones of Joseph, (Genesis 1:13.) And Joshua 24:32, it is reported, that the bones of Joseph were buried without making any mention of the rest. Some answer, that Moses speaketh of Joseph for honor's sake, because he had given express commandment concerning his bones, which we cannot read to have been done of the rest. And, surely, when Jerome, in the pilgrimage of Paula, saith, that she came by Shechem, he saith that she saw there the sepulchres of the twelve patriarchs; but in another place he maketh mention of Joseph's grave only. And it may be that there were empty tombs [404] erected to the rest. I can affirm nothing concerning this matter for a certainty, save only that this is either a speech wherein is *synecdoche,* or else that Luke rehearseth this not so much out of Moses, as according to the old fame; as the Jews had many things in times past from the fathers, which were delivered, as it were, from hand to hand. And whereas he saith afterward, they were laid in the sepulcher which Abraham had bought of the sons of Hemor, it is manifest that there is a fault [mistake] in the word Abraham. For Abraham had bought a double cave of Ephron the Hittite, (Genesis 23:9,) to bury his wife Sarah in; but Joseph was buried in another place, to wit, in the field which his father Jacob had bought of the sons of Hemor for an hundred lambs. Wherefore this place must be amended.

Acts 7:17-19

Acts 7:17-19

17. And when the time of the promise drew near, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people increased, and was multiplied in Egypt, 18. Until another king arose, which knew not Joseph: 19. This man dealt subtilely with our kindred; he evil-entreated our fathers, that they might cast out their infants, lest they should be increased.

17. Stephen passeth over unto the deliverance of the people, before which [405] went that innumerable issue which had increased beyond the ordinary

[404] "[{Κενοτάφια}]," ceonotaphs.

[405] "Cujus praeludium," as a prelude to which.

manner in no long space of time. Therefore, he setteth down this as a singular gift of God, that the people was increased, to the end we may know that that came not to pass according to the common or wonted custom of nature. But, on the other side, God seemeth to take from the Jews all hope, because Pharaoh doth tyrannously afflict them, and their bondage groweth greater daily. And when as they are commanded to cast out their male infants, it seemeth that the destruction of the whole nation was present. There is another token of deliverance given, when Moses cometh abroad; but because he is by and by refused and enforced to fly into exile, there remaineth nothing but mere despair. The sum is this; that God, being mindful of his promise, did increase the people in time, that he might perform that which he had sworn to Abraham; but the Jews (as they were unthankful and froward) did refuse the grace of God, so that they did what they could to shut up the way before themselves. Furthermore, we must note the providence of God in this place, whilst that he doth so order the course of times, that his works have always their opportunity. But men who make haste disorderly in their desires cannot hope patiently, and be at rest, until such time as God showeth forth his hand; for this cause, because they take no heed to that moderation whereof I have spoken. And to the end God may exercise the faith of his children so often as he appeareth with joyful tokens of grace, he setteth other things against those on the other side, which cut off suddenly the hope of salvation. For who would not have said of the Hebrews, that they were utterly undone, when as the king's commandment appointed all the men children to be put to death? For which cause the meditating upon that doctrine is the most [more] necessary for us, that God doth kill and restore to life; he leadeth unto hell, and bringeth back again.

19. *Dealt subtilely.* The old interpreter did not translate this amiss, to *deceive.* [406] For Stephen meaneth that the king of Egypt did craftily invent new shifts and wicked pretenses, that he might every now and then lay heavier burdens upon the people, like as almost all tyrants do; for how unjustly soever they vex their subjects, they are [but] too witty to invent excuses. And it is not to be doubted but that Pharaoh abused this honest color, that it was not meet that the Jews, who were sojourners, should have a place of abode in his realm for nought, and that they should be free from all burthens, seeing they did enjoy great commodities. Therefore, he deceitfully made them vile bondslaves of free-men. When Stephen saith that this tyrant knew not Joseph, hereby it appeareth how soon the remembrance of benefits passeth away among men, For although we do all with one consent detest unthankfulness, yet is there no vice more common amongst us.

Lest they should be increased. Erasmus translateth this improperly, in my judgment. For [{ζωογονεισθαι}] expresseth more than *lest their children should live.* For the word is fet [fetched] thence, because the people doth all always remain alive in the offspring. And, furthermore Stephen doth not

[406] "Circumvenire," to circumvent.

reckon up all the parts of their evil-entreating, but putteth down one example of extreme cruelty. Whence we may easily gather how near the whole seed of Abraham was to destruction. For Pharaoh seemed to have murdered them all with that commandment as with one stroke of a sword. But such violent barbarism did the more set forth the unlooked-for and incredible power of God; because when Pharaoh hath, by all means possible, striven against God, yet all is in vain.

Acts 7:20-29

Acts 7:20-29

20. At that time was Moses born, who was acceptable to God And he was brought up three months in his father's house. 21. And the daughter of Pharaoh took him up when he was cast out, and nourished him up for her own son. 22. And Moses was taught in all wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and deed. 23. And when the time of forty years was fulfilled, it came into his mind to go visit his brethren, the children of Israel. 24. And when he saw one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and revenged him which had the wrong, having smitten the Egyptian. 25. And he thought that his brethren would have understood that by his hand should give them deliverance; but they understood not. 26. The next day he was seen as they strove, and set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren: why hurt ye one another? 27. And he which did injury to his neighbor thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? 28. Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? 29. And Moses fled at this saying, and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

20. It is not without cause that Stephen noteth the circumstance of time. Moses was born at the very same time when the king had commanded that all the men children should be cast out. Therefore, it seemeth that the minister of deliverance is dead before he is born. But that time is most fit for God to work in, when there is no hope or counsel to be looked for at man's hands. And it appeareth also most plainly how God doth make perfect his power in man's weakness, (2 Corinthians 41:9.) Moses is kept three months, but at length his parents (that they may save their own lives) are enforced to cast him out into the river. Only they put him into a little coffer, [407] that he may not by and by [immediately] perish. When as Pharaoh's daughter taketh him up, he escaped death indeed, yet so that he goeth into another nation, being cut off from the kindred of Israel. Yea, he was like to be a most troublesome adversary to his nation, unless God had restrained his mind. It is forty years before he showeth any token of brotherly good-will.

22. Whereas Luke reporteth that he was taught in *all wisdom* of the Egyptians, he putteth that in his commendation as a point of excellency. Notwithstanding, it might have so fallen out, as it doth oftentimes, that being

[407] "Arculam," a little chest, a basket.

puffed up with profane sciences, he might have despised the base common people; yet because God had determined to redeem his people, he doth, in the mean season, frame both the mind of Moses and all other things to finish his work. The reason of man's flesh [408] should murmur in this place, Why doth God wink at so long miseries of the people? Why doth he suffer Pharaoh to rage more cruelly daily? Why doth he not suffer Moses to grow up amongst his own people? Why doth he after a sort cut him off from the kindred of Israel, being adopted by the king's daughter? Why will he suffer him to remain amidst courtly pleasures, [409] and doth not rather pull him thence? But the end itself is so wonderful, that we are enforced to confess that all these things were governed by singular counsel and order to set forth the glory of God.

Whereas I said that Luke speaketh in this place of the learning of the Egyptians for honor's sake, I would not have it so taken as if there were in the same no corruption. Forasmuch as astrology [410] doth consider the wonderful workmanship of God, not only in the placing of the stars, and in such excellent variety, but also in their moving, force, and secret offices, it is a science both profitable and worthy of praise. The Egyptians bestowed great study in this, but being not content with the simple order of nature, they wandered also into many foolish speculations, as did the Chaldeans. It is uncertain whether Moses was infected with these superstitions or no. Yet, howsoever it be, we see how sincerely and plainly he setteth that before us to be considered in the frame of the world, which is appertinent unto godliness. Surely this was excellent modesty, in that he which could reason with learned and witty men of the secrets of nature, doth not only omit higher subtleties, but doth also descend unto the common capacity of every most simple man, and doth, in a common style, set forth unto men unlearned those things which they perceive by experience. When Justinian [Justin] babbleth concerning Moses, he maketh him a magician, which, with juggling and enchantments, made passage for the people through the Red Sea; so that Satan did not only go about to bury the power of God, but also to blaspheme the same. But we know that Moses did not strive with the enchanters by magic, but did that only which God had enjoined him.

Furthermore, the Egyptians had mystical divinity, wherewith they colored their doting inventions and monstrous abominations, as if they would prove that they went mad not without reason: as the Papists, whereas they delude and mock men like stage-players, in their mass and other foolish rites, yet they invent mysteries, that they may persuade men that there is nothing there but that which is divine. The common sort of priests cannot climb so high, but those which amongst them will be accounted more cunning [411] do omit no rite, how foolish and childish soever it be, affirming that

[408] "Carnis ratio," carnal reason.
[409] "Ad annum quadragesimum," till his fortieth year.
[410] "Astrologia," astrology, or, more properly here, astronomy.
[411] "Perspicaces," clear-sighted.

there is some spiritual mystery in every [one] of them. There is extant concerning this matter a most foolish mingle-mangle, which they call the Rationall [Rationale] of Divine Offices. But forasmuch as sacrificing priests alone did use such dotings amongst themselves, it is not to be thought that Moses spent any time in these, whose bringing up was princely, but that he was taught in liberal arts.

He was mighty. This phrase doth express among the Hebrews a double excellency, when as he which doth excel in wit and learning, is also apt to attempt and bring to pass great and weighty matters. [412] Stephen's meaning is, therefore, that Moses was furnished with rare gifts, so that they did all confess that he was a singular man. But seeing he was in such estimation, the Israelites had the less hope that he should be the minister which should work their deliverance.

23. *When the time was fulfilled.* Many gather by this that Moses was never estranged in mind from his nation; but the words of Stephen incline rather toward the contrary, to wit, that the Spirit of God did at length awake his mind, as it were out of sleep, that he might at length go visit his brethren, whom he had long time neglected. It is to be thought that he was not ignorant of what stock he came, seeing he had some token thereof in his flesh, and seeing the rumor thereof was spread abroad in the court, because the king's daughter could not adopt him to be her son without some suspicion of wickedness, unless his kindred had been known; yet was it long before he was of such courage that he durst make known the love which he bare toward his kindred. And this serveth not a little to set forth the glory of God, that Moses, being ignorant of his calling, doth remain a long time idle in the king's court, and is afterward called of the Lord contrary to the hope of all men, and his own also. Therefore, this new care for his brethren which came into his mind, proceeded from a new and unwonted motion of God's Spirit.

24. *When he saw a certain man.* Moses came not to this spectacle by chance, but forasmuch as God had appointed him to be the deliverer of his people, he would have him show forth this token, and, as it were, make this beginning. For Stephen doth plainly express that he did attempt nothing unadvisedly, but did that which became him that was appointed to be a deliverer of the people, knowing that he was thereunto called. For unless God had armed him, (and made him puissant,) it had been a thing altogether unlawful for him to kill any man, how wicked soever he had been. It is a godly deed, and praiseworthy, for a man to set himself against the wicked, to defend the good against the injuries of the wicked, to bridle their violence; but it is not for a private person to punish, (or take vengeance.) Therefore, it was unlawful for Moses to slay the Egyptian, save only inasmuch as the Lord had put the sword in his hand according to the right of his calling.

[412] "Ad res praeclaras gerendas aptus est," is fitted for greater exploits.

But this heroical courage and nobleness of heart [413] was a work of the Holy Ghost; because God doth mightily show forth his power in those whom he appointeth unto great matters, that they may be able to fulfill their function. In sum, Stephen meaneth that Moses was even then offered to be the minister of deliverance when the day was at hand, according to the covenant made with Abraham, yet did the people hope for nothing less.

26. *The day following he appeared.* Stephen declareth now that the fathers did not only neglect, but maliciously reject the grace of God. For although the evil which he mentioneth did proceed from one man only, yet doth he by right assign the fault unto them all. For if they had been thankful to God, they would all with one consent have repressed his forwardness. [414] But they are whisht, [415] and suffer that good turn which Moses had done to be upbraided unto him; and, so much as in them lieth, they bring them into extreme danger whom they ought to have defended by endangering themselves. [416] Therefore, his drift is this, that the people themselves were in the fault, that they were no sooner delivered and eased. [417] So the wickedness of men doth oftentimes hinder God from doing that [which] he would do. He is ready to help those that be his in due time, but we keep back his hand from ourselves with divers lets, and afterwards we complain of his slowness, but unjustly. Furthermore, this unthankfulness was too wicked against God, and too cruel against Moses. They were to thank God for giving such a faithful patron in the king's court. They were to love and reverence Moses; but they rewarded him full evil [418] with threatenings and reproaches. Furthermore, inasmuch as the fact was brought to the king's ears, we must needs impute that to the treachery of the people. Therefore, as when afterward the people could see the land of Canaan, they did through their own folly keep themselves from entering in; so now, refusing the grace of God in the person of one man, they cause the time of their deliverance to be deferred forty years. For although God had determined what he would do, yet those are justly blamed for the delay which hinder [419] Moses in his office.

Men ye are brethren. There is, indeed, amongst men a general conjunction, so that they ought to use great courtesy one toward another, and to abstain from all injuries; but this is more unmeet and intolerable, when those hurt one another who are nearer linked together. Therefore, Moses doth not only use a general reason, that it may revoke [420] their minds which were

[413] "Haec heroica animi magnitudo," this heroic magnanimity.

[414] "Proterviam," petulance.

[415] "Tacent omnes," they are all silent.

[416] "Oppositas suis capitibus," by exposing their own hands.

[417] "Nonnisi per populum stetisse quominus levationem citius sentiret," that is was owing entirely to the people themselves that they did not sooner obtain some alleviation.

[418] "Atqui pessimam et iniquissimam mercedem reportat," but he receiveth a very bad and most iniquitous recompense, viz.

[419] "Impediunt ac turbant," impede and disturb.

[420] "Quae ad aequitatem revocet," which may call back or dispose to equity.

desirous to do harm, but he mentioneth their kindred and fellowship of blood to mollify their cruelty. Yet all in vain; for he which had done injury to his neighbor doth forwardly thrust him from him, and addeth thereunto threatening. And this is a common thing amongst men; for an evil conscience doth drive men into fury, and the worse every man's cause is, the more boldly and cruelly doth he extol himself. But under what color doth he which hath the worst cause set himself so stubbornly against Moses? He saith he is no judge; but he did not reprove them according to authority, but did only friendly admonish them. Is it the duty of a judge alone to admonish us when we do amiss? But this is a common vice, used of all stubborn and unruly persons, to give place to no admonitions, save only when they are enforced by violence and authority; yea, they are like frantic [phrenzied] men who rail upon [421] their physicians. For which cause we must be the more careful to bridle our lust, lest we run headlong with such blind fury against those which are desirous to cure our vices. Furthermore, we are taught by this example, that the servants of God cannot so do their duty in reproving such vices of men, but they shall suffer many injuries, offend many, and incur dangers; and chiefly when they do well, they shall surely hear evil. But they must swallow up the unworthiness of these evils, [422] that they may not therefore cease to do that which the Lord commanded them, and which he alloweth. [423] Moses is burdened here with a cruel false accusation that he usurpeth the authority of a ruler, and by this means they lay treason to his charge. Secondly, it is objected unto him reproachfully that he slew an Egyptian; both these were very odious. Whereby we may gather with how dangerous a temptation the mind of the holy man was stricken. And forasmuch as we see that he was neither discouraged by exile, neither by any other evils, so that it did not repent him of his well-doing, let us also learn by his example to bear a valiant and strong mind and courage against all such assaults of Satan,

Acts 7:30-34

Acts 7:30-34

30. And when forty years were expired, there appeared unto him in the desert of Mount Sinai the angel of the Lord, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31. And so soon as Moses saw it, he wondered at the vision. Furthermore, when he drew near to consider, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32. I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; and Moses was afraid, and durst not draw near. 33. And the Lord said unto him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. 34. In seeing, I have heard [seen] the affliction of

[421] "Furiose impetunt," furiously assault.

[422] "Sed horum malorum indignitas illis est devoranda," but the indignity of these evils must be devoured by them, (overlooked or submitted to.)

[423] "Proinde ei probari," and is therefore approved by him.

my people in Egypt, and have heard their mourning, and I am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

30. *And when forty years were expired.* As Moses was no blockish man, [424] every one of us may easily gather how many things might have come into his mind which might have caused him to mistrust his calling. The shifts and sleights of Satan are captious. We are more than bent naturally to distrustfulness; [425] what doubts soever arise in our minds concerning the word of God we do easily admit the same. It was a hard exchange to be thrust from earthly delights and a sumptuous life unto the painful and base office of feeding sheep; and especially forasmuch as Moses saw so much time spent, and being in the mean season sent into the wilderness, what other thing could he imagine with himself but that that was vain and a plain mock which the Lord had promised? Forasmuch as being now fourscore years of age, he was occupied about the feeding of his father-in-law's sheep, when could he have hoped that there should have been any use of him in delivering the people? It is good for us oftentimes to call to mind these combats of the godly until they be thoroughly imprinted in our memory, lest our minds faint, and our hearts fail us, if the Lord make us stay longer than we could wish. Again, Moses giveth a notable example of modesty, seeing that in all that time he attempteth nothing; he raiseth no tumults, neither intrudeth himself any way to bear rule, as troublesome men use to do; but employeth himself in his shepherd's function as diligently as if he should never have been called unto any greater charge. But whilst he tarrieth the Lord's leisure so patiently, he [the Lord] appeareth unto him at length.

The angel of the Lord appeared unto him. It is first demanded who this angel was? and, secondly, why he appeared in such a form? For after that Luke had called him an angel, he bringeth him in immediately speaking thus: *I am the God of Abraham, etc.* Some answer, As God doth sometimes attribute and impart unto his ministers those things which are most proper to himself, so it is no absurd or inconvenient thing, if they have his name given them; but seeing this angel affirmeth manifestly that he is the eternal God, who alone is, and in whom all things have their being, we must needs restrain this title unto the essence of God; for it can by no means agree to the angels. It might be said more fitly, that because the angel speaketh in the name of the Lord, he taketh upon him his person, as if he declared his commandments word for word, as out of the mouth of God, which manner of speaking is usual in the prophets; but when Luke shall say afterwards, that this was the same angel through whose assistance and guiding Moses delivered the people: and Paul, in the 10th chapter of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 10:4) doth affirm that Christ was that guide, there is no cause why we should now wonder that the angel taketh to himself that which is proper to God alone.

[424] "Homo… stupidus," a stupid man.

[425] "Nos ad diffidentiam natura plusquam propensi," we are by nature too prone to distrust.

Therefore, let us, first of all, set down this for a surety, that there was never since the beginning any communication between God and men, save only by Christ; for we have nothing to do with God, unless the Mediator be present to purchase his favor for us. Therefore, this place doth plentifully prove the divinity of Christ, and teacheth that he is of the same essence with the Father. Furthermore, he is called an angel, not only because he had the angels always to bear him company, and to be, as it were, his apparitors: [426] but because that deliverance of the people did shadow the redemption of us all, for whose sake Christ was to be sent of his Father, that he might take upon him the shape of a servant together with our flesh. It is certain, indeed, that God did never appear unto men as he is, but under some shape agreeable to their capacity; notwithstanding, there is another reason why Christ is called by this name, because he being appointed by the eternal counsel of God to be unto men the minister of salvation, doth appear unto Moses to this end. Neither is that contrary to this doctrine, which is written in the 2nd chapter to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 2:16) that Christ never took the angels, but the seed of Abraham; for although he took upon him the shape of an angel for a time, yet did he never take the nature of angels, as we know that he was made very man.

It resteth that we speak somewhat of the burning bush. That is common, that God doth apply the signs unto the things by a certain likelihood, and this is almost the common order and way of the sacraments. Furthermore, this was the fittest thing that could have been shown to Moses, to confirm his faith in the present business. He knew in what state he had left his nation. Although there were a greater [427] number of men, yet were they not unlike to a bush. For the thicker the bush is, and the more store of shrubs it hath, [428] the more subject is it to take fire, that it may burn on every side; so the people of Israel were but a weak band, and such as was laid open to all injuries; and this unwarlike multitude being pressed down even with their own weight, had incensed the cruelty of Pharaoh only with the prosperous success of increasing. Therefore, the people being oppressed with cruel tyranny, is, as it were, a pile of wood set on fire at every corner, neither is there any thing which keepeth it from being consumed to ashes, save this, because the Lord sitteth in the midst thereof; and although the [an] undoubted [429] fire of persecution did then burn, yet because the Church of God is never free from afflictions in the world, the continual estate thereof is after a sort painted out in this place. For what other thing are we but fuel for fire? And there fly abroad innumerable fire-brands of Satan continually, which set on fire both our bodies and also our minds; but the Lord delivereth and defendeth us, by his wonderful and singular goodness, from being

[426] "Quasi apparitores," as it were his officers.

[427] "Ingens numerus," a vast number.

[428] "Et compactis arbustis magis abundat," and the more numerous and compact its twigs are.

[429] "Insoltus," unwonted.

consumed. Therefore, the fire must needs burn, that it may burn us in this life; but because the Lord dwelleth in the midst of us, he shall so preserve us that afflictions shall do us no harm, as it is also said in the 46th Psalm, (Psalm 46:5.)

31. *He wondered at the vision.* Let us know that God did use thus to deal with our fathers, that they might assuredly know his majesty; for he meant to make a manifest distinction between the visions which he showed, and the juggling casts of Satan. And this certainty is more necessary, for what credit should the oracles of God otherwise carry, wherein the covenant of eternal life is contained? Therefore, forasmuch as this alone is the true stay of faith, to have God to be the author thereof, that he may [he must needs] undoubtedly declare that it is he that speaketh. Again, forasmuch as Satan walketh about continually, and doth by many and strange shifts insinuate himself, and hath so many ways to deceive, and especially seeing he doth pretend the name of God craftily, we must take great heed of his mocks. We see how in times past he deluded all nations, and [how he deludes] the Papists also. For all the monsters of superstitions, all the dotings of errors which were in times past, and do as yet reign in Popery, did proceed from dreams, visions, and false revelations; yea, furthermore, even the Anabaptists have their illusions thence. Therefore, this is the only remedy that God do distinguish by certain marks those visions which he showeth; for then are we without danger of erring, when he hath revealed his majesty unto us. For this cause was the mind of Moses stricken with admiration, and then afterwards he draweth near to consider; after that he is come nearer, the Lord toucheth him with a more lively feeling of [I confess indeed] his presence, so that he is afraid. For I confess that there are none of all these things which Satan cannot imitate, yet falsely like an ape. And the Lord doth not only show himself by such signs, but helping our dullness, he doth also open our eyes that we may not be deceived. Again, the Holy Ghost doth imprint in our minds certain marks and tokens of God's presence, that there may no doubt remain.

32. *I am the God of thy fathers.* Now, we see to what end the vision was offered to Moses; to wit, that the word of God might have his [its] authority. For bare visions should do but little good, unless doctrine were joined therewithal; and it is joined with them not as an inferior part, but as the cause of all visions and the end. And whereas he calleth himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there is a double reason why he calleth himself so. As the majesty of God is infinite, if we will comprehend it, it doth rather swallow up our senses; if we endeavor to ascend unto it we vanish away; therefore, he adorneth himself with titles under which we may comprehend him. But we must mark that God maketh choice of such titles, as that he may by them call us back unto his word. For he is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for this cause, because he committed unto them the doctrine of salvation, that he might thereby be known to the

world. But God had respect properly unto the present circumstance when he spake to Moses on this wise; for both this vision, and the hope of the delivery of the people, and the commandment which he was about to give to Moses, did depend upon the covenant which he had made in times past with the fathers. So that the suspicion of novelty is taken away, and the mind of Moses is lifted up to hope for redemption, which was grounded in the whole [430] promise.

Therefore, this title is as much as if God had said, I, which have promised in times past to your fathers, that I have a care of your safety, which have taken the kindred of Abraham to my tuition by a free covenant, yea, which have appointed this time for an end of your bondage, I appear now unto thee, that I may perform that which I promised, like as at this day all the promises of God must lean and be stayed upon this foundation, that they may be sure and certain to us, that God hath adopted us in Christ, and hath promised that he will be our God and our Father. And Christ gathereth out of this place by good reason that the godly live after they be dead, (Matthew 22:32;) for if the whole man perish in death, this were an unfitting speech, [431] *I am the God of Abraham.* Let us suppose that there is no Rome, shall not he be laughed at which shall call himself consul of Rome? For this is requisite in relation, that the members be answerable between themselves. [432] There is also another reason to be considered, that forasmuch as God hath in his hand both life and death, without all doubt he preserveth those alive whose father he will be, and whom he counteth his children; therefore, though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died, concerning the flesh, yet do they live in spirit with God.

And Moses being afraid. This might seem to be an absurd thing, that a voice full of consolation doth rather terrify Moses than make him glad; but it was good for Moses to be thus terrified with the presence of God, that he might frame himself unto the greater reverence; neither doth the voice of God alone strike his mind, but his majesty, whereof he saw a sign in the burning bush. And what marvel is it, if man be afraid when he seeth God? and especially let us remember that men's minds are by this means prepared unto fear and reverence as in Exodus 20:22,

"Thou hast seen signs, thou hast heard the sound of the trumpet, that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord."

But some will say, Why dare not Moses now for fear consider, who was not afraid to draw near before? I answer, that the nearer we draw unto God, the more his glory doth appear, so are we the more afraid, and that by right. And God maketh Moses afraid for none other cause, save only that he may make him obedient unto him. This fear was a preparation not unfit for greater boldness; and to this end tendeth that which followeth, *Put off*

[430] "In veteri," on the old.

[431] "Inepta esset loquutio," the expression were inept.

[432] "Hoc enim exigit relatio ut membra inter se respondeant," for relation requires that the members (related) correspond to each other.

thy shoes from thy feet; for he is admonished by this sign with reverence to receive the commandments of God, and to give him due glory by all means.

33. *Because the place wherein.* The Lord meant by this commendation which he giveth to the place, to lift up the mind of Moses into heaven, that he might not think upon any earthly thing. And if so be that Moses was to be pricked forward with so many pricks, that having forgotten the earth, he might hearken to God, must not we have our sides even, as it were, digged through, [433] seeing we are an hundred times more slow than he? Notwithstanding, here may a question be asked, how this place became so holy? for it was no more holy than other places before that day. I answer, that this honor is given to the presence of God, and not to the place, and that the holiness of the place is spoken of for man's sake. For if the presence of God do make the earth holy, how much more force thereof ought men to have? [434] Notwithstanding, we must also note, that the place was thus beautified only for a time, so that God did not fix his glory there, as Jacob erected an altar to God in Bethel, after that God had showed some token of his presence there, (Genesis 35:7.) When as his posterity did imitate the same afterward, it was such worship as was reproved. [435] Finally, the place is called holy for Moses' sake only, that he may the better address himself to fear God and to obey him. Forasmuch as God doth now show himself unto us everywhere in Christ, and that in no obscure figures, but in the full light and perfect truth, we must not only put off our shoes from our feet, but strip ourselves stark-naked of ourselves. [436]

34. *In seeing I have seen.* God promiseth now that he will deliver his people, that he may appoint Moses to be his minister afresh, because the former objection was taken away by so long space of time. For God is said to see our miseries when he hath respect to us, and is careful for our safety; as he is said again to shut his eyes, and turn his back, when as he seemeth to set light by our cause. In like sort is he said to come down. He needeth not to move out of his place to help us, for his hand reacheth throughout the heaven and earth; but this is referred unto our understanding. For, seeing that he did not deliver his people from their affliction, he might seem that he was afar off, and was busied about some other thing in heaven. Now he saith that the Israelites shall perceive that he is nigh unto them. The sum tendeth to this end, that Moses knowing the will of God, may not doubt to follow him as a guide, and the more boldly to employ himself about the delivery of the people, which he knew was the work of God. For we must note that he saith that he heard the mourning of the people. For although he hath respect unto those which are in misery and unjustly oppressed, yet when we lay our mournings and complaints in his lap, he is especially moved to have mercy;

[433] "Annon quasi fodiendi sumus," must not we be, as it were, stabbed.

[434] "Quanto majorem vim ab hominibus percipi aequium est," how much more forcibly ought man to feel it?

[435] "Perversus cultus fuit," it was perverted worship.

[436] "Sed nos totos exuere," but divest ourselves entirely.

although this word may be taken for those blind and confused complaints which are not directed unto God, as it is taken oftentimes elsewhere.

Acts 7:35-37

Acts 7:35-37

35. This Moses, whom they had denied, saying, Who made thee a ruler and judge? him, I say, hath God sent to be a ruler and a redeemer, in the hand of the angel which appeared unto him in the bush. 36. He brought them out, having showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37. This is Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, The Lord your God shall raise up unto you a Prophet, out of the midst of your brethren, like unto me; hear him.

35. Stephen passeth over many things, because he maketh haste unto this stun, that the Jews may understand that the fathers were not delivered therefore, because they had deserved that with their godliness, but that this benefit *was* bestowed upon them, being altogether unworthy; and, secondly, that there is some more perfect thing to be hoped for of these beginnings. When Moses, being ordained of God to be their revenger and deliverer, was now in a readiness, they stopped the way before him; therefore God doth deliver them now, as it were against their will. That which is added touching miracles and wonders, serveth as well to the setting forth of the grace of God, as to make known the calling of Moses. It is surely a strange thing, that God doth vouchsafe to declare his power by divers wonders, for such an unthankful people's sake. But in the mean season, he bringeth his servant in credit. Therefore, whereas the Jews set less by him afterward, whereas they essay sometimes to drive him away by railing, whereas they scold sometimes, sometimes murmur, sometimes set upon him outrageously, they bewray thereby both their wickedness, and also their contempt of the grace of God. Their unthankfulness and ungodliness was so increased always, that God must needs have striven with wonderful patience with such a froward and stubborn people.

A ruler and a deliverer. We must understand the contrarieties [437] which augment the fault. They would have obeyed Moses if a tyrant had appointed him to be a judge, but they contemn him proudly, and refuse him disdainfully, being appointed of God, and that to be a deliverer. Therefore, in despising him, they were wicked; and in rejecting grace, unthankful. And whereas Moses hath such an honorable title given him, God doth not so give and resign unto man that honor which is due to himself, that he loseth any whit of his authority thereby. For doubtless Moses was not called a redeemer or deliverer in any other respect save only because he was the minister of God. And by this means the glory of the whole work remaineth in the power of God wholly. Therefore let us learn that so often as men have the

[437] "Subaudiendae sunt antitheses," we must supply the antitheses.

titles which belong to God given them, God himself is not despoiled of his honor; but because the work is done by their hands, they are by this means commended. To this end tendeth that which Stephen saith, that this charge was committed to Moses in the hand of the angel. For by this means Moses is made subject to Christ, that under his conduct and direction he may obey God. For *hand* is taken in this place not for ministry, but for principality. Wherefore, God did so use the service of Moses, that the power of Christ did surpass him, as he is even at this day the chief governor, in accomplishing the salvation of the Church; yea, he useth the ministry of men in that sort, that the force and effect dependeth upon him alone.

37. *A Prophet shall God raise up.* Stephen endeavoreth undoubtedly to prove by these words that Christ is the end of the law; although he doth not express the same in plain words. And assuredly, (as we have already said,) Luke reciteth not word for word all those things which Stephen uttered; but it is sufficient for him to note the principal points of matters. Furthermore, we have said before in the third chapter, that this testimony is so applied to Christ, that notwithstanding it agreeth to the other prophets also. For after that Moses had forbidden the people to be carried to and fro with the wicked superstitions of the Gentiles, he showeth what ought to follow. There is no cause (saith he) why thou shouldst desire magicians and enchanters; for God will never suffer thee to want prophets to teach thee faithfully. And now it is certain that the ministry of the prophets was temporal, as was also the ministry of the law; until Christ should bring the full perfection of wisdom into the world. Therefore Stephen's speech tendeth to this end, that Moses doth not keep the people fast bound to himself alone when as he setteth before them and commendeth unto them another teacher. The prophets were indeed, interpreters of the law and all their doctrine was, as it were, an addition or appurtenance [438] of those things which were uttered by Moses; but forasmuch as this was also certain, that Christ should bring a more perfect kind of doctrine, because he should make an end of all the prophecies, it followeth, that he is made the chief; and that the principal mastership (that I may so call it) is his, lest the faith of the gospel should be doubtful. Now we know to what end Stephen intermingled Moses' testimony, to wit, that he may prove that the Jews did no less contemn him, (of whom they made boast with open mouth to be their only teachers) even now when he is dead, than they did in times past, whilst he lived, wickedly and frowardly reject him. For whosoever believeth Moses, he will not refuse to be the disciple of Christ, whose messenger and crier he was, (John 5:46.) For the rest [439] out of the third chapter.

[438] "Appendix," an appendix.
[439] "Reliqua pete," for the rest see.

Acts 7:38-41

Acts 7:38-41

38. This is he which was in the congregation in the wilderness, with the angel which had spoken unto him in mount Sinai, [or did speak to him in the mount,] and with our fathers; who received lively oracles, that he might give them to us: 39. Whom our fathers would not obey, but they refused him, and they turned back in their hearts into Egypt, 40. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for we know not what is happened to this Moses which brought us out of the land of Egypt. 41. And they made a calf in those days, and they offered sacrifice to the idol, and they rejoiced over the works of their own hands.

38. Stephen proceedeth to set forth the frowardness [440] of the people, who though they were provoked [stirred up] with so many benefits of God, yet did they never cease maliciously to reject him. If they had been disobedient and unthankful to God before, yet this so wonderful a deliverance ought to have brought them into a better mind; but he declareth that they were always like themselves. It was meet that so many miracles should not only have stuck fast in their minds, but also have continued still before their eyes. But having forgotten all, they fly back suddenly unto the superstitions of Egypt. The memorial of their cruel servitude was yet fresh, which they had escaped by passing over the Red Sea; and yet they prefer those tyrants by whom they were more than cruelly handled, before their deliverer, This was, therefore, a heap of ungodliness most desperate, that their stubbornness could not be broken or overcome with so many benefits of God, but that they did always return unto their nature. This doth greatly augment the greatness of the offense, where Stephen saith that Moses was then with them in the wilderness. For besides that there appeareth here rare goodness and long-sufferance of the Lord, in bearing with them, they make themselves to be without all excuse, whilst that being beset on every side with so many straits, being brought into so great distress; having Moses to be their guide in their journey, and the faithful keeper of their life, they fall away nevertheless treacherously from God, Finally, it appeareth that they were like untamed beasts, whom God could not keep in obedience with so many bands. Therefore, inasmuch as Moses left not off to govern them even through the wilderness, under the conduct and aid of the angel, it is an easy matter to gather by this circumstance of time, how incurable and obstinate their frowardness was; as it was a point of monstrous rebellion, not to be humbled with miseries, [441] and even with the very sight of death.

Whereas he saith, that Moses was with the angel and the fathers, there is a contrary respect. [442] He was present with the fathers, that he might be their guide according to the commandment of the Lord; he was with the

[440] "Pravitate," depravity.

[441] "Tot malis," so many miseries.

[442] "Longe diversa est ratio," the explanation (of the two things) is very different.

angel as a minister. Whereupon it followeth that he was no private person to whom this injury was done, but it was done to the governance of God, when the people could be kept back, with the reverence of neither, from running headlong into wicked rebellion. We have already spoken of the angel. But the participle [{λαλουντος}] or *which spake,* hath a double meaning. For it may be understood either of the first vision, whereby Moses was called to redeem the people, or of that speech which God had with Moses, after they were come over the Red Sea. And because Christ declared both ways, that he was the author of their deliverance, it is no great matter whether we choose; yea, there is no let but that it may be extended unto both. For he which began to speak to Moses from the beginning, that he might send him into Egypt, did continue the tenor of his speech afterward, until the work was finished.

Which received lively oracles. Erasmus translated it *lively speech;* but those which are expert in the Greek tongue, they shall know that I have more truly translated the words of Stephen. For there is greater majesty in Oracles than in Speech, I speak only of the word; for I know that whatsoever proceedeth out of the mouth of God, the same is an oracle. Moreover, he purchaseth authority for the doctrine of Moses in these words, because he uttereth nothing but that which proceeded from God, Whereupon it followeth, that they did not so much rebel against Moses as against God; whereby their stubbornness [443] is more discovered, And this is a general way to establish doctrine, when men teach nothing but that which is commanded them by God. For what man dare make Moses inferior to him, who (as the Spirit affirmeth) ought only to be believed for this cause, because he faithfully unfolded and delivered the doctrine which he had received of God? But some men may ask this question, Why he called the law a living speech? For this title seemeth to disagree much with the words of Paul, where he saith that the law is the ministry of death, and that it worketh death, and that it is the strength of sin, (1 Corinthians 3:7.) If you take lively speech for that which is effectual, and cannot be made frustrate by the contempt of men, there shall be no contrariety; but I interpret it as spoken actively, for that which maketh to live. [444] For seeing that the law is the perfect rule of godly and holy life, and it showeth the righteousness of God, it is counted, for good causes, the doctrine of life and salvation. And to this purpose serveth that solemn protestation of Moses, when he calleth heaven and earth to witness, that he hath set before them the way of death and life. In which sense the Lord himself complaineth, that his good law is broken, and his good commandments, whereof he had said, "He which shall do these things shall live in them," (Ezekiel 20) Therefore the law hath life in itself. Yet if any man had liefer take *living* for that which is full of efficacy and strength, I will not greatly stand in contention.

[443] "Ferrea improbitas," their stubborn wickedness.
[444] "Vivifica," vivifying.

And whereas it is called the ministry of death, that is accidental to it, because of the corrupt nature of man; for it doth not engender sin, but it findeth it in us. It offered life, but we, which are altogether corrupt, can have nothing but death by it. Therefore, it is deadly in respect of men alone. Though Stephen had respect unto a farther thing in this place; for he doth not only speak of the bare commandments, but comprehendeth all Moses' doctrine, wherein the free promises are included, and so consequently, Christ himself, who is the only life and health of men. We must remember with what men Stephen had to do. They were such as were preposterously zealous of the law, who stayed only in the dead and deadly letter of the law; and, in the mean season, they raged against Stephen, because he sought Christ in the law, who is, indeed, the soul thereof. Therefore, by touching their perverse ignorance glancingly, he giveth them to understand that there is some greater and some more excellent thing hidden in the law than they have hitherto known. For as they were carnal, and content with an outward show, they sought no spiritual thing in it, yea, they would not so much as suffer the same to be showed them.

That he might give them to us. This serveth to refute the false accusation wherewith he was falsely burthened. For seeing he submitteth his neck to the yoke of the law, and professeth that he is one of Moses' scholars, he is far from discrediting him amongst others. Yea, rather he turneth back the fault which was laid to his charge upon those which were the authors of the slander. That was, as it were, a common reproach for all the people, because the fathers would not obey the law. And therewithal he telleth them that Moses was appointed to be a prophet, not only for his time, but that his authority might be in force with the posterity, even when he was dead. For it is not meet that the doctrine of God should be extinguished together with ministers, or that it should be taken away. For what is more unlikely [445] than that that should die whereby we have immortality? So must we think at this day. As the prophets and apostles spake unto the men of their time, so did they write unto us, and (that) the force of their doctrine is continual, because it hath rather God to be the author thereof than men. In the mean season, he teacheth that if any reject the word appointed for them, they reject the counsel of God.

39. *They refused, and were turned away.* He saith that the fathers rejected Moses; and he showeth the cause also, because they gave themselves rather unto the superstitions of Egypt; which was horrible, and more than blind fury, to desire the customs and ordinances of Egypt, where they had suffered such grievous things of late. He saith that they *were turned away* into Egypt in their hearts; not that they desired to return thither, (bodily,) but because they returned in mind unto those corruptions, which they ought not so much as to have remembered without great detestation and hatred. It is true, indeed, that the Jews did once speak of returning; but Stephen toucheth not

[445] "Minus consentaneum," less befitting.

that history now. Furthermore, he doth rather express their stubbornness, when he saith that they were turned away. For after that they had taken the right way, having God for their guide and governor, they start aside suddenly, as if a stubborn unbroken horse, not obeying his rider, should frowardly run backward.

40. *Make us.* Though the Jews be turned back divers ways, yet Stephen maketh *choice* of one notable example above all the rest, of their filthy and detestable treachery, to wit, when they made themselves a calf, that they might worship it instead of God. For there can no more filthy thing be invented [446] than this their unthankfulness. They confess that they were delivered out of Egypt; neither do they deny that this was done by the grace of God and the ministry of Moses; yet, notwithstanding, they reject the author of so great goodness, together with the minister. And under what color? They pretend they cannot tell what is become of Moses. But they know full well that he is in the mount. They saw him with their eyes when he went up thither, until such time as the Lord took him unto himself, by compassing him about with a cloud. Again, they know that Moses is absent for their health's sake, who had promised that he would return, and bring unto them the law which God should give. He bade them only be quiet a while. They raise mad uproars suddenly within a small time, and without any cause; yet to the end they may cover their madness with the color of some reason, they will have gods present with them, as if God had showed unto them no token of his presence hitherto; but his glory did appear daily in the cloud and pillar of fire. Therefore we see what haste they make to commit idolatry through wicked contempt of God, that I may, in the mean season, omit to declare how filthy and wicked their unthankfulness was, in that they had so soon forgotten those miracles which they ought to have remembered even until the end of the world. Therefore, by this one backsliding, it appeareth sufficiently what a stubborn and rebellious people they were.

Moreover, it was more expedient for the cause which Stephen had in hand, to recite this history of their rebellion than the other. [447] For the people doth quite overthrow the worship of God; they refuse the doctrine of the law; they bring in a strange and profane religion. And this is a notable place, because it pointeth out the fountain from which all manner of superstitions did flow since the beginning, and especially what was the first beginning of making idols; to wit, because man, which is carnal, will, notwithstanding, have God present with him, according to the capacity of his flesh. This is the cause why men were so bold in all ages to make idols. [448] And God doth, indeed, apply [449] himself to our rudeness thus far, that he showeth himself visible,

[446] "Nihil… fingi potest," nothing can be imagined.

[447] "Quam alias referri," than to refer to any other.

[448] "Tanta in fingendis idolis, hominum lascivia fuerit," there was such wantonness in men in forming idols.

[449] "Accommodat," accommodate.

after a sort, under figures; for there were many signs under the law to testify his presence, And he cometh down unto us, even at this day, by baptism and the supper, and also by the external preaching of the word. But men offend two manner of ways in this; for, first, being not content with the means which God hath appointed, they boldly get to themselves new means. This is no small fault, because their fingers itch always to have new inventions without keeping any mean, and so they are not afraid to pass the bounds which God hath appointed them. But there can be no true image of God, save that which he appointed. Therefore, what images soever are reigned and invented by man besides his word, they are false and corrupt.

There is also another vice no less intolerable, that as man's mind conceiveth nothing of God but that which is gross and earthly, so it translateth all tokens of God's presence unto the same grossness. Neither doth man delight in those idols only which he himself hath made, but also doth corrupt whatsoever God hath ordained, by wresting it unto a contrary end. God cometh down unto us, indeed, as I have already said, but to this end, that he may lift us up into heaven with him. But we, because we are wholly set upon the earth, will, in like sort, have him in the earth. By this means is his heavenly glory deformed, and that fulfilled altogether which the Israelites say here, *Make us gods.* For whosoever he be that doth not worship God spiritually, he maketh unto himself a new god; and yet if ye thoroughly weigh all things, the Israelites will not have a god made of set purpose by them, but they think rather that they have the true and eternal God under the shape of the golden calf. For they are ready to offer the appointed sacrifice, and they approve that with their consent which Aaron saith, that those are the gods by whom they were brought out of Egypt. But God pusseth not for those frivolous imaginations; but he complaineth that men put strange gods in his place, so soon as they depart even a very little from his word.

41. *And they made a calf.* We may easily gather by that which goeth before, why they were more delighted in that figure than in any other. For although Egypt did swarm with innumerable idols, yet it is well known that they made the greatest account of an ox. And whence is it that they are so desirous to have an idol, save only because they were turned back into Egypt, as Stephen hath already said? We must note the speech when he saith that they offered sacrifice to the idol. Aaron commandeth the people to assemble themselves together to worship God; they come all together. Therefore they testify that they mean nothing less [any thing rather] than to defraud God of his worship, howsoever they translate the same unto the calf; yea, rather, they are determined to worship God in the image of the calf. But because they forsook the true God, by making an idol, whatsoever followeth afterward it is judged to be given to the idol, because God refuseth all wicked worshipping. For it is not meet to account that as bestowed upon him which he hath not commanded; and because he forbids them expressly to erect any visible image unto him, that is mere sacrilege whatsoever is done

afterward in honor thereof.

They rejoiced over the works. This speech is taken out of Isaiah, yet, out of the prophets, who, in like sort, upbraid unto the Jews that they were delighted in their own inventions. And surely it is wonderful madness, when men arrogate unto themselves anything in God's matters. I take this rejoicing to be that solemn dancing whereof Moses speaketh, in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus. Yet Stephen toucheth a common vice, wherewith idolaters are infected. For although it be altogether unlawful for men to attempt anything in religion which God hath not appointed, yet do they invent everything unadvisedly, and setting light by the Word of God, they make choice of the works of their own hands; but Stephen showeth that while they take such pleasure in this liberty, they displease God so much the more. But if we will have God to allow our worship, we must abstain from the works of our hands, that is, from our own inventions; for all that which men invent of themselves is nothing else but sacrilegious profanation. The idol is properly so called reproachfully, as it were a thing nothing worth, because no reason doth suffer man to make God. [450]

Acts 7:42-43

Acts 7:42-43

42. And God turned himself, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven: as it is written in the book of the prophets, Have ye offered unto me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness, O ye house of Israel? 43. And ye took to you the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, and figures which ye made to worship them; therefore I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

Stephen will here declare that the Jews did never make an end of sinning, but that they wandered farther in their froward errors; so that that first fall of theirs was unto them as it were an entrance into a labyrinth. And this doth he assign unto the just vengeance of God, that after that time their madness grew so, that they gat for one idol infinity. This example teacheth us to be careful to follow the rule which God hath set down; because, so soon as we are turned even but a little aside from the same, we must needs be carried to and fro with divers dotings, we must needs be entangled in many superstitions, and be utterly drowned in the huge sink of errors; which punishment God in justice layeth upon men which refuse to obey his word. Therefore Stephen saith that God was turned away; which word imported as much as if he should say, that he turned his back. For he had fastened his eyes after a sort upon the people, when he showed his singular care which he took in governing them; being offended with their falling away, now he turneth his face another way.

We may also hereby gather that we can no otherwise follow the right way,

[450] "Deum… fabricari," to fabricate a god.

save only when the Lord watcheth over us to govern us; but so soon as his face is turned away, we run by and by into errors. The Israelites were forsaken of God even then when they made the calf; but Stephen meant to express the greatness of the punishment, as if he should have said, that they were altogether cast off into a reprobate sense then; as Paul also teacheth, that those which gave not glory to God when he had showed himself unto them, were, by the just judgment of God, given up unto blindness and blockishness, and unto shameful lusts, (Romans 1:28.) Hereby it came to pass, that after that religion began to be corrupt, innumerable abominations succeeded a few superstitions, and gross monsters of idolatry came in place of light corruptions. For because men neglected the light which was set before them, they became altogether blockish by the just judgment of God, so that they had no more judgment than brute beasts. Idolatry surely is very fertile, that of one reigned god there should by and by come an hundred, that a thousand superstitions should flow from one. But this so great madness of men springeth hence, because God revengeth himself by delivering them to Satan; because, after he hath once in hand to govern us, there is no change in his part, but he is plucked away [451] from us by our rash lightness.

Have ye offered unto me slain beasts and sacrifices? This place is taken out of the fifth chapter of Amos, (Amos 5:25.) The speech which Stephen useth showeth that all the prophecies were gathered into one body; and Amos addeth, (after that he had inveighed against the idolatry and sundry sins of the people,) that this is no new evil, that the Jews are rebellious against God, because their fathers had fallen away from true godliness even in the wilderness. Furthermore, he denieth that they offered slain beasts to him, not because there were there no sacrifices at all, but because God refused their corrupt worship; like as he reproveth and chideth the people in Isaiah, because they honored him with no sacrifice,

"Thou," (saith he,) "O Jacob, hast not called upon me, neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices, neither have I made thee serve in offering or incense. Thou hast not bought for me calamus, neither hast thou filled me with fatness. But thou hast been burdenous [burdensome] unto me in thy sins, and hast caused me to serve in thine iniquities," (Isaiah 43:22.)

Assuredly the Jews did all these things daily, but God accepteth not the obedience of the wicked, neither doth he approve the same. Again, he abhorreth all that which is polluted with such mingle-mangles as are added. [452] Thus doth Amos speak of the fathers which were revolts. [453] That which is added forthwith may be referred either unto them or unto their posterity.

43. *You took to you the tabernacle of Moloch.* Some take the copulative for the adversative [particle,] as if he should say, Yea, rather, ye worshipped the idol. It may be resolved also into the conjunction causal, thus, You did

[451] "Distrahitur," torn asunder, withdrawn.
[452] "Adventitiae mixturae," adventitious mixtures.
[453] "De patribus apostatis," of the apostate fathers.

not offer sacrifices to me, because ye erected a tabernacle to Moloch. But I expound it somewhat otherwise, to wit, that God doth first accuse the fathers for the more vehemency; and then afterwards he addeth, that their posterity did increase the superstitions, because they gat to themselves new and diverse idols; as if the prophet had spoken thus in the person of God, If I shall rip up from the beginning, (O house of Jacob,) how your kindred hath behaved itself toward me; your fathers began to overthrow and corrupt, even in the wilderness, that worship which I had commanded; but you have far passed their ungodliness, for you have brought in an infinite company of gods. And this order is fitter for Stephen's purpose; for he intendeth to prove, (as we have already said,) that after the Israelites felt away unto strange and bastardly rites, they never made an end of sinning, but being stricken with blindness, they polluted themselves every now and then with new idolatries, until they were come even unto the last end [454] of impiety. Therefore, Stephen confirmeth this sentence fitly with the testimony of the prophet, that the Jews, descending of wicked and rebellious fathers, had never ceased to wax worse and worse. And although the prophet's words be somewhat unlike to these, yet is the sense all one. It is to be thought that Stephen, who had to deal with the Jews, did repeat word for word in their tongue that which is in the prophet; Luke, who wrote in Greek, did follow the Greek interpreter. The prophet saith, Ye honored Succoth your king, and Chiun your image, the star of your gods. The Greek interpreter made a noun common of a noun proper, because of the alliance [455] of the word *Succoth,* which signifieth *a tabernacle.* Furthermore, I cannot tell whence he fetcheth that his Remphan, unless it were because that word was more used in that time.

And figures which ye made. The word image, which is in the prophet, doth of itself signify no evil thing. Moreover, the word [{τυπος}]; is taken amongst the Grecians in good part. For the ceremonies which God appointed are called [{τυποι}]; notwithstanding the prophet condemneth expressly the figures [types] which the Jews had made. Why so? Because God will not be worshipped under a visible and external form. If any man object that he speaketh in this place of stars; that is true, I confess; but I stand only upon this, that although the prophet doth give their idols some honest name, yet doth he sharply condemn their corrupt worship; whereby the foolish and childish caviling of the Papists is refuted. Because they deny that those images which they worship are idols, they say, that that mad worship of theirs is, [{εικονοδουλεια}], or serving of images, and not [{ειδολοδουλεια}], or worshipping of idols. Seeing they mock God sophistically, there is no man that is endued even but with common understanding, which doth not see that they are more than ridiculous even in such toys. For although I move no question about the word, it is certain that the word [{τυπος}]; is

[454] "Ad extermum," to the extreme.
[455] "Affinitatem," its affinity to.

more honorable than [{εικων}]. But those same [{τυποι}], or figures, are simply condemned in this place, which men make to themselves, not only [{προς} {την} {λατρειαν}], or that they may worship them, but [{προς} {την} {προσκυνησιν}], that is, that they may give them even any reverence at all. Therefore that filthy distinction falleth flat to the ground, wherein the Papists think they have a crafty starting-hole. [456]

Beyond Babylon. The prophet nameth Damascus; neither doth the Greek interpretation dissent from the same. Wherefore it may be that the word Babylon cropt [crept] in here through error; though in the sum of the thing there be no great difference. The Israelites were to be carried away to Babylon; but because they thought that they had a sure and strong fortress in the kingdom of Syria, whose head Damascus was, therefore the prophet saith that Damascus shall not help them, but that God shall drive them farther; as if he should say, So long as you have Damascus set against your enemies, you think that you are well fenced; but God shall carry you away beyond it; even into Assyria and Chaldea.

Acts 7:44-50

Acts 7:44-50

44. Our fathers had the testimony of witness in the wilderness, like as he had appointed, speaking to Moses, that he should make it according to the form which he had seen: 45. Which tabernacle our fathers which succeeded brought with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, which God drove out before the face of our fathers, until the days of David; 46. Who found favor before God, and desired that he might find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47. But Solomon built him an house. 48. But the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as the prophet saith, 49. Heaven is My seat, and the earth is my footstool. What house will ye build for me? saith the Lord; or what place is it that ye should rest in? 50. Hath not my hand made all these things?

44. *The tabernacle of witness.* Stephen showeth here that the blame cannot be laid upon God, because the Jews polluted themselves with divers superstitions, as if God had suffered them to wander freely. [457] For he saith that God had commanded how he would be worshipped by them. Whereupon it followeth that they were entangled in so many errors, because they would not follow that form which God had appointed. Although he girdeth [reprehendeth] them for two causes: Because, being not content with that rule alone which God had prescribed, they invented to themselves strange worships; secondly, because they had no respect unto the right end of the temple, and of the ceremonies which God had appointed. For whereas they ought to have been unto them exercises of the spiritual worship, they appre-

[456] "Effugium," evasion.
[457] "Sine freno," without a curb.

hended nothing but that which was carnal, according to their carnal nature; [458] that is, they took the shadow for the body.

Therefore we see that the Jews were first reprehended for their boldness, for because that being not content with the plain word of God, they were carried away after their own inventions. Secondly, they are reproved for the preposterous abuse of the true and sincere worship; because they followed the flesh instead of the Spirit. They had, saith he, *the tabernacle of witness.* Therefore it was their own wantonness and rashness only which caused them to sin. For seeing they were well taught what was the right way and order of worshipping God, all cloak and color of ignorance was taken away.

Which thing is worth the noting. For seeing God doth after a sort bridle us, when he maketh his will known unto us, if after we have received his commandment we turn aside, either unto the right hand or to the left, we be twice guilty; because the servant which knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall suffer more stripes: This is the first mark whereby the Holy Spirit doth distinguish all bastardly and corrupt worshippings from the true and sincere worship. Yea, (to speak more briefly,) the first difference between true worship and idolatry is this: when the godly take in hand nothing but that which is agreeable to the Word of God, but the other think all that lawful which pleaseth themselves, and so they count their own will a law; whereas God alloweth nothing but that which he himself hath appointed. To this end serveth the word *witness.*

The Hebrew word [מוֹעֵד] (*moed*) signifieth, indeed, an appointed place and time, or an assembly of men; but the reason expressed in Moses showeth that there is another cause why it is so named. For in Moses this is oftentimes repeated, "I will meet with you there." Therefore the tabernacle was consecrated by the covenant and the word of the Lord, and his voice was heard there continually, that it might be distinguished from all profane places.

According to the form which he had seen. This is referred unto the second point which I have touched; for it may be that he which shall use the ceremonies only which God appointed, shall notwithstanding worship God amiss. For God careth not for external rites, save only inasmuch as they are of the heavenly truth; therefore God would have the tabernacle to be made like unto the heavenly figure, [459] that the Jews might know that they were not to stay still in the external figures. Furthermore, let him which is disposed read my Commentaries upon the Epistle to the Hebrews, and he shall see what that figure, whereof mention is made Exodus 25, (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5,) did signify. Stephen doth only briefly tell them in this place that the worship which God commanded the Jews is spiritual, and that they, according to their carnal blockishness, were evil and false interpreters; therefore, as we have said, that God alloweth no worship but that which

[458] "Pro crasso suo ingenio nihil nisi terrenum et carnale apprehenderent," in accordance with their gross disposition, they apprehend nothing but what was earthly and carnal.

[459] "Archetypum," archetype, model.

is grounded in his commandment, so we are taught here that it is requisite in the right use of the commandment, that the spiritual truth be present; which thing being granted, it was the like question which we said did consist principally in this issue, whether the shadows ought to yield to the body or not. Whereas Moses is said to have seen a form or figure, the Spirit of God signifieth thereby that it is unlawful for us to invent forms at our pleasure; but that all our senses must be set upon that form which God showeth, that all our religion may be formed according to it. The word *figure* signifieth here, in this place, the principal pattern, [460] which is nothing else but the spiritual truth.

45. *Which they brought in.* This serveth to increase the *frowardness* [461] of the nation, that whereas the tabernacle did continue with them, and they carried the same whithersoever they went, yet could they not be kept within the bounds of God's covenant, but they would have strange and profane rites; to wit, declaring that God dwelt amidst them, from whom they were so far distant, and whom *they* did drive out of that inheritance which *he* had given them. To this purpose serveth that also, that God did beautify the tabernacle with divers miracles; for the worthiness thereof [462] was established by those victories which the Jews had gotten, as it appeareth by divers places of the holy history; therefore, it must needs be that they were very disobedient, which did not cease oftentimes to start aside from that worship which was so many ways approved.

Until the days of David. Although the ark of the Lord continued long in Shiloh, yet it had no certain place until the reign of David, (1 Samuel 1:3;) for it was unlawful for men to erect a place for the same, but it was to be placed in that place which the Lord had showed, as Moses saith oftentimes. Neither durst David himself, after he had taken it from the enemies, bring it into the thrashing-floor of Araunah until the Lord had declared, by an angel from heaven, that that was the place which he had chosen, (2 Samuel 24:16.) And Stephen counteth this a singular benefit of God, not without great cause, that the place was showed to David wherein the Israelites should hereafter worship God; as in the Psalm he rejoiceth as over some notable thing: "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord; our feet shall be stable in thy courts, O Jerusalem," (Psalm 132:3) The priesthood was coupled with the kingdom; therefore, the stability of the kingdom is showed in the resting of the ark; therefore it is said that he desired this so earnestly that he bound himself with a solemn vow, that he would not come within his house, that his eyes should enjoy no sleep, nor his temples any rest, until he should know a place for the Lord, and a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. Furthermore, the place was showed to David, but it was granted to Solomon to build the temple, (1 Kings 5:7.)

[460] "Primarium exemplar," the primary pattern, the original model.
[461] "Pervicaciam," perverseness.
[462] "Illius dignitas," its dignity.

47. *Solomon built.* Stephen seemeth to gird Solomon glancingly [463] in this place, as if he did not regard the nature of God in building the temple; yet did he attempt that work not without the commandment of God. There was also a promise added, wherein God did testify that he would be present with his people there. I answer, that when Stephen denieth that God dwelleth in temples made with hands, that is not referred unto Solomon, who knew full well that God was to be sought in heaven, and that men's minds must be lifted up thither by faith; which thing he uttered also in that solemn prayer which he made:

"The heaven of heavens do not contain thee,
and how much less this house?"
(1 Kings 8:23;)

but he reproveth the blockishness of the people, which abused the temple, as if it had had God tied to it; which appeareth more plainly by the testimony of Isaiah, (Isaiah 6:6,) which he citeth also; God, saith he, would have Solomon to build him a temple; but they were greatly deceived who thought that he was, as it were, included in such a building; as he complaineth by his prophet that the people do him injury, when as they imagine that he is tied to a place; but the prophet doth not for that cause only inveigh against the Jews, because they worshipped God superstitiously, thinking that his power was tied to the temple, but because they did esteem him according to their own affection, and, therefore, after that they had ended [464] their sacrifices and external pomp, they imagined that he was pleased, and that they had brought him indebted to them. This was almost a common error in all ages; because men thought that cold ceremonies were sufficient enough for the worship of God. The reason is, because forasmuch as they are carnal, and wholly set upon the world, they imagine that God is like to them; therefore, to the end God may take from them this blockishness, he saith that he *filleth all things.*

49. For whereas he saith, that *heaven is his seat, and the earth his footstool*, it must not be so understood as if he had a body, or could be divided into parts, after the manner of men; but because he is infinity, therefore he saith that he cannot be comprehended within any spaces of place; therefore, those men are deceived who esteem God or his worship according to their own nature; and because the prophet had to deal with hypocrites, he doth not only dispute about the essence of God, but also teacheth generally, that he is far unlike to men, and that he is not moved with the vain pomp of this world as they are. Here ariseth that question also, why the prophet saith that the Lord hath no place of rest in the world, whereas, notwithstanding, the Spirit affirmeth the contrary elsewhere, "This is my rest for ever," (Psalm 132:14.) Moreover, Isaiah doth adorn the Church with this self-same title,

[463] "Videtur hic oblique Stephanus Solomonem perstringere," Stephen here seemeth indirectly to rebuke Solomon.

[464] "Defuncti sunt," performed.

that it is the glorious rest of God, alluding unto the temple, I answer, that when God appointed signs of his presence ill the temple, and sacrifices in times past, he did not this to the end he might settle and fasten himself and his power there; therefore, the Israelites did wickedly, who, setting their minds wholly upon the signs, did forge to themselves an earthly God. They dealt also ungodly, who under this color took to themselves liberty to sin, as if they could readily and easily pacify God with bare ceremonies. Thus doth the world use to mock God.

When God doth declare, by the external rites, that he will be present with his, that he may dwell in the midst of them, he commandeth them to lift up their minds, that they may seek him spiritually. Hypocrites, which are entangled in the world, will rather pluck God out of heaven; and whereas they have nothing but vain and bare figures, they are puffed up with such foolish confidence, that they pamper themselves in their sins carelessly, so, at this day, the Papists include Christ in the bread and wine in their imagination; that done, so soon as they have worshipped their idol with foolish worship, they vaunt and crack as if they were as holy as angels. We must diligently note these two vices, that men do superstitiously forge to themselves a carnal and worldly God which doth so come down unto them, that they remain still having their minds set upon the earth, and that they rise not up in mind to heaven. Again, they dream that God is pacified with frivolous obedience; hereby it cometh to pass, that they are besotted in the visible signs; and, secondly, that [465] they go about to bring God indebted to them after a childish manner, and with things which be nothing worth.

Now we understand in what sense the prophet saith that God hath no place of rest in the world. He would, indeed, that the temple should have been a sign and pledge of his presence, yet only to the godly, which did ascend into heaven in heart, which did worship him spiritually with pure faith; but he hath no place of rest with the superstitious, who, through their foolish inventions, tie him unto the elements of the world, or do erect unto him an earthly worship; neither yet with hypocrites, who are puffed up with drunken confidence, as if they had done their duty towards God well, after that they have played in their toys. In sum, the promise received by faith doth cause God to hear us in his temple, as if he were present to show forth his power in the sacraments; but unless we rise up unto him by faith, we shall have no presence of his. Hereby we may easily gather, that when he dwelleth amidst those that be his, he is neither tied to the earth, neither comprehended in any place, because they seek him spiritually in heaven.

50. *Hath not mine hand?* The prophet telleth the people in these words, that God hath no need either of gold, either of precious furniture of the temple, either of the sacrifices; whereupon it followeth that his true worship is not contained in ceremonies. For he desireth none of all these things which we offer unto him, for his own sake, but only that he may exercise us

[465] "Neglecta pietate," neglecting a piety, omitted.

in the study of godliness; which argument is handled more at large, Psalm 1. For although this be a shameful foolishness to go about to feed God with sacrifices, yet unless hypocrites were drowned in the same, they would make no such account of toys, because all that is unsavory before God which dissenteth from the spiritual worship; therefore, let us know that God seeketh us and not ours, which we have only at pleasure; and hereby it appeareth also what great difference there is between true religion and the carnal inventions of men.

Acts 7: 51-53

Acts 7: 51-53

51. You stiff-necked, and of an uncircumcised heart and ears, ye have always resisted the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. 52. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain those which foretold of the coming of the Just; of whom you are now made the betrayers and murderers: 53. Who have received the law in the dispositions of angels, and have not kept it.

51. Forasmuch as Stephen doth not expressly answer the points of the accusation, I am of their mind who think that he would have said more, if his oration had not been broken off with some uproar. For we know what a session of judges he had; therefore, no marvel if they enforced him to hold his peace with noise and outcries. And we see, also, that he did use long insinuation of set purpose, that he might tame and appease them who were like brute beasts most cruel; but it is likely that their madness was then incensed, when he proved that they had most wickedly corrupted the law, that the temple was polluted with their superstitions, and that there is nothing sincere amongst them; because, whilst they did stick in bare figures, they did not worship God spiritually, because they did not refer the ceremonies unto the heavenly figure; but though Stephen did not enter the cause straightway, but essayed to make their fierce minds somewhat more gentle by little and little, yet did he reason very fitly, to purge himself of the crime laid to his charge.

These two things, as we have said, were the principal points of the question, that Stephen had blasphemed God and his temple; that he went about to disannul the law. That Stephen might clear himself of both these false slanders, he began at the calling of Abraham, and declareth that the Jews excelled the Gentiles, not of their own nature, not by any right of their own, not by any merits of works, but by a free privilege, because God had adopted them in the person of Abraham. This is also very pertinent to the cause, that the covenant of salvation was made with Abraham before any temple or ceremonies were, yea, before circumcision was appointed. Of which things the Jews did so boast, that they said there was no worship of God without them, neither any holiness. After that he set down how wonderful and

manifold the goodness of God was towards Abraham's stock, and again how wickedly and frowardly they had refused, so much as in them lay, the grace of God; whereby it appeareth that it cannot be ascribed to their own merits that they are counted God's people, but because God did choose them of his own accord, being unworthy, and did not cease to do them good, though they were most unthankful. Their lofty and proud spirits might by this means have been subdued, tamed, and humbled, that being emptied of that wind of foolish glory they might come unto the Mediator. Thirdly, he declared that the Angel was the governor and chief, in giving the law and delivering the people, and that Moses did so serve in his function, that he taught that there should come other prophets hereafter, who should, notwithstanding, have one which should be the chief of them, that he might make an end of all prophecies, and that he might bring the perfect accomplishment of them all. Whereby it is gathered that those are nothing less than Moses' disciples, who reject that kind of doctrine which was promised and commended in the law, together with the author thereof.

Last of all, he showeth that all the old worship which was prescribed by Moses is not to be esteemed of itself, but that it ought rather to be referred to another end, because it was made according to the heavenly pattern; and that the Jews have always been wicked interpreters of the law, because they conceived nothing but that which was earthly. Hereby is it proved that there is no injury done to the temple and the law when Christ is made, as it were, the end and truth of both, But because the state of the cause did consist chiefly in this, that the worship of God doth not properly consist in sacrifices and other things, and that all ceremonies did nothing else but shadow Christ, Stephen was purposed to stand upon this point if the Jews would have permitted him; but because, when he was come to the pith of the matter, they cannot abide to hear any more, (they were so incensed with fury,) the application of those things which he had said, unto this cause which he had in hand, is wanting. And he is enforced to use a sharp reprehension for a conclusion, *Ye of an hard neck,* saith he, (Exodus 32:9; 33:3,5.) We see how soon he is offended with them with an holy zeal, but because he saw that he spake many things to small end, especially before deaf men, he breaketh off his doctrine. This is a metaphor taken from horses or oxen, which Moses useth often, when he will say that his people is a rebellious people, and disobedient to God, and also unruly.

The upbraiding which followeth was of greater force with them. Circumcision was unto them a vail and covering to cover all vices. Therefore, when he calleth them uncircumcised in heart, he doth not only mean that they are rebellious against God and stubborn, but that they were found treacherous and covenant-breakers, even in that sign whereof they did so greatly boast; and so he turneth that back most fitly to their shame, whereof they made boast to their glory. For this is all one, as if he should have said that they had broken the covenant of the Lord, so that their circumcision was void and

profane. This speech is taken out of the law and the prophets. For as God hath appointed the sign, so he would have the Jews know to what end they were circumcised; to wit, that they might circumcise their hearts and all their corrupt affections to the Lord, as we read, "And now circumcise your hearts to the Lord," Wherefore, the letter of circumcision, as Paul calleth it, is a vain visor with God, (Romans 2:28.) So, forasmuch as at this day the spiritual washing is the truth of our baptism, it is to be feared, lest that may well be objected to us, that we are not partakers of baptism, because our souls and flesh are polluted with filthiness.

Ye have always resisted. At the first Stephen vouchsafed to call these men fathers and brethren, against whom he inveigheth thus sharply, Therefore, so long as there remained any hope that they might be made more gentle, he dealt not only friendly with them, but he spake honorably unto them. Now, so soon as he espieth their desperate stubbornness, he doth not only take from them all honor, but lest he should have any fellowship with them, he speaketh unto them as unto men of another kindred. You, saith he, are like to your fathers, who have always rebelled against the Spirit of God. But he himself came of the same fathers; and yet that he may couple himself to Christ, he forgetteth his kindred, inasmuch as it was wicked. And yet for all this, he bindeth them not all in one bundle, as they say, but he speaketh unto the multitude.

And those are said to resist the Spirit who reject [466] him when he speaketh in the prophets. Neither doth he speak in this place of secret revelations, wherewith God inspireth every one, but of the external ministry; which we must note diligently. He purposeth to take from the Jews all color of excuse; and, therefore, he upbraideth unto them, that they had purposely, and not of ignorance, resisted God. Whereby it appeareth what great account the Lord maketh of his word, and how reverently he will have us to receive the same. Therefore, lest, like giants, we make war against God, let us learn to hearken to the ministers by whose mouth he teacheth us.

52. *Which of the prophets?* Forasmuch as they ought not to bear their fathers' fault, Stephen seemeth to deal unjustly, in that he reckoneth this amongst their faults unto whom he speaketh; but he had just causes so to do. First, because they did vaunt that they were Abraham's holy progeny, it was worth the labor to show unto them how great vanity that was, as if Stephen should say, that there is no cause why they should vaunt of their stock, forasmuch as they come of those who were wicked murderers of the prophets. So that he toucheth that glancingly which is more plainly set down by the prophets, that they are not the children of prophets, but a degenerate and bastardly issue, the seed of Canaan, etc. Which thing we may at this day object to the Papists, when as they so highly extol their fathers. Furthermore, this serveth to amplify withal, whereas he saith that it is no new thing for them to resist the truth, but that they have this wickedness,

[466] "Contumaciter rejicient," contumaciously reject.

as it were, by inheritance from their fathers. Furthermore, it was requisite for Stephen by this means to pluck from their faces the visor of the Church, wherewith they burdened him. [467] This was an unmeet prejudice against the doctrine of the gospel, in that they boasted that they are the Church of God, and did challenge this title [468] by long succession. Therefore, Stephen preventeth them on the contrary, and proveth that their fathers did, no less than they, rage against the prophets, through wicked contempt and hatred of sound doctrine. Lastly, this is the continual custom of the Scripture to gather the fathers and children together [469] under the same guiltiness, seeing they pollute themselves with the same offenses, and that famous sentence of Christ answereth thereto, "Fulfill the measure of your fathers, until the just blood come upon you, from Abel unto Zacharias."

Who have foretold. Hereby we gather that this was the drift of all the prophets, to direct their nation unto Christ, as he is the end of the law, (Romans 10:4.) It were too long to gather all the prophecies wherein the coming of Christ was foretold. Let it suffice to know this generally, that it was the common office of all the prophets to promise salvation by the grace of Christ. Christ is called in this place the *Just,* not only to note his innocency, but of the effect, because it is proper to him to appoint justice in the world. And even in this place doth Stephen prove that the Jews were altogether unworthy of the benefit of redemption, because the fathers did not only refuse that in times past, which was witnessed unto them by the prophets, but they did also cruelly murder the messengers of grace, and their children endeavored to extinguish the author of righteousness and salvation which was offered unto them. By which comparison Christ teacheth that the wicked conspiracy of his enemies was an heap of all iniquities.

53. *Who have received the law.* They called that fury wherewith they raged against Stephen zeal of the law, as if he had been a forsaker of the law, and a revolt [470] and had enforced others to fall away in like sort. Although he was determined to clear himself of this false accusation, yet he did not go through with his answer. For he could not be heard, and it was to no end to speak to deaf men. Therefore, he is content, at a word, to take from them their false color and pretense. It is evident, saith he, that you lie, when you pretend the zeal of the law, which you transgress and break without ceasing; and as he objected unto them in the words next going before, the treacherous murder of the Just, so now he upbraideth unto them their revolting from the law. Some man will say that Stephen's cause is no whit bettered hereby, because the Jews break the law. But as we have already said, Stephen doth not so chide them, as if his defense did principally consist in this issue, but that they may not flatter themselves in their false boasting. For hypocrites must be handled thus, who will, notwithstanding, seem to be most

[467] "Gravabant," burdened, brought a charge against him, or threw obloquy on him.
[468] "Hunc qui titulum sibi… arrogabant," and arrogated this title to themselves.
[469] "Aggregare," to sum up, include.
[470] "Apostata," an apostate.

earnest defenders of God's glory, though indeed they condemn him carelessly. And here is also a fit antistrophe, because they made semblance that they received the law which was committed to them, which was, notwithstanding, reproachfully despised by them.

In the dispositions of angels It is word for word, *into the dispositions,* but it is all one. Furthermore, we need not seek any other interpreter of this saying than Paul, who saith that the law was disposed or ordained by angels, (Galatians 3:16;) for he useth the participle there whereof this noun is derived. And his meaning is, that the angels were the messengers of God, and his witnesses in publishing the law, that the authority thereof might be firm and stable.

Therefore, forasmuch as God did call the angels to be, as it were, solemn witnesses when he gave the Jews his law, the same angels shall be witnesses of their unfaithfulness. [471] And to this end doth Stephen make mention of the angels, that he may accuse the Jews in presence of them, and prove them guilty, because they have transgressed the law. Hereby we may gather what shall become of the despisers of the gospel, which doth so far excel the law, that it doth, after a sort, darken the glory thereof, as Paul teacheth, (2 Corinthians 3.)

Acts 7:54-58

Acts 7:54-58

54. Furthermore, when they heard these things, they were cut asunder in their hearts, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth. 55. But forasmuch as he was full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56. And he said, Behold, I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. And they cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears; 57. And with one accord they ran upon him: 58. And having cast him out of the city, they stoned him.

54. *When they heard.* The beginning of the action had in it some color of judgment; but at length the judges cannot bridle their fury. First, they interrupt him with murmuring and noise, now they break out into envious and deadly cryings, [472] lest they should hear any one word. Afterward they hale the holy man (out of the city,) that they may put him to death. And Luke expresseth properly what force Satan hath to drive forward the adversaries of the word. When he saith that *they burst asunder inwardly,* he noteth that they were not only angry, but they were also stricken with madness. Which fury breaketh out into the gnashing of the teeth, as a violent fire into flame. The reprobate, who are at Satan's commandment, must needs be thus moved with the hearing of the word of God; and this is

[471] "Perfidiae," perfidy.

[472] "Infestis clamoribus," hostile clamor.

the state of the gospel, it driveth hypocrites into madness who might seem before to be modest, as if a drunken man who is desirous of sleep be suddenly awakened. Therefore, Simeon assigneth this to Christ, as proper to him, to disclose the thoughts of many hearts, (Luke 2:35.) Yet, notwithstanding, this ought not to be ascribed to the doctrine of salvation, whose end is rather this, to tame men's minds to obey God after that it hath subdued them. But so soon as Satan hath possessed their minds, if they be urged, their ungodliness will break out. Therefore, this is an accidentary [accidental] evil; yet we are taught by these examples, that we must not look that the word of God should draw all men unto a sound mind.

Which doctrine is very requisite for us unto constancy. Those which are teachers cannot do their duty as they ought, but they must set themselves against the contemners of God. And forasmuch as there are always some wicked men, which set light by the majesty of God, they must ever now and then have recourse unto this vehemency of Stephen. For they may not wink when God's honor is taken from him. And what shall be the end thereof? Their ungodliness shall be the more incensed, so that we shall seem to pour oil into the fire, (as they say.) But whatsoever come of it, yet must we not spare the wicked, but we must keep them down mightily, although they could pour out all the furies of hell. And it is certain that those which will flatter the wicked do not respect the fruit, [473] but are faint-hearted through fear of danger. But as for us, howsoever we have no such success as we could wish, let us know that courage in defending the doctrine of godliness is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

55. *Forasmuch as he was full.* We cannot almost express into what straits the servant of Christ was brought, when he saw himself beset round with raging enemies; the goodness of his cause was oppressed, partly with false accusations and malice, partly with violence and outrageous outcries; he was environed with stern countenances on every side; he himself was haled unto a cruel and horrible kind of death; he could espy succor and ease no where. Therefore, being thus destitute of man's help, he turneth himself toward God. We must first note this, that Stephen did look unto God, who is the judge of life and death, (turning his eyes from beholding the world,) when he was brought into extreme despair of all things, whilst that there is nothing but death before his eyes. This done, we must also add this, that his expectation was not in vain, because Christ appeared to him by and by. Although Luke doth signify, that he was now armed with such power of the Spirit as could not be overcome, so that nothing could hinder him from beholding the heavens; therefore Stephen looketh up toward heaven, that he may gather courage by beholding Christ; that dying he may triumph gloriously, having overcome death. But as for us, it is no marvel if Christ do not show himself to us, because we are so set and tied upon the earth.

[473] "Qui impiorum aures deliciis mulceri volunt, non tam respicere profectum," who would pour soothing wrods into the ears of the wicked, look not so much to their profit.

Hereby it cometh to pass, that our hearts fail us at every light rumor of danger, and even at the falling of a leaf. And that for good causes; for where is our strength but in Christ? But we pass over the heavens, as if we had no help any where else, save only in the world, Furthermore, this vice can be redressed by no other means than if God lift us up by his Spirit, being naturally set upon the earth. Therefore, Luke assigneth this cause, why Stephen looked up steadfastly toward heaven, because he was full of the Spirit. We must also ascend into heaven, having this Spirit to be our director and guide, so often as we are oppressed with troubles. And, surely, until such time as he illuminate us, our eyes are not so quick of sight, that they can come unto heaven. Yea, the eyes of the flesh are so dull, that they cannot ascend into heaven.

He saw the glory of God. Luke signifieth, as I have said, that Christ appeared forthwith to Stephen so soon as he lifted up his eyes towards heaven. But he telleth us before, that he had other eyes given him than the fleshly eyes, seeing that with the same [474] he flieth up unto the glory of God. Whence we must gather a general comfort, that God will be no less present with us, if, forsaking the world, all our senses strive to come to him; not that he appeareth unto us by any external vision, as he did to Stephen, but he will so reveal himself unto us within, that we may indeed feel his presence. And this manner of seeing ought to be sufficient for us, when God doth not only, by his power and grace, declare that he is nigh at hand, but doth also prove that he dwelleth in us.

56. *Behold, I see the heavens.* God meant not only privately to provide for his servant, but also to wring and torment his enemies; as Stephen doth courageously triumph over them, when he affirmeth plainly that he saw a miracle. And here may a question be moved, how the heavens were opened? For mine own part, I think that there was nothing changed in the nature of the heavens; but that Stephen had new quickness of sight granted him, which pierced through all lets, even unto the invisible glory of the kingdom of heaven. For admit we grant that there was some division or parting [475] made in heaven, yet man's eye could never reach so far. Again, Stephen alone did see the glory of God. For that spectacle was not only hid from the wicked, who stood in the same place, but they were also so blinded within themselves, that they did not see the manifest truth. [476] Therefore, he saith that the heavens are opened to him in this respect, because nothing keepeth him from beholding the glory of God. Whereupon it followeth that the miracle was not wrought in heaven, but in his eyes. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should dispute long about any natural vision; because it is certain that Christ appeared unto him not after some natural manner, but after a new and singular sort. And I pray you of what color was the glory of

[474] "Quorum perspicacia," by their perspicacity.
[475] "Scissuram," rent or opening.
[476] "Apertam veritatis lucem," the open light of truth.

God, that it could be seen naturally with the eyes of the flesh? Therefore, we must imagine nothing in this vision but that which is divine. Moreover, this is worth the noting, that the glory of God appeared not unto Stephen wholly as it was, but according to man's capacity. For that infiniteness cannot be comprehended with the measure of any creature.

The Son of man standing. He seeth Christ reigning in that flesh wherein he was abased; so that in very deed the victory did consist in this one thing. Therefore, it is not superfluous in that Christ appeareth unto him, and for this cause doth he also call him the Son of man, as if he should say, I see that man whom ye thought ye had quite extinguished by death enjoying the government of heaven; therefore, gnash with your teeth as much as you list: there is no cause why I should fear to fight for him even unto blood, who shall not only defend his own cause, but my salvation also. Notwithstanding, here may a question be moved, why he saw him standing, who is said elsewhere to sit? Augustine, as he is sometimes more subtle than needs, saith, "that he sitteth as a judge, that he stood then as an advocate." For mine own part, I think that though these speeches be diverse, yet they signify both one thing. For neither sitting, nor yet standing, noteth out how the body of Christ was framed; but this is referred unto his power and kingdom. For where shall we erect him a throne, that he may sit at the right hand of God the Father, seeing God doth fill all things in such sort, that we ought to imagine no place for his right hand?

Therefore, the whole text is a metaphor, when Christ is said to sit or stand at the right hand of God the Father, and the plain meaning is this, that Christ hath all power given him, that he may reign in his Father's stead in that flesh wherein he was humbled, and that he may be next him. And although this power be spread abroad through heaven and earth, yet some men imagine amiss that Christ in every where in his human nature. For, though he be contained in a certain place, yet that hindereth no whit but that he may and doth show forth his power throughout all the world. Therefore, if we be desirous to feel him present by the working of his grace, we must seek him in heaven; as he revealed himself unto Stephen there. Also, some men do affirm ridiculously out of this place, that he drew near unto Stephen that he might see him. [477] For we have already said, that Stephen's eyes were so lifted up by the power of the Spirit, [478] that no distance of place could hinder the same. I confess, indeed, that speaking properly, that is, philosophically, there is no place above the heavens. But this is sufficient for me, that it is perverse doting to place Christ any where else save only in heaven, and above the elements of the world.

57. *Crying with a loud voice.* This was either a vain show of zeal, as hypocrites are almost always pricked forward with ambition to break out into immoderate heat; as Caiaphas when he heard Christ say thus, After this ye

[477] "Ut videri posset ab eo," that he might be seen by him.

[478] "Per fidem," through faith, omitted.

shall see the Son of man, etc., did rent his clothes in token of indignation, as if it were intolerable blasphemy; or else certainly the preaching of the glory of Christ was unto them such a torment, that they must needs burst through madness. And I am rather of this mind; for Luke saith afterward, that they were carried violently, as those men which have no hold of themselves use to leap out immoderately. [479]

58. *They stoned.* God had appointed this kind of punishment in the law for false prophets, as it is written in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy; but God doth also define there who ought to be reckoned in that number; to wit, he which doth attempt to bring the people unto strange gods; therefore the stoning of Stephen was both unjust and also wicked, because he was unjustly condemned; so that the martyrs of Christ must suffer like punishment with the wicked. It is the cause alone which maketh the difference; but this difference is so highly esteemed before God and his angels, that the rebukes of the martyrs [480] do far excel all glory of the world. Yet here may a question be moved, How it was lawful for the Jews to stone Stephen, who had not the government in their hands? For in Christ's cause they answer, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. I answer, that they did this violently and in an uproar. And whereas the president did not punish this wickedness, it may be that he winked at many things, [481] lest they should bring that hatred upon his own head which they bare against the name of Christ. We see that the Roman presidents did chiefly wink at the civil discords of that nation, even of set purpose; that when one of them had murdered another, [482] they might the sooner be overcome afterward.

Acts 7:58-61

Acts 7:58-61

And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul. 59. And they stoned Stephen, calling on, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said thus, he fell on sleep. 61. And Saul consented [was consenting] to his death.

And the witnesses. Luke signifieth, that even in that tumult they observed some show of judgment. This was not commanded in vain that the witnesses should throw the first stone; because, seeing they must commit the murder with their own hands, many are holden with a certain dread, who otherwise are less afraid to cut the throats of the innocent with perjury of the tongue. But in the mean season, we gather how blind and mad the ungodliness of these witnesses was, who are not afraid to imbrue their bloody hands with

[479] "Subito et intemperanter prosilire," break out suddenly and intemperately.

[480] "Martyrum probra," the ignominy.

[481] "In populo turbulento et prope indomito," in a turbulent and almost untameable people, omitted.

[482] "Ut mutuo confecti," that having mutually destroyed each other.

the blood of an innocent, who had already committed murder with their tongues. Whereas he saith, that their clothes were laid down at the feet of Saul, he showeth that there was no let in him, but that being cast into a reprobate sense he might have perished with the rest. [483] For who would not think that he was a desperate, [desperado,] who had infected his youth with such cruelty? [484] Neither is his age expressed to lessen his fault, as some unskillful men go about to prove; for he was of those years, that want of knowledge could no whit excuse him. And Luke will shortly after declare, that he was sent by the high priest to persecute the faithful. Therefore he was no child, he might well be counted a man. Why, then, is his youth mentioned? That every man may consider with himself what great hurt he might have done in God's Church, unless Christ had bridled him betimes. And therein appeareth a most notable token both of God's power and also of his grace, in that he tamed a fierce and wild beast in his chief fury, even in a moment, and in that he extolled a miserable murderer so highly who through his wickedness was drowned almost in the deep pit of hell.

59. *Calling on.* Because he had uttered words enough before men, though in vain, he turneth himself now unto God for good causes, and armeth himself with prayer to suffer all things. For although we have need to run unto God's help every minute of an hour during our whole warfare, yet we have greatest need to call upon God in the last conflict, which is the hardest.

And Luke expresseth again how furious mad they were, because their cruelty was not assuaged even when they saw the servant of Christ praying humbly. Furthermore, here is set down a prayer of Stephen having two members. In the former member, where he commendeth his spirit to Christ, he showeth the constancy of his faith. In the other, where he prayeth for his enemies, he testifieth his love towards men. Forasmuch as the whole perfection of godliness consisteth upon [of] these two parts, we have in the death of Stephen a rare example of a godly and holy death. It is to be thought that he used many more words, but the sum tendeth to this end.

Lord Jesus. I have already said, that this prayer was a witness of confidence; and surely the courageousness and violentness [485] of Stephen was great, that when as he saw the stones fly about his ears, wherewith he should be stoned by and by; when as he heareth cruel curses and reproaches against his head, he yet stayeth himself meekly [486] upon the grace of Christ. In like sort, the Lord will have his servants to be brought to nought as it were sometimes, to the end their salvation may be the more wonderful, And let us define this salvation not by the understanding of our flesh, [487] but by

[483] "Per eum non stetisse quominus in sensum reprobum conjectus, cum aliis periret," that it was not owing to himself that he did not fall into a reprobate mind, and perish with the rest (of the Jews.)

[484] "Tirocenio," training.

[485] "Animi magnitudo," magnanimity.

[486] "Secure," securely.

[487] "Non carnis nostrae sensu," not by our carnal senses.

faith. We see how Stephen leaneth not unto the judgment of the flesh, but rather assuring himself, even in very destruction, that he shall be saved, he suffereth death with a quiet mind. For undoubtedly he was assured of this, that our life is hid with Christ in God, (Colossians 3:3.)

Therefore, casting off all care of the body, he is content to commit his soul into the hands of Christ. For he could not pray thus from his heart, unless, having forgotten this life, he had cast off all care of the same.

It behoveth us with David (Psalm 31:6) to commit our souls into the hands of God daily so long as we are in the world, because we are environed with a thousand deaths, that God may deliver our life from all dangers; but when we must die indeed, and we are called thereunto, we must fly unto this prayer, that Christ will receive our spirit. For he commended his own spirit into the hands of his Father, to this end, that he may keep ours for ever. This is an inestimable comfort, in that we know our souls do not wander up and down [488] when they flit out of our bodies, but that Christ receiveth them, that he may keep them faithfully, if we commend them into his hands. This hope ought to encourage us to suffer death patiently. Yea, whosoever commendeth his soul to Christ with an earnest affection of faith, he must needs resign himself wholly to his pleasure and will. And this place doth plainly testify that the soul of man is no vain blast which vanisheth away, as some frantic fellows imagine dotingly, [489] but that it is an essential spirit which liveth after this life. Furthermore, we are taught hereby that we call upon Christ rightly and lawfully, because all power is given him of the Father, for this cause, that all men may commit themselves to his tuition. [490]

60. *Kneeling down, he cried.* This is the other part of his prayer, wherein he joineth the love of men with faith in Christ; and surely if we desire to be gathered to Christ for our salvation, we must put on this affection. Whereas Stephen prayeth for his enemies, and those most deadly, and even in the very instant when their cruelty might provoke him unto desire of revenge, he declareth sufficiently what affection he beareth toward all other men.

And we know that we are all commanded [491] to do the same which Stephen did; [492] but because there is nothing more hard than so to forgive injuries, that we will wish well to those who would have us undone, (Matthew 5:43, 44;) therefore we must always set Stephen before our eyes for an example. He crieth indeed with a loud voice, but he maketh show of nothing before men which was not spoken sincerely and from the heart, as God himself doth witness. Yet he crieth aloud, that he may omit nothing which might serve to assuage the cruelty of the enemies. The fruit appeared not forthwith, yet undoubtedly he prayed not in vain; and Paul is unto us a sufficient testimony

[488] "Fortuito," fortuitously.

[489] "Ut quidam phrenetici delirant," as some phrenzied persons rave.

[490] "Un ejus fidem," to his faith.

[491] "A Christo," by Christ, omitted.

[492] "Quod autem Stephanum fecisse narrat Lucas," which Luke relates that Stephen did.

[493] that this sin was not laid to all their charges. I will not say as Augustine, that unless Stephen had prayed the Church should not have had Paul; for this is somewhat hard; only I say this, that whereas God pardoned Paul, it appeareth thereby that Stephen's prayer was not in vain. Here ariseth a question, how Stephen prayeth for those which he said of late did resist the Holy Ghost; but this seemeth to be the sin against the Spirit which shall never be forgiven? We may easily answer, that that is pronounced generally of all which belongeth to many everywhere; therefore, he called not the body of the people rebellious in such sort that he exempted none. Again, I have declared before what manner of resisting he condemned in that place; for it followeth not by and by, that they sin against the Holy Ghost who resist him for a time. When he prayeth that God will not lay the sin to their charge, his meaning is, that the guiltiness may not remain in them.

And when he had said thus, he fell on sleep. This was added, that we may know that these words were uttered even when he was ready to yield up the ghost, which is a token of wonderful constancy; also this word sleep noteth a meek kind of death. Now, because he made this prayer when he was at the point of death, he was not moved with any hope of obtaining pardon, to be so careful to appease his enemies, but only that they might repent. When this word sleep is taken in the Scripture for to die, it must be referred unto the body, lest any man imagine foolishly with unlearned men, that the souls do also sleep.

[493] "Illustre documentum," an illustrious proof.

Chapter 8

CHAPTER 8

In this history we may first see the state of the godly in this world, to wit, that they are like sheep appointed to be slain, as it is in the Psalm, (Psalm 44:22;) and especially when the Lord letteth loose the bridle to his enemies, that they may put that cruelty in execution which they have in mind conceived. Secondly, here is set down the end of persecutions, to wit, that they are so far from breaking off the course of the gospel, that they are rather made helps to further the same through the wonderful counsel of God. Like as it was a manifest miracle, that the scattering abroad, mentioned by Luke, gathered many unto the unity of faith who were estranged from God before. Now, let us consider every thing in order.

Acts 8:1-4

Acts 8:1-4

1. And at that day there was great persecution raised against the church which was at Jerusalem. Therefore they were all scattered abroad throughout all regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2. And religious men dressed Stephen together, and they mourned sore for him. 3. But Saul made havock of the church, and, entering into houses, and drawing thence men and women, he cast them into prison. 4. And they being dispersed, did go about preaching the word of God.

1. *At that day.* The persecution began at Stephen, after that, when their madness was thereby set on fire, it waxed hot against all, both one and other. For the wicked are like brute beasts, for when they have once tasted blood they are more desirous thereof, and become more cruel through committing murder. For Satan, who is the father of all cruelty, doth first take from them all feeling of humanity when they are once imbrued with innocent blood; that done, he stirreth up in them an unquenchable thirsting after blood, whence those violent assaults to commit murder come; so that when they have once begun, they will never make an end with their will. Moreover, when they have power once granted them to do hurt, their boldness increaseth in tract of time, so that they are carried headlong more immoderately, which thing Luke also noteth when he saith, The persecution was great. Undoubtedly the Church had but small rest before, neither was it free from the vexation of the wicked; but the Lord spared his for a time, that they might have some liberty, and now they began to be sorer set on.

These things must be applied unto our time also. If the furiousness of our enemies seem at any time to be as it were fallen on sleep, so that it casteth not out flames far, let us know that the Lord provideth for our weakness; yet, let us not in the mean season imagine that we shall have continual truce, but let us be in readiness to suffer sorer brunts, as often as they shall break out suddenly. Let us also remember, that if at any time the constancy of one man have whetted the cruelty of our enemies, the blame of the evil is unjustly ascribed to him. For Luke doth not defame Stephen, [494] when as he saith, that by means of him the Church was sorer vexed than before; but he rather turneth this to his praise, because he did valiantly, as the standard-bearer, encourage others with his example to fight courageously. When he calleth it the Church which was at Jerusalem, his meaning is not that there were Churches elsewhere, but he passeth over unto these things which ensued thereupon. For whereas there was but this one only body of the godly in all the world, it was rent in pieces through flight; yet there sprung up more Churches by and by of those lame members which were dispersed here and there, and so the body of Christ was spread abroad far and wide, whereas it was before shut up within the walls of Jerusalem,

They were all scattered abroad. It is certain that they were not all scattered abroad, but the Scripture useth an universal note, for that which we say, Every where or abroad. [495] The sum is this, that not only a few were in danger; because the cruelty of the enemies raged throughout the whole Church. Many do oftentimes take themselves to their feet, through faintness of heart, even when they hear any light rumor, but these are in another case. For they fled not unadvisedly, being discouraged, [496] but because they saw no other means to pacify the fury of the adversaries. And he saith, that they were scattered not only through divers places of Judea, but that they came even unto Samaria; so that the middle wall began to be pulled down, which made division between the Jews and the Gentiles, (Ephesians 2:14.) For the conversion of Samaria was, as it were, the first fruits of the calling of the Gentiles. For although they had circumcision, as had the people of God, yet we know that there was great dissension, and that not without great cause, forasmuch as they had in Samaria only a forged worship of God, as Christ affirmeth, because it was only an unsavory emulation. [497] Therefore God set open the gate for the gospel then, that the scepter of Christ, sent out of Jerusalem, might come unto the Gentiles. He exempteth the apostles out of this number, not that they were free from the common danger, but because it is the duty of a good pastor to set himself against the invasions of wolves for the safety of his flock.

But here may a question be asked, forasmuch as they were commanded

[494] "Neque enim Stephanum ignominia notat Lucas," for Luke does not fix a stigma on Stephen.

[495] "Vulgo," commonly.

[496] "Consternati," in consternation.

[497] "Insipida… aemulatio," an insipid, senseless rivalship.

to preach the gospel throughout the whole world, (Mark 16:16,) why they stayed at Jerusalem, even when they were expelled thence with force and hand? I answer, that seeing Christ had commanded them to begin at Jerusalem, they employed themselves there until such time as being brought into some other place by his hand, they might know, for a surety, that he was their guide. And we see how fearfully they proceeded to preach the gospel; not that they foreslowed [shunned] that function which was enjoined them, but because they were amazed at a new and unwonted thing. Therefore, seeing they see the gospel so mightily resisted at Jerusalem, they dare go to no other place until such time as they have broken that first huge heap of straits. Assuredly, they provide neither for their ease, nor yet for their own commodities either for being void of care by staying at Jerusalem; for they have a painful charge, they are continually amidst divers dangers they encounter with great troubles. Wherefore, undoubtedly, they are purposed to do their duty; and especially, whereas they stand to it when all the rest fly, that is an evident testimony of valiant constancy. If any man object that they might have divided the provinces amongst them, that they might not all have been occupied in one place, I answer, that Jerusalem alone had business enough for them all.

In sum, Luke reckoneth up this as a thing worthy of praise, that they followed not the rest into voluntary exile to avoid persecution; and yet he doth not reprehend the flight of those men whose state was more free. For the apostles did consider what particular thing their calling had; to wit, that they should keep their standing, seeing the wolves did invade the sheepfold. The rigor of Tertullian, and such like, was too great, who did deny indifferently that it is lawful to fly for fear of persecution. Augustine saith better, who giveth leave to fly in such sort that the churches, being destitute of their pastors, be not betrayed into the hands of the enemies. This is surely the best moderation, which beareth neither too much with the flesh, neither driveth those headlong to death who may lawfully save their lives. Let him that is disposed read the 180th Epistle to Honoratus.

That I may return to the apostles, if they had been scattered here and there with fear of persecution, even at the beginning, all men might have rightly called them hirelings. How hurtful and filthy had the forsaking of the place been at the present time? How greatly would it have discouraged the minds of all men? What great hurt should they have done with their example among the posterity? It shall sometimes so fall out indeed, that the pastor may also fly; that is, if they invade him alone, if the laying waste of the Church be not feared if he be absent. [498] But and if both his flock and he have to encounter with the adversary, he is a treacherous forsaker of his office if he stand not stoutly to it even until the end. Private persons have greater liberty.

2. *They dressed Stephen.* Luke showeth, that even in the heat of persecu-

[498] "Propter ejus absentiam," on account of his absence.

tion the godly were not discouraged, but being always zealous, they did those duties which did belong to godliness. Burial seemeth to be a matter of small importance; rather than they will foreslow [neglect] the same, they bring themselves in no small hazard of life. And as the circumstance of time doth declare, that they contemned death valiantly, so again, we gather thereby that they were careful to do this thing not without great and urgent cause. For this served greatly to exercise their faith, that the body of the holy martyr should not be left to the wild beasts, in whom Christ had triumphed nobly according to the glory of his gospel. Neither could they live to Christ, unless they were ready to be gathered unto Stephen into the society of death. Therefore the care they had to bury the martyr was unto them a meditation unto invincible constancy of professing the faith. Therefore they sought not in a superfluous matter, with an unadvised zeal, to provoke their adversaries. Although that general reason, which ought always and every where to be of force amongst the godly, was undoubtedly of great weight with them. For the rite of burying doth appertain unto the hope of the resurrection, as it was ordained by God since the beginning of the world to this end.

Wherefore, this was always counted cruel barbarism to suffer bodies to lie unburied willingly. Profane men did not know why they should account the rite of burial so holy; but we are not ignorant of the end thereof, to wit, that those which remain alive may know that the bodies are committed to the earth as to a prison, [499] until they be raised up thence. Whereby it appeareth that this duty is profitable rather for those which are alive than those which are dead. Although it is also a point of our humanity to give due honor to those bodies to which we know blessed immortality to be promised.

They made great lamentation. Luke doth also commend their profession of godliness and faith in their lamentation. For a doleful and unprosperous end causeth men, for the most part, to forsake those causes wherein they were delighted before. But, on the other side, these men declare by their mourning, that they are no whit terrified with the death of Stephen from standing stoutly in the approbation of their cause; considering therewithal what great loss God's Church suffered by the death of one man. And we must reject that foolish philosophy which willeth all men to be altogether blockish that they may be wise. It must needs be that the Stoics were void of common sense who would have a man to be without all affection. Certain mad fellows would gladly bring in the same dotings into the Church at this day, and yet, notwithstanding, although they require an heart of iron of other men, there is nothing softer or more effeminate than they. They cannot abide that other men should shed one tear; if anything fall out otherwise than they would wish, they make no end of mourning. God doth thus punish their arrogancy jestingly, (that I may so term it,) seeing that he setteth them to be laughed at even by boys. But let us know that those affections which God hath given to man's nature are, of themselves, no more corrupt than the author himself;

[499] "Velut in custodiam," as it were in custody.

but that they are first to be esteemed according to the cause; secondly, if they keep a mean and moderation. Surely that man which denieth that we ought to rejoice over the gifts of God is more like a block than a man; therefore, we may no less lawfully sorrow when they be taken away. And lest I pass the compass of this present place, Paul doth not altogether forbid men mourning, when any of their friends are taken away by death, but he would have a difference between them and the unbelievers; because hope ought to be to them a comfort and a remedy against impatience. For the beginning of death caused us to sorrow for good causes; but because we know that we have life restored to us in Christ, we have that which is sufficient to appease our sorrow. In like sort, when we are sorry that the Church is deprived of rare and excellent men, there is good cause of sorrow; only we must seek such comfort as may correct excess.

3. *But Saul.* We must note two things in this place, how great the cruelty of the adversaries was, and how wonderful the goodness of God was, who vouchsafed to make Paul a pastor of so cruel a wolf. For that desire to lay waste the Church wherewith he was incensed did seem to cut away all hope. Therefore his conversion was so much the more excellent afterward. And it is not to be doubted but that this punishment was laid upon him by God, after that he had conspired to put Stephen to death, together with the other wicked men, that he should be the ringleader of cruelty. For God doth oftentimes punish sins more sharply in the elect than in the reprobate.

4. *And they were scattered abroad.* Luke declareth in this place also, that it came to pass by the wonderful providence of God, that the scattering abroad of the faithful should bring many unto the unity of faith; thus doth the Lord use to bring light out of darkness, and life out of death. For the voice of the gospel, which was heard heretofore in one place only, doth now sound everywhere; in the mean season, we are taught by this example that we must not yield unto persecutions, but rather be encouraged unto valiantness; for, when the faithful flee from Jerusalem, they are not afterward discouraged either with exile or with their present miseries, or with any fear, that they degenerate into slothfulness; [500] but they are as ready to preach Christ even in the midst of their calamity as if they had never suffered any trouble. Moreover, Luke seemeth to note that they led a wandering life in that they changed their lodgings often. Therefore, if we desire to be counted their brethren, let us prick forward ourselves so diligently, that no fear or bitterness of cross discourage us, but that we go forward in showing forth the profession of faith; and that we never be weary of furthering the doctrine of Christ; for it is an absurd thing that exile and flight, which are the first exercises of martyrdom, should make us dumb and fainthearted.

[500] "Ad ignaviam vel tarditatem," unto sloth or cowardice.

Acts 8:5-13

Acts 8:5-13

5. And when Philip came into the city of Samaria, he preached Christ to them. 6. And the multitude gave ear to those things which Philip spake, hearing with one consent, and seeing the signs which he showed. 7. For whereas many were possessed with unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice; and many that had the palsy, and which were lame, were healed; 8. So that there was great joy in that city. 9. And a man, named Simon, had been before in the city, exercising the art magic, and bewitching the people of Samaria, saying that he was some great man: 10. To whom they all gave heed, both small and great, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11. And they had given heed unto him, because they had been bewitched long time with his witchcraft. 12. But as soon as they believed Philip preaching concerning the kingdom of God, and in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13. And Simon himself believed, and being baptized, did cleave to Philip; and when he saw the signs and great powers which were done, he wondered.

5. Luke said that they all preached the Word of God, now he maketh mention of Philip alone, both because his preaching was more fruitful and effectual than the preaching of the rest, and also because there followed notable histories, which he will add afterward. He put the *city of Samaria* for the *city Samaria* which was laid waste by Hyrcanus, and built again by Herod, and called Sebaste. Read Josephus, in his Thirteenth and Fifteenth Books of Antiquities. When he saith that Philip *preached Christ,* he signifieth that the whole sum of the gospel is contained in Christ. The other speech which he useth shortly after is more perfect; yet it all one in effect. He joineth the kingdom of God and the name of Christ together; but because we obtain this goodness through Christ, to have God to reign in us, and to lead an heavenly life, being renewed into spiritual righteousness, and dead to the world, therefore the preaching of Christ containeth this point also under it. But the sum is this, that Christ doth repair with his grace the world, being destroyed; which cometh to pass when he reconcileth us to the Father. Secondly, when he regenerateth us by his Spirit, that the kingdom of God may be erected in us when Satan is put to flight. Moreover, whereas he declared before, that the apostles did not stir one foot from Jerusalem, it is to be thought that he speaketh of one of the seven deacons in this place, whose daughters did also prophesy.

6. *And the multitude gave ear.* Luke declareth how the Samaritans did embrace Philip's doctrine. For he saith that they heard, whereby they took some taste; there was also another prick whereby they were pricked forward, and that was miracles; at length there followed attentiveness. This is the right going forward unto faith; for those which refuse that doctrine which they have not heard, how is it possible that they should ever come unto faith,

which cometh by hearing? (Romans 10:14.) Therefore, whereas they were ready to hear, that was the first step unto reverence and attentiveness. And therefore it is no marvel if faith be so rare, and almost none in the world; for how many be there which vouchsafe to hearken when God speaketh? whereby it cometh to pass that the more part rejecteth the truth before they know the same, and have not so much as lightly tasted it. And as hearing is the beginning of faith, so it should not be sufficient of itself, unless the majesty of doctrine should also move the hearts. And surely, whosoever considereth that he hath to do with God, cannot hear him contemptuously when he speaketh; and the very doctrine which is contained in his word shall purchase authority for itself, so that attentiveness shall flow of itself from hearing. As touching miracles we know that there is a double use thereof; they serve to prepare us to hear the gospel, and to confirm us in the faith thereof. The adverb, *with one accord*, may be joined as well with hearing as with attentiveness. This latter doth like me better, that they were attentive with one accord; and therein doth Luke commend the force and efficacy of Philip's preaching, because a great number of men was suddenly won to hear attentively with one consent.

7. *Unclean spirits.* He toucheth certain kinds briefly, that we may know with what miracles they [501] were brought to attribute any authority to Philip. That crying wherewith the unclean spirits cried was a token of resistance. Wherefore this served not a little to set forth the power of Christ, that he did bind the devils with his commandment, though they resisted stubbornly.

8. *The joy* whereof he speaketh is a fruit of faith. For it cannot be but that so soon as we know that God will be favorable and merciful our minds shall be wrapt with incomparable joy, and such as doth far pass all understanding, (Philippians 4:7.)

9. *A certain man named Simon.* This was such a let that it might seem that the gospel could have no passage to come unto the Samaritans; for the minds of them all were bewitched with Simon's jugglings. And this amazedness was grown to some strength by reason of long space of time. Furthermore experience teacheth what a hard matter it is to pluck that error out of the minds of men which hath taken root through long continuance and to call them back unto a sound and right mind who are already hardened. Superstition made them more obstinate in their error, because they counted Simon not only as a prophet of God, but even as the Spirit of God.

10. For the surname, *great power*, tendeth to this end, that whatsoever should otherwise be divine might wax vile through this greatness. Therefore the power of Christ appeareth hereby more plainly, in that Philip brake through these lets; which thing Luke amplifieth,

11. When he saith that *they were astonied*, from the least to the greatest. For seeing all men, of what estate soever they were, were deluded, what entrance could the gospel have, especially since it was no mean seducing? for

[501] "Samaritae," the Samaritans.

all their senses were besotted. And besides that we see thereby how mighty the truth is, there is also set before us an example of constancy in Philip, who, though he saw no way, yet doth he set hand to the Lord's work with a valiant courage, waiting for the success which God should give. And thus must we do, we must valiantly attempt whatsoever the Lord commandeth, even when our endeavors seem to be vain. Furthermore, whereas Satan did bewitch the Samaritans, let us know that it is the common punishment of infidelity. All men are not bewitched, indeed, with the jugglings of enchanters, neither are there Simons everywhere, which can so seduce and deceive; but my meaning is, that it is no wonder, [502] if Satan do mock men diversely in the dark; for they are subject to all errors whosoever are not governed by the Spirit of God. Furthermore, when Luke saith that they were all seduced one with another, we are taught that neither wit, neither all that reason and wisdom which we have, are sufficient to avoid the craftiness of Satan withal. And surely we see in what foolish and doting errors they were entangled, who were counted in the world wiser than others.

The great power of God. Therefore Satan abused the name of God to deceive, which is the most pestilent kind of deceiving, so far is it from being any excuse. It hath been said before, that Simon did take to himself the name of the principal power of God, that he might suppress and surpass whatsoever was elsewhere divine, as the sun darkeneth all the stars with his light. This was wicked and ungodly profaning of the name of God. But we read of nothing which was done here, which is not done as yet daily; for men are bent to nothing more than to translate that to Satan which is proper to God. They pretend religion; but what did this pretense help the Samaritans? Therefore it goeth well with us when God setteth forth to us his power in Christ, and declareth therewith that we must not seek the same anywhere else, and doth discover the sleights and juggling casts of Satan, which we must avoid, to the end he may keep us still in himself.

12. *When they had believed.* That is the miracle whereof I spake because they heard Philip, who were altogether made astonied with the illusions of Simon; in that they were made partakers of the heavenly wisdom who were blockish and dull. So that they were, after a sort, brought from hell to heaven. Whereas baptism followed faith, it agreeth with Christ's institution, as concerning strangers, (Mark 16:47 [*sic*],) and those which were without. For it was meet that they should be engrafted into the body of the Church before they should receive the sign; but the Anabaptists are too foolish, whilst they endeavor to prove by these places that infants are not to be baptized. Men and women could not be baptized without making confession of their faith; but they were admitted unto baptism upon this condition, that their families might [503] be consecrated to God; for the covenant goeth thus:

"I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,"

[502] "Non esse mirum aut insolens," that it is not strange or unusual.

[503] "Simul," at the same time.

(Genesis 17:7.)

13. *Simon also himself.* He which had besotted the whole city with his witchery receiveth the truth together with others. He which had boasted himself to be the principal power of God submitteth himself to God, [Christ;] though he were brought to the knowledge of the gospel, not so much for his own sake alone, as for the whole country's sake, that that offense might be taken out of the way which might have hindered the unskillful. And to this end tendeth that which Luke setteth down afterward, that he wondered at the signs. For God meant to triumph over this man, whom the Samaritans counted a petit God; [504] which cometh to pass whilst he is enforced to give glory to the true miracles, after that his vain boasting is taken away. And yet he giveth not himself over sincerely to Christ; for then his ambition, and that wicked and profane account which he made of the gifts of God, should not break out. And yet I am not of their mind who think that he made only a semblance of faith, seeing he did not believe. Luke saith plainly that he believed, and the reason is added, Because he was touched with wondering. How, then, doth he shortly after betray himself to be but a hypocrite? I answer, That there is some mean between faith and mere dissimulation. The Epicures [Epicureans] and Lucianists do profess that they believe, whereas notwithstanding they laugh inwardly, whereas the hope of eternal life is unto them a vain thing; finally, whereas they have no more godliness than dogs or swine.

But there be many who howsoever they be not regenerate with the Spirit of adoption, and do not addict themselves unto God with the true affection of the heart, being overcome with the power of the Word, do not only confess that that is true which is taught, but are also touched with some fear of God, so that they receive doctrine; for they conceive that God must be heard; that he is both the author and also the judge of the world. Therefore, they make no semblance of faith before men, which is none, but they think that they believe. And this faith continueth only for a time, whereof Christ speaketh in Mark, (Mark 4; Luke 8:13;) to wit, when the seed of the Word conceived in the mind is, notwithstanding, choked forthwith with divers cares of the world, or with wicked affections, so that it never cometh to any ripeness; yea, rather, it groweth out of kind unto unprofitable corn nothing worth. Such, therefore, was Simon's faith; he perceiveth that the doctrine of the gospel is true, and he is enforced to receive the same with the feeling of his conscience; but the groundwork is wanting; that is, the denial of himself. Whereupon it followed that his mind was enwrapped in dissimulation, which he uttereth forthwith. But let us know that his hypocrisy was such as he deceived himself in; and not that gross hypocrisy whereof Epicures and such like make boast; [505] because they dare not confess the contempt of God.

He was baptized. It appeareth plainly, by this example of Simon that

[504] "Semideo," a demigod.

[505] "Venditant," make a display of.

all men have not that grace given them in baptism, which grace is there figured. The opinion of the Papists is this, That unless mortal sin be the cause of let, [506] all men receive the truth and effect with the signs. So that they attribute unto the sacraments magical force, as if they did profit without faith, But let us know that the Lord offereth to us by the sacraments, whatsoever the annexed promises do sound; [507] and that they are not offered in vain, so that [508] being directed unto Christ by faith, we set [seek] from him whatsoever the sacraments do promise. And although the receiving of baptism did profit him nothing then, yet if conversion followed afterward, as some men suppose, the profit was not extinguished nor abolished. For it cometh to pass oftentimes that the Spirit of God worketh afterward after a long time, that the sacraments may begin to show forth their force. [509]

Did cleave to Philip. Whereas Philip admitted him into his company, it appeareth thereby how hard a matter it is to know hypocrites. And this is a trial of our patience. So Demas was a companion of Paul for a time; afterward he became an unfaithful revolt [510] (2 Timothy 4:10,) Finally, we cannot escape this evil, but that wicked men and deceitful will sometimes join themselves unto us; and if at any time the wicked creep craftily into our company, proud censors burden us unjustly, as if we were to answer for their misdeeds. Though we must take heed of facility, which causeth the gospel to be slandered oftentimes, and we must be so much the more vigilant, that we admit none without great choice, forasmuch as we hear that great men have been deceived. He saith that he was made astonied with the greatness of the signs; that we may know that that great power, whereof he boasted, was nothing else but juggling and smokes. And Luke speaketh not in this place of any plain wondering, but of a damp or trance which causeth a man to forget what he doth. [511]

Acts 8:14-17

Acts 8:14-17

14. And when the apostles which were at Jerusalem had heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15. Who, when they were come down, they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16. For he was not as yet come down upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. 17. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

[506] "Ponat obicem," interpose an obstacle.

[507] "Sonant," mean.

[508] "Modo," provided that.

[509] "Efficaciam," efficacy.

[510] "Desertor," deserter.

[511] "Neque enim simplex admlratio hie notatur, sed ecstasis, quae hominem extra se rapit," for the thing here denoted is not simple wonder, but ecstacy, by which a man is rapt (carried out of himself.)

14. Luke describeth, in this place, the proceedings of the grace of God in the Samaritans, as he useth to enrich the faithful continually with greater gifts of his Spirit, for we must not think that the apostles took that counsel whereof Luke speaketh, without the instinct of the same God who had already begun his work in Samaria by the hand of Philip; and he useth his instruments diversely unto divers parts of his work, according to his good pleasure. He used Philip as an instrument to bring them unto the faith; now he ordaineth Peter and John to be ministers to give the Spirit and thus doth he foster the unity of his Church when one helpeth another, and not only knit man and man together, but whole churches also. He could have finished that which he had begun by Philip; but to the end the Samaritans might learn to embrace brotherly fellowship with the first Church, he meant to bind them herewith as with a band; secondly, he meant to grant the apostles (whom he had commanded to preach the gospel throughout the whole world — Mark 16:15) this privilege, that they might the better all grow together into one faith of the gospel; and we know that it was otherwise dangerous, lest, seeing the Jews and Samaritans were much unlike in mind and manners, being so divided, they should by this means divide Christ, or at least feign to themselves a new Church.

In the mean season, we see how careful the apostles were to help their brethren; for they stay not until they be requested, but they take this charge upon them of their own accord. The apostles do not this through any distrust, as if they did suspect that Philip did not his duty so uprightly as he ought; [512] but they set to their hand to help him in his work, and Peter and John came not only to help him, and to be partakers of his labors, but also to approve the same. Again, Philip is not grieved because other men finish that building which he had begun, but they one help another full gently and faithfully; and surely it is ambition alone which will not suffer holy fellowship and mutual imparting of duties to enter. [513] Whereas Luke saith that Peter was sent by the rest, we may hereby gather that he was not the chief ruler over his fellows in office; [514] but did so excel amongst them, that yet, notwithstanding, he was subject to, and did obey the body.

Which were at Jerusalem. This may carry a double meaning, either that all the apostles were at Jerusalem then, or that there were certain resident there when the rest went hither and thither; and I do rather allow this latter, for it is to be thought that they did so divide themselves, that always some of the number might take upon them divers embassages, as occasion was offered, that some might stay at Jerusalem, as in the principal standing. [515] Again, it may be that after every man had spent some time in his voyage, they were wont to assemble themselves there. It is certain, indeed, that

[512] "Minus dextre quam par esset," less dexterously than was meet.

[513] "Quae sanctae communicatione januam claudit," which shuts the door against holy communion.

[514] "Non exercuisse in collegas imperium," did not exercise authority over his colleagues.

[515] "Statione," station.

that time which they spent at Jerusalem was not spent in idleness; and, secondly that they were not tied to some one place, forasmuch as Christ had commanded them to go over all the world (Mark 16:15.)

15. *They prayed.* Undoubtedly they taught first, for we know that they were no dumb persons; but Luke passeth over that which was common to them and Philip, and declareth only what new thing the Samaritans had by their coming, to wit, that they had the Spirit given them then.

16. But here ariseth a question, for he saith that they were only baptized into the name of Christ, and that therefore they had not as yet received the Holy Ghost; but baptism must either be in vain and without grace, or else it must have all the force which it hath from the Holy Ghost. In baptism we are washed from our sins; but Paul teacheth that our washing is the work of the Holy Ghost, (Titus 3:5.) The water used in baptism is a sign of the blood of Christ; but Peter saith, that it is the Spirit by whom we are washed with the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:2.) Our old man is crucified in baptism, that we may be raised up unto newness of life, (Romans 6:6;) and whence cometh all this save only from the sanctification of the Spirit? And, finally, what shall remain in baptism if it be separate from the Spirit? (Galatians 3:27.) Therefore, we must not deny but that the Samaritans, who had put on Christ, indeed, in baptism, had also his Spirit given them; and surely Luke speaketh not in this place of the common grace of the Spirit, whereby God doth regenerate us, that we may be his children, but of those singular gifts wherewith God would have certain endued at the beginning of the gospel to beautify Christ's kingdom. Thus must the words of John be understood, that the disciples had not the Spirit given them as yet, forasmuch as Christ was yet conversant in the world; not that they were altogether destitute of the Spirit, seeing that they had from the same both faith, and a godly desire to follow Christ; but because they were not furnished with those excellent gifts, wherein appeared afterwards greater glory of Christ's kingdom. To conclude, forasmuch as the Samaritans were already endtied with the Spirit of adoptioni the excellent graces of the Spirit are heaped upon them, in which God showed to his Church, for a time as it were, the visible presence of his Spirit, that he might establish for ever the authority of his gospel, and also testify that his Spirit shall be always the governor and director of the faithful.

They were only baptized. We must not understand this as spoken contemptuously of baptism; but Luke's meaning is, that they were only endued then with the grace of common adoption and regeneration, which is offered to all the godly in baptism. As for this, it was an extraordinary thing that certain should have the gifts of the Spirit given them, which might serve to set forth the kingdom of Christ and the glory of the gospel; for this was the use thereof, that every one might profit the Church according to the measure of his ability. We must note this, therefore, because, while the Papists will set up their feigned confirmation, they are not afraid to break out into this

sacrilegious speech, that they are but half Christians upon whom the hands have not been as yet laid. This is not tolerable now because, whereas this was a sign which lasted only for a time, they made it a continual law in the Church, as if they had the Spirit in readiness to give to whomsoever they would. We know that when the testimony and pledge of God's grace is set before us in vain, and without the thing itself, it is too filthy mockery; but even they themselves are enforced to grant that the Church was beautified for a time only with these gifts; whereupon it followeth that the laying on of hands which the apostles used had an end when the effect ceased. I omit that, that they added oil unto the laying on of hands, (Mark 6:13;) but this, as I have already said, was a point of too great boldness, to prescribe a perpetual law to the Church, that that might be a general sacrament, which was peculiarly used amongst the apostles, (Galatians 3:7; Romans 6:6;) that the sign might continue still after that the thing itself was ceased; and with this they joined detestable blasphemy, because they said that sins were only forgiven by baptism, and that the Spirit of regeneration is given by that rotten oil which they presumed to bring in without the Word of God. The Scripture doth testify that we put on Christ in baptism, and that we are engrafted into his body, that our old man may be crucified, and we renewed into righteousness. These sacrilegious robbers have translated that to adorn the false visor of their sacrament which they have taken from baptism. [516] Neither was this the invention of one man only, but the decree of one council, whereof they babble daily in all their schools.

17. *When they had laid their hands.* The laying on of hands followeth prayers, whereby they testify that the grace of the Spirit is not included in the external ceremony, which they crave humbly at the hands of another. And yet when they confess that God is the author, they neglect not the ceremony which was delivered them by God to this use; and because they usurp it not rashly, the effect is also annexed. This is the profit and efficacy of signs, because God worketh in them, and yet he remaineth the only giver of grace and distributeth the same according to his good pleasure; but let us remember that the laying on of hands was the instrument of God, at such time as he gave the visible graces of the Spirit to his, and that since the Church was deprived of such riches, it is only a vain visor without any substance. [517]

Acts 8:18-25

Acts 8:18-25

18. And when Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whom I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

[516] "Detracta baptismo spolia," the spoils taken from baptism.

[517] "Inane duntaxat esset spectrum," it was only an empty specter.

20. And Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God is obtained with money. 21. Thou hast no part nor inheritance in this business; for thy heart is not right before God. 22. Therefore repent of this wickedness, and pray unto God, if peradventure the cogitation of thy heart may be forgiven thee. 23. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of unrighteousness. 24. And Simon answering, said, Pray ye for me unto God, that none of these things may happen to me which ye have said. 25. Then when they had testified and spoken the word of God, they returned to Jerusalem, and they preached the gospel in many streets of the Samaritans.

18. *And when Simon.* Simon's hypocrisy is now discovered, not because that he had feigned before that he believed; for when he was convicted he gave Christ his hand in earnest, like as many yield unto the gospel, lest they strive against God, but in the mean season they continue like to themselves; whereas the denial of ourselves ought to follow true faith. And this is to mix Christ with Satan, when doctrine pierceth not unto the hidden affections of the heart, but the inward uncleanness lieth hidden there. [518] Therefore God wipeth away that false color now in Simon, lest by professing the name of Christ he deceive both himself and others. For that ambition which was hidden before breaketh out now, when as he desireth to be equal with the apostles. This is now one vice; another is, because while he thinketh that the grace of God is to be sold, he will get some greedy gain thereby. [519] Whereby it appeareth that he is a profane man, and such as had not tasted the first principles of godliness; for he is touched with no desire of God's glory; yea, he doth not once think what it is to be a minister of God. As he had heretofore gotten gain by his magic, so he thought that it would be gainsome if he might give the graces of the Spirit. For undoubtedly he hunted after riches, and sought to purchase praise in the sight of the world; and he did God great injury also, because he thought that this heavenly power did nothing differ from his magical enchantments. Now we understand briefly what and how many ways Simon offended. In the gifts of the Spirit he doth not adore, neither acknowledge the power of Christ; he doth not confess that the apostles were endued with heavenly power, to set forth Christ's glory by their ministry; his own ambition driveth and carrieth him headlong, so that he desireth to become excellent; and to make the world subject to himself, setting God apart, he will buy the Holy Ghost, as if he could be bought with money.

20. *Peter answered.* Peter giveth him the repulse here stoutly, and being not content to chide him, he addeth a bitter curse (or wish,) that Simon and his money may perish together; though he doth not so much wish unto him destruction, as he telleth him that the just vengeance of God hangeth over his head, that he might terrify him. In sum, he showeth what he hath

[518] "Quasi sepulta," as it were buried.

[519] "Vult eam ad lucrum prostituere," he wishes to prostitute it to gain.

deserved, when he hath made the Spirit of God subject to filthy buying and selling; as if he should have said, Thou art worthy to perish with thy money, [520] when thou dost so blaspheme the Spirit of God. For we may easily gather by that which followeth, that Peter would rather have had Simon saved than destroyed. But as it were supplying the place of a judge, he pronounceth what punishment Simon's ungodliness deserveth; and it was requisite that he should be thus accused with such vehemence, that he might perceive the greatness of his offense. [521] To the same end tendeth that that he judged his money to perish; for he signifieth that it was as it were infected and polluted with cogitation of wickedness, because it was offered to such a wicked use. And surely we ought rather to wish that all the whole world perish, than that those things should darken the glory of God, which, in comparison thereof, are nothing worth. When he wisheth thus to a sacrilegious man, he doth not so much respect the person as the fact; for we must be offended with the offenses of men in such sort, that we must pity the men themselves. Such are those sentences of God which adjudge adulterers, thieves, drunkards, and wrongful dealers, to destruction, (1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 5:5;) for they do not cut off all hope of salvation from them, but they are only referred unto their present state and declare what end is prepared for them, if they go forward obstinately.

21. *Thou hast no part.* Some do frame this sentence otherwise, that Simon is not partaker of grace, because he setteth a price thereof. But the other reading which we have followed is more usual, to wit, that that reason be joined to the former member. And surely it is better to knit the two sentences together, thus, Thy money perish with thee, because thou thinkest that the inestimable gift of the Spirit can be bought with money. Whereas the old interpreter had put, *in this word;* Erasmus translated it more fitly, *in this business;* for Peter's meaning is, that that sacrilegious person hath nothing to do in all that administration, who doth wickedly profane the same.

Furthermore both the Papists, and also the old divines, have disputed much concerning simony; but that which the Papists call simony doth not agree with Simon's fact. Simon would have bought the grace of the Spirit with money; the Papists apply the crime of simony unto their idle revenues; and yet I speak not this that I may extenuate those horrible sins which reign at this day in Popery, in buying and selling spiritual promotions. Now, this wickedness is filthy enough of itself, in that they hold such a mart in the Church of God. And in the mean season, we must note the true definition of simony, to wit, that it is a wicked buying and selling of the gifts of the Spirit, or some other such like thing, whilst that a man abuseth them unto ambition or other corruptions. Though I confess that all those imitate Simon who strive to attain unto the government of the Church by unlawful means; which thing we see committed at this day without shame, as if it

[520] "Nundinationi," trafficking.

[521] "Sceleris sui atrocitatem," the atrocity of his crime.

were lawful; and we can scarce find one priest in all Popery which is not manifestly a simoniacal person in this respect; because none can put up his head amongst them, [522] but he must creep in by indirect means. Although we must confess, (which thing even children see, to our great shame,) that this vice is too common even amongst the false professors of the gospel.

But let us remember, first, to the end we may be free from the infection of Simon, that the gifts of the Spirit are not gotten with money, but that they are given of the free and mere goodness of God, and that for the edifying of the Church; that is, that every man may study to help his brethren according to the measure of his ability; that every man may bestow [523] that about the common good of the Church which he hath received; and that the excellency of no man may hinder, but that Christ may excel all. Notwithstanding, it may seem a marvelous matter, that Peter excludeth Simon from being a partaker of the Spirit, as concerning special gifts; because his heart is not right before God. For the wickedness of Judas did not let him from having the gifts of the Spirit in great measure; neither had the gifts of the Spirit been so corrupted amongst the Corinthians, if their heart had been right in the sight of God. Therefore that reason which Peter allegeth seemeth insufficient; because many men excel oftentimes in the gifts of the Spirit, who have an unclean heart. But, first of all, there followeth no absurdity, if God give such graces to men which are unworthy thereof. Secondly, Peter prescribeth no general rule in this place, but because the Church alone is for the most part made partaker of the gifts of the Spirit, he pronounceth that Simon, who is a stranger to Christ, is unworthy to have the same graces given him, (which are bestowed upon the faithful,) as if he were one of God's household. Moreover, he had blasphemed those gifts whereof he is deprived.

22. *Repent, therefore.* Whereas he exhorteth him unto repentance and prayer, he putteth him in some hope of pardon thereby; for no man shall ever be touched with any desire of repentance, save only he which shall believe that God will have mercy upon him; on the other side, despair will always carry men headlong unto boldness. Furthermore, the Scripture teacheth that God is not called upon aright save only by faith. Therefore, we see how Peter raiseth up Simon now unto hope of salvation, whom he had thrown down before with the cruel lightnings and thunderbolts of words; and yet Simon's sin was no small sin. But, if it could be, we ought to pluck men even out of hell.

Therefore, until such time as even the most wicked men do by manifest signs betray themselves to be reprobates, no one of them is to be handled so sharply but that remission of sins is to be set before him. Yea, we must so deal with those for whom sharp chiding is profitable, by reason of their hardness and stubbornness, that we throw them down with one hand, and set them on foot with the other; for the Spirit of God doth not suffer us to

[522] "Quando nullus illuc emergere potest," since no man can rise there.
[523] "Modeste conferat," may modesty bestow.

accurse them [524] But Peter seemeth to bring him into some fear and doubt, when he saith, if *peradventure*. And the Papists go about to prove by this place and such like, that we must pray with doubtful minds; because men may unadvisedly promise themselves certain success in their petitions. But we may readily answer them; for the word {ει} {αρα} signifieth as much as if a man should say, If by any means thou must obtain pardon of God. Peter useth this word, not that he may leave Simon's mind in a perplexity, but that he may the more prick him forward to be earnest in prayer. For the very difficulty doth not a little serve to stir us up; because when we see the thing at hand, we are too careless and sluggish. Therefore Peter doth not terrify Simon, that he may overthrow or trouble all hope of obtaining in his heart, but putting him in sure hope if he shall crave pardon humbly and from his heart, he telleth him only that pardon is hard to be gotten, by reason of the greatness of his offense, to the end he may provoke him unto ferventness; for it is requisite that we may be lightened by faith when we go unto God, yea, that she be the mother of prayer.

23. *In the gall of bitterness.* Peter doth sharply reprove Simon again, and striketh him with God's judgment. For unless he had been compelled to descend into himself, he would never have been turned in good earnest unto God. For there is nothing more deadly for men which are blockish than when we flatter them, or when we do but a little scrape the skin, whereas they ought rather to be thrust through. Therefore, until such time as a sinner shall conceive sorrow and true heaviness by reason of his sin, we must use such severity as may wound his mind; otherwise the rotten sore shall be nourished within, which shall by little and little consume the man himself. Yet let us always observe this mean, that we provide for men's salvation so much as in us lieth. Moreover, there be two excellent fine metaphors in Peter's words; the one whereof seemeth to be taken out of Moses, where he forbiddeth that there be not in us any root, from which springeth gall and wormwood, (Deuteronomy 29.) By which speech is noted the inward wickedness of the heart; when as it hath so conceived the poison of ungodliness, that being therewith infected, it can bring forth nothing but bitterness. To the same end tendeth the binding of iniquity: to wit, when the whole heart is kept bound and tied by Satan. For it falleth out sometimes that men which are otherwise given very godlily, do break out into evil works, who have not their heart corrupt inwardly with poison. We know that hypocrisy is engendered in man's nature; but when as the Spirit of God doth shine, we are so blinded in our vices, that we nourish them within as if it were some hidden bundle. Therefore Peter's meaning is, that Simon fell not only in one point, but that his very heart root was corrupt and bitter; that he fell into Satan's snares not only in one kind of sin, but that all his senses were ensnared, so that he was wholly given over to Satan, and was become the bond-slave of iniquity. In the mean season, we are taught that the greatness of offenses is esteemed

[524] "Anathemate ferire," to strike with anathema.

not so much according to the fact [525] which appeareth, as according to the affection of the heart.

24. *Simon answered.* Hereby we gather that he did not so take that which Peter had threatened unto him, but that he did consider that his salvation was sought. And though Peter alone spake, yet he attributeth the speech unto all by reason of the consent. Now ariseth a question what we ought to think of Simon. The Scripture carrieth us no farther, save only unto a conjecture. Whereas he yieldeth when he is reproved, and being touched with the feeling of his sin, feareth the judgment of God; and that done, flieth unto the mercy of God, and commendeth himself to the prayers of the Church; these are assuredly no small signs of repentance; therefore we may conjecture that he repented. And yet the old writers affirm with one consent, that he was a great enemy to Peter afterward, and that he disputed with him by the space of three days at Rome. The disputation is also extant in writing under the name of Clement, but it hath in it such filthy dotings, that it is a wonder that Christian ears can abide to hear them. Again, Augustine, writing to Januarius, saith, that there were divers and false rumors spread abroad in Rome in his time concerning that matter. Wherefore, nothing is more safe than bidding adieu to uncertain opinions, simply to embrace that which is set down in the Scriptures. That which we read elsewhere of Simon may justly be suspected for many causes.

25. *And they testified.* In these words Luke teacheth that Peter and John came not only that they might enrich the Samaritans with the gifts of the Spirit, but also that they might establish them in the faith which they had already received, by approving Philip's doctrine. For thus much doth the word *testify* import; as if he should say, that it came to pass by their testimony, that the word of God had full and perfect authority, and that the truth was of force, as being well testified and authentic. Notwithstanding Luke teaeheth therewithal that they were faithful witnesses of God, when he addeth that they uttered the word of God. This was, therefore, the sum of the apostles' doctrine, faithfully to utter those things which they had learned of the Lord, and not their own inventions, or the inventions of any man else. He saith, that they did this not only in the city, but also in villages. Therefore we see that they were so inflamed to further the glory of Christ, that whithersoever they came they had him in their mouth. So that the seed of life began to be sown throughout the whole region, after that it was preached in the city. [526]

Acts 8:26-31

Acts 8:26-31

26. And an angel of the Lord spake to Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward

[525] "Flagitio," flagitiousness.

[526] "Ab una urbe," from one city.

the south, to the way which goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza; it is waste. 27. And when he arose, he went. And, behold, a man, an Ethiopian, an eunuch, a man of great authority with Candace, queen of Ethiopia, which had the rule of all her treasure, which carne [had come] to Jerusalem to worship 28. And as he returned, and sat in his chariot, he read Esaias the prophet. 29. And the Spirit said to Philip, Draw near, and be thou joined to this chariot. 30. And as Philip ran unto it, he heard him reading the prophet Esaias, and he said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31. He said, How can I, unless some man direct me? And he requested Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

26. *And the angel.* Luke passeth over unto a new history, to wit, how the gospel came even unto the Ethiopians. For though he reporteth there was but one man converted unto the faith of Christ, yet because his authority and power was great in all the realm, his faith might spread abroad a sweet smell far and wide. For we know that the gospel grew of small beginnings; and therein appeared the power of the Spirit more plainly, in that one grain of seed did fill a whole country in a small space. Philip is first commanded by the angel to go toward the south; the angel telleth him not to what end. And thus doth God oftentimes use to deal with those that be his, to prove their obedience. He showeth what he will have them to do; he commandeth them to do this or that, but he keepeth the success hidden with himself. Therefore let us be content with the commandment [527] of God alone, although the reason of that which he enjoineth, or the fruit of obedience, appear not by and by. [528] For although this be not plainly expressed, yet all the commandments of God contain a hidden promise, that so often as we obey him, all that work which we take in hand must needs fall out well. Moreover, this ought to be sufficient for us, that God doth allow our studies, when as we take nothing in hand rashly or without his commandment. If any man object, that angels come not down daily from heaven to reveal unto us what we ought to do, the answer is ready, that we are sufficiently taught in the Word of God what we ought to do, and that they are never destitute of counsel who ask it of him, [529] and submit themselves to the government of the Spirit. Therefore nothing doth hinder and keep us back from being ready to follow God, save only our own slothfulness and coldness [530] in prayer.

To the way which goeth down to Gaza. All the learned grant that that is called Gaza here which the Hebrews call Haza. Wherefore, Pomponius Mela is deceived, who saith that Cambyses, king of Persia, called that city by this name, because when he made war against the Egyptians, he had his riches laid up there. It is true, indeed, that the Persians call treasure or plenty, *Gaza*; and Luke useth this word shortly after in this sense, when as

[527] "Simplici Dei imperio," with the simple command of God.
[528] "Statim," instantly.
[529] "Illius os," at his mouth.
[530] "Incuria," carelessness.

he saith that the eunuch was the chief governor of the treasure of Candace; but because that Hebrew word was used before such time as Cambyses was born, I do not think but that it was corrupt afterwards, the letter {ה{ *(heth)* being changed into *g*, which thing we see was done in all others almost. The epitheton waste is added for this cause, because Alexander of Macedonia laid waste that old Gaza. Also Luke refuteth those who make Constantinus the builder of the second and new Gaza, who affirmeth that it was an hundred and fifty years before; but it may be that he beautified and enlarged the city after it was built. And all men confess that this new Gaza was situate on the seacoast, distant twenty furlongs from the old city.

27. *Behold, a man, an Ethiopian.* He calleth him a man, who he saith shortly after was an eunuch; but because kings and queens in the East were wont to appoint eunuchs over their weighty affairs, thereby it came to pass that lords of great power were called generally [531] eunuchs, whereas, notwithstanding, they were men. Furthermore, Philip findeth indeed, now at length, that he did not obey God in vain. Therefore, whosoever committeth the success to God, and goeth on forward thither whither he biddeth him, he shall at length try [532] that all that falleth out well which is taken in hand at his appointment. [533] The name *Candace* was not the name of one queen only; but as all the emperors of Rome were called Caesars,, so the Ethiopians, as Pliny withesseth, called their queens Candaces. This maketh also unto the matter that the writers of histories report that that was a noble and wealthy kingdom, because it may the better be gathered by the royalty and power thereof how gorgeous the condition and dignity of the eunuch was. The head and principal place [534] was Meroe. The profane writers agree with Luke, who report that women used to reign there.

Came [had come] to worship. Hereby we gather that the name of the true God was spread far abroad, seeing he had some worshippers in far countries. Certes, it must needs be that this man did openly profess another worship than his nation; for so great a lord could not come into Judea by stealth, and undoubtedly he brought with him a great train. And no marvel if there were some everywhere in the East parts which worshipped the true God, because that after the people were scattered abroad, there was also some smell [535] of the knowledge of the true God spread abroad with them throughout foreign countries; yea, the banishment [536] of the people was a spreading abroad of true godliness. Also, we see that though the Romans did condemn the Jewish religion with many cruel edicts, yet could they not bring to pass but that many, even on [in] heaps, would profess the same. [537] These were certain

[531] "Promiscue," promiscuously.
[532] "Experietur," will experience.
[533] "Ejus auspiciis et mandato," under his auspices, and by his command.
[534] "Primaria sedes," metropolis.
[535] "Odor," savour.
[536] "Exilium populi," the exile of the people, the captivity of the Jews.
[537] "Turmatim multi ad eam transirent," from going over, becoming proselytes, to it in

beginnings [538] of the calling of the Gentiles, until such time as Christ, having with the brightness of his coming put away the shadows of the law, might take away the difference which was between the Jews and the Gentiles; and having pulled down the wall of separation, he might gather together from all parts the children of God, (Ephesians 2:14.)

Whereas the eunuch came to Jerusalem to worship, it must not be accounted any superstition. He might, indeed, have called [539] upon God in his own country, but this man would not omit the exercises which were prescribed to the worshippers of God; and, therefore, this was his purpose, not only to nourish faith privily [540] in his heart, but also to make profession of the same amongst men. And yet, notwithstanding, he could not be so divorced [541] from his nation, but that he might well know that he should be hated of many. But he made more account of the external profession of religion, which he knew God did require, than of the favor of men. And if such a small sparkle of the knowledge of the law did so shine in him, what a shame were it for us to choke the perfect light of the gospel with unfaithful silence? If any do object that the sacrifices were even then abrogated, and that now the time was come wherein God would be called upon everywhere without difference of place, we may easily answer, that those to whom the truth of the gospel was not yet revealed, were retained in the shadows of the law without any superstition. For whereas it is said that the law was abolished by Christ, as concerning the ceremonies, it is thus to be understood, that where Christ showeth himself plainly, those rites vanish away which prefigured him when he was absent. Whereas the Lord suffered the eunuch to come to Jerusalem before he sent him a teacher, it is to be thought that it was done for this cause, because it was profitable that he should yet be framed by the rudiments of the law, that he might be made more apt afterward to receive the doctrine of the gospel. And whereas God sent none of the apostles unto him [542] at Jerusalem, the cause lieth hid in his secret counsel, unless, peradventure, it were done that he might make more account of the gospel, as of some treasure found suddenly, and offered unto him contrary to hope; or because it was better that Christ should be set before him, after that being separated and withdrawn from the external pomp of ceremonies and the beholding of the temple, he sought the way of salvation quietly at such time as he was at rest. [543]

28. *He read Esaias.* The reading of the prophet showeth that the eunuch did not worship a God unadvisedly, according to the understanding of his own head, whom he had reigned to himself, but whom he knew by the

crowds

[538] "Praeludia," preludes to.

[539] "Deum precari," have prayed to God.

[540] "Et clanculum," and stealthily, omitted.

[541] "Divortium facere," differ from.

[542] "Neminem ex apostolis illi Deus obtulerit," God cast none of the apostles in is way.

[543] "Liberius in otio et quiete," more freely in ease and quiet.

doctrine of the law. And surely this is the right way to worship God, not to snatch at bare and vain rites, but to adjoin the word thereunto, otherwise there shall be nothing but that which cometh by chance and is confused. And certainly the form of worshipping prescribed in the law differeth nothing from the inventions of men, save only because God giveth light there by his word. Therefore, those which are God's scholars do worship aright only, that is, those who are taught in his school. But he seemeth to lose his labor when he readeth without profit. For he confesseth that he cannot understand the prophet's meaning, unless he be helped by some other teacher. I answer, as he read the prophet with a desire to learn, so he hoped for some fruit, and he found it indeed. Therefore, why doth he deny that he can understand the place which he had in hand? For because [544] he manifestly confesseth his ignorance in darker places. There be many things in Isaiah which need no long exposition, as when he preacheth of the goodness and power of God, partly that he may invite men unto faith, partly that he may exhort and teach them to lead a godly life. Therefore, no man shall be so rude an idiot [545] which shall not profit somewhat by reading that book, and yet, notwithstanding, he shall, peradventure, scarce understand every tenth verse. Such was the eunuch's reading. For seeing that, according to his capacity, he gathered those things which served to edification, he had some certain profit by his studies. Nevertheless, though he were ignorant of many things, [546] yet was he not wearied, so that he did cast away the book. Thus must we also read the Scriptures. We must greedily, and with a prompt mind, receive those things which are plain, and wherein God openeth his mind. As for those things which are hid from us, we must pass them over until we see greater light. And if we be not wearied with reading, it shall at length come to pass that the Scripture shall be made more familiar by continual use.

31. *How should I?* Most excellent modesty of the eunuch, who doth not only permit Philip who was one of the common sort, to question with him, but doth also willingly [547] confess his ignorance. And surely we must never hope that he will ever show himself apt to be taught who is puffed up with the confidence of his own wit. Hereby it eometh to pass that the reading of the Scriptures doth profit so few at this day, because we can scarce find one amongst a hundred who submitteth himself willingly to learn. For whilst all men almost are ashamed to be ignorant of that whereof they are ignorant, every man had rather proudly nourish his ignorance than seem to be scholar to other men. Yea, a great many take upon them haughtily to teach other men. Nevertheless, let us remember that the eunuch did so confess his ignorance, that yet, notwithstanding, he was one of God's scholars when he read the Scripture. This is the true reverence of the Scripture, when as we acknowledge that there is that wisdom laid up there which surpasseth

[544] "Nempe… agnoscit," namely, he acknowledgeth.
[545] "Idiota," unlearned.
[546] "Si multa eum latebant," though many things escaped him, were hidden from him.
[547] "Ultro et ingenue," spontaneously and ingenuously.

[548] all our senses; and yet notwithstanding, we do not loathe it, but, reading diligently, we depend upon the revelation of the Spirit, and desire to have an interpreter given us.

He prayed Philip that he would come up. This is another token of modesty, that he seeketh an interpreter and teacher. He might have rejected Philip according to the pride of rich men; for it was a certain secret upbraiding of ignorance when Philip said, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* But rich men think that they have great injury done them if any man speak homely to them. And, therefore, they break out by and by into these speeches, What is that to thee? or, What hast thou to do with me? But the eunuch submitteth himself humbly to Philip that by him he may be taught. Thus must we be minded if we desire to have God to be our teacher, whose Spirit resteth upon the humble and meek, (Isaiah 66:2.) And if any man, mistrusting himself, submit himself to be taught, the angels shall rather come down from heaven [549] than the Lord will suffer us to labor in vain; though (as did the eunuch) we must use all helps, which the Lord offereth unto us, for the understanding of the Scriptures. Frantic men require inspirations and revelations [550] from heaven, and, in the mean season, they contemn the minister of God, by whose hand they ought to be governed. Other some, which trust too much to their own wit, will vouchsafe to hear no man, and they will read no commentaries. But God will not have us to despise those helps which he offereth unto us, and he suffereth not those to escape scot free which despise the same. And here we must remember, that the Scripture is not only given us, but that interpreters and teachers are also added, to be helps to us. For this cause the Lord sent rather Philip than an angel to the eunuch. For to what end served this circuit, that God calleth Philip by the voice of the angel, and sendeth not the angel himself forthwith, save only because he would accustom us to hear men? This is, assuredly, no small commendation of external preaching, that the voice of God soundeth in the mouth of men to our salvation, when angels hold their peace. Concerning which thing, I will speak more upon the ninth and tenth chapters.

Acts 8:32-35

Acts 8:32-35

32. Furthermore, the sentence of Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to be slain, and as a lamb dumb before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth. 33. In his humility his judgment is exalted. Who shall declare his generation? because his life is taken from the earth. 34. And the eunuch answering Philip said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other? 35. And Philip opening his mouth, and

[548] "Superet ac fugiat," surpasses and escapes.
[549] "Ad nos docendos," to teach us, omitted.
[550] "{Ενθουσιασμοὺς}," enthusiasms or inspirations.

beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

32. *The sentence of Scripture.* It is properly a text or *period.* Let us know that he lighted not upon this place by chance but that it came to pass by the wonderful providence of God, that Philip should have a proposition or principle from which the whole sum of Christianity might be set. [551] Therefore, first, he hath matter of full instruction brought to his hand by the secret direction of the Spirit; secondly, the form is plainly applied to the ministry of man. This is an excellent prophecy of Christ, and above all others to be remembered; because Isaiah saith plainly there [552] that such should be the manner of redeeming the Church, that the Son of God do by his death purchase life for men, that he offereth himself in sacrifice to purge [553] men's sins, that he be punished with the hand of God, and that he go down even unto the very hell, that he may exalt us unto heaven, having delivered us from destruction. In sum, this place teacheth plainly how men are reconciled to God, how they obtain righteousness, how they come to the kingdom of God, being delivered from the tyranny of Satan, and loosed from the yoke of sin; to be brief, whence they must fetch all parts of their salvation.

Notwithstanding, I will only expound those things which Luke here citeth, and there be, indeed, two members. In the former, he teacheth that Christ, to the end he may redeem the Church, [554] must needs be so broken, that he appear like to a man which is cast down and past hope. Secondly, he affirmeth that his death shall give life, and that there shall a singular triumph issue out of great despair. Whereas he compareth Christ to a lamb, which suffereth itself to be led and slain, and to a sheep, which offereth herself meekly to be shorn; his meaning is, that the sacrifice of Christ shall be voluntary. And surely this was the way to appease God's wrath, in that he showed himself obedient. He spake, indeed, before Pilate, (John 18:34, 36,) but not to save his life, but rather that he might willingly offer himself to die, [555] as he was appointed by the Father, and so might bring that punishment upon himself which was prepared for us. Therefore the prophet teacheth both things, that Christ must needs have suffered that he might purchase life for us, and that he was to suffer death willingly, that he might blot out the stubbornness of men by his obedience. And hence must we gather an exhortation unto godliness, [556] as Peter doth; but that doctrine of faith which I have already touched is former [557] in order.

33. *In his humility his judgment.* The eunuch had either the Greek volume, or else Luke did set down the reading which was then used, as he useth

[551] "Apte deduci," aptly deduced.
[552] "Sine involucris," without circumlocution, unequivocally.
[553] "Expiandis," to expiate.
[554] "Et restituat in vitam," and restore her to life, omitted.
[555] "In victimam," as a victim.
[556] "Ad patientiam," to patience.
[557] "Praecedit," precedes.

to do. The prophet saith that Christ was exalted out of sorrow and judgment, by which words he signifieth a wonderful victory, which immediately ensued his casting down. For if he had been oppressed with death, there could nothing have been hoped for at his hands.

Therefore, to the end the prophet may establish our faith in Christ, after that he had described him to be stricken with the hand of God, and to be subject to be slain, [558] he putteth upon him a new person now; to wit, that he cometh up out of the depth of death as a conqueror, and out of the very hell, being the author of eternal Life. I know, indeed, that this place is diversely expounded. Some there be which understand by this, that he was carried from the prison to the cross; other some there be who think that to be taken away doth signify as much as to be brought to nought. And, indeed, the signification of the Hebrew word, {לחה{ (*lachah*) is doubtful, [559] as is also the signification of the Greek word {αιρεσθαι}. But he which shall thoroughly weigh the text, [context,] shall agree with me in that which I have said, that he passeth now from that doleful and unseemly sight which he had set before our eyes, unto the new beginning of unlooked-for glory. Therefore the Greek interpretation differeth not much from the words of the prophet in the sum of the matter. For Christ's judgment was exalted in his humility or casting down; because at such time as he might seem to be cast down and oppressed, the Father maintained his cause. After this sort *judgment* shall be taken in this place (as in many other) for *right*. But it signifieth *condemnation* in the Hebrew text. For the prophet saith, that after that Christ shall be brought into great straits, and shall be like unto a condemned and lost man, he shall be lifted up by the hand of the Father. Therefore the meaning of the words is, that Christ must first have suffered death, before the Father should exalt him unto the glory of his kingdom; which doctrine must be translated unto the whole body of the Church; because all the godly ought wonderfully to be lifted up with the hand of God, that they be not swallowed up of death. But when God appeareth to be the revenger of his, he doth not only restore them to life but also, getteth to them excellent triumphs of many deaths, as Christ did triumph most gloriously upon the cross; whereof the apostle maketh mention in the Colossians 2.

His generation. After that the prophet hath set forth the victorious death of Christ, he addeth now that his victory shall not last only for a small time, but shall go beyond all number of years. For the exclamation of the prophet importeth as much as if he should deny that the perpetuity of Christ's kingdom can be expressed by the tongue of men. But interpreters have wrested this place miserably. Whereas the old writers have endeavored hereby to prove the Eternal Generation of the Word of God against Arius, it is too far dissenting from the prophet's mind. Chrysostom's exposition is never a whit truer, who referreth it unto the human generation. Neither do they

[558] "Et mactationi subjectum," and subjected to slaughter.

[559] "Ambigua," ambiguous, equivocal.

understand the prophet's meaning, which suppose that he inveigheth against the men of that age. Other some think better, who take it to be spoken of the Church, save only that they are deceived in the word generation, which they think doth signify a posterity or issue. But the word {דר{, (*dor*,) which the prophet useth, signifieth, amongst the Hebrews, *an age*, or the continuance of man's life. Therefore, undoubtedly this is the prophet's meaning, that Christ's life shall endure for ever, when as he shall be once delivered by his Father's grace from death; although this life, which is without end, appertaineth unto the whole body of the Church; because Christ rose, not that he may live for hlmself, but for us. Therefore, he extolleth now in the members [560] the fruit and effect of that victory which he placed in the Head. Wherefore every one of the faithful may conceive sure hope of eternal life out of this place; secondly, the perpetuity of the Church is rather avouched in the person of Christ.

Because his life is taken from the earth. This is, to look to, (to be) a very absurd reason, that Christ doth reign with such renown in heaven and earth, because he was cut off. For who can believe that death is the cause of life? But this was done by the wonderful counsel of God, that hell should be a ladder, whereby Christ should ascend into heaven; that reproach should be unto him a passage into life; that the joyful brightness of salvation should appear out of the horror and darkness of the cross; that blessed immortality should flow from the deep pit of death. Because he humbled himself, therefore the Father exalted him, that every knee may bow before him, (Philippians 2:10,) etc. Now must we bethink ourselves what fellowship we have with Christ, that it may not be troublesome to any to go the same way.

34. *The eunuch said to Philip.* Here it appeareth what an earnest desire the eunuch had to learn. He wandereth in divers prophecies of Isaiah as through doubtful boughts, [561] and yet he is not weary of reading. And whilst that he arrogateth nothing to himself, he getteth far more, contrary to his hope, even at a sudden, than he could get during his whole life by taking great pains, if he had brought all his quickness of wit. So the Lord will be unto us a Master, though we be but small, if, acknowledging our ignorance, we be not loth to submit ourselves to learn. And as the seed, covered with earth, lieth hid for a time, so the Lord will illuminate us by his Spirit, and will cause that reading which, being barren and void of fruit, causeth nothing but wearisomeness, to have plain light of understanding. The Lord doth never keep the eyes of his so shut, but that so soon as they are once entered, the way of salvation appeareth unto them in the Scripture; but that they profit ever now and then a little by reading. Yet doth he suffer them to stick fast oftentimes, and permitteth their course to be hindered by some bar which is laid in the way, both that he may try patience of faith in

[560] "In membris omnibus," in all the members.

[561] "Per dubias ambages," through dubious, winding paths.

them, and also that he may teach them humility, by putting them in mind of their ignorance, that he may make them more attentive after that they have shaken off drowsiness; that he may make them more fervent in prayer; that he may prick them forward to love the truth more dearly; that he may set forth the excellence of his heavenly wisdom, which is otherwise not so esteemed as it ought. But howsoever the faithful do not attain unto the mark of perfect knowledge, yet they shall always perceive that their labor is not in vain, so that they stop not the way before themselves with proud loathsomeness. [562] Let this going forward suffice us until the time of full revelation do come, that even a small taste of knowledge doth drip [563] into us the fear of God and faith.

35. *Philip, opening his mouth.* To open the mouth is taken in Scripture for, to begin a long speech concerning some grave and weighty matter. Therefore Luke's meaning is, that Philip began to intreat [discourse] of Christ, as it were, with full mouth. He saith that he began with this prophecy, because there is no one which depainteth out Christ more lively; [564] and it was then brought [565] to his hand. Therefore, after that Philip had showed, by the prophet's words, after what sort Christ should come, and what was to be hoped for at his hands, he conferred the thing itself afterward, that the eunuch might know that that Christ which was promised was already revealed and given, and that he might understand his power. Where we translate it, that *he preached Christ,* Luke saith that he preached the gospel. The sense is, that he taught that of Christ which he uttered in his gospel himself, and commanded to be taught; whereby we gather, that when Christ is known, we have the sum of the gospel.

Acts 8:36-40

Acts 8:36-40

36. And as they went on the way, they came to a water. And the eunuch said, Lo, here is water, what letteth me to be baptized? 37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. He answering, said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38. Then he commanded the chariot to be stayed, and they went both down into the water; to wit, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39. And when they were come out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more. Therefore, he went on in his way rejoicing. 40. But Philip was found at Azotus; and, going on his journey, he preached the gospel to all cities, until he came to Cesarea.

36. *What letteth me?* The eunuch's baptism ensueth now, whence we

[562] "Superbo fastidio," by proud disdain, fastidiousness.
[563] "Instillat," instil.
[564] "Clarius," more clearly.
[565] "Commode," conveniently, omitted.

gather how greatly he profited in a small time, seeing he offereth himself willingly to give Christ his name. For it must needs be that faith was after a sort ripe in his heart, seeing that he brake out into external profession with such desire. I like not that which Chrysostom noteth, that he was kept back with modesty from requiring baptism plainly; for that interrogation hath greater vehemency than if he should simply have said to Philip, I will have thee to baptize me. But we see that Christ was preached to him in such sort, that he knew that baptism was a sign of new life in him, and that therefore he would not neglect the same, because it was added to the word, and such an addition as was inseparable. Therefore, as he embraced that willingly which he heard concerning Christ, so now he breaketh out with a godly zeal into the external confession of faith; neither doth he think it sufficient for him to believe inwardly before God, unless he testifieth before men that he is a Christian. There might many things have come into his mind, which might have kept him back from being baptized, lest that he should lay himself open to the hatred and rebukes both of the queen, and also of the whole nation. But he denieth that any of these things doth hinder him from desiring to be numbered amongst the disciples of Christ. If being instructed but a few hours he came to this point, how filthy is the sluggishness of those men who suppress the faith which they have conceived, having been taught five, ten, or twenty years?

If thou believest with all thy heart. Whereas the eunuch is not admitted to baptism, until he have made confession of his faith, we must fetch a general rule hence, That those ought [not] to be received into the Church, who were estranged from the same before, until they have testified that they believe in Christ. For baptism is, as it were, an appurtenance of faith, and therefore it is later in order. Secondly, if it be given without faith whose seal it is, it is both a wicked and also too gross a profaning. But frantic fellows do both unskillfully and also wickedly impugn baptizing of infants under color hereof. Why was it meet that faith should go before baptism in the eunuch? To wit, because seeing that Christ marketh those alone which are of the household of the Church with this note and mark, they must be ingrafted unto the Church who are to be baptized. And as it is certain that those who are grown up are ingrafted by faith, so I say that the children of the godly are born the children of the Church, and that they are accounted members of Christ from the womb, because God adopteth us upon this condition, that he may be also the Father of our seed. Therefore, though faith be requisite in those which are grown up, yet this is untruly translated unto infants whose estate is far unlike. But certain great men have abused this place, when as they would prove that faith hath no confirmation by baptism. For they reasoned thus, The eunuch is commanded to bring perfect faith unto baptism, therefore there could nothing be added. But the Scripture taketh the whole *heart* oftentimes for a *sincere* and unfeigned heart, whose opposite is a double heart. So that there is no cause why we should imagine that

they believe perfectly who believe with the whole heart, seeing that there may be a weak and faint faith in him who shall, notwithstanding, have a sound mind, and a mind free from all hypocrisy. Thus must we take that which David saith, That he loveth the Lord with all his heart. Philip had, indeed, baptized the Samaritans before, and yet he knew that they were yet far from the mark. Therefore, the faith of the whole heart is that which, having living roots in the heart, doth yet notwithstanding desire to increase daily.

I believe that Jesus Christ. As baptism is grounded in Christ, and as the truth and force thereof is contained there, so the eunuch setteth Christ alone before his eyes. The eunuch knew before that there was one God, who had made the covenant with Abraham, who gave the law by the hand of Moses, which separated one people from the other nations, who promised Christ, through whom he would be merciful to the world. Now he confesseth that Jesus Christ is that Redeemer of the world, and the *Son of God;* under which title he comprehendeth briefly all those things which the Scripture attributeth to Christ. This is the perfect faith whereof Philip spake of late, which receiveth Christ, both as he was promised in times past, and also showed at length, and that with the earnest affection of the heart, as Paul will not have this faith to be feigned. Whosoever hath not this when he is grown up, in vain doth he boast of the baptism of his infancy. For to this end doth Christ admit infants by baptism, that so soon as the capacity of their age shall suffer, they may addict themselves to be his disciples, and that being baptized with the Holy Ghost, they may comprehend, with the understanding of faith, his power which baptism doth prefigure.

38. *They went down into the water.* Here we see the rite used among the men of old time in baptism; for they put all the body into the water. Now the use is this, that the minister doth only sprinkle the body or the head. But we ought not to stand so much about such a small difference of a ceremony, that we should therefore divide the Church, or trouble the same with brawls. We ought rather to fight even an hundred times to death for the ceremony itself of baptism, inasmuch as it was delivered us by Christ that that we should suffer the same to be taken from us. But forasmuch as we have as well a testimony of our washing, as of newness of life, in the figure of water; forasmuch as Christ representeth unto us his blood in the water as in a glass, that we may fet [566] our cleanness thence; forasmuch as he teacheth that we are fashioned again by his Spirit, that being dead to sin, we may live to righteousness; it is certain that we want nothing which maketh to the substance of baptism. Wherefore the Church did grant liberty to herself, since the beginning, to change the rites somewhat, excepting this substance. For some dipped them thrice, some but once. Wherefore there is no case why we should be so straitlaced in matters which are of no such

[566] "Petamus," seek.

weight; [567] so that external pomp do no whit pollute the simple institution of Christ.

39. *When they were come up.* To the end Luke may at length conclude his speech concerning the eunuch, he saith that Philip was caught away out of his sight. And that was of no small weight to confirm him, forasmuch as he saw that that man was sent unto him by God like to an angel, and that he vanished away before he could offer him any reward for all his pains; whence he might gather that it was no gainful insinuation, seeing that he was vanished away before he had one halfpenny given him. Whereas Philip had no reward at the eunuch's hand, let the servants of Christ learn hereby to serve him freely, or rather let them so serve men for nothing that they hope for a reward from heaven. The Lord granteth leave, indeed, to the ministers of the gospel to receive a reward at their hands whom they teach, (1 Corinthians 9:9,) but he forbiddeth them therewithal to be hirelings which labor for lucre's sake, (John 10:12, 13.) For this must be the mark whereat they must shoot, to gain the men themselves to God.

Rejoicing. Faith and the knowledge of God bring forth this fruit always of themselves. For what truer matter of joy can be invented than when the Lord doth not only set open unto us the treasures of his mercy, but poureth out his heart into us, (that I may so speak,) and giveth us himself in his Son, that we may want nothing to perfect felicity? The heavens begin to look clear, and the earth beginneth to be quiet then; the conscience being then delivered from the doleful and horrible feelings of God's wrath, being loosed from the tyranny of Satan, escaping out of the darkness of death, beholdeth the light of life. Therefore it is a solemn thing amongst the prophets to exhort us to be joyful and to triumph, so often as they are about to speak of the kingdom of Christ. But because those men whose minds are possessed with the vain joys of the world, cannot lift up themselves unto this spiritual joy, let us learn to despise the world and all vain delights thereof, that Christ may make us merry indeed.

40. *He was found at Azotus.* It is well known, out of the book of Joshua 11:22, that Azotus was one of the cities out of which the sons of Anak could not be expelled. It is distant from Ascalon almost two hundred furlongs; the Hebrews call it Ashdod. Thither was Philip carried; there began he to take his journey on foot after the manner of men, sowing the seed of the gospel wheresoever he became, [passed.] This is surely rare and wonderful stoutness, [568] that he spreadeth the name of godliness in his journey. And whereas Luke saith expressly that he preached in all cities until he came to Cesarea, and doth not declare that he returned to Samaria, we may thereby conjecture that he staid at Cesarea for a time; and yet I leave this indifferent.

[567] "Non ita necessariius," not absolutely necessary.
[568] "Strenuitas," strenuousness, activity.

Chapter 9

CHAPTER 9

Acts 9:1-5

Acts 9:1-5

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the highest priest, 2. Required epistles of him to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he should find any of this sect, whether they were men or women, he might carry them bound to Jerusalem. 3. And as he was in the way, it happened that he drew near to Damascus: and suddenly there shined a light about him from heaven: 4. And falling flat to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against pricks.

1. *And Saul.* Luke setteth down in this place a noble history, and a history full well worthy to be remembered, concerning the conversion of Paul; after what sort the Lord did not only bring him under, and make him subject to his commandment, when he raged like an untamed beast but also how he made him another and a new man. But because Luke setteth down all things in order as in a famous work of God, it shall be more convenient to follow his text, [context,] that all may come in order whatsoever is worth the noting. When as he saith, that *he breathed out threatenings and slaughter as yet,* his meaning is, that after that his hands were once imbued with innocent blood, he proceeded in like cruelty, and was always a furious and bloody enemy to the Church, after that he had once made that entrance [569] whereof mention is made in the death of Stephen. For which cause it was the more incredible that he could be so suddenly tamed. And whereas such a cruel wolf was not only turned into a sheep, but did also put on the nature of a shepherd, the wonderful hand of God did show itself therein manifestly.

2. And Luke describeth therewithal that he was furnished with weapons and power to do hurt, when as he saith that he had *obtained* letters of the highest priest, that he might bring all those bound to Jerusalem whom he should find professing the name of Christ. There is mention made of women, that it may the better appear how desirous he was to shed blood who had no respect of sex whom even armed enemies are wont to spare in the heat of war. Therefore he setteth forth before us a fierce and cruel beast who

[569] "Ab infausto trocinio," from that ominous commencement.

had not only liberty given him to rage, but had also his power increased to devour and destroy godly men, as if a madman had a sword put into his hand. Whereas I have translated it sect, Luke hath way, which metaphor is common enough in the Scriptures. Therefore Paul's purpose was quite to put out the name of Christ by destroying all the godly cruelly.

3. *As he was in the way.* In craving epistles of the high priest, he ran headlong against Christ willingly; and now he is enforced to obey whether he will or no. This is surely the most excellent mercy of God, in that that man is reclaimed unto salvation contrary to the purpose of his mind, whom so great a heat carried headlong into destruction. Whereas the Lord suffereth him to receive letters, and to come near to the city; (whereby we see how well he knoweth the very instants of times to do everything in due time; [570]) he could have prevented him sooner, if it had seemed good to him so to do, that he might deliver the godly from fear and carelessness. [571] But he setteth out his benefits more thereby, in that he tieth the jaws of the greedy wolf, even when he was ready to enter the sheepfold. Also we know that men's stubbornness increaseth more and more by going forward. Wherefore the conversion of Paul was so much the harder, forasmuch as he was already made more obstinate by continuing his fury.

Shined about him. Because it was no easy matter to pull down [572] so great pride to break such a lofty courage, to pacify such a blind heat of wicked zeal, and, finally, to bridle a most unbridled beast, Christ must needs have showed some sign of his majesty, whereby Paul might perceive that he had to do with God himself, and not with any mortal man;. although there were some respect had of humbling him, (because he was unworthy to have Christ,) to accustom him by and by to obey, by laying upon his neck the meek and sweet yoke of his Spirit. And he was scarce capable of so great gentleness, until his cruelty might be broken. [573] Man's sense cannot comprehend the Divine glory of Christ as it is; but as God did oftentimes put upon him forms wherein he did show himself, so Christ did now declare and make manifest his divinity to Paul, and showed some token of his presence, that he might thereby terrify Paul. For although the godly be afraid and tremble at the seeing of God, yet it must needs be that Paul was far more afraid when as he perceived that the divine power of Christ was set full against him.

4. And therefore Luke saith that he *fell to the ground.* For what other thing can befall man, but that he must lie prostrate and be, as it were, brought to nothing, when he is overwhelmed with the present feeling of God's glory? And this was the first beginning of the bringing down of Paul, that he might become apt to hear the voice of Christ, which he had despised so long as he sat haughtily upon his horse.

Saul, Saul! Luke compared the light which shined round about Paul to

[570] "Oppportune," opportunely.
[571] "Anxietate," anxiety.
[572] "Domare," to tame.
[573] "Violenter fracta," forcibly broken.

lightning, though I do not doubt but that lightnings did fly in the air. And this voice, which Christ did send out to beat down his pride, may full well be called a *lightning* or *thunderbolt,* because it did not only strike him, and make him astonished, but did quite kill him, so that he was now as nobody with himself, who did so much please himself before and did challenge to himself authority to put the gospel to flight. Luke putteth down his name in Hebrew in this place, *Saul, Saul!* because he repeateth the words of Christ, who spake unto him, undoubtedly, according to the common custom of the country.

5. *Who art thou, Lord?* We have Paul now somewhat tamed, but he is not yet Christ's disciple. Pride is corrected in him, and his fury is brought down. But he is not yet so thoroughly healed that he obeyeth Christ; he is only ready to receive commandments, who was before a blasphemer. Therefore, this is the question of a man that is afraid, and thrown down with amazedness. For why doth he not know, by so many signs of God's presence, that it is God that speaketh? Therefore that voice proceeded from a panting and doubtful mind; therefore, Christ driveth him nigher unto repentance, When he addeth, *I am Jesus,* let us remember that that voice sounded from heaven. Therefore it ought to have pierced the mind of Paul when he considered that he had made war against God hitherto. It ought to have brought him by and by to true submission, when he considered that he should not escape scot free, if he should continue rebellious against him whose hand he could not escape.

This place containeth a most profitable doctrine, and the profit thereof is made manifold, for Christ showeth what great account he maketh of his gospel, when he pronounceth that it is his cause, from which he will not be separated. Therefore he can no more refuse to defend the same than he can deny himself. Secondly, the godly may gather great comfort by this, in that they hear that the Son of God is partner with them of the cross, when as they suffer and labor for the testimony of the gospel, and that he doth, as it were, put under his shoulders, that he may bear some part of the burden. For it is not for nothing that he saith that he suffereth in our person; but he will have us to be assuredly persuaded of this, that he suffereth together with us, [574] as if the enemies of the gospel should wound us through his side. Wherefore Paul saith, that that is wanting in the sufferings of Christ what persecutions soever the faithful suffer at this day for the defense of the gospel, (Colossians 1:24.) Furthermore, this consolation tendeth not only to that end to comfort us, that it may not be troublesome to us to suffer with our Head, but that we may hope that he will revenge our miseries, who crieth out of heaven that all that which we suffer is common to him as well as to us. Lastly, we gather hereby what horrible judgment is prepared for the persecutors of the Church, who like giants besiege the very heaven, and

[574] "Eadum ipsum sympathia tangi," that he is touched with the same sympathy.

shake their darts, which shall pierce [575] their own head by and by; yea, by troubling the heavens, they provoke the thunderbolt of God's wrath against themselves. Also, we are all taught generally, that no man run against Christ by hurting his brother unjustly, and specially, that no man resist the truth rashly and with a blind madness, under color of zeal.

It is hard for thee. This is a proverbial sentence, taken from oxen or horses, which, when they are pricked with goads, do themselves no good by kicking, save only that they double the evil by causing the prick to go farther into their skins. Christ applieth this similitude unto himself very fitly, because men shall bring upon themselves a double evil, by striving against him, who must of necessity be subject to his will and pleasure, will they nill they. Those which submit themselves willingly to Christ are so far from feeling any pricking at his hands, that they have in him a ready remedy for all wounds; but all the wicked, who endeavor to cast out their poisoned stings against him, shall at length perceive that they are asses and oxen, subject to the prick. So that he is unto the godly a foundation whereon they rest, but unto the reprobate who stumble at him, a stone which with his [its] hardness grindeth them to powder. And although we speak here of the enemies of the gospel, yet this admonition may reach farther, to wit, that we do not think that we shall get any thing by biting the bridle so often as we have any thing to do with God, but that being like to gentle horses, we suffer ourselves meekly to be turned about and guided by his hand. And if he spur us at any time, let us be made more ready to obey by his pricks, lest that befall us which is said in the Psalm, That the jaws of untamed horses and mules are tied and kept in with a hard bit, lest they leap upon us, etc.

In this history we have a universal figure of that grace which the Lord showeth forth daily in calling us all. All men do not set themselves so violently against the gospel; yet, nevertheless, both pride and also rebellion against God are naturally engendered in all men. We are all wicked and cruel naturally; therefore, in that we are turned to God, that cometh to pass by the wonderful and secret power of God, contrary to nature. The Papists also ascribe the praise of our turning unto God to the grace of God; yet only in part, because they imagine that we work together. But when as the Lord doth mortify our flesh, he subdueth us and bringeth us under, as he did Paul. Neither is our will one hair readier to obey than was Paul's, until such time as the pride of our heart be beaten down, and he have made us not only flexible but also willing to obey and follow. Therefore, such is the beginning of our conversion, that the Lord seeketh us of his own accord, when we wander and go astray, though he be not called and sought; that he changeth the stubborn affections of our heart, to the end he may have us to be apt to be taught.

Furthermore, this history is of great importance to confirm Paul's doctrine. If Paul had always been one of Christ's disciples, wicked and froward men

[575] "Reditura," recoil upon.

might extenuate the weight of the testimony which he giveth of his Master. If he should have showed himself to be easy to be entreated, and gentle at the first, we should see nothing but that which is proper to man. But when as a deadly enemy to Christ, rebellious against the gospel, puffed up with the confidence which he reposed in his wisdom, inflamed with hatred of the true faith, blinded with hypocrisy, wholly set upon the overthrowing of the truth, [he] is suddenly changed into a new man, after an unwonted manner, and of a wolf is not only turned into a sheep, but doth also take to himself a shepherd's nature, it is as if Christ should bring forth with his hand some angel sent from heaven. For we do not now see that Saul of Tarsus, but a new man framed by the Spirit of God; so that he speaketh by his mouth now, as it were from heaven.

Acts 9:6-9

Acts 9:6-9

6. And he trembling and fearing said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, where it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7. And the men which accompanied him in his journey stood amazed, hearing indeed a voice, and seeing no man. 8. And when Saul was risen from the ground, when his eyes were opened he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him to Damascus. 9. And he was three days without sight, neither eating nor drinking.

6. The fruit of that reprehension followeth, wherewith we have said it was requisite that Paul should have been sore shaken, that his hardness might be broken. For now he offereth himself as ready to do whatsoever he should command him, whom of late he despised. For when he asketh what Christ would have him do, he granteth him authority and power. Even the very reprobate are also terrified with the threatening of God, so that they are compelled to reverence him, and to submit themselves unto his will and pleasure; yet, nevertheless, they cease not to fret and to foster stubbornness within. But as God humbled Paul, so he wrought effectually in his heart. For it came not to pass by any goodness of nature, that Paul did more willingly submit himself to God than Pharaoh, (Exodus 7:13;) but because, being like to an anvil, [Pharaoh] did, with his hardness, beat back the whips of God wherewith he was to be brought under, (even as it had been the strokes of a hammer;) but the heart of Paul was suddenly made a fleshy heart of a stony heart, after that it received softness from the Spirit of God; which softness it had not naturally. The same thing do we also try [experience] daily in ourselves. He reproveth us by his word; he threateneth and terrifieth us; he addeth also light correction, and prepareth us divers ways unto subjection. But all these helps shall never cause any man to bring forth good fruit, unless the Spirit of God do mollify his heart within.

And the Lord said unto him. After that Paul had put his stiff neck under

the yoke of Christ, he is now governed by his hand. For doubtless the Lord doth not so bring us into the way, that he leaveth us either before we begin our course, or in the midst thereof; but he bringeth us unto the very mark by little and little. Luke depainteth out unto us in this place this continual course of God's governance. For He taketh him afterward unto himself to be taught whom He hath made apt to be taught. Neither doth that any whit hinder that he useth man's ministry ill this point. Because the authority and power remaineth nevertheless in him, howsoever he accomplish his work by man; though it may seem an absurd thing that Christ, who is the Eternal Wisdom of God, doth send a scholar (who was ready to hear, and did gape after instruction) unto another [576] man, that he might learn. But I answer, that that was done not without cause. For the Lord meant by this means to prove Paul's modesty, when he sendeth him to one of his scholars to be taught; as if he himself would not vouchsafe as yet to speak unto him familiarly, but sendeth him to his servants whom he did of late both so proudly contemn and so cruelly persecute.

And we are also taught humility under his person. For if Christ made Paul subject to the teaching of a common disciple, which of us can grudge to hear any teacher, so that he be appointed by Christ, that is, he declare himself to be his minister in deed? Therefore, whereas Paul is sent to Ananias, let us know that that is done to adorn the ministry of the Church. This is assuredly no small honor whereunto it pleaseth God to exalt mankind, when as he chooseth our brethren from amongst us to be interpreters of his will; when as he causeth his holy oracles to sound in the mouth of man, which is naturally given to lying and vanity. But the unthankfulness of the world betrayeth itself again herein, that no man can abide to hear when God speaketh by the mouth of man. All men could desire to have angels come flying unto them, or that heaven should be now and then cut asunder, and that the visible glory of God should come thence. Forasmuch as this preposterous curiosity springeth from pride and wicked contempt of the Word, it setteth open a gate to many dotings, and breaketh the bond of mutual consent among the faithful. Therefore the Lord doth testify, that it pleaseth him that we should be taught by men, and confirmeth the order set down by himself. And to this purpose serve these titles, "He which heareth you heareth me," (Luke 10:16;) that he may cause his word to be reverenced as it ought.

It shall be told thee. Christ putteth Ananias in his place by these words, as touching the office of teaching; not because he resigneth his authority to him, but because he shall be a faithful minister, and a sincere preacher of the gospel. Therefore we must always use this moderation, that we hear God alone in Christ, and Christ himself alone, yet as he speaketh by his ministers. And these two vices must be avoided, that the ministers be not proud, under color of such a precious function, or that their base condition impair no whit of the dignity of heavenly wisdom.

[576] "Suspensum allo," in suspense, elsewhere.

7. *And the men.* He speaketh now briefly of the companions of Paul, that they were witnesses of the vision. Yet it seemeth that this narration doth not in all points agree with that of Paul, which we shall see in the 22nd chapter, (Acts 22:9.) For he will say there, that his companions were terrified with the light, but they heard no voice. Some there be who think that it was a fault, [577] and that through ignorance of the writer [578] the negation is placed out of its right place. I think that it is no hard matter to answer it; because it may be that they heard the sound of the voice, yet did they not discern either who it was that spake, or what was spoken. "They heard not," saith he, "the voice of him that spake with me." Surely this is the meaning of these words, that he alone knew the speech of Christ. It followeth not thereupon, but that the rest might have heard a dark and doubtful voice. Whereas Luke saith in this place that there was a voice heard, and no man seen, his meaning is, that the voice proceeded from no man, but that it was uttered by God. Therefore, to the end the miracle may carry the greater credit, Paul's companions see a light like to lightning; they see Paul lie prostrate; a voice they hear (though not distinctly [579]) sounding from heaven; and yet, nevertheless, Paul alone is taught what he must do.

8. *He was raised up from the earth.* Luke addeth now, that he was taken with so great fear that he could not rise of himself; and not that only, but he was also blind for a time, that he might forget his former wit and wiliness. [580] When as he saith, that *after that his eyes were opened, he saw not,* it seemeth that it doth not agree with the other words which shall follow by and by, that his eyes were covered, as it were, with scales; but the meaning of this place is, that he was blind indeed, and deprived of his sight for that three days; because when he opened his eyes he saw nothing.

9. Whereas he saith, that he neither ate nor drank for the space of three days, that is to be counted a part of the miracle. For although the men of the east country endure hunger better than we, yet we do not read that any did fast three days, save only those who had want of victual, or who were constrained by some greater necessity. Therefore we gather that Paul was wonderfully afraid, [581] seeing that being, as it were, dead, he tasted no meat for three days.

Acts 9:10-12

Acts 9:10-12

10. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, called Ananias, unto whom the Lord said in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here am I, Lord. 11. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the way that is called

[577] "Esse mendum," that there is a mistake.
[578] "Librarii," the copyist.
[579] "Articulate," articulately.
[580] "Acumen," acumen.
[581] "Expavefactum," terrified.

Straight, and seek in the house of Judas one called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. 12. And he hath seen in a vision a man, named Ananias, entering in, and laying his hand upon him that he might see.

10. We have said before that this man was rather chosen than any of the apostles, that Paul, having laid away the swelling of his arrogancy, might learn to hear the least, and that he [might] come down from too great loftiness even unto the lowest degree. And this vision was necessary for Ananias, lest through fear he should withdraw himself from that function which was enjoined him, to wit, to teach Paul. For though he know that the Lord calleth him, yet he slideth back, or, at least, he excuseth himself. Therefore it was requisite that he should have some certain testimony of his calling, that there should happy success be promised to his labor, that he might take that in hand with a joyful and valiant mind which the Lord commanded. Furthermore, as Christ animateth and confirmeth Ananias, by appearing to him in the vision, so he prepareth and maketh Paul ready for all things, that he may receive Ananias reverently, as if he would receive an angel coming from heaven. The Lord could have sent Paul straightway unto Ananias, and have showed him his house, but this was more fit for his confirmation; because he knew the better that the Lord had a care of him. And also the Lord setteth out his grace unto us, that as he stopped Paul before, so now he reacheth him his hand of his own accord, by his minister. And, in the mean season, we are also taught, by his example, to be more ready and careful to seek out the lost sheep.

In a vision. This word *vision* signifieth some light [582] which was set before the eyes to testify God's presence. For this is the use of visions, that the majesty of the Word being well proved, it may purchase credit, amongst men; which kind of confirmation God used oftentimes toward the prophets; as he saith, that he speaketh to his servants by a vision or by a dream. He hath, indeed, suffered Satan to deceive the unbelievers with false imaginations and visures. [583] But forasmuch as Satan's juggling casts are of power only in darkness, God doth lighten the minds of his children so, that they assure themselves that they need not to fear legerdemain. [584] Therefore Ananias answereth, *Here am I, Lord,* knowing indeed that it was God.

11. *For, behold, he prayeth.* Luke showeth that Paul gave himself [585] to prayer those three days; and peradventure this was one cause why he fasted, although it be certain, as I have already said, that he suffered such long hunger, because he was after a sort deprived of sense, as men which are in a trance use to be. Christ doth assuredly speak of no short prayer [586] in this place, but he doth rather show that Paul continued in this kind of exercise until he should be more quiet in mind. For besides other causes of terror,

[582] "Symbolum," symbol.
[583] "Fallacibus spectris," with fallacious specters.
[584] "Impostura," imposture.
[585] "Fuisse intentum," was intent.
[586] "Precatione momenti," momentary or ejaculatory prayer.

that voice might sound in his ears, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And it is not to be doubted but that the careful [587] looking for a perfect revelation did marvellously trouble his mind; but this was the reason why the Lord caused him to wait three days, that he might the more kindle in him an earnest desire to pray.

12. *He saw a man, named Ananias.* It is uncertain whether Luke do yet repeat the words of Christ, or he add this of his own. Those which take it in the person of Luke are moved with some show of absurdity, because it is an unlikely thing that Christ used these words. Although this may be easily answered thus, to wit, that Christ confirmeth Ananias after this sort, There is no cause why thou shouldst fear but that he will receive thee willingly, forasmuch as he already knoweth thy shape by a vision. I have also told him thy name, and whatsoever thou shalt do with him. Yet may the reader choose whether he will.

Acts 9:13-16

Acts 9:13-16

13. And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard of many of this man, what hurt he hath done to thy servants at Jerusalem: 14. And here he hath power from the priests to bind all which call upon thy name. 15. And the Lord said unto him, Go; because he is a chosen instrument to me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. 16. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name.

13. *Lord, I have heard.* In that Ananias objecteth the danger to the Lord, he betrayeth his weakness of faith therein. Therefore we see that the saints and servants of God are afraid of death, which thing keepeth them back from doing their duty; yea, it causeth them sometimes to stagger. Ananias would gladly go to some other place; but this is a point of a good man, that he yieldeth not so much to fear that he withdraweth himself from Christ's obedience. And, therefore, this is a sign of rare obedience, [588] that although through fear of death he were somewhat slack at the first, yet having forgotten himself by and by, he maketh great haste to go whither Christ called him. And yet, notwithstanding, he refuseth not flatly in these words to do that which he is commanded to do, but useth an excuse [589] very modestly, Lord, what meaneth this, that thou sendest me to the hangman? Therefore we may see a desire to obey mixed with fear.

14. *He hath power to bind.* We gather by these words, that the fame of the persecution which Saul went about [590] was spread far and wide; for which cause his conversion was [591] more famous. Nevertheless, the Lord

[587] "Anxia," anxious.
[588] "Pietatis," piety.
[589] "Obliqua excusatione," indirect excuse.
[590] "Parabat," was preparing.
[591] "Debuit," must have been.

suffered the faithful to be evil entreated, [592] that the benefit of such sudden deliverance might afterwards be the more excellent. We must mark that speech, when he saith that the godly call upon the name of Christ. For whether you understand it, that inasmuch as they professed that they were Christ's, they rejoiced therefore in him, or that they used to fly to him for succor, invocation cannot be without sure confidence. By both which the divinity of Christ is not only proved, but also if the second be received, which seemeth to be more natural, [593] we are taught by the example of the faithful, to call upon the name of Christ when he is preached to us.

15. *Go; because he is an elect instrument.* The commandment repeated the second time, and also the promise of success added, taketh away all doubtfulness. Therefore sloth shall want an excuse, if it be never redressed after that many pricks be used; like as we see that very many, who howsoever the Lord cry unto them continually, do not only loiter during their whole life, but do also cherish their slothfulness by all means possible. [594] If any man object that the Lord speaketh not at this day in a vision, I answer, that forasmuch as the Scripture is abundantly confirmed to us, we must hear God thence. [595]

A vessel of election, or, as Erasmus translateth it, *an elect instrument,* is taken for an excellent minister. The word *instrument* doth show that men can do nothing, save inasmuch as God useth their industry at his pleasure. For if we be instruments, he alone is the author; the force and power to do is in his power alone. And that which Christ speaketh in this place of Paul appertaineth to all men, both one and other. Therefore how stoutly soever every man labor, and how carefully soever he behave himself in his duty, yet there is no cause why he should challenge to himself any part of praise. Those which dispute subtilely about the word *vessel,* dote through ignorance of the Hebrew tongue. Luke putteth the genitive ease for the dative and that according to the common custom of the Hebrew tongue. And he meant to express a certain excellency, as if he should have said, that this man shall be no common minister of Christ, but shall be indued with singular excellency above others. Nevertheless, we must note that if any thing be excellent, it dependeth upon the favor of God, as Paul himself teacheth elsewhere. Who is he that separateth thee? to wit, that thou shouldst excel others, (1 Corinthians 4:7.) To conclude, Christ pronounceth that Paul was chosen unto great and excellent things.

To bear my name amongst the Gentiles. To him who went about before to suppress the name of Christ is the same now committed to be borne. If we please to take {שנם{ (*schenos*) for a *vessel*, this should be a continual

[592] "Misere cruciari," miserably tortured.

[593] "Genuinum," genuine.

[594] "Quibus possunt blanditiis," by all sorts of blandishment.

[595] "Quo magis notandum est Anniae exemplum, qui ad secundum mandatum moras omnes abrumpit." Wherefore it is the more necessary to give heed to the example of Ananias, who, on the second command, breaks off all delay, omitted.

metaphor, because a minister of the gospel serveth instead of a vessel to publish the name of Christ; but because it signifieth rather amongst the Hebrews any instrument generally, I take these words *to carry my name*, for to extol the same unto due honor. For Christ is placed after a sort in his princely throne when as the world is brought under his power by the preaching of the gospel.

16. *And because.* Paul could not do this, and have Satan quiet, and the world to yield to him willingly; therefore Luke addeth, that he shall be also taught to bear the cross. For the meaning of the words is, I will accustom him to suffer troubles: to endure reproaches, and to abide all manner [of] conflicts, that nothing may terrify him, and keep him back from doing his duty. And when Christ maketh himself Paul's teacher in this matter, he teacheth that the more every man hath profited in his school, the more able is he to bear the cross. For we strive against it, and refuse it as a thing most contrary, until he make our minds more gentle. Also this place teacheth, that no man is fit to preach the gospel, seeing the world is set against it, save only he which is armed to suffer. Therefore if we will show ourselves faithful ministers of Christ, we must not only crave at his hands the spirit of knowledge and wisdom, but also of constancy and strength, that we may never be discouraged by laboring and toiling; which is the estate of the godly.

Acts 9:17-19

Acts 9:17-19

17. And Ananias went and entered into the house, and when he had laid his hands upon him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, namely Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, that thou mayest recover thy sight, and that thou mayest be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18. And forthwith there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he recovered his sight by and by; and arising he was baptized. 19. And when he had taken meat he was strengthened.

17. *Having laid his hands upon.* We have said elsewhere that this was a solemn, and, as it were, an ordinary thing amongst the Jews, to lay their hands upon those whom they did commend to God. The apostles translated that custom taken from sacrifices to their use, either when they gave the visible graces of the Spirit or when they made any man minister of the Church. To this end doth Ananias lay his hands now upon Paul, partly that he may consecrate him unto God, partly that he may obtain for him the gifts of the Spirit. And though there be no mention made of doctrine in this place yet it shall appear afterwards by Paul's narration, that Ananias was also commanded to teach him; and by baptism, which was later in order, we gather that he was instructed in the faith. Let the readers note out of the chapter next going before how this ceremony is effectual to give the Spirit, But seeing Paul received the Spirit by the hand of Ananias, the Papists are

more than ridiculous, who will have the bishops alone to lay on their hands.

18. *There fell from his eyes as it had been scales.* The blindness of Paul, as we have said before did not proceed from fear alone or from amazedness; but by this means was he admonished of his former blindness, that he might quite abandon that boldness and vain confidence wherewith he was puffed up. He boasted that he was taught at the feet of Gamaliel, (Acts 22:3;) and undoubtedly he thought very well of his great wittiness, [596] which was notwithstanding mere blindness. Therefore he is deprived of the sight of his body [597] three days, that he may begin to see with his mind; for those must become fools, whosoever they be, which seem to themselves wise, that they may attain to true wisdom. For seeing that Christ is the Sun of righteousness, in seeing without him we see not; it is he also which openeth the eyes of the mind. Both things were showed to Paul, and to us are they showed in his person; for he hath his eyes covered with scales, that, condemning all his knowledge of ignorance, [598] he may learn that he hath need of new light, which he hath hitherto wanted; and he is taught that he must let [seek] the true light from none other save only from Christ, and that it is given by no other means save only through his goodness. Furthermore, whereas being pined with three days hunger, he maketh no haste to receive meat until he be baptized, thereby appeareth the earnest [599] desire he had to learn, because he refreshed not his body with meat until his soul had received strength.

Acts 9:19-25

Acts 9:19-25

And Saul was with the disciples which were at Damascus certain days. 20. And by and by he preached Christ, that he was the Son of God. 21. And they were all amazed which heard, and said, Is not this he which at Jerusalem made havock of those who called upon his name, and he [had come] came hither to that end, that he might carry them bound unto the priests? 22. And Saul waxed more strong, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this was Christ. 23. And when many days were past, the Jews took counsel together to put him to death: 24. And their laying in wait was known to Saul. And they kept the gates day and night, that they might slay him: 25. And the disciples having taken him by night, put him down through [by] a wall, and let him down in a basket.

20. Luke declareth now how fruitful Paul's conversion was, to wit, that he came abroad by and by, [600] and did not only profess that he was a

[596] "Quin sibi multum placuerit in sua perspicacia," but he was much pleased with his own perspicacity."

[597] "Oculis," of his eyes, his bodily sight.

[598] "Ut totum suum acumen ignorantiae damnans," that confessing all his acuteness to be ignorance.

[599] "Ferventissimum," most fervent.

[600] "Statim prodient in publicum," immediately appeared in public.

disciple of Christ, but did also set himself against [601] the fury and hatred of the enemies, by defending the gospel stoutly. Therefore, he who of late ran headlong against Christ with furious force, doth now not only submit himself meekly unto his will and pleasure but like a stout standard-bearer fighteth even unto the utmost danger to maintain his glory. Certain it is that he was not so quickly framed by Ananias' industry, [602] but that so soon as he had learned the first principles by man's mouth, he was extolled by God unto higher things afterward. He comprehendeth the sum of his preaching briefly, when he saith that Christ was the Son of God. In the same sense, he saith shortly after that he saw Christ. And understand thus much, that when Paul intreated out of the law and the prophets of the true office of the Messiah, he taught also that all whatsoever was promised of, and was to be hoped for, at the hands of the Messiah, was revealed and given in Christ. For the words signify thus much, when he saith that he preached that Christ is the Son of God. That was undoubtedly a principle amongst the Jews, that there should a Redeemer come from God, who should restore all things to a happy estate. Paul teacheth that Jesus of Nazareth is he, which he cannot do, unless he shake off those gross errors which he had conceived of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah. Certain it is that Paul declared how Christ was promised in the law, and to what end; but because all tended to this end, that he might prove that the son of Mary was he of whom the law and the prophets bare witness, therefore Luke is content with this one word only.

21. *They were all amazed.* This is added, that we may know that the power of God was acknowledged. For seeing that the zeal of Paul against the gospel was openly known, they saw no other cause of such a sudden change but the hand of God. And, therefore, this is also one fruit of the miracle, that they all wonder at him being made a new man so suddenly, so that his doctrine doth the more move their minds. Whereas they say that he raged horribly with great cruelty, and that he came of late to Damascus that he might proceed in his purpose, these circumstances serve to augment the miracle. We must also note the phrase, those which call on his name, which withesseth that the godly did so profess the name of Christ, that they placed all their hope of salvation in him. According to that, these

"men put their trust in chariots, and others in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord,"
(Psalm 20:7.)

Finally, whatsoever the Scripture commandeth concerning calling upon the name of God, it agreeth to the person of Christ.

22. *And Saul waxed stronger.* Luke doth not only in this place commend the bold zeal of Paul in confessing the faith of Christ, but also he telleth us that he had strong reasons to convince the Jews. He waxed strong, saith

[601] "Se… objecerit," exposed himself to.

[602] "Opera Ananiae formatum," formed or trained by the agency of Ananias.

he, that is, he got the victory in disputation; his confession did carry with it great force and efficacy, [603] because being furnished with testimonies of Scripture, and such other helps of the Holy Ghost, he did, as it were, tread all his adversaries under his feet. [604] For the word confounded, which Luke useth, doth signify, that, forasmuch as Paul did urge them out of measure, they were so stricken that they could not tell where they were. [605] The manner of the confounding is expressed, because Paul proved that Jesus was Christ. For the sense is this, that even when the Jews were most desirous to resist, they were overcome and *confounded.* So that Paul tried [found] by experience, that that was most true which he himself affirmeth, that the Scripture is profitable to convince, (2 Timothy 3:16.) Also, he performed that which he required elsewhere of a bishop and teacher, (Titus 1:7;) for he was armed with the word of God to maintain the truth. And Luke setteth down two things, that Paul so got the victory in disputing that he overthrew the Jews; and yet their stubbornness was not broken and tamed that they yielded to the truth, because their consciences rage nevertheless inwardly, and being thrown down from their false opinion, they do not submit themselves to Christ.

Whence had Paul this victory, save only because the Scripture was his sword? Therefore, so often as heretics stand up to resist the true faith, so often as wicked men endeavor to overthrow all godliness, so often as the ungodly do obstinately resist, let us remember that we must fet [seek] armor hence. Because the Papists find no weapons in Scripture, yea, because they see that it maketh quite against them, they fly into this miserable fortress [606] that they must not dispute with heretics, and that there can no certain thing be set down out of Scripture. But if Satan himself be vanquished with the sword of the word, why shall it not be able to put heretics to flight? not that they will submit themselves, or make an end of murmuring, [607] but because they shall lie overcome in themselves. [608] And if so be it we covet to escape this trouble, let us raise no tumults against God, but let us, with a quiet and meek spirit, receive that peace which the Scripture offereth us.

23. *When many days were fulfilled.* He saith that many days were expired, that we may know that Paul had some space of time granted him wherein he might do good. For although the Jews did resist him even from the first day, yet the Lord did not suffer the course which he had begun well to be broken off so soon, so he doth with his wonderful counsel hinder the purposes of the enemies, stay their endeavors, restrain their malice and madness, whilst that he furthereth [609] the gospel; and also we see what the hatred of the

[603] "Vim et energiam conjunctam," combined force and energy.
[604] "Quasi obruebat," as it were threwn down, overwhelmed.
[605] "Ut apud se non essent," that they were out of themselves.
[606] "Asylum," asylum.
[607] "Obstrependi," brawling, gainsaying.
[608] "In seipsis convicti," selfconvicted.
[609] "Donec promoveat," until he may further.

truth doth. For when the wicked see that they are unable to resist, they are carried headlong into bloody fury. They would gladly contemn the word of God if they could; but because they are enforced, whether they will or no, to feel the force thereof, they run headlong, like furious beasts, with blind violence. [610] The unadvised and rash heat of zeal will always almost break out into such cruelty, unless men suffer themselves to be ruled by the word of God. This is, assuredly, horrible blindness. For why are they so mad, save only because their wounded conscience doth vex them? But God doth by this means punish their hypocrisy, who do, therefore, hate sound religion; because, being friends of darkness, they fly the light.

Furthermore, we see how sweetly these preposterous zealous fellows [611] grant themselves liberty to do whatsoever them lusteth, when Satan hath once pricked them forward to persecute the truth. For they fear not to take counsel, under color of zeal, to put a man to death, which they know is mere wickedness, [612] as at this day the Papists think that they may do whatsoever they will, so they can quench the doctrine of the gospel. They rage not only with sword, but they go about by lying in wait, by treachery, and by most execrable means, to destroy us. We must, first, beware that that do not befall us, that we entangle not ourselves in the defense of evil causes; secondly, that we handle those causes well which we know are good. But it is to be thought that they laid wait for Paul privily; that done, when they could do no good this way, it is likely that they came to the governor of the city, and that then the gates were watched, that they might by one means or other catch him. For Paul saith that Aretas, the king's governor, commanded that which Luke attributeth in this place to the Jews.

25. *The disciples having taken him by night.* There is a question moved here, whether it were lawful for the disciples to save Paul thus or no? and also, whether it were lawful for Paul to escape danger by this means or no? For the laws say that the walls of cities are holy, [sacred,] and that the gates are holy. Therefore, he ought rather to have suffered death, than to have suffered a public order to be broken for his sake. I answer, that we must consider why it is decreed by the laws that the walls should not be violated; to wit, that the cities may not be laid open to murders and robberies, and that the cities may be free [613] from treason. That reason ceaseth when the question is concerning the delivery of an innocent man. Therefore, it was no less lawful for the faithful to be let down in a basket, than it shall be lawful for any private person to leap over a wall, that he may avoid [614] the sudden invasion of the enemy. Cicero doth handle this latter member, and he setteth down very well, that although the law forbid a stranger to come near the wall, yet doth not he offend who shall go up upon the wall to save the city,

[610] "Caeco et praecipite impetu," with blind and headlong impulse.
[611] "Zelotae," zealots.
[612] "Nefarium," nefarious.
[613] "Tuti," safe.
[614] "Propulset," repel.

because the laws must always be inclined [615] to equity. Therefore Paul is not to be blamed, because he escaped by stealth, seeing that he doth that without raising any tumult amongst the people. Nevertheless, we see how the Lord useth to humble those that be his, seeing that Paul is enforced to steal his life from the watchmen of the city if he will save himself. Therefore, he reckoneth this example amongst his infirmities. He was acquainted betime with the cross [616] with this first exercise.

Acts 9:26-31

Acts 9:26-31

26. And when Saul was at Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27. But when Barnabas had taken him, he brought him to the apostles, and he told them how that he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had behaved himself boldly at Damascus, in the name of Jesus, 28. And he was conversant with them at Jerusalem; and when he was emboldened in the name of the Lord Jesus, 29. He spake, and disputed with the Grecians. And they went about to kill him. 30. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him to Cesarea, and sent him to Tarsus. 31. Then the churches throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace; and they were edified, and walked in the fear of the Lord, and were filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

26. *When Saul was.* These were yet hard entrances [617] for Paul, who was as yet but a freshwater soldier, in that, when he had hardly escaped the hands of the enemies, the disciples would not receive him. For he might have seemed to have been so tossed to and fro, as it were, in mockery, that he could have no resting place. All his own nation was set against him for Christ's cause. The Christians refuse him. Might he not have been quite discouraged and out of hope as one expelled out of men's company? First, what remaineth but that he fall away from the Church, seeing he is not received? But when he remembereth the life which he had led aforetime he marvelleth not that they are afraid [618] of him. Therefore, he doth patiently suffer the brethren to refuse his company, seeing they had just cause of fear. This was true conversion, that whereas he raged horribly before, he doth now valiantly suffer the storms of persecutions; and, in the mean season, when as he cannot be admitted into the company of the godly, he waiteth with a quiet mind until God reconcile them unto him. We must diligently note what he desireth, to wit, that he may be numbered amongst the disciples of Christ. This can

[615] "Flectandae," bent.

[616] "Hoc tirocinio ad crucem ferendam mature assuefactus fuit." He was early trained to bear the cross by this first trial.

[617] "Dura et aspera Paulo adhuc tironi rudimenta haec fuerunt," this was rough and harsh training for Paul, who was as yet a tyro.

[618] "Se horrori esse," that he is a terror to them.

he not obtain. Here is no ambition, but he was to be instructed by this means to make more account even of the lowest place amongst the disciples of Christ than of all masterships in corrupt and revolted [619] synagogues, And from this submission was he exalted unto the highest degree of honor, that he might be the principal doctor of the Church, even unto the end of the world. But no man is fit to be a teacher in the Church save only he who willingly submitteth himself, [620] that he may be a fellow disciple with other men.

27. *When Barnabas had taken him.* Whereas the disciples fled so fast from Paul, that was, peradventure, a point of too great fearfulness, [621] and yet he speaketh of none of the common sort, but of the apostles themselves. But he doth either extenuate or lighten their fault, because they suspected him for just causes, whom they had found and tried [622] to be such a deadly enemy; and, it was to be feared, lest they should rashly endanger themselves if they should have showed themselves to be so easy to entreat. Therefore, I think that they are not to be blamed for that fear which they conceived for just cause, or that they deserve to be even accused for the same. For if they had been called to give an account of their faith, they would have provoked [623] not Paul only, but also all the furies of hell, without fear. Whence we gather that every fear is not to be condemned but such as causeth us to turn aside from our duty. The narration which Luke addeth may be referred as well unto the person of Barnabas as of Paul. Yet I think rather that Paul declareth to the apostles what had befallen him; and yet the speech may be well applied to Barnabas, especially when as mention is made of Paul's boldness.

28. Luke saith afterwards that Paul *went in and out with the disciples,* which speech signifieth amongst the Hebrews familiarity, as the inhabitants of cities are said to go in and out at the gates of the city. Therefore after that Paul was commended by the testimony of Barnabas, he began to be counted one of the flock, that he might be thoroughly known to the Church. Luke saith again that he dealt boldly in the name of the Lord, by which words he commendeth his (stoutness and) courage in professing the gospel. For he durst never have whispered amidst so many lets, unless he had been endowed with rare constancy. Nevertheless, all men are taught what they ought to do; to wit, every man according to the measure of his faith. For though all be not Pauls, yet the faith of Christ ought to engender in our minds so great boldness, that we be not altogether dumb when we have need to speak. I take *the name of the Lord* in this place for the profession of the gospel; in this sense, that Paul defended Christ's cause manfully.

[619] "Apostaticis," apostate.

[620] "Qui sponte in ordinem se cogit," who spontaneously reduces himself into insubordination.

[621] "Id nimiae forsan timiditatis fuit," that, perhaps, was owing to too great timidity.

[622] "Experti sunt," experienced.

[623] "Provocassent," challenged or defied.

29. *He disputed with the Grecians.* Erasmus noteth well in this place that those are here called Grecians, not which came [624] of Grecians, but rather those Jews who were scattered throughout divers parts of the world. Those men were wont to come together [625] to Jerusalem to worship. And it is to be thought that Paul disputed rather with strangers and aliens, [626] than with those who dwelt at Jerusalem, [627] because this latter sort would never have abidden him, neither had it been wisely done to come in their sight. Therefore being excluded from those who knew him before he tried whether there were any hope to do good amongst men whom he knew not, so that he did most stoutly whatsoever concerned the duty of a valiant soldier.

They would have slain him. Behold, again, fury instead of zeal; and it cannot otherwise be, but that hypocrisy and superstition will be cruel and fierce. The godly must be incensed with an holy wrath, when they see the pure truth of God corrupted with false and wicked opinions; yet, so that they moderate their zeal, that they set down nothing until they have thoroughly weighed the cause; and, secondly, that they essay to bring those into the way who wander out of the same. Lastly, that if they see their stubbornness to be past hope, they themselves take not the sword in hand, because they must know that they have no authority granted them of the Lord to (punish or) revenge. But hypocrites are always ready to shed blood before they know the matter; so that superstition is bloody, through blind and headlong fury. But Paul, who of late ran up and down to vex the godly, can abide nowhere now. [628] And yet this estate was far better for him, than if he should have reigned in peace and quietness, driving the godly everywhere out of their places.

30. In that he went to Tarsus, he did it undoubtedly to this end, that he might carry the doctrine of the gospel thither, because he hoped that he should have some favor and authority in his country, where he was famous; yet was he brought thither by the brethren, that they might deliver him from the lying in wait.

31. *Then the Churches.* Luke's meaning is, that the enemies of the gospel were greatly provoked by Paul's presence. For why was there such peace made suddenly by his departure, save only because the very sight of him did provoke the fury of the enemies? And yet this is no reproach to him, as if he had been, as it were, some trumpet in war; but Luke doth rather commend him for this, because he made the wicked run mad, only with the smell of him when he was near them. For Christ meant so to triumph in him, that he might be no less a trouble than an ornament to his Church.

Therefore we are taught by this example that those are not by and by [629]

[624] "Qui oriundi essent ex Graecis," who were of Greek extraction.
[625] "Ex suis provinciis," from their different provinces.
[626] "Advenis… hospitibus," with guests and strangers.
[627] "Indigenis," with natives.
[628] "Fidem figere," rest his foot.
[629] "Protinus," forthwith.

to be condemned, who inflame the madness of the wicked more than others; which admonition is not a little profitable. For as we are too dainty and too much besotted with the love of our own rest, so we be also sometimes angry with the best and most excellent servants of Christ, if we think that through their vehemency the wicked are pricked forward to do hurt; and by this means we do injury to the Spirit of God, whose force and speech kindleth all that flame.

And whereas Luke saith, that the Churches had peace, let us know that it was not continual, but because the Lord granted his servants some short breathing. For thus doth he bear with [630] our infirmity, when he appeaseth or mitigateth the winds and storms of persecutions, lest if they should hold on still, they should urge us out of measure. And this blessing is not to be despised, neither is it any common blessing, when as the Churches have peace. But Luke addeth other things, which are of far more value; to wit, that the Churches were edified, they walked in the fear of God, and they were filled with the consolation of the Spirit. For as we are wont to riot and exceed in time of peace, the Churches are more happy, for the most part, amidst the tumults of war, than if they should enjoy what rest they would desire. But and if holy conversation, and the consolation of the Spirit, whereby their state doth flourish, be taken away, they lose not only their felicity, but they come to nought. Therefore, let us learn not to abuse external peace in banqueting and idleness; but the more rest we have given us from our enemies, to encourage ourselves to go forward in godliness whilst we may. And if at any time the Lord let loose the bridle to the wicked to trouble us, let the inward consolation of the Spirit be sufficient for us. Finally, as well in peace as in war, let us always joyfully go forward toward him who hath a reward for us. [631]

Edification may be taken either for increase; to wit, whilst the Churches are augmented with the number of the faithful, or for their going forward who are already in the flock; to wit, whilst they have new gifts given them, and have greater confirmation of godliness. In the first signification it shall be referred unto the persons; in the second unto the gifts of the Spirit. I embrace both willingly; that there were some every now and then gathered unto the Church who were strangers before, and those who were of the household of the Church did increase in godliness and other virtues. Furthermore, the metaphor of a building is very convenient, because the Church is the temple and house of God, and every one of the faithful is also a temple, (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 3:16.) The two things which follow, that they walked in the fear of God, and that they were filled with the consolation of the Spirit, are parts of that edification. Therefore, though the Churches had peace, yet they were not drunken with delights and earthly joy, but, trusting to God's help, they were more emboldened to glorify God.

[630] "Indulget," is indulgent to.

[631] "Ad nostrum agnotheten," to him who judges our combat.

Acts 9:32-35

Acts 9:32-35

32. And it happened, that whilst Peter walked through all, he came also unto the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33. And he found there a man named. AEneas, who had laid in his bed eight years, who had the palsy. 34. And Peter saith unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ make thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And forthwith he arose. 35. And all those which dwelt at Lydda and Assaron saw him, and were turned unto the Lord.

32. Luke setteth down how the Church was increased by miracles. And he reciteth two miracles: That a man who had been bedrid eight years, having the palsy, was suddenly healed; and that a certain woman was raised from death. First, he saith, that as Peter walked throughout all, he came to Lydda. And by all understand not Churches, but the faithful, because it is in Greek of the masculine gender, though that skilleth not much for the sense. And it was meet that the apostles, who had no certain place of abode, should wander hither and thither as occasion was offered. Wherefore, whilst they are all occupied in divers parts, Peter took upon him this charge, whereby the foolishness of the Papists is refuted, who gather Peter's primacy by the authority which he had to visit; as if the rest of the apostles did live idly at Jerusalem like private men, when Peter did visit the Churches. Again, admit we grant that Peter was the chief apostle, which thing the Scripture showeth oftentimes, doth it thereupon follow that he was the head of the world? But would to God the bishop of Rome, who will be counted Peter's successor, would travel as he did to animate the brethren, and would every where prove indeed that he is the apostle of Christ. Now, he which out of his throne doth with more than tyrannous lordship oppress all the Churches, pretendeth that Peter did visit the Churches with great pains.

Which dwelt at Lydda. Lydda, which was afterward called Diospolis, was situated not far from the Mediterranean Sea, being a renowned city as well for antiquity as also for many gifts. Joppa was nigh to this city, which had a famous haven, though very full of rocks. The city itself stood upon a high cliff, whence they might see to Jerusalem. At this day there is nothing to be seen there but the ruinous walls of the old city, save only that the haven remaineth, which they call most commonly Japhet. It should seem that Luke nameth Assaron as some town or city. Jerome mentioneth Saron, and thinketh that thereby is meant the whole plain lying between Cesarea and Joppa. But because Jerome showeth no reason why he should change the reading which is commonly used, I admit that willingly which Luke's text showeth me, to wit, that it was a city hard by. But I do not contend about this matter; as I do not ambitiously gather those things which may serve for a vain brag, because it shall be sufficient for the godly readers to know those things which make to Luke's meaning.

34. *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.* It is certain that the apostles would

never have attempted the doing of miracles, unless they had been first certified of the will of God, whereupon the effect did depend. For they had no such power of the Spirit given them that they could heal whatsoever sick persons they would; but as Christ himself used a measure in his miracles, so he would have his apostles to work no more than he knew were profitable. Therefore Peter did not rashly break out into these words; because he might have set himself to be laughed at, unless he had already known the will of God. It may be that he prayed apart. The Spirit who was the author of all miracles, and which wrought by the hand of Peter, did even then direct his tongue, and did move his heart by a secret inspiration. And in these words Peter showeth plainly that he is only the minister of the miracle, and that it proceedeth from the power of Christ; that he may by this means extol the name of Christ alone.

Make thy bed. These circumstances do amplify the glory of the miracle, in that he doth not only recover strength to rise, but is also able to make his own bed, who could move no member before. To the same end tendeth the continuance of the disease; for a palsy of eight years' continuance is not easily cured. In like sort is he said to have laid in his bed, that we may know that all his members were lame; for it was a little bed wherein they were wont to rest at noon. Whereas AEneas was so ready to make trial of his members, he thereby declared the obedience of his faith. For although he perceived the strength which was given him, [632] yet he was most of all moved with the efficacy of the words, *to rise.*

35. *And all those.* His meaning is, that the miracle was published abroad, and was known throughout the whole city. For when the Scripture saith *all*, it doth not comprehend every one how many so ever it noteth; but it putteth all for the more part, or for many, or for the common sort of men. Therefore, the sense is, that whereas there was but a small number of godly men there, a great part of the people became members of the Church. And in this clause is expressed the fruit of the miracle, because they embraced Christ and his gospel. Wherefore those men corrupt miracles, whosoever they be, which look only upon men, and do not turn their eyes toward this end, that being instructed concerning the power and grace of Christ, they may stick only to him. Therefore that token of Christ's divine power which he showed was the beginning of turning to him. [633]

Acts 9:36-38

Acts 9:36-38

36. And there was a certain disciple at Joppa called Tabitha, which, if you interpret it, is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and alms

[632] "Redditum sibi vigorem," that his vigor was restored.

[633] "Initium et praeparatio conversionis ad ipsum," was a preparation and commencement of conversion to him.

which she did. 37. And it happened in those days that she was sick, and died. And when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper parlour. 38. And forasmuch as Lydda was near to Joppa, the disciples, who had heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, requesting him that he would come to them.

36. There followeth a more famous token of Christ's power, by how much it is more hard to restore life to a dead body, than to restore health to a man that is sick. But Luke doth first commend the person of Tabitha on whom the miracle was showed, and that with a double title; to wit, that she was Christ's disciple, and that she approved her faith with good works and alms. He hath oftentimes already put this word *disciple* for a Christian man; and lest we should think that that name was proper to men only, he attributeth the same to a woman. And this title teacheth us that Christianity cannot be without doctrine; and that that form of learning is prescribed, that the same Christ may be Master to all. This is the chiefest praise, this is the beginning of holy life, this is the root of all virtues, to have learned of the Son of God the way to live, and the true life. The fruits of good works proceed afterward from faith. By good works I mean the duties of love, wherewith our neighbors are helped; and Luke placeth the chief kind in alms. The commendation of liberality is great, because, as the Holy Ghost doth witness, it containeth in itself the sum of a godly and perfect life. Now we see what titles Tabitha hath. For religion toward God or faith goeth first; secondly, that she exercised herself in helping the brethren, and specially in relieving the poverty of the poor. For by use it is come to pass, that all that help wherewith the poor, and those which are in misery, are helped, is called {ελεημοσυνη}. Tabitha is rather a Syrian word than an Hebrew, which Luke did turn into Greek, that we might know that it was not like to the virtues of the holy women, and that she was debased in such a simple name; [634] for Dorcas signifieth a goat; but the holiness of her life did easily wipe away the blot of a name not very seemly.

37. *It happened that she was sick.* He saith in plain words that she was sick, that he may the more plainly express her death which followed. To the same end he saith that the corpse was washed and laid in an upper chamber; therefore, these circumstances serve to make the miracle to be believed. Whereas they carry her not straightway to the grave, but lay her in the upper part of the house, that they may keep her there, we may thereby gather that they had some hope of recovering her life. It is likely that the rite of washing, whereof Luke maketh mention, was most ancient; and I do not doubt but that it came from the holy fathers by continual course of times, as if it had been delivered from hand to hand, that in death itself some visible and of the resurrection might comfort the minds of the godly, and lift them up unto some good hope; to wit, seeing the manifestation of eternal life was not

[634] "Ut sanctae mulieris virtutibus non fuisse conforme sciremus, et in nomine parum honorifico fuisse quasi dejectam," that we might know that it was not suitable to the virtues of a holy woman, and that she was, as it were, degraded by a name far from honorable.

so evident, yea, seeing that Christ, the pledge and substance of eternal life, was not as yet revealed, it was requisite that both the obscurity of doctrine, and also the absence of Christ, should be supplied by such helps. Therefore they washed the bodies of the dead, that they might once [635] stand before the judgment-seat of God, being clean. [636] Finally, there was the same reason for washing the dead which was for the living; the daily washing put them in mind of this, that no man can please God save he who should be purged from his filthiness. So, in the rite of burying, God would have some sign extant whereby men might be admonished that they went polluted out of this life by reason of that filthiness which they had gathered in the world. Washing did no more help those which were dead than burial, but it was used to teach the living; [637] for because death hath some show of destruction, lest it should extinguish the faith of the resurrection, it was requisite that contrary shows should be set against it, that they might represent life in death. The Gentiles also took to themselves this ceremony, for which cause Ennius saith*, A good woman did wash and anoint Tarquinius's corpse.* But (their) imitation was but apish [638] in this thing, as in all other ceremonies. And Christians also have taken to themselves this example unadvisedly, as if the observation of a figure used under the law ought to continue always; for at the beginning of the gospel, although the necessity were abolished, yet the use was lawful, until such time as it might grow out of use in tract of time. But the monks do at this day no less imitate Judaism than did the Gentiles in times past, without choice and judgment, for they wash corpses, that they may bury Christ in shadows, which, being buried with him in his grave, ought never to have been used any more.

38. *The disciples, which had heard,* The washing of the corpse showeth that the disciples knew not what would come to pass, for by this means they make the corpse ready to be buried. Yet this is some token of hope, that they lay her in an upper chamber, and send to Peter. Furthermore, they murmur not against God, neither do they cry out that it is an unmeet thing; but they humbly crave God's help, not that they will make Tabitha immortal, but their only desire is to have her life prolonged for a time, that she may yet profit the Church.

Acts 9:39-43

Acts 9:39-43

39. And Peter arose and came with them, whom, when he was come, they brought into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood about her weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made when she

[635] "Ut pura aliquando ad Dei tribunal sisterentur," that they might one day stand pure at the judgmentseat of God.

[636] "Quotidianae ablutiones," their daily ablutions.

[637] "Superstites," survivors.

[638] "Praepostera," preposterous.

was with them. 40. And when they were all put out, Peter kneeled down and prayed; and, turning himself toward the corpse, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41. And he reached out his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, he restored [exhibited] her alive. 42. That was noised through all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43. And it happened that he stayed many days at Joppa with a certain man, named Simon, a tanner.

39. *And Peter arose.* It is doubtful whether the messengers declared to Peter the (matter and) cause why they fet [sent for] him; yet it is more like to be true, that they requested him absolutely that he would come to work a miracle. But there ariseth another question, whether he knew God's purpose or not? First, if he should mistrust the success, he should go with them unadvisedly? I answer, although he did not yet know what the Lord would do, yet can he not be blamed for yielding to the request of the brethren. Also, there were other reasons why he should come; to wit, to mitigate their sorrow; to strengthen them with godly exhortations, lest they should faint, being discouraged with the death of one woman; to establish the Church, which was as yet tender, and but as it were an infant. Lastly, this one thing ought to have been sufficient for him, because in refusing he should have been thought proudly to despise his brethren, notwithstanding we must know this also, that so often as the Lord determined to work some miracle by his apostles, he did always direct them by the secret motion of the Spirit. I do not doubt but that although Peter were not yet certain of the life of Tabitha, yet did he undoubtedly perceive that God was his guide and conductor in that journey, so that he addressed himself to go not unadvisedly, though being uncertain of the event. [639]

All the widows. Luke expresseth in this place the cause for which Tabitha was raised from death; to wit because God pitied the poor, and did at their desire restore the woman to life. There were also other ends. For seeing she liveth two lives, those virtues which Luke commended before are adorned in her person, but the chief end is, that the glory of Christ may be set forth. For God could have kept her alive longer; neither doth he change his purpose, as being moved with repentance when he doth restore her to life again, but because many of the disciples were weak and novices, who had need of confirmation, God declareth by the second life of Tabitha, that his Son is author of life. Therefore God did respect the poor and widows in such sort, that, by relieving their poverty, he established in their minds the faith of his gospel; for in this miracle he gave ample matter of profiting.

40. *When they were all put forth.* When as he taketh a time to pray, he seemeth as yet to doubt what will be the end. When he healed AEneas he brake out into these words, without making any stop, *AEneas, Jesus Christ make thee whole.* But as the operation of the Spirit is not always alike and the same, it may be that though he knew the power of God, yet he went

[639] "Suspensus licet atque… incertus," though in suspense and uncertain.

forward unto the miracle by degrees. Yet it seemeth to be an absurd thing, that he putteth all the saints out of the chamber, for whom it had been better to have seen it with their eyes. But because the Lord had not as yet revealed the time when, and the manner how, he would show forth his power, he desired to be alone, that he might the more fitly pray. Also it might be, that he knew some other reason which moved him to do this, which we know not. It is recorded in the Sacred History, (1 Kings 17:23,) that Elias did the same. For he being alone, and not so much as the mother of the child with him, doth stretch himself thrice upon the dead corpse. For the Spirit of God hath his vehement motions, which, if any man will square out according to the common use of men, or measure by the sense of the flesh, he shall do wickedly and unjustly. We must this think, when as Peter, as it were doubting, seeketh a by place, he preventeth superstition, lest any man should ascribe to his power the work of God, whereof he was only a minister, For he which withdrew himself from company, and did pray so instantly, did plainly confess that the matter was not in his own hand. Therefore, when Peter wisheth to know what pleaseth the Lord, he confesseth that he alone was the author of the work. Kneeling in time of prayer is a token of humility, which hath a double profit, that all our members may be applied unto the worship of God, and that the external exercise of the body may help the weakness of the mind; but we must take heed so often as we kneel down, that the inward submission of the heart be answerable to the ceremony, that it be not vain and false. [640]

Turning towards the corpse. This seemeth also to be contrary to reason, that he speaketh unto a corpse without feeling; but this speaking unto the dead corpse was one point of the vehemency whereunto the Spirit of God enforced Peter. And if any man desire a reason, this form of speech doth more lively express the power of God in raising the dead, than if it should be said in the third person, let this body receive life again and live. Therefore, when as Ezekiel doth shadow the deliverance of the people under a figure of the resurrection:

"O dead bones," (saith he,) "hear the word of the Lord,"
(Ezekiel 37:4.)

And Christ saith,

"The time shall come when the dead shall hear
the voice of the Son of God,"
(John 5:25.)

For this was indeed the voice of Christ, which was uttered by the mouth of Peter, and gave [back] breath to the body of Tabitha. The circumstances following serve to confirm the certainty of the miracle.

41. Luke repeateth, again, in the end that she was showed openly to the disciples; whence we gather that she was raised again, rather for other men's

[640] "Ne fallax sit ac lusoria," that it be not elusory and fallacious.

sake than for her own. Brain-sick fellows, [641] who dream that the soul of man is only a blast which vanisheth away until the day of the resurrection, snatch at this place to prove their doting withal. To what end was it (say they) to call back the soul of Tabitha into the prison of the body, where it should suffer such misery, if it were received into blessed rest? As if it were not lawful for God to have respect of his glory as well in death as in life; and as if this were not the true felicity of the godly to live and die to him, yea, as if Christ were not to us a vantage, as well by living as dying, (Philippians 1:21,) when we dedicate ourselves to him. Therefore, there shall no inconvenience follow, if the Lord had greater respect to his own glory than to Tabitha, although, as the commodity [642] of the faithful is always annexed to the glory of God, this turned to her greater good that she revived, that she might be a more excellent instrument of God's goodness and power.

42. *And many believed.* Now appear manifold fruits of the miracle, for God comforted the poor, a godly matron was restored to the Church, in whose death it suffered great loss, and many are called unto the faith; for although Peter were [had been] a minister of so great power, yet he keepeth not the men in [on] himself; but doth rather direct them unto Christ.

43. When as he saith that Peter dwelt with a tanner, we may hereby gather of what manner of men the church of Joppa did consist, for if the chieftains of the city had been converted to Christ, some one of them would have lodged Peter; for it had been too cruel a thing to suffer an apostle of Christ to be so despised. Therefore, the Lord did gather together there, as every where, a church of the common sort of men, that he might throw down the pride of the flesh; and also thereby appeareth Peter's courtesy, in that he vouchsafeth to lodge with a man of that calling; although it seemeth that he was rather a merchant of some good estimation, than one of the basest sort of workmen. For Luke will say afterwards that there were there some which ministered unto Peter, whereby it appeareth that he was well and honestly used.

641 "Fanatici quidam," certain fanatics.
642 "Utilitas," advantage, interest.

Chapter 10

CHAPTER 10

Acts 10:1-6

Acts 10:1-6

1. And there was a certain man of Cesarea named Cornelius, a captain [centurion] of the band which was called the Italian band; 2. A devout man, and one that feared God with his household, and one which gave alms to all the people, and which prayed to God continually. 3. He saw plainly in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. 4. And beholding, and being afraid, he said, What is it, Lord? Then he said to him, Thy prayers and thy alms are come up into remembrance before God. 5. And now send men to Joppa, and fet [send for] Simon, which is called Peter: 6. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house lieth to the sea; he shall tell thee what thou must do.

1. Luke passeth over now unto a worthy [643] history, to wit, that God vouchsafeth to advance a stranger, and one uncircumcised, unto singular honor above all the Jews, because he doth both send his angel unto him, and for his sake bringeth Peter to Cesarea, that he may instruct him in the gospel. But first of all Luke showeth what manner of person this Cornelius was, for whose cause an angel descended from heaven, and God spake to Peter in a vision. He was a captain [centurion] of the Italian band; a band [cohort] did consist upon [of] a thousand footmen, and he which was chief captain was called a tribune, (or marshal.) Again, every hundred had a captain. A legion had for the most part five bands. That band was called the Italian band, because the Romans did choose soldiers oftentimes from amongst those which dwelt in the provinces; but they had the strength of the army [644] out of Italy; therefore, Cornelius was an Italian born; but he was at Cesarea with his hundred, to guard the city. For the Romans were wont so to distribute their places of abode, [645] that every city of renown might have a garrison to stay sudden uproars. A rare example that a soldier was so devout towards God, so upright and courteous towards men! For at that time the Italians, when as they were carried into the provinces to live in warfare, ran to and fro like hungry wolves to get some prey; they had

[643] "Memorabilem," memorable.
[644] "Robur exercituum," the flower of their armies.
[645] "Stationes," stations.

for the most part no more religion than beasts; they had as great care of innocency as cutthroats; for which cause the virtues of Cornelius deserve the greater commendation, in that leading a soldier's life, which was at that time most corrupt, he served God holily, and lived amongst men without doing any hurt or injury. And this is no small amplification of his praise, in that casting away superstition wherein he was born and brought up, he embraced the pure worship of God; for we know what account the Italians made of themselves, and how proudly they despised others. And the Jews were at that time in such contempt, that for their sakes pure religion was counted infamous, and almost execrable. Seeing that none of these things could hinder Cornelius, but that forsaking his idols he did embrace the true worship of the true God alone, it must needs be that he was endued with rare and singular sincerity. Moreover, he could find scarce any thing amongst the Jews wherewith he could be allured unto the study of godliness, because there was then scarce one amongst a thousand which had even some small smattering of the law; and, undoubtedly, Cornelius had lighted upon some good worshipper of God, who being sound from corrupt opinions, did expound unto him the law faithfully, without mixing any leaven therewith; but because Luke giveth him many titles of commendation, we must note them all [singly.]

2. He saith that he was a godly man, and one that feared God; secondly, that like a good householder he had a care to instruct his families; he praiseth him afterward for the offices of love, because he was beneficial [beneficent] toward all the people; and, lastly, that he prayed [to] God continually. The sum is this, that Cornelius was a man of singular virtues, wherein the integrity of the godly consisteth, so that his life was framed, in all points, according to the rule which God prescribeth unto us. And because the law is contained in two tables, Luke commendeth, in the former place, Cornelius' godliness; secondly, he descendeth unto the second part, that he exercised the offices of love toward men. This is very profitable to be marked, because we have a way to live well described in his person.

Wherefore, in ordering the life well, let faith and religion be the foundation, which being taken away, all other virtues are nothing else but smokes. Luke reckoneth up the fear of God and prayer as fruits and testimonies of godliness and of the worship of God, and that for good causes. For religion cannot be separated from the fear of God and the reverence of him, neither can any man be counted godly, save he who acknowledging God to be his Father and Lord, doth addict himself wholly to him. And let us know that voluntary fear is commended in this place when those men submit themselves to God willingly and from their heart, who duly consider themselves what is due to him.

Moreover, because a great part of the world doth, with reigned trifles, corrupt and deprave the worship of God, Luke added, for good causes, that Cornelius prayed continually; whereby he doth signify, that he proved not his godliness only with external ceremonies, but that he worshipped God

spiritually, when as he exercised himself in prayer. We must also note the continuance of his prayer; whence we gather, that he did not pray only coldly, after the common custom, but that he was earnestly bent to prayer, as the continual benefits of God do exhort us and prick us forward thereunto, and the force of faith ought there to show itself. Wherefore let every one of us exhort himself to persevere in prayer by the example of Cornelius.

With all his house. We must not lightly pass over this commendation that Cornelius had a church in his house. And, surely, a true worshipper of God will not suffer so much as in him lieth God to be banished from his house. For how unmeet a thing is it for him to maintain his own right stoutly, that his wife, children, servants, and maids may obey him, and not to regard that God is disobeyed. It shall sometimes fall out so that a godly man cannot have even his wife to be of his mind; yet he, which ruleth others, must endeavor by all means to have God obeyed; and there is nothing more meet than that we should consecrate all ours to God as ourselves. Therefore, if a godly man have children which are unlike him, or a wife of evil conditions, or lewd and wicked servants, let him not wink, nor yet suffer his house to be polluted through his slothfulness. The diligence of Cornelius is not so much commended as the blessing of God, whereby it came to pass that he had his house obedient unto him in godliness. And we must not omit the circumstance, that he instructed his family in the fear of God, setting light by the fear of danger, which did hang over his head therefore. For the Jewish religion was in great contempt; [646] and no citizen of Rome might freely [647] receive any strange religion, as they called it. Wherefore, although the sincere profession of the gospel be evil spoken of in the world, yet is it too corrupt frightfulness [648] if that unjust hatred hinder any man from offering his family to God for a sacrifice, by godly instruction.

Giving alms. There is also the figure *synecdoche* in this member, [clause.] For as it was said, even now, that the worship of God was proved by prayers, so now, when Luke speaketh of love, he maketh choice of one kind; whereby he showeth that Cornelius was a liberal and bountiful man. For our godliness ought so to appear to men, that we declare that we fear God by using bountifulness and justice. The word *alms* is translated unto those external good works wherewith we help the poor, (Isaiah 58:7,) forasmuch as *misericordia,* or mercy, is the inward affection of the heart properly. For from this fountain springeth true and well ordered bountifulness, if the troubles and sorrows of our brethren do move us to compassion; if, considering the unity which is amongst us, we foster and cherish them as we would cherish our own flesh, and study to help them as we would help our own members. Hypocrites are, indeed, sometimes liberal, or at least bountiful; but howsoever they waste all, [649] yet no relief which they shall bestow upon the poor shall

[646] "Valde… exosa," exceedingly hated.
[647] "Impune," with impunity.
[648] "Timiditas," timidity or cowardice.
[649] "Ut omnia profundant," how profuse soever they be.

be worthy to be called by the name of alms. For we must hold that of Paul, He which hath no love is nothing, though he give all his goods to the poor, (1 Corinthians 13:3.) Let us, therefore, learn by this word, that God doth then allow our liberality, if we relieve the poverty of the poor, being moved with compassion, and if, as it were, with open bowels we bestow that which the liberality of God doth give.

Whereas Luke saith that he gave alms to *all* the people, it signifieth as much as everywhere to the poor; for there were not a few rich men to whom to have given had been an absurd thing. But whereas he bestowed so liberally upon the Jews, he declared how he agreed with them in religion; in which respect Luke saith, shortly after, that he was allowed of [650] all the Jews. And if so be it he was such an excellent mirror of godliness and holiness, even when he had but a small smattering of faith, although he were letted so many ways, [651] ought not we to be ashamed who will be accounted most Christian doctors, and are yet so cold in the exercises of godliness? If a small sparkle of faith prevailed so much in him, what ought the full brightness of knowledge to work in us? But howsoever we boast of Christ with full mouth, yet how far are we, for the most part, from the example of the holy man, so that there appeareth scarce a small shadow of those virtues wherewith he was replete? For how loose [652] are we in prayer? How slow and sluggish to do the duties of mercy? Yea, many are not only letted with filthiness and covetousness from giving liberally so much of their own as they ought, but they are so inflamed with a desire [653] to have, they are become so beastly through cruelty, [654] that they are not afraid to rob the poor of their substance, and to eat their very flesh.

3. *He saw in a vision.* Luke putteth vision for a kind of oracle coming from God, that we may know that Cornelius was brought unto the faith of Christ after an heavenly manner. And because men are oftentimes deceived with juggling, Luke setteth down the time to avoid all suspicion, when he mentioneth the *ninth hour.* And at that time they were wont to divide the day into twelve hours; from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof. Whereupon it followeth that it was fair daylight when the angel appeared, that the vision might be more evident. Although there were always seals added unto visions, that they might free the servants of God from fear of illusions, because when he appeared in dreams, yet were there such marks of certainty imparted in their minds as would not suffer them to doubt.

4. *And he beheld, and was afraid.* Luke expresseth his attentiveness in plain words, that we may know that it was no vain imagination which came upon the man as he was sleeping or doing some other thing. The fear

650 "Probatum," approved by.

651 "Quum tam multa offendicula occurrerent," when so many obstacles or offenses stood in the way.

652 "Quantus… torpor," how great our torpor or sluggishness.

653 "Insana cupidine," an insane desire.

654 "Tanta crudelitate efferati sunt," so rage with cruelty.

wherewith he was taken [655] proceeded from the perceiving of the majesty of God; [656] for so soon as men conceive the presence of God, they must needs be afraid and cast down with fear. And whereas his words do no whit terrify us, that must be imputed to our sluggishness, because we do not know nor perceive that it is God which speaketh. But the godly, to whom God revealeth himself in his word, do tremble when they hear it, as Isaiah saith, (Isaiah 66:2, 5.) Furthermore, the sight of God is unto them terrible, not that they may always lie confounded, and be swallowed up of fear, but only that they may humbly address themselves to reverence him.

What is it, Lord? It appeareth plainly by this answer, that Cornelius' mind was touched with religion; that he knew that he had to deal with God. Therefore the common translation hath it evil, [657] Who art thou, Lord? And it is likely that that which is there read was put in instead of this, forasmuch as in the Greek text there is no doubtfulness, whereby the interpreter might be deceived, and all the copies agree together in this reading, {τι} {εστι}. And assuredly, when Cornelius perceived that it is God, he submitteth himself to obey; as the answer is nothing but a commandment.

Thy prayers and alms. Because God seemeth to be after a sort deaf, unless he answer our petitions by and by, hence cometh that speech, that our prayers come unto him, and that he is mindful thereof. Furthermore, the angel assigneth this as the cause why God vouchsafeth to show to Cornelius the light of his gospel; because he hath heard his prayers and accepted his alms. Whence we gather that virtues and good works do not only please God, but that they are also adorned with this excellent reward, that he heapeth upon us and enricheth us with greater gifts for their sakes; according to that, "To him that hath shall be given," (Matthew 13:12.) And again,

"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many things,"
(Matthew 25:21.)

For God doth after this sort extol his by a continual course of his gifts, as it were by certain steps, until he bring them to the top.

But the Papists abuse this place two ways; for because God respected the prayers and alms of Cornelius, so that he endued him with the faith of the gospel, they wrest that unto the preparations which they have invented, as if a man did get faith by his own industry and power, and did prevent [658] the grace of God by the merits of works. Secondly, they gather, generally, that good works are meritorious in such sort, that the graces of God are increased in every man as he hath deserved. In the former they are too childishly deceived, whilst that they feign that the works of Cornelius were acceptable to God before he was illuminate by faith. And we need not to fet [seek] a proof far to refute their ignorance; for he could obtain nothing

[655] "Terror quo correptus est," the terror with which he was seized.
[656] "Ex sensu Divinae Majestatis," from a sense of the Divine Majesty.
[657] "Haabet male," is inaccurate.
[658] "Antevertat," anticipate.

by prayer unless faith went before, which only openeth the gate for us to pray; and Augustine weigheth that well and wisely, who derideth Pelagius, because he said that faith was obtained by prayers before it was in man in any measure: Who (saith he) will seek a physician save he who is already healed in some part? And it is the health of faith which teacheth us to knock. Furthermore, the fear of God and godliness do plainly prove that he was regenerate by the Spirit. For Ezekiel giveth [659] this praise to God alone, that he frameth the hearts of men to fear him, (Ezekiel 32:40 [*sic*].) And Isaiah saith, that the Spirit of the fear of God resteth in Christ, (Isaiah 11:2,) that we may know that he can be found no where save only in his members. Therefore it is too great folly to feign a man in the person of Cornelius, who, having nature for his guide, can attain unto eternal life, or endeavor to come thither. Therefore they reason blockishly, that we are able to prevent the grace of God with the merits of works.

As touching the second error, when as they imagine that every one of us is increased with greater graces as he hath deserved, it may easily be refuted. First, we deny that we have any good works which God hath not freely given us; secondly, we say that the right use of gifts cometh from him also and that this is his second grace, that we use his former gifts well. Thirdly, we deny that we deserve any thing by our works, [660] which are always lame and corrupt. Good works do indeed purchase for us the increase of grace, but not by their own desert. For they cannot be acceptable to God without pardon, which they obtain by the benefit of faith. Wherefore it is faith alone which maketh them acceptable. [661] Thus did Cornelius obtain more perfect knowledge of Christ by his prayers and alms, but in that he had God to be favorable and merciful to his prayers and alms, that did depend upon faith.

Furthermore, if good works be esteemed [estimated] by faith, it is of mercy, and not of merit, that God doth allow [approve] them. For because faith findeth no worthy thing in us whereby we can please God, it borroweth that of Christ which we want. And this is too perverse, that though the Papists have this word merit every now and then in their mouths, and cease not to puff up fools with a vain confidence, yet they bring nothing whereby the studies of men may be moved to do well. For they leave their consciences always in a doubt, and command men to doubt whether their words please God or not. Must not men's minds need faint when they are possessed with such fear? But as for us, though we take merit from works, yet when as we teach that there is a reward laid up for them, we prick men forward with an excellent and sharp prick, to desire to live well. For we address ourselves then joyfully to serve God, when we are persuaded that we lose not our labor. And whereas there appeareth at this day no more plentiful abundance of the gifts of the Spirit, but that the more part doth rather wither away, we must

[659] "Vendicat," claimeth.
[660] "Conciliant," procure.
[661] "Quae pretium illis statuit," which gives them their value.

thank our unthankfulhess for that. For as God did crown Cornelius' prayers and alms, and holiness, with the most precious pearl of his gospel, so there is just cause why he should suffer us to starve, being brought unto hungry poverty, when as he seeth us abuse the treasure of his gospel wickedly and ungodlily.

Yet here may a question be asked, Whether faith require the knowledge of Christ, or it be content with the simple persuasion of the mercy of God? for Cornelius seemeth to have known nothing at all concerning Christ. But it may be proved by sound proofs that faith cannot be separated from Christ; for if we lay hold upon the bare majesty of God, we are rather confounded with his glory, than that we feel any taste of his goodness. Therefore, Christ must come between, that the mind of man may conceive that God is merciful. And it is not without cause that he is called the image of the invisible God, (Colossians 1:15;) because the Father offereth himself to be holden in his face alone. Moreover, seeing that he is the way, the truth, and the life, (John 14:6;) whithersoever thou goest without him, thou shalt be enwrapped on every side in errors, and death shall meet you [thee] on every side. We may easily answer concerning Cornelius. All spiritual gifts are offered unto us in Christ; and especially whence cometh regeneration, save only because we are ingrafted into the death of Christ, our old man is crucified? (Romans, 6:5, 6.) And if Cornelius were made partaker of the Spirit of Christ, there is no cause why we should think that he was altogether void of his faith; neither had he so embraced the worship of the true God, (whom the Jews alone did worship,) but that he had also heard [662] somewhat of the promised Mediator; though the knowledge of him were obscure and entangled, yet was it some. Whosoever came at that time into Judea he was enforced to hear somewhat of the Messiah, yea, there was some fame of him spread through countries which were far off. [663] Wherefore, Cornelius must be put in the catalogue of the old fathers, who hoped for salvation of the Redeemer before he was revealed. And it is properly [664] [improperly] said of Augustine, that Peter grounded his faith; whereas it had now before a firm foundation; although Augustine thinketh as we do in the thing itself, who affirmeth plainly, that Cornelius could not pray unless he had faith, in his Book of the Predestination of Saints, and other places.

5. *Now send to Joppa.* God dealt most favorably with Cornelius, in that he doth not command him to go himself, but to send messengers unto Peter, that he may stay quietly at home, and that Peter may endure the toil of the journey for his sake. But let us not wonder that Cornelius was so courteously handled, seeing that God thrusteth the ministers of his word daily upon the unwilling; so that he appeareth of his accord to those which do not seek him, as he saith by Isaiah, (Isaiah 65:1.) But why doth not the angel

[662] "Quin aliquid simal… audesset," without having at the same time heard.
[663] "Longe dissitas," widely separated.
[664] "Improprie," improperly.

rather teach him? [665] For this seemeth an inconvenient [666] thing that he resigneth his office to a mortal man; for the oracle should have had greater authority than when the gospel is preached to him by a mortal man. As when Christ appeared to Paul by a vision, he set, notwithstanding, Ananias to teach him, that he might by such an example establish the ministry of the preaching of the gospel, which he committed to his Church; so now the angel giveth place to Peter, that he may execute the office committed unto him by Christ. Therefore, whosoever will be the disciple of Christ, and be illuminated by the (heavenly) light of the heavenly wisdom, let him not grudge to use attentiveness and docility toward the external voice of men, which Christ useth as an instrument, and whereunto he will have our faith annexed. And we see how sore God hath punished their furious pride, who, contemning preaching, have looked for [667] revelations from heaven. For since God will be heard in men, the ministers to whom he hath given his word [668] cannot be contemned without contempt and reproach of him. Nevertheless, I confess that the spirits must be proved, (1 John 4:1,) that we hear not without choice whosoever do pretend that they are ministers of Christ. But because faith cometh by hearing, (Romans 10:17,) no man shall attain thereunto which shall refuse and despise the word when it is preached,

Acts 10:7-16

Acts 10:7-16

7. And after that the angel which spake to Cornelius was departed, he called two of his servants, and a godly soldier, of those which did wait on him: 8. And when he had told them all things, he sent them to Joppa. 9. On the morrow, as they journeyed, and drew nigh to the city, Peter went up into the highest part of the house to pray, about the sixth hour; 10. And he was fasting; therefore he would eat. And in the mean season, while they made ready, there fell upon him an excess of mind. [669] 11. He saw heaven open, and a vessel coming down upon him like to a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; 12. Wherein were all four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and birds of heaven. 13. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. 14. And Peter said, Not so, Lord; because I have never eaten any common or unclean thing. 15. And the voice said to him again, Make not thou those things common which God hath made clean. 16. And this was done thrice; and the vessel was taken up again into heaven.

7. *And after that the angel.* Luke declareth here how ready Cornelius was to obey when as he maketh no tarriance, but doth that with all diligence

[665] "Doctoris partes implet," fulfill the office of teacher.
[666] "Parum rationi consentareum," little accordant with reason.
[667] "Captarunt," have caught at, longed for.
[668] "Apud quos verbum suum deposuit," with whom he had deposited.
[669] "Mentis excessus," a suspension of mind or thought, a trance.

which he was commanded to do. And this was the cause that he was so forward, because he believed the promise; as want of faith is the cause why we are so slow to follow God. Angels come not flying to us from heaven that they may appoint us certain men, but that voice of Christ soundeth in all men's cars.

"Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," (Matthew 7:7.)

How is it that of an hundred scarce one or two will stir one foot, that some creep so little that they profit but a little, but because we do not indeed believe the promise? Therefore, let us learn that we must not drive off from day to day, but every man must hasten thither whither he is called, so soon as he heareth the voice of God.

Two of his servants. Cornelius had this reward for being so diligent in teaching his family, that he had faithful and honest servants who were willing to do him service; and also such as that he might commit any thing to them. On the other side, the Lord doth oftentimes punish masters with just punishments who have no regard to instruct their families. For they find those justly stubborn and unfaithful whom they would not frame unto godliness and the fear of God, and also they are afraid of their treachery.

A godly soldier. Forasmuch as this soldier was much conversant with Cornelius, he had also taught him to fear God, as well as his household servants. It is meet that we call to mind here that which I touched before, that there is no kind of life which excuseth us but that we must worship God purely. For a soldier's life was at that time most corrupt; for they were fallen unto filthy licentiousness, from the ancient discipline, and yet the Spirit of God beareth record in this place of the godliness of soldiers. Wherefore, there is no cause why they should require a calling that is free from worshipping God, under color of warfare, who would by one means or other be free from all righteousness. If they deny that they can serve God because they be soldiers, they shall have these two soldiers meet judges and witnesses against them at the last day, who shall condemn them. And in the mean season, those brain-sick fellows are condemned who cry that it is unlawful for Christians to carry weapons. For these men were warriors, and yet godly, and when they embrace Christ they forsake not their former kind of life; they cast not away their armor as hurtful, nor yet forsake their calling.

8. Whereas Cornelius expoundeth the whole matter to the soldier and his servants, it tendeth to this end, that he may the more encourage them to give ear to the commandment, which they see is rather a commandment of God than of man; and he is not afraid to make known unto them so great a matter whom he had instructed well before.

9. *On the morrow, as they journeyed.* As Luke declared that Cornelius was admonished by an oracle to send for Peter, so now he setteth down another vision, whereby Peter is commanded to come to him. Whereby it

appeareth that all this matter was governed by the wonderful counsel of God, who doth both make Cornelius apt to be taught, yea, he kindleth in him a study and desire to learn and, on the other side, maketh Peter willing to take in hand to teach him. But we must note the circumstances whereby he maketh the history more evident.

Peter went up upon the house, that he might pray alone by himself; for a quiet and lone place is a great help to prayer, which thing Christ himself did not omit, that the mind, being free from all things which might call it away, might be the more earnest and bent toward God. And the Jews had another manner of houses and buildings than we use; for they had walks upon the tops of their houses. The sixth hour was then noon. And it is not to be doubted but that he got himself to prayer then according to his custom. For because we are drawn away with divers businesses, [670] and there is no end of turmoiling, unless we bridle ourselves, it is good to have certain hours appointed for prayer, not because we are tied to hours, but lest we be unmindful of prayer, which ought to be preferred before all cares and business. Finally, we must think the same thing of time which we think of place; to wit, that they are certain remedies whereby our infirmities is holpen; which, if the apostles counted fit for them, how much must more the sluggish and slow use the same?

10. *Excess of mind.* Because our minds are wholly, as it were, set upon the earth, to the end Peter might the better comprehend the oracle, it was meet that his mind should be, as it were, moved from his place and carried up; and by this means was he prepared to receive the oracle, when as he is carried up above the world after an unwonted manner.

11. The opening of heaven signifieth, in my judgment, another thing in this place than in the seventh chapter. For it is said there that heaven was opened to Stephen, that he did behold the glory of Christ; in this place Peter saw our heaven which we see divided, so that a sheet came thence.

12. If any man ask how he could see a great multitude of living creatures at once, the question is easily answered. For Luke saith, *All manner,* because there were there divers kinds mixed one with another. Therefore he beginneth not at the first kind, that he may prosecute the number unto the last. Again, we must not measure this seeing according to the manner of men, because the trance gave Peter other eyes. But before we go any farther we must know the end of the vision. Some dispute more subtilely about the same than the place requireth, in my judgment. Therefore, I think that it is generally showed to Peter that the difference which God had made in times past is now taken away. And as he had put difference between living creatures, so, having chosen to himself one people, he counted all nations unclean and profane.

Now the difference between living creatures being taken away, he teacheth by the consequent that there is no such disagreement among men any longer

[670] "Totum fere diem," almost the whole day, omitted.

as there was in times past, and that there is no difference between the Jew and the Grecian. Hereby Peter is admonished that he do not abhor the Gentiles as being unclean. Undoubtedly, God meant to encourage Peter to come to Cornelius without fear; but he had separated one people to himself from the rest, as saith Moses in his song, when as the Most High did distribute the nations, he put his lot in Jacob, etc., (Deuteronomy 32:9;) therefore he called it his inheritance and peculiar people.

According to this order, it had not been lawful to Peter to bring the covenant of salvation unto the Gentiles; for that was to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs, (Matthew 15:26,) unless, peradventure, they would be circumcised, and embrace the Jewish religion; for it was lawful to receive such as did yield themselves. Wherefore, when as the apostles were sent before to preach the gospel, they were forbidden to turn in unto the Gentiles, (Matthew 10:5.) And forasmuch as the preaching of the gospel is a most holy and weighty matter, Peter ought not to have attempted any thing therein with a doubting and wavering mind. Therefore, to the end he may be assured of his calling, God showeth manifestly, as in a picture, that the legal difference between the clean and unclean is abolished; whence he may gather that the wall which was heretofore between the Jews and the Gentiles is now pulled down. And Paul saith, that it is a mystery hid from the beginning of the world, that the Gentiles are made partakers of the same salvation with the people of God, and ingrafted into one body, (Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 3:6.)

Therefore Peter durst never have opened the gate of heaven unto the Gentiles, unless God himself had made a plain way and entrance for all men, by taking away the wall of separation. I said even now that there was no time wherein it was not lawful to admit the Gentiles unto the worship of God, so they were circumcised; but so long as they continued in uncircumcision they were strangers with God. But now God made the covenant of life common to all the whole world, which he had shut up in one nation, as in a treasure. Whence we gather that this vision is not a little profitable for us; for, when as it teacheth that the difference between Jews and Gentiles continued only for a season, it is as much as if God should pronounce from heaven that he receiveth all people of the world into favor, that he may be God over all. Finally, we have an evident proclamation from heaven, which putteth us in hope of eternal life.

But some men will object that Peter was taught before concerning this matter; for he and the rest were commanded to preach the gospel throughout the whole world, (Mark 16:15.) Therefore, he was either ignorant of his calling, or else this vision was superfluous. I answer, that there was such and so great difficulty in the novelty itself, that they could not acquaint themselves therewith by and by. They knew both the prophecies of the prophets, and the late commandment of Christ concerning the calling of the Gentiles by the gospel; but when they come to the push, they doubted

nevertheless, being stricken with the strangeness of the thing. Wherefore, it is no marvel if the Lord confirm Peter with a new sign, concerning which thing we must also say somewhat as yet in the next chapter.

13. *A voice from heaven.* The voice came from heaven as did the sheet, that Peter might know that both came from God; neither had the sight done him any good, unless God had with this voice made clean those things which were before unclean. Whereas some pick an allegory out of the word kill, as if God did signify that men are sacrificed to him by the spiritual sword of the gospel; I do not prosecute that, but plainness pleaseth me better, that God doth take away by this voice the law concerning the choice of beasts, that he may also teach that he rejecteth no people, (Romans 15:16.) For if by the former word be meant *sacrificing,* what shall *eat* signify?

14. *Not so, Lord.* This is the voice of him which doth as well refuse, as also object to God his own commandment; for he is afraid, for good causes, to touch that which he knew was forbidden him in the law of God, (Leviticus 11:21, etc.) Therefore he objecteth to God the law which he himself made, lest he should break the same unadvisedly. There was a certain show of repugnancy between the law and the vision; therefore Peter is not hasty, but desireth first to have his doubt dissolved before he depart from observing the law. Yet it is a strange matter why Peter resisted more in meats than did Abraham in killing his son; for Abraham [might have] had more things to object, (Genesis 22:9, 10.) I dare not here say that that befell Peter which is too common among men, to stand more about outward and small matters than about the chief points of the law; I rather make that answer which is out of doubt, that Abraham's mind was so persuaded, and that he was furnished with such power of the Spirit, that he overcame with 1ofty and heroical fortitude all those things which might have hindered him. But the Spirit of God wrought slenderly, [671] in Peter; whereby we are taught that every small or light thing doth cause us to doubt, unless the Lord do furnish us with counsel and constancy to overcome all fear. Yet Peter dealeth very godly and very religiously, in that being in doubt amidst divers cogitations, he dare do nothing until it better appear what he ought to follow. *Common* signifieth in this place profane. For because the Lord (as we have said) had chosen the Jews to be a peculiar people, he had prescribed unto them this rite and manner of living, that it might distinguish them from the profane Gentiles. Therefore, whatsoever the Gentiles did use contrary to the rule of the law, that did they call common, because there was nothing pure or holy but that which God had appointed for the use of his people.

15. *God hath made clean.* He speaketh of meats; but this sentence must be extended unto all parts of the life. It is word for word, *That which God hath made clean, do not thou make profane;* but the sense is, It is not for us to allow or condemn any thing; but as we stand and fall by the judgment of God alone, so is he judge of all things, (Romans 14:4.) As touching meats, after

[671] "Lente," slowly.

the abrogating of the law, God pronounceth that they are all pure and clean. If, on the other side, there start up a mortal man, making a new difference, forbidding certain, he taketh unto himself the authority and power of God by sacrilegious boldness. Of this stamp were the old heretics, Montanus, Priscillianus, the Donatists, the Tatians, and all the Encratites. Afterwards the Pope, to the end he might bind all those sects in a bundle, made a law concerning meats. And there is no cause why the patrons of this impiety should babble that they do not imagine any uncleanness in meats, but that men are forbidden to eat flesh upon certain days, to tame the flesh. For seeing they eat such meats as are most fit, both for delicacy and also for riot, why do they abstain from eating bacon, as from some great offense, save only because they imagine that that is unclean and polluted which is forbidden by the law of their idol? With like pride doth the tyranny of the Pope rage in all parts of life; for there is nothing wherein he layeth not snares to entangle the miserable consciences of men. But let us trust to the heavenly oracle, and freely despise all his inhibitions. We must always ask the mouth of the Lord, that we may thereby be assured what we may lawfully do; forasmuch as it was not lawful even for Peter to make that profane which was lawful by the Word of God.

Furthermore, this is a place of great importance to beat down the frowardness of men, which they use too much in perverse judgments. There is no man almost which doth not grant liberty to himself to judge of other men's doings. Now, as we are churlish and malicious, we lean more toward the worse part, so that we take from God that which is his. This voice alone ought to suffice to correct such boldness, That it is not lawful for us to make this or that unclean, but that this power belongeth to God alone. And also in these words is given us to understand, that the Jews were not therefore the holy people of the Lord, because they excelled through their own worthiness, but only by reason of God's adoption. Now, after that God had received the Gentiles into the society of the covenant, they have all equal right.

16. *This was done thrice.* The repetition of the vision served for the confirmation of Peter, lest any doubt [672] should remain in his mind. Whence we gather how deeply the observing of the law was rooted in his mind. And I know no reason why God left him in a dump, [perplexed,] until, by the event which followed, he might learn the cause of the vision, save only because being astonished he did not desire to know what this thing meant; although it was all in good time, that the messengers of Cornelius should come shortly after to interpret it. The *vessel* was at length taken up again into heaven, that Peter might be certified that this message came from heaven, [God.]

Acts 10:17-23

Acts 10:17-23

[672] "Vel anxietas vel scrupulus," or anxiety or scruple, omitted.

17. And as Peter doubted in himself what vision this should be which he had seen, behold, two men, sent from Cornelius, inquiring for Simon's house, stood at the door. 18. And when they had called, they asked whether Simon, surnamed Peter, did lodge there. 19. And as Peter thought upon the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20. Arise, go down, and go with them, doubting nothing, because I have sent them. 21. And when Peter was come down unto the men which were sent from Cornelius unto him, he said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek. What is the cause wherefore ye come hither? 22. They said to him, Cornelius the captain, [centurion,] a just man, and one that feareth God, having testimony of all the nation of the Jews, was warned by an oracle by a holy angel, that he should call thee into his house, and should hear of thee words. 23. Furthermore, when he had called them in, he lodged them. [673]

17. Peter was taught not only by the vision, but also by the Word of God; and yet in seeing he saw not, until the Spirit is unto him an interpreter; a most excellent mirror of our slackness. Although we be yet far unlike to Peter; for we are so far from understanding by and by what God will, or to what end he speaketh to us, that many interpretations are scarce sufficient for us. But we must also note that which Luke addeth, that Peter did think earnestly upon the vision, to wit, after that he was come to himself again after his amazedness; for this was a token of godly reverence, that he did not carelessly suffer the vision to escape him. Therefore the Lord opened to him when he did knock, (Matthew 7:7.) And we are justly plagued for our sluggishness, in that we profit no better in the Word of the Lord, seeing we are so cold, and have so small desire to inquire.

20. *Go, doubting nothing.* The Scripture useth this word often, when it will express of what sort the obedience of faith ought to be. So Paul, in the fourth chapter to the Romans, (Romans 4:19,) when as he commendeth the faith of Abraham, saith, That he doubted not when as the Lord promised him seed, being now aged and past hope of children. And in the fourteenth, (Romans 14:23,) in treating of meats, he condemneth doubting consciences. And it is properly to reason on both sides, (as they say,) when as we are carried hither and thither by course, by gathering contrary reasons. But we must not follow God with a doubtful and wavering, but with a quiet and constant mind. In sum, the Lord will have us to attribute so much to him, that when we hear him we dispute no longer what we have need to do, but that we set down for a certainty, that that must be done which he commandeth. And surely it is meet that his will should show us the way, when all clouds are driven away, and that it should subdue all our senses unto it, unto willing obedience, all reasoning [disputation] being broken off; which is also better gathered by the next text. For the reason is added, why it is not lawful for Peter to suspend his judgment in an uncertain matter, because God is the author of the business; because it is as much as if it

[673] "Accepit hospitio," he hospitably entertained them.

should be said, that we ought to be content with the beck of God alone, that we may obey his commandment. And hereby are we also admonished that men's consciences shall by no other means be quiet, that they safely do that which they do, than when being taught by the Word of God, they determine that they do nothing without his commandment and conduct.

21. *Behold, I am he whom ye seek.* Luke declareth now how ready Peter was to obey; secondly, that he understood at length, by the messengers, to what end the vision was showed unto him. For he heareth that he is called by Cornelius, a man that is a Gentile, whom he would have counted profane, and unworthy of his company, unless his judgment had been corrected with this voice, "That which God calleth pure, judge not thou to be common." This is to be wise indeed, when as abandoning all vain confidence, and correcting our stubbornness, the authority of God doth so pull us unto it, and doth so possess our minds, that we count nothing right but that which it prescribeth.

22. *Cornelius, a just man.* Cornelius' servants commend their master not ambitiously, or to the end they may flatter him, but that Peter may the less abhor his company. [674] And for this cause they say that he was approved of the Jews, that Peter may know that he was not estranged from true and sincere godliness. For even those which were superstitious, though they served idols, did boast that they were worshippers of God. But Cornelius could not have the Jews, who retained the worship of the true God alone, to be witnesses of his godliness, unless he had professed that he worshipped the God of Abraham with them. Furthermore, as this was a rare example, so it ought to have moved Peter not a little. Although they lean most of all to this argument, that they may persuade him that which they go about, that all this matter is governed by the commandment of God, as if they should say, That he is not so much called by a mortal man as by God, who had so commanded by his angel.

23. And Peter also, being overcome with the authority of God, deliberateth no longer, but lodgeth the men, that he may go with them forthwith. So we must meekly submit ourselves to God; and there remaineth nothing after that we know his will, but that we run speedily thither whither he calleth us. There is no difficulty in the rest.

Acts 10:23-29

Acts 10:23-29

The day following Peter went forth with them, and certain of the brethren that were of Joppa accompanied him. 24. And the next day they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, having called his kinsfolks and friends together. 26. And when Peter entered in, Cornelius meeting him, and falling down at his feet, worshipped him. 26. But Peter lifted him up, saying, Arise, I am also a man. 27. And when he had talked with him,

[674] "Ab ejus congressu minus abhorreat," may be less averse to meet with him.

he entered in, and he found many assembled together. 28. And he said to them, You know that it is wickedness for a man that is a Jew to join himself to a man that is a stranger, or to enter in unto him; but God hath showed to me that no man must be called common or unclean. 29. For this cause I came without gainsaying, when I was called; therefore, I demand for what cause ye have called me.

The day following he went forth. It should seem that they arrived a little before night [675] because they were not as yet entered the city at noon, and the vision which was showed thrice asked no small time. Therefore, when they had taken their rest all night, they address themselves to return. Again, there was a point of courtesy in that some of the faithful do accompany Peter, who were sent, as it is to be thought, by the whole church, to bring him even to Cesarea. These men journey with Peter for goodwill and honor's sake; but the Lord bringeth them, that they may be witnesses of his grace. So that they are bountifully rewarded for their thankfulness, when as for confirmation of their faith they see the kingdom of Christ spread abroad even unto the Gentiles.

24. *Cornelius waited for them.* Luke doth not only commend the godly affection of Cornelius in this point, that he waited earnestly for Peter's coming, but because he would have his friends and kinsfolks to be companions with him in the faith. This was a thing not without great danger, to call together a company of men, that they might embrace a new kind of religion. And there wanted not reasons, under color whereof he might have flattered [excused] himself; for he was not commanded to call others to accompany him, but rather they were passed over, and he himself was chosen to be made partaker of so great goodness; but he considered with himself how much he was indebted [676] both to the glory of God, and also to the salvation of his brethren. He knew that it was an unjust thing, and a point of discourtesy, to provide for himself alone, and not to regard others. He counted it a point of filthy carelessness [677] to hide the treasure of the gospel under the ground. Therefore, he did that which the Lord requireth of all his by Isaiah and Micah, that every one exhort his brother (taking him as it were by the hand) unto the faith.

Therefore, Cornelius hath taught us by his example, that when God revealeth himself unto us we must not choke the light of his knowledge with sloth or fear, but we must rather endeavor that our faith may shine before others to give light, and to show the way to them; for the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven is not such, that even the least portion can be taken from us, if many be made partakers thereof; but if others be made co-heirs with us, it shall rather increase our glory, Furthermore, we must mark how far he is from vainglory; for he calleth them to be his school-fellows, being himself

[675] "Sub vesperum," towards evening.
[676] "Quantum… deberet," how much he owed.
[677] "Foedae socordiae," shameful sloth.

ready to learn. This is the true study of godliness, when as together with zeal there appeareth such plainness, [678] that we are not ashamed to depend upon the mouth of God. For many are pricked forward with ambition, to employ themselves in teaching the ignorant; and foolish babbling discovereth their folly, when as they huddle out words more earnestly, and they would have none heard but themselves. But this alone ought to be the drift of all men, to bring themselves and all the whole world under God, that when men are subdued unto true humility, he alone may have the preeminence. Let not him which excelleth in the faculty and grace of teaching refuse to teach his brethren, so that he be free from boasting, and proud desire to excel. Let him to whom it was not granted to be a teacher keep himself within his bounds. Let neither of them desire mastership, as James teacheth them; but let one so edify another, that neither the learned, neither the unlearned, be ashamed to be brought into order.

Notwithstanding, it is demanded, [679] what kinsfolks he could have in Judea, seeing that he was an alien, and was come thither only by reason of war, which continued but for a short time? As I affirm nothing, so I embrace this as most probable, that he had some in his garrison which were his kinsmen; for neighbors, and those which were of acquaintance were wont to serve under one captain. And we need not doubt of this, but that Cornelius' kinsmen were desirous to be under him, forasmuch as he was a centurion. He calleth familiar friends {αναγκαιους}, as those are called of the Latins, Necessarii, which are nearer together. [680]

25. *Falling down at his feet, he worshipped.* Here is the word {προσεκυνησεν}, which signifieth to testify honor or worship, either by bowing the knee or ducking down the head, or by any other gesture. Now, the question is, whether Peter refuteth this worship for modesty's sake only, or he disalloweth it as a thing altogether unlawful? It appeareth that Cornelius' fact displeased Peter, by the reason which is by and by added, *Arise, for even I am a man.* For we may gather that there was some divine thing in that worship, because he did ascribe unto mortal man the honor which is due to God alone. But we must not think that Cornelius did count Peter instead of God; for if he translated God's honor unto mortal man, where is that godliness and religion, with the title whereof he was of late adorned? Therefore, I think that he meant nothing less than to spoil God of his lawful worship, that he might give it to man; but forasmuch as he meant to give singular honor unto the prophet and apostle of Christ, he fell into an immoderate token of reverence, and so he offended in excess.

For it can scarce be expressed in words how prone men are to fall to superstition, when as that honor is given to the ministers of Christ, which hath any small show of divine worship; for we fall easily unawares into that

[678] "Simplicitas," simplicity, singleness of mind.

[679] "Quaeritur tamen," it is asked, however.

[680] "Qui arctiore vinculo inter se conjuncti sunt," who are bound together by a closer tie.

whereof we thought full little. There were less danger in a king or in the chief chieftains of this world; for he which falleth down before a king keepeth himself within the bounds of earthly and civil honor. But the case standeth otherwise in the ministers of Christ; for as their office is spiritual, so if any man fall down at their feet to worship them, this honor hath in it some spiritual thing. For we must put a difference between civil worship, which men use among themselves in respect of civil order, and that under which is contained religion, or which respecteth directly the honor of God; as also between laws which are made for temporal regimen, or which bind the conscience. For certain foolish men are deceived too far, who think that kneeling is in this place condemned simply and of itself. But this is that which I said, Cornelius doth not here salute his proconsul, or the emperor, after any civil sort; but being stricken with wondering when he saw Peter, he honoreth him as he would have honored God, if he had been present; so that he giveth man more than is meet, having, as it were, forgotten himself. He thought nothing less (as I have already said) than to rob God of any part of his honor, that he might give that to man which he took from him. But when as the worship which is given to man hath somewhat which is, as it were, linked with the honor of God, men fall into a fault contrary to their hope and opinion, so that they extol man above his degree, and give him the worship which is due to God.

The Papists, omitting that distinction, snatch only at one member for they handle religious worship only. To the end they may ascribe some part thereof, with some honest color, unto creatures, they cut [subdivide] it into latria, dulia, and hyperdulia. They give latria to God alone; as if they should say, that the adoration of worship is due to him alone. They make dulia common to the dead and their bones, to images and pictures. They assign their hyperdulia to the Virgin Mary, and to the cross whereon Christ hanged. That I may omit to say that they babble through childish ignorance, how many of them do understand that rotten distinction? Neither do I speak only of the common sort, but of the chieftains. Therefore, all their worshippings must needs be infected and corrupt with wicked superstition, seeing they unadvisedly match creatures with God. But Luke saith not in this place that Cornelius gave to Peter latria, (or the honor due to God;) he useth only the general word worshipped, and he addeth, notwithstanding, that he was reproved, because he did wickedly extol man higher than became him. Surely, if that new opinion concerning the adoration which is called dulia had any place, Peter ought to have admonished Cornelius that he should not go beyond dulia. But because no worship whereunto religion is annexed, and the respect of God's honor, doth leave to God his honor untouched, what man soever it have; therefore, Peter is content with this one only reason that he is a man. Moreover, I would gladly know of the Papists, whether they think that John was so blockish, that he would take the honor due to God, which they call latria, and give it to the angel? Surely, there was

nothing else that caused him to worship the angel, save only too much and preposterous reverence, and that in honor of God, whose glory shone in the angel; notwithstanding his fact is condemned. Therefore, to the end we may give God that which is his own, let the spiritual worship, under which is comprehended religion, remain whole and sound to him.

28. *Ye know that it is not lawful.* This seemeth to be no friendly preface, and such as may rather harden [681] than win their hearts, when as they hear that they are accounted so unclean, that with their familiarity and conference they pollute the saints; which must needs be a great reproach for them. But it was needful for Peter thus to speak, lest they should suspect that he had an evil conscience, because, contrary to the custom delivered by the fathers, he came. [682] But when as he affirmeth that he was sent of God, all such suspicion is taken away and purged. Moreover, he mitigateth very well by these words the offense which did stick in their minds, by reason of an old grudge which was between the Jews and the Gentiles, so that he could by no means have entered his speech better, For he pronounceth that those are now clean who were before unclean, so that they have mutual fellowship now with the saints. Furthermore, whereas he said that it was wickedness for the Jews to go in unto the Gentiles, we must know that this came not so much from the law, as from the observation of the fathers. God had forbidden, indeed, that they should (not) entangle themselves with marriages or covenants, (Deuteronomy 7:3;) they were never forbidden to eat with them, or to use the common businesses of life. But lest that familiarity might entice them into that which was forbidden, they observed the custom delivered by the fathers, so that they did not company together. It is to no end to dispute here whether that tradition did bind men's consciences; for Peter doth not teach [683] what is lawful according to God, but what was commonly used.

No man. He maketh the sum and end of the vision more plain, when he referreth that unto men which was spoken of meats. And whereas he saith, that no man is unclean, it may not be understood of (all) particular persons; for it is certain that all unbelievers are polluted with uncleanness of conscience, so that they pollute those things which are otherwise pure, when as they do but touch them. Paul also saith that their children remain unclean until they be cleansed by faith. Finally, if faith alone do purge and purify the hearts of men, unbelief doth make the same profane. But Peter [684] compareth the Jews and the Gentiles together in this place; and because the wall of separation was pulled down, and the covenant of life [685] is now common to them both alike, he saith that those are not to be counted aliens who are made partakers of God's adoption.

29. We must also note that which he addeth, that *he came without*

[681] "Exasperet," exasperate.
[682] "Quasi legis contemptor," as if he had been a despiser of the law, omitted.
[683] "Ex professo," professedly, omitted.
[684] "Tantum," only, omitted.
[685] "Et salutis," and salvation, omitted.

gainsaying, For this is the holy silence of faith, when as without murmuring against God we receive that meekly which he commandeth, abandoning [686] all contrary reasons which intrude themselves.

Acts 10:30-33

Acts 10:30-33

30. Then saith Cornelius, Four days ago, until this hour, I was fasting; and about the ninth hour I prayed at my house; and behold a man stood before me in a shining garment, 31. Who said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thy alms is come into remembrance before God. 32. Therefore send men to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; this man lodgeth in the house of Simon the tanner; when he shall be present he shall speak to thee. 33. Therefore, after that hour I sent unto thee, and thou hast done well that thou art come, Therefore, all we are now present before God, to hear all things which are appointed for thee of God.

Because this answer of Cornelius containeth only the bare repetition of the history, I shall not need to stand long about that. The sum is, that he called Peter at the commandment of God.

30. *I was fasting.* Many Greek books [687] have {ημην}, *I sat.* The old interpreter omitteth the word fasting, which I think was done through error or negligence, because it is expressed in all the Greek books. [688] Furthermore, he maketh express mention of fasting, partly that we may know that he prayed not coldly, or overfields [689] at that time; secondly, that the vision may be the less suspected. For doubtless the brain of a man that is fasting (where there is moderate sobriety) doth not easily admit any strong imaginations, wherein appear images and strange forms, whereby men are deceived. [690] Therefore Cornelius' meaning is, that he was earnestly bent to pray, at such time as the angel appeared to him, and that his mind was free from all such lets which use to make men subject to fantasies and imaginations. [691] And to the same end tendeth the circumstance of time, that this was done when it was now fair daylight, three hours before the going down of the sun.

A man stood in shining garment. He calleth him a man, whom he knew was an angel of God; but it is a common thing for the name of the visible form wherein God or his angels appear to be translated unto him or them; so Moses doth sometimes call them angels, and sometimes men, which appeared to Abraham in shape of men. The shining garment was a token of heavenly glory, and, as it were a sign of the divine Majesty which appeared [692] in the

[686] "Procul abigendo," driving far away.
[687] "Codices," manuscripts.
[688] "Codicibus," manuscripts.
[689] "Defunctorie," perfunctorily.
[690] "Hallucinationes in spectris," spectral delusions.
[691] "Phantasmatibus ac spectris," phantasms and specters.
[692] "Quae fulgere… debuit," which must have been refulgent.

angel. The evangelists declare, that there was such brightness in Christ's garment when he showed his glory to the three disciples in the mount. The same thing do they witness of the angels which were sent to testify Christ's resurrection. For, as the Lord beareth with our infirmity thus far that he commandeth his angels to descend under form of our flesh, so he casteth out upon them certain beams of his glory, that the commandments which he hath committed to them may be the more reverenced and believed. Here ariseth a question, whether that were a true and natural body, and whether that were a garment in deed, or Cornelius did only see such a shape and show; and though this be not so necessary to be known, and we can scarce affirm any thing for a truth, [693] yet it seemeth to me more probable as touching conjecture, that God to whom it belongeth to create all things gave to the angel a true body, and did clothe the same with a most gorgeous garment; but so soon as the angel had ended his embassage, I think he was restored to his own nature, the body and garment being brought to nought, and that he suffered no human thing [694] so long as he was in the shape of man.

33. *Therefore, we are all now present.* To the end Peter may be more ready and willing to teach, Cornelius affirmeth that himself and the rest will be apt to be taught, and ready to obey God; for this serveth not a little to move the teacher to take pains with the hearers, when as he hopeth assuredly that they shall profit thereby, These words, *before God,* may have a double meaning; they may either be an oath, or Cornelius may thereby simply profess that that company was gathered together at his house, as in the sight of God, that they may hear man's voice in like sort as if it proceeded out of God's own mouth. Whethersoever you choose, there shall be always one end; [695] for to the end Cornelius may the more procure the credit of his sincerity, he testifieth that he hath God before his eyes, whom no man may mock by dissimulation; and assuredly, so often as the Word of God is set before us, we must thus think with ourselves, that we have not to deal with a mortal man, but that God is present, and doth call us. For, from this respect of God ariseth the majesty of God's word, and reverence in hearing the same. Notwithstanding, he seemeth to promise unadvisedly for others in a matter so weighty, for who can be a fit borrow [cautioner] for another man's faith? But because every man had promised obedience for himself, he doth, for good causes, hope that they were so affectioned; and, undoubtedly, we may think that they had promised that they would be obedient to his sayings so soon as the matter was showed them, and that even then every one confirmed by himself that which one had spoken in the name of all.

To hear all things. This only is true faith when we embrace not the one half of the Word of God alone, but addict [subject] ourselves wholly unto it; and yet, notwithstanding, there be few examples in the world of this full

[693] "Pro certo," for certain.

[694] "Neque tamen humani quidquam passum," and that he had no human property.

[695] "Idem semper erit finis," the result will be the same.

and universal faith, for the more part doth not submit themselves to the doctrine of God, as if they had made a covenant with God, save only so far forth as it pleaseth them. If any thing displease them they either carelessly contemn or mislike the same. But Cornelius doth wisely distinguish between God and man, for he maketh God the author of the doctrine, and leaveth nothing for man besides the ministry and embassage. "Thou shalt" saith he, "have attentive scholars, and those which will be obedient in all things which God hath commanded thee; that he alone may be principal, and thou only his minister; that, he alone may speak but out of thy mouth," which thing God prescribeth to all his servants in the person of Ezekiel.

"Take" saith he, "the word out of my mouth, and thou shalt show unto them from me,"
(Ezekiel 33:7.)

Acts 10:34-38

Acts 10:34-38

34. And Peter opening his mouth said, Of a truth I find that God is no accepter of persons: 35. But in every nation he that feareth him, and doth righteousness, is accepted of him. 36. Concerning the thing which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all:) 37. Ye know how the word was spread throughout all Judea, beginning at Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38. How that God hath anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went doing good, and healing all those which were holden by the devil, because God was with him.

34. *Opening his mouth.* We have already said, that the Scripture useth this phrase when it doth signify that there was any grave or weighty oration or speech made. In the fifth of Matthew, (Matthew 5:1,) it is said that Jesus opened his mouth when he would preach to his disciples, and intreat of most weighty matters, as if a man should say in Latin, he began to speak, having first well bethought himself what he would speak.

In truth I find. {Καταλαμβανεσθαι} is to apprehend, or to gather by reasons, signs, and conjectures. Cornelius was a Gentile born, yet God heareth his prayers; he vouchsafeth to show him the light of the gospel; he appointed and sendeth an angel to him particularly; thereby doth Peter know that, without respect of persons, those do please God which live godly and innocently. For before, (being wholly possessed with this prejudice, that the Jews alone were beloved of God, as they alone were chosen out of all people,) [nations,] he did not think that the grace of God could come unto others. He was not, indeed, so gross that he thought that godliness and innocency of life were condemned because they were in a man that was a Gentile; but, seeing he did simply snatch at that, [696] that all those were estranged

[696] "Illud arriperet," laid hold of the fact.

from the kingdom of God, and were profane, which were uncircumcised, he entangleth himself unawares in that so filthy an error, that God did despise his pure worship and an holy life, where there was no circumcision; because uncircumcision made all virtues unsavory to the Jews. By which example, we are taught how greatly we ought to beware of prejudices, which make us oftentimes judge amiss.

Furthermore, we must note what the word *person* doth signify, because many are thereby deceived, whilst that they expound it generally, that one man is preferred before another. So Pelagius denied in times past that some are chosen and some are [re]proved [697] of God; because God did not accept persons. But by this word we must understand the external state or appearance, as they call it; and whatsoever is about man himself, which doth either bring him in favor, or cause him to be hated; riches, nobility, multitude of servants, honor, do make a man to be in great favor; poverty, baseness of lineage, and such like things, make him to be despised. In this respect, the Lord doth oftentimes forbid the accepting of persons, because men cannot judge aright so often as external respects do lead them away from the matter. [698] In this place, it is referred unto the nation; and the meaning is, that circumcision is no let, but that God may allow [699] righteousness in a man that is a Gentile. But it shall seem by this means that God did respect persons for a time. For, when as he did choose the Jews to be his people, passing over the Gentiles, did he not respect persons? I answer, that the cause of this difference ought not to be sought in the persons of men, but it doth wholly depend upon the hidden counsel of God. For, in that he rather adopted Abraham, that with him he might make his covenant, than the Egyptians, he did not this being moved with any external respect, but (all) the whole cause remained in his wonderful counsel. Therefore, God was never tied to persons.

Notwithstanding, the doubt is not as yet dissolved, [700] because it cannot be denied but that circumcision did please God, so that he counted him one of his people who had that token of sanctification. But we may easily answer this also that circumcision followed after the grace of God, forasmuch as it was a seal thereof. Whereupon it followeth that it was no cause thereof. Nevertheless, it was unto the Jews a pledge of free adoption; in such sort, that uncircumcision did not hinder God, but that he might admit what Gentiles he would unto the society of the same salvation. But the coming of Christ had this new and especial thing, that after that the wall of separation was pulled down, (Ephesians. 2:14,) God did embrace the whole world generally. And this do the words *in every nation* import. For so long as Abraham's seed was the holy inheritance of God, the Gentiles might seem to be quite banished from his kingdom; but when Christ was given to be a light of the

[697] "Reprobari," reprobated.

[698] "Judicem a causa abducunt," lead the judge away from the cause.

[699] "Gratam habeat ac probet," may approve and be pleased with.

[700] "Nondum tamen soluta est difficultas," the difficulty, however, is not yet solved.

Gentiles, the covenant of eternal life began to be common to all alike.

35. *He which feareth God, and doth righteousness.* In these two members is comprehended the integrity of all the whole life. For the fear of God is nothing else but godliness and religion; and *righteousness* is that equity which men use among themselves, taking heed lest they hurt any man, and studying to do good to all men. As the law of God consisteth upon [of] these two parts, (which is the rule of good life) so no man shall prove himself to God but he which shall refer and direct all his actions to this end, neither shall there be any sound thing in all offices, [duties,] unless the whole life be grounded in the fear of God. But it seemeth that this place doth attribute the cause of salvation unto the merits of works. For if works purchase favor for us with God, they do also win life for us which is placed in the love of God towards us. Some do also catch at the word *righteousness,* that they may prove that we are not justified freely by faith, but by works. But this latter thing is too frivolous. For I have already showed that it is not taken for the perfect and whole observing of the law, but is restrained unto the second table and the offices of love. Therefore it is not the universal righteousness whereby a man is judged just before God, but that honesty and innocency which respecteth men, when as that is given to every man which is his.

Therefore the question remaineth as yet, whether works win the favor of God for us? which that we may answer, we must first note that there is a double respect of God in loving men. For seeing we be born the children of wrath, (Ephesians 2:3,) God shall be so far from finding any thing in us which is worthy of his love, that all our whole nature causeth him rather to hate us; in which respect, Paul saith that all men are enemies to him until they be reconciled by Christ, (Romans 5:10.) Therefore the first accepting of God, whereby he receiveth us into favor, is altogether free; for there can as yet no respect of works be had, seeing all things are corrupt and wicked, and taste of [bespeak] their beginning. Now, whom God hath adopted to be his children, them doth he also regenerate by his Spirit, and reform in them his image: whence riseth that second respect. For God doth not find man bare and naked then, and void of all grace, but he knoweth his own work in him, yea, himself. Therefore, God accepteth the faithful, because they live godly and justly. And we do not deny that God accepteth the good works of the saints; but this is another question, whether man prevent the grace of God with his merits or no, and insinuate himself into his love, or whether he be beloved at the beginning, freely and without respect of works, forasmuch as he is worthy of nothing else but of hatred. Furthermore, forasmuch as man, left to his own nature, can bring nothing but matter of hatred, he must needs confess that he is truly beloved; whereupon, it followeth that God is to himself the cause that he loveth us, and that he is provoked [actuated] with his own mercy, and not with our merits. Secondly, we must note, that although the faithful please God after regeneration with good works, and their respects of works, yet that is not done with the merit of works. For

the cleanliness of works is never so exact that they can please God without pardon; yea, forasmuch as they have always some corruption mixed with them, they are worthy to be refused. Therefore, the worthiness of the works doth not cause them to be had in estimation, but faith, which borroweth that of Christ which is wanting in works.

36. *Concerning the matter.* Because the Greek text is abrupt, some think that the accusative case is put instead of the nominative; and that the sense is this, This is the word which God hath sent unto the children of Israel. Other some refer it unto the word *ye know*, which followeth afterward; and they think that there was another word added to make the sentence more pleasant. For Luke putteth {λογον} in the former place, and afterward {ρημα}. But forasmuch as it is common and familiar amongst the Grecians to understand [701] the prepositions; this sense, which I have set down, seemeth to me more agreeable, though, if the harshness of the speech can be any better mitigated, I will willingly yield. Therefore I take this member to be a preface, which appertaineth unto this worthy work of God, which he showed amongst the children of Israel, preaching peace by Christ. That done, there is added a narration. At length, in the conclusion of his speech, Peter showeth to what end Christ was sent into the world. Furthermore, he beginneth with this commemoration not without cause, That God sent his word unto the children of Israel. And *speech* is put for *thing* in the Hebrew phrase. The eternal covenant which God had made with that people was at that time famous. There was nothing more commonly known among the Jews than that there was a Redeemer promised in times past to the fathers, who should restore things which were decayed unto a flourishing and blessed estate. This did those also know who were familiarly conversant with the Jews. Therefore, to the end Peter may purchase greater credit, he saith that he will speak of no new or unknown thing, but of the restoring of the Church, which did depend upon the eternal covenant of God, and which was now manifestly showed, and almost in every man's mouth.

Preaching peace. Peter teacheth here what manner [of] rumor and thing that was which was spread abroad; to wit, such as that it did make peace. I take peace in this place for the reconciling of men and God, which, notwithstanding, hath in it the perfect [702] salvation of the Church. For, as horrible confusion, and, as it were, a huge lump, [703] do follow after that God is once estranged from us; so, so soon as his fatherly favor doth once appear, he gathereth his Church together, and true felicity ariseth. Therefore, this is Peter's meaning, that God showed himself merciful to his people in Christ, and that he received into favor Abraham's children again, (whom he seemed to have cast away for a time,) that he might establish among them a flourishing estate. And as he maketh God the author of this peace, so he placeth

[701] "Subaudire," to supply.
[702] "Solidam et perfectam," the perfect and entire.
[703] "Tetrum chaos," a dire chaos.

Christ in the midst as the pledge thereof, that it may be certain and holy. He coupleth peace and preaching expressly together, because this is one way whereby the fruit of the reconciliation, purchased by Christ, cometh unto us. In like sort, after that Paul had taught that Christ is our peace, he addeth immediately, that he came to preach peace unto those who were nigh at hand and far off, (Ephesians 2:17.)

37. *Ye know how the word.* This sermon of Peter consisteth upon [of] two members principally; for in the former he reciteth an history; secondly, he descendeth unto the fruit of the history). For seeing that the coming of Christ into the world, his death and resurrection, are the matter of our salvation, Christ cannot otherwise be set before us to salvation, than if we first know that he hath put on our flesh; that he was in such sort conversant amongst men; that he proved himself, by certain testimonies, to be the Son of God; that he was at length nailed upon the cross, and raised up from the dead by the power of God. Again, lest the knowledge of the history be unprofitable and cold, we must also show the end why he came down from his heavenly glory into the world, why he suffered such a death so reproachful amongst men, and accursed by the mouth of God. The cause of his resurrection must be showed, whence the effect and fruit of all these things is gathered; to wit, that Christ was humbled, that he might restore us unto perfect blessedness who were quite lost; and also that he put on brotherly love together with our flesh; that by taking upon him our infirmities, he unburdened us thereof; that he made satisfaction for our sins, by the sacrifice of his death, that he might purchase the Father's favor for us; that when as he had gotten the victory of death, he purchased for us eternal life; that he set heaven open for us by his entrance into the same; that all the power of the Spirit was poured out upon him, that he might enrich us with his abundance, (Isaiah 61:1.)

This order of teaching doth Peter observe when he beginneth with the history of the gospel; and afterward showeth what we have by Christ's descending into the earth, by his death and resurrection. First, he saith, that Jesus of Nazareth came abroad after John's baptism. For because John was appointed to this end, by the counsel of God, that he might lift up the minds of the people to wait for Christ, it was not meet that this point should be omitted. He was counted an excellent prophet of God; therefore his authority was of great importance to make Christ to be believed, especially amongst the ignorant and those which were but novices. We must note the phrase, that John preached baptism. For Luke comprehendeth, indeed, under the word *baptism,* all the whole ministry of John; nevertheless he showeth that it was no dumb sign, and void of doctrine. And assuredly this is the chiefest thing in all sacraments, that the Word of God may appear engraven there, and that the clear voice may sound. For which cause, that wicked profanation which is seen in Papistry is so much the more to be detested, because, burying preaching, they do only charm the sacraments with magical enchantment,

38. *Jesus of Nazareth.* He calleth him a Nazarite here, not because he was born there, but because he came thence to execute his office; again, because he was surnamed thus commonly. He saith that he was anointed with the Spirit and power by *hypallage.* For the power wherein Christ exceeded proceeded from the Spirit alone. Therefore, when as the heavenly Father anointed his Son, he furnished him with the power of his Spirit. Peter saith immediately after, that this power appeared in miracles; although he expresseth one kind only in plain words, that Christ testified that he was endowed with power of the Holy Ghost that he might do good in the world. For it was not meet that the fearful power of God should be showed forth in him, but such as might allure the world with the sweet taste of goodness and grace to love him and to desire him. The metaphor of anointing is usual so often as mention is made of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is now applied unto the person of Christ, because by this means he was consecrated a king and priest by his Father. And we know that in time of the law, oil was a solemn token of consecration. The going of Christ is taken for the course of his calling, as if he should say, that he fulfilled his function until the time appointed before. The similitude is taken from travelers which go forward in their journey until they come unto the appointed place; although he showeth therewithal that he walked through Judea in three years, so that no corner was without his good deeds.

Those which were holden of devils. This also was a more manifest token of God's power in Christ, that he did not only heal men of common diseases, but did also cure desperate evils. All diseases are indeed light punishments [704] wherewith God doth punish us; but when as he dealeth more gently with us according to his fatherly kindness, he is said to strike us with his hand then; but in more grievous scourges he useth Satan as the minister of his wrath, and as it were an hangman. And we must diligently mark this distinction; for it were an absurd thing to say that he is tormented of the devil who is sick of an ague, or of some other common kind of disease; but the alienating of the mind, [705] furious madness, and other, as it were, monstrous griefs, [evils,] are fitly and properly attributed to Satan. And, in this respect, the Scripture useth to call men who are so taken and carried headlong with such madness that they have no hold of themselves, so that they seem to be turned almost into beasts, men possessed of devils.

Because God was with him. Peter noteth briefly to what end those powers did tend which were showed [706] by the hand of Christ, to wit, that tie might purchase credit among men, who did behold God as it were present; and this was the true use of miracles, as we have said already elsewhere, and as we shall see again hereafter when we come to it. For we must stay ourselves upon this principle, that we diminish the majesty of God unless we embrace and

[704] "Totidem ferulae," so many rods.
[705] "Mentis alienatio," mental alienation.
[706] "Editae," exhibited, performed.

reverence those whom he marketh with the mark of his servants. Therefore, forasmuch as powers [miracles] did plainly prove that Christ descended from heaven, his dignity is placed without the lot of man's judgment.

Acts 10:39-43

Acts 10:39-43

39. And we are witnesses of all things which he did in the country of the Jews, and at Jerusalem, whom they slew, hanging him on a tree. 40. Him God raised the third day, and showed him openly, 41. Not unto all the people, but to the witnesses appointed before of God for this purpose; namely, to us who did eat and drink with him after that he was risen from the dead: 42. And he commanded us that we should preach to the people, and should testify that he is appointed judge of the quick and dead. 43. To this man do all the prophets bear witness, that whosoever believeth in him may, through his name, receive remission of sins.

39. *And we be witnesses.* That he may make his words to be believed, he saith, that he and his fellows in office saw with their eyes all those things which they spake concerning Christ. [707] Shortly after, he taketh the word witness in another sense, when he saith that they were appointed witnesses [708] by God, [709] and that they are brought forth, as it were, by God, that they might by their preaching bring men unto the faith of Christ. So Paul, in the fifteenth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 15:15,) saith,

"We (saith he) should be found false witnesses [of Gods] unless Christ were risen from the dead."

And we have already heard by the mouth of Christ, "Ye shall be my witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and at Jerusalem." And now Peter calleth himself only an historical witness, because he beheld the things which were done. And here he toucheth his death briefly, because it was openly known; he standeth longer upon his resurrection, which was more doubtful, and the knowledge whereof was more available unto faith.

41. If any man demand here, Why God did not show his Son openly to all men after his resurrection? I answer, Although there could no reason be showed, yet ought the counsel of God alone to suffice sober and modest men, that they may assure themselves without all doubt that that is best which God hath thought meet. And yet, assuredly God used this moderation to a good end. For the certainty of the resurrection was proved by many and firm testimonies, and this was profitable to exercise the faith of the godly, to believe the gospel rather than their eyes. As touching the wicked and professed enemies of Christ seeing that being so often convict they would

[707] "Ita loqui de rebus probe compertis," and so spake of things well ascertained, omitted.

[708] "Certos testes," sure witnesses.

[709] "Quo significat publicam apostolis impositam esse personam, utque ad hoc peculiariter delectos esse," by which he intimates that a public character was assigned to the apostles, and that for this they were specially chosen, omitted.

never yield to God, they were unworthy to have Christ to admit them to behold the glow of his resurrection. Though even they were sufficiently convict with the report of the soldiers, whom they had hired to keep the sepulcher; that I may omit other reasons which we may fet out of the Harmony. [710] Therefore, let us assure ourselves of this, that the holy apostles were chosen by the holy decree of God, that by their testimony the truth of Christ's resurrection might stand. Whosoever is not content with this approbation, let him take away and overthrow if he can that inviolable decree of God, which Peter commendeth to us in this place. And as for us, if we covet to have God the sure author of our faith let us learn to be content with the witnesses whom in due time he hath brought forth, as it were, by his hand, being ordained by him before the world was made.

Who did eat. And here it appeareth what great regard Christ had of our rudeness and ignorance, who did abase himself so far for our sake, that when he was now endued with heavenly glory, he did yet, notwithstanding, eat and drink as a mortal man. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should complain that the resurrection of Christ is obscure and doubtful; for he suffered his disciples to be slow and hard of belief for this cause, that being better confirmed, they might take from us all occasion of doubting. Yea, rather, we must endeavor ourselves that our unworthiness and unthankfulness do not darken so great kindness of the Son of God toward us. But when as the Scripture saith, that Christ did eat, curious men move a question, what became of that meat? But the answer is easy; that like as it was created out of nothing, so was it easily brought to nothing by the divine power of Christ. That meat which is taken for the sustenance of the body is concocted and afterward digested; but we know that Christ took this meat to feed our faith, and in this use was it spent. And those men are deceived who think that Christ did only seem to eat, For what good could such a visor or vain show have done? [711] For when, as we say that Christ was not enforced with any necessity of his own to eat, but that he meant only to provide for those that were his, all occasion is cut off [712] from the frivolous inventions of men.

42. *And he commanded us.* He beginneth in this place to intreat of the kingdom of Christ, when he saith that Christ did rise again for this cause, that he may once judge the world. For by the same right are the government of heaven and earth, and the perpetual government of the Church, due to him. He saith that he shall be judge *of quick and dead;* because, when as the dead shall rise again, others also, who shall then remain alive, shall be changed in a moment, as Paul teacheth in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52,) and in the First to the Thessalonians, and the fourth chapter, (1 Thessalonians 4:17.) In the word *testify* there is great weight; because, as men are naturally inclined

[710] "Quas petere licebit ex Harmonia," which may be seen in my Harmony.

[711] "Nec video quorsum attineat ejusmodi subterfugia quaerere," nor do I see the use of having recourse to subterfuges (futile explanations) of this kind.

[712] "Ansa praecisa est," no handle is left for.

unto unbelief, the simple preaching of the gospel should not be so effectual, unless the Lord should establish it with strong protestations. And chiefly, every one of us doth feel in himself too much what a hard matter it is both to lift up our minds to hope for the coming of Christ, which are entangled in earthly snares, and also continually to keep them fixed in this meditation, seeing they cease not with their lightness to be carried hither and thither continually.

43. *To him bear all the prophets.* Luke toucheth and gathereth the sum of the sermon briefly, as we have said; therefore is he so short [713] in noting the fruit of the history. Let us know that the words uttered by Peter are not recited in this place; but that it, is only declared of what things he intreated. And we must consider three things, That it is the proper office of Christ to reconcile men to God when their sins are done away; that we have remission of sins by faith; that this doctrine is not new or of late invented, but that it had all the prophets of God since the beginning of the world to bear witness of it.

As touching the first, if God be pleased and pacified by not imputing our sins, it appeareth hereby that he hateth and is displeased with all mankind, [714] until such time as they begin to please him by free pardon. Therefore we are all condemned of sin, which maketh us subject to the wrath of God, and bindeth us with the guiltiness of eternal death; and because we are destitute of righteousness in ourselves, we are taught to flee unto the mercy of God, as unto our only fortress. When as he saith that the faithful receive remission of sins, there is understood a hidden contrariety between them and God; for God must needs offer it of his own accord that the faithful may receive it. When as he saith that it is given by the name of Christ, his meaning is, that we return into God's favor by the benefit of Christ alone, because he hath once reconciled him to us by his death; or, as they say commonly, that we obtain forgiveness of sins by Christ's mediation, (and coming between,) and by none other means.

Satan could never blot out of the minds of men the feeling of their guiltiness, but that they were always careful to crave pardon at God's hands; but forasmuch as there was but one way and means to obtain pardon, miserable men, being deluded with the jugglings [impostures] of Satan, did invent to themselves wonderful labyrinths, in whose crooks and turns they wearied themselves in vain. This first error did first lead them away from the right way, because they essayed to deserve pardon, which is offered freely, and is received by faith alone. Afterward there were innumerable kinds of satisfactions [expiations] invented whereby they appeased God. The beginning thereof flowed indeed from the Word of God; but forasmuch as when God gave unto the fathers the sacrifices and rites of oblations, he shadowed

[713] "Vel potius concisus," or rather concise, (abrupt,) omitted.

[714] "Totum humanum genus exosum illi esse et infensum," that the whole human race is hostile and hateful to him.

Christ, blind and profane men, setting Christ aside, and following a vain shadow, did corrupt all that which was God's in sacrifices and satisfactions. [715] Wherefore, what sacrifices soever the Gentiles did use since the beginning of the world, and those which the Turks and Jews use at this day, may be set against Christ as things altogether contrary. The Papists are never a whit better, save only that they sprinkle their satisfactions with the blood of Christ; but they deal too disorderly therein, [716] because, being not content with Christ alone, they gather to themselves, on every side, a thousand manner of sacrifices or satisfactions. Therefore, whosoever desireth to have remission of sins, let him not turn aside from Christ, even the least nail's breadth.

When as we hear, that we have remission of sins by believing, we must understand and know the force and nature of faith, as undoubtedly Peter intreated abundantly of this, [viz.] after what sort we must believe in Christ. And this is nothing else, but with the sincere affection of the mind to embrace him as he is set before us in the gospel; so that faith dependeth upon the promises. Yet Peter seemeth to deal amiss, because whereas we have two principal things by our Savior Christ, he doth only make mention of the one of them; for he speaketh nothing of repentance and newness of 1ife, which ought not to be omitted in the sum of the gospel. [717] But we may easily answer, That the regeneration of the Spirit is comprehended under faith, as it is an effect thereof. For we believe in Christ for this cause, partly that he may restore us unto the Father's favor by the free imputation of righteousness; partly that he may sanctify us by his Spirit, And we know that we are adopted by God to be his children upon this condition, that he may govern us by his Spirit. Therefore, it was sufficient for Peter to show how men, who were by nature estranged from God, do return into favor with him.

As touching the third member, we need not reckon up all places of the prophets, where they set before us Christ to be the mediator, who by obtaining pardon for our sins, doth reconcile God to us; but this is their common order of teaching, and, as it were, their rule, to call back all the godly unto that covenant which God made with Abraham putting the mediator between. [718] Furthermore, this point is very needful to be known, that the grace which was offered at length by Christ is the same which the law and the prophets, in times past, delivered unto the fathers to be hoped for. And surely it was of great force with Cornelius and such like, who did greatly reverence the law and prophets, that they might know that that was performed and accomplished in very deed in Christ which was testified in the oracles of the prophets. Therefore, to the end the ministers of the Church may agree with

[715] "Quicquid Dei erat in piaculis," every thing of an expiatory nature appointed by God.

[716] "Sed in eo nimio sunt praeposteri," but in this they are exceedingly preposterous.

[717] "Quae in evangelii summa praetermitti minime debuerat," which ought by no means to have been omitted in a summary of the gospel.

[718] "Mediatore interposito," by the imposition of a Mediator.

the prophets in their form of teaching, let them study by preaching to set forth Christ; let them continually testify that we must seek righteousness at his hands alone, which consisteth upon [of] free remission of sins. This is another manner of antiquity than that which is showed with great boasting of the Papists, whilst that they thrust in the rotten inventions [719] of their satisfactions into the place of Christ's blood.

Acts 10:44-48

Acts 10:44-48

44. And as Peter yet spake these words, the Spirit came down upon all which heard the word. 45. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also were poured out the gifts of the Holy Ghost. 46. For they heard them speak with tongues, and glorify God. Then Peter answered, 47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Spirit as well as we? 48. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

44. *And as Peter yet spake.* God declareth now by a new miracle, that the doctrine of the gospel is common as well to the Gentiles as to the Jews. And this is an excellent seal of the calling of the Gentiles; because the Lord would never have vouchsafed to bestow upon the Gentiles the graces of his Spirit, unless it had been to declare that even they were adopted together into the society of the covenant. These gifts, mentioned by Luke, differ indeed from the grace of regeneration; and yet, undoubtedly, God did by this means seal both Peter's doctrine, and also their faith and godliness which heard him. He saith that they were *all* endowed with the Spirit, like as we saw before, that they came all encouraged to learn and obey.

This visible sign representeth unto us, as it were in a table, what an effectual instrument of God's power the preaching of the gospel is; for he poured out his Spirit as Peter spake, to the end he might show that he sendeth not teachers to that end, that they may beat the air with the vain sound of their voice, but that he may work mightily by their voice, and may quicken the same by the power of his Spirit, to the salvation of the godly. Thus doth Paul put the Galatians (Galatians 3:2.) in mind, that they received the Holy Ghost by the hearing of faith; and in another place he saith that he is the minister of the Spirit, and not of the letter, (2 Corinthians 3:6.) The gift of the tongues, and other such like things, are ceased long ago in the Church; but the spirit of understanding and of regeneration is of force, and shall always be of force, which the Lord coupleth with the external preaching of the gospel, that he may keep us in reverence of his word, and may prevent the deadly dotings, wherein brain-sick fellows enwrap themselves, whilst that, forsaking the word, they invent an erroneous and wandering spirit. But it

[719] "Putida… figmenta," the foul figments.

doth not, nor shall not, always so fall out, that all those which hear the word with their outward ears, do or shall also receive the Spirit; and the ministers do seldom light upon such hearers as Peter had, who are willing, with one consent, to follow God. Yet he bringeth to pass that all the elect feel in themselves the consent of the external word, and of the secret power of the Spirit.

45. *The faithful were astonished.* He calleth them faithful who were as yet possessed with a wicked error. So the Lord doth not by and by wipe away all clouds of ignorance from his, and yet they do not darken the praise of faith before God, because he pardoneth errors and doth vouchsafe to favor it, as if it were pure and plain. And yet it is a wonder, that seeing they knew that Peter was sent of God, they would now be amazed, as at some strange and new thing, because God giveth the grace of his Spirit to those to whom he would have Christ now preached; but the sudden change is the cause of this, because, whereas God until that day had separated the Gentiles from his people as strangers and aliens, he doth now favor them both alike, and lifteth them up into the like degree of honor. Although we be also taught by this example, how hard a matter it is for us to wind out ourselves out of our errors once conceived, especially when they are of any continuance.

46. *For they heard them.* He expresseth what gifts of the Spirit were poured out upon them, and therewithal he noteth the use; to wit, that they had variety of tongues given them, so that they did glorify God with many tongues. Also, it may be gathered out of this place, that the tongues were given them not only for necessity, seeing the gospel was to be preached to strangers and to men of another language, but also to be an ornament and worship to the gospel. But ambition did afterward corrupt this second use, forasmuch as many did translate that unto pomp and vain glory which they had received to set forth the dignity of the heavenly wisdom, as Paul doth sharply reprove this fault in the Corinthians. Therefore, no marvel if God took away that shortly after which he had given, and did not suffer the same to be corrupted with longer abuse.

47. *Peter answered.* Peter reasoneth from the thing to the sign; for, seeing that baptism is an addition or appurtenance of the spiritual grace, he which hath received the Spirit is also apt [fit] to receive baptism; and this is the (most) lawful order, that the minister admit those unto the receiving of the outward sign whom God hath testified to be his children by the mark and pledge of his Spirit; so that faith and doctrine are first. And whereas unlearned men infer thereupon that infants are not to be baptized, it is without all reason. I grant that those who are strangers from the Church must be taught before the sign of adoption be given them; but I say, that the children of the faithful which are born in the Church are from their mother's womb of the household of the kingdom of God. Yea, the argument which they use preposterously against us do I turn back [retort] upon themselves; for, seeing that God hath adopted the children of the faithful before they be

born, I conclude thereupon that they are not to be defrauded of the outward sign; otherwise men shall presume to take that from them which God hath granted them. As touching the manifest grace of the Spirit, there is no absurdity therein, if [720] it follow after baptism in them.

And as this testimony maketh nothing for maintenance of their error, so it doth strongly refute the error of the Papists, who tie the grace of the Spirit to the signs, and think that the same is fet [fetched] from heaven with enchantments, [721] as those witches did think that they did pull down the moon with their charms. But forasmuch as Luke saith that these had the Holy Ghost given them who were not as yet baptized, he showeth that the Spirit is not included in baptism. Lastly, we must note that the apostles were content with water alone when as they did baptize, [722] and would to God this plainness had been retained amongst their posterity, and that they had not gathered here and there divers trifles, whereof baptism is filth in Popery. They think that the worthiness of baptism is adorned with oil, salt, spittle, wax-candles, whereas they are rather filthy pollutions which corrupt the pure and natural [genuine] institution of Christ.

48. *And he commanded them to be baptized.* It was not of necessity that baptism should be ministered by Peter's hand, as Paul doth likewise testify that he baptized few at Corinth, for other ministers might take this charge upon them. Whereas he saith, in the name of the Lord, it must not be restrained unto the form, as we have said in the third chapter; but because Christ is the proper scope of baptism, therefore are we said to be baptized in his name. When as Luke saith, last of all, that Peter was requested by Cornelius and his kinsmen that he would tarry a few days, he commendeth in them their desire to profit. They were, indeed, endued with the Holy Ghost; but they were not so come to the top, but that confirmation was as yet profitable for them. And, according to their example, so often as opportunity to profit offereth itself, we must use it diligently; and let us not swell with pride, which stoppeth the way before doctrine. [723]

[720] "Tempore," in point of time.

[721] "Eamque exorcismis non secus elici putant e coelo," and think it can only be brought down from heaven by exorcisms.

[722] "Ad conferendum baptismum," in giving baptism.

[723] "Qui ingressum obstruat doctrinae," which obstructeth the entrance of doctrine.

Chapter 11

CHAPTER 11

Acts 11:1-18

Acts 11:1-18

1. And the apostles and brethren which were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had embraced the word of God. 2. And when Peter was gone up to Jerusalem, those which were of the circumcision reasoned with him, 3. Saying, Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised, and hast eaten with them. 4. And Peter began, and expounded to them in order, saying, 5. I was in the city Joppa praying; and being in a trance, I saw a vision, to wit, A certain vessel coming down from heaven like a great sheet, tied by the four corners, which came even unto me: 6. Which, when I considered earnestly, I saw then four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and birds of the heaven. 7. And I heard a voice saying to me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8. Then I said, Not so, Lord: Because there never entered into my mouth any common or unclean thing. 9. And the voice answered me the second time from heaven, Profane not thou those things which God hath made clean. 10. And this was done thrice: and they were all received into heaven again. 11. And, behold, the same hour three men stood nigh the house wherein I sat, being sent unto me from Cesarea. 12. And the Spirit commanded me to go with them, doubting nothing. And they came with me, and these six brethren, and we entered the man's house. 13. And he told us how he had seen an angel standing at his house, and saying to him, Send men to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14. Who shall speak to thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15. Furthermore, when I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell down upon them, even as upon us at the beginning. 16. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, John truly hath baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17. Therefore, seeing that God had given them the like gift as unto us, which was believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that could let [hinder] God? 18. When they had heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also given unto the Gentiles repentance unto life.

1. *And the apostles.* Whereas Luke declareth that the fame of one house which was converted was spread abroad everywhere amongst the brethren, that did arise by reason of admiration; for the Jews accounted it as a monster

that the Gentiles should be gathered unto them as if they should have heard that there had been men made of stones. Again, the immoderate love of their nation did hinder them from acknowledging the work of God. For we see that through this ambition and pride the Church was troubled; because the equality which did diminish their dignity was not tolerable. For which cause they did contend stoutly to bring the necks of the Gentiles under the yoke. But forasmuch as it was foretold by so many prophecies of the prophets, that the Church should be gathered of all people after the coming of the Messiah, and forasmuch as Christ had given commandment to his apostles touching the preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, how can it be that the conversion of a few men should move some, as some strange thing, and should terrify other some, as if it were some monster? I answer, that whatsoever was foretold touching the calling of the Gentiles, it was so taken as if the Gentiles should be made subject to the law of Moses, that they might have a place in the Church. But the manner of the calling, the beginning whereof they saw then, was not only unknown, but it seemed to be quite contrary to reason. For they did dream that it was impossible that the Gentiles could be mixed with the sons of Abraham, and be made one body with them, (the ceremonies being taken away,) but that there should be great injury done to the covenant of God; for to what end served the law save only to be the mid wall to note out the disagreement? Secondly, because they were acquainted with that difference during their whole life, the unlooked-for newness of the thing doth so pierce them, that they did forget all that which ought to have quieted their minds. Finally, they do not straightway comprehend the mystery, which, as Paul teacheth, was unknown to the angels from the creation of the world.

2. *They reasoned with him.* Obstinacy doth for the most part accompany error. This was now a fault having in it too gross ignorance, in that they did not quietly receive the Gentiles into their bosom, united to them by the same Spirit of faith. But they do not only leap back, but also contend with Peter contentiously, and blame him for his fact, which deserved great praise. They hear that the Gentiles have embraced the Word of God; what letteth them then from embracing them, that they may be coupled together [724] under the government of one God? For what more holy bond can there be, than when all men, with one consent, are coupled and joined to God? And why should not those grow together into one body who make the Messiah of God their head? But because they saw the external form of the law broken, they thought that heaven and earth did go together. [725]

And note, that although Luke said before that the apostles and brethren had heard this fame, yet he spake nothing of offense; but he bringeth in now, as it were, a new sect of men, which did contend with Peter. The brethren, saith he, *heard,* and there an end; it followeth, *When Peter was come to*

[724] "Societam colant," may cultivate communion.
[725] "Misceri," were confounded.

Jerusalem, those which were of the circumcision did contend with him, who were undoubtedly unlike to the first; again, these words {περιτομης}, do not simply signify the Jews, but those who were too much addicted to keeping the ceremonies of the law. For there were none of Jerusalem in Christ's flock at that time, save only those which were circumcised. From whom, then, could he distinguish those men? Lastly, it seemeth to be a thing unlike to be true that the apostles, and those which were moderate being of the number of the faithful, did attempt this combat. For though they had been offended, yet they might have conferred with Peter privately, and have demanded some reason of his fact. By these reasons am I moved to think that those are said to be of the circumcision who did make so great account of circumcision, that they granted no man a place in the kingdom of God, unless he took upon him the profession of the law, and, being admitted into the Church by this holy rite, did put off uncleanness.

3. *Unto men being uncircumcised.* This was not forbidden by the law of God, but it was a tradition which came from the fathers. And yet, notwithstanding, Peter doth not object that they dealt too hardly [726] with him in this point, and that he was not bound by the necessity of man's law. He omitteth all this defense, and doth only answer, that they came first unto him, and that they were offered unto him, as it were, by the hand of God. And here we see the rare modesty of Peter, because whereas, trusting to the goodness of the cause, he might have justly despised unskillful men, who did trouble him unjustly, yet doth he mildly excuse himself as it becometh brethren. This was no small trial in that he was unworthily accused, because he had obeyed God faithfully. But because he knew that this law was enjoined the whole Church, that every man be ready to give an account of his doctrine and life so often as the matter requireth, and he remembered that he was one of the flock, he doth not only suffer himself to be ruled, but submitteth himself willingly to the judgment of the Church. Doctrine, indeed, if it be of God, is placed above the chance and die of man's judgment; but because the Lord will have prophecy judged, his servants must not refuse this condition, that they prove themselves to be such as they will be accounted. But we shall see anon how far the defense both of doctrine, as also of facts, ought to extend.

For this present we must know this, that Peter doth willingly answer for himself when his fact is reproved. [727] And if the Pope of Rome be Peter's successor, why is not he bound by the same law? Admit we grant that this submission was voluntary, yet why doth not the successor imitate such an example of modesty showed unto him? Although we need no long circumstance [728] here; for if that be true which the Popes spew out in their sacrilegious decrees, Peter did treacherously betray and forsake the privileges of their

[726] "Praecise," strictly.

[727] "Petrum ad causam dicendam libenter descendere quum ejus factum improbatur," that Peter readily condescends to plead his cause when his act is impugned.

[728] "Circuitu," circumlocution.

seat, [See,] and so he betrayed the See of Rome. For, after that they have made the Pope the judge of all the whole world, affirming that he is not subject to man's judgment; after that they have lifted him up above the clouds, that, being free from giving an account, his will and pleasure may stand for a reason, [law,] they make him forthwith patron of the apostolic seat, [See,] stoutly to defend the privileges thereof. Of what great sluggishness shall Peter then be condemned, if he did lose his right given him of God, by yielding so cowardly? [easily.] Why did not he at least object that he was free from the laws, and exempt from the common sort? But he useth no such preface, but entereth [on] the cause without making any delay. And let us remember, that there is nothing which hindereth us from contemning that idol safely, seeing that usurping such unbridled tyranny, he hath blotted himself out of the number of the bishops.

And Peter beginning. Because this narration is all one with [that] which we had in the chapter next (going before,) and because it is repeated almost in the very same words, if any thing need to be expounded let the readers repair thither. The purpose of Peter, and all the whole sum of his speech, shall appear by the conclusion. Yet, before I come thither, we must briefly mark that he maketh the preaching of the gospel the cause of salvation. *Thou shalt hear (saith he) words wherein thou mayest have salvation,* not because salvation is included in man's voice, but because God, offering his Son there unto eternal life, doth also cause us to enjoy him by faith. This is assuredly wonderful goodness of God, who maketh men ministers of life, who have nothing but matter of death in themselves, and which are not only subject to death in themselves, but are also deadly to others. Nevertheless, the filthy unthankfulness of the world betrayeth itself in this point, which, loathing true and certain salvation offered unto it, and forsaking it when it lieth at the feet, doth imagine divers and vain salvations, in seeking which, it had rather gape being hungry, [729] than to be filled with the grace of God which meeteth it and is present.

16. *I remembered the word of the Lord.* We have sufficiently declared in the first chapter, that when Christ uttered that sentence, he did not make a comparison between two baptisms; but that he intended to declare what difference there was between him and John, (Acts 1:5.) For, as we distinguish the sign from his [its] truth, so it is good to distinguish the minister from the author, lest mortal man challenge [730] that which is proper to God. Man hath the sign in his hand; it is Christ alone which watereth and regenerateth. For it skilleth much whither men's minds be directed in seeking the graces of God, because they shall not receive one drop without Christ. Therefore, there is this general difference between Christ and all the ministers of the Church, because they give the external sign of water, but he fulfilleth and performeth the effect of the sign by the power of his Spirit. The readers

[729] "Famelicus inhiare mavult," it prefers gaping famished.

[730] "Ad se trahat," arrogate to himself.

were to be admonished of this thing again in this place, because many do falsely infer that John's baptism and ours are not all one, whilst that Christ, challenging to himself the Spirit, doth leave nothing for John save water alone.

But if any man trusting to this testimony do make baptism a cold spectacle, and void of all grace of the Spirit, he shall be also greatly deceived. For the Holy Scripture useth to speak two manner of ways of the sacraments. For because Christ is not unfaithful in his promises, he doth not suffer that to be vain which he doth institute; but when as the Scripture doth attribute to baptism strength to wash and regenerate, it ascribeth all this to Christ, and doth only teach what he worketh by his Spirit by the hand of man and the visible sign. Where Christ is thus joined with the minister, and the efficacy of the Spirit with the sign, there is so much attributed to the sacraments as is needful, (Titus 3:5;) but that conjunction must not be so confused, but that men's minds, being drawn from mortal and frail things, and things like to themselves, and from the elements of the world, they must learn to seek for salvation at Christ's hand, and to look unto the power of his Spirit alone; because he misseth the mark of faith, whosoever turneth aside even but a little from the Spirit unto the signs; and he is a sacrilegious person who taketh even but an inch of Christ's praise, that be may deck man therewith. And we must also remember that Christ did comprehend under the word Spirit, not only the gift of tongues, and such like things, but all the whole grace of our renewing; but because these gifts were an excellent argument of Christ's power, this sentence may well be applied unto them. I will make this more plain; seeing that Christ did bestow upon the apostles the visible graces of the Spirit, he did plainly declare that the Spirit was in his hand; so that by this means he did testify, that he is the alone author of cleanness, righteousness, and of the whole regeneration. And Peter applieth it unto his purpose thus, that forasmuch as Christ did go before, carrying with him the force of baptism, it became him to follow with the addition, [731] that is, the outward sign of water.

17. *Who was I?* Now do we see to what end Peter made that narration; to wit, that he might declare that God was the author and governor of all the whole matter; therefore, the state of the question consisteth in [turneth upon] the authority of God, whether meat be not of more weight than men's counsels. [732] Peter affirmeth that he did nothing but that which was rightly and orderly done, because he obeyed God; he showeth that he preached the doctrine of the gospel, neither amiss, neither rashly, where Christ bestowed the graces of his Spirit. The approbation of our doctrine, and also our deeds, must be brought to this rule so often as men call us to an account; for whosoever stayeth himself upon the commandment of God, he hath defense

[731] "Cum accessione," with the accessary.

[732] "Annon praeponderet cibus humanis consiliis," whether meat do not preponderate in man's counsels.

enough. If men be not content, there is no cause why he should pass for their judgments any more. [733] And hereby we gather that the faithful ministers of God's word may in such sort give an account of their doctrine, that they may no whit impair the credit and certainty thereof; to wit, if they show that it was given them by God: but if they shall deal with unjust men, who will not be enforced with the reverence of God to yield, let us let them alone with their obstinacy, appealing unto the day of the Lord.

And we must also note, that we do not only resist God by striving against him, but also by lingering, if we do not that which our calling requireth, and which is proper to it. For Peter saith that he cannot deny baptism and brotherly fellowship to the Gentiles, but that he should be [without being] an enemy to God. But he should have essayed nothing which was manifestly contrary to the grace of God. That is true indeed; but he which doth not receive those whom God offereth, and shutteth the gate which God openeth, he hindereth the work of God so much as in him lieth; as we say at this day, that those men make war against God who are set against the baptizing of infants; because they most cruelly exclude those out of the Church whom God hath adopted into the Church, and they deprive those of the outward sign whom God vouchsafeth to call his children. Like unto this is that kind of resisting, in that many dissemblers, who, whilst they be magistrates, ought to assist, according to their office, the martyrs of Christ, go about to stop their mouths, and to take from them their liberty. For because they hate the truth, they would have it suppressed.

18. *When they heard these things they were quieted.* The end doth show that those were not moved with malice which did contend with Peter; for this is an evident sign of godliness, in that being thoroughly instructed touching the will of God, they cease forthwith to contend. By which example we are taught, that those are not to be despised who, being offended through unadvised zeal, reprove any thing wrongfully; but that their consciences must be appeased by the Word of God, which are troubled by error, and that their docility is tried at least thus far forth. As touching us, we do hereby, in like sort, learn whereupon our judgment must depend, namely, upon the sole and simple beck of God. For this honor is due to him, that his will be to us the certain and principal rule of truth and justice. So often as it is requisite for us to know the cause of any thing, the Lord doth not conceal the same from us; but to the end he may accustom our faith unto just obedience, he telleth us sometimes simply and plainly that this or that thing pleaseth him. He which granteth liberty to himself to inquire farther, and taketh a delight in his curiosity, doth nothing else but throw himself headlong with devilish boldness. And Luke doth not only declare that these men held their peace, but that they gave glory also to God. Some are enforced by shame to hold their peace, who, notwithstanding, keep in that in their minds which they

[733] "Non est quod perversa eorum judicia amplius moretur," there is no reason why he should any longer regard their perverse judgments.

dare not utter. That is rather a dissemblance of modesty than docility. But these men do so thoroughly submit themselves to God, that they are not afraid nor ashamed to recant by and by, [forthwith.]

Then hath God. Luke doth briefly declare in these words what the gospel containeth, and to what end it tendeth, to wit, that God may reconcile men to himself, being renewed by his Spirit. The word *repentance* alone is expressed in this place, but when he addeth *unto life,* it appeareth plainly that it is not separated from faith. Therefore, whosoever will rightly profit in the gospel, let him put off the old man, and think upon newness of life, (Ephesians 4:22;) that done, let him know for a certainty that he is not called in vain unto repentance, but that there is salvation prepared for him in Christ. So shall it come to pass, that the hope and assurance of salvation shall rest upon the free mercy of God alone, and that the forgiveness of sins shall, notwithstanding, be no cause of sluggish security. This member, to *give repentance,* may be expounded two manner of ways; either that God granted to the Gentiles place for repentance, when as he would have his gospel preached to them; or that he circumcised their hearts by his Spirit, as Moses saith, (Deuteronomy 30:6,) and made them fleshy hearts of stony hearts, as saith Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 11:19.) For it is a work proper to God alone to fashion and to beget men again, that they may begin to be new creatures; and it agreeth better with this second sense; it is not so much racked, and it agreeth better with the phrase [phraseology] of Scripture.

Acts 11:19-24

Acts 11:19-24

19. Those, therefore, which were dispersed by reason of the tribulation which happened about Stephen, went into Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to the Jews. 20. And there were certain of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, entering into Antioch, spake with the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21. And the hand of the Lord was with them: Therefore a great number, when they believed, were turned unto the Lord. 22. And the tidings of them came unto the ears of the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they sent Barnabas, that he might go to Antioch. 23. Who, when he was come, and [had] seen the grace of God, he rejoiced, and did exhort all, that with purpose of heart they would continue cleaving to the Lord. 24. Because he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith. And there was a great multitude added unto the Lord.

19. *Those which were scattered abroad.* Luke returneth now unto the former history, (and unto that which followed in the same.) For he had said before that after that Stephen was slain the cruelty of the wicked increased; and many fled hither and thither for fear, so that the apostles were almost left alone at Jerusalem. Whereas the Church was thus torn in pieces, and fear did cause those which were fled to keep silence or else contempt of strangers,

[734] he declareth that that event did follow which no man would have hoped for; for as the seed is sown that it may bring forth fruit, so it came to pass through their flight and scattering abroad, that the gospel was spread abroad in nations which were far off, which was included before within the walls of one city, as in a barn. [735] In like sort it came to pass, that the name of Christ, passing over mountains and seas, did flow even unto the farthest parts of the world; and by this means, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, the consumption did abound [736] in righteousness. If so many godly men had not been expelled out of Jerusalem, Cyprus had heard nothing, Phenice had heard nothing of Christ; yea, Italy and Spain, which were farther off, had heard nothing. But the Lord brought to pass, that of many torn members did arise more bodies. For how came it to pass that there were Churches gathered at Rome and at Puteoli, save only because a few exiled men, and such as fled away, [737] had brought the gospel thither with them? And as God did at that time make the endeavors of Satan frustrate after a wonderful sort, so we need not doubt but that even at this day he will make to himself triumphs of the cross and persecution, that the Church may better grow together, though it be scattered abroad. Phenice joineth to Syria, and is nigh to Galilee. Antioch is a most famous city of Syria, at which part it is joined to Cilicia.

Speaking to none. Peradventure they were letted not only with fear of persecution, that they durst not speak to the Gentiles, but also with that foolish religion, in that they thought that the children's bread was thrown to the dogs, (Mark 16:15;) whereas, notwithstanding, Christ had commanded that the gospel should be preached to all the world after his resurrection.

20. Luke doth at length declare that certain of them brought this treasure even unto the Gentiles. And Luke calleth these Grecians not {Ελληνες}, but {Ελληνισται}. Therefore, some say that those came of the Jews, yet did they inhabit Greece; which I do not allow. For seeing the Jews, whom he mentioned a little before, were partly of Cyprus, they must needs be reckoned in that number, because the Jews count Cyprus a part of Greece. But Luke distinguisheth them from those, whom he calleth afterward {Ελληνιστας}. Furthermore, forasmuch as he had said that the word was preached at the beginning only to the Jews, and he meant those who, being banished out of their own country, did live in Cyprus and Phenice, correcting as it were this exception, he saith that some of them did teach the Grecians. This contrariety doth cause me to expound it of the Gentiles. For Luke's meaning is, that a few did more freely preach the gospel, [738] because the calling of the Gentiles was not unknown to them. But the constancy of them all deserveth

[734] Transpose thus: "And fear, or else contempt of strangers, did cause those who had fled to keep silence."

[735] Transpose thus: "The gospel which was before included, etc., was spread abroad," etc.

[736] "Consumptio exundavit," the devastation overflowed.

[737] "Pauci exules ac profugi," a few exiles and fugitives.

[738] "Evangelii doctrinam sparsisse," did spread the doctrine of the gospel.

no small praise; because, being delivered, as it were, out of the midst of death, they are not afraid to do their duty toward God even with danger. Whence we gather to what end, and how far forth Christians may fly persecution; to wit, that they may spend [739] the residue of their life in spreading abroad the glory of God. If any man demand how it came to pass that strangers lately coming, and such as might have been suspected among all the Jews, and hated of them, because they were banished out of Jerusalem, were so bold, I answer, that this came to pass through the singular motion of God, and that they consulted suddenly according to the occasion offered them. For this deliberation is not of flesh and blood.

21. *The hand of the Lord was.* Luke proveth by the success that the gospel was offered unto the Gentiles also by the brethren of Cyprus and Cyrene not rashly nor unadvisedly, because their labor was fruitful and profitable. But such increase should never have followed, unless God had commanded and favored. Therefore, it followeth that it pleased God that the Gentiles should be called. The hand, as it is well known, doth signify power and strength. Therefore, this is Luke's meaning, that God did testify by his present aid that the Gentiles were called together with the Jews, through his direction, to be made partakers of the grace of Christ. And this blessing of God served not a little to confirm the minds of all men. This place did also teach us, that what pains soever the ministers of God take in teaching, it shall be all vain and void, unless God bless their labors from heaven. For we may plant and water, as Paul teacheth, but the increase cometh from God alone, (1 Corinthians 3,) in whose hand the hearts of men are, that he may bend and frame the same at his pleasure. Therefore, as often as we are to intreat of faith, let us always remember this speech, that God wrought by his ministers, and that he made their doctrine effectual by his hand, that is, by the secret inspiration of the Spirit. Therefore, let the minister attempt nothing trusting to his own wit and industry, but let him commit his labor to the Lord, upon whose grace the whole success dependeth; and where doctrine shall work effectually, let those which shall believe thank God for their faith. Furthermore, we must note that which Luke saith, that many were turned unto God by faith, because he doth very well express the force and nature of faith; that it is not idle and cold, [740] but such as restoreth men (who were before turned away from God) unto his government, and bindeth them unto his righteousness.

22. *And the tidings.* If this report had been brought before Peter did excuse himself, those good men should have been reproved of many whose ministry notwithstanding God had sealed with the grace of his Spirit; but that superstition was now wiped away out of their minds, forasmuch as God had by evident signs declared that no nation ought to be counted profane. Therefore, they contend no longer, neither do they count it a point of rashness, that some durst preach Christ unto the Gentiles; but by sending help,

[739] "Strenue impendant," may strenously spend.

[740] "Otiosa frigidaque notitia," an idle and frigid knowledge.

they testify that they allow that which they had done. Furthermore, this was the cause why they sent Barnabas. The apostles did at that time bear all the burden of the kingdom of Christ; therefore, it was their duty to frame and set in order Churches every where; to keep all the faithful, wheresoever dispersed, in the pure consent of faith; to appoint ministers and pastors wheresoever there was any number of the faithful. The crafty wiliness of Satan is well known. So soon as he seeth a gate set open for the gospel, he endeavoreth by all means to corrupt that which is sincere, [pure;] whereby it came to pass that divers heresies brake out together with Christ's doctrine. Therefore, the greater gifts every Church hath, the more careful ought it to be, lest Satan mix or trouble any thing amongst the ignorant, and those who are not as yet established in the right faith; because it is the easiest matter in the world to corrupt corn in the blade. To conclude, Barnabas was sent to bring them farther forward in the principles of faith; to set things in some certain order; to give the building which was begun some form, that there might be a lawful state of the Church.

23. *When he had seen the grace of God.* By these words Luke teacheth, first, that the gospel which they had received was true; secondly, that Barnabas sought nothing else but the glory of Christ. For, when he saith that he saw the grace of God, and that he exhorted them to go forward, hereby we gather that they were well taught. And the joy is a testimony of sincere godliness. Ambition is evermore envious and malicious; so that we see many seek for praise by reproving other men, because they are more desirous of their own glory than of the glory of Christ. But the faithful servants of Christ must rejoice (as did Barnabas) when they see the gospel increase, by whomsoever God shall make his name known. And assuredly those which help one another, so that they acknowledge that all the effect which springeth thence is the work of God, will never envy one another, neither will they seek to carp [at] one another, but will, with one mouth and mind, praise the power of God.

Again, this is worth the noting, that Luke doth attribute the faith of the men of Antioch, and whatsoever was worthy [of] praise there, to the grace of God. He might have reckoned up all those virtues which might make for the commendation of men; but he comprehendeth what excellence soever was in that Church under this word *grace.* Lastly, we must note Barnabas' exhortation. We have already said that Barnabas did subscribe to the former doctrine which they had embraced; but lest doctrine fall away, it is most requisite that it be thoroughly imprinted in the minds of the faithful by continual exhortations. For seeing that we have to encounter continually with so many and such strong adversaries, and our minds are so slippery, unless every man arm himself diligently, it will by and by fall away, which thing infinite numbers do show to be true by their falling away. Whereas he setteth down this manner of perseverance, that they continue with purpose of heart we are hereby taught that faith hath taken deep root then when it

hath a place in the heart. Wherefore it is no marvel, if scarce one of ten of those who profess faith do stand unto the end, seeing that very few know what the affection and purpose of heart meaneth.

24. *For he was a good man.* Barnabas is commended with the commendation of the Holy Ghost; yet we must know that there was respect had not so much of him as of us. For all those are condemned of ungodliness and malice who envy other men's labors, and are grieved when they see the same have good success.

Also we must note the epithet used in the description of a *good man, full of the Holy Ghost, full of faith.* For after that he had said that he was an upright and good man, he showed from what fountain this goodness did flow; that, abandoning the affections of the flesh, he did, with all his heart, embrace godliness, having the Spirit to be his guide. But why doth he separate faith from the Spirit, whose gift it is? I answer, that it is not named severally, as if it were a diverse thing, but it is rather set forth as a principal token, whereby it might appear that Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost.

There was a great multitude added. Though the number of the godly was already great, yet Luke saith that it was increased by Barnabas' coming. Thus doth the building of the Church go forward when one doth help another with mutual consent, and one doth gently allow [741] that which another hath begun.

Acts 11:25-26

Acts 11:25-26

25. And Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul: 26. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it happened that they lived a whole year in the church, and did teach a great multitude; so that at Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

25. Barnabas' simplicity is commended to us now the second time, that whereas he might have borne the chiefest swing at Antioch, yet went he into Cilicia that he might fet [fetch] Paul thence, who he knew should be preferred before him. Therefore we see how, forgetting himself, he respecteth nothing but that Christ may be chief; how he setteth before his eyes the edifying of the Church alone; how he is content with the prosperous success of the gospel. Therefore, Barnabas is no whit afraid lest Paul do any whit debase him by his coming, so he glorify Christ.

26. He addeth afterward, that such a holy concord was blessed from heaven; for this was no small honor that the holy name of Christians began there for all the whole world. Though the apostles had been long time at Jerusalem, yet God had not vouchsafed to bestow upon his Church, which was there, this excellent title of his Son. Whether it were because at Antioch

[741] "Candide… probat," candidly approves.

much people was grown together into one body, as well of Jews as of Gentiles, or whether it were because the Church might be better ordered in time of peace; or because they were more bold to confess their faith, there were in very deed Christians both at Jerusalem and also in Samaria before that time; and we know that Jerusalem was the first fountain from which Christianity did flow. [742] And what is it else to be a disciple of Christ but to be a Christian? But when they began plainly to be called that which they were the use of the name served greatly to set forth the glory of Christ, because by this means they referred all their religion unto Christ alone. This was, therefore, a most excellent worship for the city of Antioch. that Christ brought forth his name thence like a standard, whereby it might be made known to all the world that there was some people whose captain was Christ, and which did glory in his name.

But and if Rome had such a color of [pretext for] pride, who were able to suffer the proud boastings of the Pope and his adherents? They would then, not without cause, thunder out that Rome is the mother and head of all Churches; but it is well, that seeing they challenge to themselves whatsoever, when they come to the matter, they are found altogether vain; yea, Antioch itself doth plainly prove that the estate of one place is not continual. Admit we grant the Romans these plausible titles, *we have been sometimes, [we once were,]* shall they yet be so bold as to take one-half of that which belongeth to Antioch? And is the dignity of Antioch the greater now, because the Christians had their name thence? Yea, it is rather a manifest mirror of the horrible vengeance of God. For, seeing there is nothing to be seen there but evil favored wastiness, [743] it remaineth that we learn to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and that we know that unthankful men have not so much liberty granted them that they may freely mock God.

Acts 11:27-30

Acts 11:27-30

27. In those days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28. And one of them, named Agabus, arose, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be a great famine throughout the whole world, which happened under Claudius Caesar. 29. And as every one of the disciples was able, they decreed every man to send succor to the brethren which dwelt in Judea. 30. Which thing they did, sending it unto the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

27. Luke commendeth in this place the faith of the men of Antioch by the fruit, because they endeavored to relieve the poverty of that church, from whence they received the gospel, with their abundance; and that did they unrequested. Such earnest care for the brethren doth sufficiently declare

[742] "Verum fuisse fontem ex quo primum fluxit Christanismus," was the true fountain from which Christianity did first flow.

[743] "Deformen vasitatem," hideous devastation.

how seriously they worshipped Christ, the head of all. Luke doth signify that the fame of that church was spread abroad, when he saith that there came excellent men thither from Jerusalem. But forasmuch as the word *prophet* is taken divers ways in the New Testament as we may learn by the former Epistle to the Corinthians, those are called prophets in this place who were endued with the gift of prophesying, as the four daughters of Philip shall have the same title given them hereafter. And forasmuch as the foretelling of the famine is attributed to Agabus alone, we may hereby gather that this was granted to every one by a certain measure to know things to come.

28. *He signified by the Spirit.* Luke doth plainly express that the Spirit of God was the author of this prophecy, that we may know that it was not a conjecture taken by the stars, or some other natural causes; again, that Agabus did not play the philosopher after the manner of men, but he uttered that which God had appointed by the secret inspiration of the Spirit. Barrenness may indeed be sometimes foretold by the disposition of the stars, but there is no certainty in such foretellings, both because of the opposite concourses, and also, especially, because God doth govern earthly things at his pleasure, far otherwise than can be gathered by the stars, that he may lead men away from the perverse beholding of stars. And although these foretellings have their degree, yet the prophecies of the Spirit do far exceed them. But it seemeth that the foretelling of the famine was unlucky, [of evil omen,] and not to be wished for; for to what end was it for men to be made miserable before their time, by having the unhappy event foretold? I answer, that there be many causes for which it is expedient that men should be warned before in time when the judgments of God hang over their heads, and punishments [are] due to their sins. I omit others which are usual [744] in the prophets, because [viz. that] they have a space granted wherein to repent, that they may prevent God's judgment, who have provoked his wrath against themselves; because [that] the faithful are instructed in time to arm themselves with patience; because [that] the obstinate wickedness of wicked men is convict; because [that] both good and evil learn that miseries do not come by chance, but that they are punishments wherewith God doth punish the sins of the world; because [that] those are awakened out of their sleep and sluggishness by this means, who took great delight in their vices. The profit of this present prophecy appeareth by the text, because the men of Antioch were thereby pricked forward to relieve their brethren which were in misery.

Which happened under Claudius. Suetonius also maketh mention of this famine, who saith that there were crusts or shards thrown at Claudius' head in the midst of the market and that he was so sore afraid of stoning, that he had a singular care afterward, during his whole life, to make provision for victual. And Josephus, in his Fifteenth Book of Antiquity, saith, that Judea was sore oppressed with scarcity, by reason of continual drought.

[744] "Passim occurrunt," everywhere occur, are everywhere mentioned.

29. But here ariseth a question, seeing that the misery was common to all, why ought they rather to have succored one people than all the rest? I answer, that forasmuch as Judea was impoverished with great destructions of wars and other miseries, the men of Antioch were not without cause more moved with the miseries of the brethren which were there; secondly, the greater the rage of the enemies was, the more wretched was the estate of the brethren. Finally, Paul doth sufficiently declare, in the Epistle to the Galatians, that Judea had certain especial necessities, whereof all other had regard, not without cause, (Galatians 3) And this thankfulness deserved no small commendations, in that the men of Antioch thought that they ought to help the needy brethren, from whom they had received the gospel. For there is nothing more just than that those should reap earthly things who have sown spiritual things. As every man is too much bent to provide for himself, every man might readily have excepted and objected: Why shall not I rather provide for myself? But when they call to mind how greatly they are indebted to the brethren, omitting that carefulness, [745] they turn themselves to help them. In sum, this alms had a double end; for the men of Antioch did the duty of charity toward their needy brethren and they did also testify by this sign, what great account they made of the gospel, whilst that they honored the place whence it came.

As every man was able. We see the men of Antioch observe in this place that mean which Paul prescribeth to the Corinthians, (2 Corinthians 8:6,) whether they did this of themselves, or being instructed by him; and it is not to be doubted, but that he continued like to himself [746] in both places. Therefore we must follow this rule, that every one, considering how much is granted him, impart the same courteously with his brethren, as one that must give an account; so shall it come to pass, that he which is but poor shall have a liberal mind, and that a small reward [747] shall be counted a fat and gorgeous sacrifice. By this word *determined,* Luke giveth us to understand that their oblation was voluntary. Which thing ought so to be, as Paul teacheth, that we reach out our hand unto the needy not as constrained, but cheerfully, (2 Corinthians 9:7.) When as he nameth every one, it is all one as if he should say, that one did not prescribe another a law, neither did they burthen one another with their prejudice, but that every man did bestow his liberality as seemed good to himself; and we must note the word {διακονιας}, whereby we are taught that rich men have greater abundance given them upon that condition, that they may be the ministers of the poor in the dispensation committed to them by God. Lastly, Luke teacheth that the blessing was sent not to all the whole nation, but only to those that were of the household of faith, not because we ought never to use any bountifulness, or courtesy towards the unbelievers, seeing love ought to extend itself unto

[745] "Immodica illa anxietate," that excessive anxiety.
[746] "Sibi constiterit," is consistent with himself.
[747] "Munus," gift.

all mankind, but because those ought to be preferred whom God hath joined and linked to us move near, and with a more holy band.

30. *Sending it unto the elders,* [presbyters.] We must note two things in this place, that the men of Antioch did choose faithful men, and of known honesty, to carry their blessing; secondly, that they sent it unto the elders, that they might wisely bestow the same. For if alms be thrown into the midst of the common people, or be set in the midst where every one may take what he will, every man will by and by take it to himself as if it were some common prey; and so he that is most bold will defraud the needy; yea, through his greediness he will cut the throats of the hungry. Therefore, let us mark these places, which teach that we must not only deal uprightly and faithfully, but that there is also an order and wisdom required as well in making choice as in all our administration. Those are called elders in whose hands the government of the Church was, among whom the apostles were chief; the men of Antioch refer the holy money (which they had appointed for the poor) to their discretion. If any man object that this was the office of the deacons, forasmuch as the apostles did deny that they could both serve tables and attend upon doctrine, answer is easy, that the deacons were appointed over tables, in such sort, that yet, notwithstanding, they were under the elders, [presbyters,] neither did they any thing but at their appointment.

Chapter 12

CHAPTER 12

Acts 12:1-5

Acts 12:1-5

1. About that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to afflict certain of the Church. 2. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3. And when he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also. (Then were the days of sweet [unleavened] bread.) 4. When he had taken him also, he put him in prison, delivering him to four quaternions of soldiers to be kept; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. 5. Therefore, Peter was kept in prison; but continual prayer was made for him of the Church of [to] God.

1. Here followeth new persecution raised by Herod. We see that the Church had some short truce, that it might, as it were, by a short breathing, recover some courage against the time to come, and that it might then fight afresh. So at this day there is no cause why the faithful, having borne the brunts of one or two conflicts, should promise themselves rest, [748] or should desire such a calling [749] as old overworn soldiers use to have. Let this suffice them if the Lord grant them some time wherein they may recover their strength. This Herod was Agrippa the greater, [elder,] the son of Aristobulus, whom his father slew. Josephus doth no where call him Herod, it may be, because he had a brother who was king of Chalcis, whose name was Herod. This man was incensed to afflict the Church not so much for any love he had to religion, as that by this means he might flatter the common people which did otherwise not greatly favor him; or rather, he was moved hereunto with tyrannical cruelty, because he was afraid of innovation, which tyrants do always fear, lest it trouble the quiet estate of their dominion. Yet it is likely that he did shed innocent blood, that, according to the common craft of kings, he might gratify a furious people; because St. Luke will shortly after declare that Peter the apostle was put into prison that he might be a pleasant spectacle.

He killed James. Undoubtedly the cruelty of this mad man was restrained and bridled by the secret power of God. For assuredly he would never have been content with one or two murders, and so have abstained from persecut-

[748] "Perpetuam. quietem," perpetual rest.
[749] "Vacationem," discharge.

ing the rest, but he would rather have piled up martyrs upon heaps, unless God had set his hand against him, and defended his flock. So when we see that the enemies of godliness, being full of fury, do not commit horrible slaughters, that they may mix and imbrue all things with blood, let us know that we need not thank their moderation and clemency for this; but because, when the Lord doth spare his sheep, he doth not suffer them to do so much hurt as they would. This Herod was not so courteous, that he would stick to win peace or the people's favor with the punishment of an hundred men or more.

Wherefore, we must think with ourselves that he was tied by one that had the rule over him, that he might not more vehemently oppress the Church. He slew James, as, when any sedition is raised, the heads and captains go first to the pot, [750] that the common riff-raft may by their punishment be terrified. Nevertheless, the Lord suffered him whom he had furnished with constancy to be put to death, that by death he might get the victory as a strong and invincible champion. So that the attempts of tyrants notwithstanding, God maketh choice of sweet-smelling sacrifices to establish the faith of his gospel. Luke calleth this games which was slain the brother of John, that he may distinguish him from the son of Alpheus. For whereas some make him a third cousin of Christ's, who was only some one of the disciples, I do not like of that, because I am by strong reasons persuaded to think that there were no more. Let him that will, repair to the second to the Galatians. Therefore, I think that the apostle and the son of Alpheus were all one, whom the Jews threw down headlong from the top of the temple, whose death was so highly Commended for his singular praise of holiness.

3. *Seeing that it pleased the Jews.* It appeareth more plainly by this that Herod was not moved either with any zeal that he had to Moses' law or with any hatred of the gospel, thus to persecute the Church; but that he might provide for his own private affairs, for he proceedeth in his cruelty that he may win the people's favor; therefore we must know that there be diverse causes for which the Church is assaulted on every side. Oftentimes perverse zeal driveth the wicked headlong to fight for their superstitions, and that they may sacrifice an offering to their idols by shedding innocent blood; but the more part is moved with private commodities only, so in times past, at such time as Nero knew, after the burning of the city, that he was loathed and hated of the people, he sought by this subtle means to get into favor again, or, at least, he went about to stay their slanders and complaints, by putting certain thousands of the godly to death.

In like sort, that Herod may win the people's favor, who did love him but a little, he putteth the Christians to death. as a price wherewith he might redeem their favor; and such is our estate at this day, for though all men run

[750] "In duces et capita animadverti solet," punishment is usually inflicted on the heads and captains.

by troops upon the members of Christ, [751] yet few are pooked [752] forward with superstition; but some sell themselves to antichrist, like profitable bond-slaves; other some bear with, and commend the outrageous outcries of monks and the common people. But we, in the mean season, being abjects, must be glad to bear their mocks; yet there is one comfort which doth excellently keep us on foot, in that we know that our blood is precious in the sight of Almighty God, which the world cloth shamefully abuse; yea, the more shamefully and reproachfully the wicked do handle us, so much the less shall God's goodness forsake us.

4. *Adding four quaternions of soldiers.* Luke doth, in this place, declare by circumstances that Peter was, as it were, shut up in his grave, so that it might seem that he was quite past hope; for as they divided the day and night into four parts by three hours, so Herod divided the watches, that four soldiers might always keep watch, and that one quaternion might succeed another every third hour. He showeth the cause why he was not forthwith put to death, because it had been an heinous offense to put him to death in the Easter holidays; therefore, Herod doth not delay the time as doubtful what to do, but doth only wait for opportunity; yea, he maketh choice of a time, when as his gift may be more plausible, because there came a great multitude together from all parts unto the holy day. [753]

5. *But prayers were made.* Luke teacheth here that the faithful did not, in the mean season, foreslow [neglect] their duty, Peter stood in the forward [754] alone; but all the rest fought with their prayers together with him, and they aided him so much as they were able. Hereby we do also gather, that they were not discouraged, for by prayer they testify that they persist so much as they are able in defense of the cause, for which Peter is in danger of life. This place teacheth, first, how we ought to be affected when we see our brethren persecuted by the wicked for the testimony of the gospel, for if we be slothful, and if we be not inwardly touched with their dangers, we do not only defy and them of the due duty of love, but also treacherously forsake the confession of our faith; and, assuredly, if the cause be common, yea, if they fight for our safety and salvation, we do not only forsake them, but even Christ and ourselves; and the present necessity requireth, that they be far more fervent in prayer than commonly they are, whosoever will be counted Christians. We see some of our brethren (being brought to extreme poverty) live in exile, others we see imprisoned, many cast into stinking dungeons, many consumed with fire, yea, we see new torments oftentimes invented, whereby being long tormented they may feel death. Unless these provocations sharpen our desire to pray, we be more than blockish; therefore, so soon as any persecution ariseth, let us by and by get ourselves to prayer.

Also, it is a likely thing that the Church took greater thought for Peter's

[751] "Insaniant," rage against.
[752] "Incitat," instigated by.
[753] "Ad diem festum," to the feast, or festival.
[754] "In prima acie," in the front rank, the van.

life, because they should have suffered great loss if he had gone. [755] Neither doth Luke say barely that *prayer was made;* but he addeth also, that it was *earnest* and continual, whereby he giveth us to understand that the faithful prayed not coldly or over fields; [756] but so long as Peter was in the conflict, the faithful did what they could to help him, and that without wearisomeness. We must always understand the name of God, which is here expressed, whensoever mention is made of prayer in the Scripture, for this is one of the chiefest and first principles of faith, that we ought to direct our prayers unto God alone, as he challengeth to himself this peculiar worship, "Call upon me in the day of tribulation," (Psalm 50:15.)

Acts 12:6-11

Acts 12:6-11

6. And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night slept Peter between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers kept the prison before the door. 7. And, behold, the angel of the Lord stood, and a light shined in the habitation: and he smote Peter's side, saying, Arise straightway; and his chains felt from his hands, 8. And the angel said to him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. Then he saith to him, Put thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9. And going out, he followed him, neither understood he that that was true which was done by the angel; but he thought that he saw a vision. 10. And when they were past the first watch, and the second, they came to the iron gate, which leadeth into the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and when they were come out, they passed through one street, and by and by the angel departed from him. 11. Then Peter returning to himself, said, Now of a truth I know that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the waiting of the people of the Jews.

6. *When he was about to bring him forth.* It seemeth at the first blush that the Church prayeth to small purpose, for the day was now appointed wherein Peter should be put to death, and he is within one night of death, and yet the faithful cease not to pray, because they know that when the Lord doth purpose to deliver his, he taketh his time oftentimes in the last and farthest point of necessity, and that he hath in his hand diverse ways to deliver. Secondly, we may think that they did not so much pray for Peter's life, as that the Lord would arm him with invincible fortitude, for the glory of the gospel, and that God would [not] set the gospel of his Son open to the reproaches and slanders of the wicked.

That night he slept. All these circumstances do more set forth the wonderful power of God, for who would not have thought that Peter was already swallowed up of death? for though he drew breath as yet, yet he had no

[755] "In ejus morte," in his death.
[756] "Defunctorie," perfunctorily.

chinch [chink] to creep out at, for as much as he was beset with many deaths. Therefore, whereas he escapeth from amidst deaths, whereas he goeth safely among the hands of his hangmen, whereas the chains are molten and are loosed, whereas the iron gate openeth itself to him; hereby it appeareth that it was a mere divine kind of deliverance, and it was profitable for Peter to be thus taught by these signs, that he might with more assurance forthwith declare unto men the grace of God thus known. Again, it appeareth by this strait keeping that Herod meant nothing less [757] than to let Peter go away alive.

7. *A light shined,* It is to be thought that Peter alone saw this light, and that the soldiers did either sleep so soundly, or else were so amazed, that they neither felt nor perceived any thing, And there might be two causes why God would have the light to shine; either that Peter might have the use thereof, and that the darkness might be no hindrance to him, or that it might be to him a sign and token of the heavenly glory. For we read oftentimes that the angels appeared with glistering brightness, even when the sun did shine, Assuredly, Peter might have gathered by the strange light that God was present, and also he ought to have made his profit thereof. When as the angel smiteth Peter's side, it appeareth hereby what a care God hath for his, who watcheth over them when they sleep, and raiseth them when they are drowsy. And surely there were nothing more miserable than we, if the continuance of our prayers alone did keep God in his watching over us; for such is the infirmity of our flesh that we faint and quail, and we stand most of all in need of his help when our minds, being drawn away, do not seek him. Sleep is a certain image of death, and doth choke and drown all the senses, what should become of us if God should then cease to have respect to us? But forasmuch as when the faithful go to sleep, they commit their safety to God, it cometh to pass by this means, that even their sleep doth call upon God.

Whereas he saith, that immediately after the angel had said the word the chains were loosed, we gather by this, that there is power enough in the commandment of God alone to remove all manner [of] lets, when all ways seem to be stopt on all sides, so that if he intend to appease the motions and tumults of war, although the whole world were appointed in armor, their spears and swords shall forthwith fall out of their hands; on the other side, if he be determined to punish us and our sins with war, in a moment, (in the twinkling of an eye,) their minds, which were before given to peace, shall wax hot, and they shall lay hand on their swords. Whereas Luke setteth down severally both the words of the angel, and also the course of the matter, it serveth for the more certainty of the history, that it may in every respect appear that Peter was delivered by God.

9. *He knew not that it was true.* He did not think that it was a vain or false visor, as Satan doth oftentimes delude men with jugglings; but *true* is

[757] "Nihil Herocli fuisse minus in animo," that there was nothing Herod less intended.

taken in this place for that which is done naturally and after the manner of men. For we must note the contrariety [antithesis] that is between the thing itself and the vision. Furthermore, though he think that it is a vision, yet doth he willingly obey; whereby his obedience is proved, whilst that being content with the commandment of the angel alone, he doth not inquire nor reason what he must de, but doth that which he is commanded to do.

10. *When they were past.* God was able to have carried Peter away in the turning of an hand; [758] but he overcometh diverse straits one after another, that the glory of the miracle might be the greater. So he created the world in six days, (Genesis 1.) not because he had any need of space of thee, but that he might the better stay us in the meditating upon his works, (Exodus 20:11,) for he applieth the manner of doing unto our capacity, and unto the increase of faith. If Peter had at a sudden been carried unto the house where the brethren were assembled, then should one only deliverance have been acknowledged, but now we see, as it were with our eyes, that he was delivered more than ten times.

11. *Then Peter returning to himself.* It is word for word, being made in himself, because, being before astonied with a strange and incredible thing, he was, as it were, without himself. But now at length, as it were after a trance, he knoweth that he is delivered from death. His words set down by Luke contain a thanksgiving; for he extolleth with himself the benefit of God which he had tried, [experienced,] and whereof he had tasted, and he doth highly commend it with himself, until he find some other witnesses. He saith that the angel was sent of God, according to the common meaning of the godly, who hold that the angels are appointed to be ministers, to be careful for, and to take charge of their safety; for unless he had been thus persuaded, he would not have spoken of the angel. And yet he doth not commend the angel as the author of the grace, but he ascribeth all the whole praise of the work to God alone, neither do the angels help us to this end, that they may derive unto themselves even the least jot of God's glory. Whereas he saith that he was delivered out of the hand of Herod, he amplifieth the goodness and benefit of God, by the power of his enemy. To the same end tendeth that which he addeth of the Jews; for the greater the number of the enemies was, the more excellent was the grace of God toward his servant; for it is a great matter that God alone being favorable, the deadly hatred of all the whole world should come to nought.

Acts 12:12-19

Acts 12:12-19

12. And, considering, he came into the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered and praying. 13. And when Peter had knocked at the entry-door, a maid came out to hearken,

[758] "Momento uno," in one moment.

named Rhoda. 14. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the door for joy, but running in, she told that Peter stood without. 15. But they said to her, Thou art mad. But she affirmed more vehemently that it was so. But they said, It is his angel. 16. But. Peter continued knocking: when they had opened, they saw him, and they were astonished. 17. But after that he had beckoned to them with the hand, that they should hold their peace, he told them how God had brought him out of prison. And he said, Tell James and the brethren these things. And he departed thence, and went into another place. 18. After that it was day, there was no small ado amongst the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19. And when Herod had sought him, and could not find him, so soon as he knew the matter, he commanded the keepers to be carried away, [executed.]

12. *Into the house of Mary* It appeareth that she was a matron of rare godliness, whose house was, as it were, a certain temple of God, where the brethren did use to meet together. And Luke saith that there were many assembled there, because, seeing they could not all meet together in one place without fear of some tumult, they came together in diverse places of the city in companies, as they could conveniently. For, doubtless, there were other companies gathered together elsewhere, because it is not to be thought that (at such times as many of the faithful did give themselves to prayer) the apostles were not in like sort occupied, and one house could not hold so many. And we must always mark the circumstance of time, because, even in the heat of the enemy's cruelty, the godly were, notwithstanding, assembled together. For if, at any time, this exercise be profitable, then is it most necessary when hard conflicts approach.

15. *When he did knock at the gate.* Whereas they think that the maid is mad, which telleth them that Peter was come; we gather by this, that they did not hope or look for Peter's deliverance, and yet we will not say that they prayed without faith; because they looked for some other success, to with that Peter being armed with power from heaven, should be ready, whether it were by life or death, to glorify God, [759] that the flock being terrified with the violent invasion of wolves might not be scattered abroad, that those that were weak might not faint, that the Lord would put away that whirlwind of persecution. But in that the Lord granteth them more than they hoped for, he surpasseth their desires with his infinite goodness. And now that which was done seemeth to them incredible, that they may be the more provoked to praise his power.

It is his angel. They call him his angel, who was by God appointed to be his keeper and the minister of his safety. In which sense Christ saith that the angels of little ones do always see the face of his Father, (Matthew 18:10.) And what do they gather hence commonly? that every particular man hath a particular angel, which taketh charge of him; but it is too weak. For the Scripture doth sometimes testify (Exodus 14:10) that there is one angel given

[759] "Christi nomen," the name of Christ.

to a great people, and to one man only a great host. For Elizeus [Elisha] his servant had his eyes opened, so that he saw in the air chariots of fire, which were appointed to defend the prophet, (2 Kings 6:17.) And in Daniel there is but one angel of the Persians, and one of the Grecians named, (Daniel 10:5, 12.) Neither doth the Scripture promise to every man a certain and peculiar angel, but rather that the Lord hath charged his angels to keep all the faithful, (Psalm 91:11;) also that they pitch their tents about the godly, (Psalm 34:8.) Therefore, that vain surmise which is common touching the two angels of every man is profane. Let this be sufficient for us, that the whole host of heaven doth watch for the safety of the Church; and that as necessity of time requireth sometimes one angel, sometimes more do defend us with their aid. Assuredly, this is inestimable goodness of God, in that he saith that the angels, who are the beams of his brightness, are our ministers.

17. *Tell James and the brethren:* By brethren I understand not every one that was of the Church but the apostles and elders. For though it were requisite that the miracle should be made known to all, yet will Peter worthily for honor's sake, have his fellows in office to be certified thereof. Ecclesiastical writers after Eusebius report that this *James* was one of the disciples; but forasmuch as Paul reckoneth him in the number of the three pillars of the Church, (Galatians 2:9,) I do not think that a disciple was advanced to that dignity, and the apostles set aside. Wherefore, I do rather conjecture, that this was James the son of Alpheus, whose holiness was such, that it caused the Jews to wonder at it. And there be two reasons for which Peter would have this joyful message brought unto the brethren; to wit, that he might rid them of that care which did vex them; secondly, that they might be encouraged with such an example of God's goodness to be the more bold. Whereas he passeth into another place, I think it was done for this cause, because, forasmuch as the house was well known and famous, because many of the brethren resorted thither, he might lie hid elsewhere with less danger. Therefore, he sought a place which was not so much suspected of the enemy, and that he might not only save himself, but also his hostess and others.

18. *When it was day.* Luke returneth now unto Herod and the soldiers; and he saith that there was no small ado amongst them. For they could not suspect that Peter was taken from them by violence, or that he was escaped by some subtle shift. Herod examineth the matter afterward as a judge; but when as he perceived that the soldiers were in no fault, he himself is also enforced to be a witness of the deliverance wrought by God. Whereas he commandeth them to be carried out of his sight, or to be carried to prison, we may thereby gather, that their faithfulness and diligence were approved and seen; for if there had been any suspicion of negligence, there was punishment prepared for them; but the cause why he doth not let them go free was partly rage, mixed with tyrannous cruelty, and partly shamefacedness. Though some expound it otherwise, that he commanded that they should

be punished forthwith. [760] And whether, being angry, he delivered them to the hangman, or he was content to punish them with perpetual imprisonment, it is assuredly an excellent example of blindness, that whereas he ought to perceive the power of God, yea, though his eyes were shut, yet doth he not bend, neither doth he wax more meek, but proceedeth to resist God of obstinate malice. Thus doth Satan deprive the wicked of understanding, that in seeing they see not; and the Lord, by smiting them with this horrible amazedness, doth justly revenge himself and his Church.

Acts 12:19-25

Acts 12:19-25

And descending from Judea to Cesarea, he stayed there. 20. And Herod was offended with those of Tyre and Sidon: but they came unto him with one consent, and persuading Blastus, the chamberlain to the king, they required peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country. 21. And upon a day appointed Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel, and sitting upon his throne, he made an oration unto them. 22. And the people cried, It is the voice of God, and not of man. 23. And straightway the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not the glory to God: and being eaten of worms, he died. 24. Furthermore, the word of God did increase and multiply. 25. And Barnabas and Paul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, having finished their office, taking John with them, which was called Mark.

20. A worthy [761] history, which doth not only show, as it were in a glass, what end is prepared for the enemies of the Church, but also how greatly God hateth pride. The Scripture saith that "God resisteth the proud," (1 Peter 5:5.) God himself did show a lively image thereof in the person of Herod. And assuredly men cannot extol themselves higher than becometh them, but they shall make war with God, who, to the end he may surpass all, [762] commandeth all flesh to keep silence. And if God did so sharply punish pride in a king whom prosperity did puff up, what shall become of those of the common sort who are ridiculously puffed up without cause? Furthermore, we must note the course of the history, that all things go well with Herod after that he had miserably vexed the Church; he enforced the nations round about him, being tamed with hunger, to come to crave pardon upon their knees, as if God had rewarded him well for his wicked fury. This was no small trial for the godly, who might have thought thus with themselves [763] that God cared not for them, and they were afraid lest with Herod's power his tyranny and cruelty should increase. But the Lord had another purpose, [764]

[760] "Extemplo ad Supplicium rapi," that they should he immediately dragged off to execution.

[761] "Memorabilis," a memorable.

[762] "Ut solus emineat," that he alone may have the pre eminence.

[763] "Quibus obrepere suspieio poterat," who might be led to suspect.

[764] "Sed longa aliud fnit Dei consilium," but very different was the purpose of God.

for he set the oppressor of his Church on high that he might have the greater fall. Therefore, that shadowish felicity, wherein he delighted too much, was unto him a certain falling against the day of slaughter. In like sort, when at this day we see the bloody enemies of the Church carried up upon the wings of fortune into heaven, there is no cause why we should be discouraged; but let us rather call to mind that saying of Solomon,

"Pride goeth before calamity;
and the heart is lifted up before a fall,"
(Proverbs 16:18.)

Herod was displeased. Luke useth the compound participle, {θυμομαχον} which signifieth *privy grudging* or *hatred.* Therefore Herod did not make open war against those cities; but such was his displeasure, that he essayed to subdue them by policy, as it were by undermining them by little and little. It is a rare matter, saith Demosthenes, for free cities to agree with monarchs. Moreover, Herod was naturally cruel, bold, of insatiable covetousness; and it is not to be doubted but that Tyre and Sidon were, as it were, certain bars or rails to stay his fury, as they were wealthy cities, and unaccustomed to bear the yoke. Also, the remembrance of their old glory might have encouraged them; forasmuch as pride cometh commonly of wealth, it is no marvel if these two cities were proud, the one whereof Isaiah calleth queen of the seas, whose merchants, he said, were kings, and her chapmen dukes, (Isaiah 23:8.) Also, he saith elsewhere that Sidon was become proud by reason of her wealth. And although they had sundry times been brought almost to utter ruin, yet the commodiousness of their situation did shortly restore them to their wonted state. Hereby it came to pass that they could more hardly digest Agrippa, of late a base fellow, a man of no estimation, [765] and one who had been let out of prison; especially seeing that he had behaved himself so cruelly toward his own subjects, and was troublesome and injurious to his neighbors.

Forasmuch as their country was nourished. It had not been good for him to have assailed the men of Tyre and Sidon with open war, therefore he giveth commandment that there should no corn nor victual be carried [766] out of his realm. By this means did he, without any army, besiege them by little and little. For the borders of both cities were strait, and their ground barren, whereas there was a great people to be fed. Therefore, after that they were tamed with hunger, they humbly crave peace, and that not free, for assuredly they had some laws given them; and it is to be thought that this Blastus mentioned by Luke was not with bare words persuaded, but with rewards [gifts] won to entreat the peace. [767] I know not why Erasmus did think it good to translate this place otherwise than the words import.

21. *Upon an appointed day.* Luke saith that the men of Tyrus and Sidon

[765] "Obscurae fortunas," of obscure origin.
[766] "Illis… importari," be imported to them.
[767] "Ut pacis esset interpres," to intercede for peace.

had peace granted them, because this was the occasion of the king's oration, without doubt, that he might make them his underlings hereafter. The same history is extant in Josephus, in his Nineteenth Book of Antiquities, save only that he calleth him everywhere Agrippa, whom Luke calleth Herod. It is to be thought that Agrippa was his proper name, and that he was called by none other name so long as he was a private man; but after that he was advanced to be a king, he took to himself princely dignity, according to the name of his grandfather. Josephus and Luke agree together wonderfully in the thing itself, and in all circumstances. First, they agree concerning the place. Josephus saith, That his garment was embroidered with gold, on which, when the sun-beams light, it did glister again; and that this was the cause which moved the courtiers to call him [768] a god. That he was suddenly wounded; also, that there was seen an owl sitting upon a cord over his head, which cord did prognosticate his ruin. And he is so far from doubting that his sacrilegious pride was punished with this kind of punishment, that he saith, that he confessed the same openly amidst his cruel torments, "Behold me, whom you call a god; I am enforced to finish my life most miserable." There is no mention made there of the peace made with those of Tyrus and Sidon; but that he made and set forth plays [769] in honor of Caesar. But it may be that the solemnity of the plays was appointed in respect of the peace concluded, which we know was a solemn thing.

23. *Forthwith he smote him.* As, before, the angel was a minister of God's grace in the delivery of Peter, so now he taketh vengeance upon Herod. And God doth sometimes use the ministry of angels in heaven in punishing; but sometimes he maketh the devils as hangmen, by whose hand he executeth his judgments. And this doth he as well toward his faithful servants as toward the reprobate. Saul was troubled and vexed by Satan, (1 Samuel 16:14) but the same did also befall holy Job, (Job 1:12; 2:7.) In the Psalms, the punishments wherewith God doth chasten the wicked are attributed to the evil angels; yet we see how the angel which had the government of the safety of the Church smiteth the Egyptians in the first-begotten, (Exodus 12:29;) although the Scripture calleth the wicked spirits God's spirits, because they are obedient to his commandment, though full sore against their will. But where the epithet *evil* is not added, as in this place, we must understand the angel which doth willingly obey God, and yet the shape of the owl, whereof Josephus maketh mention, did rather serve to figure the devil than an heavenly angel.

Furthermore, I dare not affirm for a surety what manner of disease that was. The word which Luke useth doth signify that he was eaten up of worms. Many conjecture that it was a lousy disease. This is certain, that even when he was yet alive he was corrupt with stink and rottenness, so that he was, as it were, a living carcass. So that he was not only vexed with cruel torments,

[768] "Consulataret," to salute him as.

[769] "Ludos celebraret," celebrated games.

but also made a laughing-stock to all men, and of all men reviled. For God intended to make choice of a kind of punishment wherewith he might repress the cruelty of a proud man with extreme ignominy. If he had been overcome of some great and valiant army, and had been brought to poverty, the judgment of God had not been so marked; and this had been an honest and princely chastisement; [770] but forasmuch as he abhorreth lice and worms, and this filthiness cometh out of his body, which doth kill him by eating him up, he is handled according to his deserts.

In like sort Pharaoh, forasmuch as he did so oft exalt himself against God with untamed pride, he was not orderly assailed by some prince that did border upon him, but locusts and caterpillars were God's warriors [soldiers] to make war against him, (Exodus 8:17, 24;) for the more proudly a man exalteth himself, the more doth he deserve to be cast doom of God into the lowest hell with shame and reproach. This is the reason why he set this reigned god Herod to be eaten up of worms, which he was at length enforced to grant, when he said, "Behold me, whom ye saluted as a god; I die miserable." Such a manifest example of horrible vengeance in a king's person ought to terrify us not a little from presuming to take to ourselves more than we ought; and that we do not suffer ourselves to be made drunk with the false commendation and flattery of men as with deadly poison.

Because he gave not the glory to God. He is condemned of sacrilege, not only because he suffered himself to be called God, but because, forgetting himself, he took to himself the honor due to God. We do not read that the king of Babylon was thus extolled; and yet the prophet upbraideth to him that he went about to make himself equal with God, (Isaiah 14:13, 14.) Therefore this sacrilege is a common fault in all proud men, because, by taking to themselves more than they ought, they darken the glory of God; and so, like giants, so much as ever they are able, they endeavor to pluck God out of his seat. Howsoever, they do not usurp the title of God, neither openly boast with their mouth that they are gods; yet because they take to themselves that which is proper to God, they desire to be, and to be accounted gods, having brought him under, furthermore, the prophet pointeth out the beginning of this evil in one word, when he bringeth in Nebuchadnezzar speaking on this wise, "I will go up," (Isaiah 14:13.)

Wherefore there is but one remedy, if every one keep himself in that degree wherein he is placed. Let those who are base and castaways [in a humble station] not desire to climb higher; let kings, and those who are above others, remember that they are mortal, and let them modestly submit their highness to God. And we must note, that it is not enough if men give to God only half the honor which is due to him, who challengeth all that wholly which is his own; if they submit themselves but in part, whom he will have to be thoroughly humbled. Now, forasmuch as the Scripture despoileth us quite of all praise of wisdom, virtue, and righteousness, there is no one of us that

[770] "Liberalis et regia castigatio," a dignified and royal chastisement.

can take to himself the least jot of glory without sacrilegious robbing of God. And it is a wonder that, seeing the Scripture pronounceth that all those make, as it were, open war against God which exalt themselves; and we do all grant that that cannot be done without our overthrow, [destruction;] the greatest part of men runneth, notwithstanding, headlong with furious boldness unto their own destruction; for there is scarce one of an hundred who, being mindful of his condition, doth leave to God his glory undiminished.

24. *And the word of God.* When the tyrant was once taken out of the way the Church was suddenly delivered, as it were, out of the jaws of the wolf. Therefore, though the faithful be accounted as sheep appointed to be slain, (Psalm 44:23,) yet the Church doth always overlive her enemies; and though the word of God seem oftentimes to be oppressed with the wicked tyranny of men, yet it getteth up the head again by and by, (Romans 8:37.) For Luke determined [771] not only what had happened after that Herod was dead, but also by this example to encourage us, that we may be assured that God will do that, in all ages, which he then did, to the end the gospel may at length break through all impediments of the enemies, and that the more the Church is diminished, it may the more increase through the heavenly blessing.

25 *And Barnabas and Paul.* The ministry which Luke saith Barnabas and Paul did finish, must be referred unto the alms, whereof mention was made before. For after that Agabus the prophet had foretold the famine and barrenness, the brethren gathered money at Antioch, whereby they might relieve the necessity of the church which was at Jerusalem; the carrying of this money was committed to Barnabas and Paul. Now Luke saith that they returned to Antioch, that he may pass over unto a new history. He addeth, *that they took with them John, whose surname was Mark,* whose mother was honorably commended before, that he might keep them company, who was afterward, as we shall see, a cause of grievous and dangerous [hurtful] discord between them.

[771] "Enim consilium Lucae fuit," for it was the purpose of God.

Chapter 13

CHAPTER 13

Acts 13:1-3

Acts 13:1-3

1. And there were in the church which was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon, called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod and Saul. 2. And as they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate to me Barnabas and Saul unto the work whereto I have called them. 3. Then after they had fasted and prayed, and laid the hands upon them, they let them go.

Here followeth an history, not only worthy to be remembered, but also very profitable to be known, how Paul was appointed the teacher of the Gentiles; for his calling was, as it were, a key whereby God opened to us the kingdom of heaven. We know that the covenant of eternal life was properly concluded with the Jews, so that we had nothing to do with God's inheritance, forasmuch as we were strangers, (Ephesians 2:12;) and the wall of separation was between, which did distinguish those of the household from strangers. Therefore it had profited us nothing, that Christ brought salvation unto the world, unless, the disagreement being taken away, there had been some entrance made for us into the Church. The apostles had already received commandment touching the preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, (Mark 16:16,) but they had kept themselves until this time within the borders of Judea. When Peter was sent to Cornelius, it was a thing so new and strange, that it was almost counted a monster, [prodigy.] Secondly, that might seem to be a privilege granted to a few men extraordinarily; but now, forasmuch as God doth plainly and openly appoint Paul and Barnabas to be apostles of the Gentiles, by this means he maketh them equal with the Jews; that the gospel may begin to be common as well to the one as to the other. And now the wall of separation is taken away, that both those who were far off and those which were nigh hand may be reconciled to God; and that being gathered under one head, they may grow together to be one body. Therefore Paul's calling ought to be of no less weight amongst us, than if God should cry from heaven in the hearing of all men, that the salvation, promised in times past to Abraham, and to the seed of Abraham, (Genesis 22:17) doth no less appertain unto us at this day, than if we had

come out of the loins of Abraham. For this cause is it that Paul laboreth so much [772] in defense and avouching of his calling, (Galatians 1:17, 12-24;) that the Gentiles may assuredly persuade themselves that the doctrine of the gospel was not brought to them by chance, neither by man's rashness, but, first, by the wonderful counsel of God; secondly, by express commandment, whilst that he made that known to men which he had decreed with himself.

1 *There were in the church.* I have declared in the fourth to the Ephesians, (Ephesians 4:11) and in the twelfth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 12:28,) what difference there is (at least in my judgment) between doctors and prophets. It may be that they are in this place synonyma, [synonymous,] (or that they signify both one thing,) so that this is Luke's meaning, that there were many men in that church endowed with singular grace of the Spirit to teach. Surely I cannot see how it can hang together, to understand by prophets those which were endowed with the gift of foretelling things; but I think rather that it signifieth excellent interpreters of Scripture. And such had the office to teach and exhort, as Paul doth testify in the fourteenth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 45:37.) We must mark Luke's drift: Paul and Barnabas were ministers of the church of Antioch; God calleth them thence now unto another place. Lest any man should think that that church was destitute of good and fit ministers, so that God did provide for other churches with the loss of it, Luke preventeth this, and saith, that there was such store there, that though it did help others, yet did there remain sufficient for the use thereof; whereby appeareth how plentifully God had poured out his grace upon the Church, whence rivers, as it were, might be deducted and carried into diverse places.

So even in our time God doth so enrich certain churches more than others, that they be seminaries to spread abroad the doctrine of the gospel. It must needs be that Manaen, who was brought up with Herod, came of some noble family. And this doth Luke recite of purpose that he may set forth to us his godliness who, despising worldly pomp, had coupled himself to the simple and despised flock of Christ. He might, indeed, have been a principal courtier if he had been ruled by ambition; but that he may wholly addict himself to Christ, he refuseth not to change those smokes of honor with [for] reproach and ignominy. For if we consider in what state the Church stood then, he could not give his name to the gospel, unless he should make himself subject [773] to common infamy. Therefore the Lord meant to teach us, by his example, to despise the world, that those may learn with a valiant and lofty mind to despise the world, who cannot otherwise be true Christians, unless they cast away those things which are precious to the flesh, as hurtful lets and hindrances.

2 *And they ministered to the Lord.* The word which Luke useth doth not only signify to be occupied about holy things, but also sometimes to bear

[772] "Multis locis," in many passages, omitted.

[773] "Quin se… subjiceret," without subjecting himself.

public offices. And because the holy rites of the Gentiles did for the most part consist upon [of] burnt-offerings and sacrifices, it is oftentimes taken for *to offer sacrifice;* which sense did well like the Papists, that they might prove that the apostles did use some sacrifice. But admit it were so; yet do they foolishly pretend for defense of their mass, that the teachers of Antioch did sacrifice. First, forasmuch as the word is of the plural number, it followeth that every one of them did say mass. But letting toys pass, I say we must consider what manner of sacrifice Christ commended to his Church. The Papists feign that the office of priesthood is enjoined them, to sacrifice Christ and by sacrificing him to redeem peace with God. There is so little mention made hereof in Scripture, that the Son of God doth rather challenge this honor to himself alone. Wherefore Christ's Church hath another priesthood, to wit that every man may offer himself and his to God; and that the public ministers may sacrifice to God, souls, with the spiritual sword of the gospel, as Paul teacheth, (Romans 15:16.) Moreover, the prayers of all the godly are the spiritual calves of the lips, (Hosea 14:2,) wherewith God is well pleased, when they are offered up upon the holy altar; that is, in Christ's name, [as] in the thirteenth to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 13:15.) Therefore, when Luke saith that the prophets and teachers ministered to God when the Spirit spake to them, I understand nothing else but that they were in the public action. He addeth *fasting,* that we may know that their minds were then free from all impediments, that nothing might hinder them from giving attendance to prophesying. But the question is, [774] whether they kept a common fast, or Luke doth only signify that they were fasting then until that time. This is, without question, that these circumstances were expressed, that Paul's calling may carry the more credit amongst us.

Separate to me. God commandeth that Paul and Barnabas be sent by the consent of the Church, thither whither he had appointed them to be sent; whereby we gather that there is no lawful election of pastors, save only wherein God is chief. For whereas he hath commanded that the Church should elect pastors and bishops, he hath not therefore granted men so much liberty, but that he will bear the chief sway as the chief governor. The ordinary election of pastors differeth from this appointing of Paul and Barnabas, because it was requisite that they should be appointed by the heavenly oracle to be the apostles of the Gentiles; which is not necessary to be done daily in ordaining pastors. But they agree in this, that as God did testify that Paul and Barnabas were already appointed by his decree to preach the gospel, so none may be called unto the office of teaching save only those whom God hath already chosen to himself after a sort.

Furthermore, there is no need that the Spirit should cry to us out of heaven, that he is called of God about whom we are, [775] because we receive

[774] "Dubium est," it is doubtful.

[775] "Divinitus vocatum esse eum de quo agitur," that he of whom we treat (whose election is in question) is divinely called.

those, as it were, from hand to hand, (as they say,) whom God hath furnished with necessary gifts, forasmuch as they are framed and made fit by his hand. But whereas Luke saith in this place, that Paul was appointed by the voices and consents [776] of the Church; it doth seem not to agree with Paul's own words, where he doth deny that he was called of men, or by men, (Galatians 1:1.) I answer, that he was made an apostle long before, (and that by no voices [suffrages] of men,) before such time as he was sent unto the Gentiles; and he had now already executed the office of an apostle many years, when he was called to go unto the Gentiles by a new oracle. Wherefore, that he may have God for the author of his apostleship, it is not without cause that he excludeth men. And he doth not now command that he be ordained by the Church therefore, [viz.] that his calling may depend upon men; but God publisheth that his decree, which was as yet known to a few, and that with a public commandment, and he commandeth that it be sealed with the solemn subscription of the Church. Therefore, this is the meaning of the words, That this is the time wherein Paul must preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and the wall being pulled down, he must gather a Church of the Gentiles, who were before strangers from the kingdom of God, (Ephesians 2:14.) For although God had used him hitherto at Antioch and elsewhere, this was now added as a peculiar thing, that God did intend to adopt the Gentiles into the same inheritance of life with the Jews. But and if he were thus created a teacher of the Church from the beginning, he should not then have been called at that time by men. For, seeing the Lord doth pronounce that he had called him, what doth he leave for the Church, save only that they subscribe obediently? For men's judgment is not here put as in a doubtful matter, neither have their voices and consents any freedom. But we must mark what I have already said, that Paul and Barnabas are not now only appointed teachers, but they have an extraordinary office enjoined them, that they may begin to bring the grace of God commonly unto the Gentiles. And that do the words import, when it is said, *Separate to the work* For undoubtedly he speaketh of a new work, and which had heretofore not been used.

But how is Barnabas in this place appointed to be Paul's companion and fellow in office, who, as far as we can read, did never execute the office of teaching? yea, who did always give Paul leave to teach, without saying anything himself? I answer, that he had occasions enough offered him to speak in Paul's absence, so that they had both of them enough to do. For one could not always be present in all places. It is not to be doubted but that he did faithfully discharge that duty which God had enjoined him, and that he was no dumb looker on. And why should we wonder that Luke doth not set down his sermons in plain words, seeing that he scarce repeateth one of a thousand of Paul's?

The Spirit said. Whatsoever Macedonius and his sect object that they

[776] "Suffragiis," by the suffrages.

may turn their backs, [777] yet we have a more plain and sound testimony of the divine essence of the Spirit in this place, than that they can escape it and make it frustrate. There is nothing more proper to God than with his power and commandment to govern the Church alone; but the Spirit challengeth this right when he commandeth that Paul and Barnabas be separated to him, and testifieth that they were called by his beck. Assuredly we must needs confess that the body of the Church is lame and without a head, unless we confess that it is God who ordereth the same at his pleasure, who setteth teachers over it, who governeth the proceedings and order thereof. We shall have afterwards chapter 20, in Paul's sermon, (Acts 20:28,) that all bishops are placed by the Holy Ghost, which govern the Church; but no man is to be counted a lawful pastor of the Church, as the same Paul witnesseth, save he which is called of God; neither doth God point out false prophets by any other mark, save only by this, that he hath not sent them; therefore, we gather that the Holy Ghost is God indeed, whose authority is sufficient to choose pastors, and who hath the chief rule in choosing them, which is likewise confirmed out of the words of Isaiah,

"And now, behold, the Lord hath sent me, and his Spirit,"
(Isaiah 48:16.)

Furthermore, we must note out of these words, that he is a person truly subsisting in God; for if we admit Sabellius's invention, that the word Spirit importeth no person, [778] but that it is a bare adjunct, [epithet] that shall be a foolish and absurd speech, that the Holy Ghost hath said, [779] Isaias also should foolishly ascribe to him the sending of a prophet.

3. *When they had fasted and prayed.* That they may obey the oracle, they do not only send Paul and Barnabas away; but also with a solemn rite they appoint them to be the apostles of the Gentiles; it is without question that this was a public fast. Luke said before, that they were fasting, forasmuch as they were busied in their ministry: it might be that that was according to the custom; but now there is another reason, for in appointing a public fast, which used to be done in hard matters and of great importance, they provoke both themselves and others unto an earnest ferventness in prayer, for this is oftentimes added in Scripture as a help to prayer; but (it was a matter of such weight to erect the kingdom of Christ amongst the Gentiles) the teachers of Antioch do not without cause earnestly pray the Lord, that he will enable his servants; [780] and that was not the end of their prayer, that God would, by his Spirit of wisdom and discretion, govern their judgments in choosing, because all disputation or doubting concerning this matter was taken away; but that God would furnish those with the Spirit of wisdom and

[777] "Tergiversandi causa," for the sake of tergiversation.

[778] "Hypostasin non designet," does not designate a hypostasis.

[779] "Inepta et absurda erit loqutio, quod Spiritus Sanctus dixerit," the expression, "that the Holy Spirit said," will be absurd and inept.

[780] "Ut det pares servis suis humeros," that he may make the shoulders of his servants equal to the burden, may fit them for the office.

strength whom he had already chosen to himself, that he would strengthen them with his power against all the invasions of Satan and the world, that he would bless their labors, that they might not be unfruitful, that he would open a gate for the new preaching of the gospel.

The laying on of hands which Luke reckoneth up, in the third place, was a kind of consecration, as we have said, (Acts 6:6.) For the apostles retained the ceremony which was used amongst the Jews, according to the old custom of the law; as also kneeling, and such rites, which were profitable to exercise godliness. In sum, this is the end why they laid their hands upon Barnabas and Paul, that the Church might offer them to God, and that they might with their consent declare that this office was enjoined them by God; for the calling was properly God's alone, but the external ordaining did belong to the Church, and that according to the heavenly oracle.

Acts 13:4-12

Acts 13:4-12

4. Therefore, when they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they went to Seleucia, and thence they sailed into Cyprus. 5. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they had John, also for their minister. 6. And when they had passed over the island unto Paphos, they found a certain false prophet, a Jew, named Bar-jesus, 7. Who was with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, a wise wan; who, when he had called Barnabas and Paul, sought to hear the word of God. 8. And Elymas, the sorcerer, (for so is his name expounded,) resisted them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith. 9. And Saul, which was also called Paul, being full of the [Holy] Ghost, and looking steadfastly on him, 10. Said, O thou that art full of all deceit and wickedness, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, dost thou not cease to pervert the straight ways of the Lord? 11. And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And forthwith there fell upon him mist and darkness, and, going about, he sought some to lead him by the hand. 12. Then the proconsul, seeing what had happened, he believed, wondering at the doctrine of the Lord,

4. *Being sent out by the Holy Ghost.* There is no mention made here of the election made by the Church, because it was altogether a divine calling; the Church did only receive those who were offered them by the hand of God. He saith, that they came first to Seleucia, which was a city of Syria. There was, indeed, a country of the same name; but it is more likely that Luke speaketh of the city, which was not far from Cyprus by sea.

5. He saith that they began to preach the gospel first in Salamis, a famous city of Cyprus. Notwithstanding, they seem to begin amiss; for whereas they were sent specially to the Gentiles, they preach the word of God, nevertheless, to the Jews, I answer, that they were not so addicted to the Gentiles, that,

setting aside the Jews, it stood them upon to go straight to the Gentiles, for when God did make them teachers of the Gentiles, he did not depose them from the office which they had heretofore exercised; so that there was no reason to let them, but that they might take pains, both with Jews and Gentiles; [781] yea, farther, it was meet that they should begin with the Jews, as we shall see in the end of the chapter. Moreover, Luke addeth by the way, that they were helped by John; for his meaning is not that he was their minister for any private use, or for the uses of body; but rather in that he was their helper to preach the gospel, he commandeth his godly study [zeal] and industry; not that the degree of honor was equal, but because the labor was common to all; for which cause he had the less excuse afterward, seeing that he forsook the holy calling.

6. *When they had passed over.* It is to be thought that this their passage was not altogether without fruit; and, assuredly, Luke would never have passed over with silence a general repulse; but it was sufficient for him to say that they were not idle in the office of teaching in their journey, seeing that he maketh haste unto a famous history, which he will set down immediately. And forasmuch as Salamis, situated upon the east coast, did look toward Syria, it was requisite that Paul and Barnabas should pass through the midst of the island unto the other side, that they might come to Paphos; for Paphos was a city situated upon the sea-coast toward the south. Furthermore though all the island was dedicated to Venus, yet Paphos was the principal seat of the idol. For which cause the goodness of God is more wonderful, in that he would have the light of his gospel to pierce into such a filthy and cruel [dire] den. For we may thereby gather what manner of integrity and chastity, and honesty and temperance, was in that city, in that religion did grant liberty to the inhabitants to commit all manner of shameful and heinous offenses.

They found a certain fake prophet. Seeing that religion was quite corrupt among the Jews, it is no marvel if they fell away unto many wicked superstitions. And forasmuch as they had hitherto professed that they worshipped a certain peculiar god, this was a fair color to deceive withal, seeing that they might pretend the name of the unknown God at their pleasure; but this is a wonder how it was possible for Elymas, with his juggling, to cozen a grave and wise man. For we know that the Jews were at that time hated of all the world, and especially of the Romans, and with hatred was coupled extreme contempt of them.

Now Luke doth not without cause expressly commend Sergius's wisdom, lest any man should think that his foolishness and lightness was subject to the seducings of the sorcerer. His meaning was, indeed, to show in a clear mirror how frivolous and vain man's wisdom is, which cannot beware of such gross subtlety of Satan.

And assuredly where the truth of God doth not appear, the more men

[781] "Ita nulla ratio prohibuit quin Judaeis promiscue et Gentibus operam suam conferrent," so nothing prevented them from bestowing their labor promiscuously on Jews and Gentiles.

seem to be wise, the more filthily foolish are they. We see what filthy monsters of superstition did reign amongst the most witty Gentiles, and such as were furnished with all manner of learning. Therefore, there is neither judgment nor wisdom, save only from the Spirit of God. And this is the just vengeance of God upon all idolaters, that being delivered up to a reprobate sense they can discern nothing, (Romans 1:28.) Though it may be that Sergius Paulus, being weary of superstitions, did then begin to desire a more pure worship of God, at such time as he [did] light upon that sorcerer. Which if we receive, it was surely a wonderful judgment of God, that he suffered a man godly-affected to throw himself headlong into the [deadly] snares of Satan. But God doth sometimes so exercise his elect, that he causeth them to wander many ways, before they be directed into the right way.

7. And whereas Sergius Paulus, desiring some better thing than that which he had learned from his childhood, was unaptly drawn aside unto diverse superstitions, I gather hereby that he sendeth for Paul and Barnabas of his own accord, to teach him. Therefore, he had conceived a certain reverence and fear of God, though he knew him not as yet; and forasmuch as he was persuaded that that was the true God which was worshipped in Judea, he desired to know out of his word a pure and certain rule of godliness. So soon as he hath tasted of the dotings of the false prophet he standeth in doubt. And it is not to be doubted, but that God doth solicit his mind, that he may not be altogether stayed in vanity, though he suffered himself to be deceived for a time by a wicked man.

8. *To turn away the deputy from the faith.* No marvel if the seducer seek to put away the light, whereby he saw his own darkness driven away. [782] The same stour [contest] have we at this day with a number of babblers, who use to sell their smokes, and to shut, by all shifts possible, the eyes of the simple, that they may not behold the Sun of righteousness, being now risen. We must wrestle with such lets; for as there be [not] always and everywhere magicians present, which procure us some business, [783] Satan thrusteth in lets [784] enough, which possess our minds to drive away Christ, which the flesh is too ready to receive. Finally, both the enticements of the world and the wicked affections of our flesh are as many charms, whereby Satan ceaseth not to overthrow the faith.

9. *And Saul, who was also called Paul.* Luke showeth now how God brake the bond wherein the deputy was bound. For seeing that he was too much addicted to the magician, he could not embrace true doctrine as one that was free and at liberty; for the devil keepeth those minds (which he hath entangled) in his slavery after a wonderful and incredible manner, that they cannot see even the most plain truth; but so soon as he was once vanquished, Paul could easily enter in unto the deputy. And mark what Luke saith, that

[782] "Discuti," dispelled.

[783] "Nam ut non semper et ubique praesto sint magi qui negotium nobis facessant," for though magicians are not always and everywhere present to give us trouble.

[784] "Avocamenta," enticements.

the faith is overthrown when the word of God is resisted. Whence we may gather that faith is so grounded in the word, that without this shore [785] it fainteth at every assault; yea, that it is nothing else but the spiritual building of the word of God.

10. *O thou full of deceit.* It was not without a cause that Paul was thus hot and angry; for he had no hope to do any good if he should deal after some moderate and mild sort. We must always begin with doctrine, and those are also to be admonished, exhorted, and pricked forward, who do not as yet appear to be altogether obstinate. Neither doth Paul so vehemently inveigh against the sorcerer at the first dash; but when he seeth him maliciously and manifestly fight against the doctrine of godliness, he handleth him like a bond-slave of Satan. Thus must we deal with the desperate enemies of the gospel, in whom appeareth open contumacy and wicked contempt of God, especially when they stop the way before others, And lest any man should think that Paul was out of measure angry, Luke saith plainly that the inspiration of the Spirit was his guide. Wherefore this heat of zeal is not only not to be reprehended, but it ought to make the profane condemners of God sore afraid, who fear not to rebel against his word; forasmuch as this judgment is given upon them all not by mortal man, but by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Paul.

As touching the words, this place refuteth their error who think that Paul took his name of the deputy, as if he had set up some token of victory. There may many reasons be brought, and those strong enough, on the contrary; but this one place is sufficient, where Luke showeth that at such time as the deputy was not brought to the faith he had two names. And it is not to be doubted but that he retained his own name [786] amongst the Jews; and we know that this was a usual thing, that those who were citizens of Rome should borrow some Italian name. Luke joineth *subtlety* with *deceit,* which is contrary to sincerity; to wit, whilst crafty men transform their wit hither and thither, so that they have in them no simplicity; though the Greek word which Luke useth signifieth ready boldness to do hurt; but the former signification agreeth better. By the *son of the devil* is meant a reprobate and desperate man. Such are all those which resist maliciously, and as it were of set purpose, that which is just and right; therefore Paul addeth, that he is a great *enemy of all righteousness.*

Dost thou not cease to pervert? He calleth all that means whereby the Lord bringeth us unto himself the ways of the Lord. He testifieth that this is plain and straight; and he accuseth the sorcerer for making the same crooked, full of turnings, and doubtful, with his boughts and turns. Whence may be gathered a profitable doctrine, that it cometh to pass through the subtlety of Satan that we do not readily, with straight course, go unto the Lord. For he showeth us in his word a plain way, and such as is not thorny. Wherefore we

[785] "Fultura," prop or support.

[786] "Gentile… nomen," his family name.

must take good heed of seducers, which trouble the way with their ditches or thorns, or else make the same hard and unpleasant.

And it shall be convenient to repeat here that which I touched before, that the servants of Christ must not be blamed if they do sore inveigh against the professed enemies of sound doctrine, unless we will accuse the Holy Ghost of intemperance. Neither am I ignorant how easily men may fall in this point; for which cause godly teachers must take so much the more heed, first, that they favor not the affections of the flesh too much under the color of zeal; secondly, that they break not out with headlong and unseasonable heat where there is yet place for moderation; thirdly, that they give not themselves over to foolish and uncomely railing, but only that they express the unseemliness of the thing by gravity and weight of words. Such was the vehemency of holy zeal and of the Spirit in the prophets, which if dainty and soft men judge troublesome and raging, they consider not how dear and precious God's truth is to him.

Now there riseth not one Elymas to subvert the faith but many, and those which are far more wicked. For we see with what sacrilegious boldness they despoil God of all honor; with what filthy corruptions they profane all religion; how cruelly they throw miserable souls headlong into eternal destruction; how unseemly they mock Christ; how filthily they disfigure all the whole worship of God; with what cruel reproaches they rend the holy truth of God; with what barbarous tyranny they lay waste the Church of God; so that you would say that they tread God under foot. And yet there be many crabbed philosophers who would have these furious giants flattered and clawed by the back. [787] But forasmuch as it doth evidently appear that such did never taste what that meaneth, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," (Psalm 69:9,) let us, bidding adieu to their coldness, or rather sluggishness, be most hot, [788] as becometh us, in maintaining the glory of God.

11. *Behold the hand.* The hand is put here to punish; [789] a whereby he doth signify that God is the author of this punishment, and that he is only the minister. Furthermore, I think that this hability is that which Paul calleth {δυναμις}, or *power,* (1 Corinthians 12:28.) For as they did excel in power of the Spirit to help the faithful with miracles, so had they the whip in their hand to tame the rebellious and obstinate withal. Such vengeance of God did Peter show upon Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts 5:5.) But because miracles ought, for the most part, to resemble the nature of Christ, who is all gentle, sweet, bountiful, and merciful; therefore he would seldom have the apostles to show examples of the contrary power. Neither must we think that they were endued with this power to punish any man so often as it seemeth good in their own eyes, but the same Spirit of God, which did thus

[787] "Blanditiis mulceri," soothed by flattery.

[788] "Usque ad summum fervorem efferamur, "let us be carried even to the highest pitch of fervour.

[789] "Ad plagam infligendam," for inflicting a blow.

arm them, did direct them unto the lawful and right use. Therefore we must remember that which we had before, that Paul spake by inspiration of the Spirit. Furthermore, it was a very fit kind of punishment. For seeing that the sorcerer essayed to darken the sun, and to take from others the benefit of the light, he was, by good right, cast into horrible darkness.

But now, forasmuch as many of the Papists do far exceed this sorcerer at this day in ungodliness, it is a wonder why they be suffered to be so bold without being punished. Is the hand of God weakened? Is he less careful for his glory? Hath he no care to revenge the gospel? I answer, that this visible punishment which was once laid [790] upon the sorcerer, and such as this, are perpetual examples of God's wrath against all those who are not afraid either to corrupt and deprave, or openly with slanders to resist the pure doctrine of the gospel. For we do know that miracles were wrought for a time to this end, that they may continually be in force, and be fresh before our eyes, and that they may give us light to behold the judgments of God, which we cannot see so plainly; but it is not for us to prescribe God this or that way to punish his enemies. Sergius Paulus, who, before he came to man's estate, had no taste of true religion, who, from his childhood, was infected with diverse superstitions, and had very hard lets, which kept him back from embracing the faith; lastly, who was bewitched with the dotings of the sorcerer, that he could scarce come to the faith, had need of no small helps. Hereby it came to pass that God did, as it were, reach his hand out of heaven manifestly, though he helped us all in his person; for the same gospel, the authority whereof was then established, is at this day preached to us, and yet, notwithstanding, God doth not so linger, but that he showeth his fearful power diverse ways against the enemies of the gospel, unless our eyes were so dull when he showeth his judgments that we cannot see.

12. *Then when the deputy saw* This is that which I said, that the snares were broken wherein Elymas kept him entangled, for he was brought by the miracle unto faith, because the reverence of doctrine is the beginning of faith, and the preparation. Therefore, forasmuch as he saw an evident token of the power of God, he knew that Paul was sent of God, and so he began to reverence his doctrine, whereof he did doubt before. If God do now miraculously strengthen in the minds of many the faith of the gospel, which is shaken with so many and such strong engines; if he bring to pass, after an incredible manner, that the course of faith doth pass through a thousand lets, being content with this his grace, let us not murmur against him, or reason the matter with him, as if our condition were worse, if he do not daily show such miracles as we would desire.

Acts 13:13-15

Acts 13:13-15

[790] "Inflicta," inflicted.

13. And when Paul's companions had loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga of Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. 14. Furthermore, when they had passed over the country of Perga, they came to Antioch, a city of Pisidia, and entered into the synagogue upon the day of the Sabbaths, and sat 15. And after the lecture of the law and prophets, the master of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if there be in you any word of exhortation unto the people, say on.

13. Here is set down another of Paul's stations; for, being departed from Paphos, when he came to Antioch of Pisidia, he made there a worthy [791] sermon, which Luke will recite, together with the success; but before he come to that, he doth by the way speak of the departure of John, because it was afterwards a cause of doleful disagreement. When he saith, *Paul's companions loosed from Paphos,* he doth, in the first place, mean Paul himself; secondly, the other, one excepted. So that by noting his softness, he praiseth others which followed Paul with great [792] constancy.

14. *Entering, upon the day of the Sabbaths.* He putteth the plural number instead of the singular, as it falleth out oftentimes in other places of Scripture; for they were wont to assemble themselves together upon the Sabbaths, lest their rest should be unprofitable and sluggish. The institution of the Sabbath had another end also, that it might be a figure of the spiritual rest when as the faithful, being dead to the world and the flesh, abandon their own will, and cease from their works. Because we have the truth hereof in Christ, whilst that being buried together with him we put off the old man; therefore the old figure is past. But God had respect also unto the politic use, that the Jews, being free from all other cares and businesses, might keep their holy assemblies; so that the ceasing off from earthly works did give a place to their heavenly exercises. So, even at this day we must use holy days; for we must therefore omit all other things that we may the more freely serve God.

15. *After the lecture* [reading] *of the law.* There is no mention made of prayers, and yet, undoubtedly, they were not omitted or foreslowed, [neglected;] but because Luke did intend to set down the sermon made there by Paul, no marvel if he reckon up those things only which did belong unto the order of teaching. And this is a notable place, out of which we learn after what sort they handled doctrine at that time among the Jews. The law and the prophets had the first place; because there must nothing be set before the Church which was not drawn out of that fountain. Also we gather by this that the Scripture was not suppressed among a few, but that both one and other [793] were admitted to the reading thereof, afterward those who were able, and had the grace to teach and exhort, had the second place, as interpreters of the Scripture which was read. Notwithstanding Luke showeth, last

[791] "Memorabilem," memorable.
[792] "Indefatigabili," indefatigable.
[793] "Omnes… promiscue," all promiscuously.

of all, that every one was not suffered to speak, lest confusion should arise by liberty; but the office of exhorting was committed to certain men, whom he calleth rulers of the synagogue, or masters. Therefore Paul and Barnabas begin not forthwith to speak, lest they disturb the accustomed order with too much haste; but they do modestly stay till they have liberty granted them to speak, and that with their leave who had authority by public consent. We know how corrupt the state of that people was then; and Luke will at length declare, in the end of the chapter, that these men of Antioch were too stout and stubborn in receiving [794] the grace of Christ; and yet there remained this goodness among them, that their assemblies were honestly and decently governed; [795] for which cause such evil favored confusion is so much the more shame fill which is seen at this day among those who will be counted Christians. The Papists do indeed sing [796] the Scriptures in their churches with shrill and sounding voice, but in an unknown tongue, so that the people reap no fruit thereby. There is seldom any doctrine used; and it were better for the wicked babblers even then to hold their peace, who thrust in their own unclean inventions instead of the Word of God, and pollute with the stink of their impiety whatsoever is holy.

If there be in you? This speech doth signify that what grace soever is in men to edify the Church, it is, as it were, committed [797] to them; although the word *in,* according to the Hebrew phrase, may be superfluous. Therefore, I stand not greatly upon that, because the sense may be plain, If you have any exhortation which is apt and profitable for the people. An exhortation doth not exclude doctrine. But it seemeth that this word was commonly used among them; because it is properly the office of the teacher to utter no new thing of his own brain, but to apply the Scripture, wherein is comprehended the whole wisdom of the godly, unto the present use of the people. Thus, they do not only teach, but also apply the doctrine which they have elsewhere, unto the edifying of the Church, which I think is meant by the word *exhortation.*

Acts 13:16-23

Acts 13:16-23

16. And Paul rose, and when he had given a token of silence with the hand, he said, Men and brethren, which fear God, hear. 17. The God of this people did choose our fathers, and exalted the people, when they were strangers in the land of Egypt; and he brought them thence with an high arm. 18. And about forty years he suffered their manners in the wilderness. 19. And having destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them

[794] "Respuenda," rejecting.
[795] "Compositi," arranged.
[796] "Cantillant," chant.
[797] "Depositum," deposited with.

their land for an inheritance. 20. After these things, about four hundred and fifty years, he gave them judges, until Samuel the prophet. 21. Afterward they required a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, forty year's. 22. And when he had taken him away, he raised up to them David to be king, of whom bearing witness, he said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man according to my heart, who shall do all my will. 23. Of whose seed God, according to promise, raised to Israel the Savior, Jesus.

16. We must note the state of this sermon, lest we think that he uttered words in vain. Paul seemeth, indeed, to begin even at the very first beginning, but he speaketh nothing but that which is most convenient for the present purpose. His purpose is to bring the Jews unto the faith of Christ; and that he may the better do this, it is needful to declare that they excel other nations in this one thing, because the Savior was promised them, whose kingdom is their principal and only felicity. This is, therefore, Paul's beginning, that whereas they were chosen in times past to be the peculiar people of God; whereas they had so many benefits bestowed upon them from time to time, though they showed themselves most unworthy, this did depend upon the promise of the Messiah, and did tend to that end, that God might govern them by the hand of the Messiah; and that therefore they have nothing whereof they may boast, unless they be gathered under their Head; yea, that unless they receive him when he is offered, the covenant of life which God had made with their fathers shall be void, and the adoption shall be frustrate. This is the drift of the first part of the sermon: that this is the principal point of the law and the foundation of God's covenant, that they have Christ for their Captain and Governor, that he may restore all things among them; that without him religion cannot stand, and that they shall be most miserable without him. Thence Paul passeth unto another member, that Jesus, whom he preacheth, is Christ indeed, through whom salvation is offered to the people; also he declareth the means of the redemption purchased by him. Furthermore, he intreateth of his power and office, that they may know what good things they ought to hope for at his hands. The conclusion containeth a chiding; for he threateneth to them horrible judgment, if they refuse the author of salvation, who offereth himself, even of his own accord, whom earnestly to desire the law and prophets provoke. This is, in a manner, the sum; now let us discuss every point by itself.

Men and brethren. Because Paul knew that there were many bastardly sons of Abraham, or such as were grown out of kind, [798] he calleth the Jews to whom he speaketh by a double name. First, he calleth them brethren, having respect unto common kindred, notwithstanding he showeth therewithal that they shall be true Israelites if they fear God, and that even then they are likewise true hearers, because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." In like sort he maketh the faithful attentive, and purchaseth audi-

[798] "Degeneres," degenerate.

ence among them, as if he should say, Seeing many boast that they are sons of Abraham, who were unworthy of such honor, show yourselves to be no bastardly seed. Let us learn by this that it is not a fault common to one age only, that good and sincere worshippers being mixed with hypocrites, have the name of the Church common among them. But we must have a great care hereof, that we be indeed that which we are called; which thing the true fear of Almighty God will bring to pass, and not the external profession alone.

17. *The God of this people.* This preface did witness that Paul did go about no new thing, which might lead away the people from the law of Moses. There is but one God, who is God of all nations; but he calleth him God of that people, to whom he had bound himself, and who was worshipped amongst the posterity of Abraham, amongst whom alone true and pure religion was to be found. To the same end tendeth that which is added immediately, *He chose our fathers.* For he testifieth by these words that he seeketh nothing less [799] than that they may fall away from the true and living God, who hath separated them from the residue of the world. Neither do I doubt but that he did more manifestly express that he did not preach to them an unknown or strange God, but the same who revealed himself long ago to their fathers; so that he doth briefly comprehend the sound knowledge of God, grounded in the law, that their faith, conceived out of the law and prophets, may continue firm.

Notwithstanding, he doth, in the mean season, commend and set forth the free love of God toward that people. For how came it to pass that only the children of Abraham were the Church and inheritance of God, save only because it pleased God to dissever them from other nations? For there was no worthiness to distinguish them; but the difference began at the love of God, wherewith he did freely love Abraham.

Of this free love of God, Moses doth oftentimes put the Jews to mind, as Deuteronomy 4:7, 8, 10, 14, 32, 34, and in other places; wherein God did set before us a mirror of his wonderful counsel, in that finding no excellence in Abraham, an obscure person and miserable idolater, he doth, notwithstanding, prefer him before all the world. Furthermore, this election was common to all the people, as was also circumcision, whereby God did adopt to himself the seed of Abraham; but there was also a more hidden election, whereby severing to himself a few of many children of Abraham, he did declare, that not all who came of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh are reckoned in the spiritual stock.

He did drive out a people. Paul teacheth that all those benefits which God bestowed afterwards upon the Jews, did proceed and flow from that free favor which he did bear toward their fathers. For this was the cause that they were delivered by the wonderful power of God, and brought by his hand into the possession of the land of Canaan, after that he had driven

[799] "Nihil se minus captare," that there is nothing he less desires.

out so many nations for their sake. For it is no small matter for the land to be deprived of her inhabitants, that she might receive strangers. This is the fountain and root of all good things whereunto Paul calleth us, that God chose the fathers. This was the reason and cause which moved God to so great patience, that he would not cast off that rebellious people, who should otherwise have destroyed themselves a thousand times with their own wickedness. Therefore, where the Scripture maketh mention that their sins were pardoned, it saith that God remembered his covenant. He saith that they were *exalted,* though they were *strangers,* that they may remember how worthy and gorgeous their deliverance was.

18. *He suffered their manners.* The compound verb hath greater force and grace in the Greek, whereby the mercifulness of God is expressed in suffering the people, whom he knew to be stubborn and disobedient. And Paul giveth us to understand again, that the election of God was the cause that his goodness did strive with the wickedness of the people. [800] Notwithstanding, we must note that God did so take pity upon his elect people, whilst that he will continue firm in his purpose, that he did, notwithstanding, sharply punish the rebellious and wicked. He spared the people indeed, so that he did not quite destroy them, as he might by good right; but he found also means that their wickedness might not remain unpunished. And so that of Isaiah was fulfilled,

"If the multitude shall be as the sand of the sea,
a remnant shall be saved," (Isaiah 10:22.)

20. *He gave them judges.* Under this name the Scripture comprehendeth rulers and governors; and here is another testimony of the infinite goodness of God toward the Jews, in that he pardoned so many backslidings in them. For it is likely that Paul handled those things more at large, which Luke gathereth briefly. And we know what was the estate of the people during all that time, seeing that through untamed wantonness they did ever now and then shake off the yoke. They were often punished with most grievous plagues, yet so soon as they were once humbled, God delivered them from the tyranny of their enemies. So that he saved the body thereof alive, amidst many deaths, four whole ages and one-half. And hereby it appeareth how unworthy they were of the favor of God, which they did despise and reject so often, unless the constancy of the election had gotten the victory. For how is it that God is never wearied, but that he keepeth promise with those who are truce-breakers an hundred times, save only because turning his eyes toward his Christ, he hath not suffered his covenant, grounded in him, to decay or perish?

21. *Afterward they desire.* And this change was all one as if they would quite and manifestly overthrow the government which he had appointed, whereof God himself complaineth in Samuel, (1 Samuel 8:5, 7.) But the stability of the election saved them from being punished as such madness

[800] "Sustinendo populo," in sustaining the people.

did deserve; yea, the wicked and unlawful desire of the people was to God a new and incredible occasion to erect the kingdom whence Christ should afterward come. For how is it that the scepter came to the tribe of Judah, save only because the people were desirous to have a king? And assuredly the people dealt wickedly; but God, who knoweth how to use evil things well, turned that offense into safety. Whereas Saul was thrown down from the kingdom, it served to reprove the fault of the people, (1 Samuel 15:28,) but immediately when the kingdom is established in David's family the prophecy of Jacob was verified, (Genesis 49:10.)

22. *I have found David, my servant.* This title was not so much cited in praise of the person, as that Paul might make the Jews more attentive to receive Christ. For the Lord doth testify that his mind was thoroughly set upon David for no light cause, but he commandeth in him some singular thing; and by extolling him so highly, his intent is to lift up the minds of the faithful unto Christ in his person. The place is taken out of the fourscore and ninth Psalm, (Psalm 89:20.) Only Paul putteth in that which is not there to be found, that David was the son of Isai, [Jesse,] which amplifieth the grace of God. For seeing that Isai [Jesse] was a breeder of cattle, it was a wonderful work of God to take the least of his sons from the sheepfolds, and to place him in the throne of the kingdom. By the word *found,* God meaneth that he had gotten such a man as he would. Not that David had brought to pass by his own travel and industry that he should meet God, being such a one, but the phrase is taken from the common custom of men.

But the question is, Seeing that David fell so grievously, how God giveth testimony of his continual obedience? We may answer two ways; for God had respect rather unto the continual course of his life, than unto every of his particular actions. Secondly, he did thus set him forth, not so much for his own merit as for his Christ's sake. Assuredly he had deserved, by one wicked fact, eternal destruction for him and his, and, so much as in him lay, the way of the blessing of God was shut up, that there might nothing but vipers' seed come of Bathsheba. But that so filthy a fact, in the death of Uriah, (2 Samuel 11:27) turneth to a contrary end by the wonderful counsel of God, because Solomon is born and cometh of that unlooked-for wedlock, which was full of treachery, and, finally, polluted with many spots. And though David sinned grievously, yet because he followed God all the course of his life, he is praised without exception, that he showed himself obedient to God in all things; though (as I have said before) the Spirit carrieth us into a farther thing; yea, the common calling of all the faithful in Christ, the head, is here depicted out to us.

23. *According to promise.* This clause doth also prove that which I have already said elsewhere, that in sending Christ, the Lord had respect only unto his own faithfulness and goodness; for he sent him because he had promised so to do. And as the promise doth testify that salvation was free, so it doth also purchase no small credit to the gospel; because it appeareth

by this that Christ came not at a sudden, of whom there was never anything spoken; but that he who was promised from the beginning was now given in his time. But the promises which Luke here toucheth by the way are famous and well known. And they were so common among the Jews, that they called Christ commonly by no other name but the Son of David, (Matthew 22:42; Matthew 15:22.) He saith that Jesus was raised up to Israel; because, though salvation belong to the whole world, yet was he first a minister of circumcision to fulfill the promises made to the fathers, (Romans 15:8.) He translated the Hebrew name *Jesus* into {σωτηρ} in Greek. So that he uttered one thing twice, and yet here is no superfluous repetition; because he meant to declare that Christ is indeed and doth perform that which the name given him by God, by the voice of the angel, doth import.

Acts 13:24-26

Acts 13:24-26

24. After that John had preached, before the face of his entrance, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25. And when John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom do ye think me to be? I am not. But, behold, he cometh after me whose shoe latchets I am not worthy to loose. 26. Men and brethren, children of the generation of Abraham, and those who among you fear God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

24. We know what office John had, to wit, to prepare the way of the Lord. Therefore Paul bringeth in his testimony, that he may prove to the Jews that he preached no false Christ, but the true Christ of God, whom that most famous forerunner had before commended; not that man's testimony is sufficient to prove so weighty a matter; but there was another respect to be had to John whom all men almost did think to be a prophet of God. Therefore hence cometh the authority of the testimony, that a crier sent from heaven, and no private man, speaketh of Christ. And Paul reciteth two things summarily concerning John, that he taught the baptism of repentance before Christ's coming. Secondly, that casting from him of his own accord the title and honor of the Messiah, he submitted himself to Christ.

The baptism of repentance. Baptism brought in contrary to the rite and custom of the law was a token of great alteration. For it was unlawful to renew anything before Christ's coming. The Jews had indeed in the law their baptisms or washings, which were also exercises of repentance, but John was the author of new and strange baptism, or rather the minister, who put them in hope of the restoring long looked-for and desired. When he calleth it *the baptism of repentance* he doth not exclude remission of sins, but he speaketh according to the circumstance of the place, because this baptism was a preparation unto the faith of Christ. And we must note the phrase, that he preached baptism. Whereby we are taught that the sacraments are then rightly administered, when doctrine is joined with the visible figure;

for the mouth of the baptizer must not be dumb, because the sign is vain without doctrine.

25. *When John fulfilled his course.* The second member of the testimony, that when John drew near to the end of his course he sent his disciples to Christ; for he had fashioned them before with the rudiment of baptism, and then he sent them to Christ (as they say) from hand to hand. And this interrogation, *Whom do ye think me to be?* is not a question of one that doubteth. For John reproveth and chideth the Jews, because they did falsely give to him the honor of the Messiah. Though it may be read in one text, I am not he whom you take me to be; yet the other reading is more usual, as it hath also greater force to refute the error. Furthermore, his testimony doth deserve greater credit, in that he doth willingly refuse the honor offered him, (which he might have taken to himself, not without commendations) and doth submit himself to another. There cannot, assuredly, be any suspicion of ambition, or of seeking after honor here, which may discredit his words.

Behold, he cometh; that is, he is about to come, the Hebrew phrase, which is common enough in the New Testament. Whereas he confesseth that he is unworthy to loose the latchets of Christ's shoes, it is a proverbial figure, whereby he abaseth himself so much as he can, lest his greatness darken Christ's glory; for he meant to do that faithfully which was given him in charge, that Christ alone might have the preeminence. Therefore he saith, that how great soever he be, yet he is nothing in respect of Christ. For though God's servants have their dignity, yet being compared to Christ, they must all be as nothing, that he alone may excel; as we see all stars vanish away, that they may give place to the brightness of the sun.

26. *Men and brethren.* Paul doth again prick forward the Jews to embrace Christ; for this ought to have raised no small study and attentiveness in their minds, when as they saw [heard] their salvation handled, and that the message of salvation was appointed properly for them. He calleth them *children of Abraham* not only for honor's sake, but that they may know that they be heirs of eternal life; and he speaketh them so fair that it might not grieve them to depart from the scribes and priests whom they worshipped, because they must needs receive Christ. Furthermore, we must remember that which I said before, though the gate of the kingdom of heaven were set open to the Gentiles, yet were not the Jews thrown down from their estate; but were counted the first-begotten in God's family; therefore is it that he saith, that salvation was sent to them, because they were first in order; yet because the carnal kindred was of itself of no great importance, and the ungodliness of many brake out, Paul speaketh specially unto the true worshippers of God, signifying that words were but vain, unless the fear of God reign in their hearts, which may receive them, and, receiving them, may foster them. We must note this title of the gospel, that it is called the *word of salvation.* Wherefore, their hardness must needs be great [801] whom

[801] "Plusquam ferrea," more than that of iron.

it doth not allure with the sweetness that is in it; but though it be such naturally, yet is it made accidentally "the savor of death unto death" to the reprobate, (2 Corinthians 2:16.)

Acts 13:27-31

Acts 13:27-31

27. For those which dwelt in Jerusalem, and their rulers, seeing that they knew him not, neither the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day; when they had condemned him, they fulfilled them. 28. And when they found no cause of death in him, they desired Pilate that he would crucify him. 29. And after that they had fulfilled all things which were written of him, when they had taken him down from the tree, they put him in a tomb. 30. But God raised him up from the dead. 31. Who appeared many days to those which went up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people.

27. He doth wisely, and in due time, prevent an offense which might have been a great hindrance to their faith, [men's faith.] For Jerusalem was God's sanctuary, the king's seat, the fountain of truth, and the light of the whole world; but Christ was put to death there. Furthermore, nothing could seem more absurd to look to than to receive him who was cast out of the temple of God; and to seek the doctrine of salvation any where else than there whence God himself had testified it should come. Moreover, by believing in Christ, they seemed to make a departure from the Church; and, therefore, this one objection was strong enough to refute all Paul's sermon, Why dost thou force upon us, under color of God's covenant, a man whom the principal part of the holy people condemned? This objection doth Paul answer, lest it hinder the course of the gospel; and not that only, but he turneth it also to the contrary part; for seeing that the author of life was despised and rejected at Jerusalem, Paul exhorteth the men of Antioch, at least those who among them feared God, that they receive him so much the more joyfully; for this doth the causal word declare, as if he should have said, Seeing that Jerusalem knew not her good, it behoveth you to be the more awakened and inflamed, lest the same unthankfulness and forwardness be found in you.

But he useth another reason to remove the offense, to wit, that their ungodliness was so far from diminishing any whit of Christ's divine excellency, that it ought rather to serve to prove and establish the same, for whereby doth Christ better appear than because all that was fulfilled in him which had been foretold in the law and prophets? (Luke 24:25, 26.) Furthermore, what got the enemies of Christ, save only that in him shined the plain truth of the Scripture? It must needs be that Christ should be rejected of the chief, for it was so foretold,

"The stone which the builders refused hath
God made the head of the corner," (Psalm 118:22.)

Christ must needs have been condemned among the wicked, that he might acquit us before God; it was expedient that sins should be laid upon him, that he might make satisfaction for the same; that he should be offered upon the cross, that the shadowish sacrifices of the law might cease; for even the Scripture contained these things, (Isaiah 53:4, 5; Daniel 9:26.)

Therefore, the more violently the captains of the people sought to extinguish Christ, they did in very deed prove him to be Christ, and the Lord did wonderfully deceive [frustrate] them, so that their obstinate impiety doth more edify the faith of the godly than destroy it. Of the same sort are almost all offenses which lead away weak and inconstant souls from Christ; for if they would thoroughly ponder the whole process of the work of God, there should be matter of confirmation where they faint. Therefore it cometh to pass, for the most part, that [802] we be troubled with offenses and stumbling-blocks, because, whilst we behold those things which belong to Christ with purblind eyes, [803] we imagine that to be black which is white; and we see how far Paul is from dissimulation, and how freely [804] he professeth the truth of the matter, that Christ was hated not only of the common sort, but also of the chief chieftains; and that he was not hissed at by a few, but oppressed by the wicked conspiracy of all the people. That was hard and hateful at the first conflict; but Paul opposeth a more strong engine, that God used them against their wills as a touchstone, whereby he might try his Son. Seeing that the gospel standeth in the same state at this day, let us not be ashamed, with Paul, to confess that the proud princes of the world, and those who bear the greatest sway in the Church, are the deadly enemies of Christ, seeing that doth rather turn to Christ's praise than reproach; for by this means is the Scripture fulfilled.

Seeing they knew him not. Though deliberate malice did enforce the rulers to oppress Christ, yet doth Paul truly impute it to ignorance, [805] because otherwise they would never have crucified the Lord of glory, (1 Corinthians 2:8.) For the malice of the wicked is like to raging madness, and in seeing it doth not see. Undoubtedly, we need not doubt of this, that they were deprived of a sound mind and the light of the Spirit, who were not afraid to fight against God to their own destruction. Again, he hitteth them in the teeth with ignorance of the Scripture; and lest any should object that he speaketh of some dark and unknown manner; he addeth also, that he doth speak of no other prophecies than of those which are read every Sabbath day; as if he should say, that the oracles of Scripture are most plain and known to the most ignorant, and yet they knew them not. Thus doth Paul teach how monstrous their unbelief was, that he may make the hearers loathe it;

[802] "Nostra socordia," by our sluggishness.

[803] "Torvis aut lusciosis," with stern or purblind eyes.

[804] "Ingenue," ingenuously.

[805] "Sicut alibi, quum dicit, absconditam esse mundi principibus evangelii sapientiam," as elsewhere, when he says, That the wisdom of the gospel was hid from the princes of the world, omitted.

and by this example are we taught, that although the Lord appears to us by the Scripture, yet all men have not eyes. After that also the blockishness of the nation waxed more gross, as Paul saith elsewhere, that there is a veil put before their face, that they cannot see Moses when he is present, (2 Corinthians 3:15.) In the mean season, we must note that we are recalled to the Scripture, lest the authority of great men deceive us, neither is there any cause why any man, inventing to himself a prejudice according to the wicked meaning of other men, should think that he is acquitted; for Paul exhorteth the men of Antioch to judge out of the Scripture against the visored governors of the Church; [806] for this cause is it given, that it may be read; and reading is not appointed in vain by the Lord; but that all godly men may thereby profit and judge what is right.

This they fulfilled. So that we see that not only creatures void of understanding, but even the very devil, and also the wicked, are subject to the power [807] of God, that he may execute by them that which with himself he hath decreed. The same had we in the third and fourth chapters, (Acts 3:23; Acts 4:28,) that when the enemies of Christ did most of all rage to destroy him, yet could they not obtain their purpose; but rather they brought that to pass with their own hands which God had in his counsel determined; which thing maketh not a little for commendation of God's truth, because he is not only of sufficient power to perform those things which he hath promised; but also those who go about to bring his counsels to nought do their endeavor to establish them, though it be against their will. For how should not the truth of God stand which the chiefest enemies are enforced to fulfill? Yet wisdom is necessary here, lest we join God and Satan together.

For the Jews are not therefore excusable, because they fulfilled the Scriptures; because we must consider their wicked will, and not the event, which they did not look for, yea, which ought to be counted a miracle. If we look into their work by itself, it is quite contrary to God; but as God doth, in the sun and other planets, by wonderful cunning, temper contrary motions, and such as strive among themselves, so he directeth the perverse endeavors of the wicked, by his secret power, unto another end than they thought upon and did desire, lest they should do any thing but that which he would. They, indeed, as touching themselves, do contrary to his will; but it falleth out according to the will of God after an incomprehensible manner. Forasmuch as this course is contrary to nature, no marvel if the wisdom of the flesh see it not. Therefore, it must be discerned with the eye of faith, or rather it must be reverenced; and those dogs who bark against it must be despised with their wantonness. [808]

28. *When as they found no cause of death.* It was very pertinent to the matter that they should know that Christ was put to death guiltless, for we

[806] "Larvatos Ecclesiae praesules," pretended prelates of the Church.
[807] "Providentiae," the providence.
[808] "Petulantla," petulance.

could not have been justified by his death, if he had suffered death for his own evil deeds; therefore it was requisite that he should be guiltless, that his death might be a satisfaction for the sins of the world. And, undoubtedly, I think that Paul did plainly declare that Pilate condemned Christ, not according to the office of a judge, but that he consented that he should be put to death after that he was overcome with the ungodly requests of the people; and also that the Jews were driven by lust, and not enforced by reason, to desire Christ's death.: For it stood him upon to terrify the hearers, that they might not couple themselves [809] to so wicked a fact. But Luke doth now in few words set down, after his common custom, those things which Paul did then more at large declare.

29. *When they had fulfilled all things;* to wit, which it pleased God should be done by them. For they did so handle Christ that there was nothing of the prophecies of the Scripture left unfulfilled. By this means is the stumbling-block (which the understanding of the flesh conceiveth by reason of the ignominy of the cross) taken away, that the Son of God was not laid open to the furious fury of the wicked; but he obeyed his fathers decree. Furthermore, it doth also in Scripture appear what condition was appointed for him in times past. Whereas he saith that Christ was buried by the same which had slain him, it seemeth contrary to the history of the gospel; but it may be that Luke did take the word *buried* indefinitely. And if it please you to refer it unto the same, it shall be *synecdoche.* For he was buried with Pilate's leave; and at the appointment and pleasure of the priests there were watchmen set to watch the grave. Therefore, though Joseph and Nicodemus did bury Christ, (Matthew 27:57,) that is ascribed improperly, and yet not absurdly, to the Jews; because it is not Paul's drift in this place to commend the good deed, but to prove Christ's resurrection; because God took him out of the grave whom his enemies had shut up there. Therefore he giveth us to understand that the body of Christ was not taken thence privily or by stealth, but that it was laid in a place both famous and known to the adversaries; and so, consequently, that even they were set to watch it; and yet for all this it was not found: whence we may gather the certainty of the resurrection.

30. *God hath raised him up.* The death of Christ was the salvation of the godly, yet joined with the resurrection; therefore doth Paul stand longer upon this second point. For he should never have persuaded his hearers that they were to seek salvation in Christ's death, unless the power of Almighty God had appeared in raising Christ from death.

31. After that he hath said that Christ came out of the grave, which was beset with the hired ministers of the adversaries, he addeth now that he appeared to many of the disciples, which bare faithful witness to the people. And he calleth them *witnesses,* either in respect of their office; because they were chosen for this purpose, as we have already said in the first chapter,

[809] "Se adjungerent socios," join themselves as associates.

(Acts 1:8;) or else declaring simply that they professed openly and freely that which they knew concerning Christ. Whereupon it followeth that the matter was made known openly [810] at Jerusalem. And the proof was not so light; because, in the fearful power of the enemies, who were ready and bent to resist, and did omit nothing, there were, notwithstanding, such as did openly affirm that Christ rose again, and were also such as saw that thing with their eyes; for if there had been any refutation in readiness, the scribes would not have neglected it.

Acts 13:32-37

Acts 13:32-37

32. And we preach to you glad tidings, that the promise made to the fathers, 33. Hath God fulfilled to their children: having raised up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34. And in that he hath raised him up from the dead, not to return hereafter to corruption, he hath said thus, I will give you the holy things of David. 35. Therefore he saith also in another place, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36. David, indeed, when he had served his time, by the counsel of God he fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. 37. But he whom God raised saw no corruption.

32. *We preach to you glad tidings.* He doth now challenge to himself the office and honor of an apostle, that he may be heard as a lawful minister of God. And he saith the sum of the embassage enjoined him is, that that is revealed and given in their time which was promised in times past. And in few words doth he comprehend many and great matters. First, he giveth them to understand that he bringeth in nothing which is new, or contrary to the law and prophets, but that he did reveal the fulfilling of that doctrine which they themselves did confess, and were persuaded to have been delivered by God. Whereupon it followeth that they cannot refuse that which he offereth them, but they shall break the covenant made with the fathers by God, so much as in them shall lie; secondly, he commandeth the faithfulness of God, because it doth now in very deed appear that there was nothing promised in times past unadvisedly or in vain; but he doth chiefly extol the greatness of the grace given at length in Christ. For we must note the comparison between them and the fathers, when he saith, that they had gotten that which was promised to the fathers. For the more liberally the grace of God is poured out upon them, the more filthy shall their unthankfulness be, if they shall despise or loathe that inestimable good thing. For what else were this, but to cast down at their feet a treasure even reached out to them, that they might take hold thereof, and so consequently laid in their lap, the hope whereof was reverently embraced by the fathers, when it was showed them

[810] "Probe fuisse testatem," was well attested.

afar off, and which they did foster [811] during their whole life.

But some man may ask this question concerning those who lived under the law, whether even they were not made partakers of the promises? I answer, that there is such a society of the same grace among us which doth not hinder the long distance. But this was Paul's meaning, that their faith stood, as it were, in doubt until Christ appeared, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen; as he teacheth, (2 Corinthians 1:19, 20.) Therefore we be the heirs of the same kingdom of heaven, and partakers of the same spiritual good things, which God bestoweth upon his children; also, God gave to them some taste of his love in this life, as we taste him now. But Christ, who is the substance of all good things and of eternal life, was only promised to them, but he is given to us; and they desired him, as being far off; we enjoy him, being present.

33. *To their children, namely, to us.* It is certain that Paul speaketh of natural children, who had their beginning of the holy fathers, which we must therefore note, because certain brain-sick men, drawing all things unto allegories, dream that there is no respect to be had in this place of kindred, but only of faith. And with such an invention they make the holy covenant of God of none effect, where it is said,

"I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,"
(Genesis 17:7.)

It is faith (say they) alone which maketh us the children of Abraham. But I say, on the other side, that even those who are born the children of Abraham according to the flesh, are also counted the spiritual children of God, unless they grow out of kind through unbelief [812] For the boughs be naturally holy, because they spring from a holy root, until they become profane through their own fault, (Romans 11:16.) And assuredly it is Paul's drift to allure the Jews unto Christ; and that he may do this, they must be distinguished from the common sort by some privilege. And yet it followeth not thereupon (which these knaves do odiously object) that the grace of God is tied to the carnal seed; because, though the promise of life came by inheritance to the posterity of Abraham, yet many were deprived by their unbelief. Therefore faith is the cause, that of a great multitude only a few are counted children. And that is the double election whereof I spake before. The one common to the whole nation alike; because the first adoption of God containeth the whole family of Abraham. The other, which is restrained unto the secret counsel of God, and is at length established by faith, that it may be confirmed to men.

Therefore Paul doth well and truly affirm that that was performed to the Jews which God had promised to the fathers. For it was promised to them also, as Zacharias saith in his song, "The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would give himself for us," etc. And yet the worthiness

[811] "Patienter foverint," patiently foster.

[812] "Nisi sua infidelitate degenerent." unless they degenerate through their own infidelity.

of that nation doth not hinder but that the grace of Christ may also spread itself throughout the whole world; because the first-begotten hath the first degree of honor, so that he doth, notwithstanding, leave the second place to his brethren. For in that after the old people were cast off, the possession of the church was left empty for strangers, it began to be a new occasion of gathering the Church of the Gentiles; but and if that people had stood in the faith, the Gentiles had been joined into the common society of honor.

After that he had raised Christ. The word *raised,* in my judgment reacheth farther than it doth where it is shortly after repeated. For he doth not only say that Christ rose from the dead, but that he was appointed of God, and, as it were, brought to light by the hand of God, that he might fulfill the office of the Messiah, as the Scripture teacheth everywhere that kings and prophets are raised up. [813] For the word {αναστησαι} is sometimes taken in this sense: And this reason moveth me thus to think, because God, by sending his Son into the world, did fulfill his promise made to his servants in times past, by the effect itself.

Likeas, in the second Psalm. Though the Greek books, [814] agree in the number, yet we must not pass over that which Erasmus saith, that many of the old writers read the *first Psalm.* And it may be that Luke wrote so; for that which at this day is counted the second Psalm, might have been called the first not without reason, seeing that it is likely that the first Psalm was added instead of a proem by the scribes and priests, by whose industry the Psalms were gathered into one body. For the name of the author is not set to it, and it doth only exhort to meditate upon the law of God. But there is no great weight in that matter. [815] For this is the chiefest thing, that we know how properly and how well Paul applieth the testimony taken out of the Psalm unto the matter which he hath in hand. We do not deny that David, when he saw that he was on every side assailed by his enemies, and that they were of greater power and might than that he was able to resist them, doth set against them God's aid, who he knew was the author of his kingdom and reign. But forasmuch as he was a figure of the true Messiah, we know that those things were shadowed in his person, which do appertain, wholly and perfectly to the Messiah alone. And the text itself doth prove sufficiently that there is not only a simple and bare thanksgiving contained there, agreeable to David's kingdom, but it is a higher prophecy. For it is well known that David did in his life scarce taste of the hundredth part of the glory which is spoken of in this place, concerning which we have spoken more at large, chapter 4.

Now let us look higher into the words: Kings are indeed called sons of God, (Psalm 82:6.) But seeing that God doth intend to prefer David before all other kings, and to exempt him out of the number of them, this title of honor

[813] "A Domino," by the Lord, omitted.

[814] "Codices," manuscripts.

[815] "Sed in ea re non est multum momenti," but the point is not of much importance.

is given to him principally above all other; not because so great honor resteth in his person, because by this means he should pass [816] the angels, as it is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 1st chapter. Therefore he is thus gorgeously set out in respect of Christ, whose image he was, that God doth not take him for one of the common sort, or for some one of a great multitude, but he doth, as it were, acknowledge him to be his only begotten Son. The proof followeth, because God did beget him when he established the kingdom in his hand. For that was not done by man's industry, but God showed from heaven the invincible power of his hand, whereby it might plainly appear that he reigned according to God's counsel. Therefore this begetting, by him mentioned, must be referred unto the understanding of knowledge of men; to wit, because it was then openly known that he was begotten of God, when as he was set upon the throne of the kingdom wonderfully, contrary to the hope of all men, and did, by the heavenly power of the Spirit, break infinite conspiracies; because he could not reign until he had brought all nations round about him in subjection, as if a certain world were subdued.

Now, let us come unto Christ. He came not into the world without testimony, whereby he did prove that he was the Son of God. For his glory did appear as became the only begotten Son of God, as it is written, John 1:14, and he saith everywhere that he hath God for the witness and maintainer of this honor. Therefore God begat Christ, when he gave him certain marks, whereby he might be known to be his true and lively image and Son. And yet this doth not let but that Christ is the Wisdom begotten of the Eternal Father before time. But that is the secret generation; and now David declareth that it was revealed to men; so that the relation is, as we have said, unto men and not unto God; because that which was hidden in the heart of God was make known to men. And it is a very fine figure, because Christ's divinity was no less declared and established, than if he had been begotten of God before the eyes of men. I know that Augustine's deep sight [817] doth please some, that by *today* is meant *perpetuity.* But when as the Spirit of God himself is his own interpreter, and whereas he doth expound that by the mouth of Paul which he had said by David, we must not invent any other sense. And forasmuch (as the same Paul doth witness) that Christ was declared to be the Son of God in power when he rose from the dead, (Romans 1:4,) we gather that this was the principal token of celestial excellency, and that the Father did then bring him truly to light, that the world might know that he was begotten of him. Therefore, though God began to raise Christ when he came into the world, yet his raising was then, as it were, perfect and full; because whereas he was humbled before, having taken, as it were, the form of a servant, (Philippians 2:7,) he did then appear to be the conqueror of death and the Lord of life; so that he wanted nothing of that majesty which was meet for the Son of God, and that for the only begotten

[816] "Praestantior esset," be more excellent than.

[817] "Augustini argutiam," the subtlety of Augustine.

Son.

34. *That he should not return.* He addeth now the other member, that Christ was once raised from death that he may live for ever, as Paul teacheth, Romans 6:10,

"He dieth no more, neither shall death have dominion over him any more; because he liveth to God."

For the hope conceived of Christ's resurrection should be slender and cold, if he were yet subject to destruction, or to any change. Therefore he is said to be entered into the kingdom of God, that he may also give to his [people] eternal felicity, living for ever. For because Christ rose rather for our sake than for himself, the perpetuity of life which the Father hath given him reacheth unto us all, and is ours. Notwithstanding the place of Isaiah which is here cited, seemeth to make but a little for proof of Christ's immortality, I will give you the holy things of David, (Isaiah 55:3.) But it is not so. For seeing Isaiah speaketh of the redemption promised to David, and affirmeth that the same shall be firm and stable, we do well gather by this the immortal kingdom of Christ, wherein the eternity of salvation is grounded. And Paul followed the Greek interpreters when he put *holy things* for mercies. *Chessed,* which signifieth *meek, merciful,* and *gentle,* is wont by the Grecians to be translated *holy.* Therefore they translated {הסדי}{ *of David,* the *holy things of David,* whereas the prophet meaneth rather the grace promised to David. But Paul granted this to the ignorant and weak, who were better acquainted with the Greek reading, especially forasmuch as the force of the testimony consisteth in another point. For this is Paul's meaning in sum, If the grace be eternal which God saith he will give in his Son, the life of his Son must be eternal, and not subject to corruption. [818] For we must hold this rule, that all the promises of God are in Christ yea and amen, (2 Corinthians 1:20;) and that therefore they cannot be of any force unless he do quicken them.

35. *Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One.* This place was likewise cited by Peter in the first sermon, set down by Luke in the second chapter, (Acts 2:27,) where I expounded the same; therefore, let the readers repair thither. Only I will touch this briefly, that David putteth two Hebrew words for *the grave,* as he useth repetitions commonly; the former whereof is derived of *desiring* or *lusting,* because the grave devoureth all things as an insatiable gulf; and the other of *corruption.* According to this etymology David's meaning is faithfully expressed in Greek; for the quality of the grave is noted, when as it receiveth the corpse, and doth, as it were, swallow it up, that it may rot there, and may at length perish when it is consumed. Paul affirmeth that that belongeth to Christ alone, that he was free and saved from corruption; for though his body was laid in the grave, corruption had, notwithstanding, no title to it, seeing that it lay there whole, as in a bed, until the day of the resurrection.

36. *When David had served his time.* Lest any man should think that

[818] "Mutationi," change.

that place intreateth of David, Paul showeth briefly that this agreeth not to David in all points, whose corpse was rotten in the grave. Therefore it remaineth, that because this was a privilege belonging to Christ alone, that David prophesied of him in spirit. Nevertheless, we must note the proportion between the members and the head; for as the truth of this prophecy was found whole and perfect in Christ alone, as in the head, so it taketh place in all the members according to the measure and order of every man. And forasmuch as Christ rose to this end, that he may fashion and make our base body like to his glorious body, (Philippians 3:21;) upon this condition do the godly go down into the pit, that rottenness may not [finally] consume their bodies. Therefore, according to the hope of the resurrection to come, David saith by good right that he shall not see corruption; for that ought not altogether to be counted corruption for which there is a better restoring prepared; for the bodies of the faithful corrupt to this end, that they may put on blessed incorruption in their time. Yet this is no let but that the estate of the head and members may be far unlike, and that we may follow the Son of God afar off and lazily. [819]

Now we see that both things are true and fitly said, that David and the rest of the faithful, inasmuch as they shall be like to their head, shall not see corruption, and yet the Son of God alone shall be free from corruption wholly. We must note the phrase, when he saith, that *David served his age,* or the men of his time.

The old interpreter distinguisheth it otherwise, and certain Greek copies agree thereto, to wit, that *David served the will of God in his time;* which reading, though it is to be allowed, [820] yet it doth not cause me to mislike the other. For it is neither superfluous nor cold, that he slept by the will of God, or the counsel of God; because the meaning thereof is, that God, in the death of David, did not forget that prophecy; as if he should say that the body of David lay in the grave not without the counsel or purpose of God, until it should rise again, that the effect of the prophecy might be extended unto Christ. If no man mislike that which I say, we are taught hereby to what end men live in the world, to wit, that one man may help another. For every man doth not live, neither is born, for himself, but mankind is knit together with a holy knot. Therefore, unless we be disposed to overthrow the laws of nature, let us remember that we must not live for ourselves, but for our neighbors.

But here may a question be asked, whether we ought not also to care for our posterity? I answer, that the ministry of the godly is also profitable for the posterity, as we see that David, being dead, doth profit us more at this day than a great part of those which live with us; but Paul meaneth simply, that the faithful during their whole life employ themselves and their offices to help their neighbors, and that death is unto them as a goal, because they

[819] "Lente," slowly.

[820] "Tametsi probabilis est," though it is probable.

have made an end then, when the Lord calleth them out of the world. The sum is, that we must have respect first to our time, that we may serve our brethren, with whom and among whom we lead our life; and, secondly, we must do our endeavor that the fruit of our ministry may redound unto our posterity. Seeing that God prescribeth his servants this law, their rashness cannot be excused who feign that the dead pray for us, and that they do no less serve the Church than whilst they lived.

By the counsel of God he fell on sleep. Paul might have said simply that David died; he addeth by *the counsel of God,* that we may know that that was not fulfilled in the person of the prophet which is read in the Psalm. Notwithstanding, we are taught that the bond of life and death is in like sort appointed for us by God, as it is Psalm 90:3,

"Thou sendest out men, and makest them to pass over; again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men."

Yea, Plato setteth down this very eloquently, that it is meet that men pass out of the world not without the leave and pleasure of God, by whose hand they are placed there as a standing for a time. [821] And for this cause, when he speaketh of David's death, he maketh mention of the counsel of God, that we may know that corruption did not happen to him by chance, as if God had forgotten his promise; but that it came to pass by God's providence, that the faithful might know that the prophecy was to be referred unto another. *To sleep,* and to be *laid unto the fathers,* are forms of speech so well known and so common, that they need no exposition.

Acts 13:38-42

Acts 13:38-42

38. Therefore, be it known unto you, [822] that through him remission of sins is promised to you: 39. And from all things, from which ye could not be justified in the law of Moses. 40. Whosoever believeth in this man is justified. 41. Therefore, take heed, lest that befall you which is said in the prophets; 42. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and vanish away; because I do a work in your days, a work which ye shall not believe, if a man tell it you.

38. *Therefore, be it known unto you.* After that he hath declared the mean whereby salvation is purchased through Christ, he doth now intreat of his office and power. And this is the principal point, to know what good things we have by the coming of Christ, and what we are to hope for at his hands. And although Luke setteth down in a word that Paul preached of the benefits of Christ, yet there is no cause why any man should doubt but that so great matters were handled weightily, and only according as their dignity

[821] "Cujus manu in ea, tanquam in statione, ad tempus locati sunt," by whose hand they are placed in it for a time, as at a station.

[822] "Viri fratres," brethren, omitted.

did require. By this word, *Be it known unto you,* Paul meaneth that nothing should hinder them from knowing such an excellent and plain matter, save only sloth; and that, therefore, it was an absurd thing that those benefits of God should be hidden from the faithful which were offered by Christ. For he was sent with the shrill preaching of the gospel, which our faith ought to hear, that it may enter into the sure possession of his good things; for we must know what he is, that we may enjoy him truly. Forgiveness of sins is set first, whereby God doth reconcile us unto himself. That which God will have preached to all his people doth he show to be necessary for all men; for Paul speaketh not to one or two, but to all the Jews which were at Antioch.

Therefore, we must first mark that we be all enemies to God through sin, (Colossians 2:13.) Whereupon it followeth that we are all excluded from the kingdom of God, and are given over to eternal death, until God receive us to favor by the free forgiveness of sins. We must also note this, that God doth pardon to us our sins, and that he is reconciled through the Mediator, because like as without him there is no satisfaction, so neither is there any pardon or forgiveness of guiltiness. These be principles of our faith which are not learned in the schools of the philosophers, that all mankind is condemned and drowned in sin, that there is in us no righteousness which is able to reconcile us to God; that the only hope of salvation resteth in his mercy, whilst that he doth freely forgive us; and that those remain under the guilt which fly not unto Christ, and seek not forgiveness [823] in his death.

And from all things. He doth secretly prevent that which might seem contrary to the former doctrine. For look how many ceremonies of the law there were, so many exercises were there to obtain remission of sins. Therefore, the Jews might readily object, If he alone do reconcile God to us, our sins being done away, to what end serve so many washings and sacrifices, which we have hitherto used according to the prescript of the law? Therefore, lest the ceremonies of the law hinder the Jews, Paul teacheth that Christ doth that which they were not able to do. Not that Paul spake so briefly and compendiously, (for he did not hope that the Jews would at the first come unto Christ, casting from them suddenly the affiance which they had in the righteousness of the law;) but it was sufficient for Luke briefly to collect [824] the sum of those things which he then taught in just and due order. His meaning is, that the Mediator took away that let from the Jews wherein they did stick. The ceremonial law ought indeed to have been a schoolmaster to lead them by the hand unto Christ; all rites commanded by God were helps to help and further their faith; but as men use preposterously to corrupt the holy ordinances of God, they stop the way before themselves by their ceremonies, and they shut the gate of faith, that they could not come to Christ. They thought they had righteousness in sacrifices; that by washings was gotten true cleanness; that God was pleased with them so soon as they

[823] "Expiationem… peccati," expiation of sin.

[824] "Perstringere," glance at.

had ended their external pomp: in sum, forsaking the body, they laid hold upon vain shadows. God did indeed appoint no unprofitable or vain thing in the law; wherefore ceremonies were sure and undoubted testimonies of remission of sins. For God did not lie in these words, Let the sinner do sacrifice, and his iniquity shall be purged. But as Christ was the end of the law, and the heavenly pattern of the tabernacle, so the force and effect of all ceremonies did depend upon him; whereby it is proved that they were vain shadows, when he was set aside, (Hebrews 8:5.) Now we see Paul's drift and purpose; to wit, that he meant to draw away the Jews from the false and perverse confidence which they reposed in the law; lest being puffed up, they should think that they had no need of Christ's help, or lest they should seek only external felicity in him.

Be justified in the law. This place doth plainly show what the word *justified* doth import in all other places where it is used; to wit, to be delivered and acquitted. There was mention made of remission of sins; Paul affirmeth that there is no other way whereby we can obtain the same but the grace of Christ. Lest any man should object that there be remedies to be found in the law, he answereth that there was in them no force. Therefore the sense is plain, that they cannot be justified from sin in the law, because the rites of the law were neither just nor lawful prices to remove guiltiness; they were nothing worth of themselves to deserve righteousness, neither were they sufficient recompenses to appease God. Certainly, it cannot be denied (but wickedly) that that justification annexed to remission of sins is, as it were, the means and way to obtain the same. For what else doth Paul go about but to confirm that saying, that our sins are forgiven us through the benefit of Christ, by answering contrary objections? And he proveth it, because neither satisfactions, neither all the rites of the law, call justify us from sin. Therefore he is justified by Christ, who is freely loosed from the guilt and judgment of eternal death to which he was subject. This is the righteousness of faith, whilst that God counteth us just, by not imputing our sins.

This only propriety of the word is sufficient to refute the cavils of the Papists, who hold that we are not justified by pardon or by free accepting, but by habit and infused righteousness. Therefore, let us not suffer them to rend in pieces unworthily and wickedly this text of Paul, when he saith that they are justified from all things, that we may be assured of remission of sins. And now we must know that the law of Moses is set against Christ, as the principal mean to obtain righteousness, if there had been any besides Christ. Paul disputeth, indeed, of ceremonies; but we must note that there was nothing omitted in them which might serve to purge sins and to appease God. Yet there was not one of all the ceremonies of the law which did not make man guilty, as a new handwriting; as Paul teacheth, Colossians 2:14. What then? Assuredly God meant to testify that men are justified by the death of his Son alone, because he made him sin for us who did [knew] no sin, that we might have righteousness in him, (2 Corinthians 5:21.) Whereupon

it followeth that whatsoever satisfactions are invented by men, they tend to rob Christ of his honor. *In the law* and *in Christ* signify as much as *by the law* and *by Christ,* according to the Hebrew phrase.

From all things. By this member is refuted the wicked invention of the Papists, who teach that only original sin and actual sins committed before baptism are clearly and freely forgiven by Christ, and that others are redeemed by satisfactions. But Paul saith plainly that we are justified from sins by Christ throughout the whole course of our life. For we must remember that the ceremonies [rites] of the law were committed to the Jews, that as well the profit as the use thereof might flourish daily in the Church; that is, that the Jews might indeed understand that their sacrifices and washings were not continually reiterated in vain. If the truth and substance of them be found in Christ, it followeth that there is no other satisfaction or sacrifice to put away sins but his death; otherwise there should be no analogy or proportion between this and the old figures. The Papists call us back unto repentance and the keys, as if the ceremonies of the law were not exercises to think upon repentance, and as if the power of the keys were not annexed unto them. But the faith of the godly was holpen by such helps, that they might fly unto the grace of the Mediator alone. Therefore, let this remain sure and certain that the righteousness which we have in Christ is not for one day or a moment, but it is everlasting, as the sacrifice of his death doth daily reconcile us to God.

39. *Every one that believeth.* Paul showeth how men obtain the righteousness of Christ; to wit, when they receive it by faith; and that which faith doth obtain is not obtained by any merits of works. Wherefore, Paul's opinion is plain, that we are justified by faith alone, which, notwithstanding the Papists oppugn [oppose] and strive against no less obstinately than bitterly, nevertheless, it is requisite that we know what the word *believe* doth import, which is made unsavory to the Papists through ignorance. There be also other benefits of Christ which we reap by faith; for when he regenerateth us by his Spirit, he restoreth in us the image of God; and after that the old man is crucified he fashioneth us unto newness of life. But it was enough for Luke to express this one thing, how men return into favor with God, from whom they be estranged by sin, because we may easily pass thence unto the residue.

40. *Take heed that that come not upon you.* Because he had to do with stiff-necked men, or at least there were diverse in the company which were stiff-necked (as if he meant with a hammer to soften their stubbornnesses) he addeth a chiding unto doctrine. For if the Jews had been obedient and willing to obey, undoubtedly he would have sought sweetly to allure them unto Christ. But it was either their sluggishness, or else their willfulness, that caused him to be more angry; like as all those must be cited to appear before God's judgment-seat who contemn the grace of Christ and the horrible judgment of eternal death must be denounced to those. He signifieth, indeed,

that there is yet place left for repentance, when he willeth [825] them to take heed; yet, notwithstanding, he telleth them therewithal, that unless they beware in time, the horrible vengeance of God is not far off.

Which is said in the prophets. The place which is cited is taken out of the first chapter of Habakkuk, (Habakkuk 1:5;) but because all prophecies were gathered into one volume or body, Paul saith that it is written in the prophets.

41. And yet he doth not recite word for word the words of Habakkuk, which go thus, "Behold, ye Gentiles, and see and wonder, and be astonished; because a work shall be done in your days which no man shall believe when it shall be told him." Paul saith, "Behold, ye despisers," that the Jews may know that the vengeance which was once brought upon their fathers is common to the despisers of the word; as if he should say, God doth at this day make no less account of his word, the contempt whereof he did once punish so sharply. Therefore, the prophet's denunciation doth appertain unto all ages, so that the despisers cannot hope that they can escape that vengeance now whereof others have tasted. They boasted of the temple; they vaunted that they were the people of God; being puffed up with wicked pride, they despised all threatenings. Therefore Paul putteth them in mind of that which God by his prophets doth threaten to the despisers.

A work in your days. The sense is, Those who refuse to believe the word of God shall feel his hand, that being at length with plagues convicted, they may know that he spake in earnest. It is a common proverb, that experience is the mistress of fools. So the Lord doth indeed punish the wicked, [826] that being tamed with miseries, they may begin to confess his power. And what manner [of] punishment doth he denounce? Because you (saith he) do not believe my word, I will show an example among you which no man will believe; by which words he meaneth, that he will punish them, so that the world shall be afraid to see it. For as rebellion against God is a detestable monster, so it is no marvel if of itself it beget monsters of punishments. Therefore, we must beware, lest, if we cease to give credence to God's word, we feel his hand more mighty than all our senses do comprehend, and even unto the astonying [astonishment] of all the whole world; and lest even we be made astounded through fear. Habakkuk prophesieth of the destruction brought upon them by the Chaldeans; but the punishment whereby God revenged the contempt of his gospel was more cruel, [severe.] Therefore, let us accustom ourselves to fear God and reverently embrace his word, lest some such things befall us.

Acts 13:42-45

Acts 13:42-45

[825] "Hortatur," exhorteth.

[826] "Re ipsa impios coarguit," convicts the wicked by the reality.

42. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles exhorted them that they would speak to them words between the Sabbaths. [827] 43. And when the synagogue was dissolved, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, talking with them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44. And when the Sabbath was come, almost the whole city was gathered to hear the word of God. 45. And when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with indignation, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contrarying [contradicting] them, and blaspheming them.

42. *When they were gone out of the synagogue.* It may be also read, out of the synagogue of the Jews, and peradventure more fitly. For it is likely that they were gone out before the multitude was dispersed; and that is gathered out of the text because Luke saith shortly after, that when the synagogue was dissolved certain of the Jews did follow Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, the sense is, that Paul and Barnabas went out whilst the Jews were yet assembled, and that they were then requested by the Gentiles to take some pains with them in the mean season.

43. And that afterward there came certain of the Jews and proselytes to Paul, being both desirous to learn, and also that they might make profession of their faith. When as the old interpreter and Erasmus did translate it *the Sabbath following,* they did not understand Luke's meaning. For seeing that he intreateth in this place of the Gentiles, I do not think that they choose a Sabbath wherein they may hear Paul and Barnabas. For that day was appointed for the Jews, but the Gentiles had no less opportunity upon other days. Therefore, to what end should they defer their desire and prayers until the eighth day? Yea, rather they covet to hear Paul whilst he is at leisure, and is not occupied in teaching the Jews. So that the Lord doth not suffer them to be idle until the Sabbath come, offering unto them matter in the Gentiles, wherein they may exercise themselves.

42 *They would speak words.* I have translated it as it is in Luke, though the article {τα} may be taken for {τα} {αυτα}, as in some other places. Then the sense should be, that they were requested that they would that week intreat of the same things before the Gentiles. Furthermore, whilst that the Gentiles do snatch greedily at every first opportunity, the Jews being quiet, [828] do neglect that which is set before them; only that certain of them join themselves to Paul and Barnabas. Luke expresseth the proselytes by name, who seeing they had embraced the doctrine of the law, and did worship the God of Israel, were not puffed up with that pride which hindered the Jews, who made boast of their long stock and race.

43. *Who speaking.* The sense is doubtful. For it may be referred unto the Jews and proselytes, that they exhorted Paul and Barnabas that they should not faint, but stand stoutly in the grace of God. Neither did they

[827] "Intermedio Sabbatho," in the interval between the Sabbaths.
[828] "Fastidio pleni," being full of disdain.

want occasion; for they saw combats prepared for them; and that therefore they had need of invincible constancy to suffer and abide the brunts of the contrary faction. Wherefore that might very well agree, that being inflamed with a desire to go forward, they sought to encourage Paul and Barnabas to hold on. If you refer it unto Paul and Barnabas, the sense shall be this, that they did not reject those which came, but they entertained them courteously and gently, and confirmed and strengthened them, that they might persist in the grace which they had received. And this word *grace* doth first comprehend the faith of the gospel; secondly, those good things which come thence to us; or, that I may speak more briefly, the calling into the hope of eternal salvation.

44. *And when the Sabbath came.* The great assembly of the people doth prove that Paul and Barnabas loitered not between the Sabbaths, and they did not take pains with the Gentiles in vain; for the studies and desires of the people had been so prepared, that they all desired to know the whole matter more surely, which they did hope would be, if it should be discussed among the Jews. For we may guess that though they were allured with some sweet taste, yet were they not as yet thoroughly persuaded to receive the doctrine of the gospel without doubting, [829] but that they came into the synagogue in a quandary, [830] between hope and desire.

45. *They were filled.* It is no new matter for the rage of the wicked to be inflamed when the light of the gospel is set somewhat nearer; especially when they see the increase of sound doctrine, they break out with greater violence to resist. And it is to be doubted whether Luke do mean, by the word *zeal,* that they were moved with a certain wicked indignation, to set themselves against Paul and Barnabas, as ambition is the mother as well of envy as of all contention; or he take *zeal* for *indignation* conceived thereupon, because they did lament that the Gentiles were made equal with the people of God. For they counted this a very unmeet thing, that the holy treasure of doctrine, which was the proper inheritance of the children, should he, as it were, at all men's feet.

Gainsaying and blaspheming. They were so sore set upon resisting, that they brake out at length into blasphemy. And Satan doth for the most part drive the wicked unto such madness, that when they be overcome with reasons and discouraged, they wax harder and harder; and wittingly and willingly they spew out at length blasphemies against God and the truth. Wherefore we must take so much the more heed when as the truth of God is plainly set before us, lest, if we be carried away with a desire to speak against it, we fall straightway into that steep down. [831]

[829] "Sine controversia," without controversy.
[830] "Suspensi," suspended.
[831] "In illud praecipitium ruamus," we rush instantly over that precipice.

Acts 13:46-52

Acts 13:46-52

46. And when Paul and Barnabas had taken liberty, [or boldness,] they said, It was necessary that we should. first preach the word of God to you. And after that ye reject it, and do not judge yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn unto the Gentiles. 47. For thus hath the Lord commanded us: I have made thee a light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be the salvation unto the end of the earth. 48. And when the Gentiles heard, they rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord; and they believed, as many as were ordained unto eternal life. 49. And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout the whole region. 50. And the Jews stirred certain religious and honest women, and the chief men of the city, and they raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51. And they shaked up the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium. 52. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

46. *When they had taken liberty.* Luke showeth that the servants of Christ were so far from being discouraged with the stubbornness of the enemies, that they began, therefore, to inveigh against them afresh more freely. For though they had sharply pricked them, yet they did yet spare them a little; but now, when they see Christ obstinately rejected by them, they [832] excommunicate them and deprive them of the kingdom of God. And by this example are we taught that we must not use extreme severity, save only against those who are quite past hope. And the more bold the reprobate are to oppress the truth, the more courage ought we to take to ourselves. For the servants of God must be armed with invincible constancy of the Spirit, that they may never give place to the devil, nor to his ministers; as the Lord commandeth Jeremiah to encounter with the reprobate with a face of iron.

It was necessary. He accuseth them of unthankfulness, because, whereas they were chosen by God out of all people, that Christ might offer himself unto them, they refuse so great a benefit maliciously. And in the former member he setteth down the degree of honor and excellency whereunto God had exalted them; afterward followeth the upbraiding, because they do willingly cast from them so great grace; whereupon he concludeth that it is now time that the gospel be translated unto the Gentiles. In that he saith, that *it was meet that it should first be preached to them,* it doth properly appertain unto the time of Christ's kingdom. For under the law, before Christ was given, the Jews were not only the first, but alone. Therefore was it that Moses called them a priestly kingdom, and the peculiar people of God, (Exodus 19:5, 6.) But the adoption of God rested then with them alone upon this condition, (the Gentiles being omitted,) that they should be preferred as yet before the Gentiles by the coming of Christ. For though Christ reconciled the world to his Father, yet they were former in order, who

[832] "Vicissim," in their turn.

were already near unto God, and of his family. Therefore, that was the most lawful order, that the apostles should gather the Church first of the Jews, afterward of the Gentiles, as we saw in the first chapter, (Acts 1:18,) and in other places, so that the fellowship of the Gentiles did not take from the Jews the right of the first-begotten, but that they were always the chief in the Church of God. In this respect Paul saith, that the righteousness of God is made manifest in the gospel, first to the Jews, then to the Grecians, (Romans 1:16.) Such greatness of grace which God vouchsafed to bestow upon them, doth exaggerate and increase the greatness of their sin, whilst that they reject that which is so mercifully offered unto them. Therefore he addeth that they give judgment of themselves, *that they are unworthy of eternal life.* For seeing that the rejecting of the gospel is the denial of the righteousness of God, we need no other judge to condemn the unbelievers.

And after that ye reject. Paul seemeth to reason unfitly. For, first it was not of necessity that the Jews should be excluded, that the Gentiles might be admitted unto the hope of salvation; secondly, this was more convenient, that, after the Jews had embraced the gospel, they should grant the second place to the Gentiles. And Paul speaketh in like sort as if they could not grow together into one body, and as if the gospel could not come unto the Gentiles unless it were rejected of the Jews. And now was he not ordained to be the apostle of the Gentiles before he found such stubbornness in the Jews? [833] I answer, that there is great force in the words *we are turned* For his meaning is, that he is now turned away from the Jews, that he may addict and give over himself wholly to the Gentiles. If they had remained in their degree such turning had not followed, but he should have drawn the Gentiles also with a continual course, after that the Jews were received into the bosom; and he should have embraced them both together, know, forasmuch as the Jews turn their backs, and withdraw themselves from his ministry, he cannot look upon them and the Gentiles both at once. Therefore, taking his leave of them, he is enforced to translate his care unto the Gentiles. Therefore, unless the Jews had estranged themselves from the Church, the calling of the Gentiles should have been such as is by the prophets described: "In that day shall seven strangers take hold of the cloak of a man that is a Jew, and shall say, we will walk with you; because God is with you." But now the Gentiles are called after a new and accidental manner; because, when the Jews were rejected, they entered into the empty possession. They ought to have been gathered unto the Jews; but after that they fell away, and were driven out, they came in their place. So that their death was the life of the Gentiles, and the natural branches being cut off, the wild olives were ingrafted into the holy root, until God do at length restore them also unto life, being ingrafted into their former root, that the Israel of God being gathered together from all quarters may be saved.

[833] "Cur ergo nunc demum ad gentes se convertit, quasi earurn vocatio ex electi populi infidelitate pendeat," why then does he now only turn to the Gentiles, as if their calling depended on the infidelity of the chosen people? omitted.

47. *As he hath commanded.* The place is taken out of Isaiah, where, notwithstanding, God doth rather speak unto his Son than unto the apostles. But we must note, that many things which the Scripture attributeth to Christ do appertain unto his ministers. I say many things; not all things: for there be certain titles proper to the person of Christ, wherewith to adorn the ministers were wicked sacrilege. Christ is called our Righteousness, because he was the only purging sacrifice, [834] and hath reconciled the Father to us by his death, and did rise again afterward, that, having overcome death, he might purchase for us eternal life. Therefore the whole substance of our salvation is in Christ's person; but inasmuch as he worketh by his ministers, by resigning to them his office, he doth also impart with [to] them his titles. Of this sort is the preaching of the gospel. He alone was appointed by the Father to be our teacher; but he hath put in his place pastors and doctors, who speak, as it were, out of his mouth. So that the authority remaineth wholly to him, and he is nevertheless heard in his ministers. Therefore Paul doth fitly apply unto himself the testimony of Isaiah, where he intreateth of the preaching of the gospel.

I have made thee a light. It should seem that he speaketh in that place of such a calling of the Gentiles as doth not carry with it the casting off of the old people. For God doth rather associate strangers unto the Jews, who were before of the household. It is but a small matter, saith he, that thou be my minister in teaching Israel, because I have made thee a light to the Gentiles. God doth seem to begin his Church among the children of Abraham, and, that done, to reach out his hand to the Gentiles, that they may both make one Church by one consent of faith. But Paul doth in such sort cite the prophecy, as if it could not be fulfilled unless the Jews had been cast off. For he signifieth that the light of Christ was lighted to the Gentiles, after that they were cast into the darkness of death. I answer, that this cannot be necessarily proved out of the text, that Paul doth affirm that the Gentiles could not have been illuminated before the light of the Jews had been put out. For this may be the sense, Forasmuch as you have deprived yourselves of eternal life, there is no cause why ye should think that the grace of God is profaned, if, leaving you, we take care and charge of the Gentiles; for the Messiah is not given to you alone, but he is appointed to be the Savior of the whole world; as it is written, "I have made thee," etc.; although, if you weigh the place of the prophet more thoroughly, you shall find the casting off of the old people included therein. For God pronounceth that he will be glorious and renowned in the ministry of Christ, though Israel be not gathered together. He addeth afterward, by way of exposition, that the power of Christ shall not be restrained unto one people only, because his light shall shed abroad his beams unto the farthest parts of the world unto salvation. It seemeth that Paul noteth this occasion of calling the Gentiles, namely, because, seeing he found no matter to exercise himself in among the

[834] "Victima expiatrix," expiatory victim

Jews, he gave himself wholly to the Gentiles. We must note this by the way, in the words of the prophet, that salvation is put after light, according to that saying of Christ,

"This is eternal life, to know thee, the true God," etc.
(John 17:3.)

For if the knowledge of God alone bring to us salvation, it is likewise the only resurrection from destruction of eternal death, for us to be illuminated into the faith of Christ, after that we be delivered from the darkness of ignorance.

48. *And when the Gentiles heard.* The matter of the Gentiles' joy was this, [viz.] when they heard that they were not called to salvation at a sudden, as if this had not been decreed before by God, but that that is now at length fulfilled which was foretold many years before. For doubtless it was small confirmation of their faith, because salvation was promised to them by the coming of Christ, whereby it did also come to pass that they did with more earnest desire and reverence embrace the gospel. To *glorify* the word of God may be expounded two manner of ways, either that they did confess that it was true which was prophesied by Isaiah, or that they embraced the doctrine which was set before them with faith. Assuredly there is a full subscription noted out, because they dispute or doubt no longer, so soon as they saw that Paul had gotten the victory. And surely we do then honor the word of God as we ought, when we submit ourselves obediently to it by faith; as it cannot be more grievously blasphemed than when men refuse to believe it. And here we see how the Gentiles were not hindered, by that stubbornness which they saw in the Jews, from giving their name to Christ. With like courage [835] must we despise and tread under foot the pride of the wicked, when, by their obstinacy, they study to stop the way before us.

And they believed. This is an exposition of the member next going before, at least in my judgment.: For Luke showeth what manner [of] glory they gave to the word of God. And here we must note the restraint, [reservation,] when he saith that they believed, (but) not all in general, but those who were ordained unto life. And we need not doubt but that Luke calleth those {τεταγμενους}, who were chosen by the free adoption of God. For it is a ridiculous cavil to refer this unto the affection of those which believed, as if those received the gospel whose minds were well-disposed. For this ordaining must be understood of the eternal counsel of God alone. Neither doth Luke say that they were ordained unto faith, but unto life; because the Lord doth predestinate his unto the inheritance of eternal life. And this place teacheth that faith dependeth upon God's election. And assuredly, seeing that the whole race of mankind is blind and stubborn, those diseases stick fast in our nature until they be redressed by the grace of the Spirit, and that redressing floweth from the fountain of election alone. For in that of two which hear

[835] "Animi magnitudine," magnanimity.

the same doctrine together, [836] the one showeth himself apt to be taught, the other continueth in his obstinacy. It is not, therefore, because they differ by nature, but because God doth lighten [illumine] the former, and doth not vouchsafe the other the like grace. We are, indeed, made the children of God by faith; as faith, as touching us, is the gate and the first beginning of salvation; but there is a higher respect of God. For he doth not begin to choose us after that we believe; but he sealeth his adoption, which was hidden in our hearts, by the gift of faith, that it may be manifest and sure. For if this be proper to the children of God alone to be his disciples, it followeth that it doth not appertain unto all the children of Adam in general. No marvel, therefore, if all do not receive the gospel; [837] because, though our heavenly Father inviteth all men unto the faith by the external voice of man, yet doth he not call effectually by his Spirit any save those whom he hath determined to save. Now, if God's election, whereby he ordaineth us unto life, be the cause of faith and salvation, there remaineth nothing for worthiness or merits.

Therefore, let us hold and mark that which Luke saith, that those were ordained before unto life, who, being in-grafted into the body of Christ by faith, do receive the earnest and pledge of their adoption in Christ. Whence we do also gather what force the preaching of the gospel hath of itself. For it doth not find faith in men, save only because God doth call those inwardly whom he hath chosen, and because he draweth those who were his own before unto Christ, (John 6:37.) Also Luke teacheth in the same words, that it cannot be that any of the elect should perish. For he saith not that one or a few of the elect did believe, but so many as were elect. For though God's election [838] be unknown to us until we perceive it by faith, yet is it not doubtful or in suspense in his secret counsel; because he commendeth all those whom he counteth his to the safeguard and tuition of his Son, who will continue a faithful keeper even unto the end. Both members are necessary to be known. When election is placed above faith, there is no cause why men should challenge to themselves any thing in any part of their salvation. For if faith, wherein consisteth salvation, which is unto us a witness of the free adoption of God, which coupleth us to Christ, and maketh his life ours, whereby we possess God with his righteousness, and, finally, whereby we receive the grace of sanctification, be grounded without us in the eternal counsel of God; what good things so ever we have, we must needs acknowledge that we have received it of the grace of God, which doth prevent us of its own accord. Again, because many entangle themselves in doubtful and thorny imaginations, whilst that they seek for their salvation in the hidden counsel of God, let us learn that the election of God is therefore approved by faith, that our minds may be turned unto Christ as unto the

[836] "Promiscue," indiscriminately.
[837] "Promiscue," indiscriminately.
[838] "Adoptio," adoption.

pledge of election, and that they may seek no other certainty save that which is revealed to us in the gospel; I say, let this seal suffice us, that

"whosoever believeth in the only-begotten Son of God hath eternal life," (John 3:36.)

49. *The word of the Lord was spread abroad.* Luke doth in this place declare the proceeding [839] of the gospel; wherein appeareth how true the parable of Christ is, when he saith that it is like to leaven, (Luke 13:21.) We heard before that there was great concourse of people, so that the seed of true doctrine was sown throughout the whole city. Luke saith now that it was spread farther, to wit, throughout the whole country.

50. Nevertheless, he declareth that that was done not without great pains and trouble. Therefore, the beginning of the calling of the Gentiles was joyful and prosperous, neither could Satan hinder the course of the grace of God; but in the mean season, it stood Paul and Barnabas upon (whom God had brought forth into the field [840]) to strive. And we must mark what Luke saith, that the religious and honest women, together with the chief men of the city, were enforced to persecute the servants of Christ. For this was no small offense to the rude, and those who were as yet scarce begotten in Christ, when they saw all those men and women which were of any account or estimation set against Christ, and also whatsoever was praise-worthy according to men. A great multitude of men received Christ, but it was but the multitude and the offscourings of men. Against them were set the chief men of the city, who with their pomp did easily oppress the base and obscure multitude. That might also cause doctrine to be suspected, yea, to be hated, in that godly and honest matrons to look to were enemies to it. If wicked, ungodly, and mischievous men should have issued out of their taverns and dens; if companies of whores should break out of their brothel-house, it should be no reproach to the gospel; yea, rather the dignity thereof should thereby appear more plainly; but now, what may the weak think with themselves, but that the doctrine which hath such adversaries is not of God? Therefore it was expedient that not only the faithful, who were as yet weak, should be confirmed by the Lord, lest their faith should fall, but also that the hand should be reached out to Paul and Barnabas, lest, being discouraged, they should leave off.

And by this example the Lord meant to teach us that we must valiantly resist such lets; [841] and that we must beware lest the vain visors of virtue [842] do blind our eyes, so that we cannot see the glory of Christ which shineth in the gospel. For it is certain that all that virtue and honesty which is in men is mere hypocrisy where they set themselves against. Christ; though it may be that those who are rashly carried against Christ for a time may afterwards repent. Notwithstanding, we must thus think with ourselves, that

[839] "Progressum," the progress.
[840] "Athletas in arenam," as wrestlers into the arena.
[841] "Offendiculos," petty scandals.
[842] "Inanes virtutum larvae." empty masks or shows of virtue.

whatsoever fair show of holiness those bear who resist the gospel, they are neither endued with the perfect fear of God, neither are they any thing else but a vain shadow, how greatly soever they boast of their virtue. Neither is it without cause that Christ hath this title given him, that he revealeth the cogitations of many hearts, (Luke 2:35.)

Religious. And what manner [of] religion could that be where there was no reverence of the Word of God? We must note that there be four kinds of men: as there be few which worship God sincerely and from the heart, so there be few who openly profess the manifest and gross contempt of him. These be two sorts. And the more part is neither quite without religion, neither is it altogether void of the common worship of God; but yet, notwithstanding, whilst they do coldly, and, as it were, overfields [843] play with God, if they be thoroughly examined they be but profane; like as, at this day, the ungodliness of many is after a sort shrouded under ceremonies, and the reigned profession of the worship of God. So that in all ages there have been certain worshippers of God who have worshipped him like stage-players, [844] whose holiness did wholly consist in gestures and vain pomps. In Paul's time, even as at this day, a peculiar study of godliness was to be found in a few, whose religion, though it were impure, and their heart reigned, deceitful, and double, yet are they counted after a sort religious, in respect of their zeal. But hereby appeareth what account we may make of bare religion, which driveth headlong, through unadvised heat, the professors thereof, to resist the kingdom of God, and to oppress his glory. Furthermore, it is to be thought that though these matrons had not altogether given their name to Judaism, neither had they been nousled [845] in the doctrine of the law, yet were they half Jewesses, and that was the cause that they did so willingly take upon them the defense of the nation. For thus are women led about captive, being laden with sins, as Paul witnesseth.

51. *When they had shaken of the dust of their feet.* We may also gather, even by the commandment of Christ, (Matthew 10:14; Luke 9:5; 10:11,) that this was a token of cursing among the Jews. For it is not to be thought that Christ meant to have his [disciples] use an unknown sign, forasmuch as it was his purpose to terrify the gross and professed condemners of his doctrine. Furthermore, he meant by this means to declare that God doth so detest the wicked, that we must take meat heed that we have no fellowship with them, lest we be infected with their uncleanness. All the wicked are said, indeed, to pollute the ground whereon they tread; but the Lord did never command that any, save only the condemners of his word, should be so rejected with such execration. If any adulterer or whoremonger, if any perjured person, if any drunkard, [846] were to be excommunicate, this sign was not used. Therefore, it appeareth how intolerable the contempt of the

[843] "Defunctorie," in a perfunctory manner.
[844] "Histrionici Dei cultores," histrionic worshippers of God.
[845] "Imbutae," imbued with.
[846] "Si quis homicida," if any murderer, omitted.

word of God is in his sight; because, when as he commandeth that the dust of the feet be shaken off, it is as much as if he should pronounce that they are the bond-slaves of Satan, men past hope, and worthy to be banished [847] from off the earth. Wherefore, let this so great;, severity teach us to reverence the gospel. Also the ministers of the word are taught with how great ferventness of zeal they must maintain the majesty of the word, that they do not coldly dissemble and wink at the contempt thereof.

52. *The disciples were filled with joy* This member may be expounded two manner of ways; That they were filled with joy and the Spirit, by *hypallage,* thus, With joy of the Spirit, or (which is all one) with spiritual joy; because there is no quietness, peace, or joy of conscience, but it cometh of the Spirit of God, in which respect Paul saith that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, (Romans 14:17;) or that the word *Spirit* may contain under it other virtues and gifts. Yet this pleaseth me better, that they were filled with joy; because the grace of the Holy Spirit reigned in them, which alone doth so make us glad, truly and perfectly, that we are carried up above the whole world. For we must mark Luke's drift, that the faithful were so far from being troubled and shaken with those stumbling-blocks, how great soever they were, with the reproach of their teachers, with the disquieting of the city, with terrors and threatenings, also with fear and dangers hanging over their heads, that they did with the loftiness of their faith despise valiantly the gorgeousness, as well of their reigned holiness as of their power. And assuredly, if our faith shall be well grounded in God, and shall be thoroughly rooted in his word; and, finally, if' it shall be well fortified with the aid of the Spirit as it, ought, it; shall nourish peace and joy spiritual in our minds, though all the world be in an uproar.

[847] "Qui exterminentur," to be exterminated.

Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14

Acts 14:1-4

Acts 14:1-4

1. And it came to pass at Iconium, that they went together [or at the same time] into the synagogue of the Jews, and spake so, that a great multitude both of Jews and Gentiles believed. 2. And the Jews which believed not stirred and with envy infected the minds of the Gentiles against the brethren. 3. Therefore, they were long time conversant there, behaving themselves boldly in the Lord, who bare witness of the word of his grace, granting that signs and wonders might be done by their hands. 4. And the multitude of the city was divided: and some stood with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

1. [848] in one place, yet do they not yield; because they consider that the Lord had called them upon that condition, that they should do their duty though the whole world and Satan did say nay. Therefore, we see that they came not only ready to teach, but also armed to enter conflicts, that they might courageously proceed in publishing the gospel, even through the midst of combats.

And assuredly, that which was once spoken to Jeremiah is common to all the prophets and ministers of God,

"They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail,"
(Jeremiah 1:19.)

Now, whithersoever they fly, they carry with them the same courage [849] still; whereby it appeareth that they were not only furnished for one combat, but even for continual warfare; which Luke doth now prosecute. [850] He saith first, that they came to Iconium, and therewithal he showeth that they sought not there some haven where they might rest quietly; but they entered the synagogue as if they had suffered no hurt at all.

I refer the word {Κατα} {το} {αυτο}, forasmuch as it signifieth among the Grecians, *together, or at the same time,* rather unto the Jews than unto Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, I interpret it thus, not that they went in both together, but that they followed the multitude at the solemn and appointed

[848] "Verum quamvis duciter accepti," but however harshly they were received.
[849] "Animi praesentiam," presence of mind.
[850] "Quod Lucas nunc prosequitur," as Luke now relates in detail.

time of the meeting, whence we gather that they spake not secretly with a few men, but in a great assembly of people; whereby they declare their boldness and ready desire; they are so far from fearing envy, or avoiding danger. [851]

That a great multitude believed. As Luke did before show the power of the Spirit in Paul and Barnabas, so now he commandeth another grace of God in that prosperous success which they had. For one only sermon which they made was not without fruit, but it brought forth many children of God, as well of the Jews as of the Gentiles. If one, or two, or a few, had believed, they might have thought that they sped well; but the Lord confirmeth them far better, when as they gather such plentiful fruit of their doctrine even in a short time. For they knew that so many hearts of men were converted to believe, not so much by their voice, as by the power of the Spirit; whereby they might also assure themselves that they themselves were defended by the outstretched hand of God, which did not a little encourage them.

2. *And those Jews which believed not* Lo, they are persecuted now afresh, and that by the Jews, for they were like firebrands to inflame the minds of the Gentiles; for it is to be thought that the Gentiles could abide to hear the gospel preached, unless they had been incensed to resist by these fans. [852] I interpret {κακωσαι} in this place for to resist [853] with a malicious affection, or to enforce to do hurt. Under the name brethren, Luke comprehendeth, in my judgment, all the godly; to wit, that they were vexed and troubled whosoever embraced the gospel, as if some pernicious sect had risen to spread discord, to trouble the peace of the city, to shake the public state; yet if any had rather restrain it unto Paul and Barnabas I am not greatly against him.

3. *A long time.* Luke declareth here, that Paul and Barnabas did not depart the city so soon as they saw some set against them, for when he saith that they behaved themselves boldly, he giveth us an inkling [854] that there was cause of fear offered them. Whence we gather that they stood stoutly, and that through rare constancy and courage they counted all dangers as nothing, until they were compelled by violence to depart to another place. This clause, {επι} {κυριω}, may be expounded diversely, either that they behaved themselves stoutly in the Lord's cause, or that they trusted to his grace, and were thereby encouraged. I have followed that which was more common, that they behaved themselves freely and boldly in the Lord, that is, being holpen not by their own strength, but by his grace. He showeth immediately after, after what sort they were encouraged in the Lord; to wit, because [that] he approveth the doctrine by signs and miracles. For seeing that they knew thereby that the Lord was present with them, and that his

[851] "Ut invidiam fugitent, aut periculem formident," from shunning envy, or dreading danger.

[852] "Nisi liabellis illis accensae fuissent ad resistendum," had not these like fans kindled their resistance.

[853] "Inficere," to infect.

[854] "Innnib," he intimates.

hand was nigh to help them, they were worthily pricked forward to behave themselves stoutly. But in noting one kind, he doth not exclude other kinds, for the Lord did lift them up unto boldness, and establish them in constancy by other means. But it seemeth that Luke did speak of miracles expressly, because the Lord showed in them his power openly before all the people. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas were not a little emboldened when the Lord did so deliver their doctrine from contempt.

Furthermore, we must note this phrase, that the Lord gave witness to the gospel in miracles, for it showeth the true use of miracles. This is, indeed, the first end, that they may show to us the power and grace of God; but because we be wrong and perverse interpreters of them, lest they be drawn unto abuse and corruption, God doth never suffer them to be separated from his word. For if miracles were wrought at any time without his word; first, that was very seldom; secondly, there came but small fruit thereof; and God hath wrought miracles, for the most part, whereby the world might know him not simply, or in his bare majesty, but in his word. So Luke saith, in this place, that the gospel was established by miracles, not that some confused religion might possess the minds of men, but that Paul's doctrine going before they might be brought unto the pure worship of God.

Whence we may easily gather how foolishly the Papists deal, when as they endeavor to lead away the world from the reverence of God and the gospel by bare miracles. For we must hold that principle, that those miracles which came from God at any time did never tend to any other end but that the gospel might have his perfect and full authority.

Now must we see whether the gospel command us to call upon the dead, to burn incense to idols, to translate unto reigned saints the grace of Christ to take in hand vowed pilgrimages, to invent profane worshippings, whereof there is no mention made in the Word of God; but there is nothing more contrary to the gospel than that these superstitions should take place. Whereupon it followeth that the Papists do wickedly make engines of the shoars [855] of the gospel to oppugn it. To the same end tendeth that which Luke saith, that the Lord granted that by the hands of his servants miracles might be done; in which words he teacheth that those were only ministers who obeyed God, and that he was the author, who used their hand and industry. Wherefore, in speaking properly, we cannot say that they were Paul and Barnabas's miracles, but the miracles of God alone, who doth so work by men, that he will not have his glory darkened by their ministry.

Furthermore, we must note the title of the gospel, which Luke putteth in here, that it may be made to us more amiable; for in calling it the word of grace, it hath a most pleasant taste, because salvation is offered to the world in it through Christ. And we must understand the contrariety with the law, wherein only the curse is set before us. Therefore, let us remember that God speaketh to us in the gospel to this end, that he may reconcile himself to us,

[855] "Fulturis," the props or stays.

and may testify that he is merciful to us.: Neither doth this hinder that it is *the savor of death unto death* to the reprobate, (2 Corinthians 2:16) because they change not the nature thereof by their fault. Read those things which we have spoken in the second chapter touching signs and wonders.

4. *The multitude was divided.* The most troublesome part of the tragedy [856] followeth now, for the city is divided into two parts; and at length Paul and Barnabas (being enforced by the uproar of the people) depart unto another place. If it be demanded what was the original of the discord, assuredly it flowed from the gospel, to which, notwithstanding, there is nothing more contrary than to cause discord; but the forwardness of men causeth that the gospel, which ought to be the bond of unity, is (so soon as it cometh abroad) the occasion of tumults. Wherefore, so soon as any schism ariseth, before we condemn those who seem to be the authors, it behoveth us wisely to consider who ought to bear the blame. We hear here that one city was divided, [857] whereby some were brought unto Christ. The Spirit of God pronounceth this to the praise, and not the shame, of Paul and Barnabas. The same rule must we observe at this day, lest the gospel be burdened with false envy, if it bring not men together [858] unto God, but the wicked rage against it. It is assuredly a miserable matter to see division among men. But as the unity is accursed which doth separate us all from God, so it were better that a few should depart an hundred times from all the whole world, and, in the mean season, come in favor again with God, than that disagreeing with him continually, they should have peace with the world. [859]

Acts 14:5-10

Acts 14:5-10

5. And when there was an assault made of the Gentiles and Jews, together with their rulers, to do them violence, and to stone them, 6. When they knew the matter, they fled into cities of Lycaonia, to Lystra and Derbe, and to the country lying nigh there about on every side: 7. And there they preached the gospel. 8. And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, who had been lame from his mother's womb, neither had he ever walked. 9. This man heard Paul speak: who, beholding him, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10. Said with a loud voice, Arise upright upon thy feet. And he leapt up and walked.

5. Mark how far forth the holy champions of Christ did suffer. They give not back when their enemies do only set themselves against them; but when the sedition waxeth hot, and they be in danger of stoning, though they have many favorers of their doctrine, they go no further, but remembering the

[856] "Catastrophe," the catastrophe.
[857] "Schismate," by a schism.
[858] "Omnes pariter," all alike.
[859] "Mundi pac."

saying of Christ, wherein he warneth the faithful in patience to possess their souls, they avoid the fury of the enemy. And though they fly, lest they [860] throw themselves headlong into death, yet their constancy in preaching the gospel doth sufficiently declare that they feared not danger. For Luke saith that they preached the gospel in other places also. This is the right kind of fear, when the servants of Christ do not run willfully into the hands of their enemies, of them to be murdered, and yet they do not foreslow [abandon] their duty; neither doth fear hinder them from obeying God when he calleth; and so, consequently, they can afford, if need be, to go even through death itself to do their duty.

8. *A certain man at Lystra.* Luke reciteth one miracle which we may think [861] was one of many; but there was mention made of it alone by reason of the famous event. For we shall see by and by what happened. Luke reckoneth up the circumstances, which do more plainly set forth the power of God, when he saith that the man did never walk, and that he was a cripple even from his mother's womb, and that he was suddenly healed by the voice of Paul alone before the eyes of all men, and that his legs, which were dead, were made nimble, so that he leapt up without making any stop. [862]

9. *He heard Paul speak.* Hearing is set down first, that we may know that the faith which Luke will commend by and by was conceived of Paul's doctrine. Therefore, when he heard Paul, he hoped to be healed. But the question is, whether this was promised to him specially; for God doth not command us to hope for everything by and by, [863] when he offereth unto us eternal salvation in the gospel. I answer, that this was a singular and extraordinary motion of the Spirit of God in the cripple, as it was on the other side in Paul, when he knew his faith by beholding him only. It may be that many may receive the gospel, and yet they shall not be cured of those diseases wherewith they are vexed. But forasmuch as God was determined to show a token of his grace in the cripple, he prepared his mind before, and made him capable of this that should come upon him. [864] Wherefore we must not make this a common rule, because the cripple believed that he should be healed, but it was a peculiar preparation to receive the gift of healing. And this kind of faith is likewise particular which giveth place to [865] miracles, which many of God's children do want, who are, notwithstanding, indued with the Spirit of adoption.

Whom when Paul beheld steadfastly. We know how doubtful and how deceitful a thing the countenance of man is, therefore there could no sure judgment be given thereby of faith, which hath God alone to be witness thereof; but, as I have already said, the cripple's faith was revealed to Paul

860 "Temere," rashly, omitted.
861 "Probabile est," it is probable.
862 "Sine difficultate," without difficulty.
863 "Protinus," forthwith.
864 "Hujus accessionis," of this accession.
865 "Locum," room for.

by the secret inspiration of the Spirit, as he was to the apostles their only guide and master to work miracles.

10. *He said with a loud voice.* Many old books, [866] and those of great credit, add, "I say to thee in the name of Jesus Christ," and surely we see how careful the apostles were to magnify the name of Christ in all miracles; therefore I think that that was expressed by Luke, and yet we cannot find it commonly now in the printed books, [copies.] Whereas Luke saith afterward, that the lame man leapt up, it serveth not only for the commendation of God's power, but also such readiness and willingness to obey did testify that he was rightly prepared by the Lord; so that he did already walk in mind when as his feet were as yet dead. Although his speed in rising made the power of God more manifest, to which end also Paul exalted his voice, that the sudden change might the more move the multitude.

Acts 14:11-13

Acts 14:11-13

11. Furthermore, when the multitude had seen what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, Gods being made like to men are come down to us. 12. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the captain of the speech. [867] 13. And Jupiter's priest, which was before their city, bringing bulls and crowns [chaplets] unto the gates, would have done sacrifice with the multitude.

11. *Furthermore, the multitude.* This history doth abundantly testify how ready and bent men are unto vanity. Paul uttered not that word abruptly, *Arise;* but he added it as it were a conclusion to the sermon made concerning Christ. Yet the people ascribe the praise of the miracle unto their idols, as if they had heard no word of Christ. Indeed, it is no such wonder, that the barbarous men fell unto superstition which they had learned [868] from their childhood, so soon as they saw the miracle. But this vice is too common every where, and it is so bred in us, to be perverse and wrong interpreters of the works of God. Hence come such gross dotings of superstitions in Popery, because catching rashly at miracles, they take no heed to doctrine. For which cause we must take the better heed, and be the more sober, lest we happen with the sense of the flesh to corrupt (whereunto we are so bent) the power of God, which shineth and appeareth to us for our salvation. And no marvel if the Lord would have only a few miracles wrought, and that for a short time, lest through the lust of men they should be drawn unto a far contrary end; because it is unmeet that he should set his name to be mocked of the world, which must needs be, when that which is proper to him is translated unto idols, or the unbelievers corrupt his works, to invent

[866] "Codices," manuscripts or copies.
[867] "Dux esset sormonis," took the lead in speaking.
[868] "Imbiberant," had imbibed.

corrupt worshipping, while that setting the word aside, they catch at every divine power which they feign. [869]

Gods like to men. This was an opinion drawn from old fables, which, notwithstanding, took the beginning of truth. [870] The books of the poets are full of these toys, that the gods were often seen upon earth in the likeness of men; and yet we may well think that this carne not of nothing, [871] but rather that profane men did turn that into fables, which the holy fathers taught in times past concerning angels. And it may be that Satan, when he had men besotted, did with diverse jugglings delude them. This is of a truth, whatsoever was God's, whensoever it went with the infidels, [872] it was corrupt by their wicked inventions. The same must we likewise think of sacrifices, wherein God did exercise his [873] even from the beginning, that they might have the external signs of godliness and of the worship of God. And after that the unbelievers invented to themselves strange gods, they abused the sacrifices unto their sacrilegious worship. When the men of Lycaonia see unwonted power in the cripple that was healed, they persuade themselves that it is a work of God; this is all well. [874] But it was evil done, in that they forge to themselves false gods in Paul and Barnabas, according to the old [wonted] error, for what is the cause that they prefer Barnabas before Paul, save only because they follow the childish surmise [fiction] concerning Mercury, the interpreter of the gods, in which they had been nourished? By which example we are taught what a mischief it is to be accustomed and acquainted with errors in youth, which can so hardly be rooted out of the mind, that even through the works of God, whereby they ought to have been redressed, they wax more hard.

13. *Also Jupiter's priest.* Though Luke doth not express with what affection he [this priest] was moved to be so diligent, yet it is to be thought, that, forasmuch as there was great hope of most plentiful gain offered, he was moved with covetousness. For he had great hope of gain in time to come, if it should be noised abroad that Jupiter appeared there. For this opinion would by and by have followed, that Jupiter was more delighted in the temple of Lystra than in any other. And so soon as such superstition hath once filled the minds of men, they spare no cost to offer sacrifice. [875] The world is indeed of itself inclined to this, but then came the sacrificing priests, who are like fans and bellows. And it is not to be doubted, but that the whole multitude was moved with ambition, to be so desirous to offer sacrifice to Paul under the name of Jupiter, that their city might be the more famous and noble. Hence hath Satan so great liberty [license] to deceive, whilst that

[869] "Numen quodlibet. a se confictum," any kind of deity reigned by themselves.
[870] "Originem a veritate duxerant," had derived their origin from truth.
[871] "Non fuisse de nihilo confictum," was not reigned without some foundation.
[872] "Ubi ad infideles transiit," when it was transmitted to unbelievers, the heathen.
[873] "Fideles suos," his believing people.
[874] "Recte hactenus," so far right.
[875] "Donaria," gifts.

the sacrificing priests set nets to get gain, and the people are delighted to have errors confirmed.

Acts 14:14-18

Acts 14:14-18

14. Furthermore, when the apostles, Barnabas and Saul, had heard, rending their garments, they ran in into the, press, crying, 15. And saying, Men, why do ye these things? We be also men subject to like miseries as you are, preaching to you that you turn from those vain things unto the living God, who hath made heaven and earth, and the sea, and whatsoever are in them: 16. Who in times, past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, 17. Though he left not himself without witness, doing good, giving to us from heaven rain and fruitful times, replenishing with food and gladness our hearts. 18. And when they had thus said, they scarce appeased the multitude, that they should do [from doing] sacrifice to them.

14. *When the apostles had heard.* In that Paul and Barnabas rent their garments, and leapt into the midst of the multitude, it appeareth thereby how zealous they were for the glory of God; [no;] being content only to speak to the people, [876] they troubled the preparation of the sacrifice so much as they are able. It cometh to pass sometimes that even hypocrites refuse excessive honor; but they rather provoke the simple to give it them with their reigned modesty. There was no such thing in Paul and Barnabas; for they declared, both by words and also by all gesture of body, that they were so far from taking pleasure in that worship which the men of Lystra gave unto them, that they did utterly detest it. This is holy anger, wherewith the servants of God must be inflamed so often as they see his glory profaned and overthrown by the sacrileges of men. And, assuredly, no man shall be able otherwise to serve God sincerely and faithfully, unless he put on that affection of jealousy, whereof Paul speaketh in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (2 Corinthians 11:27) that those men to whom the Lord hath committed the charge of his Church be no less courageous and stout to defend the glory of their Lord, than a husband is vigilant to defend his wife's chastity.

Therefore, we must take good heed that we suffer not that honor to be given us which may darken the glory of God; but rather so soon as there appeareth any profaning of God's glory, let this heat break out, whereof we have an example in Paul and Barnabas. And though the teachers of the Church ought especially to be imbued with zeal, yet there is no one of the godly which ought not to be sore displeased, when he seeth the worship of God polluted or given to some other; because it is written of all,

"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the rebukes of them that rebuked thee fell on me"*

[876] "Verbis non contenti," not contented with words.

*(Psalms 69:10.)

And if so be it holy men being yet compassed about with the flesh did so greatly detest idolatry, how shall we think them to be affected now, when they are stripped out of all the affections of the flesh? When as the world abuseth their names and persons unto superstition, it thinketh it doth them a great pleasure; but it is greatly deceived. For they will stand up first against their worshippers, and will indeed declare that they never make more account of anything, than that the worship of God might remain whole and sound to him. Moreover, there can be no greater injury done to them, than when the honor which is taken from God is given to them; which must needs be when any divine thing is ascribed and given them.

Whereas Luke saith that Paul and Barnabas did rent their garments, it appeareth by other places of Scripture that this rite and custom was used among the men of the east country, so often as they would by external gesture express either great sorrow or detesting of any thing. When Luke calleth Barnabas an apostle together with Paul, he extendeth the signification of the word farther than unto the chief [primary] order which Christ appointed in his Church; like as Paul maketh Andronicus and Junias excellent among the apostles. But if we should speak properly, they were evangelists and not apostles; unless peradventure because Barnabas was made Paul's fellow in office, we place them both in like degree of office, so may he be truly called an apostle.

15. *Men, why do ye those things?* They begin with a reprehension, as the matter did require; that done, they show to what end they were sent. Afterward they preach concerning the only God, and show that he was unknown to the world. Lastly, that they may more strongly pluck out of their hearts the deceits and sleights of the devil, they teach that this ignorance was without excuse. Therefore the first part of the sermon is a reprehension, wherein the men of Lystra are condemned for worshipping mortal men preposterously instead of God. Though the reason which they allege seemeth to be cold. For it were an easy matter to gather thence, that it is not unlawful to worship those who are delivered from human miseries by death. By this means all the superstitions of the Gentiles should stand untouched, which were wont to count none gods but those who were dead. With the same color also have the Papists colored their idolatry, who worship rather the dead men's bones, stones and wood, than living men in whose nostrils is breath. [877] I answer, that Paul and Barnabas drew this argument from the matter which was now in hand, We be miserable men; therefore you do falsely and filthily imagine us to be gods, and worship us as gods. If idolatry be handled generally, this shall be a perpetual reason to condemn it, and shall alone be sufficient enough, that the perfect and whole worship of godliness is due to God alone, and that therefore it is profaned, so soon as it is in any point given to creatures, whether they be angels, or men, or stars.

[877] "Quam vivos et spitantes homines," than living, breathing men.

But occasion shall oftentimes be offered, that many things may be spoken against one kind of idolatry, which do not appertain unto another, (neither are agreeable to the same;) and yet shall they be of no small force for the matter which is in hand, as Paul and Barnabas, by confessing that they be mortal men, subject to diverse calamities, had a fit reason to reprove the fury and madness of the people.

We preach to you. An argument drawn from contraries. For here they show that the end of their coming was quite contrary; to wit, that they might remove superstitions, which had hitherto reigned. For it is all one as if they had said, Doth the miracle move you? Then give credence to our words. And the sum of our embassage is, that all reigned godheads wherewith the world hath hitherto been deceived may be done away and perish. And this is a general doctrine, whereby they do not only appease the present madness, but also reprehend all manner [of] superstitions, and whatsoever was contrary to, or disagreeing with, the rule of godliness. For without doubt they call all that vain which men have invented to themselves of their own brain. And we must mark this definition, that all religion is vain which departeth and degenerateth from the pure and simple Word of God. There is no express mention made indeed of the Word, because they spake to the Gentiles. But because God is no otherwise rightly worshipped than according to his appointment, it followeth out of Paul's words, that so soon as men depart from that worship which God hath commanded and doth allow, [approve,] they are wearied foolishly and vainly with a vain and unprofitable labor. For that religion wherein God hath not the preeminence is nothing worth, neither hath it any truth or soundness.

And this was the cause that sincere and perfect godliness was never found, neither did it ever flourish in the more part of the world. For they stood only about the removing of the old idolatry; and the other thing was in the mean season foreslowed, [neglected,] to bring men unto the true God alone, after that they had forsaken idols. They turned, indeed, the name of an idol sometimes into the name of God, but under that color they did nevertheless cherish the old errors, which they should have endeavored to redress. So the priests of France begat the single life of great Cybele. [878] Nuns came in place of the vestal virgins. The church of All Saints succeeded Pantheon, (or the church of All Gods; [879]) against ceremonies were set ceremonies not much unlike. At length came in the multitude of gods, who they thought would be lawful and tolerable if they had once decked [masked] them with the titles of saints. Corruptions are not by this means purged, neither are the stables, both profane and full of filth, turned into the temple of God; but the name of God is mixed with profane pollutions, and God himself is brought into a filthy stall. Wherefore, let us remember that the apostles

[878] "Sic Galli sacrifici magnae Cybeles caelibatum genuerunt," so the priests of Gaul gave rise to the celibacy of great Cybele.

[879] "Pantheo successit Pantagion," Pantagion (All Saints) succeed Pantheon, (All Gods.)

did not only employ themselves to overthrow idolatry which had long time reigned in former ages, but did also take great heed that pure religion might reign afterward, having put all corruptions to flight.

Who hath made heaven and earth We know that the order of teaching doth require that we begin with things which are better known. Seeing that Paul and Barnabas spake to the Gentiles, they should have in vain essayed to bring them [880] unto Christ. Therefore, it was expedient for them to begin with some other point, which was not so far separate from common sense, [perception,] that after that was confessed they might afterward pass over unto Christ. The minds of the men of Lystra were possessed with that error, that there be more gods than one. Paul and Barnabas show, on the contrary, that there is but one Creator of the world. After that that reigned number and multitude of the gods was taken away, there was passage now made unto the second member, that they might teach what that God was who was the Creator of heaven and earth. The case standeth otherwise at this day between us and the Papists; they confess that there is but one God, and they admit the Scripture. Therefore, it remaineth that we prove to them out of the Scripture what God is, and after what sort he will be worshipped of men.

16. *In times past.* Because the men of Lystra might object that that God was unknown hitherto, Paul and Barnabas prevent them and say, that all men wandered indeed in darkness, and that all mankind was stricken with blindness, but that they deny that any prejudice must be made [881] according to the perverse ignorance of the world. These were two no small lets for the unbelievers, long antiquity of time, and the consent almost of all nations. Paul and Barnabas remove both in this place, If, say they, men have erred many years, [ages,] and if the world have wandered without reason and judgment, let not, therefore, the truth of God, when it appeareth, be less precious to you. For seeing that it is eternal, and is not changed, it is an unmeet thing that the long prescription of years should be set against it. They prove that there is no more aid or patronage to be found in the number of men. There is no cause (say they) why the conspiracy of all the whole world should keep you from coming to the right way. Blindness hath got the upper hand among all people; but God doth now (appear and) give light to you. Therefore, your eyes must be open, and you must not slumber and sleep in darkness, though all people have been drowned therein hitherto.

Their ways. If he had only said that men were deceived until that time through God's sufferance, we might easily gather thereby that all men can do nothing else but err, so long as they be not governed of God. Yet he speaketh far more plainly when he calleth errors the *ways* of men. For we are plainly taught by this what the wisdom and understanding of man's mind can do in

[880] "Statim," forthwith, omitted.

[881] "Debere praejudicium fieri," that any thing should be prejudged, (any judgment should be founded on.)

beholding and keeping the way of salvation. All people [nations] (saith he) have walked in their own ways; that is, they have wandered in darkness and death. It is all one as if he should say, that there is no sparkle of true reason in all the whole world.

Therefore, there is but one rule of true godliness, that is, that the faithful, casting from them all confidence in their own wit, do submit themselves to God. For the ways of men are now as they were in times past; and the examples of all times teach how miserably blind those men be who have not the word of God to give them light, though they think they can pass other men in quickness of sight. Immediately after the beginning of the world, the more part fell away unto diverse superstitions and wicked worshippings. Whence came that, save only because it pleased them to follow their own imaginations? When it might have seemed that the world was purged with the flood, it fell again [relapsed] straightway to the same vices. Therefore, there is nothing more deadly than to lean to our own wisdom.

But Paul and Barnabas show no cause here why the Lord suffered the world to err so long; and assuredly we must count the will of God alone the chiefest law of equity. God hath always a good reason for his worlds; but because it is oftentimes hid from us, it is our duty reverently to wonder at his secret counsel. We must, indeed, confess that the world was worthy of [deserved] such destruction; but there can no other reason be brought why the Lord had mercy rather on one age than on another, save only because it seemed good to him that it should be so. Therefore, Paul calleth that time which was appointed of God for preaching the gospel, the time of fullness, (Galatians 4:4,) lest any other opportunity be sought. And we must remember that which we had in the first chapter, that it is not for us to know the times and seasons which the Father hath placed in his own power. So that the cavil of the Papists is refuted, who say that it cannot be that God suffered his Church to err so long. For whence, I pray you, came the Gentiles but from the ark of Noah, when there was a certain singular purity of the Church? (Genesis 9:9.) Also, the posterity of holy Shem, together with others, did degenerate. Yea, Israel, the peculiar people of the Lord, was also left for a long time. Wherefore, it is no marvel if God did punish the contempt of his word with the same blindness under the reign of his Son as he did in times past.

17. *Notwithstanding, he did not suffer himself to be without witness.* Paul and Barnabas take from the Gentiles in this place the cloak [pretext] of ignorance. For how greatly soever men please themselves in their own inventions, being at length convicted of error, they fly unto this fortress, [asylums] that they ought to bear no blame; [882] but that God was rather cruel, who did not vouchsafe so much as. with one hiss to call those back whom he saw perish, [perishing.] Paul and Barnabas cut off [883] this frivolous

[882] "Nullum sibi debere culpam imputari," that no blame ought to be imputed to them

[883] "Anticipant," anticipate.

objection, when they show that God lay hid in such sort, that he [still] bare witness of himself and his divinity. Notwithstanding, we must see how these two things can hang together; for if God bare witness of himself, he did not suffer (so much as in him lay) the world to err. I answer, that this kind of testimony, whereof mention is made, was such as that it made men without excuse, and yet was it not sufficient to salvation. For that of the apostle is true, that by faith it is understood that the worlds were ordained by the word of God, (Hebrews 11:3.) But faith is not conceived by the bare beholding of the heaven and earth, but by the hearing of the word. Whereupon it followeth, that men are brought by the direction of the word alone unto that knowledge of Almighty God which bringeth salvation. And yet this letteth not but that they may be made without excuse, even without the word, who, though they be naturally deprived of light, are blind notwithstanding, through their own malice, as Paul teacheth in the first chapter to the Romans.

Giving rain and fruitful seasons. God hath, indeed, revealed himself to all mankind by his word since [from] the beginning. But Paul and Barnabas show that there was no age on which God did not bestow benefits, which might testify that the world is governed by his government (and commandment;) and because the light of doctrine had been buried long thee, therefore they say only, that God was showed by natural arguments, [evidences.] And it is to be thought that they did, in such sort, set forth the magnificence and greatness of the works of God as became them; but it was sufficient for Luke to touch the (sums and) chief points of matters. Neither do I so understand it, that they intreated subtlety, and after the manner of the philosophers, of the secrets of nature, for they spake unto an unlearned multitude; therefore it behooved them to set that before them plainly which the most ignorant did know. Notwithstanding they take this principle, that in the order of nature there is a certain and evident manifestation of God, in that the earth is watered with rain; in that the heat of the sun doth comfort it; [884] in that there cometh such abundance of fruit out of the same yearly, it is thereby gathered for a surety, that there is some God who governeth all things. For even the heaven and earth are not moved or governed by their own motion, and much less by fortune. Therefore it remaineth, that this wonderful workmanship of nature doth manifestly show the providence of God; and those who said that the world was eternal spake not as they thought, but they went about by malicious and barbarous unthankfulness [ingratitude] to suppress the glory of God, wherein they betrayed their impudence.

Filling with meat and gladness. The ungodliness of men is more convict in that, if they knew not God, because he cloth not only set before their eyes testimonies of his glory in his works, but doth also appoint all things for their use. For why doth the sun and stars shine in the heavens, save only that they may serve men? Why doth the rain fall from heaven? Why doth

[884] "Vegetat," causes it to vegetate.

the earth bring forth her increase, save only that they may minister food to men? Therefore, God hath not set man upon earth that he may be an idle beholder of his work, as being set upon a theater, but to exercise himself in praising the liberality of God, whilst that he enjoyeth the riches of heaven and earth. And now, is it not more than filthy forwardness [depravity] not to be moved with so great goodness of God in the manifold abundance of things? To fill the hearts with meat, doth signify nothing else but to give food which may satisfy the desires of men. By this word *gladness,* Paul and Barnabas do mean that God doth give more to men, according to his infinite goodness, than their necessity doth require; as if it had been said, that men have meat given them not only to refresh their strength, but also to make their hearts merry.

If any man do object that it falleth out so oftentimes that men do rather mourn, being hungry, then rejoice, being full; I answer, that that cometh to pass contrary to the order of nature; namely, when the Lord shutteth his hand because of the sins of men. For the liberality of God should flow unto us abundantly of his [its] own accord, as it is here described by Paul and Barnabas, unless it were kept back by the lets of our vices. And yet there was never so great barrenness wherein the blessing of God in feeding men did quite wither away. It was, indeed, well said of the prophet, Open thy mouth, and I will fill it, (Psalm 81:10,) that we may know that we be hungry through our own fault, whilst that we do not admit the goodness of God. But how unworthy soever we be and straight, [885] yet the fatherly love of God breaketh through even unto the unworthy. Especially the generality of mankind doth testify that the benefits of God do never cease, wherein he appeareth to be our Father.

18. *When they had said thus.* Luke said before that they did not only use words, but they ran also with violence into the multitude. [886] Now he addeth, that the fury of the people was scarce appeased [887] with that vehemency, whereby appeareth how mad and untamed the heat of the world is toward idolatry. For if they believe the [them] gods, why do they not believe their word, whereby they put from them false honor? But all idolaters are sick of this disease, that they are oftentimes ready to shake off the yoke, unless religion be subject to their will and pleasure. Wherefore, no marvel if the prophets say oftentimes that men are carried into the blind affection of superstitions, even as brute beasts are carried into their lust.

Acts 14:19-22

Acts 14:19-22

[885] "Sed quam libet simus restricti," but however we may be restrained (in ourselves.)

[886] "Sed etiam cure impetu irruisse in turbam," but also rushed impetuously among the multitude.

[887] "Repressum," repressed.

19. And there came from Antioch and Iconium Jews, by whom the multitudes were persuaded, and when they had stoned Paul, they cast him out without the city, thinking that he was dead. 20. And as the disciples stood about him, he arose and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe. 21. And when they had preached the gospel to this city, and had framed malay disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22. Strengthening the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.

19. *There came.* Paul and Barnabas can hardly stay the people from doing sacrifice; but a company of knaves do, with small ado, persuade them to stone Paul, whom of late they made a god. Whereby appeareth how much more men be bent unto superstition than unto the true worship of God, and how arrogant superstition is, which will always bear the chief sway in appointing the worship of God. The servants of God seek no other thing but to bring men under obedience of him, which is salvation and felicity alone. They challenge to themselves no lordship, they hunt after no gain; and yet the world cannot abide them. For almost all men murmur; and now and then there rise tumults. Those who are thus stubborn against God, they be too ready to believe seducers, and willingly submit themselves to their tyranny. So the Pope had liberty to deceive at his pleasure, and not only to oppress miserable souls with slavery, but also cruelly to torment them. Whatsoever he commanded it was obediently received, and even at this day, though he make impossible laws, yet dare no man once mutter against them. Nevertheless, the yoke of Christ is sweet, (Matthew 11:30,) and yet few there be who will suffer it.

Therefore, in this history is most lively painted out unto us the forwardness of the world. Paul might have reigned under the title of Mercury, with the commendation of all men; he will not be a god. Because he serveth Christ faithfully, he is stoned. His constancy is commended, to the end we may follow it. He was indeed wonderfully delivered by the Lord; but as touching himself he suffered a most cruel kind of death. Therefore, we must make like account of this testimony, which he doth also recite in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (2 Corinthians 11:25,) as if he had been slain. Furthermore, we need not doubt but that the common sort made insurrection against him outrageously. [888] So that, what violence soever the wicked do to the servants of Christ, it is never called in question; the laws are whist, [silent;] judgments cease; the magistrate is asleep; there is no patron to be found.

20. *As the disciples.* Though no man defended Paul, yet Luke showeth that the godly were desirous of his life; [889] yet they did so moderate them-

[888] "Quin tumultuose in eum insurrexeret vulgus," that the mob rose tumultuously against him.

[889] "De ejus vita sollicitos," were anxious for his life.

selves, lest they should attempt anything with great danger to no end, seeing they could not help him unless it were done privily. And surely we must always mark what the Lord hath brought to our hand. If I, standing upon the bank, shall see a man in the midst of the water, and cannot reach him my hand when he is like to be drowned, [890] what is remaining for me to do but to commend him to the Lord? And [but] if there be any hope to help him, then must I endanger myself. [891] Therefore, we will not say that Saint Paul was left alone by the disciples through sloth, seeing they could not help him; and they declare their love and care when they stand about him after he is cast out.

They went to Derbe It appeareth plainly by this that Paul was miraculously saved, seeing that, on the morrow, after he was cast out for dead, he taketh his journey, being fresh and sound; whence it is also gathered what an invincible heart he bare against all evils and afflictions. For he creepeth not into a corner, where, like an overworn soldier, he may live idly; but he goeth to the same places where he was uncourteously and cruelly handled but a little before. Notwithstanding Luke showeth that the church was first planted among the men of Derbe, he addeth afterward, that Paul and Barnabas returned unto the churches which they had ordained, that they might confirm the disciples; whereby by he giveth us to understand that the use of the Word consisteth not in instruction only, whereby the hearer is only taught, but that it is also available for confirmation of faith, in admonishing, exhorting, and reproving. And Christ doth not only command his ministers to teach, but also to exhort; and Paul saith that the Scripture is profitable not only to teach, but also to exhort, (2 Timothy 3:16.) Wherefore, let not pastors think that they have done their duty as they ought, when they have well trained up their people in true knowledge, unless they employ themselves to this part also. Again, let not the faithful neglect the Word of God, as if the reading and preaching thereof were unnecessary; because there is no man who hath not need of continual confirmation.

22. *And exhorting them.* This was the principal way to confirm, in that they provoke the disciples who had before embraced the Gospel and did profess it, to go forward by exhorting them; for we are far from being so ready and stout [892] as we ought. Therefore our laziness needeth pricks, and our coldness must be warmed. But because God will have his exercised with diverse combats, Paul and Barnabas admonish the disciples to be ready to suffer tribulation. A very necessary admonition, that we must go on warfare in this world, that we may live well and godly. If the flesh should not molest us, if Satan should attempt nothing, if the wicked should not trouble us with some stumbling-blocks, it were no such troublesome thing to persevere; because that were a sweet walk through a soft and pleasant way; but because

[890] "Naufrago," when shipwrecked.
[891] "Periculum subire," run the risk.
[892] "Prompti et strenui," prompt and strenuous.

there arise on every side, and every minute of an hour, [moment,] infinite assaults, which provoke us to fall away, there ariseth the hardness, [893] and therefore is it that the virtue of constancy is so rare. Therefore, to the end we may persist even unto the end, we must be prepared for war.

But Luke speaketh not in this place only of the persecutions which the adversaries raise against us with drawn swords and flaming fires; but he comprehendeth under the word *tribulations,* all sorrows and miseries whereunto the life of the godly is subject; not because the faithful alone are miserable; because this is the common state both of the good and bad. Whence also cometh that famous proverb, It is the best not to be born; and the next to die very quickly. [894] But when as God doth oftentimes spare the wicked, and doth fat them with prosperity, he is more sharp and hard, [895] toward his children. For besides common molestations, they are oppressed peculiarly with many discommodities, and the Lord doth humble them with such exercises, keeping their flesh under correction lest it wax wanton; he awaketh them, lest they lie sleeping upon earth. Unto these are added the reproaches and slanders of the wicked; for they must be, as it were, the offscourings of the world. Their simpleness is laughed at; but they use [896] wicked mocks and scoffs, principally against God. Last of all, the lust of the wicked breaketh out into open violence; so that they have need to strive [897] with many tribulations, and it cannot be but that all their life shall be envied and unquiet amidst so many enemies. But this is the best comfort, and which is sufficient enough to confirm their minds, that this way (though it be hard and sharp) leadeth unto the kingdom of heaven. For we gather by this that the miseries of the godly are more happy than be all the doting dainties and delights of the world.

Therefore, let us remember, first, that this condition is set down for us, that we suffer many tribulations; yet let us also remember to add this, to mitigate the bitterness thereof, that by them we be brought unto the kingdom of God. Furthermore, their babbling is frivolous, [898] who gather hereby that patience is a work which deserveth eternal salvation, seeing that the cause of salvation is not in this place handled, but after what sort God useth to handle his in this world; and the comfort is added, not to extol the dignity and merit of works, but only to encourage the godly, that they faint not under the burden of the cross. All mankind, as we have said before, as well one as other, is subject to many miseries; but the afflictions of the reprobate are no thing else to them but the very entry of hell; but these turn to the saints to an happy and joyful end, and for them they fall out well; and so,

[893] "Difficultas," difficulty.

[894] "Optimum est non nasci; proximum vero, quam citissime mori," the best thing is not to be born; the next best to die as soon as possible.

[895] "Austerior est ac durior," he is more harsh and austere.

[896] "Maxime uruntur," they are most of all stung by. The translator appears to have read "utuntur."

[897] "Valde infesta," exceedingly troubled.

[898] "Futilis et stulta," futile and foolish.

consequently, they be helps for salvation, because they take part with Christ. [899] We must note that Paul and Barnabas being not content with the plural number, do plainly set down many tribulations, lest any man, after he hath suffered one or two, or [900] a few, do at length sink down. [901] Therefore, let the faithful think that they must pass through continual miseries; that done, let them prepare themselves not for one kind of persecution only, but for diverse kinds. For though God handle some men more courteously and gently, yet doth he pamper none of his so daintily that he is free from all tribulations.

Acts 14:23-28

Acts 14:23-28

23. And when by voices [suffrages] they had ordained them elders through all churches, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. 24. And passing over through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25. And when they had spoken the word at Perga, they went down to Attalia: 26. And thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they were commended to the grace of God unto the work which they had fulfilled. 27. And when they were come, when the Church was gathered together, they showed what great things God had done by them, and that he had opened to the Gentiles the door of faith. 28. And they were there no small time with the disciples.

23. *When they had ordained elders.* By this it appeareth sufficiently, that it is not enough if men have been once taught the doctrine of godliness, and to have [hold] the sum of faith, unless they go forward continually; therefore, Christ did not only send his apostles to preach the gospel, but he commanded also that there should be pastors appointed, that the preaching of the gospel might be perpetual and in daily use. Paul and Barnabas do mark that this order was set down by Christ, when they assigned pastors to every church, lest, after their departure, doctrine should cease and be whisht, (silent.) Furthermore, this place teacheth, that the Church cannot want an ordinary ministry, neither can any be counted Christians before God but those who, during their whole life, are willing to learn. I take it that those are called elders, in this place, who had the office of teaching enjoined them; for it appeareth by Paul that some were only censors of manners, and such as had authority to punish enormities, (1 Timothy 5:17.) Now, forasmuch as Luke saith, that they were set over every church, the difference between their office and the office of the apostles is gathered hence. For the apostles had no certain place of abode, but they went to and fro to found new churches; but pastors were set and appointed, every man to his own church, and were,

[899] "Communicant cum Christo," make them to be partakers with Christ.
[900] "Aut saltem paucis," or at least a few.
[901] "Tandem succumbunt," at length succumb.

as it were, placed to watch [902] over their congregations.

Had ordained by election. The Greek word {χειροτονειν} doth signify to decree, or ordain a thing, by lifting up the hands, as they used to do in the assemblies of the people. Notwithstanding, the ecclesiastical writers do often use the word {χειροτονεια}, in another sense; to wit, for their [the] solemn rite of ordaining, which is called in Scripture *laying on of hands.* Furthermore, by this manner of speech is very excellently expressed the right way to ordain pastors. Paul and Barnabas are said to choose [903] elders. Do they this alone by their private office? [904] Nay, rather they suffer the matter to be decided by the consent of them all. [905] Therefore, in ordaining pastors the people had their free election, but lest there should any tumult arise, Paul and Barnabas sit as chief moderators. Thus must the decree of the council of Laodicea be understood, which forbiddeth that the people have liberty granted them to elect. [906]

They having prayed with fasting. They had a double end and reason of their prayer; the first, that God would direct them with the spirit of wisdom and discretion to choose the best and most meet men, for they knew that they were not furnished with so great wisdom but they might be deceived; neither did they so much trust to their diligence, but that they knew that the principal point did consist in the blessing of God, as we see men's judgments err daily where the heavenly government is not, and that all their labor is nothing worth where the hand of God is not. These be the true signs and tokens [907] of the godly to call upon the Spirit of God, that he may govern their counsels. And if so be it this rule be to be observed in all businesses so often as the government of the Church is in hand, which dependeth wholly upon his will and pleasure, we must [908] beware that we attempt nothing unless we have him for our guide and governor. And the second end of their prayer was, that God would furnish with necessary gifts those pastors which were chosen. For it is a harder matter to fulfill such a function faithfully as a man ought, than that man's strength is sufficient for it. Therefore, they crave God's help even in this part also, having Paul and Barnabas for their authors.

They fast likewise, that even that may be a help [909] to stir up the ferventness of their prayers; for we know how great our coldness is otherwise. Not because it is always necessary that we should pray fasting, seeing that God doth invite even those who are full to give thanks; but when we are urged by any necessity to pray more fervently than we used commonly to do, this is a very profitable provokement. And now we have already declared

[902] "Ad praesidium," as a guard.
[903] "Eligere," to elect.
[904] "An soli hoc privato officio faciunt," do they alone do this by their peculiar office?
[905] "Omnium suffragiis," by the suffrages of all.
[906] "Plebi electionem permitti," election to be given (left) to the people.
[907] "Auspicia," auspices.
[908] "Sollicite," anxiously.
[909] "Adduntur jejunia, tamquam adminicula," fastings are added as helps.

what a weighty matter the choosing of pastors is, wherein the soundness of the Church is handled. Wherefore, no marvel if Luke write that they used extraordinary prayers. And it is profitable for us to mark this use, and other [uses] of fasting, lest we imagine with the Papists that it is a meritorious work, or lest we place the worship of God in it, seeing it is of itself nothing, neither is it of any importance with God, save only inasmuch as it is referred unto another end. [910]

They committed themselves to the Lord. We gather hereby, first, what great care Paul and Barnabas had for the salvation of those who, by their industry, [911] were turned unto the Lord; for they testify, that in this infirmity of the flesh men be subject to more dangers, than that their faith can continue steadfast through his [its] own strength. Therefore, this is the only refuge and aid, if the Lord keep them continually whom he hath once received. And when Luke saith, that they were commended to God in whom they believed, there cometh no small confidence hence unto us; because he assigneth this office to God as proper to him, to save and defend all those who by true faith have embraced his word.

24. *Passing through Pisidia.* We have already said that Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch of Pisidia. Being now about to return to Antioch of Syria, whence they were sent away, they go through Pamphylia, which is the middle region toward the mount Taurus. And Perga and Attalia are cities lying near together. And whereas Luke saith, that they preach the Word in the one only, we may thereby guess that they had not opportunity offered them everywhere to teach, which they were wont to neglect or let pass nowhere.

26. *When they had been commended.* Luke might have said that they were ordained there to be the apostles of the Gentiles; but by a circuit of words [912] he doth more plainly express that they were neither sent away of men, neither did they attempt any thing trusting to their own strength, but that their whole journey, together with the success, was committed to God, the author thereof. Therefore, their preaching was no man's work, but a work of the grace of God. And the word *grace* is referred as well unto the power and efficacy of the Spirit, as also unto all the rest of the signs of favor; because all those gifts be free which God bestoweth upon his servants. And the sentence may be thus resolved, that they prayed God that he would show forth his grace to further the labors of his servants.

27. *After they had called the Church together.* As those who return from an embassage used to give an account of their acts, so Paul and Barnabas declared to the Church all the sum of their voyage, that it may thereby appear what good success they had, and how faithfully they behaved themselves in their office; and also that they may exhort the faithful to give thanks to God,

[910] "Nisi quatenus alio refertur," except in so far as it has reference to something else.
[911] "Cura et labore," by their care and labour.
[912] "Verborum circuitu," by a circumlocution.

as the thing itself gave them large matter; [913] therefore Luke saith, Not that they did extol the things which they themselves had done, but whatsoever things the Lord had done by them. It is word for word *with them;* but according to the phrase of the Hebrew tongue, it is all one as if it had been said, *in them,* or *by them,* or *towards them,* or simply *to them,* in the dative case. Therefore Luke doth not say {συν} {αυτοις}, but {μετα} {αυτων}; which I say for this cause, lest any unskillful man ascribe some part of the praise to Paul and Barnabas, as if they had been partners with God in the work; whereas he doth rather make him the only author of all those famous facts which they had done.

Luke addeth immediately after, that the Lord had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; for though they were sent unto the Gentiles, yet the strangeness [novelty] of the matter causeth them to wonder not a little; and not only the sudden change did make the Jews astonished, but also because it was to them as it were a monster, that unclean men, and such as were strangers [914] from the kingdom of God, should be mixed with the holy seed of Abraham, that they might both together make one and 'the same Church of God. They are now taught by the event itself, that it was not for nothing that there were apostles sent to them. Moreover, it is said that the door of faith was set open to the Gentiles, not only because the gospel was preached to them with the external voice, but because, being illuminated by the Spirit of God, they were called effectually unto the faith. The kingdom of heaven is indeed set open to us by the external preaching of the gospel; but no man entereth in save he to whom God reacheth out his hand; no man draweth near unless he be drawn inwardly by the Spirit. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas show and prove by the effect that their calling was approved and ratified by God, because the faith of the Gentiles was, as it were, a seal engraven by the hand of God to establish the same, as Paul saith, (Romans 16:25; 2 Corinthians 3:7.)

[913] "Amplum materiam," ample materials.

[914] "Impuros et alienos," impure men, aliens.

Chapter 15

CHAPTER 15

Acts 15:1-5

Acts 15:1-5

1. And certain which came down from Judea did teach his brethren, that unless they should be circumcised according to the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. 2. And when there arose sedition, and disputing not a little to Paul and Barnabas against them, they appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to the apostles and elders to Jerusalem about this question. 3. And when they were sent by the Church, they passed through. Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they brought great joy to all the brethren. 4. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church, and of the apostles and elders, and they showed what things soever God had done with them. 5. And there arose certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That, it was needful that they should be circumcised, and to declare that the law of Moses must be kept.

1. When Paul and Barnabas had endured many combats against the professed enemies of the gospel, Luke doth now begin to declare that they were tried by domestic war; so that it was meet that their doctrine and ministry should be proved by all means, to the end it might the better appear that they were furnished by God, and armed against all the assaults of the world and Satan. For that was no small confirmation for their doctrine, in that being shaken and battered with so many engines, it stood nevertheless, neither could the course thereof be broken off by so many hindrances. Therefore, to this end doth Paul boast that he suffered fights without and terrors within, (2 Corinthians 7:5.) This history is most worthy the noting; for though we do naturally abhor the cross and all manner [of] persecution, yet civil and domestic discord is more dangerous, lest haply they discourage us. [915] When tyrants bend their force and run violently upon men, flesh indeed is afraid; and all those who are not endued with the spirit of fortitude do tremble with all their heart; but then their consciences are not properly touched with any temptation. For this is known to be as it were the fatal estate of the Church. But when it falleth out so that the brethren go together by the ears, and

[915] "Plus tamen et intestinis dissidiis est periculi ne anlmos nostros frangant vel debilitent," yet there is more danger in intestine dissensions, lest they weaken or dispirit us.

that the Church is on an uproar within itself, it cannot be but that weak minds shall be troubled and also faint; and especially when the controversy is about doctrine, which alone is the holy bond of brotherly unity. Finally, there is nothing which doth more indamage the gospel than civil discord, because it doth not only pierce and wound weak conscience, but also minister occasion to the wicked to backbite.

Wherefore, we must diligently note this history, that we may know that it is no new example, if among those who profess the same gospel there arise some wranglings and strife about doctrine, when proud men can get them a name, (whereof they are so furiously desirous,) by no other means but by bringing in their own inventions. It is certain, that as there is but one God, so there is but one truth of this God. [916] Therefore, when Paul goeth about to exhort the faithful unto mutual consent, he useth this argument, "One God, one faith, one baptism," etc., (Ephesians 4:6.) But when we see wicked men arise, who go about to divide [rend] the Church by their factions, and also either to corrupt the gospel with their false and filthy [spurious] inventions, or else to bring the same in suspicion, we ought to know the subtlety [artifice] of Satan. Therefore, Paul saith elsewhere that heresies come abroad, that those who are tried may be made manifest, (1 Corinthians 11:19.) And, assuredly, the Lord doth wonderfully make void the subtlety of Satan, in that he trieth the faith of his by such trials, and doth beautify his word with worthy and excellent victory; and causeth the truth to shine more clearly which the wicked went about to darken. But it is very convenient to weigh all the circumstances of the history which Luke noteth.

Which came down from Judea. This cloak and color was very forcible to deceive even good men then. Jerusalem was honored not without cause among all churches, because they reverenced it even as their mother. For the gospel was deducted, as it were, by pipes and conduits [917] from that fountain. These seducers come thence; they pretend the apostles; they boast that they bring nothing but that which they learned of them. They blind and blear the eyes of the unskillful with this smoke; and those who are light and wicked do greedily snatch at the color which is offered them. The perturbation of the Church doth, like a tempest, shake those who were otherwise good and moderate, so that they are enforced to stumble. Therefore, we must note this subtlety of Satan, that he abuseth the names of holy men that he may deceive the simple, who, being won with the reverence of the men, dare not inquire after the thing itself. Luke doth not express, indeed, with what affection these knaves were moved; yet it is likely that perverse zeal was the cause which moved them to set themselves against Paul and Barnabas; for there be certain churlish natures which nothing can please but that which is

[916] "Certum quidem est, sicuti unus est Deus, ita unam esse ejus veritatem," it is certain, indeed, that as God is one, so also his truth is one.

[917] "Per rivos," by streams.

their own. They had seen that circumcision and other rites of the law were observed at Jerusalem; wheresoever they become, they can abide nothing which is not agreeable thereto, as if the example of one church did bind all the rest of the churches with a certain law. And though such be carried with a preposterous zeal to procure tumults, yet are they pricked inwardly with their ambition, and with a certain kind of stubbornness. Nevertheless, Satan hath that he would; for the minds of the godly have such a mist cast before them that they can scarce know black from white.

Therefore, we must beware first of this plague, that some prescribe not a law to other some after their manner, that the example of one church be not a prejudice [918] of a common rule. Also, we must use another caution, that the persons of men do not hinder or darken the examination of the matter or cause. For if Satan transfigure himself into an angel of light, (2 Corinthians 11:14,) and if, by sacrilegious boldness, he usurp the holy name of God, what marvel is it if he do like wickedly deceive men under the names of holy men? The end shall at length declare that the apostles meant nothing less than [919] to lay the yoke of the law upon the neck of the Gentiles; and yet Satan meant under this shift to get in. So it falleth out oftentimes that those who contrary [oppose] the doctrine of Christ, creep in under the title of his servants. Therefore, there is one only remedy, to come to search out the matter [920] with sound judgments; also it behoveth us to prevent an offense, lest we think that the faithful servants of God do therefore strive among themselves, because Satan doth falsely abuse their names, that he may set certain shadows by the ears together to terrify the simple.

2. *When there was sedition arisen.* This was no small trial, in that Paul and Barnabas are haled into a troublesome tumult. There was mischief enough already in the matter [dissension] itself; but it is a more cruel mischief when the contention waxeth so hot, that they are enforced to fight with their brethren as with enemies. Add, moreover, the infamy wherewith they saw themselves burdened among the simple and unskillful, as if they would trouble the peace of the Church with their stubbornness. For it falleth out oftentimes so, that the faithful servants of Christ are envied alone, and bear all the blame, after that they have been unjustly troubled, and have faithfully employed themselves in defense of a good cause. Therefore, they must be endued with invincible courage to despise all false reports which are carried about concerning them. Therefore, Paul boasteth in another place that he went through the midst of seditions, (2 Corinthians 6:5.) But the servants of God must observe such moderation, that they abhor so much as they can all discord; if at any time Satan raise tumults and contentions, let them endeavor to appease them, and, finally, let them do all that they can to foster and cherish unity. But again, on the other side, when the truth of

[918] "Communis regulae praejudicium," be not prejudged as a common rule.
[919] "Apostolis nihil minus esse in animo," that the very last thing the apostles meant was.
[920] "Ad rem ipsam quaerendam accedere," to enter upon the investigation.

God is assailed, let them refuse no combat for defense thereof; nor let them fear to oppose themselves valiantly, though heaven and earth go together.

And let us, being admonished by this example, learn, so often as there ariseth any tumult in the Church, wisely to weigh through whose fault it came, lest we rashly condemn the faithful ministers of Christ, whose gravity is rather to be praised, because they can abide so valiantly such violent assaults of Satan. Secondly, let us call to mind that Satan was bridled by the wonderful providence of God, that he might not put the doctrine of Paul to the foil. For if he had been suffered to do hurt at his pleasure, so soon as the faith of the Gentiles had been pulled down and overthrown, the gospel preached by Paul should have fallen to the ground, and the gate should have [been] shut against the calling of the Gentiles. Thirdly, let us learn that we must in time prevent dissension, of what sort soever it be, lest it break out into the flame of contention; because Satan seeketh nothing else by the fans of dissension but to kindle so many fires. But again, seeing we see the primitive Church on an uproar, and the best servants of Christ exercised with sedition, if the same thing befall us now, let us not fear as in some new and unwonted matter; but, craving at the Lord's hands such an end as he now made, let us pass through tumults with the same tenor of faith.

Unless ye be circumcised. Luke setteth [defineth] down briefly in these words the state of the question, to wit, that these seducers went about to bind men's consciences with necessity of keeping the law. Circumcision is indeed mentioned alone in this place; but it appeareth by the text that they moved the question about the keeping of the whole Law. And, because circumcision was, as it were, a solemn entrance and admission into other rites of the law, therefore, by *synecdoche,* the whole law is comprehended under one part. These enemies of Paul did not deny that Christ was the Messiah; but though they gave him their names, they retained therewithal the old ceremonies of the law.

The error might have seemed tolerable at the first glimpse. Why doth not Paul then dissemble, at least, for some short time, lest he shake the Church with conflict? for the disputation was concerning external matters, concerning which Paul himself forbiddeth elsewhere to stand and strive too much. But there were three weighty causes which enforced him to gainstand. For, if the keeping of the law be necessary, man's salvation is tied to works, which must be grounded in the grace of Christ alone, that the faith may be settled and quiet. Therefore, when Paul saw the worship of the law set against the free righteousness of faith, it was unlawful for him to hold his peace, unless he would betray Christ. For, seeing the adversaries did deny that any should be saved, save he which did observe the law of Moses, by this means they did translate unto works the glory of salvation, which they took from Christ, and having shaken assurance, they did vex miserable souls with unquietness. Again, it was no small thing, neither of any small importance, to spoil and rob faithful souls of the liberty gotten by Christ's blood. Though

the inward liberty of the Spirit were common to the fathers as well as to us, yet we know what Paul saith, that they were shut up under the childish ward and custody of the law, so that they did not much differ from servants; but we are loose from the schoolmastership of the law after that Christ was revealed, (Galatians 3:24,) and we have more liberty, the time of our nonage being, as it were, ended. The third vice of this doctrine was, because it darkened the light of the Church, [921] or at least did put in, as it were, certain clouds, that Christ the Sun of righteousness might not give perfect light. In sum, Christianity should shortly have come to nothing if Paul should have yielded to such beginnings. Therefore, he entereth the combat, not for the external uncircumcision of the flesh, but for the free salvation of men. Secondly, that he may acquit and set free godly consciences from the curse of the law, and the guilt of eternal death. Last of all, that after all hindrances are driven away, the brightness of the grace of Christ may shine as in a pleasant and clear heaven. Moreover, these knaves did great injury to the law when they did wickedly corrupt the right use thereof. This was the natural and right office of the law, to lead men by the hand, like a schoolmaster, unto Christ; therefore, it could not be worse corrupt than when, under color of it, the power and grace of Christ were diminished.

After this sort must we look into the fountains of all questions, lest by our silence we betray the truth of God, so often as we see Satan, by his subtlety, aim right at it; neither let our minds be changed and wax faint through any perils, or reproaches and slanders, because we must constantly defend pure religion, though heaven and earth must [should] go together. The servants of Christ must be no fighters, (2 Timothy 2:24;)therefore, if there be any contention risen, they must rather study to appease and pacify the same by their moderation, than by and by to blow to the assault. [922] Secondly, they must take good heed of superfluous and vain conflicts; neither shall they handle controversies of any small weight; but when they see Satan wax so proud, that religion cannot any longer continue safe and sound unless he be prevented, they must needs take a good heart to them, and rise to resist; neither let them fear to enter even most hateful combats. The name of peace is indeed plausible and sweet, but cursed is that peace which is purchased with so great loss, that we suffer the doctrine of Christ to perish, by which alone we grow together into godly and holy unity.

The Papists cause us at this day to be sore hated, as if we had been the causers of deadly tumults, wherewith the world is shaken; but we can well defend ourselves, because the blasphemies which we endeavored to reprove were more cruel [923] than that it was lawful for us to hold our peace; there we are not to be blamed, because we have taken upon us to enter combats in defense of that cause, for which we were to fight even with the very

[921] "Evangelli," gospel.

[922] "Quam ut classicum protinus caniant," than forthwith to blow the trumpet.

[923] "Atrociores," more atrocious.

angels. Let them cry till their throats be sore; Paul's example is sufficient for us, that we must not be either cold or slack in defending the doctrine of godliness when the ministers of Satan seek to overthrow it with might and main; for their brainsick distemperature ought not to pass [924] the constancy of the servants of God. When Paul did zealously set himself against the false apostles, sedition began at length [925] by reason of the conflict; and yet the Spirit of God doth not therefore reprove him; but doth rather with due praises commend that fortitude which he had given that holy man.

They determined, etc. The Spirit of God put them in mind of this remedy to appease the tumult, which might otherwise have gone farther with doing much hurt, whereby we be also taught, that we must always seek such means as be fit [926] for ending discord; because God doth so highly commend peace, let the faithful show [927] that they do what they can to nourish the peace of the Church. The truth must always be first in order with them, in defense whereof they must be afraid of no tumults; yet they must so temper their heat that they refuse no means of godly agreement; yea, let them of their own accord invent what ways soever they can, and let them be witty in seeking them out. Therefore, we must observe this mean, lest being carried away through immoderate vehemency of zeal we be carried beyond the just bounds; for we must be courageous in defense of true doctrine, not stubborn, nor rash; therefore, let us learn to join together these two virtues which the Spirit of God commandeth in Paul. When he is drawn into the field by the wicked, he is not afraid boldly to offer himself; but when he doth meekly admit the remedy which was offered, he declareth plainly what small desire he had to fight, for otherwise he might have boasted that he did not pass for the apostles, [928] and so have stood stoutly in that; but the desire of peace did not suffer him to refuse their judgment. Moreover, ignorant and weak men should have conceived a sinister opinion, if they should have seen two men only separated from all the servants of Christ; and godly teachers must in no case neglect this way to cherish faith, that they may show that they agree with the Church.

Paul, indeed, did not depend upon the beck of the apostles, that he would change his opinion if he should have found them contrary to him, who would not have given place even to the very angels, as he boasteth in first chapter to the Galatians, (Galatians 1:8;) but lest the wicked should slanderously report that he was a man that stood too much in his own conceit, and which was too proud, and which did please himself with an unseemly contempt of all men, he offered to give an account of his doctrine, as it became him, and as it was profitable for the Church; secondly, he presented himself before the apostles with sure hope of victory, because he knew full well what would

[924] "Superare," overcome.
[925] "Exarsit," blazed forth.
[926] "Aptas et commodas," fit and convenient.
[927] "Re ipsa," in reality.
[928] "Nihil se morari apostolos," that he cared not for the apostles.

be their judgment, seeing they were guided by the same Spirit wherewith he was governed. Notwithstanding, it may be demanded for what purpose the men of Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas unto the rest of the apostles; for if they did so greatly reverence them, that they stood in doubt until they had given judgment on this side or that, their faith was hitherto vain and altogether none? But the answer is easy, seeing they knew that all the apostles were sent [929] by Christ alone with the same commandments, and that they had the same Spirit given them, they were fully persuaded of the end and success, and, undoubtedly, this counsel proceeded from honest and stout men, who were not ignorant that the knaves did falsely pretend the names of James and Peter. Wherefore, they sought nothing else but that the apostles might further a good matter with their consent. [930]

To the same end were all holy synods assembled since the beginning, that grave men, and such as were well exercised in the word of God, might decide controversies, not after their own pleasure, but according to the authority of God. This is worth the noting, lest the Papists pierce any man with their loud outcries, [931] who, to the end they may overthrow Christ and his gospel, and put out all the light of godliness, thrust upon us Councils, as if every definition and determination of men were to be counted an heavenly oracle; but if the holy Fathers had their sitting at this day, they would cry with one mouth, that there was nothing more unlawful for them, neither did they mean any thing less than to set down or deliver any thing without having the word of Christ for their guide, who was their only teacher, [master,] even as he is ours. I omit this, that the Papists lean only unto untimely [932] Councils, which breathe out nothing but gross ignorance and barbarism; but even the best and most choice must be reckoned in that number, that they may be subject to the word of God. There is a grievous complaint of Gregory Nazianzene extant, that there was never any Council which had a good end. What excellency soever did flourish and was in force in the Church, it cannot be denied but that it began to decay an hundred years after; therefore, if that holy man were now living, how stoutly would he reject the toys of the Papists, who, without all shame, most impudently bring in the jugglings of visors instead of lawful Councils, and that to that end, that the Word of God may pack, [933] so soon as a few bald and foolish men have set down whatsoever pleased them?

3. *Being brought on the way by the Church.* Whereas, by the common consent of the Church, there were joined to Paul and Barnabas companions, who might, for duty's sake, conduct them, we may thereby gather, that all the godly were on their side; and that they did never otherwise think but that the cause was theirs as well as the apostles. Wherefore they determined

[929] "Pariter," in like manner.
[930] "Suffragio," suffrage.
[931] "Ventosis suis clamoribus," with their vain clamor.
[932] "Abortivis," abortive.
[933] "Facessat," may be dismissed.

the journey of Paul and Barnabas with like minds as they took it in hand; to wit, that they might tame and put to silence those troublesome spirits who did falsely make boast of the apostles. Whereas he saith shortly after, that they certified the brethren in their voyage of the wonderful conversion of the Gentiles, it is a testimony and token that they came not to Jerusalem fraught with fear; but that they did even without fear stoutly profess that which they had taught before. Therefore, they come not to plead their cause before their judges; but that they may, with common consent and judgment, on both sides, approve that which was commanded by God touching the abolishing of ceremonies. For though they did not despise the judgment of the apostles, yet because they knew that it was not lawful for them, neither for the apostles, to decree otherwise concerning the cause, it did not become them to stand as men whose matter is handled at the bar. [934] Thence cometh the boldness of rejoicing; to this end [935] tendeth the joy of the godly, whereby they subscribe both to the doctrine of Paul and also the calling of the Gentiles.

4. *They were received of the Church.* By this word *Church* he meaneth the multitude itself and the whole body; that done, he assigneth a peculiar place to the apostles and elders, by whom Paul and Barnabas were specially received. Furthermore, because the apostles had no certain place of abode at Jerusalem, but went ever now and then sometimes to one place and sometimes to another, whithersoever occasion did call them, that church had elders to whom the ordinary government of the Church was committed; and what the one function differeth from the other we have before declared, (Acts 14:23.) And hereby it appeareth what brotherly courtesy there was in the apostles and elders, because they do not only courteously receive Paul and Barnabas, but so soon as they hear what success they had with their pains they took, they magnify the grace of God. Luke repeateth again that form of speech which we had before in the chapter next going before, when he saith, that they declared whatsoever things God had done with them. Wherein we must remember that which I said before, that God is not made a fellow-laborer, but all the whole praise of the work is ascribed to him. Therefore it is said, that he did that with Paul and Barnabas which he did by them, as he is said to deal mercifully with us when he helpeth our miseries.

5. *Certain of the sect of the Pharisees.* It is not without cause that Luke expresseth what kind of men they were which went about to trouble or hinder Paul, even at Jerusalem also. And it is to be thought that the evil flowed from that fountain; and that Luke doth now more plainly express, that there brake out now also fans [disturbers] out of that very same sect, from whence the authors of that wicked dissension came. For though they had given Christ their names, yet there remained relics of their former nature. We know how

[934] "Reos," as men accused, defenders.

[935] "Huc accedit," to this is added.

proud the Pharisees were, how haughty, how lofty their looks were; [936] all which they would have forgotten if they had truly put on Christ. Like as there remained no Phariseeism in Paul, but a great part had gotten the habit of stubbornness by long custom, which they could not shake off so easily by and by. Forasmuch as there reigned most of all among them hypocrisy, they were too much addicted to external rites, which are coverings for vices. They were likewise puffed up with pride, so that they did tyrannously covet to make all other men subject to their decrees. It is well-known how sore sick the monks are of both diseases. Whereby it cometh to pass, that nothing is more cruel than they to oppress the Church, nothing is more wicked or forward than they to despise the Word of God. Moreover, we see many of them which came out of those dens which have cast from them their cowl, and yet can they never forget those conditions which they learned there. [937]

Acts 15:6-11

Acts 15:6-11

6. And the apostles and elders came together, that they might look to this business. 7. And after there had been great disputing, Peter arose and said to them, Men and brethren, ye know how that of old time God did choose in us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8. And God, who is lower of the hearts, bare witness to them giving them his Holy Spirit, as to us. 9. And he put no difference between them and us, after that by faith he had purified their hearts. 10. Therefore, why do ye now tempt God to lay a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11. But we believe that we have salvation through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, even as they.

6. *The apostles and elders met together.* Luke saith, not that all the whole Church was gathered together, but those who did excel in doctrine and judgment, and those who, according to their office, were competent [938] judges in this matter. It may be, indeed, that the disputation was had in presence of the people. But lest any man should think that the common people were suffered hand over head to handle the matter, Luke doth plainly make mention of the apostles and elders, as it was more meet that they should hear the matter and to decide it. [939] But let us know, that here is prescribed by God a form and an order in assembling synods, when there ariseth any controversy which cannot otherwise be decided. For seeing that many did daily gainstand Paul, this disputation alone, by reason whereof there was great ruin like to ensue, and which was already come to hot combats, did enforce him to go to Jerusalem.

[936] "Quanta confidentia, quale supercilium," how confident, how supercilious.
[937] "Quos illic imbiberunt mores," the habits which they contracted there.
[938] "Legitimi," lawful.
[939] "Sicut magis idonei erant cognitores," as they were more apt to take cognisance of it.

7. *And when there had been great disputation.* Though there were choice made of grave men, and such as were public teachers of the Church, yet could not they agree by and by. [940] Whereby appeareth how the Lord did exercise his Church, even then, by the infirmity of men, that it might learn to be wise with humility. Moreover, he suffered (even in that company and assembly wherein he was chief) the principal point of Christian doctrine to be diversely tossed and handled, lest we should wonder, if at any time it so fall out, that men, who are otherwise learned and godly, do, through unskillfulness, fall into an error. For some were not so quick witted [acute] that they could thoroughly see into the greatness of the matter. So that when they judge that the law ought to be kept, being unadvisedly carried away with the zeal of the law, they see not into how deep a labyrinth they throw the consciences of other men, and their own also. They thought that circumcision was an eternal and inviolable token of God's covenant; the same opinion had they of all the whole law. Wherefore Peter standeth chiefly upon this, to show the state of the question, which the most of them knew not. And his oration hath two members. For, first, he proveth by the authority of God that the Gentiles must not be enforced to keep the law; secondly, he teacheth that all man's salvation is overthrown, if the conscience be once caught in this snare. Therefore, the former part (wherein he declareth that he was sent of God to teach the Gentiles, and that the Holy Spirit came down upon them) tendeth to this end, that men did not unadvisedly disannul the ceremonies of the law, but that God is the author of that disannulling. And so soon as the authority of God is brought forth, all doubting is taken away, because this is all our wisdom, to stay ourselves upon the authority, government, and commandment of God, [941] and to make more account of his beck and pleasure than of all reasons. Now, it is meet that we ponder the words of Peter, whereby he proveth that this was granted to the Gentiles by God, to be free from the yoke of the law.

You know. He calleth them to bear witness, (and unto them he appealeth,) lest any man should think that he is about to speak of some dark and doubtful thing. The history was well known to them all. That which remained, he showeth that they were blind even in most clear light, yea, because they had not long ago learned that which was openly showed. He calleth the beginning of the preaching of the gospel old days, or the old time, as if he should say, ago, as it were since the first beginning of the Church, after that Christ began to gather to himself any people.

God did choose in us. The word *choose* doth signify to appoint or decree. Though Peter doth comprehend as well the free election of God as the choice whereby God did adopt the Gentiles to be his people; therefore, he chose, that is, as it were, making choice, that he might show a token of his free

[940] "Ne inter eos quidem statim convenire potuit," not even could they come instantly to an agreement.

[941] "Dei imperio acquiescere," to aequiesce in the command of God.

election in the Gentiles, he would that by my mouth they should hear the doctrine of the gospel. These words, *in us,* do import as much as in our sight, or we being witnesses, or among us. [942] For his meaning is, that he declareth nothing but that which they knew full well; to wit, which was done before their eyes. The phrase is common enough both among the Grecians, and also among the Hebretians, [Hebrews,] unless we had liefer resolve it as some other do, He hath chosen me out of this company.

And believe. This was a seal to confirm the calling of the Gentiles. The office of teaching was enjoined Peter by an oracle; but the fruit which came of his doctrine doth make his ministry noble and authentical, as they call it. For, seeing that the elect are illuminate into the faith by a peculiar grace of the Spirit, doctrine shall bring forth no fruit, unless the Lord show forth his power in his ministers, in teaching the minds of those inwardly which hear, and in drawing their hearts inwardly. Therefore, seeing the Lord commanded that the doctrine of the gospel should be brought unto the Gentiles, he did sanctify them to himself, that they might be no longer profane. But the solemn consecration was then perfect in all points, when he imprinted in their hearts, by faith, the mark of their adoption. The sentence which followeth immediately is to be understood as set down by way of exposition; [943] for Peter annexeth the visible graces of the Spirit unto faith, as, assuredly, they were nothing else but an addition thereof. Therefore, seeing that the Gentiles are ingrafted into the people of God without circumcision and ceremonies, Peter gathereth that it was not well done to lay upon them any necessity to keep the law. Yet it seemeth to be but a weak argument to prove their election withal, because the Holy Ghost came down upon them. For they were such gifts that they could not reason from the same, that they were reckoned in the number of the godly. But it is the Spirit of regeneration alone which distinguisheth the children of God from strangers. I answer, Though men, who were otherwise vain, were endued with the gift of tongues and such like, yet doth Peter take for a thing which all men grant, that which was known, that God had sealed in Cornelius and his cousins [relatives] his free adoption by the visible grace of the Spirit, as if he should point out his children with his finger.

The knower of the hearts. He applieth this adjunct to God, according to the circumstance of the present matter; and it hath under it a secret contrariety, [944] that men are more addicted to external purity, because they judge according to their gross and earthly sense and understanding; but God doth look into the heart. Therefore, Peter teacheth that they judge preposterously in this matter according to man's understanding, seeing that the inward pureness of the heart alone is here to be esteemed, which we know not. [945] And by this means doth he bridle our rashness, lest, taking

[942] "In medio nostri," in the midst of us.
[943] "Exegetice," exegetically.
[944] "Tacita antithesis," a tacit antithesis.
[945] "Quae nobis occulta est," which is hidden from us.

to ourselves more than we ought, we murmur against the judgment of God. As if he should say, if thou see no reason of that testimony which God gave them, think with thyself what great difference there is between him and thee. For thou art holden with external pomp according to thy gross nature, which must be abandoned when we come to the throne of God, [946] where the hearts of men are known spiritually. But, in the mean season, we must note a general doctrine, that the eyes of God do not look upon the vain pomp of men, [947] but upon the integrity of men's hearts, as it is written, (Jeremiah 5:3.) Whereas the old interpreter and Erasmus translate it, that God knoweth the hearts, it doth not sufficiently express that which Luke saith in Greek; for when he calleth God {καρδιαγνωστην}, he setteth him against [948] men, who judge rather for the most part by the outward appearance; and therefore they may be {προσωπογνωσται}, or *knowers of the face,* if they be compared with God.

9. *And he put no difference.* There was indeed some difference, because the Gentiles who were uncircumcised were suddenly admitted unto the covenant of eternal life; whereas the Jews were prepared by circumcision unto faith. But Peter's meaning is, that they were both chosen [949] together by God unto the hope of the same inheritance, and that they were extolled into the like degree of honor, that they might be the children of God and members of Christ, and, finally, the holy seed of Abraham, a priestly and princely generation. Whereupon it followeth, that they cannot without sacrilege be counted unclean, sithence God hath chosen them to be a peculiar people, and hath consecrated them to be holy vessels of his temple. For the wall of separation being pulled down, whereby the Gentiles and Jews were divided among themselves, he hath joined the Gentiles to the Jews, that they might grow together into one body, (Ephesians 2:14;) and that I may so say, he hath mixed circumcision and uncircumcision together, that as well those of the household as strangers may be one in Christ, and may make one Church; and that there may not be any longer either Jew or Grecian.

Seeing that by faith he hath purified. This member is answerable to that former adjunct which he applieth to God; as if he should say, that God, who knoweth the hearts, did inwardly purge the Gentiles, when he vouchsafed to make them partakers of his adoption, that they might be endued with spiritual cleanness. But he addeth farther, that this purity did consist in faith. Therefore he teacheth, first, that the Gentiles have true holiness without ceremonies, which may suffice before God's judgment-seat. Secondly, he teacheth that this is attained unto by faith, and from it doth it flow. In like sort, Paul gathereth, that uncircumcision doth not hinder a man but that he may be counted holy and just before God, (Romans 4:10;) because circumcision did follow after righteousness in the person of Abraham, and

[946] "Ad coeleste tribunal," to the heavenly tribunal.
[947] "Operum," of works.
[948] "Eum opponit," he opposes him to, or contrasts him with.
[949] "Utrosque pariter allectos esse," that both were in like manner allured.

by order of time it was latter, [posterior.]

But here ariseth a question, whether that purity which the fathers had in times past were unlike to that which God gave now to the Gentiles? For it seemeth that Peter distinguisheth the Gentiles from the Jews by this mark, because, being content with the cleanness of the heart alone, they need no help of the law. I answer, that the one of them differ from the other, not in substance, but in form, [only.] For God had respect always unto the inward cleanness of the heart; and the ceremonies were given to the old [ancient] people only for this cause, that they might help their faith. So that cleanness, as touching figures and exercises, was only for a time, until the coming of Christ, which hath no place among us at this day; like as there remaineth from the very beginning of the world unto the end the same true worship of God, to wit, the spiritual worship; yet is there great difference in the visible form. Now, we see that the fathers did not obtain righteousness by ceremonies, neither were they therefore pure before God, but by the cleanness of the heart. For the ceremonies of themselves were of no importance to justify them; but they were only helps, which did accidentally (that I may so term it) purge them; yet so that the fathers and we had the same truth. Now, when Christ came, all that which was accidental did vanish away; and, therefore, seeing the shadows be driven away, there remaineth the bare and plain pureness of the heart.

Thus is that objection easily answered which the Jews think cannot possibly be answered. Circumcision is called the eternal covenant, or of the world, (Genesis 17:13;) therefore, say they, it was not to be abolished. If any man shall say that this is not referred unto the visible sign, but rather unto the thing figured, it shall be well answered; but there is another answer besides this. Seeing that the kingdom of Christ was a certain renewing of the world, there shall no inconvenience follow if he made an end of [950] all the shadows of the law, forasmuch as the perpetuity of the law is grounded in Christ. I come now unto the second member, where Peter placeth the cleanness [purity] of the Gentiles in faith. Why doth not he say, In perfection of virtues, or holiness of life, save only because men have righteousness from another, and not from themselves? For, if men, by living well and justly, should purchase righteousness, or if they should be clean before God by nature, this sentence of Peter should fall to the ground. Therefore, the Spirit doth in these words plainly pronounce that all mankind is polluted, and with filthiness defiled; secondly, that their blots can by no other means be wiped away than by the grace of Christ. For, seeing that faith is the remedy whereby the Lord doth freely help us, it is set as well against the common nature of all men, as against every man's own merits. When I say that all mankind is polluted, my meaning is, that we bring nothing from our mother's womb but mere filthiness, and that there is no righteousness in our

[950] "Nihil esse absurdi si finem… imposuerit," there is no absurdity in his having put an end to.

nature which can reconcile us to God. Man's soul was indeed endued with singular gifts at the first; but all parts thereof are so corrupt with sin, that there remaineth in it no drop of pureness any longer; therefore we must seek for cleanness without ourselves.

For if any man allege that it may be recovered by merits of works, there is nothing more absurd than to imagine that wicked and coward nature can deserve anything. Therefore, it resteth that men seek elsewhere for that which they shall never be able to find within themselves. And surely it is the office of faith to translate that unto us which is proper to Christ, and to make it ours by free participation. So that there is a mutual relation between faith and the grace of Christ. For faith doth not make us clean, as a virtue or quality poured into our souls; but because it receiveth that cleanness which is offered in Christ. We must also note the phrase, that God purifieth the hearts; whereby Luke doth both make God the author of faith, and he teacheth also that cleanness is his benefit. To make short, he signifieth unto us, that that is given to men by the grace of God which they cannot give to themselves. But forasmuch as we said that faith taketh that of Christ which it transpoureth [transferreth] into us; we must now see how the grace of Christ doth make us clean, that we may please God. And there is a double manner of purging, because Christ doth offer and present us clean and just in the sight of his Father, by putting away our sins daily, which he hath once purged by his blood; secondly, because, by mortifying the lusts of the flesh by his Spirit, he reformeth us unto holiness of life. I do willingly comprehend both kinds of purging under these words; because Luke doth not touch one kind of purging only, but he teacheth that the whole perfection thereof consisteth without the ceremonies of the law.

10. *Now, therefore, why tempt ye?* This is the other part of the sermon wherein Peter showeth how deadly that doctrine is which Paul's enemies sought to bring in; to wit, which might drown godly souls in despair. He inferreth and gathereth out of the former member, that God is tempted if the Gentiles be enforced to keep the law of necessity; [951] he riseth higher, and pierceth even unto the very fountain. For he reasoneth hitherto, that the Gentiles should have injury done them if there be more required at their hands than God will; and seeing that he made them equal with the holy people, and did vouchsafe them the honor of adoption, it was. an unmeet and inconvenient [absurd] matter that they should be rejected, and so his liberality should be restrained. For he saith last of all, that this faith is sufficient for them, though they want ceremonies. And now he taketh an higher principle, that those who tie men's salvation to the works of the law leave them no good hope; but rather throw the whole world headlong into horrible destruction, if it can obtain salvation by no other means but by keeping the law. With what arguments he proveth this we shall see in their place. As touching the words, seeing the Scripture saith, that God is tempted

[951] "Ad necessitatem servandae logis," to a necessity of observing the law.

diverse ways, Peter's meaning is, in this place, that God is provoked as it were of set purpose, when there is an heavier burden laid upon men than they be able to bear; and that his power is brought within bounds [952] when that yoke is bound which he doth loose, which is nothing else but by striving against nature to match ourselves with giants, as they say.

That the yoke should be laid upon their necks. The meaning of the words is plain, that God is tempted when there is laid upon men's consciences a sorer burden than they are able to bear, and by this means the salvation of men's souls is sore shaken; seeing that they must needs by this means be drowned in despair, which cannot be without their destruction. But that injury which is done to God is no whit more tolerable, when as he is robbed of his right that he may not have liberty to deliver us. But we may easily gather out of the thing itself that he doth not speak of the ceremonies only. The servitude of the old training up under the law was hard and laborious; but yet it were too absurd to call it a yoke that cannot be borne; and we know that not only holy men, but also even most hypocrites, did well and exactly accomplish the outward observation of the rites.

Moreover, it were not any hard matter to satisfy the moral law, if it were content with corporeal obedience only, and did not require spiritual righteousness; for it is granted to many to bridle their hands and feet; but to moderate all the affections so that there may reign perfect abstinence and purity, as well in the soul as in the body, this is too hard a matter.

Therefore, those be too foolish who restrain unto ceremonies Peter's words, whereby the weakness of men to perform the righteousness of the heart is expressed; which doth not only far pass their strength, but is altogether contrary to nature. These men were, I warrant you, deceived by one reason, because the question was moved concerning ceremonies only; but they do remember that Peter did more attentively and more wisely consider as became him, what a labyrinth this error (to look to, but light) did bring with it. The false apostles did avouch, that no man could attain unto salvation unless he did keep the ceremonies. If man's salvation be tied to works, it shall be no longer grounded in the grace of Christ, and so, by this means, free reconciliation shall fall flat to the ground. Now, seeing that man's strength is unable to keep the law, all men are subject to the curse which the Lord there denounceth against the transgressors; and so, by this means, all men shall come in danger of despair, seeing that they see themselves guilty of eternal death by the law. Peradventure the false apostles understood these things craftily. But Peter pierceth the very fountain, that he may bring to light the deadly poison of that doctrine; and thus must we do, so often as Satan doth craftily thrust in wicked errors.

At this day we seem to some to be too contentious, when as we do so stoutly stand in this, that men must not pray for the dead; for it is both a most ancient custom, neither is it a thing to look to very dangerous, though

[952] "Circumscribi," is circumscribed.

men pour out superfluous prayer; yet [nay] it is a plausible opinion, because it carrieth some color of human godliness.

Furthermore, unskillful men judge thus, because they seek. not out the head spring. For, if we grant that men may pray for the dead, we must also admit this, that they are now punished by the judgment of God, because they made not satisfaction in this life for their sins. And so, by this means the force of Christ's satisfaction is translated unto the works of men. Secondly, the rule of praying aright is overthrown, if men may pray at all adventure, without the word of God. This is also a greater absurdity than that we ought lightly to pass over it. In sum, we can never give true judgment of any question, unless, having thoroughly ripped up the fountain of that doctrine which is called in question, we deduct all consequences which it bringeth with it. Therefore, it is no marvel if Peter, to the end he may pull the false apostles out (by the ears,) as it were out of their lurking dens, do generally dispute touching the whole law; because he doth nothing else but open the matter itself, whereof the simple were ignorant; that they may all see what a deadly doctrine it is, which doth both extinguish the grace of Christ, and drown souls in the horrible dungeon of despair. [953]

Neither we nor our fathers. Peter doth not only dispute what men have done indeed, but what they were able to do; neither doth he speak only of the common riff-raff, [954] but of the holy fathers. Seeing that he denieth that they were able to bear the yoke of the law, it is manifest that the law cannot possibly be kept. I know that Jerome's saying is so generally received, that it is, as it were, an undoubted and most certain maxim, If any man say that it is a thing impossible to keep the law, let him be accursed; but we must not hearken to any voice of man which is contrary to the judgment of the Spirit of God. We hear what the Spirit pronounceth in this place by the mouth of Peter, not concerning the will and works of men, but touching their ability and power. And hereunto agreeth Paul, affirming that it was an impossible thing that the law should give us life, forasmuch as it was weak through the flesh. Indeed, if any man were able to fulfill the law, he should find the life which is there promised; but forasmuch as Paul denieth that life can be gotten by the law, it followeth that there is farther and higher righteousness required there than man is able to perform. I confess, indeed, that Jerome doth not wholly grant to the strength of nature power to fulfill the law, but partly also to the grace of God, as he doth afterward expound himself, that a faithful man, holpen by the grace of the Spirit, may be said to be able to fulfill the law. But even that mitigation is not true. For, if we do weigh the strength of nature only, men shall not only be unable to bear the yoke of the law, but they shall not be able to move so much as a finger to perform the least jot of the law. And surely if that be true, that all the cogitations of man's mind are wicked from his childhood, (Genesis 8:21;) that all the

[953] "In horrendae desperationis abyssum," in the abyss of horrible despair.
[954] "Vulgo hominum." of the vulgar.

understandings of flesh [955] are enemies to God, (Romans 8:7;) that there is none which seeketh after God, (Psalm 14:3;) and other such places, which are common in the Scripture, tending to the same end, but especially which are cited by Paul in the third to the Romans, (Romans 3:11,) man's power and ability to fulfill the law shall not only be weak and lame, but altogether none to begin. [956]

Therefore, we must thus think, that even the very faithful, after they being regenerate by the Spirit of God, do study to attain unto the righteousness of the law, do perform, notwithstanding, but the half, and far less than half, not the whole. For doubtless Peter speaketh not in this place of the epicure [957] or profane men; but of Abraham, of Moses, and of other holy fathers which were the most perfect in the world; and yet he saith that these fainted under the burden of the law, because it did pass their strength. It is hatefully objected that the Spirit of God is blasphemed when as ability to fulfill the law is taken away from his grace and help; but we may readily answer, because the question is not what the grace of the Spirit is able to do, but what that measure of grace is able to do which God doth divide to every one in this life. For we must always consider what God doth promise to do; neither let us unadvisedly ask this question, whether that can be done which he himself doth testify shall never be, and which he will not have done? He promiseth the grace and aid of the Spirit to the faithful, whereby they may be able to resist the lusts of the flesh, and to subdue them; yet shall they not quite abolish and drive them away. He promiseth them grace, whereby they may walk in newness of life; yet shall they not be able to run so swiftly as the law requireth. For he will have them kept under during their whole life, that they may fly to beg pardon. If it be unlawful to separate from the power of God's counsel, and the order by him set down, it is a foolish and vain cavil, whereby the adversaries go about to burden us, when as they say that we diminish the power of God; nay rather, they transform God, when they hold that his counsel and purpose can be altered.

The Pelagians did in times past, in like sort, burden [958] Augustine. He answereth, that though it be a thing possible that the law should be fulfilled, yet is that sufficient for him, that no man did ever fulfill it, and that the Scripture doth not testify that it shall be fulfilled until the end of the world. By which words he delivereth himself from their importunate subtlety. But there was no cause why he should doubt, but freely and flatly grant that it might be fulfilled, the Holy Ghost being the author. For we must limit the grace of the Spirit, that it may agree with the promises. Furthermore, we have already declared how far the promises reach. There is no man which moveth any question concerning this, whether God be not able if he will to make men perfect; but they dote foolish which separate his power from his

[955] "Carnis sensus," carnal propensities.
[956] "Sed ad inchoandum prorsus nulla," but that he shall have no power at all to begin.
[957] "Do Epicuro," of Epicurus.
[958] "Premebant," pressed.

counsel, whereof they have an evident and plain testimony in the Scripture. God doth plainly declare a hundred times what he will, and what he hath determined to do: to go any farther is sacrilege.

Jerome was enforced by reason of philosophy to hurl out the thunderbolt of his curse against Peter and Paul; [959] because the laws must be applied unto their hability for whom they be appointed; which, as I confess to take place in man's laws, so I utterly deny that it is good as touching the law of God, which, in exacting righteousness, doth not respect what man is able to do, but what he ought to do.

Though here ariseth a harder question, "Whether the law were not given to this end, that it might enforce men to obey God? And this should be in vain, unless the Spirit of God should direct the faithful to keep it; and that the solemn protestation of Moses seemeth to put the matter out of doubt, when he saith that he giveth precepts to the Jews, not such as they may read, but indeed fulfill, (Deuteronomy 30:12;) whence we gather that the yoke was laid upon the neck of the Jews when the law was given, that it might make them subject to God, that they might not live as them lusted." I answer, that the law is counted a yoke two ways. For, inasmuch as it bridleth the lusts of the flesh and delivereth a rule of godly and holy life, it is meet that the children of God take this yoke upon them; but, inasmuch as it doth exactly prescribe what we owe to God, and doth not promise life without adding the condition of perfect obedience, and doth again denounce a curse if we shall in any point offend, it is a yoke which no man is able to bear. I will show this more plainly.

The plain doctrine of good life, wherein God doth invite us unto himself, is a yoke which we must all of us willingly take up; for there is nothing more absurd than that God should not govern man's life, but that he should wander at pleasure without any bridle. Therefore, we must not refuse the yoke of the law, if the simple doctrine thereof be considered. But these sayings do otherwise qualify (that I may so term it) the law.

"He which shall do these things shall live in theme" etc.
(Leviticus 18:5.)

Again,

"Cursed is he which continueth not in all things which are written,"
(Deuteronomy 27:26,)

that it may begin to be a yoke which no man can bear.

For, so long as salvation is promised to the perfect keeping of the law alone, and every transgression is called into judgment, mankind is utterly undone. In this respect doth Peter affirm that God is tempted, when man's arrogance doth burden the consciences of men with the law; for it is not his purpose to deny but that men must be governed by the doctrine of the

[959] "Ut sui anathematis fulmen Petro et Paulo infligeret," to thunder out an anathema against Peter and Paul.

law, and so he granteth that they be under the law [960] not simply [961] to teach, but also to humble men with the guilt of eternal death. Considering that that quality was annexed unto doctrine, he affirmeth that the souls of the godly must not be tied with the yoke of the law, because by this means it should of necessity come to pass that they should be drowned in eternal destruction. But, when as not only the grace of the Holy Spirit is present to govern us, but also free forgiveness of sins to deliver and acquit us from the curse of the law; then is that of Moses fulfilled, that the commandment is not above us, (Deuteronomy 30:11;) and then do we also perceive how sweet the yoke of Christ is, and how light his burden is, (Matthew 11:30.) For, because we know that through the mercy of God that is forgiven us, which is wanting through the infirmity of the flesh, we do cheerfully, and without any grief, [962] take upon us that which he enjoineth us. Wherefore, so that the rigor of the law be taken away, the doctrine of the law shall not only be tolerable, but also joyful and pleasant; neither must we refuse the bridle which doth govern us mildly, and cloth not urge us sorer than is expedient.

11. *By the grace of Jesus Christ.* Peter compareth these two together as contrary the one to the other; to have hope [963] in the grace of Christ, and to be under the yoke of the law; which comparison doth greatly set out the justification of Christ, inasmuch as we gather thereby, that those are justified by faith who, being free and quit from the yoke of the law, seek for salvation in the grace of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, I said before that the yoke of the law is made of two cords. The former is, "He which doth these things shall live in them;" the other is, "Cursed is every one which doth not continue in all the commandments." Let us return unto the contrary member. If we cannot otherwise attain unto salvation by the grace of Christ, unless the yoke of the law be taken away, it followeth that salvation is not placed in keeping the law, neither are those which believe in Christ subject to the curse of the law; for if he could be saved through grace, who is as yet enwrapped in the yoke of the law, then should Peter's reasoning be but foolish, which is drawn from contraries: thus, We hope for salvation by the grace of Christ; therefore we are not under the yoke of the law. Unless there were a disagreement between the grace of Christ and the yoke of the law, Peter should deceive us. [964]

Wherefore, those must needs depart from the righteousness of the law, whosoever desire to find life in Christ; for this contrariety appertaineth not unto doctrine, but unto the cause of justification.

Whereby is also refuted their surmise, [965] who say that we are justified by the grace of Christ, because he regenerateth us by his Spirit, and giveth

[960] "Jugo," yoke.
[961] "Verum quia legis officium est." but because it is the office of the law. Omitted.
[962] "Sine molestia," without trouble, repugnance.
[963] "Spem salutis," hope of salvation.
[964] "Fucum faceret," should make a gloss.
[965] "Commentum," fiction.

us strength to fulfill the law. Those who imagine this, though they seem to ease the yoke of the law a little, yet they keep souls bound with the cords thereof. For this promise shall always stand in force, He which shall do these things shall live in them; on the other side, The curse shall come upon all which shall not absolutely fulfill the law. Wherefore, we must define the grace of Christ far otherwise (whereunto the hope of salvation leaneth) than they dream; to wit, that it be free reconciliation gotten by the sacrifice of his death; or, which is all one, free forgiveness of sins, which, by pacifying and appeasing God, doth make him of an enemy or severe judge, [966] and which cannot be pleased nor entreated, a merciful Father. I confess, indeed, that we be regenerate into newness of life by the grace of Christ; but when we are about assurance of salvation, then must we call to mind the free adoption alone, which is joined with the purging [expiation] and forgiveness of sins. For, if works be admitted, that they may make us righteous in part only, the yoke of the law shall not be broken, and so Peter's contrariety [antithesis] shall fall to the ground, or else be dissolved.

Even as they. Peter doth testify in this place, that though the servitude of the law were laid upon the fathers as touching the external shoe, yet were their consciences free and quit; whereby is put away that absurdity, which might otherwise have troubled godly minds not a little. For, seeing that the covenant of life is eternal, and the same which God made with his servants from the beginning until the end of the world, it were an absurd thing, and intolerable, that any other way to obtain salvation should be taught at this day than that which the fathers had in times past. Therefore, Peter affirmeth that we agree very well with the fathers, because they no less than we reposed hope of salvation in the grace of Christ; and so, reconciling the law and the gospel together, as touching the end of the doctrine, he taketh from the Jews the stumbling-block which they reigned to themselves by reason of the discord.

Whereby it appeareth that the law was not given to the fathers that they might thereby purchase salvation, neither were the ceremonies added, that, by the observing thereof, they might attain unto righteousness; but this was the only end of all the whole law, that, casting from them all confidence which they might repose in works, they might repose all their hope in the grace of Christ. Whereby is also refuted the doting of those who think that the old people, inasmuch as they were content with earthly goods, did think no whit of the heavenly life. But Peter maketh the fathers partners with us of the same faith; and doth make salvation common to both; and yet there be some which delight in that brain-sick fellow, Servetus, with his so filthy sacrileges. Furthermore, we must note that Peter teacheth that the faith of the fathers [ancients] was always grounded in Christ, seeing that they could neither find life anywhere else, neither was there any other way for men to come unto God. Therefore, this place agreeth with that saying

[966] "Vel severo et implacabili judice," or a severe and implacable judge.

of the apostle,

"Christ yesterday, and today, and for ever," *

*(Hebrews 13:8.)

Acts 15:12-18

Acts 15:12-18

12. And all the multitude kept silence, and heard Barnabas and Paul declare what signs and wonders God had wrought by them among the Gentiles. 13. And after they had done speaking, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hear me: 14. Simeon hath showed how at the first God hath visited, that he might take of the Gentiles a people in his name. 15. And hereunto agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, 16. After these things will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is decayed; and will restore the ruins thereof, and will set it up; 17. That the, men which remain may seek the Lord, and all nations which call upon my name, saith the Lord, which doth all these things. 18. Known from the beginning [to God] are all his works.

12. *All the multitude held their peace.* By these words, Luke giveth us to understand that the Spirit of God did so reign in that assembly, that they yielded forthwith to reason. The disputation was hot before; but now, after that Peter hath laid open the counsel of God, and hath handled the question according to the doctrine of the Scripture, by and by all noise being stayed, they are quiet and whist who did of late unadvisedly defend the error. This is a lively image of a lawful Council, when the truth of God alone, so soon as it is once come to light, maketh an end of all controversies; and assuredly it is effectual enough to appease all discord when the Spirit beareth the chief sway; because he is again a fit governor, as well to moderate their tongues who must speak before others as to keep the rest under obedience, that they be not too much addicted to themselves and wedded to their own wills, but that, laying away stubbornness, they may show themselves obedient to God. Neither is it to be doubted but that there was some few which would not yield, as it falleth out in a great assembly; yet the truth of God had the upper hand, so that the silence whereof Luke speaketh was a manifest testimony of common obedience. And this was no small moderation in Peter, in that having suffered every one to say for himself what he could, he deferred his judgment (lest it should be prejudicial to others) so long, until the question had been thoroughly discussed to and fro.

They heard Barnabas and Paul. We may gather by these words that they were not heard with silence before.: For seeing that the more part was persuaded that they did wickedly admit the profane Gentiles into the Church, there should nothing which they should have said have been patiently received until this false opinion were corrected and reformed; but all should have been taken at the worst. We see what a poison displeasure conceived

for no cause is, which doth so possess men's minds, that it stoppeth the way, so that the truth can never have en, trance. Hereby we learn how true that saying is, All things are sound to the sound, (Titus 1:15,) for there is nothing so wholesome but corrupt affection do turn the same into that which is hurtful. And to this end tendeth the narration made by Paul and Barnabas, that they may show and prove that God doth allow their apostleship among the Gentiles; forasmuch as it was ratified and confirmed by miracles, which are, as it were, certain seals thereof.

13. *James answered, saying.* Some old writers of the Church think that this James was one of the disciples, whose surname was Justus and Oblia, whose cruel death is recorded by Josephus in the Twentieth Book of his Antiquities. But would to God the old writers had travailed rather to know the man, than to set forth, with reigned praises, the holiness of a man whom they knew not. It is a childish toy and surmise, in that they say that it was lawful for him alone to enter into the most holy place. For if in that entering in there had been any religion, he had done it contrary to the law of God, forasmuch as he was not the highest priest. Secondly, it was a superstitious thing thus to foster the shadowish worship of the Temple. I omit other trifles. And they are greatly deceived in that they deny that he was one of the twelve apostles. For they are enforced to confess that it is he whom Paul commandeth so honorably, that he maketh him the chief among the three pillars of the Church, (Galatians 2:9.) Assuredly, a man inferior in order and degree could never have excelled the apostles so far; for Paul giveth him the title of an apostle. Neither is that worth the hearing which Jerome bringeth, [viz.] that the word is general there, seeing that the dignity of the order is there handled; forasmuch as Christ did prefer the apostles before other teachers of the Church.

Moreover, we may gather out of this place, that they made no small account of James, (Acts 21:18;) forasmuch as he doth with his voice and consent so confirm the words of Peter, that they are all of his mind. And we shall see afterwards how great his authority was at Jerusalem. The old writers think that this was because he was bishop of the place; but it is not to be thought that the faithful did at their pleasure change the order which Christ had appointed. Wherefore, I do not doubt but that he was son to Alpheus, and Christ's cousin, in which sense he is also called his brother. Whether he were bishop of Jerusalem or no, I leave it indifferent; neither doth it greatly make for the matter, save only because the impudency of the Pope is hereby refuted, because the decree of the Council is set down rather at the appointment, and according to the authority of James than of Peter. And assuredly Eusebius, in the beginning of his Second Book, is not afraid to call James, whosoever he were, the Bishop of the Apostles. Let the men of Rome go now and boast that their Pope is head of the Universal Church, because he is Peter's successor, who suffered another to rule him, [967] if we

[967] "Sibi praesse," to take precedence of him.

believe Eusebius.

Men and brethren, hear me. James' oration consisteth upon [of] two principal members; for, first, he confirmeth and proveth the calling of the Gentiles by the testimony of the prophet Amos; secondly, he showeth what is best to be done to nourish peace and concord among the faithful; yet so that the liberty of the Gentiles may continue safe and sound, and that the grace of Christ may not be darkened. Whereas Peter is in this place called Simeon, it may be that this name was diversely pronounced then. Whereas he saith that God did visit to take a people of the Gentiles, it is referred unto the mercy of God, whereby he vouchsafed to receive strangers into his family. It is, indeed, a harsh phrase, yet such as containeth a profitable doctrine; because he maketh God the author of the calling of the Gentiles, and pronounceth that it is through his goodness that they began to be reckoned among his people, when he saith that they were taken by him; but he proceedeth further, when he saith that he did visit that he might take. For this is his meaning, That at such time as the Gentiles were turned away from God he did mercifully look upon them; because we can do nothing but depart farther and farther from him, until such time as his fatherly look prevent us of his own accord.

In his name. The old interpreter hath, To his name, which is almost all one, though the preposition, it may be otherwise translated, to wit, For his name, or Upon his name. [968] Neither shall the sense disagree, that the salvation of the Gentiles is grounded in the power or name of God, and that God did respect no other thing in calling them but his own glory; yet did I retain that which is more usual; to wit, that, in numbering them among his people, he would have them counted in his name, like as it shall be said shortly after, that his name is called upon by all those whom he gathereth together into his Church. The adverb of time, {πρωτον}, may be expounded two ways; if you read it, first, as the old interpreter and Erasmus have it, the sense shall be, that Cornelius and others were, as it were, the first fruits at whom God began the calling of the Gentiles; but it may be taken also comparatively, because there was already some token of the adoption of the Gentiles showed in Cornelius and his cousins, before that Barnabas and Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles. And I do better like this latter sense.

15. *Hereto agree the words of the prophets.* We see now how the apostles took nothing to themselves imperiously, but did reverently follow that which was prescribed in the word of God. Neither did it grieve them, neither did they count it any disgrace to them to profess themselves to be the scholars of the Scripture. Also we must here note, that the use of the doctrine of the prophets is yet in force, which some brain-sick men would banish out of the Church. By citing the prophets, in the plural number, to be witnesses, whereas he doth allege one place only, he signifieth that there is such an agreement among them, that that which is spoken by one is the common

[968] "Propter," on account of.

testimony of them all, because they speak all with one mouth, and every one speaketh as in the person of all, or rather the Spirit of God speaketh in them all. Moreover, the oracles of all the prophets were gathered together, that they might make one body. Wherefore that might worthily and fitly be ascribed to all the prophets in general, which was taken out of some one part of the general book.

16. *After these things I will return.* Because the place is not cited word for word as it is in the prophet, we must see what difference there is, though it be not necessary to examine straitly what diversity there is in the words, so it appear that the prophecy doth fitly agree with the matter which is in hand. After that God hath promised the restoring of the tabernacle of David, he saith also, that he will bring to pass that the Jews shall possess the remnants of Edom. In all that text, there appeareth nothing as yet whence the calling of the Gentiles can be fet [969] or gathered; but that which followeth immediately after in the prophet, concerning the remnant of the Gentiles which shall call upon the name of the Lord, doth plainly show that the Jews and Gentiles shall make one Church, because that which was then proper to the Jews alone is given to both in general. For God placeth the Gentiles in like degree of honor with the Jews, when he will have them to call upon his name. Those of Idumea, and the people thereabout, were in times past under David subject to the Jews; but though they were tributaries to the people of God, yet were they nevertheless strangers from the Church. Therefore, this was news and a strange thing, in that God reckoneth them up with the holy people, that he may be called [970] the God of them all; seeing that it is certain that they are all made equal in honor among themselves by this means. Whereby it doth plainly appear how well the testimony of the prophet agreeth with the present purpose. For God promiseth to restore the decayed tabernacle, wherein the Gentiles shall obey the kingdom of David, not only that they may pay tribute, or take [to arms] weapon at the king's commandment, but that they may have one God, and that they may be one family to him.

Yet there may a question be moved, why he had rather cite this prophecy, than many other which contain more plentiful proof of the matter which he hath in hand, of which sort Paul citeth many? (Romans 15:9, 10, 11.) I answer, first, that the apostles were not ambitious in heaping up places of Scripture; but they did simply aim at this, which was sufficient for them, to wit, that they might prove that their doctrine was taken out of the word of God; secondly, I say that this prophecy of Amos is more plain than it is commonly taken to be. The prophet intreateth of the restoring of an house which was decayed; [971] he describeth the miserable ruin thereof. Therefore, the promise, which is added immediately, that the seat and throne shall be

[969] "Elici," inferred.
[970] "Pariter," in like manner.
[971] "Collapsa erat," had fallen down.

set up again, from of which kings of the posterity of David shall rule over the Gentiles, doth properly appertain unto Christ. Therefore, so soon as the kingdom of Christ is set up, that must needs follow which the prophet saith also, that the Gentiles shall call upon the name of God. Now, we see that James did not unadvisedly make choice of this place; for if the kingdom of Christ cannot be otherwise established, unless God be called upon everywhere throughout the whole world, and the Gentiles grow together to be one with his holy people, it is an absurd thing that they should be driven from hope of salvation, and the middle wall must fall to the ground, wherewith the one was separate from the other under the law, [972] (Ephesians 2:14.) The first word, *I will return,* is not in the prophet, but the change of the state which he denounceth is very well expressed by this means.

The tabernacle of David, which was decayed. It is not without cause that that evil-favored wasteness and ruin of the king's house is set before our eyes by the prophet; for unless the godly should have been persuaded that Christ should notwithstanding come, though the kingdom of David were brought to nought, who should not only restore to their old order things which were decayed, but should exalt even unto the heavens the glory of his kingdom with incomparable success, they should have despaired a hundred times in a day. After they were returned from the exile wherein they lived at Babylon, they were brought by continual destructions almost unto utter destruction. Afterward that which remained was consumed by little and little with civil [973] discord, yea, when God did relieve their miseries, that kind of help which they had was a certain matter of despair; [974] for that rule which the Maccabees took upon them was then taken away from the tribe of Juda. For these causes the Spirit of God doth diligently beat in [inculcate] this by the prophet, that Christ shall not come until the kingdom of David shall perish, that they may not despair of salvation even amidst greatest miseries. So Isaiah saith, that there shall a branch arise out of the contemptible and base stock, [975] (Isaiah 11:1;) and let us also remember, that God doth observe this wonderful way in restoring the Church, that he doth build it up, [976] when it is decayed.

Furthermore, this place teachers when the Church is best ordered, and what is the true and right constitution thereof, to wit, when the throne of David is set up, and Christ alone hath the preeminence, that all may meet together in his obedience. [977]

[972] "Hunc enim finem inter alios habebant ceremoniae, ut sanctum Dei populum a profanis Gentilus discernerent; nunc sublato discrimine, ceremonias quoque abrogari convenit," for ceremonies had this, among other ends, that they might distinguish the holy people of God from the profane Gentiles; the distinction being now removed, ceremonies must also be abolished. The whole of this passage is omitted in the translation.

[973] "Intestinis," intestine.

[974] "Quaedam erat desperationis materia," was a kind of material for despair.

[975] "Ex contempto et ignobili trunco," from an ignoble and despised trunk.

[976] "Ex ruinis," out of ruins.

[977] "In ejus obsequium conveniant," may accord in obeying him.

Though the Pope have oppressed the Church with his sacrilegious tyranny, yet doth he make boast of the title of the Church; yea, he deceiveth men under the vain title of the Church, that he may put out the clear light of sound doctrine. But if we shall come thoroughly to examine the matter, we may easily refute such a gross mock, because he alone beareth rule, having deposed Christ. He doth in word confess that he is Christ's vicar; but in very deed after that he hath by a beautiful banishment [978] sent Christ into the heavens, he taketh to himself all his power; for Christ reigneth by the doctrine of his gospel alone, which is wickedly trodden under foot by this abominable idol. But let us remember that this shall be the lawful estate of the Church among us, if we do all in general [979] obey Christ, the King of kings, that there may be one sheepfold and one Shepherd, (John 10:16.)

17. *That those which remain may seek.* James added this word *seek* by way of exposition, which is not found nor read in the prophet; and yet it is not superfluous, because, to the end we may be numbered among the people of God, and that he may take us for his own, we must, on the other side, [in our turn,] be encouraged to seek him. And it is to be thought that Luke did summarily comprehend those things whereof James did dispute in his own language among the Jews; whereby it came to pass that the exposition of the matter was mixed with the words of the prophet. Instead of the *relics of the Gentiles* which Amos useth, Luke, out of the Greek translation, (which was more familiar,) putteth the *rest of the men* in the same sense, to wit, that there must go before the purging of the filthiness of the world a cutting, or paring, as it came to pass. And this doctrine must be also applied unto our time. For, because the corruption of the world is worse than that it can be wholly brought to obey Christ, he bloweth away, with diverse fans of tribulations, the chaff and weeds, that he may at length gather unto himself that which shall remain.

18. *Known from the beginning.* This is a prevention, [980] to put away the hatred which might have risen upon the novelty; for the sudden change might have been suspected, and therefore did it trouble weak minds. Therefore James preventeth, showing that this was no new thing with God, though it fell out suddenly otherwise than men thought; because God saw, before the world was created, what he would do, and the calling of the Gentiles was hidden in his secret counsel. Whereupon it followeth, that it must not be esteemed according to the sense of man. Furthermore, James hath respect unto the words of the prophet, when he affirmeth that God, who should do all these things, was also the author of the prophecy. Therefore, his meaning is, that, seeing God speaketh by his prophet, he saw then, yea, from the very beginning, [981] that neither uncircumcision nor anything else should let him, but that he would choose the Gentiles into his family. Nevertheless, there is

[978] "Specioso exilio," a specious exile.
[979] "Omnes ad unum," all to a man.
[980] "Prolepsis," an anticipation
[981] "Ab ultima aeternitate," from the remotest eternity

comprehended under this a general exhortation, that men do not take upon them to measure, with the small measure of their wit, the works of God, the reason whereof is oftentimes known to none but to himself; but rather let them cry, being astonished, [982] that his ways are past finding out, and that his judgments are too deep a depth, (Romans 11:33.)

Acts 15:19-21

Acts 15:19-21

19. Wherefore, I think that we ought not to trouble those who of the Gentiles are turned to God: 20. But that we must write unto them, that they abstain from the filthiness of images, and from fornication, and from strangled, and from blood. 21. For Moses of old time hath those in every city which preach him, when he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.

19. *That we must not trouble.* He denieth that the Gentiles must be driven from the Church through the disagreement about ceremonies, seeing they were admitted by God; yet it [he] seemeth contrary to himself, when he denieth that they ought to be troubled, and yet prescribeth certain rites. The answer is easy, which I will hereafter more at large prosecute. First, he requireth nothing at their hands but that which they were bound to do by brotherly concord; secondly, these precepts could no whir trouble or disquiet their consciences, after that they knew that they were free before God, and that false and perverse religion was taken away, which the false apostles sought to bring in. The question is now, why James doth enjoin the Gentiles these four things alone? Some say that this was let [derived] from the ancient custom of the fathers, who did not make any covenant [983] with any people which they could enforce to obey them but upon this condition; but because there is no fit author of that thing brought to light, I leave it in doubt and undecided.

But here appeareth a manifest reason why they gave particular commandment concerning things offered to idols, blood, and that which was strangled. They were, indeed, of themselves things indifferent; yet such as had some special thing in them more than other rites of the law. We know how straitly the Lord commandeth to eschew those things which are contrary to the external profession of faith, and wherein there is any appearance or suspicion of idolatry. Therefore, lest there should any blot of superstition remain in the Gentiles, and lest the Jews should see anything in them which did not agree with the pure worship of God, no marvel if, to avoid offense, they be commanded to abstain from things offered to idols.

The word {αλισγημα}, which Luke useth, doth signify all manner of profanation; therefore I have not changed the common translation, which hath

[982] "Exclament cum stupore," exclaim in amazement.

[983] "Qui non soldant foedus percutere," who were not accustomed to enter into any covenant.

pollution or filthiness. Yet it is sometimes taken for sacrifices; which sense should not disagree with James' purpose; and, peradventure, it shall be more plain and natural so to expound it in this place; because, where Luke doth shortly after repeat the same decree, he will put {ειδωλοθητα}, or things sacrificed to idols.

As concerning blood and that which was strangled, not only the Jews were forbidden by the law of Moses to eat them, (Deuteronomy 12:23;) but this law was given to all the world after the flood, (Genesis 9:4,) whereby it came to pass, that those which were not quite grown out of kind [984] did loathe blood. I do not speak of the Jews, but of many of the Gentiles. I confess, indeed, that even that commandment was but temporal; yet, notwithstanding, it was extended farther than unto one people. No marvel, therefore, if there might arise greater offense thereupon, which to cure seemed good to the apostles. But there ariseth a harder question concerning fornication; because James seemeth to reckon the same among things indifferent, whereof they must beware only in respect of offense; but there was another cause for which he placed fornication among those things which were not of themselves unlawful. It is well known what unbridled liberty to run awhoring did reign and rage everywhere; and this disease had got the upper hand principally among the men of the east country, as they be more given to lust. Assuredly the faith and chastity of wedlock was never less observed and kept any where than among them. Moreover, he doth not intreat indifferently, in my judgment, in this place of all manner [of] fornication or whoredom, as of adultery, and wandering, and unbridled lusts, whereby all chastity is violate and corrupt; but I think he speaketh of concubineship, as they call it; which was so common among the Gentiles, that it was almost like to a law.

Therefore, whereas James reckoneth up a common corruption among things which are of themselves not corrupt, there is therein no inconvenience; [985] so that we know that it was not his meaning to place those things in one order which are very far unlike among themselves. For, whereas unclean men do thereby color and cloak their filthiness, they may easily be refuted. James, say they, coupled eating of blood with whoredom; but doth he compare them together as things that are like, at least which disagree not in any point. Yea, he doth only respect [986] the wicked and corrupt custom of men, which was fallen away from the first law and order of nature appointed by God. As concerning the judgment of God, the knowledge thereof must be let [sought] out of the continual doctrine of the Scripture; and it is nothing doubtful what the Scripture saith; to wit, that whoredom is accursed before God, and that the soul and body are thereby defiled, that the holy temple of God is polluted, and Christ is rent in pieces; that God doth daily punish whoremongers, and that he will once pay them home. [987] The filthiness of

[984] "Qui non prorsus erant degeneres," who were not wholly degenerate.

[985] "In eo nihil absurdi," in that there is an absurdity.

[986] "Respicit," refers to.

[987] "Et horrendum semel fieri ultorem," and that he will one day take fearful vengeance on

whoredom, which the heavenly Judge doth so sore condemn, can be covered with no cloaks by the patrons of whoredom how witty and eloquent soever they be.

21. *For Moses hath.* This place, in my judgment, hath been badly expounded, and drawn into a contrary sense. For interpreters think that James addeth this, because it were superfluous to prescribe anything to the Jews, who were well acquainted with the doctrine of the law, and to whom it was read every Sabbath-day; and they pick out this meaning, Let us be content to require these few things at the hands of the Gentiles, which are not accustomed to bear the yoke of the law; as touching the Jews they have Moses, out of whom they may learn more. Some do also gather out of this place, that circumcision, with its appurtenances, ought to be observed even at this day among the Jews. But they reason unfitly and unskillfully, though that exposition which I have set down [988] were true. But James had a far other meaning; to wit, he teachers that it cannot be that ceremonies can be abolished so quickly, as it were, at the first dash; because the Jews had now a long time been acquainted with the doctrine of the law, and Moses had his preachers; therefore, it stood them upon to redeem concord for a short thee, until such time as the liberty gotten by Christ might, by little and little, appear more plainly. This is that which is said in the common proverb, That it was meet that the old ceremonies should be buried with some honor. Those who are skillful in the Greek tongue shall know that that last member, When he is read every Sabbath-day in the synagogues, was by me changed not without cause, for avoiding of doubtfulness. [989]

Acts 15:22-29

Acts 15:22-29

22. Then it seemed good to the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of them to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. 23. Sending letters by their hands after this form: The apostles, and elders, and brethren, to those brethren which are at Antioch, and in Syria and Gilicia, which are of the Gentiles, greeting: 24. Because we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, commanding you to be circumcised, and to keep the law, to whom we gave no commandment; 25. It seemed good to us, being gathered together with one mind, to send chosen men to you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; 26. Men which have ventured their souls for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27. Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost

them.

[988] "Quam retuli," to which I have referred

[989] "Nempe, vitandae ambiguitatis causa," namely, for the purpose of avoiding ambiguity.

and us, to lay no greater burden upon you than these necessary things, 29. That ye abstain from those things which are sacrificed to images, and from blood, and from that which is strangled, and from fornication; from which things, if you shall keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

22. *It pleased the apostles.* That tempest was made calm not without the singular grace of God, so that after the matter was thoroughly discussed, they did all agree together in sound doctrine. Also the modesty of the common people is gathered by this, because, after that they had referred the matter to the judgment of the apostles and the rest of teachers, they do now also subscribe to their decree; and, on the other side, the apostles did show some token of their equity, in that they set down nothing concerning the common cause of all the godly without admitting the people. For assuredly, this tyranny did spring from the pride of the pastors, that those things which appertain unto the common state of the whole Church are subject (the people being excluded) to the will, will not say lust, of a few. [990] We know what a hard matter it is to suppress the slanders of the wicked, to satisfy most men who are churlish and forward, to keep under the light and unskillful, to wipe away errors conceived, to heal up hatred, to appease contentions, [and] to abolish false reports. Peradventure, the enemies of Paul and Barnabas might have said that they had gotten letters by fair and flattering speeches; they might have invented some new cavil; the rude and weak might, by and by, have been troubled; but when chief men come with the letters, that they may gravely dispute the whole matter in presence, all sinister suspicion is taken away.

24. *Certain which went out from us.* We see that there was no respect of persons among these holy men, which doth always corrupt sound and right judgments. They confess that there were knaves of their own company; and yet they do no whit flatter them, or, through corrupt favor, incline to cover their error; yea, rather in condemning them freely, they spare not even themselves. And, first, they pluck from their faces that visure [mask] which they had abused, to deceive withal. They boasted that they were privy to the meaning of the apostles. [991] The apostles reprove them, and condemn them of and for lying in that false pretense, when they utterly deny that they did command any such thing. Again, they accuse them far more sharply, that they troubled the Church and subverted souls. For by this means they bring them in contempt and detestation with the godly, because they cannot be admitted but to their destruction. But false teachers are said to subvert souls, because the truth of God doth edify or build them up, and so this speech containeth a [this] general doctrine, Unless we will willingly have our souls drawn headlong from being any longer temples of the Holy Ghost, and unless we desire their ruin, we must beware of those which go

[990] "Prudenter vero Apostoli et Presbyteri Judam et Silam mittendos censuerunt, quo res minus suspecta esset," but the apostles prudently deemed it proper to send Judas and Silas, that there might be less ground for suspicion, omitted.

[991] "Se apostolorum mentem tenere," that they knew the mind of the apostles.

about to lead us away from the pure gospel. That which they say touching the keeping of the law doth only appertain unto ceremonies, though we must always remember, that they did so intreat of ceremonies; that [as if] both the salvation and also the righteousness of men did therein consist. For the false apostles did command that they should be kept, as if righteousness came by the law and salvation did depend upon works.

25. *With our beloved Barnabas and Paul* They set these praises against the slanders wherewith the false apostles had essayed to bring Paul and Barnabas out of credit. [992] And, first, to the end they may remove the opinion of disagreement which had possessed the minds of many, they testify their consent; secondly, they commend Paul and Barnabas for their ferventness in zeal and most manlike courage, that they were not afraid to venture or lay down their souls for Christ's sake. And this is an excellent virtue in a minister of the gospel, and which deserveth no small praise, if he shall not only be stout and courageous to execute the office of teaching, but also be ready to enter danger which is offered in defense of his doctrine. As the Lord doth thus try the faith and constancy of those which be his, so he doth, as it were, make them noble with the ensigns of virtue, that they may excel in his Church. Therefore, Paul holdeth forth the marks of Christ which he did bear in his body, (Galatians 6:17) as a buckler to drive back those knaves which did trouble his doctrine. And though it do not so fall out with most stout and courageous teachers and preachers of the gospel, that they strive for the gospel until they come in danger of life, because the matter doth not so require, yet is this no let but that Christ may purchase authority for his martyrs, so often as he bringeth them into worthy and renowned conflicts.

Nevertheless, let even those who are not enforced to enter combat by any necessity be ready to shed their blood, if God see it good at any time that it should be so. But the apostles commend the fortitude of Paul and Barnabas only in a good cause; because, if it were sufficient to enter dangers manfully, the martyrs of Christ should nothing differ from troublesome and frenzied men, from cutters and roysters. [993] Therefore, Paul and Barnabas are commended, not because they laid open themselves simply to dangers, but because they refuse not to die for Christ's sake. Peradventure, also, the apostles meant to nip [994] those knaves by the way, who, having never suffered any thing for Christ's sake, came out of their roust and dainties [995] to trouble the churches, which cost the courageous soldiers of Christ dearly.

28. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* Whereas the apostles and elders match and join themselves with the Holy Ghost, they attribute nothing to themselves apart therein; but this speech importeth as much as if they should say, that the Holy Ghost was the captain, guide, and governor,

[992] "Paulo et Barnabas aspergeri," to asperse Paul and Barnabas.

[993] "Nihil a tumultuosis et phreneticis, nihil a gladiatoribus differrent," should differ in no respect from tumultuous and frenzied men, or from gladiators.

[994] "Oblique perstringere," indirectly to lash.

[995] "Ex sua umbra et deliciis prodierant," had come forth from their luxurious retirement.

and that they did set down, and decreed that which they write as he did indite it to them. [996] For this manner of speech is used commonly in the Scripture, to give the ministers the second place after that the name of God is once expressed. When it is said that the people believed God and his servant Moses, (Exodus 14:31,) faith is not rent in pieces, as if it did addict itself partly to God, and partly to mortal man. What then? to wit, whereas the people had God for the sole author of their faith, they believed or gave credence to his minister, from whom he could not be separate. Neither could they otherwise believe God than by believing the doctrine set before them by Moses, as they did shake off the yoke of God after that they had once rejected and despised Moses. Whereby the wickedness of those men is also refuted, who, making boast of faith with full mouth, do no less wickedly than proudly contemn the ministry. For, as it were a sacrilegious partition, if faith should depend even but a very little upon man, so those men do openly mock God who feign that they have him to be their teacher, when they set nought by the ministers by whom he speaketh. Therefore, the apostles deny that they invented that decree of their own brain which they deliver to the Gentiles, but that they were only ministers of the Spirit, that they may, with the authority of God, make them commendable, which (proceeding from him) they do faithfully deliver. So, when Paul maketh mention of his gospel, he doth not enforce upon them a new gospel, which is of his own inventing, but he preacheth that which was committed to him by Christ.

And the Papists are doltish who go about, out of these words, to prove that the Church hath some authority of her own; yea, they are contrary to themselves. For, under what color do they avouch that the Church cannot err, save only because it is grounded immediately by the Holy Spirit? Therefore, they cry out with open mouth, that those things be the oracles of the Spirit which we prove to be their own inventions. Therefore, they do foolishly urge this cause, *it seemed good to us;* because, if the apostles decreed any thing apart from the Spirit, that principal maxim shall fall to ground, that Councils decree nothing but which is indited by the Spirit.

Besides these necessary things. The Papists do forwardly triumph under color of this word, as if it were lawful for men to make laws which may lay necessity upon the conscience. That (say they) which the Church commandeth must be kept under pain of mortal sin, because the apostles say that that must necessarily be observed which they decree. But such a vain cavil is quickly answered. For this necessity reached no farther than there was any danger lest the unity should be cut asunder. So that, to speak properly, this necessity was accidental or external; which was placed not in the thing itself, but only in avoiding of the offense, which appeareth more plainly by abolishing of the decree. For laws made concerning things which are of themselves necessary must be continual. But we know that this law was foredone

[996] "Seque eo dictante statuisse quod scribunt," and that which they write was resolved on his dictation

[997] by Paul so soon as the tumult and contention was once ended, when he teacheth that nothing is unclean, (Romans 14:14;) and when he granteth liberty to eat all manner [of] meats, yea, even such as were sacrificed to idols, (1 Corinthians 10:25). Wherefore, in vain do they gather any cloak or color out of this word to bind men's consciences, seeing that the necessity spoken of in this place did only respect men in the external use lest there should any offense arise thereupon, and that their liberty before God might stand whole and sound. Also, in vain do they gather out of all the whole place, and in vain do they go about out of the same to prove that the Church had power given to decree anything contrary to the word of God. The Pope hath made such laws as seemed best to him, contrary to the word of God, whereby he meant to govern the Church; and that not ten or twenty, but an infinite number, so that they do not only tyrannously oppress souls, but are also cruel torments to vex and torment them.

To the end the hired brabblers [wranglers] of the Pope may excuse such cruelty, they do object that even the apostles did forbid the Gentiles that which was not forbidden in the word of God. But I say flatly, that the apostles added nothing unto the word of God; which shall plainly appear if we list to mark their drift. I said of late that they meant nothing less [998] than to set down a perpetual law, whereby they might bind the faithful. What then? They use that remedy which was fit for the nourishing of brotherly peace and concord among the Churches, that the Gentiles may for a time apply themselves [999] to the Jews. But if we will grant anything, we must assuredly confess that this is according to the word of God, that love bear the sway in things indifferent; that is, that the external use of those things which are of themselves free be bent unto the rule of charity.

In sum, if love be the bond of perfection and end of the law; if God command that we study to preserve mutual unity among ourselves, and that every man serve his neighbor to edify, no man is so ignorant which doth not see that that is contained in the word of God which the apostles command in this place, only they apply a general rule to their time. Furthermore, let us remember that which I said before, that it was a politic law which could not ensnare the conscience, neither bring in any reigned worship of God; which two vices the Scripture condemneth everywhere in men's traditions. But admit we should grant (which is most false) that that did not accord with the word of God which was decreed in that council, yet that maketh nothing for the Papists. Let the councils decree anything contrary to [beyond, in addition to] the express word of God, according to the revelation of the Spirit; yet none but lawful councils may have this authority given them. Then let them prove that their councils were godly and holy, to the decrees whereof they will have us subject. But I will not any farther prosecute this

[997] "Refixam," remodeled.

[998] "Nihil minus in animo illis fuisse," that the last thing they meant was to.

[999] "Se… accommodent," accommodate themselves.

point, because it was handled in the beginning of the chapter. Let the readers know (which is sufficient for this present place) that the apostles pass not the bounds of the word of God when they set down an external law, as time requireth, whereby they may reconcile the Churches among themselves.

Acts 15:30-35

Acts 15:30-35

30. Therefore, when they were let go, they came to Antioch: and when they had assembled the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31. Which, when they had read, they rejoiced over the consolation. 32. And Judas and Silas, seeing they were also prophets, did with many words exhort [or they did comfort] the brethren, and strengthened them. 33. And they tarried there for a time, and then they were let go by the brethren in peace unto the apostles. 34. But it seemed good to Silas to stay there. 35. And Paul and Barnabas stayed at Antioch, teaching and preaching with many more the word of the Lord.

30. *When the multitude was gathered.* This was the most lawful kind of dealing to admit the whole multitude unto the reading of the epistle. For if there fall out any controversy in the doctrine of faith, it is meet that the judgment be referred over unto the learned and godly, and to such as are exercised in the Scripture; and, chiefly, to the pastors rightly ordained. Notwithstanding, because it belongeth to all alike to know for a surety what they must hold, the godly and learned teachers must make known [1000] to the whole Church what they have set down out of the word of God. For there is nothing more unfitting for holy and Christian order than to drive away the body of the people from common doctrine, as if it were a herd of swine, as they use to do under the tyranny of Popery. For because the Pope and the horned bishops did think that the people would never be obedient enough until they were brought into gross ignorance, they imagined that this was the best summary of faith, to know nothing, but to depend wholly upon their decrees. But, on the contrary, there must be a mean observed, that lawful governments may continue; [1001] and that, on the other side, the people may have that liberty which unto them belongeth, lest they be oppressed like slaves.

31. *They rejoiced over the consolation.* Seeing that the epistle is so short, and containeth nothing but a bare narration, what consolation could they have by it? But we must note, that there was no small matter of consolation therein, because, when they knew the consent of the apostles, they were all pacified, and also whereas before there was variance among them, they are now reconciled one to another. Seeing there went a false report about, that all the apostles were against Paul and Barnabas, this same had shaken some

[1000] "Fraterne communicate," must fraternally communicate.
[1001] "Salvae maneant," may continue safe.

who were too light of belief, many did stand in doubt; the wicked abused this occasion to speak evil; others some were pricked forward [1002] with love of novelty and with curiosity, and one was set against another. But now, after that they see that the judgment of the first Church doth agree with the doctrine of Paul and Barnabas, they obtain that for which the children of God ought most to wish, that being established in the right faith, and being of one mind among themselves, they may with quiet minds have peace one with another.

32. *Judas and Silas.* These two brethren were sent for this cause, that they might also testify the same thing by word which was contained in the letters, and more also; otherwise the apostles would not have sent such short letters concerning so great and weighty a matter; and they would have also spoken somewhat touching the mysteries of faith, and would have made some long exhortation, wherein they would have persuaded them unto the study of godliness. Now, Luke showeth some farther things by them done; to wit, that being furnished with the gift of prophecy, they edify the Church in general, as if he should say, they did not only do their duty faithfully in the cause which was now in hand, but they did also take good and profitable pains in teaching and exhorting the Church And we must note that he saith that they exhorted the Church, because they were prophets; for it is not a thing common to all men to enter such an excellent function. Therefore, we must beware, lest any man pass [1003] his bounds; as Paul teacheth, 1 Corinthians 7:20; and Ephesians 4:1, that every one keep himself within the measure of grace received. Wherefore, it is not in vain that Luke saith that the office of teaching is peculiar; lest any man, through ambition, being void of ability, or through rash zeal, or through any other foolish desire, coveting to put out his head, trouble the order of the Church.

They were prophets. Whereas the word hath diverse significations, it is not taken in this place for those prophets to whom it was granted to foretell things to come; because this title should come in out of season [1004] when he intreateth of another matter; but Luke's meaning is, that Judas and Silas were endued with excellent knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of God, that they might be good interpreters of God; as Paul, in the fourteenth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 14:3,) when he intreateth of the prophecy, and preferreth it before all other gifts, speaketh not of foretelling of things to come; but he commandeth it for this fruit, because it doth edify the Church by doctrine, exhortation, and consolation. After this manner doth Luke assign exhortation to the prophets, as being the principal point of their office.

33. *They were let go in peace.* That is, when they departed, the brethren, in taking their leave of them, did wish them well, as friends use to do. And

[1002] "Titillibat," tickled with.

[1003] "Temere transiliat," rashly overleap.

[1004] "Parum opportune interpositum esset," should have been inappropriately interposed.

there is *synecdoche* in this member; because the one of the two did only return to Jerusalem. And in the text there is a correction added immediately, that it seemed good to Silas to tarry there; but when Luke joineth them both together, his meaning is only to declare that the Church was quiet before they thought upon any returning. At length he addeth that Paul and Barnabas, so long as they were at Antioch, gave themselves to teaching, and did continue in this work, [1005] and yet did they give place to many more. [1006] Whereby it appeareth, that they had all one and the same desire without grudging, [1007] so that they joined hand in hand to do good; though it seemeth that he maketh mention of many more of set purpose, lest we should think that, after that Paul and Barnabas were departed, that Church was destitute, which did flourish in abundance of teachers. Moreover, the blessing of God, which began straightway to appear again in that Church, is now again commended and extolled, which Church Satan went about [1008] by his ministers miserably to scatter and lay waste.

Acts 15:36-41

Acts 15:36-41

36. And after a few days Paul said to Barnabas, Returning, let us now visit our brethren throughout all cities wherein we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37. And Barnabas counseled to take John, whose surname was Mark. 38. But Paul besought him, that he which slid back from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work, might not be taken to their company. 39. And the contention waxed so hot between them, that they parted company; and Barnabas having taken to him Mark, sailed to Cyprus. 40. But Paul having chosen Silas, journeyed, being committed to the grace of God by the brethren. 41. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, establishing the churches

36. *Let us visit our brethren.* In this history we must first note how careful Paul was for the churches which he had ordained. He laboreth, indeed, at Antioch profitably, but because he remembered that he was an apostle ordained of God, and not the pastor of one particular place, he keepeth the course of his calling. Secondly, as it did not become him to be tied to one place, so he thinketh with himself, that he was bound to all whom he begat in the Lord; therefore, he will not suffer them to want his help. Moreover, the work that was begun in those places could not be neglected; but it would shortly after decay. Yet it is to be thought that Paul stayed still in the church of Antioch, until he saw the estate thereof well ordered, and

[1005] "Intentos fuisse ad docendum, et in hoc opere assiduos," were intent on teaching, and assiduous in the work.
[1006] "Aliis compluribus," to several other persons.
[1007] "Sine aemulatione," without rivalship.
[1008] "Nuper molitus erat," had lately plotted.

concord established. For we know and try [1009] what great force principal churches [1010] have to keep other lesser churches in order. If there arise any tumult in an obscure street, or if there fall out any offense, the rumor goeth not so far, neither are the neighbors so much moved; but if any place be excellent, it cannot quail without great ruin, or, at least, but that the lesser buildings shall be therewith sore shaken, both far and wide. Therefore, Paul, in staying a time at Antioch, did provide for other churches; and so we must no less look unto his wisdom than his diligence in this example, because oftentimes the immoderate heat of the pastors in going about matters doth no less hurt than their sluggishness.

How they do. Paul knew that amidst so great lightness and inconstancy of men, and as their nature is inclined to vice, if there be any thing well ordered among them, it doth seldom continue stable, and for any long time; and especially that churches do easily decay or grow out of kind, unless they be looked to continually. There ought nothing under heaven to be more firm than the spiritual building of faith, whose stability is grounded in the very heaven; yet there be but few in whose minds the word of the Lord doth thoroughly take lively root; therefore, firmness is rare in men. Again, even those who have their anchor firmly fixed in the truth of God, do not cease notwithstanding to be subject to diverse tossings, whereby, though their faith be not overturned, yet hath it need of strengthening, that it may be underpropped and stayed. Moreover, we see how Satan doth assault, and with what subtle shifts he goeth about privily to pull down sometimes whole churches, sometimes every one of the faithful particularly. Therefore, it is not without cause that Paul is so careful for his scholars, lest they behave themselves otherwise than is to be wished; and therefore is he desirous in time to prevent, if there be any inconvenience risen, which cannot be until he have taken view. [1011]

37. *And Barnabas gave counsel.* Luke doth here set down that doleful disagreement which ought to make all the godly afraid for just causes. The society of Paul and Barnabas was consecrated by the heavenly oracle. They had long time labored, being of one mind, under this yoke whereunto the Lord had tied them; they had, by many experiences, tried [felt] the excellent favor of God, yea, that wonderful success mentioned heretofore by Luke was a manifest blessing of God. Though they had been almost drowned so often in so many tempests of persecution, and were set upon so sore [1012] by infinite enemies, though domestical sedition were everywhere kindled against them, yet they were so far from being pulled in sunder, that their agreement was then most of all tried, [proved.] But now, for a light matter, and which might easily have been ended, they break that holy bond of God's calling.

[1009] "Experimur," we know by experience.

[1010] "Quantum habeant momenti primariae ecclesiae," how great weight principal churches have.

[1011] "Sine inspectione," without inspection.

[1012] "Subinde," ever and anon.

This could not fall out without great perturbance to all the godly. Seeing that the heat of the contention was so great and vehement in these holy men, who had long time accustomed themselves to suffer all things, what shall befall us, whose affections being not as yet so brought to obey God, do oftentimes rage [1013] without modesty? Seeing that a light occasion did separate them, who had long time, amidst so great trials, retained unity holily, how easily may Satan cause those to be divided who have either none, or, at least, a cold desire to foster peace? What great pride was it for Barnabas, who had no more honorable thing than to be Paul's companion, that he might behave himself like a son towards his father, so stubbornly to refuse his counsel? Peradventure, also, some might think that Paul was not very courteous in that he did not forgive a faithful helper this fault. Therefore, we be admonished by this example, that unless the servants of Christ take great heed, there be many chinks through which Satan will creep in, to disturb that concord which is among them.

But now we must examine the cause itself, for some there be who lay the blame of the disagreement upon Paul; [1014] and, at the first hearing, the reasons which they bring seem probable. John Mark is rejected, because he withdrew himself from Paul's company; but he fell not away from Christ. A young man, being as yet unacquainted with bearing the cross, returned home from his journey. He was somewhat to be borne with for his age, being a fresh-water soldier [a tyro] he fainted in troubles even at the first dash; he was not, therefore, about to be a slothful soldier during his whole life. Now, forasmuch as his returning to Paul is an excellent testimony of repentance, it seemeth to be a point of discourtesy [1015] to reject him; for those must be handled more courteously, who punish themselves for their own offenses of their own accord. There were also other causes which ought to have made Paul more courteous. The house of John Mark was a famous inn, [1016] (Acts 12:12;) his mother had entertained the faithful in most grievous persecution; when Herod and all the people were in a rage, they were wont to have their secret meetings there, as Luke reported before. Surely he ought to have borne with such a holy and courageous woman, lest immoderate rigor should alienate her. She was desirous to have her son addicted to preach the gospel; now, what a great grief might it have been to her that his pains and industry should be refused [1017] for one light fault? And now whereas John Mark doth not only bewail his fault, but in very deed amend the same, Barnabas hath a fair color why he should pardon him. [1018]

Yet we may gather out of the text, that the Church did allow Paul's counsel. For Barnabas departeth, and with his companion he saileth into

[1013] "Subinde lasciviant," do every now and then wanton.
[1014] "Nimio Pauli rigori," on Paul's excessive rigor.
[1015] "Minime humanum," contrary to humanity.
[1016] "Celebre erat Ecclesiae hospitium," was celebrated for its hospitality to the Church.
[1017] "Ejus operam respui," that his assistance should be spurned away.
[1018] "Speciosum colorem… cur ignoscat," a specious excuse for pardoning him.

Cyprus. There is no mention made of the brethren, (as if he had departed privily without taking his leave;) but the brethren commend Paul in their prayers to the grace of God; whereby appeareth that the Church stood on his side. Secondly, whereas God showeth forth the power of his Spirit in blessing Paul, and doth bless his labors with happy success of his grace, and leaveth Barnabas, as it were, buried, there may a probable reason be drawn thence, that it pleased him that such an example of severity should be showed. And surely the offense of John Mark was greater than it is commonly taken for. He slid not back, indeed, from the faith of Christ, yet did he forsake his calling, and was a revolt [apostate] from the same; therefore, it was a matter which might have given evil example, if he had been straightway received again into the calling from which he was slid back. He had given himself over to serve Christ upon this condition, that he should be free no longer. It was no more lawful for him to break his promise made in this behalf, than it is for a husband to leave his wife, or for a son to forsake his father. Neither doth infirmity excuse his unfaithfulness, whereby the holiness of the calling was violated.

And we must note, that he was not altogether rejected of Paul; he counted him as a brother, so he would be content with the common order; he refused to admit him unto the common [public] function of teaching, from whence he fell filthily through his own fault. And there is no great difference between these two, whether he which hath offended be quite excluded from pardon, or he have only public honor denied him; though it may be that they did both exceed measure, as accidents do oftentimes mar a matter which is otherwise good. It was well done of Paul, and according to the right of discipline profitably, not to admit him to be his companion, whose inconstancy he had once tried, [experienced;] but when he saw Barnabas so importunate, he might have yielded to his desire. We ought to make more account of the truth than of the favor of all the whole world; but it is convenient that we ponder wisely what great weight there is in the matter which is in hand. For if, in a matter of no weight or edification, a man vaunt of his constancy, prepare himself for the conflict, and cease not to defend that until the end, wherein he did once take delight it shall be but foolish and perverse obstinacy. There was also some middle way and means whereby Paul might have granted somewhat to the importunateness of his fellow [colleague] in office, and yet have not revolted from the truth. It was not for him to flatter Mark, or to cloak his offense, yet was he not letted by religion, but that after he had freely professed what he thought, he might suffer himself to be overcome in that matter, which did neither indamage true doctrine, nor endanger man's salvation; which I say for this cause, that we may learn to moderate our desire, even in the best causes, lest it pass measure, and be too fervent.

Chapter 16

CHAPTER 16

Acts 16:1-5

Acts 16:1-5

1. And he came to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, there was there a certain disciple named Timotheus, the son of a certain faithful woman, a Jewess, and his father was a Grecian. 2. He was well reported of by the brethren which were at Lystra and Iconium. 3. Paul would have him to go with him; and when he had taken him he circumcised him, because of those Jews which were in those places. For they all knew that his father was a Grecian. 4. And as they passed through the cities, they delivered to them to be kept the decrees which were decreed by the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5. And so the churches were confirmed in the faith, and abounded in number daily.

1. Luke doth now begin to declare what were the proceedings of Paul after that Barnabas and he were separate. And first he showeth, that he took to his company at Lystra Timothy to be his companion. But, to the end we may know that Paul did nothing rashly, or without good consideration, Luke saith plainly, that Timothy was such a man as the brethren did well like of, and that they gave testimony of his godliness; for thus doth he speak word for word. And so Paul himself observeth the like choice, which he elsewhere commandeth to be made in choosing ministers, (1 Timothy 3: 7.) Neither is it to be thought, that those prophecies did even then come to light wherewith Timothy was set forth and adorned by the Spirit, as Paul doth testify elsewhere, (1 Timothy 1:18.) But there seemeth to be some disagreement in that, in that Luke saith that Timotheus was well reported of amongst the brethren; and Paul will have him to have a good report of those who are without, who is chosen to be a bishop. I answer, that we must principally look unto the judgment of the godly, as they be sole meet witnesses, and do alone rightly discern well and wisely according to the Spirit of God; and that we ought to attribute no more to the wicked than to blind men. Therefore it appeareth that godliness and holiness of life must be judged according to the will and consent of godly men; that he be counted worthy to be a bishop whom they commend. Notwithstanding, I confess that even this also is required in the second place, that the very infidels be

enforced to commend him; lest the Church of God come in danger [1019] of their slanders and evil speaking, if it commit [permit] itself to be governed by men of evil report.

3. *He circumcised him, because of the Jews.* Luke doth plainly express that Timothy was not circumcised, because it was necessary it should be so, or because the religion of that sign did continue as yet, but that Paul might avoid an offense. Therefore there was respect had of men, whereas the matter was free before God. Wherefore, the circumcising of Timothy was no sacrament, as was that which was given to Abraham and his posterity, (Genesis 17:13;) but an indifferent ceremony which served only for nourishing of love, and not for any exercise of godliness.

Now, the question is, whether it were lawful for Paul to use a vain sign, whose signification and force was abolished; for it seemeth a vain thing when there is a departure made from the institution of God. But circumcision was commanded by God to continue only until the coming of Christ. To this question I answer, that circumcision did so cease at the coming of Christ, that, notwithstanding the use thereof was not quite abolished by and by; but it continued free, until all men might know that Christ was the end of the law, by the more manifest revelation of the light of the gospel.

And here we must note three degrees. The first is, that the ceremonies of the law were so abolished by the coming of Christ, that they did neither any longer appertain unto the worship of God, neither were they figures of spiritual things, neither was there any necessity to use them. The second is, that the use thereof was free, until the truth of the gospel might more plainly appear. The third, that it was not lawful for the faithful to retain them, save only so far forth as the use thereof served for edification, neither was there any superstition thereby fostered; though that free power to use them, whereof I have spoken, be not without exception, because there was a divers respect to be had of ceremonies. For circumcision was not in the same place wherein the sacrifices were, which were ordained for the purging [expiating] of sins. Wherefore it was lawful for Paul to circumcise Timotheus; it had not been lawful for him to offer a sacrifice for sin. This is, indeed, a general thing, that all the worship of the law did cease at the coming of Christ, (because it was to continue but for a time,) as touching faith and conscience; but concerning the use we must know this, that it is indifferent, and left in the liberty of the godly for a short time, so far as it was not contrary to the confession of faith. We must note the shortness of time whereof I speak, to wit, until the plain manifestation of the Gospel; because some learned men are grossly deceived in this point, who think that circumcision doth yet take place [1020] among the Jews; whereas Paul teacheth, that it is superfluous when we are buried with Christ by baptism, (Colossians 2:11,12.) It was better and more truly said in the old proverb, That the synagogue was to

[1019] "Obnoxia sit," be subjected to.

[1020] "Locum adhuc habere apud Judaeos," is still binding on the Jews.

be buried with honor.

Now it resteth that we declare how far forth the use of circumcision was indifferent. That shall easily appear by the manner of the liberty. Because the calling of the Gentiles was not as yet generally known, it was meet that the Jews should have some prerogative granted them. Therefore, until it might be better known that the adoption was deducted from the lineage and kindred of Abraham unto all the Gentiles, it was lawful, so far as edification did require, to retain the sign of difference. For seeing that Paul would not circumcise Titus, and doth avouch that the same was well done, (Galatians 2:3,) it followeth that it was not lawful to use this ceremony always and without choice. Therefore they were to have respect unto edification, and unto the public commodity of the Church. Because he could not circumcise Titus, unless he would betray the doctrine [1021] of the Gospel, and lay himself open to the slanders of the adversaries, he abstained from the free use of the ceremony, which he did use in Timotheus, when he saw that it was profitable for the Church. Hereby it doth easily appear what horrible confusion doth reign in Popery. There is there a huge heap of ceremonies, and to what end but that they may have instead of one veil of the old temple an hundred. God did abrogate those ceremonies which he had commanded, that the truth of the Gospel might shine more clearly. Men durst take upon them to bring in new, and that without keeping any measure. After this came in a wicked surmise, that all these serve for the worship of God. At length followed the devilish confidence of merit. Now, forasmuch as it is evident enough that such ceremonies are neither veils nor sepulchres wherewith Christ is covered, but rather stinking dunghills wherein faith [1022] and religion are choked, those who make the use thereof generally free do ascribe more to the Pope than the Lord granteth to his law. It is to no end to speak of the mass and of such filthiness which contain in themselves manifest idolatry.

They all knew this. Luke telleth us that this was Paul's drift, to make an entrance for Timotheus unto the Jews, lest they should abhor him as a profane man. They knew all (saith he) that his father was a Grecian. Therefore, because the mothers had no power over their children, they were fully persuaded that he was uncircumcised. Let the readers not here by the way, how miserable the bondage of the people of God was then. Eunice, mother to Timotheus, was one of the small remnant which the very Jews themselves counted a monster, and yet, being married to a man which was an infidel, she durst not consecrate her children to God. No, she durst not so much as give them the external sign of grace, and yet she ceased not therefore to instruct her son of a child holily in the fear of God, and in his true worship—an example surely worthy to be followed of women, whom their husbands affray with their tyrannous government, from keeping and training up their children and families chastely in true godliness. Grecian is

[1021] "Puram doctrinam," the pure doctrine.

[1022] "Sincera fides," sincere faith.

taken in this place for a Gentile, after the old and common custom of the Scripture.

4. *They delivered them the decrees to keep.* In these words Luke doth signify unto us how desirous Paul was of peace. The best and strongest bond to keep and foster peace among the churches, was to keep that which was set down by the apostles. When Paul taketh great pains about that, he taketh great heed lest through his fault there arise any trouble. And let us remember that that continued but for a time. Because, so soon as he seeth the danger of offense cease, he doth quite unburthen the churches, and setting apart the decree, he maketh that free which the apostles had their forbidden. And yet doth he not cancel or violate by that abrogation that which the apostles had decreed, or contemn the authors themselves; because they were not determined to establish a perpetual law, but only to mitigate for a short time that which might hurt weak consciences; as I did more at large declare in the former chapter. Whereby the folly of the Papists is sufficiently refuted, who do grievously lay to our charge that we be far unlike Paul, because we will have the consciences of the godly governed by the Word of God alone, setting light by the decrees of the Church, as they call them, and not to be subject to the will of men. But, as I have already said, Paul meant nothing less than to ensnare men's consciences in the snare of necessity, for he is not contrary to himself, when he crieth in other places, that

"all things are clean to the clean,"
(Titus 1:15.)

And again,

"He which is clean eateth all things,"
(Romans 14:2.)

And again,

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,"
(Romans 14:17.)

And again,

"Meat doeth not commend us to God,"
(1 Corinthians 8:8.)

Again,

"Eat all things which are sold in the shambles, asking no question for conscience sake,"
(1 Corinthians 10:25.)

But in one word he reconcileth those things which might otherwise seem to disagree, when he commanded to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, for another's man conscience sake. Nevertheless, he taketh great heed that he bind not godly souls with the laws of men.

Therefore we attempt nothing at this day which is contrary to or disagreeing with Paul. But the Papists mock us too grossly when they compare their laws with the decrees of the apostles. The apostles invented no new worship

of God, they had erected no new spiritual government; but for the desire they had to maintain peace, they exhorted the Gentiles that they would yield a little to the Jews. Before the Pope can excuse his laws under this color, he must first change them wholly. And as for us, seeing that the Papists do place the spiritual worship of God in man's inventions, and translate the right which belongeth to God alone unto men, that they may reign as lords over souls; we are enforced manfully to withstand them, unless through treacherous silence we will betray the grace gotten by the blood of Christ. Now, what likelihood can there be between three decrees set down for the help and comfort of the weak, and an infinite heap of laws, which doth not only oppress miserable souls with the weight thereof, but also swallow up faith? We know the complaint of Augustine writing to Januarius, that the Church was wickedly laden even then with too great a burden of traditions. Could he, I pray you, suffer the bondage of these times, which is almost a hundred times harder and heavier?

5. *The churches were confirmed.* By this we gather, that that which Luke setteth down, or rather touched concerning the decrees of the apostles, was, as it were, put in by the way, being not much appertinent unto the matter. [1023] For he commendeth a far other fruit of Paul's doctrine, when he saith that the churches were confirmed in the faith. Therefore Paul did so order external things, that he was principally careful for the kingdom of God, which consisteth in the doctrine of the gospel, and doth far surpass and surmount external order. Therefore those decrees were mentioned, inasmuch as they were expedient for maintaining concord, that we might know that the holy man had a care thereof. But religion and godliness hath the former place, whose sole foundation is faith; which again doth stay itself upon the pure Word of God, and doth not depend upon men's laws. Now, by this example, Luke pricketh us forward to proceed continually, lest, at the beginning, sloth or neglect of profiting come upon us. Also the way to increase faith is expressed, to wit, when the Lord doth stir us up by the industry of his servants; as at that time he used the labor and diligence of Paul and his companions. When he addeth immediately that they were also increased in number, he commendeth another fruit of preaching, and yet he doth therewithal signify unto us, that the more those profit in faith who are first called, the more do they bring unto Christ; as if faith did creep abroad unto others by branches. [1024]

Acts 16:6-10

Acts 16:6-10

6. And when they had gone through Phrygia and the country of Galatia, they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia 7. And

[1023] "Accessorium," accessory.

[1024] "Propagine," by propagation.

going into Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia: and the Spirit suffered them not. 8. And when they had passed through Mysia, they came down to Troada, [Troas.] 9. And Paul saw a vision by night; There was a certain man of Macedonia, standing and praying him, and saying, Coming into Macedonia, help us. 10. And so soon as he saw the vision, we sought straightway to go into Macedonia, being surely confirmed that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

6. *When they had gone throughout.* Luke showeth here how diligent and careful Paul and his companions were in the office of teaching; for he saith that they journeyed through divers regions of the Lesser Asia that they might preach the gospel. But he reciteth one thing which is worth remembering, that they were forbidden by the Spirit of God to speak of Christ in some places, which serveth not a little to set forth the apostleship of Paul; as undoubtedly he was not a little encouraged to proceed, when he knew that the Spirit of God was his guide in his way, and the governor of his actions. And whereas whithersoever they came they prepared themselves to teach, they did that according to their calling, and according to the commandment of God. For they were sent to preach and publish the gospel to the Gentiles without exception; but the Lord revealed his counsel in governing the course of their journey which was before unknown, even in a moment.

Notwithstanding, the question is, If Paul taught nowhere by whither he was led by the Spirit, what certainty shall the ministers of the Church have at this day of their calling, who are certified by no oracles when they must speak or hold their peace? I answer, Seeing that Paul's province and charge was so wide, he had need of the singular direction of the Spirit. He was not made the apostle of one particular place, or of a few cities, but he had received commandment to preach the gospel through Asia and Europe; which was to sail in a most wide sea. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should wonder that in that confused wideness God beckoned unto him, as it were by reaching forth his hand, how far he would have him go, or whither. But here ariseth another harder question, why the Lord did forbid Paul to speak in Asia, and suffered him not to come into Bithynia? For, if answer be made that these Gentiles were unworthy of the doctrine of salvation, we may again demand why Macedonia was more worthy? Those who desire to be too wise, do assign the causes of this difference in men, that the Lord vouchsafeth every man of his gospel, as he seeth him bent unto the obedience of faith; but he himself saith far otherwise, to wit, that he appeared plainly to those which sought him not, and that he spake to those who asked not of him. For whence cometh aptness to those to be taught, and a mind to obey, but from his Spirit? Therefore, it is certain that some are not preferred before other some by their merit, seeing that all men are naturally like backward and wayward from faith. Therefore, there is nothing better than to leave free power to God to vouchsafe and deprive of his grace whom he will. And surely as his eternal election is free, so his calling is also free which floweth

thence, and is not grounded in men, seeing that he is not indebted to any.

Wherefore, let us know that the gospel springeth and issueth out to us out of the sole fountain of mere grace. And yet God doth not want a just reason, why he offereth his gospel to some, and passeth over other some. But I say that that reason lieth hid in his secret counsel. In the mean season, let the faithful know that they were called freely when others were set aside, lest they take that to themselves which is due to the mercy of God alone. And in the rest, whom God rejecteth for no manifest cause, let them learn to wonder at the deep depth of his judgment, which they may not seek out. And here the word Asia is taken for that part which is properly so called. When Luke saith that Paul and his companions essayed to come into Bithynia until they were forbidden by oracles, save only when need required, as they Lord useth to be present with his in doleful [1025] and uncertain matters.

9. *A vision by night.* The Lord would not that Paul should stay any longer in Asia; because he would draw him into Macedonia. And Luke expresseth the manner of the drawing, that a man of Macedonia appeared to him by night. Where we must note that the Lord did not always observe the same manner of revelation, because divers kinds are more convenient for confirmation. And it is not said that this vision was offered in a dream, but only in the night season. For there be certain night visions which men see when they be awake.

Help us. This speech setteth forth the ministry committed to Paul. For, seeing that the gospel is the power of God to salvation, (Romans 1:16,) those which are the ministers of God are said to help those who perish; that having delivered them from death, they may bring them unto the inheritance of eternal life. And this ought to be no small encouragement for godly teachers to stir up the heat of their study and desire, when they hear that they call back miserable souls from destruction, and that they help those who should otherwise perish, that they may be saved. Again, all people unto whom the gospel is brought are taught reverently to embrace the ministers thereof as deliverers, unless they will maliciously reject the grace of God; and yet this commendation and title is not so translated unto men, that God is robbed even of the best part of his praise; because, though he by his ministers give salvation, yet is he the only author thereof, as if he reached out his hands to help.

10. *Being fully persuaded.* Hence we gather, that is was not bare vision, but that it was also confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit. For Satan doth oftentimes abuse ghosts and visures [masks] to deceive withal, that he may mock and cozen the unbelievers. Whereby it cometh to pass, that the bare vision leaveth man's mind in doubt; but such as are divine indeed, those doth the Spirit seal by a certain mark, that those may not doubt nor waver whom the Lord will have certainly addicted to himself. A wicked spirit appeared to Brutus, inviting him to enter that unhappy combat and battle

[1025] "Dubiis," doubtful.

which he had at Philippi, even in the very same place whereunto Paul was afterwards called. But as the cause was far unlike, so the Lord dealt far otherwise with his servant, so that he put him out of doubt, and left him not astonished with fear. Now, in Paul and his companions the desire to obey ensued immediately upon the certainty; for, so soon as they understand that the Lord called them, they address themselves to their journey. The termination of the participle which is here used is active; and though it have divers significations, I do not doubt but that Luke's meaning is, that Paul and the rest, after that they had conferred [compared] this vision with the former oracles, were fully persuaded that the Lord had called them into Macedonia.

Acts 16:11-15

Acts 16:11-15

11. Therefore, when we had loosed from Troas, we came with a straight course in Samothracia, and the day following to Neapolis; 12. And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of the parts of Macedonia, being a free city; and we stayed in the same city certain days. 13. And on the day of the Sabbaths we went out of the city beside a river, where was wont to be prayer; and sitting, we spake to the women which came together. 14. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purples, of the city of the Thyatirans, which worshipped God, heard; whose heart the Lord opened, that she might take heed to those things which were spoken of Paul. 15. And when she was baptized, and her house, she besought us, saying, If ye judge me faithful to the Lord, enter into my house and tarry. And she enforced us.

11. This history doth, as it were in a glass, show how sharply the Lord did exercise the faith and patience of his, by bringing them in great straits which they could not have overcome unless they had been endued with singular constancy; for the entrance of Paul into Macedonia is reported to be such, as that it might have cause him to give but small credence to the vision. These holy men, leaving the work which they had in hand, did cross the seas with great haste, as if the whole nation of the Macedonians would have come to meet them with earnest desire to be helped. Now, the success is so far from being answerable to their hope, that their mouths are almost quite stopped. When they enter the chief city, they find non there with whom they may take any pains; therefore they are enforced to go into the field, that they may speak in an obscure corner and wilderness. Yea, even there they cannot have one man which will hearken to their doctrine; they can only have one woman to be a disciple of Christ, and that one which was an alien. Who would not have said that this journey was taken in hand foolishly which fell out so unhappily? But the Lord doth thus bring to pass his works under a base and weak kind, [1026] that his power may shine more clearly at length;

[1026] "Specie," appearance.

and it was most meet that the beginnings of the kingdom of Christ should be so ordered, that they might taste [savor] of the humility of the cross. But we must mark the constancy of Paul and his companions, who being not dismayed with such unprosperous beginnings, try whether any occasion will offer itself contrary to their expectation. And assuredly the servants of Christ must wrestle with all lets, neither must they be discouraged, but go forward to-morrow, if this day there appear no fruit of their labor, for there is no cause why they should desire to be more happy than Paul. When Luke saith that they abode in that city, some had rather have it, that they conferred or disputed, but the other translation is more plain. And the text persuadeth us to make choice thereof, because Luke will shortly after declare that Lydia was the first-fruits of that Church; and we may easily guess that the apostles went out of the city, because there was no gate opened to them in it.

13. *In the day of the Sabbaths.* No doubt the Jews sought some place which was solitary and by the way, when they were disposed to pray, because their religion was then everywhere most odious. And God, by their example, meant to teach us what great account we ought to make of the profession of faith; that we do not forsake it either for fear of envy or of dangers. They had, indeed, in many places synagogues, but it was not lawful for them to assemble themselves publicly at Philippi, which was a free city of Rome. [1027] Therefore, they withdraw themselves into a secret corner, that they may pray to God where they could not be espied; and yet there were those who did grudge even at this, so that they might think that it might both cause trouble and danger, but they prefer the worship of God before their own quietness and commodity. Furthermore, we may gather by this word Sabbath, that Luke speaketh of the Jews. Secondly, forasmuch as he commendeth the godliness of Lydia, it must needs be that she was a Jewess, which matter needeth no long disputation, forasmuch as we know that it was an heinous offense for the Grecians and Romans to celebrate the Sabbath, or to take up Jewish rites. Now, we understand that the Jews made choice of the river's bank, but because they shunned the company of men, and the sight of the people. If any man object, why did not every man pray in his house privately? The answer is ready, that this was a solemn rite of praying, to testify godliness; and that being far [1028] from the superstitions of the Gentiles, they might one exhort another to worship God alone, and that they might nourish the religion received of the fathers among themselves. As touching Paul and his fellows who were lately come, [1029] it is to be thought that they came thither not only to pray, but also because they hope to do some good. For it was a fit place for them to teach in, being far from noise; and it was meet that they should be more attentive to hear the word who

[1027] "Colonia Romana," a Roman colony.
[1028] "Remoti," removed, at a distance from.
[1029] "Novi hospites," new guests.

came thither to pray. Luke putteth the day of the Sabbaths instead of the Sabbath; where, following Erasmus, I have translated it, *There was wont* to be prayer; the old interpreter hath, *did seem.* And the word [{νομιζεσθαι}] hath both significations among the Grecians. Yet this sense is more fit for this present place, that they did commonly use to have prayer there.

We spake to the women. Either that place was appointed for the assemblies of women, [1030] or else religion was cold among men, so that they came more slowly. Howsoever it be, we see that the holy men omit no occasion or opportunity, because they vouchsafed to offer the gospel even to women alone. Furthermore, forasmuch as it seemeth likely to me that men and women made their prayers there together, I suppose that Luke omitted the men either because they would not hear, or else because they profited nothing by hearing.

14. *A woman named Lydia.* If they had been heard of a few women, yet this had been to enter in, as it were, by a strait chink; but now whereas one only heareth attentively and with fruit, might it not have seemed that the way was stopt before Christ? [1031] But afterward there sprung a noble Church of that one small graft, which Paul setteth out with many excellent commendations; yet it may be that Lydia had some companions, whereof there is no mention made, because she did far excel them all. And Luke doth not assign that for the cause why this one woman did show herself apt to be taught, because she was more witty [1032] than the rest, or because she had some preparation of herself; but he saith that the Lord opened her heart that she might give ear and take heed to the speech of Paul. He had of late commended her godliness; and yet he showeth that she could not comprehend the doctrine of the gospel, save only through the illumination of the Spirit. Wherefore, we see that not faith alone, but all understanding and knowledge of spiritual things, is the peculiar gift of God, and that the ministers do no good by teaching and speaking unless the inward calling of God be thereunto added.

By the word heart, the Scripture meaneth sometimes the mind, as when Moses saith, "God hath not given thee hitherto a heart to understand." So likewise in this place, Luke doth not only signify unto us that Lydia was brought by the inspiration of the Spirit, with affection of heart to embrace the gospel, but that her mind was lightened, that she might understand it. By this let us learn that such is the blockishness, such is the blindness of men, that in seeing they see not, in hearing they hear not, until such time as God doth give them new eyes and new ears. But we must note the speech, that the heart of Lydia was opened that she might give ear to the external voice of the teacher. For as preaching alone is nothing else but the dead letter, so we must beware lest a false imagination, or a show of secret illumination,

[1030] "Tantum," only, omitted.
[1031] "Obstructos esse Christo ingressus," that the entrance of Christ was hindered.
[1032] "Acutiori ingenio," of acutor intellect.

lead us away from the word whereupon faith dependeth, and wherein it resteth. For many, to the end they may amplify the grace of the Spirit, feign to themselves certain inspired persons, [1033] that they may leave no use of the external word. But the Scripture doth not suffer any such divorce to be made which joineth the ministry of men with the secret inspiration of the Spirit. Unless the mind of Lydia had been opened, Paul's preaching should have been only literal; [1034] and yet the Lord doth not inspire her with bare revelations only, but he giveth her the reverence of his word, so that the voice of man, which might otherwise have been uttered in vain, doth pierce into a mind endued with heavenly light.

Therefore, let those brain-sick fellows be packing, [begone,] who, under color [pretext] of the Spirit, refuse external doctrine. For we must note the temperature of moderation which Luke setteth down here, that we can have or obtain nothing by the hearing of the word alone, without the grace of the Spirit; and that the Spirit is given us, not that he may bring contempt of the word, but rather that he may dip [instill] into our minds, and write in our hearts the faith thereof.

Now, if the cause be demanded why the Lord opened one woman's heart alone, we must return unto that principle, that so many believe as we are ordained [1035] to life. For the fear of God, which went before the plain and manifest knowledge of Christ in Lydia, was also a fruit of free election. The describers of situations of places [1036] say, that Thyratira is a city of Lydia situate upon the side of the river called Hermus, and that it was sometimes called Pelopia; but some there be who attribute it to Phrygia, some to Mysia.

15. *When she was baptized.* Hereby it appeareth how effectually God wrought in Lydia even in a short moment. For it is not to be doubted but that she received and embraced the faith of Christ sincerely, and gave him her name, before Paul would admit her unto baptism. This was a token of mere readiness; also, her holy zeal and godliness do therein show themselves, in that she doth also consecrate her family to God. And, surely, all the godly ought to have this desire, to have those who are under them to be partakers of the same faith. For he is unworthy to be numbered among the children of God, and to be a ruler over others, whosoever is desirous to reign and rule in his own house over his wife, children, servants, and maids, and will cause them to give no place to Christ. Therefore, let every one of the faithful study to govern and order his house so, that it may be an image of the Church. I grant that Lydia had not in her hand the hearts of all those which were of her household, that she might turn unto Christ whomsoever she would; [1037] but the Lord did bless her godly desire, so that she had her household obedient. The godly (as we have already said) must endeavor, with might and main, to

[1033] "[{Ενθουσιασμους}]," inspirations.
[1034] "Literalis," literal, (gone no farther than the letter.)
[1035] "Praeordinati," preordained.
[1036] "Geographi," geographers.
[1037] "Suo arbitrio," at her own will.

drive from their houses all manner of superstition; secondly, that they have not profane families, but that they keep them under the fear of the Lord. So Abraham, the father of the faithful, was commanded to circumcise all his servants with him; and he is commanded for the care he had to govern his house, and to instruct his family. Furthermore, if this duty be required at the hands of the householder, much more of a prince, that he suffer not so much as in him lieth the name of God to be profaned in his realm.

She besought them, saying. This hath the force of an adjuration, when she saith, if ye have judged me faithful; as if she should say, I beseech you by that faith which you have approved by baptism, that ye refuse not to lodge with me; and Lydia did by such an earnest desire testify how entirely she loved the gospel. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted but that the Lord gave her such an affection, to the end Paul might be the more encouraged to proceed, not only because he saw that he was liberally and courteously entertained, but also because he might thereby judge of the fruit of his doctrine. Therefore, this was not the woman's inviting only, but also God's to keep Paul and his company there, to which end that tendeth also that Lydia enforced them, as if God did lay hand upon them, and stay them in the woman's person.

Acts 16:16-22

Acts 16:16-22

16. And it happened, as we went to prayer, a certain maid, having a spirit of divination, did meet us, which brought her masters much gain by divining. 17. She followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which preach to us the way of salvation. 18. And this she did many days. And Paul, taking it grievously, and turning back, said to the spirit, I command thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that thou come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, having taken Paul and Silas, they drew them into the market-place to the rulers. 20. And when they had presented them to the magistrates, they said, These men trouble our city, seeing they be Jews: 21. And they preach ordinances, which we may not receive nor keep, seeing we are Romans. 22. And the multitude came together against them; and when the magistrates had rent their garments, they commanded them to be beaten with rods.

16. Luke prosecuteth the increase of the Church; for though he do not straightway in a word express that thing, yet is it easily gathered out of the text, that many were brought into the faith, or at least that the Church was somewhat augmented, and Paul did not frequent the assemblies in time of prayer in vain. Notwithstanding, Luke doth also report that Satan did interrupt this course; to wit, because after that the apostles were beaten with rods, and cast in [into] prison, they were at length enforced to depart the city; yet we shall see in the end of this chapter, that when Satan had

done his worst, there was some body of the Church gathered before they did depart.

Having a spirit of divination, (or of Python.) The poets do feign that the serpent called Python was slain with the dart of Phoebus; hereupon rose another invention; [1038] that they said, that those who were possessed were inspired with the spirit of Python, and, peradventure, they were thereupon called Phoebades, in honor of Apollo. But Luke followeth the common custom of speaking, because he showeth the error of the common people, and not through what inspiration the maid did prophesy. For it is certain that the devil did deceive men under the visor of Apollo, as all idolatry and subtilty was invented and forged in his shop. But some men may marvel that the devil (through whose motion and persuasion the maid did cry) was the author of such an honorable commendation, wherewith she adorned Paul and Silas, and the rest. For, seeing that he is the father of lying, how could the truth proceed from him? Secondly, how is it that he gave place willingly to the servants of Christ, by whom his kingdom was destroyed? how can this hang together, that he prepared the minds of the people to hear the gospel, whose mortal enemy he is? Assuredly, there is nothing more proper to him than to turn away the minds of the people from the word of the gospel, which he doth now will and wish them to hear.

Whence cometh such a sudden change, or unwonted emotion? But the devil is the father of lying in such sort, that he covereth himself under the ale and deceivable color of truth. There he played another person through his crafty subtilty, than was agreeable to his nature; [1039] that by creeping in craftily he might do the more hurt; and, therefore, whereas he is called the father of lies, we must not so take it as if he did always lie manifestly and without any color. Yea, rather we must beware of his crafty subtilty, lest when he pretendeth the color of truth he deceive us under a vain show. We see, also, how he useth like subtilty daily. For what can bear a fairer show than the Pope's titles, wherein he doth not boast himself to be the adversary of Christ, but he doth not boast himself to be the adversary of Christ, but his vicar? What can be more plausible than that solemn preface, In the name of the Lord, Amen? Notwithstanding we know, that whilst the hypocritical ministers of Satan do thus pretend the truth, they corrupt it, and, with a deadly corruption, infect it. Seeing that Satan hath a double way to resist the gospel, to wit, because he doth sometimes rage openly, and sometimes he creepeth in craftily under lies, he hath also two kinds of lying and deceiving, either when he overthroweth the Word of God with false doctrines and gross superstitions, or else when he doth craftily feign that he is a friend of the Word, and so doth insinuate himself subtilely; [1040] yea, he doth never hurt more deadly than when he transformeth himself into an angel of light. Now,

[1038] "Figmento," fiction.

[1039] "Egit igitur callido artificio aliam personam quam ferret ejus natura," there with cunning artifice he played a character different from that which naturally belonged to him.

[1040] "Quasi per cuniculos obrepit," creeps in as if by burrowing.

we perceive to what end that so gorgeous a title did tend, wherewith he did extol Paul and his companions, namely, because it was not so convenient for him to make open war against the gospel, he went about to overthrow the credit thereof by secret shifts. For if Paul had admitted that testimony, there should have been no longer any difference between the wholesome [1041] doctrine of Christ and the mocks of Satan. The light and brightness of the gospel should have been entangled in the darkness of lying, and so quite put out.

But the question is, why God doth grant Satan so great liberty, as to suffer him to deceive miserable men, and to bewitch them with true divinations? For, omitting the disputations which some men move concerning his foresight, I take this for a plain case, that he doth prophesy and foretell things to come, and which are hidden only through God's sufferance. But God seemeth by this means to lay open men who are reckless or careless to his subtilty, so that they cannot beware. For seeing that prophecies breathe out divine power, men's minds must needs be touched with reverence so often as they come abroad, unless they contemn God. I answer, that Satan hath never so much liberty granted him of God, save only that the unthankful world may be punished, which is so desirous of a lie, that it had rather be deceived than obey the truth. For that is a general evil, whereof Paul complaineth in the first chapter to the Romans,(Romans 1:21,) That men do not glorify God, being known naturally by the creation of the world, and that they suppress his truth unjustly.

It is a just reward for so great unthankfulness, that Satan hath the bridle given him, that through divers jugglings he may work the ruin of those who turn away maliciously from the light of God. Therefore, so often as you read the divinations of Satan, think upon the just judgment of God. Now, if God so sharply punish the contempt of his light in the profane Gentiles, who have no other teachers but the heaven and earth, how much more sharp punishment do those deserve who wittingly and willingly choke the pure doctrine of salvation, revealed to them in the law and the gospel? No marvel, therefore, if Satan have long bewitched the world so freely with his subtilty, since that the truth of the gospel hath been wickedly contemned, which was made most manifest. But it is objected again, that no man is free from danger when false divinations fly to and fro so fast. For even as well the good as the evil seem to be subject to the cozenage of Satan when the truth is darkened and overcast. The answer is ready, though Satan set snares for all men in general, yet are the godly delivered by the grace of God, lest they be caught together with the wicked. There is also a more manifest distinction set down in the Scripture, because the Lord doth by this means try the faith and godliness of his, and doth make blind the reprobate, that they may perish as they be worthy. Therefore Paul saith plainly, that Satan hath not leave granted him to lead any into error save those who will not

[1041] "Salvificam," saving.

obey God and embrace the truth, (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12.)

Whereby is also reproved their wicked ungodliness, who, under this color, excuse the profane contempt of all doctrine; whither shall we turn ourselves, (say they,) seeing that Satan is so expert to deceive? Therefore, it is better for us to live without any religion at all, than, through the desire of religion, to run headlong into destruction. Neither do they object and pretend this fear for their excuse in earnest; but, seeing they desire nothing more than to wander carelessly, like beasts, without any fear of God, they can be content with any excuse, so they be not tied to any religion. I confess, indeed, that Satan doth no less craftily than wickedly abuse the sacred name of God; and that that proverb is too true which Papistry hath brought forth, that, the Lord doth pronounce that he will be the teacher of the humble, and hath promised that he will be nigh to those which are right in heart; seeing that Paul teacheth that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit; seeing that he doth testify that those who are well-grounded in the faith of the gospel are not in danger to be seduced by man; seeing that Peter calleth the Scripture a light shining in a dark place; seeing that courteous exhortation, or inviting of Christ, can never deceive us, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you;" let Satan do what he can, and let the false prophets seek to darken the truth so much as they are able, we need not be afraid lest the Spirit of wisdom and discretion [discernment] forsake us, who ruleth [1042] Satan at his pleasure, and maketh us triumph over him by the faith of his word.

18. *Paul took it grievously.* It may be that at the first Paul neglected, and did not greatly regard the crying of the maid, because he hoped that there would be no account made thereof, and had rather that it should vanish away of itself. But the continual repetition doth at length make him weary; because, if he had any long dissembled, Satan would have waxed more and more insolent through his silence and patience. Secondly, he ought not to have broken out into this prohibition rashly, until he knew for a certainty that he was furnished with the power of God. For Paul's commandment [1043] had been foolish and vain without the commandment of God. And this must be noted, lest any man condemn Paul of too great hastiness, because he encountered so valiantly with the unclean spirit. For he did not conceive any grief or indignation, save only that he saw that the stability of Satan would increase, unless he did betimes prevent it; neither did he attempt any thing without the motion of the Spirit; neither did he enter the conflict until he was armed with power from heaven. Notwithstanding, he seemeth to be contrary to himself, seeing that he saith elsewhere that he rejoiceth upon what occasion soever he see the gospel preached, (Philippians 1:18,) even by wicked men, and such as did study of set purpose to bring him in contempt.

[1042] "Compescit," quelleth.

[1043] "Impreccatio," impreccation, anathema.

I answer, that he had another more apt reason for himself in this place; [1044] because all men would have thought that the spirit of the maid had played with Paul; [1045] so that by that means the doctrine of the gospel should not only have come in [into] suspicion, but should also have come into great contempt. [1046] And to this end was it that Christ also did command the devil to hold his peace, (Mark 1:25,) whereas notwithstanding he suffered his name to be extolled by unmeet and unworthy men, (Luke 4:35.)

I command thee. We must note the form of speech; for as the miracle was about to have a double use, namely, that the power of Christ might be known; secondly, that he might declare that he had no fellowship with Satan's jugglings; so Paul, in giving the authority and power to Christ alone, doth declare that he is only a minister; that done, he doth openly set Christ against the devil, [1047] to the end that, by the conflict, all men may see that they be deadly enemies. For it was profitable that many should be awaked who had been given to such gross seducing, that being well purged, they might come to the true faith.

19. *But when her masters.* The same devil who of late did flatter Paul by the mouth of the maid, doth now drive her masters into fury, that they may put him to death; so that, having changed his coat, he doth now play a tragedy, who could not speed well before by his fair speech and flattery. And though the heat of zeal wherewith Paul was provoked to anger did raise the whirlwind of persecution, yet is he not therefore to be blamed; neither did it any whit repent Paul that he had wrought the miracle, so that he did wish that were undone which was done, because he knew full well through what motion he had driven the devil out of the maid. Whereby we are taught that we must not rashly condemn things which are well done, and that which is taken in hand at the commandment of God, though an unhappy success follow; because God doth then examine [test] the constancy of those which be his, until a more joyful and prosperous end drive away all sorrow. As touching the men, Luke expresseth the cause why they were so mad upon Paul; to wit, because their hope of filthy gain was gone. But though they were pricked forward with covetousness only to persecute the Gospel and the ministers thereof; yet they pretend a fair color, that it grieveth them that the public state should be perverted, that their ancient laws should be broken, and peace troubled. So, though the enemies of Christ behave themselves wickedly and unhonestly, yet they always invent some cause for their sin. Yea, though their wicked desire appear plainly, yet, with an impudent withal. So at this day those Papists which are more zealous over their law, [1048] have nothing else in their minds besides their gain and government. Let them

[1044] "Hic diversam rationem," that here there was a different reason.

[1045] "Colludere puellae daemonum cum Paulo," that the demon of the damsel was in collision with Paul.

[1046] "Sed recidisset in merum ludibrium," but became a mere laughing-stock.

[1047] "Opponit Christum daemoni," he opposes Christ to the demon.

[1048] "Acerrimi zelotae legis suae," the fiercest zealots for their law.

swear and forswear by all their saints and sacrifices, that they are enforced only with a godly affection; yet the matter itself doth plainly show, that it is the coldness of their kitchens which maketh their zeal so hot, and that ambition is the fan [1049] thereof. For they be either hungry dogs pricked forward with greediness, or furious lions breathing out nothing but cruelty.

20. *These men trouble our city.* This accusation was craftily composed to burden the servants of Christ. For on the one side they pretend the name of the Romans, than which nothing was more favorable; on the other, they purchase hatred, and bring them in contempt, by naming the Jews, which name was at that time infamous; for, as touching religion, the Romans were more like to any than to the Jewish nation. For it was lawful for a man which was a Roman to do sacrifice either in Asia or in Grecia, or in any other country where were idols and superstitions. I warrant you Satan did agree with himself very well, though he put on divers shapes, but that which was religion only, than which there was no other in the world, was counted among the Romans detestable. They frame a third accusation out of the crime of sedition; [1050] for they pretend that the public peace is troubled by Paul and his company. In like sort was Christ brought in contempt, [1051] (Luke 23:5) and even at this day the Papists have no more plausible thing wherewith they may bring us to be hated, than when they cry that our doctrine tendeth to no other end but to confusion of all things. But we must valiantly contemn this filthy and false infamy as did Christ and Paul, until the Lord bring to light the malice of our enemies, and refute their impudence.

21. *Ordinances which.* They lean to a prejudice, lest the cause should come to be disputed; as the Papists deal with us at this day, this was decreed in a General Council; it is a more ancient and common opinion, than that is may be called in question; custom hath long time approved this; this hath been established by consent more than a thousand years ago. But to what end tend all these things, save only that they may rob the Word of God of all authority? They make boast of man's decrees, but in the mean season they leave no place at all for the laws of God. We may see only this place what force these prejudices ought to have. The laws of the Romans were excellent, but religion doth depend upon the Word of God alone. Therefore in this matter we must take great heed, that men being brough under, the authority of God alone do prevail, and that he make all things which in the world are excellent subject to him.

22. *The multitude came together.* When Luke declareth that there was great encourses of the people made, after that a few men of no reputation, to wit, such as did juggle and cozen to get gain, and whose filthiness was well known, had made some stir; he reacheth with what fury the world rageth against Christ. Foolishness and inconstancy are indeed common vices among

[1049] "Flabellum," bellows.

[1050] "Tertiam calumniam ex crimine seditionis concinnant," they concoct a third calamny out of the charge of sedition.

[1051] "Odiose traductus fuit," was hatefully traduced.

all people, and almost continual, but the wonderful force of Satan doth therein betray itself, in that those who are in other matters modest and quiet, are for a matter of no importance in a heat, [1052] and became companions of most vile persons, when the truth must be resisted. There was never a whit more modesty to be found in the judges themselves, if we consider what was their duty. For they ought, by their gravity, to have appeased the fury of the people, and to have set themselves stoutly against their violence, they ought to have aided and defended the guiltless; but they lay hands on them outrageously, and renting their garments, they command them to be stripped naked and whipt before they know the matter. Surely the malice of men is to be lamented; [1053] whereby it came to pass, that almost all the judgment-seats of the world, which ought to have been sanctuaries of justice, have been polluted with the wicked and sacrilegious oppugning of the gospel.

Notwithstanding, the question is, why they were cast in prison, seeing that they were already punished, for the prison was ordained for the keeping of men? They used this kind of correction, until they might know more; and so we see the servants of Christ more sharply handled than adulterers, robbers, and other most vile persons. [1054] Whereby appeareth more plainly that force of Satan in stirring up the minds of men, that they observe no show of judgment in persecuting the gospel. But though the godly be more hardly handled for defending the truth of Christ, than are the wicked for their wickedness; yet it goeth well with the godly, because they triumph gloriously before God and his angels in all injuries which they suffer. They suffer reproach and slander; but because they know that the marks of Christ are in greater price and more esteemed in heaven than the vain pomps of the earth, the more wickedly and reproachfully the world doth vex them, the greater cause have they to rejoice. For if profane writers did so honor Themistocles, that they preferred his prison before the seat and court of judges; how much more honorably must we think of the Son of God, whose cause is in hand so often as the faithful suffer persecution for the gospel? Therefore, though the Lord suffered Paul and Silas to be scourged and imprisoned by the wicked judges, yet he did not suffer them to be put to any shame, but that which turned to their greater renown. For seeing that those persecutions, which we must suffer for the testimony of the gospel, are remnants of the sufferings of Christ; like as our Prince turned the cross, which was accursed, into a triumphant [triumphal] chariot, so he shall, in like sort, adorn the prisons and gibbets of his, that they may there triumph over Satan and all the wicked.

Renting their garments. Because the old interpreter had truly translated this, it was evil done of Erasmus to change it, that the magistrates did rent their own garments. For this was Luke's meaning only, that the holy men

[1052] "Repente effervent," suddenly effervesce, break out.
[1053] "Deploranda," desperate, deplorable.
[1054] "Et alios quosvis sceleratos," and villains of any description.

were outrageously [1055] beaten, the lawful order of judgment being neglected, and that they laid hands on them with such violence that their garments were rent. And this had been too far disagreeing with the custom of Romans, for the judges to cut [rend] their own garments publicly in the market-place; especially seeing the question was concerning an unknown religion, for which they did not greatly care; but I will not long stand about a plain matter.

Acts 16:23-28

Acts 16:23-28

23. And when they had given them many stripes, they did cast them into prison, commanding the keeper of the prison to keep them safe; 24. Who, seeing he had received such commandments, did put them in the inner prison, and made fast their feet in the stocks. 25. And at midnight Paul and Silas praying, did praise God; and those which lay bound heard them. 26. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and by and by all the doors were opened, and all their hands [chains] were loosed. 27. And when the keeper of the prison awaked, and saw all the prison doors open, drawing out his sword, he was about to slay himself, thinking that those which lay bound were fled. 28. And Paul cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm: for we be all here.

23. *That he should keep them safe.* Whereas the magistrates command that Paul and Silas should be kept so diligently, it was done to this end, that they might know more of the matter. For they had already beaten them with rods to appease the tumult. And this is that which I said of late, that the world doth rage with such blind fury against the ministers of the gospel, that it doth keep no mean in severity. But as it is very profitable for us, for example's sake, to know how uncourteously and uncomely the witnesses of Christ were entertained in times past; so it is no less profitable to know that which Luke addeth immediately concerning their fortitude and patience. For even when they lay bound with fetters, he saith that in prayer they lauded God, whereby it appeareth that neither the reproach with they suffered, nor the stripes which made their flesh smarter, nor the stink of the deep dungeon, nor the danger of death, which was hard at hand, could hinder them from giving thanks to the Lord joyfully and with glad hearts.

We must note this general rule, that we cannot pray as we ought, but we must also praise God. For though the desire to pray arise of the feeling of our want and miseries, and therefore it is, for the most part, joined with sorrow and carefulness; [1056] yet the faithful must so bridle their affections, that they murmur not against God; so that the right form of prayer doth join two affections together, (to look too contrary,) [viz.] carefulness and sorrow, by reason of the present necessity which doth keep us down, and joyfulness, by

[1055] "Tumultuose," tumultuously.
[1056] "Anxietate animi," anxiety of mind.

reason of the obedience whereby we submit ourselve to God, and by reason of the hope which, showing us the haven high at hand, doth refresh us even in the midst of shipwreck. Such a form doth Paul prescribe to us. Let your prayers (saith he) be made known to God with thanksgiving, (Philippians 4:6.) But in this history we must note the circumstances. For though the pain of the stripes were grievous, though the prison were troublesome, though the danger were great, seeing that Paul and Silas cease not to praise God, we gather by this how greatly they were encouraged to bear the cross. So Luke reported before that the apostles rejoiced, because they were counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of the Lord, (Acts 5:41.)

And those which lay bound. We must know that Paul and Silas prayed aloud, that they might make the boldness of a good conscience known to others who were shut up in the same prison; for they might have made their prayer with secret groaning and sighing of heart as they were wont, or they might have prayed unto the Lord quietly and softly. Why do they then exalt their voice? Assuredly, they do not that for any ambition; but that they may profess, that, trusting to the goodness of their cause, they fly without fear unto God. Therefore, in their prayers was included a confession of faith, which did appertain unto a common example, and prepared as well the malefactor's as the jailer's house to consider the miracle.

26. *There was an earthquake.* The Lord, in showing this visible sign, meant chiefly to provide for his servants, that they might more manifestly know that the prayers were heard; yet he had respect also of the rest. He could have loosed the fetters of Paul and Silas without an earthquake, and also have opened the gates. But that addition served not a little to confirm them, seeing that the Lord, for their sakes, did shake both the air and also the earth. Again, it was requisite that the keeper of the prison and the rest should feel the presence of God, lest they should think that the miracle came by chance. Neither is it to be doubted, but that the Lord did then show a token of his power, which should be profitable for all ages; so that the faithful may fully assure themselves that he will be nigh unto them so often as they are to enter [1057] combats and dangers for the defense of the gospel. Nevertheless, he doth neither always keep the same course, to testify his presence by manifest signs; neither is it lawful for us to prescribe him a law. For he did help his by manifest miracles then for this cause, that we may be content with his hidden grace at this day; concerning which matter we have spoken more upon the second chapter.

27. *When the keeper of the prison was awaked.* He would have slain himself that he might prevent punishment; for it had been a foolish answer to have said that the doors were opened of their own accord. But this question may be asked, Seeing that Paul seeth that they might have some hope to escape if he should slay himself, why doth he hinder him? for he seemeth by this means to refuse the deliverance which was offered by God;

[1057] "Subeunda," undergo.

yea, it seemeth to have been a mere toy, [1058] in that the Lord would have the jailer awaked, lest there should be any use [1059] of the miracle. I answer, that we must in this place have respect unto his counsel and purpose. For he did not loose Paul and Silas, and the rest, from their fetters, neither did he, therefore, open the doors, that he might straightway let them go free; but that, by showing the power of his hand, he might seal up the faith of Paul and Silas, and might make the name of Christ glorious among others. Therefore, he doth so yield to the petitions of Paul and Silas, that he showeth that he is able enough to deliver them so often as he shall think it good; and that nothing can hinder him, but that he is able to enter not only into prisons, but also into graves, that he may deliver those that be his. [1060] He opened the gates of the prison to Peter to another end, as we saw in chapter twelve. But now, forasmuch as he had another way in readiness to deliver Paul and Silas, he meant not so much to deliver them for the present time by miracle, as to confirm them against the time to come. Again, we must call that to mind which I said of late, that the opening of the prison appertained unto others, that it might be known to many witnesses that God did favor the doctrine, which was now burthened with an unjust prejudice. Undoubtedly, Paul perceived this; and therefore, though his hands were loosed, he did not once wag from his place. [1061] He might have gone away, if he had been so disposed. Why doth he not? Was it because he contemned the grace of God? or because, through his slothfulness, he will make the miracle frustrate? None of all these is probable; whence we gather that he was holden by God, as the Lord useth to direct the minds of those which be his in doubtful matters, that they may follow sometimes ignorantly, sometimes wittingly, that which is expedient to be done, and not pass their bounds.

Acts 16:29-34

Acts 16:29-34

29. And calling for a light he sprang in, and, trembling, he fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas. 30. And when he had brought them forth, he saith, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31. And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy household. 32. And they spake to him the word, and to all that were in his house. 33. And taking them at the same hour of the night, he washed their stripes; and was himself baptized, and all his household, forthwith. 34. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them; and he rejoiced that he and all his whole house believed in God.

29. *Being astonished, he fell down.* This keeper was no less brought under with fear to show obedience to God than with the miracle prepared.

[1058] "Merum…ludicrum," a mere absurdity.
[1059] "Ne quis esset usus," that there might be no use.
[1060] "A morte," from death.
[1061] "Pedem loco non movit," he did not stir a foot from the place.

[1062] Hereby it appeareth what a good thing it is for men to be thrown down from their pride, that they may learn to submit themselves to God. He was hardened in his superstitions; therefore, he might with a lofty stomach [1063] have despised whatsoever Paul and Silas should have said, whom he had reproachfully [1064] thrust into the innermost part of the prison. Now, fear maketh him apt to be taught and gentle. Therefore, so often as the Lord shall strike us or cast us down, [1065] let us know that this is done that we may be brought in [to] order from our too much haughtiness.

But it is a wonder that he was not reproved for falling down at their feet. For why did Paul wink at that which (as Luke recordeth) Peter would not suffer in Cornelius? (Acts 10:26.) I answer, that Paul doth therefore bear with the keeper, because he knoweth that he was not moved with superstition, but with fear of God's judgment so to humble himself. It was a kind of worship common enough; but chiefly among the Romans it was a solemn thing when they would humbly crave any thing, or crave pardon, they fell down at their knees to whom they put their supplication. Therefore, there was no cause why Paul should be displeased with a man whom he saw simply humbled of God. For if there had been any thing committed contrary to the glory of God, he had not forgotten that zeal which he showed before among the men of Lycaonia. Therefore, by his silence, we gather that in this kind of worship there was nothing contrary to godliness or the glory of God.

30. *Sirs, what must I do?* He doth so ask counsel, that he showeth therewith that he will be obedient. By this we see that he was thoroughly [1066] touched, so that he was ready to do what they should command him, whom not many hours before he had bound uncourteously. The wicked oftentimes when they see wonders, though they tremble for a time, yet are they straightway made more obstinate, as it befell Pharaoh, (Exodus 8:8, 32;) at least they are not so tamed that they give over themselves to God. But in this place the keeper (acknowledging the power of God) was not only a little afraid, so that he returned straightway unto his former cruelty, but he showeth himself obedient to God, and desirous of sound and wholesome doctrine. He demandeth how he may obtain salvation; whereby it appeareth more plainly that he was not suddenly taken with some light [1067] fear of God only, but truly humbled to offer himself to be a scholar to his ministers. He knew that they were cast in prison for no other cause, save only because they did overthrow the common estate of religion. Now he is ready to hear their doctrine which he had before contemned.

31. *Believe in the Lord Jesus.* This is but a short, and, to look to, a cold and hungry definition of salvation, and yet it is perfect to believe in Christ.

[1062] "Quam miraculo praeparatus," than prepared by the miracle.
[1063] "Sprevisset igitur alto animo," hence he might have shown high contempt for.
[1064] "Probrose," disgracefully.
[1065] "Aliqua consternatione tanget," or throw us into consternation.
[1066] "Serio," seriously.
[1067] "Evanido," evanescent.

For Christ alone hath all the parts of blessedness and eternal life included in him, which he offereth to us by the gospel; and by faith we receive them, as I have declared, (Acts 15:9.) And here we must note two things; first, that Christ is the mark [1068] whereat faith must aim; and, therefore, men's minds do nothing else but wander when they turn aside from him. Therefore, no marvel if all the divinity of Popery be nothing else but an huge lump [1069] and horrible labyrinth; because, neglecting Christ, they flatter themselves in vain and frivolous speculations. Secondly, we must note, that after we have embraced Christ by faith, that alone is sufficient to salvation. But the latter member, which Luke addeth by and by, doth better express the nature of faith, Paul and Silas command the keeper of the prison to believe in the Son of God. Do they precisely stay in this voice [word] only? Yea, it followeth in Luke, in the text, [context,] that they preached the word of the Lord. Therefore, we see how the faith is not a light or dry opinion concerning unknown things, but a plain and distinct knowledge of Christ conceived out of the gospel. Again, if the preaching of the gospel be absent, there shall no faith remain any longer. To conclude, Luke coupleth faith with preaching and doctrine; and after that he hath briefly spoke of faith, he doth, by way of exposition, show the true and lawful way of believing. Therefore, instead of that invention of entangled faith, whereof the Papists babble, let us hold faith unfolded in the word of God, that it may unfold to us the power of Christ.

33. *He was baptized, and all his household.* Luke doth again commend the godly zeal of the keeper, that he did consecrate all his whole house to the Lord; wherein doth also appear the grace of God, in that he brought all his whole family unto a godly consent. And we must also note the notable exchange: he was of late about to murder himself, because he thought that Paul and the rest were escaped; but now laying aside all fear, he bringeth them home. [1070] So that we see how faith doth animate and encourage those to behave themselves stoutly who before had no heart. And surely, when we droop [1071] through fear and doubtfulness, there is no better matter of boldness than to be able to cast all our cares into God's bosom; that no danger may terrify us from doing our duty, whilst that we look for an end at God's hand, such as he shall see to be most profitable.

34. *He rejoiceth that he believed.* The external profession of faith was before commended in the jailer; now the inward fruit thereof is described. When he did lodge the apostles, [1072] and was not afraid of punishment, but did courteously entertain them in his own house, otherwise than he was enjoined by the magistrate, he did testify that his faith was not idle. And that joy whereof Luke speaketh in this place is a singular good thing,

[1068] "Unicum scopum," the only mark.
[1069] "Immane chaos," immense chaos.
[1070] "Sponte," of his own accord.
[1071] "Torpeamus," become torpid.
[1072] "Hospitaliter," hospitably.

which every man hath from his faith. There is no great torment than an evil conscience; for the unbelievers, though the seek by all means to bring themselves into a certain amazedness, yet because they have no peace with God, they must needs quake and tremble. But admit they perceive not their present torments, yea, they rage and play the madmen through mad and unbridled licentiousness; yet are they never quiet, neither do they enjoy quiet joy. [1073] Therefore, sincere and quiet stable joy proceedeth from faith alone, when we perceive that God is merciful to us. In this respect, Zacharias saith, "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Sion, behold, they King cometh." Yea, this effect is everywhere in the Scripture attributed to faith, that it maketh the souls joyful. Therefore, let us know that faith is not a vain or dead imagination, but a lively sealing [sense] of the grace of God, which bringeth perfect joy by reason of the certainty of salvation, whereof it is meet that the wicked be void, who do both fly from the God of peace, and disturb all righteousness.

Acts 16:35-40

Acts 16:35-40

35. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the apparitors, [officers,] saying, Let those men go. 36. And the keeper of the prison told these words to Paul, The magistrates have sent to loose you: now therefore going out, depart in peace. 37. And Paul said to them, After that they have beaten us openly, before our cause was known, seeing that we be Romans, they have cast us into prison; and now they cast us out privily? No, surely; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38. And the apparitors [officers] told these words to the magistrates; who feared, after that they heard that they were Romans. 39. And they came and besought them; and when they had brought them out, they requested that they would depart out of the city. 40. And coming out of the prison, they entered in unto Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

35. *When it was day.* The question is, how it came to pass that the judges did so suddenly change their purpose? The day before they had commanded that Paul and Silas should be bound with fetters, as if they meant to punish them cruelly, now they let them go free. At least, if they had heard them, it might have been that the knowledge of the cause had brought them to be more gentle and better minded. [1074] But it appeareth that, forasmuch as the matter stood as yet still in one state, they were brought into repentance of their own accord. I answer, that there is no other thing here set down but that which falleth out most commonly when sedition is once raised. For not only the minds of the common people begin to rage, but also the tempest carrieth away the governors also, no doubt perversely. For we know that of

[1073] "Nec sereno gaudio potiuntur," nor do they obtain serene joy.

[1074] "Ad mansuetudinem et sanam mentem," to mildness and a sound mind.

Virgil, —

"And as amidst a mighty rout, when discord oft is bred, And baser froward-minded men with furious rage are led; Forthwith flies fire, and stones are flung, madness doth tools supply, Then if on the sudden they do any one espy Whom love to commonwealth and just deserts have reverent made, They hush, and eke attentive stand, to hear what will be said: He governs both their will and rage, With words their wrath he doth assuage."

Therefore, there can be nothing more unseemly than what in a hot tumult the judges should be set on fire [along] with the people; but it falleth out so for the most part. Therefore, when those officers saw the people up, they thought there was cause enough why they should beat the apostles with rods. But now they are caused with shame and infamy to suffer punishment for their lightness, [levity.] Peradventure also, when they inquire of the beginning of the tumult, they find those who had deceived the people [1075] in the fault. Therefore, when they had found out that Paul and Silas were innocent, they let them go, though too late. By which example, those which bear rule are taught to beware of too much haste. Again, we see how carelessly magistrates flatter [1076] themselves in their own offenses, which they know full well they have committed, especially when they have to do with unknown and base persons. When these men grant free liberty to Paul and Silas to depart, they are not ignorant that they had before done them injury; yet they think it will be sufficient if they do not continue to do them injury still, and to be more cruel upon them. [1077] The apparitors [officers] are called [{ραβδουχοι}], of the staves which they did bear; whereas the ensigns of the sergeants [lictors] were hatches bound with rods.

After that they have beaten us openly. Their defense consisteth upon [of] two points, that they raged against, and cruelly intreated, the body of a man that was a Roman; secondly, that they did that contrary to the order of law. We shall see afterwards that Paul was a citizen of Rome. But it was straitly provided by Portius' law, by the laws of Sempronius, and also by many more, that no man should have power of life or death over any citizen of Rome but the people. Notwithstanding, it may seem to be a strange thing that Paul did not maintain [assert] his right before he was beaten with rods; for the judges might honestly excuse themselves by his silence; but it is to be thought that he was not heard in the midst of the tumult. If any man object that he doth now seek remedy too late, and out of season, yea, that he doth catch at a vain and foolish comfort, [1078] when he requireth that the magistrates come themselves, we may readily answer, Paul was like to fare never a whit the better therefore; but we must mark that he meant nothing less than to provide for his own private commodity; but that he might ease

[1075] "Circulatores," the circulators (of the charge.)
[1076] "Condonent." forgive.
[1077] "Si non pergant usque in illos esse injusti et crudeles," if they do not persist to the last in injustice and cruelty towards them.
[1078] "Solatium," solace, compensation.

the brethren somewhat afterward, [1079] that the magistrates might not be so bold as to rage so freely against the good and innocent brethren. Because he had gotten their heads under his girdle, [1080] he translated his right to help the brethren, that they might be borne with. This was the cause for which he did chide them. And so Paul did wisely use the opportunity offered him; as we must neglect nothing which may take for the bridling of the enemies, that they take not to themselves so much liberty to oppress or vex the innocent, forasmuch as the Lord bringeth to our hands such helps not in vain. Notwithstanding, let us remember that if we have been injured in anything, we must not repay injuries, but we must only endeavor to stay their lust, lest they hurt others in like sort.

38. *They were afraid, because they were Romans.* They are not once moved with the other point, because they had handled innocents cruelly without discretion; [1081] and yet that was the greater reproach. But because they did not fear that any man would punish them, they were not moved with God's judgment. This is the cause that they do carelessly pass over that which was objected concerning injury done by them, only they are afraid of the officers [1082] of the Romans, and lest they should be beheaded for violating the liberty in the body of a citizen. They knew that this was death if any of the chief governors [prefects] should commit it, then what should become of the officers of one free city? [1083] Such is the fear of the wicked, because they have an amazed [1084] conscience before God, they do long time flatter themselves in all sins, until the punishment [1085] of men hang over their heads.

40. *When they saw, etc.* They were desired to part presently; yet it became them to regard the brethren, lest the tender seed of the gospel should perish, and undoubtedly they would have tarried longer if they had been suffered, but the prayers and requests of the magistrates were imperious and armed, which they are enforced to obey. Nevertheless, they foreslow [neglect] not their necessary duty, but they exhort the brethren to be constant. And whereas they went straight to Lydia, it is a token, that though the Church were increased, yet that woman was the chief even of a greater number, as touching diligence in duties of godliness; [1086] and that appeareth more plainly thereby, because all the godly were assembled in her house.

[1079] "Aliquid levationis in posterum afferret," produce some alleviation in future.
[1080] "Quia illos jam sibi tenebat obnoxios," because he now had them in his power.
[1081] "Nulla interposita cognitione," without any previous cognisance.
[1082] "Securibus," axes.
[1083] "Coloniae," colony.
[1084] "Stupidam," stupid, dull.
[1085] "Ultro," vengeance.
[1086] "In officiis pictatis," in offices of piety.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Acts 17:1-4

Acts 17:1-4

1. And when they had journeyed through Amphipolis and Appollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. 2. And as his manner was, Paul entered in unto them, and three Sabbaths disputed with [1087] them out of the Scriptures. 3. Opening and alleging that Christ must have suffered and rise again from the dead; and that this is Christ, whom, saith he, I preach to you. 4. And certain of them believed, and were joined to Paul and Silas, and of religious Grecians a great multitude, and of chief women not a few.

1. *They came to Thessalonica.* We know not why Paul attempted nothing at Amphipolis and Appollonia, which were, notwithstanding, famous cities, as appeareth by Pliny; save only because he followed the Spirit of God as his guide; and took occasion by the present matter, as occasion he did also essay to do some good there, but because it was without any good success, therefore Luke passeth over it. And whereas being beaten at Philippos, [Philippi,] and scarce escaping out of great danger, he preached Christ at Thessalonica, it appeareth thereby how courageous he was to keep the course of his calling, and how bold he was ever now and then to enter into new dangers.

This so invincible fortitude of mind, and such patient enduring of the cross, do sufficiently declare, that Paul labored not after the manner of men, but that he was furnished with the heavenly power of the Spirit. And this was all so wonderful patience in him, in that, entering in unto the Jews, whose unbridled frowardness he had so often tried, [experienced,] he proceedeth to procure their salvation. But because he knew that Christ was given to the Jews for salvation, and that he himself was made an apostle upon this condition, that he should preach repentance and faith, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, committing the success of his labor to the Lord, he obeyeth his commandment, (though he had no great hope to do good.) He seemed before to have taken his last farewell of the Jews, when he said, It was behoveful that the kingdom of God should be first preached to you; but because ye receive it not, behold we turn to the Gentiles; but that harder

[1087] "Disserebat," discoursed to.

sentence must be restrained to that company who had wickedly rejected the gospel when it was offered unto them, and made themselves unworthy [of] the grace of God. And toward the nation itself Paul ceaseth not to do his embassage; by which example we are taught, that we ought to make so great account of the calling of God, that no unthankfulness of men may be able to hinder us, but that we proceed to be careful for their salvation, so long as the Lord appointeth us to be their ministers. And it is to be thought that even now there were some who on the first Sabbath refused sound doctrine, but their frowardness [1088] did not hinder him, but that he came again upon other Sabbaths.

2. *He disputed.* Luke setteth down first what was the sum of the disputation; to wit, that Jesus, the son of Mary, is Christ, who was promised in times past in the law and the prophets, who, by the sacrifice of his death, did make satisfaction for the sins of the world, and brought righteousness and life by his resurrection; secondly, how he proved that which he taught. Let us handle this second member first. Luke saith that he disputed out of the Scriptures; therefore the proofs of faith must be fet from [sought at] the mouth of God alone. If we dispute about matters which concern men, then let human reasons take place; but in the doctrine of faith, the authority of God alone must reign, and upon it must we depend.

All men confess that this is true, that we must stay ourselves upon God alone; yet there be but a few which hear him speak in the Scriptures. But and if that maxim take place among us, [1089] that the Scripture cometh of God, the rule either of teaching or of learning ought to be taken nowhere else. Whereby it doth also appear with what devilish fury the Papists are driven, when they deny that there can any certainty be gathered out of the Scriptures; and, therefore, they hold that we must stand to the decrees of men. For I demand of them whether Paul did observe a right order in disputing or no? at least, let them blush for shame, that the Word of the Lord was more reverenced in an unbelieving nation than it is at this day among them. The Jews admit Paul, and suffer him when he disputeth out of the Scriptures; the Pope and all his count it a mere mock when the Scripture is cited; as if God did speak doubtfully there, and did with vain boughts [1090] mock men. Hereunto is added, that there is at this day much more light in the Scriptures, and the truth of God shineth there more clearly than in the law and the prophets. For in the gospel, Christ, who is the Son of righteousness, doth shed out his beam with perfect brightness upon us; for which cause the blasphemy of the Papists is the more intolerable, whilst that they will make the Word of God as yet uncertain. But let us know, as faith can be grounded nowhere else than in the Word of the Lord, so we must only stand to the testimony thereof in all controversies.

[1088] "Pravitas," depravity, perverseness.
[1089] "Valet inter nos," is held good among us.
[1090] "Ambagibus," ambiguities.

3. *Opening.* In this place he describeth the sum and subject of the disputation, and he putteth down two members concerning Christ, that he must have died and risen again, and that the son of Mary which was crucified is Christ. When the question is concerning Christ, there come three things in question, Whether he be, who he is, and what he is. If Paul had had to deal with the Gentiles, he must have fet his beginning farther; [1091] because they had heard nothing concerning Christ; neither do profane men conceive that they need a Mediator. But this point was out of doubt among the Jews, to whom the Mediator was promised; wherefore Paul omitteth that as superfluous, which was received by common consent of all men. But because there was nothing more hard than to bring the Jews to confess that Jesus who was crucified was the Redeemer, therefore Paul beginneth with this, that it was meet that Christ should die, that he may remove the stumbling-block of the cross. And yet we must not think that he recited the bare history, but he taketh on undoubtedly principle, that the causes were showed why Christ must have suffered and rise again; to wit, because he preached of the ruin of mankind, of sin and of the punishment thereof, of the judgment of God, and of the eternal curse wherein we are all enwrapped. For even the Scripture calleth us hither, when it foretelleth the death of Christ. As Isaias saith not simply that Christ should die, but plainly expressing, because [that] we have all erred, and every one hath gone his own way, he assigneth the cause of his death, that God hath laid upon him all our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace is upon him, that by his stripes we may be healed; that by making satisfaction for us, he hath purchased righteousness for us, (Isaiah 53:4-8.) So doth Daniel show the force and fruit of his death in his 9th chapter, (Daniel 9:24,) when he saith that sin must be sealed up, that eternal righteousness may succeed.

And, surely, there is no more apt or effectual way to prove the office of Christ, than when men, being humbled with the feeling of their miseries, see that there is no hope left, unless they be reconciled by the sacrifice of Christ. Then laying away their pride, they humbly embrace his cross, whereof they were before both weary and ashamed. Therefore, we must come unto the same fountains at this day, from which Paul fetteth [fetcheth] the proof of the death and resurrection of Christ. And that definition brought great light to the second chapter. It had not been so easy a matter for Paul to prove, and certainly to gather, that the Son of Mary is Christ, unless the Jews had been taught before what manner of Redeemer they were to hope for. And when that doth once appear, it doth only remain that those things be applied to Christ which the Scripture doth attribute to the Mediator. But this is the sum of our faith, that we know that the Son of Mary is that Christ and Mediator which God promised from the beginning; that done, that we know and understood why he died and rose again; that we do not

[1091] "Necesse fuisset altius sumere exordium," it would have been necessary to go farther back with his exordium.

feign to ourselves any earthly king, but that we seek in him righteousness, and all parts of our salvation; both which things Paul is said to have proved out of the Scriptures. We must know that the Jews were not so blockish, nor so impudent, as they be at this day. Paul might have drawn arguments from the sacrifices and from all the worship of the law, whereat the Jews gnarl at this day like dogs. It is well known how unseemly they rent and corrupt other places of Scripture. At that day they had some courtesy [1092] in them; also they did somewhat reverence the Scripture, so that they were not altogether such as would not be taught; at this day the veil is laid over their hearts, (2 Corinthians 3:15,) so that they can see no more in the clear light than moles.

4. *Certain of them believed.* We see here the fruit of Paul's disputation. He proved flatly [plainly] that Jesus was for us, and whose resurrection is the life of the world. Yet only certain of the Jews believe; the rest are blind at noonday, and with deaf ears refuse the certain and plain truth. This is also worth the noting, that whereas only a few Jews believed, a great multitude of the Grecians, who were far farther off, came unto the faith. To what end can you say they were nousled [trained] up in the doctrine of the law from their childhood, save only that they might be more estranged from God? Therefore, the Lord doth now begin to show some tokens of that blindness in them which the prophets do oftentimes denounced unto them. Notwithstanding, he declareth by this that his covenant was not in vain, because he did at least gather some of that people unto himself, that the sparkles of the election may shine in the remnant which was saved freely. Luke doth moreover teach, that they did not believe the sayings of Paul, only so far forth that they subscribed unto them with a cold consent, but that they did testify their earnest affection, because they had joined themselves to Paul and Silas as companions, and provoked against themselves the hatred of their nation by the free profession of the gospel. [1093] For what meaneth this adjoining, save only because they professed that they allowed [approved] that doctrine which he delivered, and that they took his part? For there is nothing more contrary to faith, than if, when we know [recognize] the truth of God, we stand notwithstanding in doubt, and are loath to join ourselves to any side. If any man had rather expound it, that they did join themselves to Paul and Silas, because they were desirous to learn, that they might be better instructed at home; thereby doth also appear the lively heat of faith; and that doth always continue unmovable, that no man doth truly believe in Christ, save only he which doth give over himself to him, and doth freely and willingly fight over his banner.

Of religious Grecians a multitude. Because they had learned [imbibed] the first principles of godliness, they were nearer to the kingdom of God than others who had always [lain] laid in the filth of superstition. Notwith-

[1092] "Ingenuitas," ingenuousness.
[1093] "Ingenua," frank, ingenuous.

standing, the question is, how the Grecians came by religion, who, being bewitched with wicked errors and dotings, were without God? as Paul teacheth, (Ephesians 2:12.) But we must know, that whither soever the Jews were exiled, there went with them some seed of godliness, [1094] and there was some smell [savor] of pure doctrine spread abroad. For their miserable scattering abroad was so turned unto a contrary end by the wonderful counsel of God, that it did gather those unto the true faith who did wander in error. And though religion were also corrupt among them with many wicked inventions, yet because most of the Gentiles were weary of their madness, they were by this short sum [1095] enticed unto Judaism, that nothing is more safe than the worship of one and the true God. Therefore, by religious Grecians understood those who had some taste of the true and lawful worship of God, so that they were not any longer given to gross idolatry. Though, as I have said, it is to be thought that it was only a light and obscure taste, which was far from true instruction. Wherefore, Luke doth improperly give them such an honorable title. But as the Spirit of God doth sometimes vouchsafe [to give] some rude beginning and first exercise of faith, or the only [mere] preparation, the name of faith, so they are called in this place religious, who, having taken their leave of idols, had begun to acknowledge one God.

And though that confused or obscure persuasion doth not deserve of itself to be counted religion, yet because it is a step whereby we come nearer unto God, it taketh the name of the consequent, as they call it, or of that which followeth. Yea, the blind and superstitious fear of God is sometimes called religion; not because it is so indeed, but improperly, to note the difference between a mean worship of God, [1096] and gross and Epicurish contempt. Nevertheless, let us know that the truth and the sound doctrine of the word of God is the rule of godliness, so that there can be no religion without the true light of understanding.

Acts 17:5-10

Acts 17:5-10

5. And the unbelieving Jews being moved with envy, [zeal,] and taking to them certain vagabonds, froward fellows, and having assembled the multitude, they made a tumult in the city; and besetting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them out unto the people. 6. And when they had not found them, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the governors of the city, crying, Those who have troubled the whole world are come hither also, 7. Who Jason hath received privily; and all these do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8. And they troubled [stirred up] the multitude and the magistrates of the city when they heard

[1094] "Dispersum fuisse aliquod prelatis semen," some seed of piety was spread.
[1095] "Hoc compendio," by this compendious argument, viz.
[1096] "Qualemcunque Dei cultum," any kind of divine worship.

these things: 9. And when they had received sufficient assurance of Jason and the rest, they let him go. 10. And forthwith the brethren sent forth Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who, when they were come, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

5. *And being moved with envy.* We see how Paul could nowhere erect the kingdom of Christ without some conflict, for so soon as any fruit of doctrine appeared, there arose persecution therewithal; but because he knew that he was to war against Satan and the wickedness of the world, he was not only hardened against all assaults, but he was more encouraged more courageously to proceed. Therefore, all the servants of Christ must be content with this one example of him, if they see that their labor doth yield some fruit, they must recompense all manner of persecutions with this reward. And this place teacheth that the zeal wherewith the unbelievers are carried headlong, and set on fire, is nothing else but furious force, [1097] because it is not governed by the prudence of the Spirit, neither yet with righteousness or equity. And though they do always pretend the name of God for an excuse of their disordered zeal, yet this history doth plainly declare, that mere hypocrisy doth reign inwardly, and that all corners of their hearts are stuffed with poisoned malice. These enemies of Paul did boast that they were defenders of the law of God; and that they did hate Paul, and contend with him only in defense thereof.

Why do they then arm the wicked, and conspire together with them to raise tumult? Why then do they also before a profane magistrate bring the gospel in that contempt which might have redounded to the contempt of the law? Such sedition doth plainly declare, that they were moved with nothing less than desire to please God, to be thus hot against Paul, for to what end do they beset Jason's house, and strive disorderly [1098] to pluck out Paul thence, save only that they may set him before the people to be stoned? Therefore, let us know that wicked zeal, which is hot [boils] in superstitious men, is always infected with hypocrisy and malice; and this is the cause that it breaketh out into cruelty without keeping any measure.

Taking to them certain vagabonds. The Greek word which Luke useth doth signify sluggards, and men whereof there ought no account to be made, who, having nothing wherewith they could keep themselves occupied at home, did run up and down idle; [1099] or bold [audacious] fellows and hungry, who are ready to forswear themselves to raise tumults, and to be at one end of [1100] every wicked fact. Whereby it doth likewise appear that their own conscience told them that they did amiss, seeing they got wicked men to take their part, and to give them their consent. For seeing the magistrate did favor them, what did move them to raise that tempest, save only because they had no hope to have any success, unless (matters should be out of order

[1097] "Rabiosum… impetum," a rabid impulse.
[1098] "Tumultuose," tumtultuously.
[1099] "Per forum," through the market-place.
[1100] "Operam suam locare," hire out their assistance in.

and) all should be in an uproar? And Luke describeth how such fans did raise sedition; to wit, they gathered the people together in troops, and spread abroad their poison here and there, until they were strong enough to make an assault; [1101] which policy [artifice] is too common among seditions fellows, as those cities which are subject to this mischief do full well know.

6. *Those men who have troubled the whole world.* This is the state of the gospel, to have those uproars which Satan raiseth imputeth to it. This is also the malicousness of the enemies of Christ, to lay the blame of tumults upon holy and modest teachers, which they themselves procure. Assuredly, the gospel is not preached to this end that it may set men together by the ears; [1102] but rather that it may keep them in peace, being reconciled to God. When Christ doth meekly will us [1103] there to come unto him, Satan and the wicked rage; [1104] therefore, Paul and Silas might easily have defended themselves; but it was requisite for them to suffer this false slander for a time; and so long as they were not heard, to put it up quietly. And the Lord meant by their example to teach us, that we must not give place to slanders and false reports; but we must stand stoutly in maintaining the truth, being ready to hear evil for things done well. Wherefore, away with the perverse wisdom of some, who, to the end they may escape false slanders, cease [hesitate] not to betray Christ and his gospel through their treacherous moderation, as though their good name were more precious than Paul's and such like, yea, than the sacred name of God, which is not free from blasphemies.

7. *All these men, etc.* The second point of the accusation of this, that they violate the majesty of the empire of Rome. A great and grievous crime, yet too impudently forged. Paul and Silas sought to erect the kingdom of Christ, which is spiritual. The Jews knew that this might be done without doing any injury to the Roman empire. They knew that they meant nothing less than to overthrow the public estate, or to take from Caesar his authority. Therefore, the Jews catch at the pretense of treason, that they may oppress the innocent with the envy of the crime alone. [1105]

Neither doth Satan cease at this day to blear men's eyes with such smokes and mists. The Papists know full well, and they be sufficiently convict before God, that that is more than false which they lay to our charge, That we overthrow all civil government; that laws and judgments are quite taken away; that the authority of kings if subverted by us; and yet they be not ashamed to the end they may make all the whole world offended with us, falsely to

[1101] "Donec ad vim inferendam sufficerent," until they were able to offer violence.

[1102] "Ut homines ad mutuous conflictus accendat," that it may inflame men to mutual conflict.

[1103] "Ad se benigne invitet," benignity invite us to himself.

[1104] "Tumultuanture," make a tumult.

[1105] "Sed colorem hunc malitiose obtendunt quaerendae invidiae causa. Non tanti erat apud Macedones religio, praesertim Judaica, ut ejus causa homines ignotos, protinus ad caedem raperent;" but maliciously use this pretext for the purpose of producing obloquy. There was not so much religion, especially Jewish, among the Macedonians, that for its sake they would hurry off strangers to execution. Omitted.

report that the Jews do not only allege that Caesar's commandments were broken, because Paul and Silas durst presume to alter and innovate somewhat in religion, but because they said there was another king. This crime was altogether forged; but if at any time religion enforces us to resist tyrannical edicts and commandments which forbid us to give due honor to Christ, and due worship to God; we may then justly say for ourselves, that we are not rebellious against kings, for they be not so exalted, that they may go about like giants to pull God out of his seat and throne. That excuse of Daniel was true, that he had not offended the king, whereas notwithstanding he had not obeyed his wicked commandment, neither had he injured mortal man, because he had preferred God before him. So let us faithfully pay to princes the tributes which are due to them, let us be ready to give them all civil obedience; but if, being not content with their degree, they go about to pluck out of our hands the fear and worship of God, there is no cause why any should say that we despise them, because we make more account of the power and majesty of God.

8. *They raised the multitude.* We see how unjustly the holy men were handled. Because they had no place granted them to defend themselves, it was an easy matter to oppress them, though they were guiltless. We see, likewise, that it is no new matter for magistrates to be carried away with the rage of the people as with a tempest, especially when the injury toucheth those who are strangers and unknown, at whose hands they look for no reward; because they will not come in danger for nothing. For then they care not for reason or equity, neither do they hear the matter, [1106] but one driveth forward another without any resistance, and all things are done out of order, as when they run unto some great fire. But it came to pass, by the singular goodness of God, that so great heat was stayed by and by; for so soon as the magistrates profess that they will know farther of the matter, the multitude is appeased; assurance [security] is taken; and, at length, the matter is ended.

10. *They sent them out to Berea.* Hereby it appeareth that Paul's labor brought forth fruit in a small time; for though the brethren send forth him and Silas, yet they adjoin themselves as voluntary companions to their danger and cross by this duty. But the constancy of Paul is incredible, because, having had such experience of their stubbornness and malice of his nation, he doth never cease to try whether he can bring any to Christ, namely, seeing he knew that he was bound both to Jews and Gentiles, no injury of men could lead him away from his calling. So all the servants of Christ must so wrestle with the malice of the world, that they shake not off Christ's yoke with what injuries soever they be provoked.

[1106] "Nec suscipitur causae cognitio," nor do theytake cognisance of the cause.

Acts 17:11-15

Acts 17:11-15

11. And those were noblemen among the Thessalonians, who had received the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the Scriptures whether these things were so. 12. And many of them believed, and honest women which were Grecians, and men not a few. 13. But when the Jews of Thessalonica knew that Paul did also preach the word of God at Berea, they came thither also, moving the multitude. 14. And then straightway the brethren sent forth Paul that he might go as it were unto the sea; but Silas and Timotheus remained there. 15. Moreover, those which guided Paul brought him even unto Athens; and when they had received commandment to Silas and Timotheus that they should come to him with speed, they departed.

11. *Did excel in nobility.* Luke returneth again unto the men of Thessalonica. The remembrance of Christ might have been thought to have been buried by the departure of Paul, and surely it is a wonder that that small light, which began to shine, was not quite put out, and that the seed of sound doctrine did not wither away, which had need continually to be watered that it might spring up. But after Paul's departure, it appeareth how effectual and fruitful his preaching had been. For those who had only tasted of the first principles of godliness do nevertheless profit and go forward, though he be absent, and exercise themselves in the continual reading of the Scripture. And, first, Luke saith that they were of the chief families. For the nobility whereof he maketh mention is referred not unto the mind, but unto the nation. Some think that the men of Berea are compared with the men of Thessalonica, because he saith [{ευγενεστερους}], and not in the superlative degree [{ευγενεστατους}]. But I think that that manner of speech is usual and common among the Grecians, which the Latins could not so well digest.[1107] Moreover, he had said a little before, that certain principal women believed at Thessalonica, and it is not to be thought that the men of Berea were preferred before those of this city. And there is a threefold reason why Luke maketh mention of their excellency of birth. We know how hardly men came down from their high degress, what a rare matter it is for those who are great in the world to undertake the reproach of the cross, laying away their pride, and rejoice in humility, as James commandeth, (James 1:10.)

Therefore Luke commendeth the rare efficacy and working of the Spirit of God, when he saith that these noblemen were no whit hindered by the dignity of the flesh, but that embracing the gospel, they prepared themselves to bear the cross, and preferred the reproach of Christ before the glory of the world. Secondly, Luke meant to make known the glory of the world. Secondly, Luke meant to make known unto us, that the grace of Christ standeth open for all orders and degrees. In which sense Paul saith, that God would have all men saved, (1 Timothy 2:4;) lest the poor and those

[1107] "Quae Latinis auribus esset durior," which would have sounded harsher to Latin ears.

who are base do shut the gate against the rich, (though Christ did vouchsafe them the former place.) Therefore we see that noblemen, and those who are of the common sort, [1108] are gathered together, that those who are men of honor, and which are despised, grow together into one body of the Church, that all men, in general, may humble themselves, and extol the grace of God. Thirdly, Luke seemeth to note the cause why there were so many added, and the kingdom of Christ was, in such short time, so spread abroad and enlarged at Thessalonica; to wit, because that was no small help, that chief men, and men of honor, did show other men the way, because the common sort is for the most part moved by authority. And though this were no meet stay for faith and godliness, yet is it no strange thing for God to bring the unbelievers (who wander as yet in error) to himself, by crooked and byways. [1109]

Received the word. This is the first thing which he commendeth in the men of Thessalonica, that with a willing and ready desire they received the gospel. Secondly, that they confirmed their faith [1110] by diligent inquisition; so that their faith and godliness are commended in the beginning for forwardness, [1111] and in process they are praised for their constancy and fervent desire they had to profit. And surely this is the first entrance into faith that we be ready to follow, and that, abandoning the understanding and wisdom of the flesh, [1112] we submit ourselves to Christ, by him to be taught and to obey him. Also Paul himself, in adorning the Thessalonians with this title, doth agree with Saint Luke, (1 Thessalonians 2:13.)

As touching the second member, this diligence is no small virtue, whereunto Luke saith the faithful were much given for confirmation of their faith. For many who at the first break out [1113] give themselves straightway to idleness, while that they have no care to profit, and so lose that small seed [1114] which they had at the first.

But two inconveniences [1115] may be in this place objected; for it seemeth to be a point of arrogancy in that they inquire that they may judge; and it seemeth to be a thing altogether disagreeing with that readiness whereof he spake of late; secondly, forasmuch as inquisitions is a sign of doubtfulness, it followeth that they were before endued with no faith, which hath always assurance and certainty joined and linked with it. Unto the first objection I answer, that Luke's words ought not so to be understood, as if the Thessalonians took upon them to judge, or as though they disputed whether the truth of God were to be received; they did only examine Paul's doctrine by the rule and square of the Scripture, even as gold is tried in the fire; for

[1108] "Nobiles et plebeios," that nobles and plebeians.
[1109] "Per obliquas vias," through winding paths.
[1110] "Quotidie," daily.
[1111] "Initio a promptitudine," at the commencement for promptitude or readiness.
[1112] "Proprio carnis sensu," our own carnal sense.
[1113] "Ebulliunt," spring forth.
[1114] "Fidei semen," seed of faith.
[1115] "Absurdo," absurdities.

the Scripture is the true touchstone whereby all doctrines must be tried. If any man say that this kind of trial is doubtful, forasmuch as the Scripture is oftentimes doubtful, and is interpreted divers ways, I say, that we must also add judgment of the Spirit, who is, not without cause, called the Spirit of discretion, [discernment.] But the faithful must judge of every doctrine no otherwise then out of, and according to, the Scriptures, having the Spirit for their leader and guide. And by this means is refuted that sacrilegious quip [quibble] of the Papists, Because there can be nothing gathered certainly out of the Scriptures, faith doth depend only upon the determination of the Church. For when the Spirit of God doth commend the men of Thessalonica, he prescribeth to us a rule in their example. And in vain should we search the Scriptures, unless they have in them light enough to teach us.

Therefore, let this remain as a most sure maxim, that no doctrine is worthy to be believed but that which we find to be grounded in the Scriptures. The Pope will have all that received without any more ado, whatsoever he doth blunder out at his pleasure; but shall he be preferred before Paul, concerning whose preaching it was lawful for the disciples to make inquisition? And let us not that this is not spoken of any visured [pretended] Council, but of a small assembly of men, whereby it doth better appear that every man is called to read the Scriptures. So likewise, making of search doth not disagree with the forwardness of faith; for so soon as any man doth hearken, and being desirous to learn, doth show himself attentive, he is now bent and apt to be taught, though he do not fully [1116] give his consent. For example's sake, an unknown teacher shall profess that he doth bring true doctrine: I will come, being ready to hear, and my mind shall be framed unto the obedience of the truth. Nevertheless, I will weigh with myself what manner [of] doctrine it is which he bringeth; neither will I embrace anything but the certain truth, and that which I know to be the truth. And this is the best moderation, when, being fast bound with the reverence of God, we hear that willingly and quietly which is set before us, as proceeding from him. Nevertheless, we beware of the seducing subtilty of men; neither do our minds throw themselves headlong with a blind rage [1117] to believe every thing without advisement. Therefore, the searching mentioned by Luke doth not tend to that end that we may be slow and unwilling to believe, but rather readiness with judgment is made the mean between lightness and stubbornness.

Now must we answer the second objection. Faith is contrary to doubtfulness: he which inquireth doubteth; therefore it followeth, that forasmuch as the Thessalonians inquire and make search touching the doctrine of Paul, they were void of faith as yet. But the certainty of faith doth not hinder the confirmation thereof. I call that confirmation when the truth of God is more and more sealed up in our hearts, whereof, notwithstanding, we did not doubt before. For example's sake, I hear out of the gospel that I am

[1116] "Statim plane," plainly, and at once.

[1117] "Caeco levitatis impetu," with a blind and giddy impulse.

reconciled to God through the grace of Christ, and that my sins are purged [expiated] through his holy blood: there shall be some testimony uttered which shall make me believe this. If afterward I examine and search the Scriptures more thoroughly, I shall find other testimonies oftentimes which shall not only help my faith, but also increase it and establish it, that it may be more sure and settled. In like sort, as concerning understanding, faith is increased by reading the Scriptures. If any man object again, that those men do attribute but small authority to Paul's doctrine, who search the Scriptures whether these things be so, I answer, that such are the proceedings of faith, that they sometimes seek for that in the Scripture whereof they are already persuaded by God, and have the inward testimony of the Spirit. And Luke doth not say that the faith of the Thessalonians was in all points perfect; but he doth only declare how they were brought to Christ, [1118] and how they did profit in faith, until the absolute building of godliness might be erected among them.

12. *And many believed.* This is not referred unto the sentence next going before, as if those of whom he spake began to believe, making choice of some of them: for that were an absurd thing. But Luke's meaning is, because many were added by their example, the Church was increased in that city. And hitherto hath Luke declared the first beginning of the church of Thessalonica, lest any man should think that Paul's labors did perish through his sudden and violent departure; for unless I be much deceived, he showeth for this purpose what fruit his preaching brought forth in the other city, before he came to the exile of Berea.

13. *And when the Jews.* We see how the Jews were carried to and fro with such hatred of the gospel as could never be appeased. For they do not only expel Christ furiously when he is offered unto them at home; but when they hear that he is preached elsewhere, they run thither like mad men. But we must not so much in this place consider the fury of the nation as the desperate malice of Satan, who pricketh forward those which be his to trouble the kingdom of Christ, and to destroy man's salvation; and he useth them as fans to raise sedition. Wherefore, let us know, that when at this day so many furious enemies do set themselves against the faithful ministers of Christ, it is not men which procure the war, but it is Satan, the father of lying, who doth go about all these things that he may overthrow the kingdom of Christ. (John 8:44.) And though there be not always the same form in fighting and encountering, yet will Satan never cease to make weary those whom he knoweth to serve Christ faithfully, either with open war, or secret lying in wait, or domestical combats.

Acts 17:16-21

Acts 17:16-21

[1118] "Qualiter initiati fuerint Christo," how they were initiated in Christ.

16. And as Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was sore grieved in him, forasmuch as he saw the city given to idolatry. 17. Therefore he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews and religious men, and in the market daily with those which lit upon him. 18. And certain Epicures [Epicureans,] and philosophers of the Stoics, disputed with him, and some said, "What will this babbler say? and other some, He seemeth to be a declarer of new devils, [or gods,] because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. 19. And when they had caught him, they led him to Mars' Street, saying, May we know what new doctrine this is which thou utterest? 20. For thou bringest certain new things to our ears: Therefore, we will know what these things mean. 21. And all the men of Athens, and the strangers which were there, gave themselves to nothing else but to speak or hear some new thing.

16. *Was sore grieved.* Though Paul, whithersoever he came, did stoutly execute that function of teaching which he knew was enjoined with him, yet Luke showeth that he was more incensed and moved at Athens, because he saw idolatry reign more there than in any other place for the most part. The whole world was then full of idols; the pure worship of God could be found nowhere; and there were everywhere innumerable monsters of superstitions, but Satan had made the city of Athens more mad than any other city, so that the people thereof were carried headlong with greater madness unto their wickedness and perverse rites. And this example is worth the noting, that the city, which was the mansion-house of wisdom, the fountain of all arts, the mother of humanity, did exceed all others in blindness and madness. We know with what commandments witty and learned men did set forth the same, and she had conceived so great good liking of herself that she counted those rude [1119] whom she had not polished. But the Holy Ghost condemning the whole world of ignorance and blockishness, saith that those masters of liberal sciences were bewitched with an unwonted madness. Whence we gather what man's wit can do in matters which concern God. Neither need we doubt of this, but that the Lord suffered the men of Athens to fall into extreme madness, that all the world might learn by them, and that they might teach all ages that the foresight and wit of man's mind being holpen with learning and instruction, doth altogether dote, and is mere foolishness when it cometh to the kingdom of God. They had undoubtedly their cloaks and colors, wherewith they did excuse their worshippings, how preposterous and corrupt soever they were. And yet, notwithstanding, it is certain that they did not only deceive men with childish and frivolous toys, but that they themselves were deluded shamefully with gross and filthy jugglings, as if they were deprived of common sense, and were altogether blockish and brutish. And as we learn what manner [of] religion proceedeth from man's understanding, and that man's wisdom is nothing else but a shop of all errors, so we may know that the men of Athens, being drunk with their own pride, did err more filthily than the rest. The antiquity, the pleasantness,

[1119] "Barbaros," barbarians.

and beauty of the city, did puff them up, so that they did boast that the gods came thence. Therefore, forasmuch as they did pull down God from heaven, that they might make him an inhabitant of their city, it was meet that they should be thrust down into the nethermost hell. Howsoever it be, the vanity of man's wisdom is here marked with eternal infamy by the Spirit of God; because, where it was principally resident, there was the darkness more thick. Idolatry did reign most of all there; and Satan carried men's minds to and fro more freely by his mocks and juggling.

Now, let us come unto Paul. Luke saith, forasmuch as he saw the city so given to idolatry, his spirit waxed hot, or was moved. Where he doth not attribute unto him indignation only, neither doth he only say that he was offended with that spectacle, but he expressed the unwonted heat of holy anger, which sharpened his zeal, so that he did address himself more fervently unto the work. And here we must note two things. For in that Paul was wroth when he saw the name of God wickedly profaned, and his pure worship corrupted, he did thereby declare, that nothing was to him corrupted, he did thereby declare, that nothing was to him more precious than the glory of God. Which zeal ought to be of great force among us, as it is in the Psalm, (Psalm 69:9,) "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." For it is a common rule of all the godly, that so soon as they see their heavenly Father blasphemed, they be sore vexed, as Peter teacheth that the godly man Lot, because he could not cure most filthy facts, did vex his heart, (2 Peter 2:8.) And teachers must, above all others, be fervent, as Paul saith, that he is jealous that he may retain the Church in true chastity, (2 Corinthians 11:2.) And those who are not touched when they see and hear God blasphemed, and do not only wink thereat, but also carelessly pass over it, are not worthy to be counted the children of God, who at least do not give him so much honor as they do to an earthly father. Secondly, we must note that he was not so grieved, that being cast down through despair, he was quite discouraged, as we see most men to be far from waxing hot, or being moved, when they see the glory of God wickedly profaned, that in professing and uttering sorrow and sighing, they do, notwithstanding, rather wax profane with others than study to reform them. Nevertheless, they have a fair cloak for their sluggishness, that they will not procure any tumult when they are like to do no good. [1120] For they think that their attempts shall be in vain if they strive against the wicked and violent conspiracy of the people. But Paul is not only not discouraged with wearisomeness, neither doth he so faint by reason of the hardness of the matter, that he doth cast from him his office of teaching; but he is pricked forward with a more sharp prick to maintain godliness.

17. *With the Jews and religious men.* It was an ordinary thing with Paul, wheresoever the Jews had synagogues, there to begin, and to offer Christ to

[1120] "Quod nolint sine profectu tumultuare," that they are unwilling to excite tumult to no good purpose.

his own nation. After that he went to the Gentiles, who, having tasted of the doctrine of the law, though they were not as yet thoroughly nousled up in [imbued with] true godliness, did, notwithstanding, worship the God of Israel, and being desirous to learn, did not refuse those things which they knew were taken out of Moses and the prophets; and because such aptness to be taught was an entrance unto faith, yea, was a certain beginning of faith, the Spirit vouchsafeth them an honorable title, who being only lightly sprinkled with the first rudiments, drew nearer unto the true God; for they be called religious. But let us remember that all the religion of the world may be brought to nought. Those are called worshippers of God spiritually who gave their name to the God of Israel. Religion is attributed to them alone; therefore there remaineth nothing else for the rest but the reproach of atheism, howsoever they toil and moil [1121] in superstition. And that for good considerations; for of whatsoever pomp the idolaters make boast, if their inward affection be examined, there shall be nothing found there but horrible contempt of God, and it shall appear that it is a mere feigned color wherewith they go about to excuse their idols.

18. *They reasoned with him.* Luke addeth now that Paul had a combat with the philosophers; not that he set upon them of set purpose, forasmuch as he knew that they were even born only to brawl and cavil; but he was enforced to enter such a conflict contrary to his purpose, as Paul himself commandeth godly teachers to be furnished with spiritual weapons, wherewith they may valiantly defend the truth if any enemies set themselves against it, (Titus 1:9.) For it is not always in our choice to make choice of those with whom we will deal; but the Lord doth often suffer stubborn and importunate men to arise to exercise us, that by their gainsaying the truth may more plainly appear. Neither is it to be doubted but that the Epicures, [Epicureans,] according to their wonted frowardness, did trouble the holy man; and that the Stoics, trusting to their subtile quips and cavils, did stubbornly deride him; [1122] yet the end shall show that he did not dispute sophistically, neither was he carried away unto any unprofitable and contentious disputation, but did observe that modesty which he himself commandeth elsewhere. And thus must we do, that by refuting meekly and modestly vain cavillings, we may utter that which is sound and true; and we must always avoid this danger, that ambition or desire to show our wit do not unwrap us in superfluous and vain contentions.

Furthermore, Luke maketh mention of two sects, which, though they were the one contrary to the other, [1123] had, not withstanding, their contrary vices. The Epicures [Epicureans] did not only despise liberal arts, but were also open enemies to them. Their philosophy was to feign that the sun was two feet broad, that the world was made *ex atomis*, [of atoms,] (or of things

[1121] "Anxie se torqueant," anxiously torment themselves.

[1122] "Contumaciter insultaverint," did contumaciously insult him.

[1123] "Ex diametro inter se essent oppositae," were diametrically opposed to each other.

which were so small that they could not be divided or made smaller,) and by deluding men thus, to blot out the wonderful workmanship which appeareth in the creation of the world. If they were a thousand times convict, they were as impudent as dogs. Though they did, in a word, confess that there be gods, yet they did imagine that they were idle in heaven, and that they were wholly set upon pleasure, and that they were blessed only because they were idle. As they did deny that the world was created by God, as I have said of late, so they thought that man's affairs were tossed to and fro without any governing, and that they were not governed by the celestial providence. Pleasure was their felicity, [1124] not that unbridled and filthy pleasure; yet such as did more and more corrupt men by her enticements, being already, of their own accord, bent to pamper the flesh. They counted the immorality of their souls but a fable, whereby it came to pass that they gave themselves liberty to make much of their bodies.

As for the Stoics, though they said that the world was subject to the providence of God, yet did they afterwards, through a most filthy surmise, or rather doting, corrupt that point of their doctrine. For they did not grant that God did govern the world by counsel, justice, and power, but they forged a labyrinth of the compass or agreement of the causes, that God himself being bound with the necessity of fate or destiny, might be carried violently with the frame of heaven, as the poets do tie and fetter their Jupiter with golden fetters, because the Fates or Destinies do govern when he is about something else. Though they placed felicity [the chief good] in virtue, they knew not what true virtue was, and they did puff up men with pride, [1125] so that they did deck themselves with that which they took from God. For though they did all abase the grace of the Holy Ghost, yet was there no sect more proud. They had no other fortitude, but a certain rash and immoderate fierceness. [1126]

Therefore there was in Paul wonderful force of the Spirit, who standing amidst such beasts, which sought to pull him to and fro, stood firm in the sound sincerity of the gospel, and did valiantly withstand and endure, as well the dogged malapertness [petulance] of the former sect, as the pride and crafty cavillings of the other. And hereby we see more plainly what small agreement there is between the heavenly wisdom and the wisdom of the flesh. For though the whole multitude were offended with the gospel, yet the philosophers were captains and standard-bearers in assaulting the same. For that did principally appear in them which Paul himself speaketh of the wisdom of the flesh, that it is an enemy to the cross of Christ, (1 Corinthians 1:26,) so that no man can be fit to learn the principles of the gospel unless he first abandon the same.

Other some said. Luke setteth before us two sects of men, which both

[1124] "Summum bonum," the supreme good.
[1125] "Superba confidentia," with proud confidence.
[1126] "Ferrea immanitus," iron-hearted cruelty.

were far from godliness; and yet the one sort is worse than the other. Those who are desirous to hear that again which they call new, first, they are moved not with any desire to learn, but with vain curiousity; secondly, they think unhonorably of the Word of God, is that the count it profane novelty; yet because they give ear, and that being in doubt until they may know farther of the matter, they are not quite past hope. But the rest who proudly refuse that which is offered, yea, condemn it reproachfully, do shut the gate of salvation against themselves. For this railing did proceed from monstrous pride; what meaneth this babbler? Because they neither vouchsafe to hear Paul, and also reproachfully refuse him, as if he were some common jester. [1127] Moreover, they do not loathe his doctrine through rash zeal, but do openly tread under foot that which is brought unto them concerning religion, though as yet they know it not; because these are ashamed to learn any thing of a base and obscure fellow, who had hitherto professed themselves to be teachers of all the whole world.

A declarer of new devils. They do not take devils [deities] in evil part, as the Scripture useth to do; but for the lesser gods or angels, who they thought were in the midst between the highest God and men, whereof Plato maketh mention oftentimes. As touching the sum of the matter, we must note that those things which Paul spake concerning Christ and the resurrection seemed to them to be new devils. Whence we gather, that our faith is principally distinguished and discerned from the superstitions of the Gentiles by these marks; because it setteth forth Christ to be the sole Mediator; because it teacheth us to seek for salvation only at his hands; because it commandeth us to seek remission of our sins in his death, whereby we may be reconciled to God; because it teacheth that men are renewed and fashioned again by his Spirit, who were before profane, and slaves to sin, that they may begin to live righteously and holy. Again, because from such beginnings as do plainly declare that the kingdom of God is spiritual, it lifteth up our minds at length unto the hope of the resurrection to come. For as concerning other things, though the philosophers do not reason purely, yet they say somewhat. Yea, they speak much concerning eternal life and the immortality of the soul; but as touching faith, which showeth free reconciliation in Christ; and regeneration, whereby the Spirit of God doth restore in us the image of God; concerning calling upon God, and the last resurrection, not a word.

19. *They brought him to Mars' Street.* Though this verse a place appointed for judgment, yet Luke doth not mean that Paul was brought before the seat of the judges, that he might plead his cause before the judges of Mars' Street. [1128] But that he was brought thither, where was most commonly a great assembly of people, that the serious disputation might be had before a great and famous audience. And admit we grant that he was brought before the judgment-seat, yet the end doth declare that he was not

[1127] "Trivialis nugator," silly or paltry trifler.
[1128] "Areopagitis," the Areopagites.

presented to the judges, but that he had free liberty to speak as before an audience. And that which followeth shortly after, touching the nature and conditions [manners] of the men of Athens, doth sufficiently declare that their curiosity was the cause; that Paul had such audience given him, that he had such a famous place granted him to preach Christ in, that so many came together. For in any other place it had been a crime worthy of death, to speak in the market or in any other public place, having gathered a company of people together; but there, because those who did carry about trifles had liberty granted them to prate, by reason of the immoderate desire they had to hear news, Paul was permitted to intreat of the mysteries of faith, being requested.

Gave themselves to nothing else. The two vices which Luke reciteth do almost go together. For it falleth out seldom that those who are desirous of novelties are not also babblers. For that saying of Horace is most true, "Fly a demander of questions, for the same is also a blab." And surely we see that curious men are like rent barrels. [1129] Furthermore, both vices came of idleness; not only because the philosophers spent whole days in disputing, but because the common sort was too much set upon novelty; neither was there any craftsman so base there, which would not thrust in himself to set in order the status of Grecia. And surely that which Luke saith here is witnessed by all writers, both Greek and Latin, that there was nothing more light, covetous, or froward than that people. Wherefore, there could never be any certain government set down in that city, which was, notwithstanding, the mistress of sciences. Therefore, in principal power, [1130] they had, notwithstanding, no long liberty; neither did they ever cease off from attempting things and making many hurly-burlies, until they brought themselves and all Grecia to utter ruin. For when their state was decayed, yet did not they forsake their boldness. Therefore, Cicero doth laugh at their folly, because they did no less fiercely set forth their decrees then, than when they were lords over Grecia. Now, though there were small hope to do any good among curious men, yet Paul did not neglect the opportunity, if, peradventure, he might gain some of a great company to Christ. Neither was this any small praise for the gospel in the most noble place of the city, and, as it were, in a common theater, to refute and openly to reprove all forged and false worshippings, which had reigned there even until this day.

Acts 17:22-25

Acts 17:22-25

22. And, standing in the midst of Mars' Street, he saith, Men of Athens, I see you in all things, as it were, more superstitious. 23. For, passing by and beholding your manner of worshipping, I found also an altar wherein

[1129] "Doliis pertusis," broken, leaking casks.

[1130] "In summa potentia," though in supreme power, (an independent state.)

was written, To the Unknown God. Therefore, whom you worship ignorantly, him do I preach unto you. 24. God, who hath made the world, and all things which are therein, seeing he is Lord both of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: 25. Neither is he worshipped with man's hands, needing any thing, seeing that he giveth to all life and breath through all things.

22. *Men of Athens.* We may divide this sermon of Paul into five members. For though Luke doth only briefly touch those things which he set down in many words, yet I do not doubt but that he did comprehend the sum, so that he did omit none of the principal points. First, Paul layeth superstition to the charge of the men of Athens, because they worship their gods all at a very venture; [1131] secondly, he showeth by natural arguments who and what God is, and how he is rightly worshipped; thirdly, he inveigheth against the blockishness of men, who, though they be created to this end, that they may know their Creator and Maker, yet do they wander and err in darkness like blind men; fourthly, he showed that nothing is more absurd than to draw any portraiture of God, [1132] seeing that the mind of man is his true image; in the first place, he descendeth at length unto Christ and the resurrection of the dead. For it was requisite to handle those four points generally, before he did descend unto the faith of the gospel.

As it were, more superstitions. The Grecians do oftentimes take [{δεισιδαιμονια}] in good part; notwithstanding it doth sometimes signify immoderate fear, wherewith superstitious men do carefully torment themselves, whilst that they forge to themselves vain doubts. And this seemeth to be the meaning of this place, that the men of Athens pass all measure in worshipping God, or that they do not perceive what manner [of] work moderation should be; as if he should say, that they deal very undiscreetly in that they weary themselves in going byways. Thus much touching the words; now to the matter. He proveth by this one reason, that all the worshippings of the men of Athens are corrupt, because they be uncertain what gods they ought to worship, because they take in hand rashly and unadvisedly divers rites, and that without measure. For in that they had set up an altar to the unknown God, it was a token that they knew no certainty. They had, indeed, a great company of gods whereof they spake much, but when they know nothing of the true divinity. Furthermore, whosoever doth worship God without any certainty, he worshippeth his own inventions instead of God. Howsoever credulous men do flatter themselves, yet neither doth God allow any religion without knowledge and truth, neither ought it to be counted holy and lawful. Yea, how proud soever they be, yet because they doubt [1133] in their consciences, they must needs be convict by their own judgment. For superstition is always fearful, and doth ever know and

[1131] "Fortuito," fortuitously.
[1132] "Deum statuis vel picturis figurare," to figure God by picture or statues.
[1133] "Perplexi haerent," remain perplexed.

then coin some new thing.

Therefore we see how miserable their condition is who have not the certain light of the truth, because they do both always doubt in themselves, and lose their labor before God. Notwithstanding, we must note that the unbelievers, whilst that they sometimes make themselves blind through voluntary stubbornness, and are sometimes amidst divers and manifold doubts, [yet] strive and fight with themselves. Oftentimes they do not only flatter themselves, but if any man dare mutter against their folly, they rage cruelly against him; the devil doth so bewitch them, that they think nothing to be better than that which pleaseth them. Nevertheless, if there arise any doubt, if any seducer put up his head, if any new folly [delirium] begin to appear, they do not only waver, being in doubt, but also of their own accord offer themselves to be carried hither and thither. Whereby it appeareth, that neither in judgment, neither in quiet state of mind, they stay and rest in the common custom of worshipping God, but that they droop like drunken men. But carefulness and doubtfulness, [anxiety,] which doth not suffer the unbelievers to flatter and please themselves, is better than amazedness. [1134] Finally, though superstition be not always fearful, yet forasmuch as it is inwrapt in divers errors, it disquieteth men's minds, and doth prick them with divers blind torments. This was the cause that the men of Athens did mix their domestical gods (whom they thought they knew, because in their vain opinion they had invented them) with unknown gods. For thereby appeareth their unquietness, because they confess that they have not as yet done as they ought, when they have done sacrifice to the familiar [1135] gods, which they had received of their fathers, and whom they called their country gods. [1136] Therefore, to the end Paul may pluck out of their minds all vain and false persuasions, he taketh this maxim, that they know not what they worship, neither have they any certain divine power, [deity.] For if they had known any god at all, being content with him, they would never have fallen away unto unknown gods, forasmuch as the knowledge of the true God alone is sufficient for the abolishig of all idols.

23. *To the unknown God.* I can well grant that this altar was dedicated to all strange gods; yet I cannot yield to that which Jerome saith, that Paul did, by a certain holy wiliness, attribute that to one God which was written of many. For seeing the superscription [inscription] was common in every man's mouth, there was no place for subtilty, [craft;] why did he then change the plural number? Surely, not that he might deceive the men of Athens, but because the matter did so require, he said, that he brought doctrine concerning an unknown god. And after he hath showed that they are deceived, because they knew not what god thee ought to worship, and had no certain godhood in a great leap of gods, he doth now insinuate himself,

[1134] "Tali stupore magis tolerabilis est," is more tolerable than such stupor.
[1135] "Popularibus," popular.
[1136] "Indigetas et patrios," native and country gods.

and doth purchase favor for his doctrine. Because it was an unjust thing to reject that which was uttered concerning a new god, to whom they had already given over themselves; and it was far better first to know him, than rashly to worship him whom they knew not. Thus doth Paul return again to that principle, that God cannot be worshipped rightly unless he be first made known.

But here may a question be moved: how he saith that God was worshipped at Athens, who doth refuse all worshippings which are not agreeable to the prescript of his law, yea, he pronounceth that all that is idolatry which men invent without his Word? If God allow no worship but that which is agreeable to his Word, how doth Paul give this praise to men, who did dote without measure that they worshipped God? For Christ, in condemning the Samaritans, is content [1137] with this one principle, in that they worship God without knowledge, (John 4:22;) and yet they did boast that they worshipped the God of Abraham. Then, what shall we say of the men of Athens, who, having buried and quite put out the remembrance of the true God, had put in place of him Jupiter, Mercury, Pallas, and all that filthy rabble? I answer, that Paul doth not in the place commend that which the men of Athens had done; but taketh from their affection, though it were corrupt, free matter for teaching.

24. *God, who hath made the world.* Paul's drift is to teach what God is. Furthermore, because he hath to deal with profane men, he draweth proofs from nature itself; for in vain should he have cited [1138] testimonies of Scripture. I said that this was the holy man's purpose, to bring the men of Athens unto the true God. For they were persuaded that there was some divinity; only their preposterous religion was to be reformed. Whence we gather, that the world doth go astray through bending crooks and boughts, yea, that it is in a mere labyrinth, so long as there remaineth a confused opinion concerning the nature of God. For this is the true rule of godliness, distinctly and plainly to know who that God whom we worship is. If any man will intreat generally of religion, this must be the first point, that there is some divine power or godhead which men ought to worship. But because that was out of question, Paul descendeth unto the second point, that true God must be distinguished from all vain inventions. So that he beginneth with the definition of God, that he may thence prove how he ought to be worshipped; because the one dependeth upon the other. For whence came so many false worshippings, and such rashness to increase the same oftentimes, save only because all men forged to themselves a God at their pleasure? And nothing is more easy than to corrupt the pure worship of God, when men esteem God after their sense and wit.

Wherefore, there is nothing more fit to destroy all corrupt worshippings, than to make this beginning, and to show of what sort the nature of God is.

[1137] "Nititur et contentus est," founds on, and is contented with.

[1138] "Pugnasset," contended with them by citing.

Also our Savior Christ reasoneth thus, John 4:24, "God is a Spirit." Therefore he alloweth no other worshippers but such as worship him spiritually. And surely he doth not subtilely dispute of the secret substance [essence] of God; but by his works he declareth which is the profitable knowledge of him. And what doth Paul gather thence, because God is the creator, framer, and Lord of the world? to wit, that he dwelleth not in temples made with hands. For, seeing that it appeareth plainly by the creation of the world, that the righteousness, wisdom, goodness, and power of God doth reach beyond the bounds of heaven and earth; it followeth, that he can be included and shut up within no space of place.

Notwithstanding this demonstration seemeth to have been in vain, because they might readily have said, that images and pictures were placed in temples to testify God's presence; and that none was so gross but that he knew that God did fulfill [fill] all things. I answer, that that is true which I said a little before, that idolatry is contrary to itself. The unbelievers said, that they worshipped the gods before their images; but unless they had tied the Godhead and power of God to images, and had hoped [1139] to be holpen thereby, would they have directed their prayers thither? Hereby it came also to pass, that one temple was more holy than another. They ran to Delphos that they might fet [fetch] the oracles of Apollo thence. Minerva had her seat and mansion at Athens. Now we see that Paul doth touch that false opinion, whereby men have always been deceived; because they feigned to themselves a carnal God.

This is the first entrance into the true knowledge of God, if we go without ourselves, and do not measure him by the capacity of our mind; yea, if we imagine nothing of him according to the understanding of our flesh, [1140] but place him above the world, and distinguish him from creatures. From which sobriety the whole world was always far; because this wickedness is in men, naturally to deform God's glory with their inventions. For as they be carnal and earthy, they will have one that shall be answerable to their nature. Secondly, after their boldness they fashion him so as they may comprehend him. By such inventions is the sincere and plain knowledge of God corrupt; yea, his truth, as saith Paul, is turned into a lie, (Romans 1:25.) For whosoever doth not ascend high above the world, he apprehendeth vain shadows and ghosts instead of God. Again, unless we be carried up into heaven with the wings of faith, we must needs vanish away in our own cogitations. And no marvel if the Gentiles were so grossly deluded and deceived, to include God in the elements of the world, after that they had pulled him out of his heavenly throne; seeing that the same befell the Jews, to whom notwithstanding the Lord had showed his spiritual glory. For it is not without cause that Isaiah doth chide them for including God within the walls of the temple, (Isaiah 66:1.) And we gather out of Stephen's sermon,

[1139] "An inde sperassent," could they have hoped?

[1140] "Pro sensu carnis nostrae," according to our carnal sense.

that this vice was common to all ages; which sermon is set down by Luke in the 7th chapter and 49th verse.

If any man asked the Jews whose grossness the Holy Ghost reproveth, if they thought that God was included in their temple, they would stoutly have denied that they were in any such gross error. But because they did only behold the temple, and did rise no higher in their minds, and trusting the temple, and did boast that God was as it were bound to them, the Spirit doth for good causes reprehend them, for tying him to the temple as If he were a mortal man. For this is true which I said even now, that superstition is contrary to itself, and that it doth vanish away into divers imaginations. Neither have the Papists at this day any defense, saying that wherewith their errors after a sort. In some, superstition doth feign that God dwelleth in temples made with hands, not that it will shut him up as it were in a prison; [1141] but because it doth dream of a carnal (or fleshly) God, and doth attribute a certain power to idols, and doth translate the glory of God unto external shows.

But if God do not dwell in temples made with hands, (2 Kings 19:15,) why doth he testify in so many places of Scripture, that he sitteth between the cherubims, and that the temple is his eternal rest? (Psalm 80:1; 132:14.) I answer, As he was not tied to any place, so he meant nothing less than to tie his people to earthly signs, but rather he cometh down to them that he might lift them up unto himself. Therefore, those men did wickedly abuse the temple and the ark, who did so behold those things that they stayed still upon the earth, and did depart from the spiritual worship of God. Hereby we see that there was great difference between those tokens of God's presence which men invented to themselves unadvisedly, and those which were ordained by God, because men do always incline downward, that they may lay hold upon [apprehend] God after a carnal manner; but God by the leading of his word doth lift them upward. Only he useth middle signs and tokens, whereby he doth insinuate himself with slow men, [1142] until they may ascend into heaven by degrees (and steps.)

25. *Neither is he worshipped with man's hands.* The same question which was answered of late concerning the temple, may now be objected touching ceremonies. For it seemeth that that may be translated unto the worshippings of the law of Moses, which Paul condemneth in the ceremonies of the Gentiles. But we may readily answer, that the faithful did never properly place the worship of God in ceremonies; but they did only count them helps wherewith they might exercise themselves according to their infirmity. When they did slay beasts, offered bread and drink offerings, light torches and other lights, they knew that godliness was not placed in these things, but being holpen by these, [1143] they did always look unto

[1141] "In ergastulis," in houses of hard labor.

[1142] "Familiariter… se insinuet," he may familiarly insinuate himself.

[1143] "Talibus rudimentis," by such rudiments.

the spiritual worship of God, and they made account of it alone. And God himself saith plainly in many places, that he doth not pass for any external or visible thing, that ceremonies are of themselves of no importance, and that he is worshipped no otherwise but by faith, a pure conscience, by prayer and thankfulness. What did the Gentiles then? to wit, when they erected images, they offered incense, they set forth plays, and laid their cushions before their idols, they thought they had fulfilled the offices of godliness excellent well. Not only the philosophers, but also the poets, do sometimes deride the folly of the common people, because they did disorderly place the worship of God in the pomp and gorgeousness of ceremonies. That I may omit infinite testimonies, that of Persius is well known:

"Tell me, ye priests to sacred rites, what profit gold doth bring? The same which Venus' puppets fine, certes no other thing. Why give not we to gods that which the blear-eyed issue could of great Messiah never give from out their dish of gold? Right justly deem'd a conscience clear, and heavenly thoughts of mind, A breast with mildness such adorn'd, as virtue hath assign'd, Let me in temples offer these, Then sacrifice the gods shall please."

And, undoubtedly, the Lord caused profane men to utter such speeches, that they might take away all color of ignorance. But it doth plainly appear, that those who spake thus did straightway slide back again unto common madness; yea, that they did never thoroughly understand what this meant. For though those who pass the common people in wit be enforced to confess that bare ceremonies are in no estimation, yet it is impossible to pull from them this persuasion, but that they will think that they be a part of the divine worship. Therefore, the more diligently they give themselves to such vanities, they do not doubt but that they do the duties of godliness well. Therefore, because all mortal men, from the highest to the lowest, do think that God is pacified with external things, and they will, with their own works, fulfill their duty towards him, that doth Paul refute. There is also a reason added, because, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, he needeth nothing, because, seeing that he giveth bread and life to men, he can receive nothing of them again. For what can they bring of their own, who, being destitute of all good things, have nothing but of his free goodness, yea, who are nothing but by his mere grace, who shall forthwith be brought to nought, if he withdraw the Spirit whereby they live? Whereupon it followeth, that they are not only dull, but too proud, if they thrust in themselves to worship God with the works of their own hands.

For whereas he saith, that alms and the duties of love are sweet-smelling sacrifices, that must be distinguished from the matter which we have now in hand, where Paul doth only intreat of the ceremonies which the unbelievers put in place of the spiritual worship of God. By life and breath is mean the life which men live so long as the soul and body are joined together.

Touching the end of the sentence, though some Greek books [1144] agree in this reading, [{κατα} {παντα}], "through all things;" yet that seemeth to me more agreeable which the old interpreter hath, [{κατα} {παντα}], "and all things," because it is both plainer, and doth also contain a more perfect and full doctrine. For thence we do better gather that men have nothing of their own; and also certain Greek copies agree thereto.

Acts 17:26-29

Acts 17:26-29

26. And hath made of one blood all mankind to dwell upon all the face of the earth, and hath appointed the times before determined, and the bounds of their habitation. 27. That they might seek God, if peradventure they may grope [after] him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. 28. For in him we live, move, and have our being; as certain of your poets said, For we be also his generation. 29. Therefore, seeing we be the generation of God, we must not think that the Godhead is like to gold, or silver, or to stone, graven by the cunning cogitation of man.

26. *And he hath made of one blood.* Paul doth now show unto the men of Athens to what end mankind was created, that he may by this means invite and exhort them to consider the end of their life. This is surely filthy unthankfulness of men, seeing they all enjoy the common life, not to consider to what end God hath given them life; and yet this beastly blockishness doth possess the more part, so that do not consider to what end they be placed in the world, neither do they remember the Creator of heaven and earth, whose good things they do devour. Therefore, after that Paul hath intreated of the nature of God, he putteth in this admonition in due season, that men must be very careful to know God, because they be created for the same end, and born for that purpose; for he doth briefly assign unto them this cause of life, to seek God. Again, forasmuch as there was not one kind of religion only in the world, but the Gentiles were distract into divers sects, he telleth them that this variety came from corruption. For to this end, in my judgment, tendeth that when he saith, that all were created of one blood. For consanguinity and the same original ought to have been a bond of mutual consent among them; but it is religion which doth most of all join men together, or cause them to fly one another's company. Whereupon it followeth, that they be revolted from nature who disagree so much in religion and the worship of God; because, wheresoever they be born, and whatsoever place [clime] of the world they inhabit, they have all one Maker and Father, who must be sought of all men with one consent. And surely neither distance of places, nor bounds of countries, nor diversity of manners, neither any cause of separation among men, doth make God unlike to himself. In sum, he meant to teach that the order of nature was broken, when as religion was

[1144] "Codices," manuscripts.

pulled in pieces among them, and that that diversity, which is among them, is a testimony that godliness is quite overthrown, because they are fallen away from God the Father of all, upon whom all kindred dependeth.

To dwell upon the face of the earth. Luke doth briefly gather, as he useth to do, the sum of Paul's sermon; and it is not to be doubted, but that Paul did first show that men are set here as upon a theater, to behold the works of God; and, secondly, that he spake of the providence of God, which doth show forth itself in the whole government of the world. For when he saith, that God appointeth the times ordained before, and the bounds of men's habitations, his meaning is, that this world is governed by his hand and counsel, and that men's affairs fall not out by chance, as profane men dream. And so we gather out of a few words of Luke, that Paul did handle most weighty matters. For when he saith that the times were ordained before by him, he doth testify that he had determined, before men were created, what their condition and estate should be. When we see divers changes in the world; when we see realms come to ruin, lands altered, cities destroyed, nations laid waste, we foolishly imagine that either fate or fortune beareth the swing in these matters; but God doth testify in this place by the mouth of Paul, that it was appointed before in his counsel how long he would have the state of every people to continue, and within what bounds he would have them contained. But and if he have appointed them a certain time and appointed the bounds of countries, undoubtedly he hath also set in order the whole course of their life.

And we must note, that Paul doth attribute to God not only a bare foreknowledge and cold speculation, as some men do indiscreetly, but he placeth the cause of those things which fall out, in his counsel and beck. For he saith not that the times were only foreseen, but that they were appointed and set in such order as pleased him best. And when he addeth also that God had appointed from the beginning those things which he had ordained before his meaning is, that he executeth by the power of his Spirit those things which he hath decreed in his counsel according to that:

"Our God is in heaven; he hath done whatsoever he would,"
(Psalm 115:3.)

Now, we see, as in a camp, every troop and band hath his appointed place, so men are placed upon earth, that every people may be content with their bounds, and that among these people every particular person may have his mansion. But though ambition have, oftentimes raged, and many, being incensed with wicked lust, have past their bounds, yet the lust of men hath never brought to pass, but that God hath governed all events from out of his holy sanctuary. For though men, by raging upon earth, do seem to assault heaven, that they may overthrow God's providence, yet they are enforced, whether they will or no, rather to establish the same. Therefore, let us know that the world is so turned over through divers tumults, that God doth at length bring all things unto the end which he hath appointed.

27. *That they might seek God.* This sentence hath two members; to wit, that it is man's duty to seek God; secondly, that God himself cometh forth to meet us, and doth show himself by such manifest tokens, that we can have no excuse for our ignorance. Therefore, let us remember that those men do wickedly abuse this life, and that they be unworthy to dwell upon earth, which do not apply their studies to seek him; as if every kind of brute beasts should fall from that inclination which they have naturally, which should for good causes be called monstrous. And, surely, nothing is more absurd, than that men should be ignorant of their Author, who are endued with understanding principally for this use. And we must especially note the goodness of God, in that he doth so familiarly insinuate himself, that even the blind may grope after him. For which cause the blindness of men is more shameful and intolerable, who, in so manifest and evident a manifestation, are touched with no feeling of God's presence. Whithersoever they cast their eyes upward or downward, they must needs light upon lively and also infinite images of God's power, wisdom, and goodness. For God hath not darkly shadowed his glory in the creation of the world, but he hath everywhere engraven such manifest marks, that even blind men may know them by groping. Whence we gather that men are not only blind but blockish, when, being helped by such excellent testimonies, they profit nothing.

Yet here ariseth a question, whether men can naturally come unto the true and merciful [1145] knowledge of God. For Paul doth give us to understand, that their own sluggishness is the cause that they cannot perceive that God is present; because, though they shut their eyes, yet may they grope after him. I answer, that their ignorance and blockishness is mixed with such frowardness, that being void of right judgment, they pass over without understanding all such signs of God's glory as appear manifestly both in heaven and earth. Yea, seeing that the true knowledge of God is a singular gift of his, and faith (by which alone he is rightly known) cometh only from the illumination of the Spirit, it followeth that our minds cannot pierce so far, having nature only for our guide. Neither doth Paul intreat in this place of the ability of men, but he doth only show that they be without excuse, when as they be so blind in such clear light, as he saith in the first chapter to the Romans, (Romans 1:20.) Therefore, though men's senses fail them in seeking out God, yet have they no cloak for their fault, because, though he offer himself to be handled and groped, they continue, notwithstanding, in a quandary; [1146] concerning which thing we have spoken more in the fourteenth chapter, (Acts 14:17.)

Though he be not far from every one of us. To the end he may the more touch the frowardness of men, he saith that God is not to be sought through many crooks, neither need we make any long journey to find him; because every man shall find him in himself, if so be that he will take any

[1145] "Liquidam," clear.

[1146] "Attoniti," in stupid amazement.

heed. By which experience we are convicted that our dullness is not without fault, which we had from the fault of Adam. For though no corner of the world be void of the testimony of God's glory, yet we need not go without ourselves to lay hold upon him. For he doth affect and move every one of us inwardly with his power in such sort, that our blockishness is like to a monster, in that in feeling him we feel him not. In this respect certain of the philosophers called man *the little world,* [a microcosm;] because he is above all other creatures a token of God's glory, replenished with infinite miracles.

28. *For in him.* I grant that the apostles, according to the Hebrew phrase, do oftentimes take this preposition *in* for per, or *by* or *through;* but because this speech, that we live in God, hath greater force, and doth express more, I thought I would not change it; for I do not doubt but that Paul's meaning is, that we be after a sort contained in God, because he dwelleth in us by his power. And, therefore, God himself doth separate himself from all creatures by this word *Jehovah,* that we may know that in speaking properly he is alone, and that we have our being in him, inasmuch as by his Spirit he keepeth us in life, and upholdeth us. For the power of the Spirit is spread abroad throughout all parts of the world, that it may preserve them in their state; that he may minister unto the heaven and earth that force and vigor which we see, and motion to all living creatures. Not as brain-sick men do trifle, that all things are full of gods, yea, that stones are gods; but because God doth, by the wonderful power and inspiration of his Spirit, preserve those things which he hath created of nothing. But mention is made in this place properly of men, because Paul said, that they needed not to seek God far, whom they have within them.

Furthermore, forasmuch as the life of man is more excellent than motion, and motion doth excel essence, [mere existence,] Paul putteth that in the highest place which was the chiefest, that he might go down by steps unto essence or being, thus, We have not only no life but in God, but not so much as moving; yea, no being, which is inferior to both. I say that life hath the pre-eminence in men, because they have not only sense and motion as brute beasts have, but they be endued with reason and understanding. Wherefore, the Scripture doth for good causes give that singular gift which God hath given us, a title and commendation by itself. So in John, when mention is made of the creation of all things, it is added apart, not without cause, that life was the light of men, (John 1:4.)

Now, we see that all those who know not God know not; because they have God present with them not only in the excellent gifts of the mind, but in their very essence; because it belongeth to God alone to be, all other things have their being in him. Also, we learn out of this place that God did not so create the world once that he did afterward depart from his work; but that it standeth by his power, and that the same God is the governor thereof who was the Creator. We must well think upon this continual comforting and strengthening, that we may remember God every minute.

Certain of your poets. He citeth half a verse out of Aratus, not so much for authority's sake, as that he may make the men of Athens ashamed; for such sayings of the poets came from no other fountain save only from nature and common reason. Neither is it any marvel if Paul, who spake unto men who were infidels and ignorant of true godliness, do use the testimony of a poet, wherein was extant a confession of that knowledge which is naturally engraven in men's minds. The Papists take another course. For they so lean to the testimonies of men, that they set them against the oracles of God; and they do not only make Jerome, or Ambrose and the residue of the holy fathers, masters of faith, but they will no less tie us to the stinking [vile] answers of their Popes than if God himself should speak. Yea, that which more s, they have not been afraid to give so great authority to Aristotle that the apostles and prophets were silent in their schools rather than he.

Now, that I may return unto this sentence which I have in hand, it is not to be doubted but that Aratus spake of Jupiter; neither doth Paul, in applying that unto the true God, which he spake unskillfully of his Jupiter, wrest it unto a contrary sense. For because men have naturally some perseverance of God, [1147] they draw true principles from that fountain. And though so soon as they begin to think upon God, they vanish away in wicked inventions, and so pure seed doth degenerate into corruptions; yet the first general knowledge of God doth nevertheless remain still in them. After this sort, no man of a sound mind can doubt to apply that unto the true God which we read in Virgil touching the reigned and false joy, that *All things are full of joy.* Yea, when Virgil meant to express the power of God, through error he put in a wrong name.

As touching the meaning of the words, it may be that Aratus did imagine that there was some parcel of the divinity in men's minds, as the Manichees did say, that the souls of men are of the nature of God. [1148] So when Virgil saith concerning the world, *The Spirit doth nourish within, and the mind being dispersed through all the joints, doth move your whole huge weight,* he doth rather play the philosopher, and subtilely dispute after the manner of Plato, than purely mean that the world is supported by the secret inspiration of God. But this invention ought not to have hindered Paul from retaining a true maxim, though it were corrupt with men's fables, that men are the generation of God, because by the excellency of nature they resemble some divine thing. This is that which the Scripture teacheth, that we are created after the image and similitude of God, (Genesis 1:27.) The same Scripture teacheth also, in many places, that we be made the sons of God by faith and free adoption when we are engrafted into the body of Christ, and being regenerate by the Spirit, we begin to be new creatures, (Galatians 3:26.) But as it giveth the same Spirit divers names because of his manifold graces, so no marvel if the word sons be diversely taken. All mortal men are called sons

[1147] "Aliquo Dei sensu imbuti sunt," are imbued with some knowledge of God

[1148] "Ex traduce Dei," are transferred from God.

in general, because they draw near to God in mind and understanding; but because the image of God is almost blotted out in them, so that there appear scarce any slender lines, [lineaments,] this name is by good right restrained unto the faithful, who having the Spirit of adoption given them, resemble their heavenly Father in the light of reason, in righteousness and holiness.

29. *Therefore seeing that.* He gathereth that God cannot be figured or resembled by any graven image forasmuch as he would have his image extant in us. For the soul wherein the image of God is properly engraven cannot be painted; therefore it is a thing more absurd to go about to paint God. Now, we see what great injury they do to God which give him a bodily shape; when as man's soul, which doth scarce resemble a small sparkle of the infinite glory of God, cannot be expressed in any bodily shape.

Furthermore, forasmuch as it is certain that Paul doth in this place inveigh against the common superstition of all the Gentiles, because they would worship God under bodily shapes, we must hold this general doctrine that God is falsely and wickedly transfigured, and that his truth is turned into a lie so often as his Majesty is represented by any visible shape; as the same Paul teacheth in the first chapter to the Romans, (Romans 1:23.) And though the idolaters of all times wanted not their cloaks and colors, yet that was not without cause always objected to them by the prophets which Paul doth now object that God is made like to wood, or stone or gold, when there is any image made to him of dead and corruptible matter. The Gentiles used images that, according to their rudeness, they might better conceive that God was nigh unto them. But seeing that God doth far surpass the capacity of our mind, whosoever attempteth with his mind to comprehend him, he deformeth and disfigureth his glory with a wicked and false imagination. Wherefore, it is wickedness to imagine anything of him according to our own sense. Again, that which worse is, it appeareth plainly that men erect pictures and images to God for no other cause, save only because they conceive some carnal thing of him, wherein he is blasphemed.

The Papists also are at this day no whit more excusable. For what colors soever they invent to paint and color those images, whereby they go about to express God, yet because they be enwrapped in the same error, wherein the men of old time were entangled, they be urged with the of the prophets. And that the heathen did use the same excuses in times past, wherewith the Papists go about to cover themselves at this day, it is well known out of their own books. Therefore, the prophets do not escape the mocks of certain, as if they laid too great grossness to their charge, yea, burthen them with false accusations; but when all things are well weighed, those who will judge rightly shall find, that whatsoever starting holes [evasions] even the most witty men have sought, yet were they taken with this madness, that God is well pleased with the sacrifice done before images. Whereas we, with Erasmus, translate it *numen,* Luke putteth [{θειον}] in the neuter gender for divinity or godhead. When Paul denieth that God is like to gold, or silver,

or stone, and addeth afterward, *graven* by cunning or invention of man, he excludeth both matter and form, and doth also condemn all inventions of men, which disfigure the true nature of God.

Acts 17:30-34

Acts 17:30-34

30. And though God have winked at the times of this ignorance hitherto, he willeth all men everywhere to repent now: 31. Because he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath appointed; having fulfilled his promise to all men, when he raised him up. from the dead. 32. And when they had heard the resurrection, of the dead, some mocked; and other some said, We will hear thee of this again. 33. So Paul went out from among them; 34. yet certain joining themselves to him believed: among whom was both Dionysius, Areopagita, and a woman named Dam ark, and others with them.

30. *And the times of this ignorance* Because that is commonly thought to be good which hath been used of long time, and is approved by the common consent of all men; it might have been objected to Paul, why dost thou disannul those things which have been received, and used continually since the beginning of the world? and whom canst thou persuade that the whole world hath been deceived so long? as is no kind of abomination so filthy, which the Papists do not think to be well fortified with this buckler. Paul preventeth [1149] this question; showing that men went astray so long therefore, because God did not reach out his hand from heaven, that he might bring them back again into the way. It may seem an inconvenient [a strange] thing, that men endued with reason and judgment should err so grossly and filthily in a most weighty matter. But Paul's meaning is, that men do never make an end of erring, until God do help them. And now he assigneth no other cause why he did not redress this any sooner, save only his good pleasure.

And assuredly we be not able to comprehend the reason why God did at a sudden set up the light of his doctrine, when he suffered men to walk in darkness four thousand years; at least seeing the Scripture doth conceal it, let us here make more account of sobriety than of preposterous wisdom. For they go about to bring God within bounds, which is a most unseemly thing, and contrary to nature herself, whosoever they be that will not suffer him to speak or hold his peace at his pleasure. Again, those that will not be content with his wisdom and secret counsel, must needs murmur against Paul, who teacheth manifestly that ignorance did reign in the world, so long as it pleased God to wink at it. Other some interpret it otherwise, that God did spare ignorance, as if he did wink, being unwilling to punish it; but that surmise is altogether contrary to Paul's meaning and purpose, who meant not to lessen man's fault, but to magnify the grace of God which did

[1149] "Anticipat," anticipates.

appear at a sudden, and it is proved to be false out of other places, because those who have sinned without law shall notwithstanding perish without law, (Romans 2:12.)

In some, Paul's words carry with them this meaning only, that men were set upon blindness, until God did reveal himself unto them; and that we ought not too curiously and boldly to demand and require the cause why he put away darkness no sooner; but that whatsoever pleased him ought seem to us right and equal without making any more ado. For though this be a hard speech that men were miserably deceived long time, whilst that God made as though he saw it not, yet must we be content with, and stay ourselves upon his providence. And if at any time there come upon us a vain and perverse desire to know more than is meet for us, let us straightway call to mind that which Paul teacheth in many places, that it was a mystery hid since the beginning of the world, in that the light of the gospel did appear to the Gentiles at a sudden, (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:9;) and that this is a token of the manifold wisdom of God, which swalloweth up all the senses of men. Again, let us remember that it doth not lessen the fault of men, because God would not heal their errors; forasmuch as their own conscience shall always hold them convict, that they cannot escape just damnation. And Paul (not that he might lay the fault and blame upon God, but that he might cut off occasion of curious and hurtful questions) said, that the world did err whilst God did wink. And hereby we learn how reverently we ought to think of God's providence, lest any man should be so bold, as man's nature is proud, to demand a reason of God of his works.

Furthermore, this admonition is no less profitable for us than for the men of that time. The enemies of the gospel, when it beginneth to spring again, count it a great absurdity that God did suffer men to go astray so long under the apostasy of the Pope, as if (though there appear no reason) it were not as lawful for him now to wink at men's ignorance as in times past. And we must principally note to what end he saith this; to wit, that the ignorance of former times may not hinder us from obeying God without delay when he speaketh. Most men think that they have a fair color for their error, so they have their fathers to keep them company, or so they get some patronage or defense by long custom; yea, they would willingly creep out here, [1150] that they may not obey the word of God. But Paul saith, that we not fet [seek] an excuse from our fathers' ignorance when God speaketh unto us; because, though they be not guiltless before God, yet our sluggishness is more intolerable if we be blind at noonday, and lie as deaf, or as if we were asleep, when the trumpet of the gospel doth sound. [1151]

Now he willeth all men. In these words Paul teacheth that we must give ear to God so soon as he speaketh, as it is written, "Today, if ye will hear

[1150] "Imo libenter et cupide hoc captant effugium," nay, they willingly and eagerly catch at this subterfuge.

[1151] "Clangente evangelii tuba," during the clang of the gospel trumpet.

his voice harden not your hearts," (Psalm 95:7,8; Hebrews 3:7,8.) For the stubbornness of those men is without excuse, who foreslow [neglect] this opportunity when God doth gently call them unto him. Also, we gather out of this place to what end the gospel is preached, to wit, that God may gather us to himself from the former errors of our life. Therefore, so oft as the voice of the gospel doth sound in our ears, let us know that God doth exhort us unto repentance. We must also note that he attributeth to God the person of the speaker, though he do it by man. For otherwise the gospel hath not so full authority as the heavenly truth deserveth, save only when our faith doth look unto him who is the governor of the prophetical function, and doth depend upon his mouth.

31. *Because he hath appointed a day.* He maketh mention of the last judgment, that he may awake them out of their dream. For we know how hard a matter it is for men to deny themselves. Therefore, they must be violently enforced unto repentance, which cannot be done better than when they be cited to appear before God's judgment-seat, and that fearful judgment is set before them, which they may neither despise nor escape. Therefore, let us remember that the doctrine of repentance doth then take place, when men, who would naturally desire to flatter themselves, are awaked with fear of God's judgment and that none are fit teachers of the gospel but those who are the criers or apparitors of the highest Judge, who bring those who are to come the Judge to plead their cause, and denounce the judgment hanging over their heads, even as if it were in their own hand. Neither is this added in vain, *in righteousness,* or *righteously.* For though all men in the world confess that God is a just Judge, yet we see how they, for the most part, pamper and flatter themselves; for they will not suffer God to demand an account farther than their knowledge and understanding doth reach. Therefore, Paul's meaning is, that men do profit themselves nothing by vain flattery; because they shall not prejudice God's justice by this means, which showeth that all that is an abomination before God which seemeth goodly in the sight of men, because he will not follow the decrees of men, but that form which himself hath appointed.

By the man whom he hath appointed. It is not to be doubted but that Paul spake more largely concerning Christ, that the Athenians might know that he is the Son of God, by whom salvation was brought to the world, and who had all power given him in heaven and earth; otherwise this speech, which we read here, should have had but small force to persuade. But Luke thought it sufficient to gather the sum of the sermon briefly. Yet is it to be thought that Paul spake first concerning the grace of Christ and that he did first preach him to be the Redeemer of men, before he made him a Judge. But because Christ is oftentimes contemned, when he offereth himself to be a Redeemer, Paul denounceth that he will once sharply punish such wicked contempt, because the whole world must be judged by him. The word [{ὁριζειν}] may be referred, as well unto the secret counsel of God,

as unto external manifestation. Yet because the former exposition is more common, I do willingly embrace the same; to wit, that God, by his eternal decree, hath ordained his Son to be the Judge of the world; and that to the end the reprobate, who refuse to be ruled by Christ, may learn that they strive but in vain against the decree of God, which cannot be broken. But because nothing seemeth more strange to men, than that God shall judge in the person of man, Paul addeth afterward, that dignity of Christ, which were hard to be believed, was approved by his resurrection.

The will of God alone ought to be so reverenced among us, that every man for himself subscribe to his decrees without delay. Because the cloak and color of ignorance useth oftentimes to be objected, therefore Paul saith plainly, that Christ was by his resurrection openly showed to be the Judge of the world, and that that was revealed to the eyes of men, which God had before determined with himself concerning him. For that point of doctrine, which Luke toucheth briefly in few words, was handled by Paul at large. He said not only in a word that Christ rose from death, but he did also intreat of the power of his resurrection as was meet. For to what end did Christ rise, but that he might be the first fruits of those which rise again? (1 Corinthians 15:23.) And to what end shall we rise again, but either to life or death? Whereupon it followeth, that Christ by his resurrection is declared and proved to be the Judge of the world.

32. *Some mocked.* By this we see how great the carelessness of men is, whom neither the tribunal-seat of God, nor the majesty of the highest [supreme] Judge, doth make afraid, (Acts 26:23.) We have said that this is a most sharp prick, wherewith men's minds are pricked forward to fear God, when his judgment is set before their eyes; but there is such unspeakable hardness in the contemners, that they are not afraid to count that a fable or lie which is spoken concerning the giving of an account of our life once. [1152] Notwithstanding, there is no cause why the ministers of the gospel should omit. [1153] the preaching of the judgment which is enjoined them. Though the wicked do laugh and mock, yet this doctrine, which they go about to make of none effect, shall so gird them, that they shall at length perceive that they have striven in vain with their snare. [1154] And no marvel if this point of Paul's doctrine were derided at Athens; for it is a mystery hid from men's minds, whereon the chiefest philosophers did never think, neither can we otherwise comprehend it, than when we lift up the eyes of faith unto the infinite power of God. And yet Paul's sermon was not altogether without fruit; because there were some of the hearers which were desirous to profit and go forward. For when they say that they will hear him again, their meaning is, that though they were not as yet thoroughly persuaded, yet had they some taste, which did provoke them to be desirous to profit. Surely

[1152] "De reddenda semel vitae ratione," about one day rendering an account of our lives.
[1153] "Supersedant," supersede.
[1154] "Laqueo," snare or fetter.

this desire was contrary to loathsomeness. [1155]

34. *Among whom was also Dionysius.* Seeing that Luke doth name one man and one woman only, it appeareth that there was but a small number of those which believed at the first. For those other of whom he maketh mention remained indifferent; because they did neither wholly despise Paul's doctrine, neither were they so thoroughly touched, that they joined themselves unto him that they might be his scholars. Luke maketh mention of Dionysius above the rest, because he was in no small authority among his citizens. Therefore, it is likely that Damaris was also a woman of some renown, [rank.]

Furthermore, it is ridiculous in that the Papists [have] made of a judge an astrologer. But this is to be imputed partly to their ignorance, partly to their boldness, [1156] who, seeing they knew not what Areopagus or Mars' Street meant, took to themselves liberty to feign whatsoever they would. And their rudeness is too gross, who ascribe the books of the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchy, and of the names of God, to this Dionysius. For the heavenly hierarchy is stuffed not only with many doltish and monkish trifles, but also with many absurd inventions, and wicked speculations. And the books of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy do themselves declare that they were made many years after, when as the purity of Christianity was corrupt with an huge heap of ceremonies. As for the book of the names of God, though it have in it some things which are not altogether to be despised, yet it doth rather breathe out subtilties than sound godliness.

[1155] "Fastidio," fastidiousness or disdain.

[1156] "Audaciae," effrontery.

Chapter 18

CHAPTER 18

Acts 18:1-5

Acts 18:1-5

1. After this Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinthus. 2. And having gotten a certain Jew called Aquila, born in Pontus, who came [had come] lately from Italy, and Priscilla, his wife, (because Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) he came unto them. 3. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought; and they were tent-makers. 4. And he disputed in the synagogue every Sabbath day, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks,: 5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was forced in the spirit, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

1. This history is worthy to be remembered even for this one cause, because it containeth the first beginning of the Church of Corinthus, which, as it was famous for good causes, both because of the multitude of men, and also because of the excellent gifts bestowed upon them, so there were in it gross and shameful vices. Furthermore, Luke showeth in this place with what great labor, and how hardly, Paul did win the same to Christ. It is well known what a rich city Corinthus was by reason of the noble mart, how populous, how greatly given to pleasure. And the old proverb doth testify that it was sumptuous and full of riot: All men cannot go to Corinthus. When Paul entereth the same, what hope, I pray you, can he conceive? He is a simple man, unknown, having no eloquence or pomp, showing no wealth or power. In that that huge gulf doth not swallow up his and desire which he had to spread abroad the gospel, by this we gather that he was furnished with wonderful power of the Spirit of God; and also that God wrought by his hand after a heavenly manner, and not after any human manner. Wherefore he boasteth not without cause, that the Corinthians are the seal of his apostleship, (1 Corinthians 9:2.) For they be twice blind, who do not acknowledge that the glory of God did more plainly appear in such a simple and base kind of dealing; and he himself showed no small token of invincible constancy, when, being vexed with the mocks of all men, (as the proud did contemn him,) he did notwithstanding stay himself upon God's help alone. But it is worth the labor to note all the circum-stances, as Luke setteth down the same in order.

2. *A Jew called Aquila.* This was no small trial, in that Paul findeth none at Corinthus to lodge him save Aquila, who had been twice exiled. For being born in Pontus, he forsook his country, and sailed over the sea, that he might dwell at Rome. He was compelled to depart thence again by the commandment of Claudius Caesar. Though the commodiousness of the city was such, the plenty so great, the situation so pleasant, and there were also so many Jews there, yet Paul found no more fit host than a man that had been banished out of his own country, and also out of another soil. [1157] If we compare the great fruit which ensued immediately upon his preaching with such a base entrance, the power of the Spirit of God shall [more] plainly appear. Also we may see how the Lord, by his singular counsel, turneth those things to his glory, and the salvation of the godly, which seem contrary to the flesh, and unhappy. [1158] Nothing is more miserable than exile, according to the sense of the flesh. But it was far better for Aquila to be Paul's companion, than to be in the highest office either at Rome or in his country. Therefore, this happy calamity of Aquila doth teach us, that the Lord doth often better provide for when he doth sharply punish [1159] us, than if he should most gently entreat us, and when he tosseth us to and fro in most extreme exile, [1160] that he may bring us unto the heavenly rest.

All Jews to depart from Rome. The estate of that nation was then very miserable, so that it is a wonder that they did not almost all depart from the worship of God. But this is a greater wonder, that the religion wherein they had been brought up prevailed against Caesar's tyranny, and that so soon as Christ, the Sun of righteousness, did arise, few were turned unto him. Notwithstanding, I do not doubt but that the Lord suffered them [1161] to pass through many troubles, that they might the more willingly, yea, the more greedily receive the grace of redemption offered them; but the more part [1162] became dull in their misery, [1163] few did submit themselves to be taught when the Lord did punish them, as did Aquila and Priscilla. Yet, if Suetonius say the truth, they were expelled through hatred of the name of Christ, and so calamity might have more provoked and angered a great part, because they were wrongfully accused for that religion which they did detest.

3. *They were of the same trade.* This place teacheth that Paul, before he came to Corinth, was wont to work with his hands; and that not upon pleasure, but that he might get his living with his handiwork. It is not known where he first learned his occupation; notwithstanding it appeareth by his own testimony that he wrought principally at Corinth. And he showeth a

[1157] "Alieno solo," a foreign soil.
[1158] "Infausta," ill-omened, unpropitious.
[1159] "Affligit," afflict.
[1160] "Per dura exilia," through the hardships of exile.
[1161] "Consulto…passus fuerit," purposely suffered.
[1162] "Ut fieri solet," as is usual, omitted.
[1163] "In suis malis obstupuit," were stupified by their calamities.

reason, because the false apostles taught freely without taking any thing, that they might craftily creep in, therefore the holy man would not give place to them in that point, lest he should cause the gospel of Christ to be evil spoken of, (1 Corinthians 9:12,15.) But we may easily gather out of this place, that whithersoever he came, (until he was occupied in the continual labor of teachings) he wrought of his occupation, that he might get his living. When Chrysostom saith that Paul was a cordiner he doth no whit dissent from Luke, because they were wont at that time to make tents of skins.

4. *He disputed in the synagogue* It is a wonder how that crept in which is in the Latin books, [1164] that Paul put in the name of Christ: unless it were because some reader would supply the want of the general sentence. For Luke setteth down two things in this place: to wit, that Paul disputed among the Jews; secondly, that he began more plainly to profess Christ after that Silas and Timotheus were come. And though it be likely that he began to speak of Christ even at the first entrance, because he could not omit the principal point of the heavenly doctrine, yet that doth not hinder but that he might use some other manner of disputation. Therefore I take [{πειθειν}] that is, to *persuade,* for *to induce by little and little.* For, in my judgment, Luke doth signify, that forasmuch as the Jews did handle the law coldly and foolishly, Paul spake of the corrupt and wicked nature of man, of the necessity of grace of the Redeemer which was promised, of the means to obtain salvation, that he might awake them; for this is a fit and brief [1165] preparation unto Christ. Again, when he saith that he was forced in spirit to teach that Jesus was Christ, his meaning is, that he was enforced with greater vehemency to intreat and speak of Christ freely and openly. So that we see that Paul did not utter all things at one time, but he tempered his doctrine as occasion did serve.

And because like moderation is profitable at this day, it is convenient for faithful teachers wisely to consider where to begin, lest a preposterous and confused order do hinder the proceeding of doctrine. Furthermore, though there were ferventness enough in Paul, yet it is no inconvenient thing that he was made more courageous by some new help, not that he was *encouraged* by shame, or the hope which he reposed in his fellows, but because he considered that this help was sent him, as it were, from heaven. But this forcing in the spirit is not taken for a violent or external impulsion, (as they say, [1166]) as those which were called Phoebades and frantic men were wont to be carried away with devilish madness; but there was more ferventness added unto the wonted inspiration of the Spirit which was in Paul, so that he was moved with new power of God, and yet did he of his own accord follow the Spirit as his guide. Whereas Paul did testify that Jesus is Christ, I expound it

[1164] "Mirum est unde repserit quod legitur in Latinis codicibus," it is strange how the reading crept into the Latin manuscripts.

[1165] "Concinna," appropriate.

[1166] "Pro violento impulsu et extrinseco ut loquuntur," for a violent and extrinsic impulse, as it is called.

thus: when he had thoroughly taught the Jews concerning the office of the Redeemer, he declared by testimonies of Scripture that this is he which was to be hoped for, because all those things agree to him which the law and the prophets attribute to Christ. Therefore, he did not simply affirm, but using a solemn testification, he proved Jesus, the Son of Mary, to be that Christ who should be the Mediator between God and men, that he might restore the world from destruction to life.

Acts 18:6-11

Acts 18:6-11

6. And when they gainsayed him, and railed upon him, shaking his garments, he said unto them, Your blood be upon your own head; I will go henceforth clean unto the Gentiles. 7. And going thence, he entered into the house of a certain man named Justus, a worshipper of God, whose house joined to the synagogue. 8. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household: and many of the Corinthians which heard believed, and were baptized. 9. And the Lord said by night, by a vision, to Paul, Fear not, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10. Because I am with thee, and no man shall lay hand on thee to hurt thee: because I have much people in this city. 11. And he remained there a year and six months, teaching them the word of the Lord.

6. *When they gainsayed.* The Jews suffered Paul after a sort until he came unto the manifest preaching of Christ. And here brake out their rage. And we must note the speech, that they go from gainsaying unto blaspheming and railing. For it falleth out thus for the most part, when men take to themselves such liberty, that the devil doth inflame them by little and little unto greater madness. For which cause, we must take good heed that no wicked lust or desire provoke us to resist the truth; and, above all, let that horrible judgment terrify us which the Spirit of God thundereth out by the mouth of Paul against all rebels. For undoubtedly, in that Paul by shaking his garments gave some token of detestation, it was no human or private indignation, but zeal kindled by God in his heart; yea, God raised him up to be a preacher and setter forth of his vengeance, to the end the enemies of the word might know that they should not escape scot free for their stubbornness. We spake somewhat touching this sign of execration or cursing in the thirteenth chapter, (Acts 13:51.) Let the readers repair thither. The sum is, that God is sorer displeased with contempt of his word than with any wickedness. And surely, men be quite past hope when they tread under foot, or drive from them, the only remedy of all evils and maladies. Now, as the Lord cannot abide rebellion against his word, so it ought to sting and nettle us full sore. My meaning is this, that when the wicked enter combat with God, and, as it were, arm themselves to resist, we are called, as it were, by the heavenly trumpet unto the conflict, because there is nothing more filthy

than that the wicked should mock God to his face, whilst we say nothing, and that they should even break out into reproaches and blasphemies.

Your blood. He denounceth to them vengeance, because they be without excuse. For they can shift no part of their fault from themselves, after that despising the calling of God they have endeavored to put out the light of life. Therefore, seeing they bear the blame of their own destruction, he doth also affirm that they shall be punished. And in saying that he is clean, he testifieth that he hath done his duty, it is well known what the Lord giveth all his ministers in charge in Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 3:18.) If thou show not unto the wicked that he may convert, [1167] I will require his blood at thy hand. Therefore Paul (because he did what he could to bring the Jews to repentance) doth acquit himself of all guiltiness. And by these words, teachers are warned that unless they will be guilty of blood before the Lord, they must do what in them lieth to bring those which go astray into the way, and that they suffer nothing to perish through ignorance.

I will go undo the Gentiles. Though the Jews had showed themselves to be most ready to be taught, yet ought Paul to have employed himself to teach the Gentiles, whose apostle and minister he was made; but here he expresseth the passage whereby he withdrew himself from the stubborn Jews for all. For he observed this course in teaching, that beginning with the Jews he might couple the Gentiles with them in the society of faith, and so might make of both together one body of the Church. When there remained no hope to do any good among the Jews, then the Gentiles only remained. Therefore, the sense is this, that they must be deprived of their own inheritance, that it may be given to the Gentiles, and so be wounded, partly that being stricken with fear, yea, being cast down, [1168] they might come to soundness of mind; partly that the emulation or striving of the Gentiles might prick them forward unto repentance. But because they were incurable, reproach and shame served for this purpose only to bring them into despair.

7. *Departing thence.* Paul did not change his lodging which he had with Priscilla and Aquila, because he was weary of their company; but that he might more familiarly insinuate himself and come in favor with the Gentiles. For I suspect that this Justus, of whom Luke maketh mention, was rather a Gentile than a Jew. Neither doth the highness of the synagogue any whit hinder; for the Jews were scattered abroad, so that they had no certain place of the city to dwell in. Yea, it seemeth that Paul did make choice of the house which did join to the synagogue, that he might the more nettle the Jews. The title and commendation ascribed to Justus confirmeth this opinion; for it is said that he was a worshipper of God. For though the Jews had not sincere religion, yet because they did all profess the worship of God, it might have seemed that godliness took place commonly in all the whole

[1167] "Si non annunciaveris ut se convertat," if you do not warn the wicked to be converted.
[1168] "Confusi," confounded.

nation. But because it was a rare matter among the Gentiles to worship God if any drew near unto true godliness, he hath this singular testimony given him which is set against idolatry. Also, I think that the Corinthians, of whom Luke speaketh shortly after, were Gentiles. Nevertheless, lest we should think that Paul's labor was altogether fruitless which he bestowed among the Jews, Luke reckoneth up two of them which believed, Crispus and Sosthenes, of whom Paul himself speaketh in the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 1:1,14.) For in his salutation he maketh Sosthenes his fellow in office, after that he saith that he baptized Crispus. I take it that he is called the ruler of the synagogue, not as if he alone did bear rule and had the government, because Sosthenes hath the same title given him shortly after, but because he was one of the chief men.

9. *And the Lord said.* Though the fruit of Paul's doctrine (in that he gained some daily to Christ) might have encouraged him to go forward, yet is the heavenly oracle added for his farther confirmation. Whence we gather that there were great combats set before him, and that he was sore tossed divers ways. For the Lord did never, without cause, [1169] pour out his oracles; neither was it an ordinary thing with Paul to have visions, but the Lord used this kind of remedy when necessity did so require; and the thing itself doth show that there laid upon the holy man a great weight of business, under which he might not only sweat but almost faint, unless he had been set on foot again, and refreshed with some new help. And it is not without cause that he saith that his coming was base and contemptible, and that he was conversant there in fear and trembling, (1 Corinthians 2:3.) For mine own part, I think thus, that the wonderful power of the Spirit, wherewith Paul was endued before, was holpen with the oracle. Furthermore, forasmuch as the Scripture distinguisheth visions from dreams, as it appeareth by the twelfth chapter of the book of Numbers, (Numbers 12:6,) Luke meaneth by this word *vision,* that when Paul was in a trance he saw a certain shape or form whereby he knew that God was present with him. Assuredly, it is not to be doubted but that God appeared by some sign.

Fear not. This exhortation showeth that Paul had cause of fear ministered unto him; for it had been a superfluous thing to correct fear, or to will him not to fear when all was well and quiet, and especially in a man so willing and ready.

Furthermore, when the Lord (to the end he may have his servant to do his duty faithfully and stoutly) beginneth with restraining fear, by this we gather that nothing is more contrary to the pure and free preaching of the gospel than the straits of a faint heart. And surely experience doth show that none are faithful and courageous ministers of the word whom this fault doth hinder; and that those only are rightly prepared and addressed to teach to whom it is granted with boldness and courage of heart to overcome all manner [of] danger. In which respect, he writeth to Timothy that the spirit

[1169] "Temere," at random.

of fear is not given to the preachers of the gospel, but of power, and love, and sobriety, (2 Timothy 1:7.) Therefore, we must note the connection of words, Fear not, but speak, which is all one as if he should have said, Let not fear let thee to speak. And because fear doth not only make us altogether without tongue, but doth so bind us that we cannot purely and freely speak that which is needful. Christ touched both briefly. Speak, (saith he,) and hold not thy peace; that is, speak not with half thy mouth, as it is in the common proverb. But in these words there is prescribed to the ministers of the word of God a common rule, that they expound and lay open plainly, and without color or dissimulation, whatsoever the Lord will have made known to his Church; yea, let them keep back nothing which may make for the edifying or increase of God's Church.

10. *Because I am.* This is the former reason why Paul, having subdued fear, must manfully and stoutly do his duty, because he hath God on his side. Whereto answereth the rejoicing of David,

"If I shall walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear none ill: because thou art with me," (Psalm 23:4.)

Again,

"If tents be pitched about me," etc., (Psalm 27:3.)

The question is, whether he did not perceive that God was present with him elsewhere, as he had had experience of his help in divers places. For the promise is general,

"I am with you until the end of the world,"
(Matthew 28:20.)

Neither is it lawful for us to mistrust so often as we obey his calling, but that he will be present with us. But it is an usual thing with the Lord to apply that unto certain kinds when the matter so requireth, which he hath promised to do in all affairs; and we know that when we come to the push, then are we most desirous of help. Moreover, these two members are joined together, "I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee." For it falleth out sometimes that God doth help us, and yet doth he, to look to, suffer us to be oppressed, as he forsook not Paul even in the midst of death; and here he promiseth the peculiar defense of his hand, whereby he shall be preserved from the violence of his enemies.

But the question is, whether Paul needed any such confirmation, who ought to have been willing to enter [undergo] all manner [of] dangers. For what if he had been to suffer death, should he therefore have fainted through fear? I answer, that if at any time God pronounce that his servants shall be safe for a time, that doth no whit hinder, but that they may prepare themselves to suffer death valiantly; but as we distinguish between profitable and necessary, so we must note that there be some promises, which, if the faithful want, they must needs faint and sink down; [1170] and that other some are added when it is expedient so to be, which, though they be taken

[1170] "Penitus," altogether.

away, (because the grace of God doth nevertheless remain firm and sure,) the faith of the godly doth not fail. After this sort, Paul is commanded not to fear, because his enemies shall not touch him; and if so be he should have been oppressed even then with their violence, yet would he not have been afraid, but God would have his boldness and courage to increase even by this, because he should be without danger. If at any time the Lord bear with us so far forth, we are not to despise such a comfort of our infirmity. In the mean season, let this be sufficient for us to tread under foot all corrupt fear of the flesh, that so long as we fight under his banner we cannot be forsaken of him. And when it is said, "No man shall gainstand thee to do thee hurt," the Lord doth not mean that he shall be free from violence and tumult whom the Jews did afterward deadly invade; but his meaning is, that their attempts shall be frustrate, because the Lord had determined to deliver him out of their hands. Therefore, we must fight stoutly that we may win the field. [1171]

Because I have much people. The second reason why he should take a good heart is, because the Lord will raise up a great and populous church there, though it be to be doubted whether this member depend upon that which goeth next before; for the text will run fitly thus, Because the Lord determined by the hand of Paul to gather together a great church, he would not suffer the enemies to interrupt the course of his labors, as if he should have said, I will help thee, that thou mayest not fail my people whose minister I have appointed thee to be. I do willingly embrace this exposition, that divers reasons are not inferred which are to be read apart, but that they be so distinguished that they agree together. Furthermore, the Lord calleth those his people, who, though they might then for good causes be counted strangers, yet because they were written in the book of life, and were forthwith to be admitted into his family, they have this title given them not improperly. For we know that many sheep wander without the flock for a time, as the sheep have many wolves among them. Therefore whom the Lord determined shortly after to gather to himself, those doth he take for his people in respect of their future faith. But let us remember, that those are engrafted into the body of Christ who appertain unto the same by the eternal adoption of God; as it is written,

"Thine they were and thou gavest them me" (John 17:6.)

11. *He continued there a year.* We do not read that Paul stayed so long anywhere else save there; and yet it appeareth by his two epistles that he was not only likely to suffer much troubles, but that he had suffered many unjust and unmeet things by reason of the pride and unthankfulness of the people, so that we see that there was no part of warfare wherein the Lord did not wonderfully exercise him. Also, we gather what a hard and laborious matter the edifying of the Church is, seeing that the most excellent workmaster spent so much time about the laying of the foundation of one church only.

[1171] "Victoria," victory.

Neither doth he boast that he had finished the work, but that the Lord had put others in his place, that they might build upon his foundation; as he saith afterwards that he had planted, and that Apollos had watered, (1 Corinthians 3:6.)

Acts 18:12-17

Acts 18:12-17

12. Now when Gallio was deputy of Achaia, the Jews rose with one accord against Paul, and brought him before the judgment-seat, 13. Saying, This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14. And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto them, If it were any injury or wicked fact, O Jews, I would according to reason maintain you: 15. But if it be a question of words and names, and your law, look ye to it yourselves; for I will be no judge in these matters. 16. And he drove them from the judgment-seat. 17. And when all the Greeks had caught Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, they smote him before the judgment-seat. Neither did Gallio care for any of these things.

12. *When Gallio.* Either the change of the deputy did encourage the Jews to wax more proud and insolent, as froward men use to abuse new things that they may procure some tumult, or else hoping that the judge would favor them, they brake the peace and silence at a sudden, which had continued one whole year. And the sum of the accusation is, that Paul went about to bring in a false kind of worship contrary to the law. Now, the question is, whether they spake of the law of Moses or of the rites used in the empire of Rome. Because this latter thing seemeth to me to be cold, [1172] I do rather receive that, that they burdened Paul with this crime that he brake and altered the worship prescribed in the law of God, and that to the end they might hit him in the teeth with novelty or innovation. And surely Paul had been worthy to have been condemned if he had gone about any such thing; but forasmuch as it is most certain that they did treacherously and wickedly slander the holy man, they endeavored to cover an evil cause with an honest excuse. We know how straitly the Lord commandeth in the law, how he will have his servants to worship him. Therefore, to depart from that rule is sacrilege. But forasmuch as Paul never meant to add to or take away anything from the law, he is unjustly accused of this fault. Whence we gather, that though the faithful themselves never so uprightly and blamelessly, yet can they not escape false and slanderous reports until they be admitted to purge themselves. But Paul was not only unworthily and falsely slandered by the adversaries, but when he would have refuted their impudency and false reports, his mouth was stopped by the deputy. Therefore he was enforced to depart from the judgment-seat without defending himself. And Gallio refuseth to hear the cause, not for any evil will he bare to Paul, but because

[1172] "Et coactum," and forced.

it was not agreeable to the office of the deputy to give judgment concerning the religion of every province. For though the Romans could not enforce the nations which were subject to them to observe their rites, yet lest they should seem to allow that which they did tolerate, they forbade their magistrates to meddle with this part of jurisdiction.

Here we see what the ignorance of true godliness doth in setting in order the state of every commonwealth and dominion. All men confess that this is the principal thing that true religion be in force and flourish. Now, when the true God is known, and the certain and sure rule of worshipping him is understood, there is nothing more equal [1173] than that which God commandeth in his law, to wit, that those who bear rule with power (having abolished contrary superstitions) defend the pure worship of the true God. But seeing that the Romans did observe their rites only through pride and stubbornness, and seeing they had no certainty where there was no truth, they thought that this was the best way [1174] they could take if they should grant liberty to those who dwelt in the provinces to live as they listed. But nothing is more absurd than to leave the worship of God to men's choice. Wherefore, it was not without cause that God commanded by Moses that the king should cause a book of the law to be written out for himself, (Deuteronomy 17:18;) to wit, that being well instructed, and certain of his faith, he might with more courage take in hand to maintain that which he knew certainly was right.

15. *Of words and names.* These words are not well packed together. Yet Gallio speaketh thus of the law of God by way of contempt, as if the Jewish religion did consist only in words and superfluous questions. And surely (as the nation was much given to contention) it is not to be doubted but that many did trouble themselves and others with superfluous trifles. Yea, we hear with what Paul hitteth them in the teeth [1175] in many places, especially in the Epistle to Titus, (Titus 1:14, and Titus 3:9.) Yet Gallio is not worthy to be excused who doth mock the holy law of God together with their curiosity. For as it behooved him to cut off all occasion of vain contentions in words, so we must, on the other side, know that when the worship of God is in hand, the strife is not about words, but a matter of all other most serious is handled.

17. *All the Grecians having taken Sosthenes.* This is that Sosthenes whom Paul doth honorably couple with himself as his companion in the beginning of the former Epistle to the Corinthians. And though there be no mention made of him before among the faithful, yet it is to be thought that he was then one of Paul's companions and advocates. And what fury did enforce the Grecians to run headlong upon him, save only because it is allotted to all the children of God to have the world set against them, and

[1173] "Aequum," equitable or just.
[1174] "Optimum compendium," the best and shortest way.
[1175] "Quid illis exprobet Paulis," how Paul upbraideth them.

offended with them and their cause, though unknown? Wherefore, there is no cause why such unjust dealing should trouble us at this day when we see the miserable Church oppugned on every side. Moreover, the frowardness of man's nature is depainted out unto us as in a table, [picture.] Admit we grant that the Jews were hated everywhere for good causes, yet why are the Grecians rather displeased with Sosthenes, a modest man, than with the authors of the tumult, who troubled Paul without any cause? Namely, this is the reason, because, when men are not governed with the Spirit of God, they are carried headlong unto evil, as it were, by the secret inspiration of nature, notwithstanding it may be that they bare Sosthenes such hatred, thinking he had lodged wicked men to raise sedition.

Neither did Gallio care for any of these things. This looseness [1176] must be imputed not so much to the sluggishness of the deputy as to the hatred of the Jewish religion. The Romans could have wished that the remembrance of the true God had been buried. And, therefore, when as it was lawful for them to vow their vows, and to pay them to all the idols of Asia and Greece, it was a deadly fact [1177] to do sacrifice to the God of Israel. Finally, in the common liberty [1178] of all manner [of] superstition, only true religion was accepted. This is the cause that Gallio winketh at the injury done to Sosthenes. He professed of late that he would punish injuries if any were done; now he suffereth a guiltless man to be beaten before the judgment-seat. Whence cometh this sufferance, save only because he did in heart desire that the Jews might one slay another, that their religion might be put out [1179] with them? But forasmuch as, by the mouth of Luke, the Spirit condemneth Gallio's carelessness, because he did not aid a man who was unjustly punished, [1180] let our magistrates know that they be far more inexcusable if they wink at injuries and wicked facts, if they bridle not the wantonness of the wicked, if they reach not forth their hand to the oppressed. But and if the sluggish are to look for just damnation, what terrible judgment hangeth over the heads of those who are unfaithful and wicked, [1181] who, by favoring evil causes, and bearing with wicked facts, set up, as it were, a banner of want of punishment, [1182] and are fans to kindle boldness to do hurt?

Acts 18:18-23

Acts 18:18-23

18. And when Paul had tarried there many days, having taken his leave

[1176] "Cessatio," non-interference.
[1177] "Capitale erat," it was a capital offence.
[1178] "In communi… licentia," while there was a common license.
[1179] "Extingueretur," might be extinguished.
[1180] "Afflictum," afflicted, oppressed.
[1181] "Perfidis et malignis," malignant and perfidious.
[1182] "Impunitatis," of impudity.

of the brethren, he sailed into Syria, Priscilla and Aquila accompanying him, when he had shaven his head at Cenchrea: for he had a vow. 19. And he came to Ephesus, when he left them. And when he had entered into the synagogue, he disputed with the Jews. 20. And when they desired him that he would stay longer time with them, he did not consent; 21. But took his leave, saying, I must needs keep the feast which is at hand in Jerusalem: but I will return to you again, God willing. And he loosed from Ephesus. 22. And when he was come down to Caesarea, and was gone up, and had saluted the Church, he came down to Antioch. 23. And when he had tarried there some time, he departed, walking through the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

18. *And when he had tarried there many days.* Paul's constancy appeareth in this, in that he is not driven away with fear, lest he should trouble the disciples, who were as yet ignorant and weak, with his sudden and untimely departure. We read in many other places, that when persecution was raised against him elsewhere he fled forthwith. What is the cause then, that he stayeth at Corinthus? to wit, when he saw that the enemies were provoked with his presence to rage against the whole Church, he did not doubt but that the faithful [1183] should have peace and rest by his departure; but now, when he seeth their malice bridled, so that they cannot hurt the flock of God, he had rather sting and nettle them, than by departing minister unto them any new occasion of rage. Furthermore, this was the third journey which Paul took to Jerusalem. For going from Damascus, he went once up that he might be made known to the apostles. And he was sent the second time with Barnabas, that he might handle and end the controversy about ceremonies. But Luke doth not set down for what cause he now took such a long and laborious journey, determining with all speed to return.

When he had shorn his head. It is uncertain whether that be spoken of Aquila or of Paul: neither skilleth it much. Though I interpret it willingly of Paul, because it seemeth to me a likely thing that he did this for because of the Jews, unto whom he was about to come. Assuredly, I think this to be a thing which all men grant, that he made not any ceremonial vow for his own cause, only that he might do some worship to God. He knew that that was to continue only for a time which God commanded under the law to the old people; and we know how diligently he teacheth that the kingdom of God consisteth not in these external elements, and how straitly he urgeth the abrogating thereof. It had been an absurd thing for him to bind his own conscience with that religion from which he had loosed all other men.

Therefore, he did shear his head for no other cause, save only that he might apply himself [1184] to the Jews, who were as yet ignorant, and not thoroughly taught; as he doth testify that he took upon him the voluntary observing of the law, from which he was freed, that he might gain those who

[1183] "Pacem et quitem fidelibus redimere," to purchase the peace and quiet of the faithful.
[1184] "Se accommodaret," accommodate himself.

were under the law, (1 Corinthians 9:20.) If any man object that it was not lawful for him to make semblance of a vow which he had not made from his heart, we may easily answer, that as touching the substance of purifying he did not dissemble, and that he used the ceremony which was as yet free, not as if God did require such worship, but that he might somewhat bear with the ignorant.

Therefore, the Papists are ridiculous when they fet [1185] from hence an example of making vows. Paul was moved with no religion to make his vow; but these men place a reigned worship of God in vows. Respect of time enforced Paul to keep the rites of the law. These men do nothing else but entangle in superstition the Church of Christ, which was set free long ago. For it is one thing to bring in use again old ceremonies used long ago, and another to tolerate the same being as yet used, until such time as they may by little and little grow out of use. I omit that the Papists in vain and foolishly compare the shaving of their priests with the sign of purifying which God had allowed in the law. But because we need not stand any longer to refute them, let this one thing suffice us, that Paul bound himself with a vow that he might bring those which were weak to Christ, at least that he might not offend them, which vow he knew was of no importance before God.

19. *Entering into the synagogue.* In that he shook his garment at Corinthus, [1186] it was [not] done for that cause, (as this place teacheth,) that he might cast off the whole nation, but only such as he had already tried [experienced] to be of desperate obstinacy. Now, he cometh afresh unto the Ephesians, that he might try whether he could find any more obedience among them. Furthermore, it is a wonder, that seeing it appeareth by Luke's report that he was heard more patiently in this synagogue than in any other place, and also that he was requested to tarry, he did not grant their request. Hence we may easily gather that which I said before, that he had some great cause to go up to Jerusalem in haste. Also, he himself showeth that he must make haste, saying, I must keep the feast which is at hand at Jerusalem. Neither is it to be doubted but that after he had set things in good order there, he departed with their good leave; and we may gather out of Luke's words that they did admit his excuse lest the repulse should offend them. And this is worth the noting, that when better hope to do good is offered us than we were wont to have, we are drawn unto divers affairs, as it were, by the hand of God, that we may learn to give over ourselves to be governed at his pleasure.

The feast. That which I said of late touching the vow doth also appertain unto the feast day. For Paul meant not to do thereby any duty of godliness [1187] to God, but to be at the assembly, wherein he might do more good than at any other time of the year. For the Epistle to the Galatians doth

[1185] "Eliciunt," extract.

[1186] "In signum detestationis," in token of detestation.

[1187] "Pietatis officio," office of piety.

sufficiently testify what account he made of difference of days, (Galatians 4:10.) And we must note that he maketh no promise touching his return without using this exception, if it please the Lord. We do all confess that we be not able to stir one finger without his direction; but because there reigneth in men so great arrogancy everywhere, that they dare determine anything (passing over God) not only for the time to come, but also for many years, we must oftentimes think upon this reverence and sobriety, that we may learn to make our counsels subject to the will and providence of God; lest, if we be deliberate and take counsel as those use to do who think that they have fortune at their commandment, we be justly punished for our rashness. And though there be not so great religion in words but that we may at our pleasure say that we will do this or that, yet is it good to accustom ourselves to use certain forms in our speeches, that they may put us in mind that God doth direct all our doings.

22. *When he came down to Caesarea.* Though Luke saith in a word that Paul saluted the Church at Jerusalem, yet is it certain that he was drawn thither with some great necessity. And yet we may gather by this text that he stayed not long at Jerusalem, peradventure because things fell not out as he would. Moreover, he declareth that his journey in his return was not idle or barren, in that he saith that he strengthened all the disciples, undoubtedly not without great pains-taking, because he was enforced to go hither and thither, and oft to turn out of his way; for this word [{καθεξης}] doth signify a continual course. Now, we have already declared (Acts 9:36) in what respect those be called disciples who had given their names to Christ, and professed the name of Christ; to wit, because there is no godliness without true instruction. They had, indeed, their pastors under whom they might profit. Yet the greater Paul's authority was, and the more excellent spirit he had given him, so they were not a little strengthened by his by them, especially seeing he was the chief work-master in the founding of all these churches.

Acts 18:24-28

Acts 18:24-28

24. And a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus, being mighty in the Scriptures. 25. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently those things which are the Lord's, knowing only the baptism of John. 26. And he began to speak freely in the synagogue: whom when Priscilla and Aguila had heard, they took him to their company, and showed him the way of the Lord more perfectly. 27. And when he was determined to go into Achaia, the brethren exhorting him, wrote to the disciples that they should receive him: who, when he was come, he helped them much who had believed through grace. 28. For he overcame the Jews mightily, and that

openly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

24. *A certain Jew.* This ought for good causes to be ascribed to the providence of God, in that whilst Paul is enforced to depart from Ephesus, Apollos cometh in his place to supply his absence. And it is very expedient to know the beginning of this man of what sort it was, forasmuch as he was Paul's successor among the Corinthians, and did behave himself so excellently, and did his faithful endeavor, and took great pains, so that Paul commendeth him honorably as a singular fellow in office.

"I have planted, (saith he,) Apollos hath watered,"
(1 Corinthians 3:6.)

Also, these things have I figuratively appointed unto myself and Apollos, (1 Corinthians 4:6.) Luke giveth him first two titles of commendation, that he was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures; afterward he will add his zeal, faith, and constancy. And though Paul do truly deny that the kingdom of God consisteth in words, and he himself was not commended for eloquence yet dexterity in speaking and reasoning [1188] (such as Luke doth here commend) is not to be despised, especially when no pomp or vain boasting is sought after, by using fine words and great eloquence; but he which is to teach counteth it sufficient for him, without fraud or ambition, without lofty words and curious cunning, plainly to lay open the matter he hath in hand. Paul was without eloquence; the Lord would have the chief apostle to want this virtue, to the end the power of the Spirit might appear more excellent in his rude and homely speech. And yet was he furnished with such eloquence as was sufficient to set forth the name of Christ, and to maintain the doctrine of salvation. But as the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit is divers and manifold, Paul's infancy, [1189] that I may so call it, did no whit let but that the Lord might choose to himself eloquent ministers. Furthermore, lest any man should think that Apollos' eloquence was profane or vain, [1190] Luke saith that it was joined with great power, [1191] namely, that he was mighty in the Scriptures. Which I expound thus, that he was not only well and soundly exercised in the Scriptures, but that he had the force and efficacy thereof, that, being armed with them, he did in all conflicts get the upper hand. And this (in my judgment) is rather the praise of the Scripture than of man, [1192] that it hath sufficient force both to defend the truth, and also to refute the subtilty of Satan.

25. *He was instructed.* That which Luke addeth shortly after seemeth not to agree with this commendation, to wit, that he knew only the baptism of John. But this latter member is added by way of correction. Nevertheless, these two agree very well together; that he understood the doctrine of the

[1188] "Sermocinandi," sermonising, haranguing.
[1189] "Pauli infantia," Paul's want of utterance.
[1190] "Vel inanem et fulinem," or futile and vain.
[1191] "Cum majore…virtute," with a greater virtue or excellence.
[1192] "Scripturae potius quam hominis laus est," is greater prase to Scripture than to the man.

gospel, because he both knew that the Redeemer was given to the world, and also was well and sincerely instructed concerning the grace of reconciliation; and yet had he been trained up only in the principles of the gospel, so much as could be had out of John's institution. [1193] For we know that John was in the midst between Christ and the prophets; and of his office doth both his father Zacharias intreat in his tongue, (Luke 1:76; Luke 1:16 and 17;) and also the angel out of the prophecy of Malachi, (Malachi 3:1.) Surely, seeing that he carried the light before Christ, and did highly extol his power, his disciples are for good causes said to have had knowledge of Christ. Moreover, the speech is worth the noting, that he knew the baptism of John. For thence we gather the true use of the sacraments; to wit, that they enter [1194] us in some certain kind of doctrine, or that they establish that faith which we have embraced. Surely, it is wickedness and impious profanation to pull them away [1195] from doctrine. Wherefore, that the sacraments may be rightly administered, the voice of the heavenly doctrine must sound there. For what is the baptism of John? Luke comprehendeth all his ministry under this word, not only because doctrine is annexed unto baptism, but also because it is the foundation and head thereof, without which it should be a vain and dead ceremony.

Being fervent in spirit he spake. Apollos hath another commendation given him in these words, that he was inflamed with an holy zeal to teach. Doctrine without zeal is either like a sword in the hand of a madman, or else it lieth still as cold and without use, or else it serveth for vain and wicked boasting. For we see that some learned men become slothful; other some (which is worse) become ambitious; other some (which is of all the worst) trouble the Church with contention and brawling. Therefore, that doctrine shall be unsavory which is not joined with zeal. But let us remember that Luke putteth the knowledge of the Scripture in the first place, which must be the moderation of zeal, [1196] for we know that many are fervent without consideration, as the Jews did rage against the gospel, by reason of a perverse affection which they did bear toward the law; and even at this day we see what the Papists be, who carried headlong with furious violence, being pricked forward with an opinion unadvisedly conceived. Therefore, let knowledge be present that it may govern zeal. And now it is said that zeal was the cause of diligence, because Apollos gave himself to teach diligently. But and if that man, being not yet thoroughly and perfectly taught in the gospel, did preach Christ so diligently and freely, what excuse do those men hope to have, who know that more perfectly and fully, which he knew not as yet, if they do not endeavor so much as in them lieth to further and advance the kingdom of Christ? Luke doth attribute zeal to the Spirit, therefore, because it is a rare and peculiar gift; neither do I so expound it that Apollos

[1193] "Institutio," instruction.
[1194] "Initient," initiate.
[1195] "Avelli," to dissever.
[1196] "Quae esset zeli moderatio," to moderate zeal.

was moved and pricked forward with the instinct of his mind, but by motion of the Holy Spirit.

26. *Whom, when Priscilla.* By this it appeareth how far Priscilla and Aquila were from the love of themselves, and from envying another man's virtue, in that they deliver those things familiarly and privately to an eloquent man, which he may afterward utter publicly. They excelled not in the same grace wherein he did excel, and, peradventure, they might have been despised in the congregation. Moreover, they most diligently help him, whom they see better furnished as well with eloquence as the use of the Scripture; so that they keep silence, and he alone is heard.

Again, this was no small modesty which was in Apollos, in that he doth suffer himself to be taught and instructed not only in [by] an handy-craftsman, but also by a woman. He was mighty in the Scripture, and did surpass [1197] them; but as touching the accomplishment of the kingdom of Christ, those do polish and trim him who might seem to be scarce fit ministers. Also, we see that at that time women were not so ignorant of the word of God as the Papists will have them; forasmuch as we see that one of. the chief teachers of the Church was instructed by a woman. Notwithstanding, we must remember that Priscilla did execute this function of teaching at home in her own house, that she might not overthrow the order prescribed by God and nature.

27. *When he was determined.* Luke doth not express for what cause Apollos would go to Achaia. Notwithstanding, we gather out of the text [context] that he was not allured with any private commodity, but because more plentiful fruit in spreading abroad the gospel did show itself there; because the brethren did more encourage him with their exhortation, and did spur him when he did already run. Which they would not have done, unless it had been for the common profit of the Church. For it had been an absurd thing to entreat a man to depart to another place, whose faithful industry they already used, and did know that they should have need of him afterward, unless there had been some better recompense offered. And I take it that the brethren of Ephesus wrote to those of Achaia, not only that they should provide lodging for the man, but also that they should suffer him to teach. This is holy commendation indeed, when we study to extol every good man with our testimony and consent, [suffrage,] lest the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he hath given to every man for the edifying of the Church, lie buried.

When he came. The brethren foresaw this, who had already had experience thereof, when they exhorted him to address himself to that journey which he had already in mind conceived. And whereas it is said that he helped the faithful much, we may take it two ways; either that he helped those who were not so well furnished, and that he did support them to beat down the pride of their enemies; for every man was not able to have weapon

[1197] "Illis longe superior," and far superior to them.

in readiness, to undertake a hard combat against old [1198] enemies, who would never have yielded, unless they had been enforced; or that he aided them, lest their faith should fail, being shaken with the gainsaying of the enemies, which thing doth oftentimes befall the weak. I take it that they were helped both ways; that having a skillful and practiced captain, they got [1199] the victory in the conflict. Secondly, that their faith was fortified with a new prop, that it might be without danger of wavering. Furthermore, Luke seemeth to note that the brethren were helped with this stoutness and constancy, when as he saith that he disputed publicly with the Jews. For this was a sign of zeal and boldness not to fly the light. Whereas, in the end of the sentence, these words are used, *through grace;* it doth either agree with the word going before, *they believed;* or else it must be referred unto the help wherewith he helped the brethren. The former interpretation is nothing hard. For the meaning thereof shall be this, that the faithful were illuminate by the grace of God, that they might believe; as if he had said, The brethren, who were already called by the benefit of God unto faith, were furthered. Yet the other text seemeth to agree better, that Apollos, in imparting that grace which he had received with the brethren, did help them. So that, *through grace,* shall import as much as according to the measure of the grace received.

28. *He overcame the Jews.* By this it appeareth to what use that ability which Apollos had (in that he was mighty in the Holy Scriptures) did serve; to wit, because he had a strong and forcible proof to reprove and overcome the enemies withal. Also, the state of the disputation is briefly set down, that Jesus is Christ. For this was out of question among the Jews, that Christ was promised to be the deliverer; but it was a hard matter to persuade them that Jesus, the Son of Mary, was this Christ, through whom salvation was offered. Therefore, it was expedient for Apollos so to dispute concerning the office of Christ, that he might prove that the testimonies of the Scripture were fulfilled in the Son of Mary; and that he might thereby gather that he was Christ.

Also, this place doth testify, that the Scripture is profitable not only to teach, but also to break the obstinacy of those which do not obey and follow willingly. For our faith should not otherwise be firm enough, unless there were an evident demonstration extant there of those things which are necessary to be known for salvation. Surely, if the law and the prophets had so great light, that Apollos did thereby prove manifestly that Jesus is Christ, as if he did point out the matter with his finger, the adding of the gospel must bring this to pass at least, that the perfect knowledge of Christ may be let [sought] from the whole Scripture.

Wherefore it is detestable blasphemy against God in that the Papists say, that the Scripture is dark and doubtful. For to what end should God have spoken, unless the plain and invincible truth should show itself in his words?

[1198] "Veteranos," veteran.

[1199] "Superiores essent," might be victorious.

And whereas they infer, that we must stand to the authority of the Church, and they are not to dispute with heretics out of the Scriptures; their cavil is sufficiently refuted by Luke. For, seeing there was nothing more stubborn than the Jews, we need not to fear but that those weapons whereto Apollos trusted, and overcame them, shall suffice us against all heretics, seeing that by them we get the victory of the devil, the prince of all errors.

Chapter 19

CHAPTER 19

Acts 19:1-7

Acts 19:1-7

1. And it came to pass when Apollos was at Corinthus, that Paul, having gone through the upper parts, came to Ephesus, and having found certain disciples, he said unto them, 2. Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said unto him, Yea, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3. And he said unto them, Wherewith were ye then baptized? And they said, With the baptism of John. 4. And Paul said, John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, speaking to the people, that they should believe in Him who should come after him; that is, in Christ Jesus. 5. When they heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and did prophesy. 7. And all the men were about twelve.

1. Luke showeth here that the Church of Ephesus was not only confirmed and increased by Paul's return, but also that there was a miracle wrought there, because the visible graces of the Spirit were given to certain rude and new disciples. Furthermore, it is not known whether they were inhabitants of the city or strangers; neither doth it greatly skill. It is not to be doubted but that they were Jews, because they had received the baptism of John; also, it is to be thought that they dwelt at Ephesus when Paul found them there.

2. *Whether they had received the Holy Ghost.* The end of the history doth show that Paul doth not speak in this place of the Spirit of regeneration, but of the special gifts which God gave to divers at the beginning of the gospel, for the common edifying of the Church. But now upon this interrogation of Paul ariseth a question, whether the Spirit were common to all everywhere at that time? For if he were given only to a few, why doth he join him with faith, as if they were so linked together that they could not be separate? Peradventure, they were none of the common sort; or because they were an indifferent number, that is, twelve, Paul demandeth whether they were all without the gifts of the Spirit. Notwithstanding, I think thus, that so many Jews were offered in presence of the Gentiles, not by chance, but by the counsel of God; and that at one time being disciples, that is, of the number

of the faithful, who did notwithstanding confess that they were ignorant of the principal glory of the gospel, which was apparent in spiritual gifts, that by them Paul's ministry might be beautified and set forth. For it is unlike that Apollos left so few disciples at Ephesus; and he might have taught them better, since that he learned the way of the Lord perfectly of Priscilla and Aquila.

Moreover, I do not doubt but that the brethren of whom Luke spake before were other than these. In sum, when Paul seeth that these men do profess the name of Christ, to the end he may have a more certain trial of their faith, he asketh them whether they have received the Holy Ghost. For it appeareth by Paul himself that this was a sign and token of the grace of God to establish the credit of doctrine; I would know of you whether ye received the Holy Ghost by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2).

We know not whether there be any Holy Ghost. How could it be, that men being Jews heard nothing of the Spirit, concerning which the prophets speak everywhere, and whose commendations and titles are extant in the whole Scripture? Surely we gather by this that Paul did neither speak generally of the Spirit; and that these men, as they were asked, did deny that they knew those visible graces wherewith God had beautified the kingdom of his Son. Therefore, they confess that they know not whether God give such gifts. Therefore, there is in the word *Spirit* the figure *metonymia.* And this sense doth that confirm that if they had altogether denied that they knew anything concerning the Spirit of God, Paul would not have passed over with silence such a gross error; yea, an error altogether monstrous. When he demandeth to what end, or how they were baptized, he showeth therewithal, that wheresoever Christ had been soundly and thoroughly preached the visible graces did also appear, that such worship [1200] might be common to all churches. Wherefore, no marvel if Paul wonder that the faithful are ignorant of such glory of Christ, which God would have to be apparent everywhere at that time; and a correction immediately, he telleth them that they must not stay in those rudiments which they had learned; because it was John's office to prepare disciples for Christ.

4. *John truly* Paul's admonition tended to this end, that these men being convict of their ignorance might desire to go forward. He saith that John preached of Christ who was to come. Therefore he sent out his disciples, [1201] that running in the course they might go towards Christ who was not as yet revealed. Wherefore, to the end these men may not flatter themselves, and refuse to go forward, he showeth that they be yet far from the mark. For the feeling of want doth enforce men to desire that which is as yet lacking. The sum cometh to this end, as if Paul had said Before Christ was glorified, this

[1200] "Decus," honour.
[1201] "Ex carceribus," from the goal.

power of his did not appear [1202] in the world; when he was ascended into heaven he would have his kingdom to flourish thus. Therefore the graces of the Spirit were much less shed out when John was as yet in the course of his embassage, which do now declare that Christ sitteth at the right hand of his Father forasmuch as he had not as then openly showed himself to be the Redeemer of the world. Therefore know ye that you must go farther forward; because ye be far from the mark. So that he doth plainly show that the faith of the godly who had been taught by John ought to have looked unto Christ who was to come, lest these men should stand still being newly entered, without going any farther.

And even by this also are we taught that the baptism of John was a token of repentance and remission of sins and that our baptism at this day doth not differ any thing from it, save only that Christ is already revealed, and in his death and resurrection our salvation is made perfect: and so baptism was brought unto his [its] effect; because out of that fountain of Christ's death and resurrection whereof I have spoken, floweth repentance, and thither is faith referred again that it may thence fet [seek] free righteousness. In sum, Paul showeth plainly that that was the baptism of regeneration and renovation as is ours. And because both purging and newness of life doth flow from Christ alone he saith that it was grounded in his faith, by which words we be also taught, that hereupon dependeth all the force of baptism, that we lay hold upon by faith in Christ whatsoever baptism doth figure; so far off is it, that the outward sign doth derogate from or diminish the grace of Christ any iota.

5. *When they heard these things.* Because the men of old had conceived an opinion that the baptism of John and of Christ were diverse, it was no inconvenient [1203] thing for them to be baptized again, who were only prepared with the baptism of John. But that that diversity was falsely and wickedly by them believed, it appeareth by this, in that it was a pledge and token of the same adoption, and of the same newness of life, which we have at this day in our baptism; and, therefore, we do not read that Christ did baptize those again who came from John unto him. Moreover, Christ received baptism in his own flesh, that he might couple himself with us by that visible sign, (Matthew 3:15) but if that reigned diversity be admitted, this singular benefit shall fall away and perish, that baptism is common to the Son of God and to us, or that we have all one baptism with him. But this opinion needeth no long refutation, because to the end they may persuade that these two baptisms be diverse, they must needs show first wherein the one differeth from the other; but a most *excellent* likelihood answereth on both parts, and also the agreement and conformity of the parts, [1204] which

[1202] "Viguit," flourish.

[1203] "Absurdum," absurd.

[1204] "Atqui utrumque respondet optima similitudo et partiurn omnium symmetria et conformitas." but there is perfect resemblance, and a complete symmetry and conformity of all the parts.

causeth us to confess that it is all one baptism.

Now the question is, whether it were lawful to repeat the same; and furious men in this our age; trusting to this testimony, went about to bring in baptizing again. [1205] Some take baptism for new institution or instruction, of whose mind I am not, because, as their exposition is too much racked, so it smelleth of a starting-hole [1206] .

Other some deny that baptism was repeated; because they were baptized amiss by some foolish enemy [1207] of John. But because their conjecture hath no color; yea, the words of Paul do rather import that they were the true and natural disciples of John, and Luke doth honorably call them disciples of Christ; I do not subscribe to this opinion, and yet deny that the baptism of water was repeated, because the words of Luke import no other thing, save only that they were baptized with the Spirit. First, it is no new thing for the name of baptism to be translated unto the gifts of the Spirit, as we saw in the first and in the eleventh chapters, (Acts 1:5, and Acts 11:6) where Luke said, that when Christ promised to his apostles to send the Spirit visible, he called it baptism.

Also, that when the Spirit came down upon Cornelius, Peter remembered the words of the Lord, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Again, we see that those visible gifts are spoken of by name in this place, and that the same are given with baptism. And whereas it followeth immediately, that when he had laid his hands upon them, the Spirit came, I take it to be added by way of interpretation; for it is a kind of speaking much used in the Scripture, first to set down a thing briefly, and afterwards to make it more plain. Therefore, that which by reason of brevity was somewhat obscure, doth Luke better express and lay more open, saying, that by laying on of hands the Spirit was given them. If any man object, that when baptism is put for the gifts of the Spirit, it is not taken simply, but having somewhat added to it. I answer, that Luke's meaning doth sufficiently appear by the text; and again, that Luke doth allude unto the baptism whereof he spake. And surely if you understand it of the external sign, it shall be an absurd thing that it was given them without using any better doctrine. But and if you take it metaphorically for institution, the speech shall be as yet harsh; and the narration should not agree, that after they were taught the Holy Ghost came down upon them.

Furthermore, as I confess that this laying on of hands was a sacrament, so I say that those fell through ignorance who did continually imitate the same. For seeing that all men agree in this, that it was a grace which was to last only for a time, which was showed by that sign, it is a perverse and ridiculous thing to retain the sign since the truth is taken away. There is another respect of baptism and the supper, wherein the Lord doth testify

[1205] "Anabaptismum invebere," to introduce Anabaptism.
[1206] "Effugium sapit," savours of evasion.
[1207] "AEmulatore," rival,

that those gifts are laid open for us, which the Church shall enjoy even until the end of the world. Wherefore we must diligently and wisely distinguish perpetual sacraments from those which last only for a time, lest vain and frivolous visures [semblances] have a place among the sacraments. Whereas the men of old time did use laying on of hands, that they might confirm the profession of faith in those who were grown up, [1208] I do not mislike it; so that no man think that the grace of the Spirit is annexed to such a ceremony, as doth Jerome against the Luciferians.

But the Papists are worthy of no pardon, who being not content with the ancient rite, durst thrust in rotten and filthy anointing, that it might be not only a confirmation of baptism, but also a more worthy sacrament, whereby they imagine that the faithful are made perfect who were before only half perfect, — whereby those are armed against the battle, who before had their sins only forgiven them. For they have not been afraid to spew out these horrible blasphemies.

Acts 19:8-12

Acts 19:8-12

8. And going into the synagogue, he spake freely about three months, disputing and persuading concerning the kingdom of God. 9. And when some waxed hard-hearted that they could not believe, speaking evil of the way before the multitude, departing from them he did separate the disciples, and disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10. And this he did by the space of two years, so that all which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11. And the Lord showed no small miracles by the hands of Paul. 12. So that from his body were brought napkins and partlets unto those that were sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits came out of them.

8. *Going into the synagogue.* By this we gather that Paul began with the company of the godly, who had already given their names to Christ. Secondly, that he came into the synagogue, that he might gather together into one body of the Church the rest of the Jews who knew not Christ as yet, or at least who had not as yet received him. And he saith that Paul behaved himself boldly, that we may know that he was not therefore heard by the space of three months, because he did craftily cover the doctrine of the gospel, or did insinuate himself by certain dark crooks. Luke doth also by and by express some token of boldness, showing that he disputed and persuaded touching the kingdom of God. And we know that by this word is oftentimes noted that restoring which was promised to the fathers, and which was to be fulfilled by the coming of Christ. For seeing that without Christ there is an evil-favored and confused scattering abroad and ruin of all things, the prophets did attribute this not in vain to the Mesas who was to

[1208] "In adultis," in adults.

come, that it should come to pass that he should establish the kingdom of God in the world. And now, because this kingdom doth bring us back from falling and sliding back, unto the obedience of God, and maketh us sons of enemies; it consisteth — First in the free forgiveness of sins, whereby God doth reconcile us to himself, and doth adopt us to be his people: Secondly, in newness of life, whereby he fashioneth and maketh us like to his own image. He saith that he disputed and persuaded, meaning that Paul did so dispute, that he proved that with sound reasons which he did allege; that done, he used the pricks of godly exhortations, whereby he pricked forward his hearers. [1209] For no profound disputations [1210] shall make us obedient to God, unless we be moved with godly admonitions.

9. *Seeing their hearts were hardened.* We do not read that Paul was heard so patiently and so favorably by the Jews at any place as at Ephesus at his first coming. For whereas others raising tumults did drive him away, he was requested by these to tarry longer. Now, after that he had endeavored, by the space of three months, to erect the kingdom of God among them, the ungodliness and stubbornness of many doth show itself. For Luke saith that they were hardened; and surely such is the power of the heavenly doctrine that it doth either make the reprobate mad or else more obstinate; and that not of nature, but accidentally, as they say, because, when they be urged by the truth, their secret poison breaketh out.

Luke addeth that they spake evil of the way before the people. For the contemners of the gospel [1211] do resist that deadlily among others which they will not embrace. And this do they to no other end, save only because they be desirous (if it can be) to have all men partners in their impiety. It is well known that every ordinance is understood by this word *way;* but here it is referred unto the gospel of Christ. Now, Luke saith that Paul departed from them, and did separate the brethren, by which example we are taught, that when we have experience of desperate and incurable stubbornness, we must lose our labor no longer. Therefore, Paul admonisheth Titus to avoid a man that is an heretic, after once or twice admonition (Titus 3:10). For the word of God is unjustly blasphemed, [1212] if it be cast to dogs and swine. Also, we must provide for the weak, lest through wicked backbitings and slandering of sound doctrine, their godliness be subverted. Therefore, Paul did separate the disciples, lest the goats should with their stink infect the flock of sheep; secondly, that the pure worshippers of God might make profession freely.

Disputing daily. This place showeth how continual Paul's diligence was in teaching; and that they be too churlish and dainty who are straightway weary of learning. For we see how few come daily, who are ready and apt to hear. And though he had a particular care for the household flock which he had gathered as into a sheepfold, yet he doth not suffer strangers to be

[1209] "Ut januam regno Dei aperirent," that they might open a dour for the gospel,
[1210] "Argutiae," subtle reasonings.
[1211] "Hac tandem se projieiunt," at length proceed to such extremes that they.
[1212] "Indigna contumelia afficitur," is grossly insulted.

destitute of his industry; but continuing the course of his disputation, he trieth whether he can find any which are apt to be taught. He calleth it the school of Tyrannus, meaning no such man as had gotten the government of Asia; for the Romans bare rule throughout all Asia, but it is to be thought that the school was built at the charge of one Tyrannus, and given to the city. Therefore, the faithful did use a public place, which bare the name of the builder, where they had their assemblies.

10. *All which dwelt.* Luke doth not mean that the men of Asia came thither to hear Paul; but that the smell [savor] of his preaching went throughout all Asia, and that the seed was sown far and wide; so that his labor was fruitful not only to one city, but also to places which were far off; and that cometh to pass oftentimes, that when the truth of God is preached in one place, it soundeth where the voice of the minister cannot sound, being spread abroad far and wide; because it is delivered from hand to hand, and one doth teach another. For one man were not sufficient, unless every man were for himself diligent to spread abroad the faith.

11. *No small miracles.* He calleth miracles *virtutes* or *powers,* after the common custom of the Scripture, which were testimonies of the extraordinary power of God. And showeth that Paul's apostleship was set forth with these ensigns, that his doctrine might have the greater authority. For it is a common speech, That wonders and signs are showed by the hand of men. So that the praise thereof is ascribed to God alone as to the author; and man is only the minister. And that he may the more amplify the miracles, he saith that handkerchiefs and partlets [1213] were brought unto the sick, which so soon as they touched they were healed. It is not unknown [1214] to what end Paul had such power given him, to wit, that he might prove himself to be a true apostle of Christ, that he might make the gospel to be believed, and might confirm his ministry. And here it is expedient to call to mind those things which we had before, touching the lawful use of miracles. And whereas God did heal the sick with Paul's handkerchiefs, it tended to that end, that even those who had never seen the man might, notwithstanding, reverently embrace his doctrine, though he himself were absent. For which cause the Papists are more blockish, who wrest this place unto their relics; as if Paul sent his handkerchiefs that men might worship them and kiss them [1215] in honor of them; as in Papistry, they worship Francis' shoes and mantle, Rose's girdle, Saint Margaret's comb, and such like trifles. Yea, rather, he did choose most simple [1216] things, lest any superstition should arise by reason of the price or pomp. For he was fully determined to keep Christ's glory sound and undiminished.

[1213] "Semicinctia," girdles.
[1214] "Non obscurum est," it is clear.
[1215] "Oscularentur venerabundi homines," men given to veneration might kiss them.
[1216] "Vilissimas," most worthless.

Acts 19:13-17

Acts 19:13-17

13. And certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, essayed to name over those which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14. And there were certain sons of Sceva, a Jew, the chief of the priests, who did this. 15. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16. And the man in whom the evil spirit was ran upon them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they escaped out of that house naked and wounded. 17. And this was known to all both Jews and Grecians which dwelt at Ephesus; and fear came upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

13. To the end it may more plainly appear that the apostleship of Paul was confirmed by those miracles whereof mention was made of late, Luke doth now teach that when certain did falsely pretend the name of Christ, such abuse was most sharply punished. Whereby we gather that such miracles were wrought by the hand of Paul, to no other end, save only that all men might know that he did faithfully preach Christ to be the power of God; forasmuch as the Lord did not only not suffer them to be separate from the pure doctrine of the gospel; but did so sharply punish those who did draw them preposterously unto their enchantments; whence we gather again, that whatsoever miracles do darken the name of Christ they be juggling casts of the devil; and that those be coziness and falsifiers who draw the true miracles of God to any other end, save only that true religion may be established. [1217]

Certain exorcists. I do not doubt but that this office did proceed of foolish emulation. God was wont to exercise his power diverse ways among the Jews; and he had used the prophets in times past as ministers to drive away devils; under color hereof they invented conjuration, [1218] and hereupon was erected unadvisedly an extraordinary function without the commandment of God. Also, it may be that (God appointing it so to be) it did somewhat; [1219] not that he favored it preposterously, but that they might more willingly retain the religion of their fathers, until the coming of Christ. Under the reign of Christ, wicked ambition caused strife between the Christians and the Jews. For exorcists were made after the will of men; after that (as superstition doth always wax worse and worse) the Pope would have this common to all his clerks, who were to be promoted unto an higher degree. For after that they be made door-keepers, forthwith the conjuring of devils is committed to them; and by very experience they set themselves to be laughed at. For they are enforced to confess that they give a vain title, and such as is without effect, for where is the power they have to conjure devils? and the very exorcists themselves do take upon them, to their own reproach, an office

[1217] "Sanciatur," sanctioned or confirmed.
[1218] "Exorelsmos," exorcisms.
[1219] "Aliquid perfecerint," they accomplished somewhat.

which they never put in practice. But this falleth out justly, that. there is no end of erring, when men depart from the word of God. As touching these men, we gather that they were wandering rogues, and such as went from door to door, of which sort we see many at this day in Popery; for he saith that they went about. By which words he giveth us to understand, that they went to and fro as occasion was offered them to deceive men.

We adjure you by Jesus. It is a thing like to be true, [probable] that these deceivers flee unto the name of Christ, that they might get new power, whereof they had falsely boasted before, or because the power which they had did cease, that they might darken the gospel. This invocation had two faults; for whereas they were enemies [1220] to Paul's doctrine, they abuse the color thereof without faith, as it were, unto magical enchantments; secondly, they take to themselves without the calling of God that which is not in man's hand. But the lawful calling upon the name of God and Christ is that which is directed by faith, and doth not pass the bounds of a man's calling. Wherefore, we are taught by this example, that we must attempt nothing, unless we have the light of the word of God going before us, lest we suffer like punishment for our sacrilege. The Lord himself commandeth us to pray. Whosoever they be which have not the gift of miracles given them, let them keep themselves within these bounds. For when the apostles made the unclean spirits come out of men, they had God for their author, and they knew that they did faithfully execute the ministry which he had enjoined them.

16. *The man running upon them.* That is attributed to the man which the devil did by him. For he had not been able to do such an act of himself, as to put to flight seven strong young men being wounded and naked. And to set down for a certainty how the devil doth dwell in men, we cannot, save only that there may be [1221] a contrariety between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Satan. For as Paul teacheth that we be the temples of God, because the Spirit of God dwelleth in us; so he saith again that Satan worketh effectually in all unbelievers. Notwithstanding, we must know that Luke speaketh in this place of a particular kind of dwelling; to wit, when Satan hath the bridle so much that he doth possess the whole man.

Furthermore, God meant to show such a token, that he might declare that his power is not included in the sound of the voice, and that it is not lawful superstitiously to abuse the name of his Son. And when he suffereth Satan to deceive us, let us know that we be more sharply punished than if he should wound us in the flesh. For the false show and color of miracles is an horrible enchantment to bewitch and besot the unbelievers, that they may be drowned in deeper darkness, because they refused the light of God.

17. *There came fear.* The fruit of that vengeance which God brought upon those who did wickedly abuse the name of Christ is this, in that they

[1220] "Alieni," aliens from, strangers to.

[1221] "Nisi quod statui potest," unless that it may be held there is.

were all touched with reverence, lest they should contemn that doctrine, whose revenger the Lord hath showed by an evident token and testimony he would be, and they were brought to reverence Christ. For, besides that God doth invite us by all his judgments to come thus far, that they may terrify us from sinning, in this example peculiarly was the majesty of Christ set forth, and the authority of the gospel established. Wherefore, there is more heavy and grievous punishment prepared for deceivers, who, with their enchantments, profane the name of Christ wittingly, lest they promise to themselves that they shall escape unpunished for such gross sacrilege. Whereas he saith that it was made known to all men, it signifieth as much as commonly or everywhere. For his meaning is, that the matter was much talked of among the people, to the end the name of Christ might be made known to more men.

Acts 19:18-22

Acts 19:18-22

18. And many of those which believed came, confessing, and showing their works. 19. And many of those which used curious arts, bringing their books, burnt them before them all; and when they had cast the price of them, they found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20. So mightily grew the word of the Lord, and was confirmed. 21. And when these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in spirit, having passed over Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After that I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22. And when he had sent two of those which ministered to him into Macedonia, to wit, Timotheus and Erastus, he stayed for a time in Asia.

18. *Many which believed.* Luke bringeth forth one token of that fear whereof he spake. For they did indeed declare that they were thoroughly touched and moved with the fear of God, who, of their own accord, did confess the faults and offenses of their former life, lest, through their dissimulation, they should nourish the wrath of God within. We know what a hard matter it is to wring true confession out of those who have offended, for seeing men count nothing more precious than their estimation, they make more account of shame than of truth; yea, so much as in them lieth, they seek to cover their shame. Therefore, this voluntary confession was a testimony of repentance and of fear. For no man, unless he be thoroughly touched, will make himself subject to the slanders and reproaches of men, and will willingly be judged upon earth, that he may be loosed and acquitted in heaven. When he saith, *Many,* by this we gather that they had not all one cause, for it may be that these men had corrupt consciences a long time; as many are oftentimes infected with hidden and inward vices. Wherefore, Luke doth not prescribe all men a common law; but he setteth before them an example which those must follow who need like medicine. For why did these men confess their facts, save only that they might give testimony of their repentance,

and seek counsel and ease at Paul's hands? It was otherwise with those who came unto the baptism of John, confessing their sins (Matthew 3:6). For by this means they did confess that they did enter into repentance without dissimulation.

But in this place Luke teacheth by one kind, after what sort the faithful were touched with the reverence of God, when God set before them an example of his severity. For which cause the impudence of the Papists is the greater, who color their tyranny by this fact. For wherein doth their auricular confession agree [1222] with this example? First, the faithful confessed how miserably they had been deceived by Satan before they came to the faith, bringing into the sight of men certain examples. But by the Pope's law it is required that men reckon up all their words and deeds and thoughts. We read that those men confessed this once; the Pope's law commandeth that it be repeated every year at least. These men made confession of their own accord; the Pope bindeth all men with necessity. Luke saith there came many, not all; in the Pope's law there is no exception. These men humbled themselves before the company of the faithful; the Pope giveth a far other commandment, that the sinner confess his sins, whispering in the ear of one priest. [1223] Lo, how well they apply [1224] the Scriptures to prove their subtilities.

19. *Who used curious crafts.* Luke doth not only speak of magical jugglings, but of frivolous and vain studies, whereof the more part of men is for the most part too desirous. For he useth the word, {περιεργα}, under which the Grecians comprehend whatsoever things have in themselves no sound commodity, but lead men's minds and studies through diverse crooks unprofitably. Such is judicial astrology, as they call it, and whatsoever divinations men [1225] invent to themselves against the time to come. They burn their books, that they may cut off all occasion of erring, both for themselves and for others. And whereas the greatness of the price doth not call them back from endamaging themselves so much, they do thereby better declare the study [zeal] of their godliness. Therefore, as Luke did of late describe their confession in words, so now he setteth down the confession they make in deeds. But because the Grecians take {αργυριον} for all kind of money, it is uncertain whether Luke doth speak of pence or sestertians. [1226] Notwithstanding, because it is certain that he expressed a sum, that we might know that the faithful did valiantly contemn gain, I do nothing doubt but that he meaneth pence, or some other better kind of coin. [1227] And fifty thousand pence (denarii) make about nine thousand pound of French money [French

[1222] "Quid enim… affine habet," for what affinity has.

[1223] "Ut clancullariis susurris in aurem proprii sacerdotes obmurmuret peccator," that the sinner mutter secret whispers into the ear of his own priest.

[1224] "Quam dextre accommodent," how dexterously they accommodate.

[1225] "Stulti homines," foolish men.

[1226] "Sesterties an densrios," "sestertii an densrios."

[1227] "Densrios vel aliquod etiam praestantius numismatis genus," denarii, or even some more valuable species of coin.

livres].

20. *Grew mightily* [*lions.*] The word {κατα} {κρατος} doth signify that the word increased not a little, (or that these proceedings were not common) as if he should say, that in those increasings appeared rare efficacy, and such as was greater than it used commonly to be. The word *grew* do I refer unto the number of men, as if he should have said, that the Church was increased, new disciples being gathered together dally, because doctrine is spread abroad. And I interpret that, that the word was confirmed in every one thus, to wit, that they did profit in the obedience of the gospel and in godliness more and more, and that their faith took deeper root.

21. *He purposed in spirit.* His meaning is, that Paul purposed to take his journey through the instinct and motion of the Spirit; that we may know that all his whole life was framed according to God's will and pleasure. And therefore hath he the Spirit to be the governor of his actions, because he did both give over himself by him to be ruled, and did also depend upon his government. Neither skilleth that which followeth, that he had not that success in his journey which he did hope for; for God doth oftentimes govern and rule his faithful servants, suffering them to be ignorant of the end. [1228] For he will have them so far forth addicted to him, that they follow that which he hath showed them by his Spirit, even shutting their eyes when matters be doubtful. Moreover, it is certain that he was wholly addicted to profit the churches, omitting and foreslowing [neglecting] his own commodity, in that he had rather deprive himself of Timotheus, a most excellent to him of all, most faithful, most dear, finally, a most fit companion, than not to provide for the Macedonians.

Acts 19:23-28

Acts 19:23-28

23. And at that time there happened no small tumult about that way. 24. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gains to the men of that occupation; 25. Whom, when he had called together, and those who were makers of like things, he said, Men, ye know that by this craft we have advantage. [1229] 26. And ye see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be not gods which are made with hands: 27. And not only this part cometh in danger to us, lest it be set at nought; but also test the temple of the great goddess Diana be despised, and it come to pass that her majesty be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. 28. When they heard these things, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

[1228] "De exitu ipsos celans," concealing the issue from them.

[1229] "Nobis suppetit facultas," our living is derived.

23. *Tumult about that way.* Concerning this word *way,* let the readers understand thus much, that it is here taken for that which the Latins call *sect;* the Greek philosophers call it *heresies* or *heresy.* But because in the Church of God, where the unity of faith ought to reign, there is nothing more odious or detestable than for every man to choose, at his pleasure, that which he will follow, I think that Luke did fly that name which was, for good causes, infamous among the godly, and that after the Hebrew phrase, he put *way* instead of *ordinance.* And as touching the sum of the matter, we see how wonderfully the Lord did exercise his servant. He did hope when he did address himself for his journey, that the Church would be quiet after his departure, and, lo, there ariseth an uproar at a sudden where he did least fear. But in Demetrius it appeareth what a hurtful plague covetousness is. For one man, for his own gain's sake, is not afraid [1230] to trouble a whole city with sedition. And the craftsmen, who were as firebrands kindled by him, and do spread abroad the fire everywhere, do teach us what an easy matter it is to cause filthy [sordid] men, and whose belly is their God, to commit all manner [of] wickedness; especially if they live only by gains evil gotten, [1231] and the hope of gain be taken from them.

Moreover, in his history we see a lively image of our time. Demetrius and his band raised a tumult; because, if superstition whereby they were wont to get gains be taken away, their craft will fall to the ground. Therefore they fight as if it were for their life, lest Demetrius go without his fat prey, and the rest want their daily living. What zeal doth at this day prick forward the Pope, the horned bishops, the monks, and all the rabblement of the Popish clergy? Yea, what fury doth drive them so sore [1232] to resist the gospel? They boast that they strive for the Catholic faith; neither did Demetrius want an honest color, pretending the worship of Diana. But the matter itself doth plainly declare that they fight not so much for the altars as for the fires, to wit, that they may have hot kitchens. They can well wink at filthy blasphemies against God, so they lack nothing of their revenues, only they are more than courageous in maintaining such superstitions as are meetest for their purpose. [1233]

Therefore, being taught by such examples, let us learn to make choice of such a kind of life as is agreeable to the doctrine of Christ; lest desire of gain [1234] a provoke us to enter a wicked and ungodly combat. And as for those who, through ignorance or error, are fallen unto any ungodly occupation, or are entangled in any other impure and wicked kind of life, let them, notwithstanding, beware of such sacrilegious rashness. And as touching godly teachers, let them learn by this example, that they shall never

[1230] "Non dubitat," does not hesitate.

[1231] "Si ex illiberali quaestu in diem vivunt," if they live from day to day by the gain of a mean occupation.

[1232] "Tam acriter," so keenly help the meal chest, (larder.) gain

[1233] "Quae ad farinas valent," as

[1234] "Lucri cupiditas," eagerness for

want adversaries, until the whole world, through denial of itself, offer peace, which we know will never come to pass. Because Paul's doctrine taketh away Demetrius and the rest of the silversmiths' gains, they leap out furiously to put out [destroy] the same, will not they do the same whom the gospel shall contrary? But there is no man who hath not occasion to fight. For all the affections of the flesh are enemies to God. So that it must needs be, that how many lusts of the flesh there be [reign] in the world, there are as many armed enemies to resist Christ. It will, indeed, oftentimes fall out, that God will bridle the wicked, lest they raise some tumult, or break out into open rage. Yet, whosoever is not tamed and brought down to bear Christ's yoke, he shall always hate his gospel. So that faithful and godly teachers must persuade themselves that they shall always have to deal with great store of enemies. Demetrius' covetousness is manifest. Nevertheless, we must also know this, that he was Satan's fan, [bellows] who, seeking by all means to overthrow Paul's doctrine, found this fit instrument. Now, forasmuch as we know that Satan is a deadly enemy to Christ and the truth, do we think that he shall ever want ministers, who shall rage through his motion and persuasion, either with open rage, or else seek to work the overthrow of the gospel by secret practices, or spew out the poison of their hatred, or else, at least, show some token of enmity by fretting and murmuring?

25. *By this craft.* Demetrius doth in this place filthily betray his malice. It is lawful for a man, in some measure, to provide for his private profit; but to trouble common [the public] peace for a man's own gain, to overthrow [1235] equity and right, to give over a man's self to do violence and commit murder, to extinguish that of set purpose which is just and right; that is too great wickedness. Demetrius confesseth that this is the state of the cause, because, [viz. that] Paul denieth that those are gods which are made with men's hands. He doth not inquire whether this be true or no; but being blinded with a desire to get gain, he is carried headlong to oppress true doctrine. The same blindness doth drive him headlong to seek violent remedies. Also the craftsmen, because they be afraid of poverty and hunger, run headlong as violently; for the belly is blind and deaf, so that it can admit no equity. For which cause, every one of us ought more to suspect himself, when the question is touching our own gain and profit, lest the same covetous desire which made these men so mad take away all difference of justice and injustice, of that which is filthy and that which is honest.

27. *Not only this part.* This is first disorderly handled in [1236] that Demetrius is careful for religion after other things; [1237] because nothing is more absurd than to prefer the belly before the goddess; but even this is also vain, in that he pretendeth that the worship of Diana is in hazard. For if he had suffered no loss by Paul's doctrine, he would have sat quietly at

[1235] "Pervertere," to pervert.
[1236] "Hoc primum praepostere," this is, in the first place, preposterous.
[1237] "Secundo tandem loco," only in the second place.

home; he would neither have taken thought for the worship of Diana, neither would he have troubled others. What is the cause, then, he is so diligent and so earnest in his business? even this, because he was plagued at home; and because he saw that he and his copartners had no honest or probable cause to make any stir, he goeth about to color [gloss] the matter with some other color. Therefore, to the end he may cover the shame of his wicked fact, he cloaketh it with the title of religion, which is plausible. So that the wicked, howsoever they strive frowardly against God, yet they gather here and there honest excuses [1238] impudently; but God doth not suffer himself to be mocked, but doth rather pull them out of their starting-holes [subterfuges]. There needeth no other witness to refute Demetrius' hypocrisy, because he cutteth his own throat with his own words, when he betrayeth the sorrow which he had conceived, because of the loss which he sustained. [1239] In like state do the Papists stand at this day; they boast with full mouth that they be patrons of the Catholic faith and of the holy mother the Church, but when they have spoken [1240] thus touching their zeal, in the very handling of the cause they breathe out with open throat the smell of their kitchens. But if we have a desire to handle the cause of godliness purely and in earnest, let us forget our commodities, that the glory of God may have the chief place. For the show of profit doth so tie all our senses with enticements, that though we wander through all manner of wickedness, yet do we flatter ourselves so long as we be determined to provide for our own commodity.

Whom all Asia and the world doth worship. It seemeth to Demetrius an unmeet thing that Diana her majesty should be brought to naught, which all the world doth reverence and worship, and this is a common starting-hole [subterfuge] for all superstitious persons, to pretend the consent of the multitude. But true religion requireth a more steadfast stay than in the will and pleasure of men. There is nothing which at this day doth more keep back the simple and unskillful than that they dare not cast from them (such ancient) errors as are commonly received everywhere. Because they feign and imagine that that which pleased many, though foolishly and rashly, is to be counted lawful. For which cause they be not afraid boldly to set the very name of custom against God himself. But the Lord doth prescribe to us another manner of rule, to wit, that being content with his authority alone, we do not pass either for the opinion of men, nor for our own commodity, nor for the custom of many nations.

Acts 19:29-34

Acts 19:29-34

[1238] "Captant honestos praetextus," catch at specious pretexts.
[1239] "Dum privatae jacturae dolorem prodit," while he betrays grief for a private loss.
[1240] "Sic praefati," premised this much.

29. And all the city was full of confusion. And they rushed into the commonplace [theater] with one consent, having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions. 30. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples would not suffer him. 31. And certain also of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, requesting him that he would not enter into the place, [theater]. 32. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was out of order, and the more part knew not for what cause they came together. 33. And some of the company drew forth Alexander, the Jews thrusting him forward. And when Alexander had required silence with the hand, he would have excused the matter [1241] to the people. 34. Whom when they knew to be a Jew, there arose a shout of all men almost for the space of two hours, crying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29. Luke setteth down in this place the nature of the people, as if it were depainted in a table. [1242] Like as if a thousand houses should be set on fire at a sudden, so all the city was on an uproar in one moment; and when such a tempest is once raised, it is not easily stayed. And forasmuch as the servants of Christ cannot avoid this mischief, they must be armed with invincible constancy, that they may boldly suffer the tumults raised among the people, and that they may not be troubled as with some new and strange matter, when they see that the people is unquiet. So Paul himself doth elsewhere triumph that he went valiantly through the midst of sedition (2 Corinthians 6:5). Nevertheless, the Lord doth uphold the ministers of his word with an excellent comfort, when as they be tossed amidst diverse storms and garboils, and with excellent boldness doth he establish them, when he doth testify that he holdeth the helm of his Church; and not that only, but that he is the governor and moderator of all tumults and storms, so that he can stay the same so soon as it seemeth good to him. Therefore, let us know that we must sail as it were in a tempestuous sea; yet that we must suffer this infamy, as if we ourselves were the procurers of trouble? [1243] neither may anything lead us away from the right course of our duty. So that in sailing we shall be sore troubled; yet will not the Lord suffer us to suffer shipwreck. Furthermore, we see that though sedition be confused, yet doth the people always take the worse part; as the men of Ephesus do now catch Gains and Aristarchus, and they drive back Alexander with their furious outcries. Whence cometh this, save only because Satan doth reign in their hearts, so that they rather favor an evil cause? There is also another reason, because a prejudice conceived upon a false report doth possess their minds, so that they cannot abide to sift the cause any farther.

30. *And when Paul would.* We may see that Paul's constancy was coupled with modesty. When as he might well have kept himself out of sight, of his

[1241] "Rationem reddere," have rendered an account.

[1242] "In tabula," in a picture

[1243] "Quasi turbas ipsi concitemus," as if we ourselves excited the disturbance.

own accord was he prepared to put himself in hazard. And yet he doth not refuse to follow their counsel, who knew the state of matters better than he. If he had not been kept back, that which he determined to do could not have been imputed to rashness. There was no sedition raised through his fault. Why should he not venture his life, especially seeing that he did not despair of better success? But when the brethren, and such friends as were more skillful, dissuade him, his modesty is worthy to be commended, in that he doth not stand stoutly in his purpose.

33. *They drew out Alexander.* It is to be thought that the Jews did not send forth this Alexander to plead the common cause of the nation, but that they were desirous to bring him before the people that he might be murdered. Nevertheless, the name Jew made him to be so hated, that they did outrageously refuse whatsoever he was about to speak in the matter and cause; yea, he did hardly escape with his life in such an uproar. Moreover, it is uncertain whether this be that Alexander of whom Paul maketh mention elsewhere, (1 Timothy 1:20; and 2 Timothy 4:14) yet the conjecture seemeth to me allowable. But and if we believe that it is he, let us learn by this fearful example to walk circumspectly, lest Satan carry us away into like falling away [defection]. For we see that he who was at the point to suffer martyrdom, became a treacherous and wicked revolt [apostate].

34. *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* This was a clamorous confession, but without any soundness; neither did it proceed from the faith of the heart. For whence came that great divinity of Diana whereof they spake, save only because like mad men they furiously defend that error which they had once received? It fareth otherwise with true godliness, that we believe with the heart unto righteousness, and then doth the confession of the mouth follow to salvation. Therein doth the distemperature and mad stubbornness of all mad men and brain-sick fools differ from the constancy and zeal of the martyrs. And yet, notwithstanding, our sluggishness is shameful if we be not as ready and stout in the confession of a sure faith as are they in their filthy error. For we see what the Spirit of God prescribeth unto us by the mouth of David,

"I believed, and therefore will I speak," (Psalm 116:10).

Acts 19:35-40

Acts 19:35-40

35. And when the town-clerk had pacified the multitude, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is he that knoweth not the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image that came down from Jupiter? 36. And seeing these things are out of question, you must be quiet, and do nothing rashly. 37. For ye have brought men which are neither church-robbers, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. 38. But and if Demetrius and the craftsmen that are with him have a matter against

any man, there be open assemblies, and there be deputies: let them accuse one another. 39. But and if there be any other matter in question, it shall be decided in a lawful assembly. 40. For it is to be doubted [1244] lest we be accused of this day's sedition, seeing there is no cause whereby we may give a reason of this concourse. And when he had thus spoken, he let the assembly depart.

35. Luke showeth in this place that the tumult was so appeased, that yet, notwithstanding, superstition prevailed with the mad people, and the truth of God was not heard. For the town-clerk, as politic men use to do, counteth it sufficient for him if he can by any means appease the outrageous multitude. Nevertheless, the cause itself is oppressed. He saw undoubtedly Demetrius' malice, and how he had troubled the city, abusing the pretense of religion for his own private gain; but he toucheth not that wound which he knew to be unknown to the unskillful. Nevertheless, to the end he may stay the uproar and contention, he extolleth the reigned power of Diana, and maintaineth her superstitious worship. If Paul had been in the common place [1245] at that time, he would rather have suffered death an hundred times than have suffered himself to be delivered from danger paying so dear for it. For though the town-clerk had not been by him commanded to speak thus, yet it should have been treacherous dissimulation in a public witness and preacher of heavenly doctrine. The scribe affirmeth that the image which the Ephesians did worship came down from heaven, and that Paul and his companions spake no blasphemy against their goddess. Could he have holden his peace, but he must needs by his silence have allowed his false excuse? And this had been to shake hands with idolatry. Therefore, it was not without cause that Luke said before that Paul was kept back by the brethren, and not suffered to enter into the common place [theater].

37. *Men which are neither church-robbers.* He doth both truly and well deny that they be church-robbers; but he doth shortly after falsely define the kind of church-robbery to speak blasphemously against Diana. For seeing that all superstition is profane and polluted, it followeth that those be sacrilegious persons who translate the honor which is due to God alone unto idols. But the wisdom of the town-clerk, and that carnal, is here commended, and not his godliness. For he had respect unto this alone to extinguish the heat of the uproar; and therefore doth he at length conclude, if Demetrius have any private matter, there be judgment-seats and magistrates. And that public affairs must be handled in a lawful, and not in a disordered assembly — in an assembly gathered by the commandment of the magistrates, and not in a concourse which is without consideration, run together through the motion of one man, and to satisfy his appetite. [1246] He calleth them deputies, [1247] in the plural number, not that Asia had more than one, but because legates

[1244] "Periculum est," there is a danger.
[1245] "In theatro," in the theatre.
[1246] "Unius hominis impulsu et libidine," at the instigation and caprice of one man.
[1247] "Proconsules," proconsuls.

did sometimes keep courts in the place of the deputies. Also, he appeaseth them by putting them in fear, because the deputy had occasion offered to punish and fine the city sore. [1248]

[1248] "Quia proconsuli oblatu erat occasio urbis male mulctandae," because an opportunity was given to the proconsul to impose a heavy fine on the city.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20

Acts 20:1-6

Acts 20:1-6

1. And after the tumult was ceased, when Paul had called unto him the disciples, and had embraced them, he took his journey that he might go into Macedonia. 2. And when he had walked through those parts, and had with much speech exhorted them, he came into Greece. 3. And when he had spent three months there, when the Jews laid in wait for him as he was about to loose into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4. And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarebus and Secundus; and Gains of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5. When these were gone before, they stayed for us at Troas. 6. And we sailed away after the day of sweet [unleavened] bread from Philippi, and came to them to Troas within five days, where we stayed seven days.

1. Luke declareth in this chapter how Paul, loosing from Asia, did again cross the seas to go to Jerusalem. And though whatsoever is written in this narration be worthy of most diligent meditation and marking, yet doth it need no long exposition. It appeareth that the Church was preserved in safety by the wonderful power of God amidst those troublesome tumults. The church of Ephesus was as yet slender and weak: the faithful having had experience of a sudden motion [commotion] once, might for just causes fear, lest like storms should ever now and then arise. We need not doubt that Paul did with much ado depart from them; yet because greater necessity doth draw him unto another place, he is enforced to leave his sons who were lately begotten, and had as yet scarce escaped shipwreck in the midst of the raging sea. As for them, though they be very loath to forego Paul, yet, lest they do injury to other churches, they do not keep him back nor stay him. So that we see that they were not wedded to themselves, but that they were careful for the kingdom of Christ, that they might provide as well for their brethren as for themselves. We must diligently note these examples, that one of us may study to help another in this miserable dispersing; but if it so fall out at any time that we be bereft of profitable helps, let us not doubt nor waver, knowing that God doth hold the helm of our ship. And we must also note this, that Paul doth not depart until he have saluted the

brethren, but doth rather strengthen them at his departure. As Luke saith straightway of the Macedonians, that Paul exhorted them with many words, that is, not overfields, [1249] as if it were sufficient to put them only in mind of their duty; but as he commandeth elsewhere that others should do, he urged importunately, and beat in [inculcated] thoroughly things which were needful to be known, that they might never be forgotten (2 Timothy 4:2).

3. *Because the Jews laid wait for him.* The Lord did exercise his servant so diversely and continually that he set before us in him an example of most excellent constancy. It is not sufficient for him to be wearied with the labor and trouble of a long and wearisome journey, unless he be also brought in danger of his life by those which lay in wait for him. Let all the servants of Christ set this mirror before their eyes, that they may never faint through the wearisomeness of straits. Notwithstanding, when Paul doth journey another way that he may avoid their laying in wait, he showeth that we must have regard of our life so far forth that we throw not ourselves headlong into the midst of dangers. And those who accompany him give no small testimony of their godliness; and we see how precious his life was to the faithful, when as a great many being chosen out of diverse countries to be his companions, do for his sake take a hard and sharp journey not without great charges. Luke saith that Paul tarried at Philippos so long as the days of unleavened bread did last, because he had at that time better opportunity offered to teach. And forasmuch as it was unknown as yet that the law was disannulled, it stood him upon to beware, lest by neglecting the feast-day he should be thought among the rude to be a contemner of God. Though, for mine own part, I think that he sought principally opportunity to teach, because the Jews were then more attentive to learn.

Acts 20:7-13

Acts 20:7-13

7. And upon one day of the Sabbaths, when the disciples were come together to break bread, Paul disputed with them, being about to take his journey on the morrow; and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8. And there were many lights in an upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9. And a certain young man named Eutychus, sitting in a window, being fallen into a deep sleep, as Paul disputed long time, being more overcome with sleep, he fell down from the third loft downward, and was taken up dead. 10. And when Paul came down, he fell upon him, and embracing him, said, Be not ye troubled, for his soul is in him. 11. And when he was gone up, and had broken bread, and had, having had long conference until it was day, he departed. 12. And they brought the boy alive, and were not a little comforted. 13. But when he had taken ship, we loosed to Assos, thence to receive Paul, for so had he appointed, being about to go by land;

[1249] "Defunctorie," perfunctorily.

7. *And in one day.* Either doth he mean the first day of the week, which was next after the Sabbath, or else some certain Sabbath. Which latter thing may seem to me more probable; for this cause, because that day was more fit for all assembly, according to custom. But seeing it is no new matter for the Evangelists to put one instead of the first, according to the custom of the Hebrew tongue, (Matthew 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1) it shall very well agree, that on the morrow after the Sabbath they came together. Furthermore, it were too cold to expound this of any day. For to what end is there mentioned of the Sabbath, save only that he may note the opportunity and choice of the time? Also, it is a likely matter that Paul waited for the Sabbath, that the day before his departure he might the more easily gather all the disciples into one place. And the zeal of them all is worth the noting, in that it was no trouble to Paul to teach until midnight, though he were ready to take his journey, neither were the rest weary of learning. For he had no other cause to continue his speech so long, save only the desire and attentiveness of his auditory.

To break bread. Though breaking of bread doth sometimes signify among the Hebrews a domestical banquet, yet do I expound the same of the Holy Supper in this place, being moved with two reasons. For seeing we may easily gather by that which followeth that there was no small multitude gathered together there, it is unlikely that there could any supper be prepared in a private house. Again, Luke will afterward declare that Paul took bread not at supper time, but after midnight. Hereunto is added that, that he saith not that he took meat that he might eat, but that he might only taste. Therefore, I think thus, that they had appointed a solemn day for the celebrating of the Holy Supper of the Lord among themselves, which might be commodious for them all. And to the end Paul might remedy after a sort the silence of longer absence, he continueth his speech longer than he did commonly use to do. That which I spake of the great number of men is gathered thence, because there were many lights in the upper chamber, which was not done for any pomp or ostentation, but only for necessity's sake. For when there is no need, it is ambition and vanity which maketh men bestow cost. Furthermore, it was meet that all the whole place should shine with lights, lest that holy company might be suspected of some wickedness or dishonesty. Add also another conjecture, if the chamber had been empty, those which were present would not have suffered Eutychus to sit upon a window. For it had been filthy licentiousness in despising [1250] the heavenly doctrine to depart aside into a window, seeing there was room enough elsewhere.

9. *When he was fallen into a deep sleep.* I see no cause why some interpreters should so sore and sharply condemn the drowsiness of the young man, that they should say that he was punished for his sluggishness by death. For what marvel is it, if, seeing the night was so far spent, having striven so long with sleep, he yielded at length? And whereas, against his will, and

[1250] "Spernendae ac respuendae," in spurning and rejecting.

otherwise than he hoped for, he was taken and overcome with deep sleep, we may guess by this that he did not settle himself to sleep. To seek out a fit place wherein to sleep had been a sign of sluggishness, but to be overcome with sleep, sitting at a window, what other thing is it but without fault to yield to nature? [1251] As if a man should faint through hunger or too much wearisomeness. Those who being drowned in earthly cares come unto the word loathsomely; those who being full of meat and wine are thereby brought on [to] sleep; those who are vigilant enough in other matters, but hear the word as though they did not pass [care] for it, shall be justly condemned for drowsiness; but Luke doth in plain words acquit Eutychus, when he saith that he fell down, being overcome with deep sleep after midnight.

Moreover, the Lord meant not only by the sleep, but also by the death of this young man to awake and stir up the faith of his, that they might more joyfully receive Paul's doctrine, and might keep it deeply rooted in their minds. It was, indeed, at the first no small temptation, but such as might have shaken even a most constant man full sore; for who would have thought that Christ had been chief governor in that company wherein a miserable man through a fall became dead? Who would not rather have thought this to be a sign of God's curse? But the Lord, by applying a remedy, doth forthwith rid the minds of his of all perturbation.

10. *He lay down upon him.* We know that the apostles, in working miracles, did sometimes use certain external rites, whereby they might give the glory to God, the author. And now, whereas Paul doth stretch himself upon the young man, I think it was done to no other end, save only that he might more easily stir up himself unto prayer. It is all one as if he should mix himself with the dead man, [1252] And, peradventure, this was done for the imitation of Elisha, of whom the sacred history doth report the same thing (2 Kings 4:34). Yet the vehemency of his affection did more move him than the emulation of the prophet. For that stretching of himself upon him doth more provoke him to crave his life with all his heart at the hands of the Lord. So when he embraceth the body of the dead man, by this gesture he declared that he offered it to God to be quickened, and out of the text we may gather that he did not depart from embracing it until he knew that the life was restored again.

Be ye not troubled. We must note that Paul took great care principally for this cause, lest that sorrowful event should shake the faith of the godly, and should trouble their minds. Nevertheless, the Lord did, as it were, seal up and establish [1253] that last sermon which Paul made at Troas. When he saith that his soul is in him, he doth not deny that he was dead, because by this means he should extinguish the glory of the miracle; but the meaning

[1251] "Naturae infirmitati," the infirmity of nature.

[1252] "Perinde agit, acsi se misceret cum mortuo," he acts just as if he were mixing himself up with the young man.

[1253] "Quasi insculpto sigillo apud eos sancivit," did sanction to them as with the impress of the seal.

of these words is, that his life was restored through the grace of God. I do not restrain that which followeth, to wit, that they were greatly comforted through the joy which they had by reason of the young man which was restored to life; but I do also comprehend the confirmation of faith, seeing God gave them such an excellent testimony of his love.

13. *When we had taken ship.* It is uncertain why Paul did choose rather to go by land, whether it were because sailing might be to him troublesome, or that as he did pass by he might visit the brethren. I think that he did then eschew the sea for his health's sake. And his courtesy is greatly to be commended, in that he spared his companions. For to what end did he suffer them to depart, save only that he might ease them of the trouble? So that we see that they did strive among themselves in courtesy and good turns. They were ready and willing to do their duty; but Paul was so far from requiring things straitly [1254] at their hands, that of his own accord and courtesy he did remit those duties which they were ready to do; yea, setting aside his own commodity, he commanded them to do that which was for their comfort. It is well known that the city Assos is by the describers of countries [1255] attributed to Troas. The same, as Pliny doth witness, was called Appollonia. They say that it was a free city of the AEtolians.

Acts 20:14-21

Acts 20:14-21

14. And when we were come together at Assos, having received him we came to him. 15. And sailing thence the day following we came over against Chios; and on the morrow we arrived at Samos, and having tarried at Trogyllum, we came to Miletus. 16. For Paul purposed to sail beyond Ephesus, lest he should spend the time in Asia: for he made haste if it were possible for him to keep the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. 17. And having sent messengers from Miletus to Ephesus, he called the elders of the church. 18. Who when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day wherein I entered into Asia, how 1 have been with you at all seasons, 19. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which happened to me by the laying in wait of the Jews; 20. So that I have kept nothing back which might be for your profit, but did show to you and teach you publicly and through every house, 21. Testifying both to the Jews and Grecians the repentance which is towards God, and the faith which is toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

16. *For Paul purposed.* It is not to be doubted but that he had great and weighty causes to make haste; not that he made so great account of the day, but because strangers did then use to come together to Jerusalem out of all quarters. Forasmuch as he did hope that he might do some good

[1254] "Rigidus exactor," from being a rigid exactor.
[1255] "Geographis," geographers.

in such a great assembly, he would not foreslow [neglect] the opportunity. Therefore, let us know that the worship of the law [1256] was not the cause that he made so great haste, but he set before his eyes the edifying of the Church; partly that he might show to the faithful that the kingdom of Christ was enlarged, partly that if there were any as yet strangers from Christ, he might gain them; partly that he might stop the mouths of the wicked. [1257] Notwithstanding, we must note, that he did, in the mean season, provide for other churches. For, in sending for the elders of Ephesus to Miletus, he showeth that he did not neglect Asia. And whereas they come together when they be called, it is not only a token of concord, but also of modesty; for they were many; yet doth it not irk them to obey one apostle of Christ, whom they knew to be endued with singular gifts. Moreover, it appeareth more plainly by the text, [context] that those are called elders, not which were grey-headed, but such as were rulers of the Church. And it is an usual thing almost in all tongues, that those be called elders and fathers who are appointed to govern others, though their age be not always accordingly.

18. *Ye know.* Paul, in this sermon, standeth principally upon this, that he may exhort those pastors of Ephesus, [1258] by his own example, to do their duty faithfully. For that is the true kind of censure, and by this means is authority purchased to doctrine, when the teacher prescribeth nothing [1259] which he himself hath not done indeed before. And it was no unseemly thing for Paul to speak of his virtues. There is nothing less tolerable in the servants of Christ than ambition and vanity; but forasmuch as all men knew full well what modesty and humility was in the holy man, he needed not to fear lest he should incur the suspicion of vain boasting; especially, seeing that benign information by necessity, he did declare his faithfulness and diligence, that others might take example thereby. He doth, indeed, greatly extol his labors, patience, fortitude, and other virtues, but to what end? Surely not that he may purchase commendation at the hands of his auditory, but that his holy exhortation may pierce more deeply, and may stick fast in their minds. He did also shoot at another mark, that his integrity and uprightness in dealing might serve afterward to commend his doctrine. And he citeth eye-witnesses, lest he seem to speak of things unknown. I call those witnesses who did not only know all things, but had also a judgment which was pure, and corrupt with no affections.

19. *Serving the Lord.* He reckoneth up first not only in what straits he was, but most of all his humility, coupled with contempt of the world, and rebukes, and other afflictions; as if he should say, that he was not honorably received or with commendation; but he was conversant among them under

[1256] "Legalem culture," legal worship.
[1257] "Ut improborum hominum calumnias refelleret," that he might refute the calumnies of wicked men.
[1258] "Quos Ephesi creaverat pastores," those whom he had appointed pastors at Ephesus.
[1259] "In verbis," verbally.

the contemptible form of the cross. And this is no small trial, [1260] when we faint not, though we see ourselves trodden under foot by the intolerable pride of the world.

Notwithstanding, we must note everything more distinctly. To serve the Lord is taken in this place, not for to worship God in holiness and righteousness, which is common to all the godly; but it doth signify to execute a public function. Therefore, Paul doth not speak of [as] some one private man, but as one made a minister of the Church. And so he doth testify, that he fulfilled the apostleship to him committed with humility and modesty; both because, knowing his own infirmity, he did mistrust himself; and also, because, considering the excellency of his calling, he counted himself very unmeet; [1261] and, lastly, because he did willingly submit himself to bear the reproach of the cross. For this humility is set both against vain confidence, and also haughtiness. Secondly, he toucheth [1262] his tears, which strifes, diverse assaults of Satan, the rage of wicked men, the inward diseases of the Church, and offenses, had made him shed; at length, he addeth, that he led a fearful life, [1263] amidst the layings in wait of the Jews; and he confesseth that he was tempted therewith, as he was not hardened, though he did not faint. For he is not ashamed to confess his infirmity.

His drift is, that those to whom he speaketh may not faint, through like tribulations; and that, being void of all ambition, they may do their duty carefully and reverently; and that they may not only with a patient mind suffer themselves to be despised of men, but that they may be cast down in themselves. Because, that man can never be rightly framed to obey Christ whose looks are lofty, and whose heart is proud. And (as men cannot long bear a show of virtue) to the end it may appear manifestly, that he behaved himself sincerely and from his heart, he maketh mention of his constancy which lasted three years, wherein he had still kept one course. Ye know (saith he) how I have behaved myself since the first day until this time. To conclude, this is the true trial of the servants of Christ, not to be changed as the times change; but to continue like to themselves, and always to keep a straight course.

20. *I have kept back nothing.* He commendeth his faithfulness and diligence in teaching in three respects, that he instructed his scholars thoroughly and perfectly, so that he omitted nothing which might make for their salvation; that being not content with general preaching, he did also endeavor to do every man good. Thirdly, he reciteth a brief sum of all his whole doctrine, that he exhorted them unto faith in Christ and repentance. Now, forasmuch as he depainteth out unto us a pattern of a faithful and good teacher, whosoever they be who are desirous to prove their industry to the Lord, they must set before their eyes the edifying of the Church, as he com-

[1260] "Probatio," proof or tests

[1261] "Longe imparem," far from being equal to it.

[1262] "Adjungit," he addeth,

[1263] "Trepidam vitam," a life of trembling.

mandeth Timotheus in another place, to consider what things be profitable, that he may be instant in delivering those things (1 Timothy 4:7, 8). And surely the Scripture (according to whose rule all manner of teaching must be examined, yea, which is the only method of teaching aright) doth not contain profound [1264] speculations, to delight men when they have nothing else to do; [1265] but as the same Paul doth testify, it is all profitable to make the man of God perfect.

But Paul prescribeth such a desire to edify, that the pastor must omit nothing, so much as in him lieth, which is profitable to be known. For they be bad masters who do so keep their scholars in the first principles, that they do never come unto the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). And surely the Lord doth not teach us in his word only to [by] halves, (as they say) but he delivereth perfect wisdom, and such as is in all points absolute. Whereby it appeareth how impudently those men boast themselves to be ministers of the word, who do not only cloak and foster the ignorance of the people with their silence, but do also wink at gross errors and wicked superstitions; as at this day in Papistry, many send out some sparks of sound doctrine, but they [1266] dare not drive away the darkness of ignorance, and whereas the wicked fear of the flesh doth hinder them, they pretend that the people is not capable of sound [1267] doctrine.

Indeed, I confess that all things cannot be taught at one time, and that we must imitate Paul's wisdom, who did apply himself unto the capacity of the ignorant. But what moderation is this when they suffer the blind to fall into the ditch, when they leave miserable souls under the tyranny of antichrist, and whereas they see idolatry rage, the worship of God corrupt, his law broken, and, finally, all holy things profaned, they do either with silence pass over such filthy confusion, or else they show it underhand, sparingly and obscurely, like men that be afraid? Therefore, we must note Paul's word, when as he saith that he kept back nothing, but did show whatsoever things were profitable for the people; for by this we gather that the pure and free [1268] profession of sound doctrine is required at the hands of the servants of Christ, wherein there must be no boughts nor crooks, and that nothing is more unseemly in them than oblique insinuations, and such as are inwrapped in crafty dissimulation.

Publicly, and throughout every house. This is the second point, that he did not only teach all men in the congregation, but also every one privately, as every man's necessity did require. For Christ hath not appointed pastors upon this condition, that they may only teach the Church in general in the open pulpit; but that they may take charge of every particular sheep, that they may bring back to the sheepfold those which wander and go astray, that

[1264] "Argutas," subtle,
[1265] "Sub umbra et in otio," when at ease under the shade.
[1266] "Plerique," the greater part.
[1267] "Solidioris," more solid.
[1268] "Ingenuam," candid.

they may strengthen those which are discouraged and weak, that they may cure the sick, that they may lift up and set on foot the feeble, [1269] (Ezekiel 34:4) for common doctrine will oftentimes wax cold, unless it be holpen with private admonitions.

Wherefore, the negligence of those men is inexcusable, who, having made one sermon, as if they had done their task, live all the rest of their time idly; as if their voice were shut up within the church walls, seeing that so soon as they be departed, thence they be dumb. Also, disciples and scholars are taught, that if they will be numbered in Christ's flock, they must give place to their pastors, so often as they come unto them; and that they must not refuse private admonitions. For they be rather bears than sheep, who do not vouchsafe to hear the voice of their pastor, unless he be in the pulpit; and cannot abide to be admonished and reproved at home, yea, do furiously refuse [1270] that necessary duty.

21. *Testifying both to Jews.* Descending now unto the third point, he setteth down the sum of this doctrine in a few words, to wit, that he exhorted all men unto faith and repentance, as it was said before, that the gospel consisteth upon [of] these two points only. Whence we do also gather wherein the true edifying of the Church doth properly consist, the care and burden whereof doth lie upon the pastor's shoulders, and whereunto we must apply all our study, if we be desirous to profit profitably in God's school. We have already said that the word of God is profaned, when the readers of the same do occupy themselves in frivolous questions. But to the end we may not read the same wanderingly, we must note and aim at this double mark which the apostle setteth before us. For whosoever he be that turneth unto any other thing, in taking great pains, he shall do nothing else but walk in a circuit. By the word *testify* he expresseth great vehemency, as if he should have said that by testifying he did commend, that the excuse of ignorance might not remain. For he alludeth unto the custom used in courts, where testifying is used to take away all doubt. As men are not only to be taught, but also to be constrained to embrace salvation in Christ, and to addict themselves to God, to lead a new life. And though he affirm that he was wanting to none, yet doth he place the Jews in the first place; because, as the Lord hath preferred them in the degree of honor before the Gentiles, so it was meet that Christ and his grace should be offered them until they should quite fall away.

Repentance toward God. We must first note the distinction of faith and repentance, which some do falsely and unskillfully confound, saying, that repentance is a part of faith. I grant, indeed, that they cannot be separate; because God doth illuminate no man with the Spirit of faith whom he doth not also regenerate unto newness of life. Yet they must needs be distinguished, as Paul doth in this place. For repentance is a turning unto

[1269] "Debiles et infirmas," the feeble and infirm.
[1270] "Ferociter repellunt," fiercely repel.

God, when we frame ourselves and all our life to obey him; but faith is a receiving of the grace offered us in Christ. For all religion tendeth to this end, that, embracing holiness and righteousness, we serve the Lord purely, also that we seek no part of our salvation anywhere else save only at his hands, and that we seek salvation in Christ alone. Therefore, the doctrine of repentance containeth a rule of good life; it requireth the denial of ourselves, the mortifying of our flesh, and meditating upon the heavenly life. But because we be all naturally corrupt, strangers from righteousness, and turned away from God himself. Again, because we fly from God, because we know that he is displeased with us, the means, as well to obtain free reconciliation as newness of life, must be set before us.

Therefore, unless faith be added, it is in vain to speak of repentance; yea, those teachers of repentance who, neglecting faith, stand only upon the framing of life, and precepts of good works, differ nothing, or very little from profane philosophers. They teach how men must live; but, forasmuch as they leave men in their nature, there can no bettering be hoped for thence, until they invite those who are lost unto hope of salvation; until they quicken the dead, promising forgiveness of sins; until they show that God doth, by his free adoption, take those for his children who were before bond-slaves of Satan; until they teach that the Spirit of regeneration must be begged at the hands of the heavenly Father, that we must draw godliness, righteousness, and goodness, from him who is the fountain of all good things. And hereupon followeth calling upon God, which is the chiefest thing in the worship of God.

We see now how that repentance and faith are so linked together that they cannot be separate. For it is faith which reconcileth God to us, not only that he may be favorable unto us, by acquitting us of the guiltiness of death, by not imputing to us our sins, but also that by purging the filthiness of our flesh by his Spirit, he may fashion us again after his own image. He doth not, therefore, name repentance in the former place, as if it did wholly go before faith, forasmuch as a part thereof proceedeth from faith, and is an effect thereof; but because the beginning of repentance is a preparation unto faith. I call the displeasing of ourselves the beginning, which doth enforce us, after we be thoroughly touched with the fear of the wrath of God, to seek some remedy.

Faith toward Christ. It is not without cause that the Scripture doth everywhere make Christ the mark whereat our faith must aim, and as they say commonly, set him before us as the object. For the majesty of God is of itself higher than that men can climb thereunto. Therefore, unless Christ come between, all our senses do vanish away in seeking God. Again, inasmuch as he is the Judge of the world, it must needs be that the beholding of him without Christ shall make us afraid. [1271] But God doth not only represent himself unto us in Christ's image, but also refresh us with his Fatherly favor, and by all means restore us to life. For there is no part of our

[1271] "Nos terrore exanimet," make us dead with terror.

salvation which may not be found in Christ. By the sacrifice of his death he hath purged our sins; he hath suffered the punishment that he might acquit us; he hath made us clean by his blood; by his obedience he hath appeased his Father's wrath; by his resurrection he hath purchased righteousness for us. No marvel, therefore, if we said, that faith must be fixed [1272] in the beholding of Christ.

Acts 20:22-27

Acts 20:22-27

22. And, behold, I go now bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what things shall befall me there: 23. Save only that the Holy Ghost doth witness throughout every city, saying that bonds and afflictions are prepared for me. 24. But I care not, neither is my life dear to me, that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25. And now, behold, I know that after this ye shall not see my face, all you through whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God. 26. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am clean from the blood of all men. 27. For I have kept nothing back, but have showed you all the counsel of God.

22. *And, behold.* He declareth now more fully to what end he intreated of his upright dealing; to wit, because they should never see him any more. And it was very expedient that the pattern which was set before them by God of them to be followed should be always before their eyes, and that they should remember him when he was dead. For we know how readily men degenerate from pure institution. But though he deny that he doth know what shall befall him at Jerusalem, yet because he was taught by many prophecies that bonds were prepared for him there, as if he were now ready to die, he cutteth off shortly after the hope of his return. And yet for all this he is not contrary to himself. He speaketh doubtfully at the first of set purpose, that he may soften that which was about to be more (hard and) bitter; and yet he doth truly affirm, that he knew not as yet the ends and events of things, because he had no certain and special revelation touching the whole process.

Bound in the spirit. Some expound this that he was bound to the churches, who had committed to him this function to carry alms. Notwithstanding, I do rather think that hereby is meant the inward force and motion of the Spirit, not as though he were so inspired, [1273] that he was out of his wit, but because being certified of the will of God, he did meekly [1274] follow the direction and instinct of the Spirit, even of his own accord. Therefore, this speech importeth as much as if he should have said, I cannot otherwise do, unless I would be stubborn and rebellious against God, who doth as it were draw me

[1272] "Prorsus esse defixam," must be wholly fixed.
[1273] "Non quod {ενθουσιασμω} correptus fuerit," not that he was so enraptured.
[1274] "Spoute vel plaeide," calmly or spontaneously.

thither, being bound by his Spirit. For to the end he may excuse himself of rashness, he saith that the Spirit is the author and guide of his journey. But would to God those brain-sick men, who boast that the Spirit doth incite to them those things which proceed from their own fantasy, did know the Spirit as familiarly as did Paul, who doth, notwithstanding, not say that all his motions and instigations [1275] are of the Spirit, but declareth that that fell out in one thing as a singular thing. For men do oftentimes foolishly and unadvisedly take in hand those things which they put in practice afterward stoutly, because they be ashamed of lightness and instability. And he doth not only mean that he took in hand his journey for a good cause, which the Spirit of God showeth him, but that it is altogether necessary for him, because it is wickedness to resist. Furthermore, let us learn, by the example of the holy man, not to kick against the Spirit of the Lord, but obediently to give over ourselves by him to be governed, that he may rule us at his pleasure after we be as it were bound to him. [1276] For if the reprobate, who are the bond-slaves of Satan, be carried not only willingly, but also greedily, through his motion, [1277] how much more ought this voluntary bondage or service to be in the children of God?

23. *But that the Holy Ghost.* I do not understand this of secret oracles, but of those foretellings which he heard everywhere of the prophets. And this speech hath greater dignity to set forth the prophecies, than if the men themselves which spake were called and cited to be witnesses. For by this means the word of God hath his [its] authority, when we confess that the Spirit of God is the author thereof, though the ministers be men. Now, forasmuch as the same Spirit, which foretelleth Paul of bonds and tribulations, doth also hold him fast bound that he cannot refuse to submit himself unto him, by this we learn, that what dangers soever hang over our heads, we are not thereby acquitted, but that we must obey the commandments of God, and follow his calling. In vain, therefore, do those men flatter themselves, who will do good so long as they be free from molestation, and may make discommodities, damages, and dangers of death, sufficient excuses.

24. *I care not.* All the godly must be so framed in their minds, and chiefly the ministers of the Word, that, setting all things apart, they make haste to obey God. The life is, indeed, a more excellent gift than that it ought to be neglected; to wit, seeing we be therein created after the image of God, to the end we may think upon that blessed immortality which is laid up for us in heaven, in which the Lord doth now by diverse testimonies and tokens show himself to be our Father.

But because it is ordained to be unto us as a race, we must always hasten unto the mark, and overcome all hindrances, lest any thing hinder or stay us in our course, For it is a filthy thing for us to be so holden with a blind

[1275] "Impulsus," impulses.
[1276] "Nec tamen violenter trahamur," and yet be not violently dragged, omitted.
[1277] "Ad ejus impulsum," as he impels them.

desire to live, that we lose the causes of life for life itself; and this do the words of Paul express. For he doth not simply set light by his life; but he doth forget the respect thereof, that he may finish his course; that he may fulfill the ministry which he hath received of Christ, as if he should say that he is not desirous to live, save only that he may satisfy the calling of God; and that, therefore, it shall be no grief to him to lose his life, so that he may come by death unto the goal of the function prescribed to him by God.

And we must note that which he saith, *with joy,* for his meaning is, that this is taken from the faithful by no sorrow or grief, but that they both. live and die to the Lord. For the joy of a good conscience is more deeply and surely laid up, than that it can be taken away by any external trouble, or any sorrow of the flesh; it triumpheth more joyfully than that it can be oppressed. Also, we must note the definition of his course; to wit, that it is the ministry received of the Lord. Paul doth indeed speak of himself; yet, by his own example, he teacheth that all those go astray who have not God to be the governor of their course. Whereupon it followeth that his calling is unto every one of us a rule of good life. Neither can we be otherwise persuaded that the Lord alloweth that which we do, unless our life be framed and ordered according to his will, which certainly is required, especially in the ministers of the word, that they take nothing in hand unless they have Christ for their author. Neither is it to be doubted but that Paul, in giving his apostleship this mark, (as he useth to do very often) doth confirm the credit thereof. He calleth it the gospel of the grace of God, of the effect or end, notwithstanding this is a title of rare commendation, that, by the gospel, salvation and the grace of God are brought unto us. For it is very expedient for us to know that God is found there to be merciful and favorable.

25. *And, behold, now I know.* He doth now utter that plainly which he had insinuated covertly. And we said that he did put them out of hope of his return, to the end he might more deeply imprint in their minds his exhortations. For we know what great force the words and speeches of men have which are uttered at their departure or death. Also, he would have them beware by this forewarning, that they do not depend upon his presence, and so their faith should faint through wearisomeness. The doctrine of the gospel is called the kingdom of God now again, which doth begin the kingdom of God in this world, by renewing men after the image of God, until it be made perfect at length in the last resurrection,

26. *Wherefore I take you to record.* It is all one as if he had said, I call you to witness, or I call you to bear witness before God and his angels. And this doth he not so much for his own cause, as that he may prescribe unto them their duty with greater authority. Furthermore, this place containeth a brief sum of teaching rightly and well, and it exhorteth the teachers themselves, vehemently and sharply, that they be diligent in their function. What order must pastors then keep in teaching? First, let them not esteem at their pleasure what is profitable to be uttered and what to be omitted; but let

them leave that to God alone to be ordered at his pleasure. So shall it come to pass that the inventions of men shall have none entrance into the Church of God. Again, mortal man shall not be so bold as to mangle the Scripture and to pull it in pieces, that he may diminish [1278] this or that at his pleasure, that he may obscure something and suppress many things; but shall deliver whatsoever is revealed in the Scripture, though wisely and seasonably for the edifying of the people, yet plainly and without guile, as becometh a faithful and true interpreter of God. I said that wisdom must be used, because we must always have respect unto profit, so there be no subtilty used, wherein many take too great delight, when as they turn and wrest the word of God unto their methods, and forge to us a certain kind of philosophy mixed of the gospel and their own inventions; namely, because this mixture is more delectable. Thence have we free will, thence the deserts of works, thence the denial of the providence and free election of God. And that which we said even now is to be noted, that the counsel of God, whereof Paul maketh mention, is included in his word, and that it is to he sought nowhere else.

For many things are kept from us in this life, the perfect and full manifestation whereof is deferred until that day, wherein we shall see God as he is, with new eyes, face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Therefore, those do set forth the will of God who interpret the Scriptures faithfully, and out of them instruct the people in the faith, in the fear of God, and in all exercises of godliness. And, as we said of late, that those are condemned by this sentence, who, disputing philosophically, lest they should teach anything which is removed from the common sense of men, and therefore odious, do corrupt with their leaven the purity of the Scripture; so, both sharply and sore, doth Paul thunder against them, who, for fear of the cross and persecution, do speak only doubtfully and darkly. [1279]

I am clean from the blood. I do not doubt but that he had respect unto the place of Ezekiel, where God denounceth that his prophet shall be guilty of the blood of the wicked unless he exhort them unto repentance (Ezekiel 3:18, 20). For upon this condition doth he appoint pastors over his Church, that if anything perish through their negligence, an account may be required at their hands; yea, that unless they show the way of salvation without guile and crooks, the destruction of those who go astray may be imputed unto them. Those men must needs be wonderful dull whom such a sharp threatening cannot awake. Wherefore the epicurish impiety of the Popish clergy doth the more bewray itself, where, though they craik and brag [1280] of their honorable titles, yet they think no more upon giving of an account for so many souls which perish, than if there sat no Judge in heaven, neither is their ungodliness any whit less filthy before the whole world, in that being given only to devour sheep, [1281] they usurp the name of pastors. Furthermore,

[1278] "Delibet," sip at.
[1279] "Aenigmatice," enigmatitally.
[1280] Make loud boast.
[1281] "Quod deglutiendis tantum ovibus intenti," in that being only intent on devouring the

the Lord showeth how dear souls be to him, seeing that he doth so sharply punish the pastor's sluggishness for their destruction; but we see what small account many men make of their own salvation, for which even God himself doth vouchsafe to be careful.

Acts 20:28-32

Acts 20:28-32

28. Therefore, take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to govern the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood. 29. For I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30. And of your own selves shall arise men, speaking perverse things, that they may draw disciples after them. 31. For which cause watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not night and day to warn every one of you with tears. 32. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, who is able to build farther, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

28. *Take heed, therefore.* He doth now apply his speech unto them, and by many reasons showeth that they must watch diligently, and that he is not so careful but because necessity doth so require. The first reason is, because they be bound to the flock over which they be set. The second, because they were called unto this function not by mortal man, but by the Holy Ghost. The third, because it is no small honor to govern the Church of God. The fourth, because the Lord did declare by an evident testimony what account he doth make of the Church, seeing that he hath redeemed it with his blood. As touching the first, he doth not only command them to take heed to the flock, but first to themselves. For that man will never be careful for the salvation of other men who will neglect his own. And in vain shall that man prick forward other to live godlily, who will himself show no desire of godliness. Yea, that man will not take pains with his flock who forgetteth himself, seeing he is a part of the flock. Therefore, to the end they may be careful for the flock to them committed, Paul commandeth and warneth that every one of them keep himself in the fear of God. For by this means it should come to pass, that every one should be as faithful towards his flock as he ought. For we said that Paul reasoneth from their calling, that they be bound to take pains in the Church of God, whereof they have the government. As if he should say, that they may not do whatsoever they like best, neither are they free after they be made pastors, but they be bound publicly to all the flock.

The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. By the very word he putteth them in mind, that they be placed, as it were, in a watch-tower, that they may watch for the common safety of all men. But Paul standeth principally

sheep.

upon this, that they were not appointed by men, but the charge of the Church was committed unto them by God. For which cause they must be the more diligent and careful, because they must give a straight account before that high seat of judgment. For the more excellent the dignity of that Lord and Master whom we serve is, the more reverence do we give him naturally, and the reverence itself doth sharpen our study and diligence.

Moreover, though the Lord would have ministers of the word chosen from the beginning by the voices [suffrages] of men, yet doth he always challenge the government of the Church to himself, not only to the end we may acknowledge him to be the only governor thereof, but also know that the incomparable treasure of salvation doth come from him alone. For he is robbed of his glory if we think that the gospel is brought unto us, either by chance or by the will of men, or their industry. But this doth Paul attribute peculiarly to the Spirit, by whom God doth govern his Church, and who is to every man a secret witness of his calling in his own conscience.

Concerning the word *overseer* or *bishop,* we must briefly note this, that Paul calleth all the elders of Ephesus by this name, as well one as other. [1282] Whence we gather, that according to the use of the Scripture bishops differ nothing from elders. But that it came to pass through vice and corruption, that those who were chief in every city began to be called bishops. I call it corruption, not because it is evil that some one man should be chief in every college or company; but because this boldness is intolerable, when men, by wresting the names of the Scripture unto their custom, doubt not to change the tongue of the Holy Ghost.

To govern the Church. The Greek word {ποιμαινειν} doth signify *to feed.* But by a fit similitude it is translated unto every kind of government. And we have said that this is the third argument drawn from the excellency of the function; as the same Paul telleth Timotheus elsewhere, that he take heed and see how he ought to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. As if he should *say,* that there is no time to be idle in such a weighty calling, and that those are less excusable whom God hath made stewards of his family, the higher that degree of honor is, unless they be correspondent to so great dignity, that is, unless they do their duty diligently. Now, if bishops or overseers be made by the Holy Ghost, to the end they may feed the Church, the hierarchy of Papistry is ridiculous, wherein bishops being proud of their (painted sheath and) vain title, do not so much as once meddle with the function of teaching, no, not for fashion's sake.

Which he hath purchased. The four reasons, whereby Paul doth carefully prick forward the pastors to do their duty diligently, because the Lord hath given no small pledge of his love toward the Church in shedding his own blood for it. Whereby it appeareth how precious it is to him; and surely there is nothing which ought more vehemently to urge pastors to do their

[1282] "Indifferenter," indifferently.

duty joyfully, than if they consider that the price of the blood of Christ is committed to them. For hereupon it followeth, that unless they take pains in the Church, the lost souls are not only imputed to them, but they be also guilty of sacrilege, because they have profaned the holy blood of the Son of God, and have made the redemption gotten by him to be of none effect, so much as in them lieth. And this is a most cruel offense, if, through our sluggishness, the death of Christ do not only become vile or base, but the fruit thereof be also abolished and perish; and it is said that God hath purchased the Church, to the end we may know that he would have it remain wholly to himself, because it is meet and right that he possess those whom he hath redeemed.

Notwithstanding, we must also remember, that all mankind are the bond-slaves of Satan until Christ set us free from his tyranny, gathering us into the inheritance of his Father.

But because the speech which Paul useth seemeth to be somewhat hard, we must see in what sense he saith that God purchased the Church with his blood. For nothing is more absurd than to feign or imagine God to be mortal or to have a body. But in this speech he commendeth the unity of person in Christ; for because there be distinct natures in Christ, the Scripture cloth sometimes recite that apart by itself which is proper to either. But when it setteth God before us made manifest in the flesh, it doth not separate the human nature from the Godhead. Notwithstanding, because again two natures are so united in Christ, that they make one person, that is improperly translated sometimes unto the one, which doth truly and in deed belong to the other, as in this place Paul doth attribute blood to God; because the man Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for us, was also God. This manner of speaking is caned, of the old writers, *communicatio idiomatum,* because the property of the one nature is applied to the other. And I said that by this means is manifestly expressed one person of Christ, lest we imagine him to be double, which Nestorius did in times past attempt; and yet for all this we must not imagine a confusion of the two natures which Eutychus went about to bring in, or which the Spanish dog, Servetus, hath at this time invented, who maketh the Godhead of Christ nothing else but a form or image of the human nature, which he dreameth to have always shined in God.

29. *For I know.* Paul doth now exhort the Ephesians to watch diligently, by the necessity, which is a most sharp prick. For he saith that "grievous wolves are ready to invade the sheepfold." This is a thing always incident to the Church to be hated of wolves. Wherefore, there is no time to sleep. But the more and the more hurtful those be who break in, the more watchful must the pastors be. For God doth sometimes release some part of trouble, that the flock may be fed quietly and peaceably; and as when the weather is fair and clear, the sheep are fed more safely in the fields, and there is more danger when the air is cloudy and dark; so the Church of God hath sometimes some fair weather granted to it. After that cometh a troublesome

time, which is more fit for the subtilty [1283] of wolves. Therefore, Paul doth mean, that it standeth them upon to be more watchful than they have been hitherto, because greater dangers hang over their heads. But the question is, how Paul knew this? First, we need not doubt of this, but that his presence was of great force to drive away wolves; and no marvel, if the power of the Spirit, which shineth in the ministers of Christ, do bridle the wicked so that they dare not utter their poison; yea, if that heavenly light do drive away much darkness of Satan. Therefore, seeing that Paul did know that the malice of Satan was kept under for a time by his industry, he doth easily foretell what will happen after his departure, though it be likely he was certified by the Lord, through the spirit of prophecy, that others might be admonished by him, as we see it came to pass. Howsoever it be, so often as faithful pastors go away, let us learn that we must beware of wolves, whom they can hardly drive from the sheep-cots, though they watch most narrowly.

30. *Of your ownselves shall arise.* This amplifieth the grievousness of the evil, because there be some wolves within, and so hiding themselves under the title of pastors, [which] do wait for some opportunity wherein they may do hurt. Also, he declareth what danger these wolves do threaten, to wit, the scattering abroad of the flock, when the Church is drawn away from the unity of faith, and is divided into sects. Neither are all those wolves who do not their duty as they ought, but there be oftentimes hirelings, a kind of men not so hurtful as the other. But the corruption of doctrine is a most deadly plague to the sheep. Now, in the third place, the fountain and beginning of this evil is noted, because they will draw disciples after them. Therefore, ambition is the mother of all heresies. For the sincerity of the word of God doth then flourish when the pastors join hand in hand to bring disciples unto Christ, because this alone is the sound state of the Church, that he be heard alone; [1284] wherefore, both the doctrine of salvation must needs be perverted, and also the safety of the flock must needs go to nought, where men be desirous of mastership. And as this place teacheth that almost all corruptions of doctrine flow from the pride of men, so we learn again out of the same that it cannot otherwise be, but that ambitious men will turn away from right purity, and corrupt the word of God. For seeing that the pure and sincere handling of the Scripture tendeth to this end, that Christ alone may have the preeminence, and that men can challenge nothing to themselves, but they shall take so much from the glory of Christ, it followeth that those are corrupters of sound doctrine who are addicted to themselves, and study to advance their own glory, which doth only darken Christ. Which thing the Lord doth confirm in the seventh of John (John 7:18). Furthermore, by the word *arise* which he useth, he signifieth that those wolves do nourish secret destruction until they may have some opportunity offered to break out.

And this place doth very well prevent an horrible stumbling-block and

[1283] "Insidiis," the snares.

[1284] "Unus Magister," as the only Master.

offense which Satan hath always cast in to trouble weak consciences. If external and professed enemies do resist the gospel, this doth not so much hurt to the Church, [1285] as if inward enemies issue out of the bosom of the Church, which at a sudden blow to the field, [1286] or which unfaithfully provoke the people to fall away; and yet God hath from the beginning exercised his Church with this temptation, and now doth exercise it. Wherefore, let our faith be fortified with this defense that it fail not, if at any time it so fall out that pastors begin to rage like wolves. He saith they shall be "grievous wolves", that he may the more terrify them; secondly, they shall be authors of wicked opinions, and that to the end they may draw disciples after them, because it cannot almost otherwise be but that ambition will corrupt the purity of the gospel.

By this it appeareth also how frivolous and vain the brag of the Papists is touching their continual succession. For seeing we can easily show that these horned beasts are nothing less than that which they will be thought to be, being always convicted, they fly unto this fortress, that they succeed the apostles by a continual course. [1287] As if these did not also succeed them, of whom Paul willeth to take heed. [1288] Therefore, seeing that God, either to prove the constancy of his [people], or in his just judgment doth oftentimes suffer wolves to rage under the person of pastors, the authority doth not consist in the name and place alone, neither is succession anything worth unless faith and integrity be joined therewithal. But and if the Papists object that they cannot be called wolves, one word of Paul shall be as a touchstone to prove whether this be so or no, that they may (saith he) draw disciples after them. And to what end tendeth all Popish religion, save only that men's lust and pleasure may reign instead of God's word? But Christ hath no disciples where he is not counted the only master.

31. *For which cause, watch.* Paul doth again exhort them unto diligence by his own example, though he doth join therewithal fear of danger, as if he should say that they have need of great attention to beware; and that it is an unseemly thing that they should be wearied who had seen his singular [1289] patience by the space of three years. Also, he speaketh of his tears, which did add no small efficacy to his exhortations. Whereas he saith that he admonished every one, it may be referred as well unto the common people as unto the elders. For because he was determined to speak such things as should be common to the whole Church, he speaketh as if the whole body were present. Nevertheless, if any had rather restrain it unto the order of the pastors, the meaning shall be this, that their studies must be kindled, not only with this speech which he now maketh, but that it is meet that they

[1285] "Minus hoc consternat pias mentes," this does less alarm pious minds.
[1286] "Classicum caught," blow the trumpet.
[1287] "Continua serie," in an unbroken series.
[1288] "Cavendum… admonet," admonishes us to beware.
[1289] "Infractam," unbroken.

remember those often exhortations which he did continually beat in [1290] by the space of three years, and that with many tears. Yet it seemeth to me to be more likely that he speaketh of all in general.

32. *I commend you to God.* He useth a prayer which, in an oration serving to move the hearers greatly, ought not to be counted absurd. For he did not pass for dividing his sermon into parts as the Rhetoricians use to do, seeing no words were sufficient to express the vehemency of the affections wherewith he was inflamed. He had intreated already of great matters and weighty, which did far exceed man's ability.

Therefore, he turneth himself unto prayer, and by little and little draweth toward an end of his speech, though it be rather an expressing of a desire than a direct prayer; as if he should have said, that they be unable to bear so great a burthen; but he doth wish to them new help from heaven, whereto they may trust and overcome all temptations. And it is not to be doubted, though he speak unto the pastors alone, but that he doth also comprehend the whole Church. First, he commendeth them to God; secondly, to the word of his grace. Notwithstanding, it is all one commendation; but Paul meant to express the means whereby the Lord doth defend the salvation of his, which (as Peter saith) is kept by faith, (1 Peter 1:5) and the means of this keeping dependeth upon the word, lest it come in hazard amidst so many dangers. And it is very expedient for us to know how God will keep us. For because his majesty is hid from us, until we come unto him by his word, we look to and fro, being in doubt.

Therefore, so soon as he receiveth us to be kept, he maketh his word the instrument to keep our salvation, in which sense, he addeth the adjunct "grace," (for the genitive case, after the manner of the Hebrews, doth signify an effect) to the end the faithful might the more safely rest in the word, where God doth show forth his favor. This exposition is plain and apt; for whereas some understand it of Christ, it is too much racked.

Who is able to build farther. The participle, {δυναμενος}, [1291] is to be referred unto God, not unto his word. And this consolation is added for this cause, lest they faint through the feeling of their infirmities. For so long as we be environed with the infirmities of the flesh, we be like to an house whose foundation is laid. [1292] All the godly must be grounded indeed in Christ, but their faith is far from being perfect. Yea, though the foundation continue stable and sure, yet some parts of the building be like to fall and quail. [1293] Wherefore, there is great need both of continual building, and also now and then new props and stays be necessary. Nevertheless, Paul saith that "we must not faint," because the Lord will not leave his work unfinished; as he doth likewise teach in the first chapter to the Philippians,

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day

[1290] "Assidue inculcaverat," had assiduously inculcated.
[1291] "Quo utitur Paulus," which Paul uses.
[1292] "Inchoato aedificio," to a commenced building.
[1293] "Nutant," nod, totter.

of the Lord,"*
*(Philippians 1:6).

Whereto that of the Psalm (Psalm 138:8) answereth,

"Thou wilt not forsake the work of our [thy] hands."

That which is added immediately concerning the inheritance of life appertaineth unto the very enjoying of life. So soon as Christ hath appeared to us, [1294] we pass indeed from death to life; and faith is an entrance into the kingdom of heaven; neither is the Spirit of adoption given to us in vain; but Paul promiseth in this place to the faithful a continual increase of grace until they see the possession of the inheritance whereunto they have been called, which is now laid up for them in heaven. He calleth it "the power of God", not as we use to imagine it, without effect, but which is commonly called actual. For the faithful must so lay hold upon it, that they may have it ready, like to a shield, or buckler, to hold up against all assaults of Satan. As the Scripture doth teach that we have aid enough in the power of God, so let us remember that none are strong in the Lord save those who, abandoning all hope and confidence of their own free will, trust and lean to him, who, as Paul saith very well, is able to build farther.

Acts 20:33-38

Acts 20:33-38

33. I have desired no man's silver, or gold, or raiment. 34. Yea, ye yourselves know how that these hands have ministered to my necessity, and to those which were with me. 35. I have showed you all things, that so laboring you must receive the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus; because he said, It is a blessed thing rather to give than take. 36. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37. And there arose great weeping among them all; and, falling upon Paul's neck, they kissed him, 38. Sorrowing most for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

33. *I have not.* As he showed of late what an hurtful plague ambition is; so now he showeth that they must beware of covetousness, [avarice] and he maketh himself an example again, even in this point, that he did covet no man's goods; but did rather get his living with the work of his hands. Not that it was sufficient to find him without some help, but because in applying his handy-work, he spared the churches, that he might not be too chargeable to them, so much as in him lay. We must note, that he doth not only deny that he did take anything violently, as hungry fellows do importunately wring out preys oftentimes, but also he affirmeth that he was clean from all wicked desire. Whence we gather, that no man can be a good minister of the word, but he must also contemn money. And surely we see that nothing is more common, than that those corrupt the word of God, to win the favor of men,

[1294] "Nobis affulsit," hath shone upon us.

who are altogether filthily given to get gain. Which vice Paul doth sharply condemn in bishops elsewhere, (1 Timothy 3:3).

34. *Yea, ye know* He doth not, in these words, precisely set down a law which all the ministers of the word must needs keep; for he did not behave himself so loftily and lordlike, that he did take that away which the Lord had granted to his servants, but doth rather in many places maintain their right, which is, that they be maintained with that which is common, Matthew 10:10; 1 Corinthians 9:14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17; Philippians 4:10, 16; 2 Corinthians 11:8. Whereunto belongeth that, that he suffered many churches to minister unto him food and raiment. Neither did he only freely receive wages for the work which he did in any place of those who were there, but when he was in necessity at Corinth, he saith that he robbed other churches to relieve his poverty. Therefore, he doth not simply command pastors to maintain their life with their handy-work, but immediately after he declareth how far forth he exhorteth them to follow his example. Those men of Corinth did not deny him that which was due to him; [1295] but seeing that the false apostles did boast that they did their work freely, and get thereby praise among the people; Paul would not be behind them in this point, nor give them any occasion to accuse him falsely; as he himself affirmeth (1 Corinthians 9:15, and 2 Corinthians 11:10). Therefore, he warneth that there be no stumbling-block laid in the way of the weak, and that their faith be not overthrown. For to receive the weak, importeth as much as somewhat to bear with their rudeness and simplicity, as it is (Romans 14:1).

And to remember. We read this sentence in no place word for word; but the Evangelists have other not much unlike this, out of which Paul might gather this. Again, we know that all the sayings of Christ were not written; and he repeateth that general doctrine of the contempt of money; whereof this is a true token, when a man is more bent to give than to take. Neither did Christ speak only politicly, [1296] as if those who are liberal are therefore blessed, because they bind other men unto them with their benefits, and it is a kind of bondage to owe anything; but he had respect unto an higher thing, because, he which giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord, (Proverbs 19:17) that those be faithful and good stewards of God, who impart to their brethren some of that plenty which they have lent them; that men draw nearer unto God in nothing than in liberality. We do also read these titles of liberality in profane authors; and a good part of the world confess that these things are true, but they consent (as it is in the proverb) with ass's ears. For the common life doth show how few be persuaded that nothing ought more to be wished, than that we bestow our goods to help our brethren. For which cause the disciples of Christ must more studiously think upon this felicity, that abstaining so much as in them lieth, from that which is another

[1295] "Non negabant illi Corinthii debitam mercedem," those Corinthians did not deny that hire was due to him.

[1296] "Politice," of what was politic.

man's, they accustom themselves to give. And yet they must not do this with an haughty heart, as if it were a miserable thing for them to be in any man's danger; [1297] either through ambition, that they may bind other men to them; but only that they may exercise themselves willingly in the duties of love, and by this means make known the grace of their adoption.

36. *And kneeling down.* The inward affection is indeed the chiefest thing in prayer; yet the external signs, as kneeling, uncovering of the head, lifting up of the hands, have a double use; the first is, that we exercise all our members to the glory and worship of God; secondly, that by this exercise our sluggishness may be awakened, as it were. There is also a third use in solemn and public prayer, because the children of God do by this means make profession of their godliness, and one of them doth provoke another unto the reverence of God. And, as the lifting up of the hands is a token of boldness [1298] and of an earnest desire, so, to testify our humility, we fall down upon our knees. But he sealeth up and concludeth that sermon which he made before with prayer; because we can hope for no profit of our doctrine, save only from the blessing of God. Wherefore, if we be desirous to do any good by teaching, admonishing, and exhorting, let us always end after this sort; to wit, with prayer.

37. *Great weeping.* No marvel if all the godly did entirely love this holy man. for it had been a point of too gross unthankfulness to despise him whom the Lord had so beautified with so many excellent gifts. And the chief cause of their weeping was, as Luke noteth, because they should see him no more. For they did bewail their own condition, and the condition of all the whole church of Asia, not in vain, which they saw to be deprived of an inestimable treasure. And when the Spirit commendeth their tears by the mouth of Luke, as witnesses of sincere godliness, he condemneth the rashness of those who require at the hands of the faithful hard and cruel constancy. For that is false whereof they dream that those affections proceed only of corruption, which we have naturally from God. Wherefore, the perfection of the faithful consisteth not in this, that they put off all affections; but that they be moved therewith only for just causes, and that they may moderate the same.

[1297] "Ipsos cuiquam esse obnoxios," that they themselves should be subjected (under obligation) to any one.

[1298] "Fiduciae," confidence.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21

Acts 21:1-6

Acts 21:1-6

1. And when it came to pass that we had loosed, being pulled away from them, we came with a straight course to Coos, and the next day to the Rhodes, and thence to Patara; 2. And when we had gotten a ship, which sailed over to Phenicia, when we were entered into it, we launched. 3. And when Cyprus began to appear to us, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed into Syria, and came to Tyrus: for here the ship did unlade her burden. 4. And when we had found disciples, we stayed there seven days; who said to Paul by the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5. And when the days were ended, we departed and went our way; and they all, with their wives and children, accompanied us, until we were out of the city; and when we had kneeled down upon the shore, we prayed. 6. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we went up into the ship; and they returned home.

1. Luke reckoneth up briefly the course of his sailing; and that not only to win credit to the history, that we may know what was done in every place, but that the readers may weigh with themselves the invincible and heroic fortitude which was in Paul, who would rather be tossed and troubled with such long, unlevel, [1299] and troublesome journeys, that he might serve Christ, than provide for his own quietness. Whereas he saith that they were drawn and pulled away, it is not simply referred unto the distance of places; but because the brethren stood on the shore, so long as they could see the ship wherein Paul and his companions were carried. He nameth the havens where the ship arrived, [1300] for this cause that we may know that they sailed quietly without trouble of tempest. Let us search the describers of countries [1301] touching the situation of the cities whereof he maketh mention; it is sufficient for me to show Luke's purpose.

4. *And when they had found disciples.* Though the number of the faithful was but small, yet there came some seed of the gospel thither, according to the prophecies Of the prophets, (Isaiah 23:18) lest Tyrus should be altogether void of the blessing of God. And here, as in other places going before, Luke

[1299] "Ac flexuosis," and Winding.
[1300] "Applicuit," touched,
[1301] "Consulantur geographi," geographers may be consulted.

calleth Christians disciples, that we may know that those alone are numbered in the flock of Christ who have embraced his doctrine by faith. For that is a vain [1302] and false profession for a man to give his name to Christ, and not to understand what he teacheth or speaketh. And let the readers mark, that Paul stayed seven days at Tyrus, for no other cause, saving that he might strengthen them. So that we see, that whithersoever he came he foreslowed [neglected] no occasion to do good.

They said by the Spirit. Namely, with the approbation of speech, that Paul might know that they spake by the Spirit of prophecy. Surely this was no small temptation to cause him not to finish the journey which he had taken in hand, seeing the Holy Ghost did dissuade him from the same. And this was a very fair color [1303] to fly from the cross, if he had cared for his own safety, to be drawn back as it were with the hand of God.

Notwithstanding, he ceaseth not to hold on thither whither he knew he was called by the Lord. Notwithstanding, here ariseth a question, how the brethren can dissuade him by the Spirit from doing that which Paul did testify he doth by the secret motion of the same Spirit? Is the Spirit contrary to himself, that he doth now loose Paul whom he held bound inwardly? I answer, that there be diverse gifts of the Spirit; so that it is no marvel if those who excel in the gift of prophecy be sometimes destitute of judgment or strength. [1304] The Lord showed to these brethren, of whom Luke maketh mention, what should come to pass; yet, nevertheless, they know not what is expedient, and what Paul's calling doth require, because the measure of their gift doth not reach so far. And the Lord would have his servant admonished of purpose, partly, that through long meditation, he might be better furnished and prepared to suffer whatsoever should come, partly that his constancy might more plainly appear, when as being certified by prophecies of the doleful event, he doth, notwithstanding, wittingly and willingly, make haste to endure whatsoever things shall befall him.

5. *With their wives and children.* This was no small testimony of love, in that they accompanied Paul out of the city with their wives and children, which thing Luke doth report, partly that he might commend their godliness according as it deserved; partly that he might declare that Paul had that honor given him which was due to him. Whence we do also gather, that he meant nothing less than to provide for his own commodity, seeing that he was not kept back with so great good will, which was a pleasant bait to entice him to stay. And we must also note the solemn custom of praying in weightier affairs, and that being certified by God of the danger, they are more stirred up to pray.

[1302] "Lusoria," elusory.
[1303] "Color apprime speciosus," a very specious pretext.
[1304] "Fortitudine," fortitude.

Acts 21:7-14

Acts 21:7-14

7. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came down to Ptolemais, and after that we had saluted the brethren, we abode with them one day. 8. And on the morrow, we which were with Paul departed, and came to Cesarea; and, entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven, we abode with him. 9. And this man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. 10. And when we abode many days, there came a certain prophet from Judea, named Agabus. 11. When he was come to us, he took, Paul's girdle, and, binding his own feet and hands, he said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, The man which owneth this girdle shall the Jews thus bind at Jerusalem, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12. And when we had heard these things, both we, and also the rest which were of that place, requested him that he would not go up to Jerusalem. 13. Then Paul answered and said, What do you, weeping and afflicting my heart? I truly am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14. And when he would not be persuaded, we were quiet, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

7. Luke doth briefly declare that Paul was also received at Ptolemais by the brethren. This is a city of Phenicia, standing upon the sea-coast, not far from the borders of Judea, from which Paul and his companions had no long journey to Cesarea. But if the readers be disposed to know farther touching the situation of regions, let them resort unto the describers of places and countries [geographers]. Furthermore, he saith, that when he came to Cesarea, they lodged with Philip, whom he calleth an Evangelist, though he were one of the seven deacons, as we may see in the sixth chapter (Acts 6:5). By this we may easily gather, that that deaconship was an office which continued but for a time; [1305] because it had not otherwise been lawful for Philip to forsake Jerusalem, and to go to Cesarea. And in this place he is set before us, not as a voluntary forsaker of his office, but as one to whom a greater and more excellent charge was committed. The evangelists, in my judgment, were in the midst between apostles and doctors. For it was a function next to the apostles to preach the gospel in all places, and not to have any certain place of abode; [1306] only the degree of honor was inferior. For when Paul describeth the order of the Church, (Ephesians 4:11) he doth so put them after the apostles, that he showeth that they have more room given them where they may teach than the pastors, who are tied to certain places. Therefore, Philip did for a time exercise the office of a deacon at Jerusalem, whom the Church thought afterward to be a meet man to whom the treasure of the gospel should be committed.

9. *Four daughters.* This is added for the commendation of Philip, not

[1305] "Temporale munus," a temporary trace, (appointment.)

[1306] "Nec praeficerentur certae staticni," and yet not be appointed to a fixed station.

only that we might know that his house was well ordered, but also that it was famous and excellent through the blessing of God. For, assuredly, it was no small gift to have four daughters all endowed with the spirit of prophecy.

By this means the Lord meant to beautify the first beginnings of the gospel, when he raised up men and women to foretell things to come. Prophecies had now almost ceased many years among the Jews, to the end they might be more attentive and desirous to hear the new voice of the gospel. Therefore, seeing that prophesying, which was in a manner quite ceased, doth now after long time return again, it was a token of a more perfect state. Notwithstanding, it seemeth that the same was the reason why it ceased shortly after; for God did support the old people with diverse foretellings, until Christ should make an end of all prophecies. [1307] Therefore, it was meet that the new kingdom of Christ should be thus furnished and beautified with this furniture, that all men might know that that promised visitation of the Lord was present; and it was also expedient that it should last but for a short time, lest the faithful should always wait for some farther thing, or lest that curious wits might have occasion given to seek or invent some new thing ever now and then. For we know that when that ability and skill was taken away, there were, notwithstanding, many brain-sick fellows, who did boast that they were prophets; and also it may be that the frowardness of men did deprive the Church of this gift. But that one cause ought to be sufficient, in that God, by taking away prophecies, did testify that the end and perfection was present in Christ; and it is uncertain how these maids did execute the office of prophesying, saving that the Spirit of God did so guide and govern them, that he did not overthrow the order which he himself set down. And forasmuch as he doth not suffer women to bear any public office in the Church, it is to be thought that they did prophesy at home, or in some private place, without the common assembly.

10. *A certain prophet.* Though Luke doth not plainly express the same, yet do I conjecture that this Agabus was the same of whom mention is made in the eleventh chapter, (Acts 11:28) who foretold that there should be famine under the reign of Claudius Caesar. And when as Luke calleth him a prophet, as of late he called, the four daughters of Philip, he signifieth that it was not a common but a peculiar gift. Now, we must see to what end the persecution which was at hand was now again showed by Agabus. As concerning Paul, he was sufficiently told already. [1308] Therefore, I do not doubt but that this confirmation was added for other men's sake; because the Lord meant every where to make known the bonds of his servant, partly that they might know that he entered the combat willingly, partly that they might perceive that he was appointed of God to be a champion to fight for the gospel. It was surely a profitable example of invincible constancy,

[1307] "Adventu suo," by his advent.

[1308] "Jam satis superque admonitus fuerat," he had been more than sufficiently warned already.

seeing that he offered himself willingly and wittingly to the violence of the adversaries; and no less profitable is it for us at this day, that his apostleship should be confirmed with this voluntary and no less constant giving over of his life.

The man who owneth this girdle. It was an usual thing among the prophets to represent those things which they spake by signs; neither did they confirm their prophecies by using signs, through their own motion, but at the commandment of the Spirit, as when Isaias is commanded to go barefoot, (Isaiah 20:2) Jeremiah to put a yoke upon his neck, to sell the possession and to buy it, (Jeremiah 27:2, and Jeremiah 32:7) and Ezekiel to dig through the wall of his house privily, and in the same night to carry forth burthens, (Ezekiel 12:5). These and such like might seem to the common sort to be toys; [1309] but the same Spirit, who did apply signs to his words, did inwardly touch the hearts of the godly, as if they had been brought to the very thing itself. So this spectacle, mentioned by Luke, did no less move Paul's companions, than if they had seen him bound in deed. The false prophets did afterward essay to delude the simple by this policy, as Satan is in a manner God's ape, and his ministers do envy the servants of God. Zedekias made himself horns, wherewith he promised Syria should be pushed. Ananias, by breaking Jeremiah's yoke, put the people in a vain hope of deliverance. God hath suffered the reprobate to be deluded with such delusions, that he might punish their unbelief.

But, forasmuch as there was in them no force of the Spirit, their vanity did no whit hurt the faithful. This is also worthy to be noted, that Agabus doth not set before their eyes a dumb spectacle, but he coupleth therewith the word, whereby he may show to the faithful the use and end of the ceremony.

12. *Both we.* Because they had not all one revelation, it is no marvel if their judgments were diverse. For seeing these holy men knew that there consisted much in the life or death of one man, they would not have him to come in danger rashly. And their desire is worthy [of] praise, in that they desired to provide for the common safety of the Church by keeping back Paul. But, on the other side, Paul's constancy deserveth so much the more praise, when as he continueth so steadfast [1310] in the calling of God. For he was not ignorant what great trouble he should suffer by reason of his bands. But because he knoweth the will of God, which was his only rule in taking counsel, he maketh no account of all other things, that he may follow it. And, assuredly, we must be so subject to the will and pleasure of God, that no profit, no kind of reason may remove us from obeying him. [1311] When Paul doth reprehend the brethren, because they afflict his heart with weeping, he doth sufficiently declare that he was not hardened, [1312] but that

[1309] "Ludicra," ludicrous.
[1310] "Inflexibilis," inflexible,
[1311] "A simplici ejus obsequio," from simple obedience to him.
[1312] "Ferreum," iron-hearted.

he was brought unto some feeling and suffering together with them. [1313] Therefore, the tears of the godly did wound his heart; but that softness did not turn him out of the way, but that he proceeded to follow God with a straight course. Therefore, we must use such courtesy toward our brethren, that the beck or will of God have always the upper hand. Now Paul doth again declare by his answer, that the servants of Christ cannot be prepared to do their duty, unless they despise death; and that none can ever be well encouraged to live to the Lord, but those who will willingly lay down their lives for the testimony of the truth.

14. *We ceased saying.* If they had thought that he ran rashly unto death, they would not have ceased so. Therefore, they yield lest they resist the Holy Spirit, whereby they understand that Paul is governed. For that which they had heard before, by the mouth of Paul, that he was drawn, as it were, by the bands of the Spirit, was quite out of their heads by reason of the sorrow which they had conceived; but when they be taught again that it was the will of God that it should be so, they think it unlawful for them to resist any longer. And with this bridle must all our affections be kept in, that nothing be so bitter, or doleful, or hard, which the will of God may not mitigate and mollify. For so often as any thing which is hard or sharp doth fall out, we give God small honor, unless this cogitation prevail with us, that we must obey him.

Acts 21:15-25

Acts 21:15-25

15. And after these days, having taken up our burdens, we went up to Jerusalem. 16. And there came together with us certain of the disciples from Cesarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17. And when we were come unto Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18. And on the morrow Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19. Whom after we had saluted, he told by order all things which God had done among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20. But when they had heard, they glorified the Lord, and said to him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousand Jews the be which believe; and they all are earnest followers of the law; 21. And it hath been told them concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they must not circumcise their children, nor live according to the customs. 22. What is it then? The multitude must needs come together; for they shall hear that thou art come. 23. Therefore, do this which we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow upon them; 24. Them take, and purify thyself with them, and do cost on them, that they may shave their heads, and that all men may know that those things which they have heard concerning thee are nothing; but

[1313] "Quin amore ad {συμπαθειαν} induceretur," but by love was induced to sympathy.

that thou thyself also walkest and keepest the law. 25. And as concerning those which among the Gentiles have believed, we have written, decreeing that they observe no such thing, but that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from that which is strangled, and from fornication.

15. *When we had taken up our burdens.* Paul's companions declare, that when they went about to call back Paul from danger, they did rather care for the common safety of the Church, than every man for his own life. For after they had taken the repulse, they do not refuse to take part with him in the same danger; and yet this was a plausible excuse that they were bound by no law to be hauled to suffer death, through one man's stubbornness. And this is truly to bring our affections in subjection to God, when we are terrified with no fear, but every one of us endeavoreth, so much as he is able, to further that which we know doth please him. Also, it appeareth more plainly what great ferventness of godliness was in the rest, who of their own accord accompany him, and bring him an host; whereas, notwithstanding, they might well have feared many discommodities.

17. *They received us gladly.* Luke reciteth this, therefore, that he may set forth the equity of the brethren, who did not credit rumors [1314] and false reports. Though many envious and wicked men did daily, one after another, endeavor to bring Paul in contempt, yet, because James and his fellows in office were well persuaded of his uprightness, they were not estranged from him. Therefore, they receive him now courteously and brotherly as a servant of Christ, and declare that he is welcome. This moderation must we observe diligently, that we be not too hasty to believe wicked reports, especially when those who have given some testimony of their honesty, and whom we have tried [1315] to serve God faithfully, are burdened with crimes unknown to us, or else doubtful, because Satan knoweth that nothing is more fit to lay waste the kingdom of Christ, than discord and disagreement among the faithful, he ceaseth not to spread abroad false [1316] speeches, which may cause one to suspect another. Therefore, we must shut our ears against false reports, that we may believe nothing concerning the faithful ministers of the Word, but that which we know to be true.

18. *All the elders were present.* We may gather that out of this place which we had already in the fifteenth chapter. So often as any weighty business was to be handled, the elders were wont to come together, to the end the consultation might be more quiet without the multitude. We shall see anon, that the people were likewise admitted in their order, yet after that the elders had had their secret consultation [1317] among themselves.

19. And now Paul showeth his modesty when he doth not make himself the author of those things which he had done, but giving the praise to God,

[1314] "Sinistris ramoribus," sinister rumours.
[1315] "Experti sumus," experienced.
[1316] "Obliquos sermones," indirect speeches, insinuations. counsel.
[1317] "Interius consilium," more private

doth call himself only the minister whose industry [agency] God had used. As we must grant, that whatsoever thing is excellent and worthy of praise, it is not done by our own power, but forasmuch as God doth work in us; and especially touching the edifying of the Church. Again, it appeareth how far off the elders were from envy, when they glorify God for the joyful success. But because mention is made of no other apostle besides James, we may conjecture that they were gone into diverse places to spread abroad and preach the gospel as their calling did require; for the Lord had not appointed them to stay still at Jerusalem; but after they had made a beginning there, he commanded them to go into Judea and other parts of the world. Moreover, the error of those men, who think that James was one of the disciples whom Paul numbereth among the three pillars of the Church, is refuted before in the fifteenth chapter. And though the same commandment was given to him which was given to the rest of his fellows in office; yet I do not doubt but that they did so divide themselves, that James stood still at Jerusalem, whither many strangers were wont daily to resort. For that was all one as if he had preached the gospel far and wide in strange [1318] places.

Thou seest, brother, how many thousands. This oration or speech hath two members. For, first, the elders say, that so many of the Jews as were converted, seeing they be earnest followers of the law, are evil affected towards Paul, because they think that he endeavoreth, with might and main, to abolish the law. Secondly, they exhort him that making a solemn vow he purge himself, that he may not be had in suspicion any longer. They object to Paul, the multitude of believers, that he may the more willingly yield to them. For if they had been a few stubborn fellows, he would not have been so much moved. But now he may not neglect both much people, and the whole body of the Church.

Undoubtedly, that zeal of the law, which was in them, was corrupt, and assuredly even the very elders declare sufficiently that they like it not. For though they do not condemn it openly, neither sharply complain of the same, yet because they separate themselves from their affection, they secretly confess that they err. If it had been a zeal according to knowledge, it ought to have begun at them; [selves] but they contend not for the law itself, neither do they pretend the due reverence thereof, neither do they subscribe to those who are earnest followers of it. Therefore, they both signify that they are of another mind, and also that they do not allow [approve] the superstition of the people.

Notwithstanding it is objected, that they say that Paul was burdened with a false report or slander; again, when they require at his hands satisfaction, they seem to nourish that zeal. I answer, that though that were a true report, in some respect, wherewith the Jews were offended, yet was it mixed with a slander. Paul did so teach the abrogating of the law, that notwithstanding by this means the authority thereof did not only continue sound

[1318] "Remotis," remote.

and perfect, but it was more holy. For as we said, in the seventh chapter, the ceremonies should be vain, unless the effect thereof had been showed in Christ. Therefore, those who say that they were abolished by the coming of Christ, are so far from being blasphemous against the law, that they rather confirm the truth thereof. We must consider two things in ceremonies; the truth, whereto is annexed the efficacy; secondly, the external use. Furthermore, the abrogating of the external use, which Christ brought, dependeth hereupon, in that he is the sound body, [1319] and that nothing was shadowed in times past which is not fulfilled in him. This differeth much from the falling away from the law, to show the true [1320] end thereof, that the figures may have an end, and that the spiritual truth thereof may always be in force. Wherefore we see that they were malicious and unjust interpreters, who laid apostacy to Paul's charge, though he did call away the faithful from the external worship of the law. And whereas they command Paul to make a vow to that end, that he may prove himself to be a keeper of the law, it tendeth to no other end, saving that he may testify that he doth not detest the law like a wicked apostate, who did himself shake off the Lord's yoke, and move others unto the like rebellion.

That they ought not to circumcise. It was so indeed; for Paul taught that both Jews and Gentiles were set at liberty. For these sentences are general with him. Circumcision is nothing (1 Corinthians 7:19). Again, We be circumcised by baptism in Christ, not with circumcision made with hands; again, Let no man judge you in meat or drink, or in the choice of feasts, which are shadows of things to come; but the body is in Christ (Colossians 2:11, 16). Again, Whatsoever cometh into the shambles, and whatsoever is set before you, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake (1 Corinthians 10:25). Again, Be not inwrapped again in the yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1). Seeing that he spake thus everywhere without exception, he freed the Jews from the necessity of keeping the law.

And lest I stand too long upon this, one place shall be sufficient, where he compareth the law to a tutor, under which the old Church was, as in the childhood thereof; but now knowing the grace of Christ, it is grown up, that it may be free from ceremonies. In that place he speaketh undoubtedly both of the Jews and Gentiles. Also, when he saith that the hand-writing of the law, which did consist in decrees, (Colossians 2:14) is blotted out and nailed to the cross by Christ, he setteth free the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, from the ceremonies, which he calleth in that place decrees. But seeing that he did not precisely reject ceremonies, in teaching that the coming of Christ did make an end of the observing thereof, that was no revolting, as the envious Jews thought it to be.

Neither were the elders ignorant of Paul's liberty. Therefore, seeing they understand the matter very well, their meaning is, to have this alone made

[1319] "Ipse est solidum corpus," he himself is the entire body.
[1320] "Legitimum." legitimate.

known to the rude and unskillful, that Paul meant nothing less than to persuade the Jews to contemn the law. Therefore, they behold not the bare matter, but knowing what the common sort thought of Paul, by reason of the reports [1321] which went about concerning him, they seek to cure the same. Though I wot not whether this were more importunate than equal, [just] which they required at Paul's hands. And by this it appeareth how preposterous the cruelty [credulity] of men is in receiving false reports, and how fast a false opinion, once rashly received, doth stick. It is certain that James and his fellows in office did endeavor to maintain and defend Paul's good report, and to put away those lies which did hurt his estimation; yet let them do what they can, they will speak evil of Paul. Unless, peradventure, they were too slack in the beginning, that they might gratify their countrymen, so that they were not their own men [free] afterward.

22. *The multitude must needs come together.* The verb is a verb neuter, as if they should say, the multitude must of necessity come together. For it had been an absurd thing that an apostle, of such rare report, should not come before the whole multitude of the faithful. For if he had eschewed the light and sight of people, the sinister suspicion might have been increased. Nevertheless, we see how modestly the elders behaved themselves in nourishing concord, when as they prevent the offense of the people in time, saving that they bear too much [1322] peradventure with their infirmity, in requiring a vow of Paul. But this moderation must be kept in the Church, that the pastors be in great authority, and yet that they rule not proudly as lords, neither despise the rest of the body. For the distinction of orders, which is the bond of peace, ought not to be any cause of dissension.

23. *Do that which we say to thee.* The elders seem (as I said even now) to be fallen unto a foolish pampering [indulgence] through too much love of their nation. But the manifest judgment of that thing [1323] dependeth upon the circumstances which are hid from us at this day: yet they knew them well. The whole body almost did consist upon [of] Jews, so that they needed not to fear the offending of the Gentiles. For in other regions this was the cause of departure, [1324] because every man was wedded to his own custom, and would prescribe a law to others. Furthermore, they had at Jerusalem many things which might provoke them to keep the ceremonies of the law, so that they had a greater excuse if they did more slowly forsake them. And though their zeal were not void of fault, yet as it was an hard matter to reform it, so it could not be done at a sudden. We see how this superstition was scarce in long time pulled from the apostles; and because new disciples came daily unto the faith, the infirmity was nourished in all together. And yet, notwithstanding, we must not deny but that ignorance was coupled with obstinacy, which the elders did nevertheless tolerate, lest

[1321] "Mallgnis rumoribus," malignant reports.
[1322] "Nimis indulgent," are too indulgent to.
[1323] "Liquidum ejus rei judicium," a clear judgment on the case.
[1324] "Discessionis," schism or dissension.

they should do more hurt by using violent remedies. I leave it indifferent whether they did pass measure or no. [1325]

Having a vow upon them. Though these four be reckoned among the faithful, yet their vow was superstitious. Whereby it appeareth that the apostles had much trouble in that nation, which was not only hardened in the worship of the law through long use, but was also naturally malapert, and almost intractable. Though it may be that these men were as yet but novices, and therefore their faith was yet but slender, and scarce well framed; wherefore the doctors did suffer them to perform the vow which they had unadvisedly made. As touching Paul, because he made this vow not moved thereunto by his own conscience, but for their sakes, with whose error he did bear, the case stood otherwise with him. Notwithstanding, we must see whether this were one of the indifferent ceremonies, which the faithful might omit or keep at their pleasure. It seemeth, indeed, to have in it certain things which did not agree [1326] with the profession of faith. But because the end thereof was thanksgiving, (as we said before in the eighteenth chapter) and there was nothing in the rite itself repugnant to the faith of Christ, Paul did not doubt to descend thus far to make his religion known. Therefore, Paul did that which he saith of himself elsewhere, because he made himself a companion of those which followed the law, as if he himself were in subjection to the law (1 Corinthians 9:20). Finally, he was made all things to all men, that he might win all; to wit, even unto the altars, so that he might pollute himself with no sacrilege under a color of love. [1327] It had not been so lawful for him to go unto the solemn sacrifice of satisfaction. [1328] But as for this part of the worship of God, which consisted in a vow, he might do it indifferently, so it were not done for religion's sake, but only to support the weak. But it was neither his intent to worship God with this rite, neither was his conscience tied, but he did freely submit himself to his weak brethren.

24. *Which they have heard of thee are nothing.* They seem to persuade Paul to dissemble. For the rumor rose not upon nothing, that he did call away the Jews from the ceremonies, and that he did not walk in observing the law. But we must remember that which I said even now, that it was sufficient for Paul and the elders, if they could remove the slander which was unjustly raised, to wit, that he was a revolt [apostate] from the law, and there might a better opportunity be offered shortly, that in purging himself he might call them back by little and little from their error. Neither was it good or profitable that Paul should be counted an observer of the law any long time, as the disciples were then commonly; for by this means a thick [1329] veil should have been put before their eyes to darken the light of Christ.

[1325] "An voturn exeesserint in medio relinquo," whether or not they went farther than they wished, I do not take it, upon me to determine,

[1326] "Parum consectianea," which ill accorded.

[1327] "Sub praetextu charitatis," under a pretext of charity.

[1328] "Expiationis," expiation

[1329] "Crassius," a thicker.

Wherefore, let us know that Paul did not dissemble, but sincerely professed that he did not hate the law, but that he did rather think reverently of it. They will him to bestow cost together with them, because they were wont to put their money together that they might offer sacrifice together.

25. *And as concerning those which have believed.* They add this lest they be thought to go about to take away or call back that liberty which they had granted to the Gentiles, so that they may be burdened with some prejudice. But, in the mean season, they seem to keep the Jews in bondage, from which they set free the Gentiles alone in plain words. I answer, forasmuch as the estate of all was alike, like liberty was granted to both. But there is mention made of the Jews, who were so addicted to their observations and ceremonies, that they would not take to themselves that liberty which they might well challenge. But the apostles did by name provide for the Gentiles, lest the Jews, after their wonted custom, should reject them as profane and unclean, because they were neither circumcised, neither nousled up [educated] in the worship of the law. Moreover, lest I load the paper with a superfluous repetition, let the readers repair unto the fifteenth chapter, (Acts 15:20) where they shall find those things which appertain unto the exposition of this decree.

Acts 21:26-30

Acts 21:26-30

26. Then when Paul had taken the men, on the morrow, being purified with them, he entered into the temple, declaring the fulfilling of the days of purification until an offering might be offered for every one of them. 27. And when the seven days were now almost ended, certain Jews of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, moved the people, and laid hands on him, 28. Crying, Men of Israel, help: This is that man, which teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. Moreover, he hath also brought Grecians into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. 29. For they had seen Trophimus an Ephesian in the city with him, whom they thought Paul had brought into the temple. 30. And all the whole city was moved, and the people ran together: and when they had caught Paul, they drew him out of the temple: and by and by the doors were shut.

26. Whereas some accuse Paul of subtilty, [1330] as if he did play the hypocrite, I have before refuted this. Yet I do not deny but that he granted to do thus much at the request of the brethren, being thereunto in a manner enforced. Therefore, it hath more color, and is (as they say) more disputable, that he was too easily entreated, and too ready to obey; and yet I do not admit that which some men say, that it went not well with Paul, because, taking upon him a new and unwonted person, he did not so constantly, as he was wont, maintain the liberty purchased by Christ. I confess, indeed, that

[1330] "Astutiae," craftiness.

God doth oftentimes punish foolish purposes with unhappy success; but I see not why this should be applied to Paul, who through voluntary subjection sought to win the favor of the rude, and such as were not thoroughly instructed, that he might do them good; being about to do that not willingly, but because he had rather yield to the brethren than stick to his own judgment. Furthermore, when he was once admitted, he might fitly have passed over to moderate that zeal. His courtesy doth rather deserve great praise, in that he doth not only gently abase himself for the unskillful people's sake, but doth also obey [1331] their foolishness who did unworthily, and against reason, suspect him. He might well have reproved [1332] them, because they had been so ready to believe reports contrary to his estimation [reputation]. In that he abstaineth, he showeth great patience; in that he winneth their favor so carefully, it is singular modesty.

Moreover, he might have been more rough and round with [1333] James and his fellows in office, because they had not been more diligent to root out errors from among the people. For though it be certain that they taught faithfully, yet it may be that the sight of the temple, and the very seat of the law, did hinder them in defending the use of liberty. But Paul, whether he went from his right of his own accord, or whether he think that they see better what is expedient than he, doth follow [1334] their counsel. And whereas false Nicodemites, following this example of Paul, go about to color their treacherous dissimulation, whilst they pollute themselves with all filthiness of Popery, it needeth no long refutation. They boast that they do this to win the weak brethren, (or that they follow their vein thus far) as if Paul did yield to them in all things without choice. If, being Jews, they should take upon them according to the pre-script of the law, to fulfill among the Jews a vow infected with no idolatry, then might they prove themselves to be like Paul. Now, forasmuch as they inwrap themselves in gross and altogether wicked superstitions, and that because they will escape the cross, what likelihood is that which they imagine? [1335]

27. *The Jews which came from Asia.* It is certain that these men were enemies to the name of Christ and of Christians, so that whilst Paul is bent to pacify the faithful, he incurreth the rage of the enemies. Those of Asia are, indeed, the raisers of the tumult; but the minds of all the people were so corrupt with the hatred of him that they all became partners in the fury. But this place teacheth, that we must not take it impatiently if at any time our hope be frustrate, and our counsels, which we have taken with a right and holy affection, fall not out well, that our actions may have an happy end. We must attempt nothing but with a good conscience, and according

[1331] "Morem gerit," defer to.
[1332] "Expostulasset," expostulated with.
[1333] "Durior," more severe on.
[1334] "Acquiescit," acquiesces in.
[1335] "Qualis ista est quam fingunt similitudo," what resemblance is there in it to that which they feign.

to the Spirit of God. But and if things come not to pass as we would, even then, let that inward feeling uphold us, that we know that God alloweth [approveth] our desire, though it be laid open to the reproaches and mocks of men; neither let it repent us of our gentleness, if at any time the wicked reward us otherwise than we deserve.

28. *Men of Israel, help.* They cry out as if they were in extreme danger, and they call upon all men to help them, as if all religion were in hazard. Whereby we see with what furious hatred they were inflamed against Paul, only because in showing that the full and perfect truth is found in Christ, he taught that the figures of the law had an end. Now, whereas they conceive a false opinion, having seen Trophimus, they do more betray by this headlong lightness how venomous they be. They accuse Paul of sacrilege. Why? because he brought into the temple a man which was uncircumcised. But they laid a most cruel [1336] crime to the charge of an innocent through a false opinion. Thus the boldness of those men useth commonly to be preposterous who are carried away with an opinion conceived before. But let us learn by such examples to beware of the distemperature of affections, and not to let light prejudices have the rein, lest we run headlong upon the innocent, being carried with blind force.

30. *And the city was moved.* We see in this place the vanity of the common people, which count Paul a condemned man before ever they hear him. Whereas the city is moved about godliness, [1337] "it is no marvel; but this is a point of perverse zeal and mad rashness, in that they set themselves against Paul before they know his matter. For in this corruption of nature frowardness is joined with foolishness, so that those will readily, of their own accord, make haste to maintain an evil cause who can hardly be moved with many exhortations to do well. This is a hard case, that the whole world should be armed against us at a sudden, through the persuasion of a few; but seeing it pleaseth the Lord it should be so, let every one of us prepare himself by this, and such like examples, to suffer all manner [of] assaults, and to bear and abide all brunts.

Acts 21:31-40

Acts 21:31-40

31. And as they sought to kill him, it was told the captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32. Who took with him straightway soldiers and under captains, and ran down unto them: but they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left smiting of Paul. 33. Then the chief captain drew near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and he asked what he was, and what he had done. 34. And

[1336] "Atrocissimum," most atrocious.

[1337] "Quod tumultuatur civitas in negotio pietatis," that the city is in a tumult in a matter relating to godliness.

some cried one thing, and some another, among the people: and when he could not know the truth, by reason of the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the camp. 35. And when he came to the stairs, it happened that he was carried of [by] the soldiers, because of the violence of the multitude. 36. For the multitude of people followed, crying, Away with him. 37. And when Paul began to be carried into the camp, he saith to the captain, May I speak to thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? 38. Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest into the wilderness four thousand men which were murderers? 39. And Paul said, I verily am a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a citizen of no vile city of Cilicia: but I beseech thee suffer me to speak to the people. 40. And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing upon the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made great silence, he spake in the Hebrew tongue, saying.

31. *As they sought to kill him.* Assuredly the force of Satan appeareth therein, in that he driveth the people headlong into such rage, that when they have shut the doors of the temple, being not content with mean punishment, they conspire to put Paul to death. We must thus think with ourselves that Satan doth prick forward the enemies of godliness, lest their rage, how cruel and troublesome soever it be, trouble us. On the other side appeareth the wonderful goodness of God, when as he raiseth up the chief captain at a sudden, that he may deliver Paul from death. He himself thought upon no such thing, but he came to appease the tumult which was raised among the people; but the Lord showeth a more evident token of his providence, because Paul's life was delivered from such present danger without man's counsel. Thus doth he suffer the faithful not only to labor, but to be almost oppressed, that he may deliver them from death more wonderfully. Luke calleth him the chief captain [tribune] of the band [1338] improperly, seeing every chief captain was set over a thousand, which cloth also appear by the text, where he saith that the chief captain took with him under captains? [1339]

32. *And when they saw the chief captain.* Those whose fury neither the majesty of God, nor yet the reverence of the temple, could once stay, begin to relent when they see a profane man. Whereby it appeareth that they were set on fire rather with barbarous cruelty than zeal. Now, whereas the chief captain bindeth Paul with chains, he declareth thereby sufficiently that he came not to ease him. The unbelievers would attribute this to fortune; but the Spirit hath depainted out unto us the providence of God as in a table [picture] reigning amidst the confused uproars of men. And though this be very hard that this holy minister of God is so shamefully handled, yet the equity of the chief captain is to be commended if he be compared with the Jews. He bindeth him with chains, as if he were some evil-doer, or

[1338] "Tribunum cohortis," tribune of the cohort.

[1339] "Centurionos… a tribuno assumptos," that the tribune took with him centurions.

some wicked person; yet doth he vouchsafe to hear him when he is bound, whom they did beat unmercifully; neither doth he determine to handle him hardly before he knew his ca, use. Yea, this was the best way to mitigate their cruelty, because they thought [hoped] that Paul should be punished immediately.

34. *Some cried one thing, and some another.* The madness of the raging people doth betray itself on every side. They make horrible outcries, whereof one is contrary to another. Nevertheless, they desire with one consent to have him put to death who was convicted of no offense. In the mean season, we need not doubt but that they were blinded with a color of holy zeal. But the truth of the cause well known maketh men truly zealous, as it maketh them true martyrs of God, but rage betrayeth devilish madness. Whereas mention is made in this place of the camp or fortress, we must know that the soldiers, which were placed to guard the city, had a place which was trenched and fortified on every side, which they might defend as if it were a castle, and from which they might beat back all assaults, if any sedition were raised. For it had not been good for them to have been dispersed here and there in diverse inns, [1340] seeing the people were treacherous, and the city troublesome. And we gather by this that the place was high, because Luke saith, that when they came to the steps, Paul was carried of [by] the soldiers. And whether the soldiers did lift Paul up on high that they might bring him safe to the station or camp, or he was thus tossed with the violence of the crowd, this was no duty [office] of favor. But the greater the cruelty of those which followed him was, God did more plainly declare that he was favorable to his servant in sparing his life, lest if he should have been murdered in the tumult, his death should have wanted due fruit.

37. *May I speak unto thee?* Paul offered himself to defend his cause, which all the servants of God must do. For we must do our endeavor to make our integrity known to all men, lest through our infamy the name of God be blasphemed. But when the chief captain demandeth whether Paul be not that Egyptian which was a murderer, which a little before had led away a company of men, [1341] let us learn that how modestly and quietly soever the ministers of Christ behave themselves, and howsoever they be void of all fault, yet cannot they escape the reproaches and slanders of the world. Which thing we must note for this cause, that we may acquaint ourselves with rebukes; [1342] and that in well-doing we may be prepared to be evil-spoken of. When he asketh him concerning the Egyptian, he meaneth not Theudas the sorcerer, as some men falsely suppose; of whom Gamaliel made mention before in the fifth chapter, (Acts 5:36) and of whom Josephus speaketh more in his twentieth of Antiquities. For, besides that we read there that Theudas carried away only four hundred men, and the chief captain reckoneth up

[1340] "Neque enim…. tutum fuisset in varia hospitia passim distribui," for it had not been safe for them to have been quartered up and down in various places.

[1341] "Hominum turbam ad defectionem impulerat?" had induced a body of men to revolt.

[1342] "Ut ad contumelias assuescamus," that we may accustom ourselves to contumely.

in this place four thousand, and saith that they were all murderers, that is more, in that Theudas raised that faction during the reign of Tiberius or Augustus Caesar; whereof remained only an obscure report, because, so soon as a troop of horsemen was sent after them, they were forthwith destroyed.

Notwithstanding, it seemeth to me that Josephus is deceived in that where he saith, first, that Cuspius Fadus was sent by Claudius, and then he addeth, that Theudas was of him overcome, seeing I have before showed that that former insurrection was made at such time as Claudius was but a private man. Though he disagree much with Luke's narration, even in the number, seeing he saith that there were about thirty thousand made partners in the sedition, unless happily we expound it thus, that, after he was put to flight by Felix, he fled into the wilderness with four thousand. And it had been an absurd thing that the number should be made ten times greater, as also, that a troop, having no skill in war, or being altogether without courage, should have been defamed with the name of murderers. For as Josephus doth witness, that seducer had deceived the simple and credulous common people with false promises, boasting that he was a prophet of God, which would lead the people dry foot through the midst of Jordan.

But the same Josephus putteth the matter out of doubt when he saith, that an Egyptian, a prophet, did gather together a band of men under Felix the president, and did carry them into Mount Olivet, whereof four hundred were slain, two hundred taken, and the residue dispersed. The history was fresh in memory. Again, forasmuch as the author of the sedition was escaped, and the region filled with murderers, [1343] it is not without cause that the chief captain demandeth of Paul, when he seeth all men so hate him, whether he were that Egyptian. Luke recordeth no longer conference had between the chief captain and Paul; yet it is likely, forasmuch as both of them understood the Greek tongue, that they had farther talk. Whereby it came to pass, that so soon as Paul had well purged himself, he had license granted him to speak to the people. For the chief captain would never have suffered a wicked man to make any public speech in a city which was so sore suspected.

[1343] "Latronibus infesta," infested with robbers.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22

Acts 22:1-5

Acts 22:1-5

1. Men, brethren, and fathers, hear mine excuse which I make now before you. 2. And when they heard that he spake to them in the Hebrew tongue, they kept the more silence: And he said, 3. I truly am a man, a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, and brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. 4. And I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women. 5. As the chief priest doth bear me witness, and all the older of elders, of whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound to Jerusalem, that they might be punished.

Though we may guess by the beginning of this speech what was Paul's drift, yet because he was interrupted, we know not certainly what he was about to say. The sum of that part which is refitted is this, that forasmuch as he was well and faithfully instructed in the doctrine of the law, he was a godly and religious worshipper of God in the sight of the world. Secondly, that he was an enemy to the gospel of Christ, so that he was counted among the priests one of the principal maintainers and defenders of the law. Thirdly, that he did not change his sect unadvisedly; but that being tamed and convict by an oracle from heaven, he gave his name to Christ. Fourthly, that he did not embrace unknown things, but that God appointed him a faithful teacher, of whom he learned all things perfectly. Lastly, that when he was returned to Jerusalem, and sought to do good to his countrymen, God did not permit him. So that he brought not the doctrine of salvation unto foreign nations without good consideration, or because he hated his own nation, but being commanded by God so to do.

1. *Men, brethren, and fathers.* It is a wonder that he giveth so great honor yet to the desperate enemies of the gospel, for they had broken all bond of brotherly fellowship, and by oppressing the glory of God, had spoiled themselves of all titles of dignity. But because Paul speaketh in this place as some one of the people, he speaketh so lovingly unto the body itself, and useth towards the heads words honorable without dissembling. And surely because their casting off was not made known as yet, though they

were unworthy of any honor, yet it was meet that Paul should reverently acknowledge in them the grace of God's adoption. Therefore, in that he calleth them brethren and fathers, he doth not so much regard what they have deserved, as into what degree of honor God had exalted them. And all his oration is so framed that he goeth about to satisfy them, freely indeed, and without flattering, yet humbly and meekly. Therefore, let us learn so to reverence and honor men that we impair not God's right. For which cause the pope's pride is the more detestable, who, seeing he hath made himself an high priest without the commandment of God and the consent of the Church, doth not only challenge to himself all titles of honor, but also such tyranny, that he goeth about to bring Christ in subjection; as if when God doth exalt men he did resign up his right and authority to them, and did stoop down to them.

2. *That he spake Hebrew.* This is indeed an usual thing, that when men which speak diverse languages are together, we hear those more willingly who speak our own language; but the Jews were moved with another peculiar cause, because they imagined that Paul was offended [1344] with his own kindred, so that he did even hate their tongue, or that he was some rogue which had not so much as learned the speech of that nation whereof he said he came. Now, so soon as they heard their own language, they began to have some better hope. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether Paul spake in the Hebrew or in the Syrian tongue; for we know that the speech of the Jews was corrupt and degenerate after their exile, forasmuch as they had much from the Chaldeans and Syrians. For mine own part, I think, that because he spake as well to the common sort as unto the elders, he used the common speech which was at that day usual.

3. *I am a Jew.* As all things were out of order at that day among the Jews, many rogues and vagabonds, to the end they might have some shroud for their wickedness, did falsely boast that they were Jews. Therefore, to the end Paul may acquit himself of this suspicion, he beginneth at his birth; that done, he declareth that he was known in Jerusalem, because he was brought up there of [from] a child; though this latter thing seemeth to be spoken not only for certainty's sake, but because it skilled much that this should also be known how well he had been instructed.

There is nothing more bold to cause trouble than unlearned men. And at that day the government of the Church was so decayed, that religion was not only subject to sects, but also miserably mangled and torn in pieces. Therefore, Paul nameth his master, lest any man may think that he had not been nousled up in learning, [1345] and therefore had he forsaken the worship of the fathers; as many men, who are not trained up in learning, forget their nature and grow out of kind. [1346] But Paul saith chiefly that he was well

[1344] "Ex professo infensum," professedly hostile to.
[1345] "Nulla disciplina imbutum," not imbued with any discipline.
[1346] "Fiunt degeneres," become degenerate,

taught in the law, that the Jews may understand that it was not through ignorance (as it falleth out oftentimes) that he causeth such ado, and doth counterfeit their monsters.

It is to be doubted whether this be that Gamaliel of whom mention is made before, (Acts 5:34). Scholars are said to sit at their masters' feet, because forasmuch as they be not as yet of strong and sound judgment, they must bring such modesty and aptness to be taught, that they must make all their senses subject to their masters, and must depend upon their mouth. So Mary is said to sit at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:39) when she giveth ear to his doctrine. But and if such reverence be due to earthly masters, how much more ought we to prostrate ourselves before the feet of Christ, that we may give ear to him when he teacheth us out of his heavenly throne? This speech doth also put boys and young men in remembrance of their duty, that they be not stout nor stubborn, or that they be not puffed nor lifted up against their masters through some foolish confidence, but that they suffer themselves quietly and gently to be framed by them.

Taught in the law of the fathers. The old interpreter doth translate it word for word, taught *according to the truth of the fathers' law,* saving that {ἀκρίβεια} is rather a *perfect way* [1347] than *truth.* Notwithstanding the question is, What he meaneth by this perfect way, seeing all of them had one and the same form of the law? He seemeth to me to distinguish that purer form of knowledge wherein he had been trained up from the common instruction, which did more disagree with the true and natural meaning of the law. And although the law of the Lord was then corrupt by many additions, even among the best doctors, yet because religion was altogether there corrupt among many, Paul doth for good causes boast, that he was both well and also diligently instructed in the law of the fathers; or (which is all one) exactly or perfectly, lest any man should think that he had gotten only some small smattering, as if he were one of the common sort.

But because many who are well taught are, notwithstanding, full stuffed with Epicurish contempt of God, he declareth that he was zealous toward God; as if he should say, that the serious study of godliness was annexed to doctrine, so that he meant not to daily in holy things, as profane men do of set purpose confound all things.

But because this his zeal was altogether rash, he maketh himself like to the other Jews for that time. Notwithstanding, this may be taken in good part, that he did long ago no less worship God from his heart than they did then.

4. *I persecuted this way.* This is the second point, that he was an enemy to Christ's doctrine, and that he was more fervent in resisting the same than all the rest, until he was pulled back by the hand of God; which thing he saith the chief priests and elders can testify. Therefore, there can be no suspicion in such a sudden change. Whereas he saith, that he had letters given him

[1347] "Exacta ratio," an exact method.

to deliver to the brethren, it must be referred unto the Jews, as if he had called them his countrymen; but he meant to appease them with a more honorable title. For this is Paul's drift, that he may declare his natural and lawful beginning which he took of that nation; [1348] and also how desirous he was to be linked with them in friendship.

Acts 22:6-11

Acts 22:6-11

6. And it happened that as I journeyed and drew near to Damascus about noon, that suddenly a great light shone round about me from heaven. 7. And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8. And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said to me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9. And they which were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid: but they heard not the voice of him which talked with me. 10. Then I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Arise, and go to Damascus; and there it shall be told thee what things be ordained for thee to do. 11. And when I saw not by reason of the glory of the light, being led by the hand by those companions which were with me, I came to Damascus.

6. *And it happened.* Because this history was expounded more at large in the ninth chapter, I will only briefly touch those things which were there spoken. But this is peculiar to this present place, that Paul reckoneth up his circumstances, that by them he may prove that he was converted by God. And this is the third member of the sermon; otherwise this change should have been thought to have proceeded of inconstancy, or rashness, or else it should not have been void of some infamy. For nothing is more intolerable than to start aside from the course of godliness which men have once entered; and also not to do that which they are commanded to do. Therefore, lest any man might suspect Paul's conversion, he proveth by many miracles which he bringeth to light, that God was the author thereof. In the night-season there appear oftentimes lightnings, which come of the hot exhalations of the earth; but this was more strange, that about noon a sudden light did not only appear, but did also compass him about like a lightning, so that through fear thereof he fell from his horse, and lay prostrate upon the ground. Another miracle, in that he heard a voice from heaven; another, in that his companions heard it not as well as he. Also, there follow other things, that, after that he was sent to Damascus, the event is correspondent to the oracle; because Ananias cometh to meet him. Also, in that his sight is restored to him in a moment.

I fell to the earth. As Paul was puffed up with Pharisaical pride, it was meet that he should be afflicted and thrown down, that he might hear Christ's voice. He would not have despised God openly, neither durst he

[1348] "Ab ilia genta… originem," origin from that nation.

refuse the heavenly oracle; yet his mind should never have been framed unto the obedience of faith, if he had continued in his former state; therefore, he is thrown down by violence, that he may learn to humble himself willingly. Furthermore, there is in Christ's words only a brief reprehension, which serveth to appease the rage of Paul being so cruelly bent. Nevertheless, we have thence an excellent consolation, in that Christ taking upon him the person of all the godly, doth complain that whatsoever injury was done to them was done to him. And as there can no sweeter thing be imagined to lenify the bitterness of persecution, than when we hear that the Son of God doth suffer not only with us, but also in us, so again, the bloody enemies of the gospel, who being now besotted with pride, do mock the miserable Church, shall perceive whom they have wounded.

9. *They which were with me.* I showed in the other place, that there is no such disagreement in the words of Luke as there seemeth to be. Luke said there, that though Paul's companions stood amazed, yet heard they a voice. [1349] But in this place he saith, they heard not the voice of him which spake to Paul though they saw the light. Surely it is no absurd thing to say that they heard some obscure voice; yet so that they did not discern it as Paul himself, whom alone Christ meant to stay and tame with the reprehension. Therefore, they hear a voice, because a sound doth enter into their ears, so that they know that some speaketh from heaven; they hear not the voice of him that spake to Paul, because they understand not what Christ saith. Moreover, they see Paul compassed about with the light, but they see none which speaketh from heaven.

10. *What shall I do, Lord?* This is the voice of a tamed man, and this is the true turning unto the Lord; when laying away all fierceness and fury, we bow down our necks willingly to bear his yoke, and are ready to do whatsoever he commandeth us. Moreover, this is the beginning of well-doing, to ask the mouth of God; for their labor is lost who think upon repentance without his word. Furthermore, in that Christ appointeth Ananias to be Paul's master, he doth it not for any reproach, or because he refuseth to teach him; but by this means he meaneth to set forth, and also to beautify the outward ministry of the Church.

And even in the person of one man, he teacheth us [1350] that we must not grudge to hear him speak with the tongue of men. To the same end tendeth that which followeth immediately, that he was blind, until offering himself to become a scholar, he had declared [1351] the humility of his faith. God doth not indeed make blind all those whom he will lighten; but there is a general rule prescribed to all men, that those become foolish with themselves who will be wise to him.

[1349] "Vocem audisse, neminem vidisse," heard a voice, and saw no one.
[1350] "Commune documentum nobis praebuit," he hath given us a common proof,
[1351] "Probasset," he had proved.

Acts 22:12-15

Acts 22:12-15

12. And one Ananias, a godly man according to the law, approved by the testimony of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13. Coming unto me, and standing by me, said to me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And I receiving my sight, the same hour saw him. 14. But he said to me, The God of our fathers hath prepared thee that thou mightest know his will, and see the Just, and hear a voice from his mouth. 15. Because thou shalt be his witness before all men of those things which thou hast seen and heard. 16. And now why stayest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, in calling upon the name of the Lord.

12. *One Ananias.* Paul proceedeth now unto the fourth point, to wit, that he did not only give his name to Christ, being astonished with miracles, but that he was also well and thoroughly instructed in the doctrine of the gospel. I have already said that Ananias met Paul, not by chance, but through the direction of Christ. And whereas he giveth him the title of godliness as concerning the law, and saith that he was well reported of by the whole nation, in these words he preventeth the wrong [1352] opinion which they might conceive. As they loathed the Gentiles, so they would never have allowed any teacher coming from them; and one that had revolted from the law should have been most detestable. Therefore, he witnesseth that he worshipped God according to the law, and that his godliness was known and commended among all the Jews, so that they ought not to suspect him. These words, according to the law, are ignorantly, by some, coupled with the text following, that he was approved according to the law. For Ananias' religion is rather distinguished by this mark from the superstitions of the Gentiles. Though we must note, that the law is not mentioned to establish the merits of works, that they may be set against the grace of God; but Ananias' godliness is clearly acquitted of all evil suspicion which might have risen among the Jews. And seeing that he restoreth sight to Paul with one word, it appeareth thereby that he was sent of God, as I have said before.

14. *The God of our fathers.* As nothing is more fit to provoke us joyfully to go forward toward God, than when we know that God doth prevent us with his free goodness, that he may call us back from destruction to life; so Ananias beginneth here. God, saith he, hath ordained thee to know his will. For by this means Paul is taught that God had respect unto him at such time as he went astray, and was altogether an enemy to his own salvation; and so God's predestination doth abolish all preparations which sophisters imagine, as if man did prevent God's grace by his own free will. In calling him the God of the fathers, he reneweth the remembrance of the promises, that the Jews may know that the new calling of Paul is joined with them, and that those fall not away from the law who pass over unto Christ. Therefore Paul

[1352] "Sinistram," sinister.

confirmeth that by these words which he avouched before in his own person, that he had not made any departure from the God of Abraham, whom the Jews had in times past worshipped, but that he continueth in the ancient worship which the fathers did use, which he had learned out of the law.

Wherefore, when the question is about religion, let us learn by the example of Paul, not to imagine any new God, (as the Papists and Mahometans have done, and as all heretics use to do) but let us retain that God who hath revealed himself in times past to the fathers, both by the law, and also by diverse oracles. This is that antiquity wherein we must remain, and not in that whereof the Papists boast in vain, who have invented to themselves a strange God, seeing they have forsaken the lawful fathers.

The same is to be said at this day of the Jews, whose religion, seeing it disagreeth with the law and the prophets, their God must also be degenerate and feigned. For he who would in times past be called the God of Abraham and of the fathers, appeared at length in the person of his Son, that he may now be called by his own name, [1353] or title, the Father of Christ. Therefore, he which rejecteth the Son hath not the Father, who cannot be separated from him. And Ananias saith, that it cometh to pass, through the free election of God, that the truth of the gospel doth now appear to Paul; whereupon it followeth, that he did not attain unto this by his own industry, which the experience of the thing did also declare. For nothing was more stubborn than Paul until Christ did tame him. And if we desire to know the cause and beginning, Ananias calleth us back unto the counsel of God, whereby he was appointed and ordained; and assuredly it is a more precious thing to know the will of God, than that men can attain unto it by their own industry. [1354] That which Ananias affirmeth of Paul ought to be translated unto all, that the treasure of faith is not common to all; [1355] but it is offered peculiarly to the elect. Furthermore, it appeareth more plainly by the next member what this will of God is. For God spake at sundry times and many ways by his prophets, but last of all, he revealed and made known his will and himself wholly in his Son (Hebrews 1:1).

To see the Just. Seeing all the Greek books [1356] in a manner agree together in the masculine gender, I wonder why Erasmus would rather translate it in the neuter, *Which is Just;* which sense the readers see to be cold and far let [fetched]. Therefore, I do not doubt but that *Just* is taken in this place for Christ; and the text runneth very finely [1357] thus, because it followeth immediately after, *and hear a voice from his mouth.* And it is certain that all the godly and holy men did most of all desire that they might see Christ. Thence flowed that confession of Simeon,

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; because mine eyes

[1353] "Proprio elogio," by the proper title.
[1354] "Suo marte," by their own strength.
[1355] "Non esse omnibus promiscue expositum," is not set before all promiscuously.
[1356] "Graeci codices," the Greek manuscripts.
[1357] "Concinne," elegantly, appositely.

have seen thy salvation," (Luke 2:29).

Therefore this seeing, which godly kings and prophets did most earnestly desire, as Christ himself doth witness, (Luke 10:24) is not without cause extolled as a singular benefit of God. But because the sight of the eyes should profit little or nothing, which we know was to many deadly, he adjoineth the hearing of the voice. Ananias setteth down the cause why God did vouchsafe Paul of so great honor, to wit, that he might be to his Son a public witness; and he doth so prepare him, that he may learn not only for himself alone, [1358] but that he may have so much the more care to profit, because he shall be the teacher of all the whole Church.

16. *And now, why tarriest thou?* It is not to be doubted but that Ananias did faithfully instruct Paul in the principles of godliness; for he would not have baptized him if he had been void of true faith. But Luke passeth over many things, and doth briefly gather the sum. Therefore, seeing Paul doth understand that the promised redemption is now given in Christ, Ananias saith, for good causes, that nothing ought to stay him from being baptized. But when he saith, Why tarriest thou? he doth not chide Paul, neither doth he accuse him of slackness, but he doth rather amplify the grace of God by adding baptism. The like sentence had we in the tenth chapter, (Acts 10:47)

"Can any man let [hinder] those from being baptized with water who have the Holy Ghost given them even as we?"

But when he saith, Wash away thy sins, by this speech he expresseth the force and fruit of baptism, as if he had said, Wash away thy sins by baptism. But because it may seem that by this means more is attributed to the outward and corruptible element than is meet, the question is, whether baptism be the cause of our purging. Surely, forasmuch as the blood of Christ is the only means whereby our sins are washed away, and as it was once shed to this end, so the Holy Ghost, by the sprinkling thereof through faith, doth make us clean continually. This honor cannot be translated unto the sign of water, without doing open injury to Christ and the Holy Ghost; and experience doth teach how earnestly men be bent upon this superstition. Therefore, many godly men, lest they put confidence in the outward sign, do overmuch extenuate the force of baptism. But they must keep a measure, that the sacraments may be kept within their bounds, lest they darken the glory of Christ; and yet they may not want their force and use.

Wherefore, we must hold this, first, that it is God alone who washeth us from our sins by the blood of his Son; and to the end this washing may be effectual in us, he worketh by the hidden power of his Spirit. Therefore, when the question is concerning remission of sins, we must seek no other author thereof but the heavenly Father, we must imagine no other material cause but the blood of Christ; and when we be come to the formal cause, the Holy Ghost is the chief. But there is an inferior instrument, and that is the preaching of the word and baptism itself. But though God alone doth

[1358] "Privatim," privately.

work by the inward power of his Spirit, yet that doth not hinder but that he may use, at his pleasure, such instruments and means as he knoweth to be convenient; not that he includeth in the element anything which he taketh either from his Spirit or from the blood of Christ, but because he will have the sign itself to be an help for our infirmity.

Therefore, forasmuch as baptism doth help our faith, that it may reap forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ alone, it is called the washing of the soul. So that the washing, spoken of by Luke, doth not note out the cause; but is referred unto the understanding of Paul, who, having received the sign, knew better that his sins were done away. [1359] Though we must also note this, that there is no bare figure set before us in baptism, but that the giving of the thing is thereto annexed; because God promised nothing deceitfully, but doth, indeed, fulfill that which under the signs he doth signify. Notwithstanding, we must again beware that we tie not the grace of God to the sacraments; for the external administration of baptism profiteth nothing, save only where it pleaseth God it shall. By this there is also another question answered which may be moved. For seeing Paul had the testimony of the grace of God, his sins were already forgiven him. Therefore, he was not washed only by baptism, but he received a new confirmation of the grace which he had gotten.

In calling upon the name of the Lord. It is out of question that he meaneth Christ, not because the name of Christ alone is called upon in baptism, but because the Father commandeth us to ask of him whatsoever is figured in baptism; neither doth the operation of the Spirit tend to any other end, saving that it may make us partakers of his death and resurrection. Therefore, Christ is appointed to excel in baptism, yet inasmuch as he is given us of the Father, and inasmuch as he poureth out his graces upon us by the Holy Ghost. Whereby it cometh to pass that the calling upon the name of Christ containeth both the Father and the Son.

Wherefore, Ananias doth not mean, that the name of Christ must only be named, but he speaketh of prayer, whereby the faithful do testify, that the effect of the outward sign is in the power of Christ alone. For the sacraments have neither any power of salvation included in them, neither are they anything worth of themselves. Wherefore, this member is, as it were, a correction of the former saying, because Ananias doth, in plain words, send Paul from reposing confidence in the external sign unto Christ.

It is well known how much the Papists differ from this rule, who tie the cause of grace to their exorcisms and enchantments; and they are so far from studying to direct the miserable people unto Christ, that they rather drown Christ in baptism, and pollute his sacred name by their enchantments.

[1359] "Expiata esse," were expiated.

Acts 22:17-22

Acts 22:17-22

17. And it came to pass, that, when I was returned to Jerusalem, and prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18. And saw him say to me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: because they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19. Then I said, Lord, they know that I did cast into prison, and did beat in every synagogue those which did believe in thee: 20. And when the blood of thy witness, Stephen, was shed, I did also stand by and consented to his death, and kept the raiment of those which slew him. 21. And he said unto me, Go: because I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. 22. And they heard him unto this word, then they lifted up their voice, saying, Away with such a fellow from off the earth: for it is not meet that he should live.

17. *And it came to pass.* This had not been the last conclusion, [1360] if Paul had not been cut off [stopped short] with their outrageous outcries. Notwithstanding, his drift and purpose doth plainly appear by the former text, [context] for he beginneth to intreat of his ministry, that he may show that he departed not from the Jews of his own accord, as if he withdrew him of malice from taking pains with them; but he was drawn unto the Gentiles contrary to his expectation and purpose. For he came purposely to Jerusalem, that he might impart with his own nation that grace which was committed to him. But when the Lord cutteth off his hope which he had to do good, he driveth him thence. But there was a double offense which Paul goeth about to cure. For they both thought that the covenant of God was profaned if the Gentiles should be admitted into the Church together with them, and nothing did grieve the proud nation so much as that others should be preferred before them, or so much as made equal with them. Therefore Paul's defense consisteth in this, that he was ready, so much as in him *lay,* to do them the best service he could; but he was afterward enforced by the commandment of God to go to the Gentiles, because he would not have him to be idle at Jerusalem. Whereas Erasmus translateth it, That I was carried without myself, is in Greek word for word, That I was in a trance; whereby he meant to purchase credit to the oracle. Also the circumstance of the time and place doth confirm the same, in that the Lord appeared to him as he prayed in the temple; which was an excellent preparation to hear the voice of God, Concerning the manner of seeing, [1361] read that which we touched about the end of the seventh chapter.

18. *Because they will not.* Though the commandment of God alone ought to be sufficient enough to bind us to obey, yet to the end Paul might be the more willing to follow, Christ showeth him a reason why he will have him depart out of Jerusalem; to wit, because he should lose his labor there; but he

[1360] "Clausula," clause or sentence.

[1361] "De modo visionis," as to the manner of the vision.

was not chosen to that end that he might be idle, or do no good by teaching; though this were a sore trial, and such as we may think did sore shake him. [1362] Not long before the function of preaching the gospel was enjoined him, that his voice might sound throughout the whole world; now even at the first entrance he is inhibited; yea, his labor seemeth to be condemned of peculiar reproach when his witness [testimony] is rejected, because his person is hated. But it was meet that the holy servant of the Lord should be thus humbled, that all the preachers of the gospel might learn to give over themselves wholly to obey Christ, that when they be excluded from one place, they may be ready immediately to go to another, and that they may not be discouraged, nor cease off from doing their duty, though they be undeservedly loathed.

19. *Lord, they know.* By this speech Paul doth testify that he was not beside himself, or brought into perplexity, [1363] but that he did assuredly believe the oracle. For without doubt he knew Christ, whom he calleth Lord. And Paul objecteth, that it cannot almost be, but that when they see him so suddenly changed, such a spectacle will move them. Whence he gathereth that he shall not be unfruitful. He thought so indeed; but Christ answereth flatly, that he hath appointed him another charge, and he taketh from him the hope which he had in vain conceived touching the Jews. The question is, whether it were lawful for Paul to object these reasons to Christ; for it is as much as if he did avouch that that is probable, which Christ said could not be. I answer, that God giveth his saints leave, familiarly, to utter their affections before him; [1364] especially when they seek no other thing but the confirmation of their faith.

If any man stand in his own conceit, or stubbornly refuse that which God commandeth, his arrogancy shall be worthily condemned; but God vouchsafeth his faithful servants of a singular privilege, that they may modestly object those things which may call them back from the desire to obey; to the end that being free from lets, they may wholly addict themselves to serve God; as Paul, after that he was taught that it pleased the Lord that it should be so, he doth not gainsay nor contend any longer, but being content with that one exception, and making an end there, he maketh himself ready to take his journey, which he seemed to be loath to take. In the mean season, whereas the Jews are not touched with so many miracles, their stubbornness and pride, which cannot be tamed, is discovered. Which upbraiding did undoubtedly cause them to rage.

22. *Away with such a fellow.* Luke showeth here how outrageously Paul's sermon was interrupted. For they do not only oppress him with their crying, but they desire to have him put to death; where it doth also plainly appear how frenzy [frenzied] pride is. The Jews conceived so great good liking of themselves, that they did not only despise all the whole world in

[1362] "Sancti hominis pectus," the holy man's breast.

[1363] "Mente aliena tam vel perplexum," alienated or perplexed in mind.

[1364] "Ut familiariter in ejus sinum exonerent suos affeetus," to unburden their feelings familiarly into his breast.

comparison of themselves, but they stood also more stoutly in defense of their own dignity than of the law itself, as if all religion did consist in this, that Abraham's stock might excel all other mortal men. So now they rage against and rail upon Paul, because he said that he was sent to be the apostle of the Gentiles; as if God were bound by his own liberality to suffer the contempt of his power [1365] in the wicked and unthankful, on whom he bestowed excellent graces above all other. And it is no marvel if there were such fierceness and fury at that day among the Jews, seeing that being by all means wasted, [1366] and accustomed to suffer extreme reproaches at this day, they cease not, notwithstanding, to swell with servile pride. But these be fruits of reprobation, until God gather together the remnant according to Paul's prophecy (Romans 11:5).

Acts 22:23-30

Acts 22:23-30

23. And as they cried, and cast off their garments, and threw dust into the air, 24. The chief captain commanded him to be led into the camp; and he commanded that he should be scourged and examined, that he might know for what cause they cried so on him. 25. And when they had bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26. When the centurion heard that, he went to the chief captain, and told him, saying, What wilt thou do? for this man is a Roman. 27. And when the chief captain came, he said to him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yea. 28. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum I purchased this freedom. And Paul said, I was so born. 29. Then those who were about to examine him departed from him immediately: and the chief captain also was afraid, after that he knew that he was a Roman, and that he had bound him. 30. And on the next day, when he would know the truth, [1367] he loosed him from his bonds, and commanded the high priests and all the council to come together, and he brought Paul and set him before them.

24. *The chief captain.* It was well and wisely done of the chief captain thus to withdraw Paul from the sight of the people, forasmuch as his presence did move and more provoke them who were already too much moved. For by this means he provideth for the life of the holy man, and partly appeaseth the madness of the people. But when he commandeth him to be scourged, to whose charge he heard no certain crime laid, he seemeth to deal unjustly. And yet this injury [injustice] was not without color, because it was likely that it was, not without cause, that all the people had conspired to put one man to death. Therefore, a vehement presumption was the cause of so strait

[1365] "Numinis sui," of his Deity.

[1366] "Attriti," trampled upon.

[1367] "Certum qua ex causa accusaretur a Judaeis," certainly for what cause he was accused by the Jews.

examination. But we must note that this is a common custom among politic men, that they be just judges, so far as is expedient for them; but if they be called away by profit, then they go out of the way. Nevertheless, it is sufficient for them to color this their wickedness with the title of wisdom, because they hold that general principle, that the world cannot be governed without some show or color of justice; but in all actions that subtilty whereof I spake doth prevail, that they consider rather what is profitable than what is equal and right.

25. *Is it lawful?* He allegeth first the privilege of the city, then he defendeth himself by common law. And though there were more weight in the second point, (to wit, that it is not lawful to scourge a man before his cause is heard) yet should he have prevailed nothing, unless the centurion had been more moved with the honor of the Roman empire. For nothing was then more heinous than to do any thing which was contrary to the liberty of the people of Rome. Valerius' law, the law of Porcius, and of Sempronius, and such like, did forbid that no man should do any violence to the body of the city of Rome [1368] without the commandment of the people. The privilege was so (sure and) holy, that they thought it to be not only a deadly offense, but also such an offense as could not be purged, that a citizen of Rome should be beaten.

Therefore, Paul escaped rather by the privilege than by common equity, yet did he not doubt in a good cause to bear off the injury which was prepared for him, with this buckler of the city. But we must know that he did so allege the right and privilege of the city, that the chief captain was brought to believe him, because his words should not have been credited unless he had used some proof. Moreover, it was no hard matter for a man, who was well known, to bring forth witnesses. We alleged a cause in the sixteenth chapter, why he suffered himself to be scourged at Philippos, [Philippi] which he now preventeth by his own declaration; to wit, because he should not have been heard in a tumult raised among the common people (Acts 16:37). But because he hath now to deal with the soldiers of Rome, who did behave themselves more moderately and gravely, he useth the opportunity.

26. *This man is a Roman.* Some man may marvel that he was so credulous, who was appointed to be chief in examining Paul, that he doth affirm the thing, as if he knew it to be so. For if he ought to believe Paul's words, every malefactor might, by this shift, have escaped punishment. But this was their manner of dealing, he which did say that he was a citizen of Rome, unless he could bring in some which knew him, or prove it lawfully, he was punished; for it was death for any man to pretend the freedom of the city falsely. Wherefore, the centurion referreth the matter unto the chief captain, as doubting thereof; and he (as we have said) doth straightway examine the matter more thoroughly. And though Luke doth not express by what testimonies Paul did prove himself to be a citizen of Rome, yet, undoubtedly,

[1368] "Civis Romani," a Roman citizen.

the chief captain knew the truth of the matter before he loosed him.

28. *With a great sum.* The chief captain objecteth this to refute him as if he should say, that the freedom of the city is not so common, and easily to be obtained. How can it be that thou, being some base fellow of the country of the Cilicians, shouldst obtain this honor, for which I paid sweetly? Whereas Paul maketh answer, that he was free born, who never saw the city, yea, whose father it may be was never there, there is no cause why this should trouble any man. For those who are skillful in the Roman history know that certain were made free of the city who dwelt in the provinces, if, having deserved well of the commonwealth, or in war, or in other weighty affairs, they did desire and crave this reward of the deputies, [proconsuls] so that it is no absurdity to say that he was born a citizen of Rome, who, descending by his ancestors of some province far distant from Rome, did never set foot in Italy. Notwithstanding, the question is, how this can hang together, that the chief captain was afraid, because he had bound a citizen of Rome, and yet he did not loose him from his bonds until the morrow? It may be that he deferred it till the next day, lest he should show some token of fear. Notwithstanding, I think that the chief captain was afraid, because Paul was bound at his commandment, that he might be scourged, because this was to do injury to the body of a citizen of Rome, and to break the common liberty, and that [although] it was lawful to put a Roman in prison.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23

Acts 23:1-5

Acts 23:1-5

1. And Paul beheld the council steadfastly, and said, Men and brethren, I have served God until this day in all good conscience. 2. And the high priest Ananias commanded those that stood by him to smite him on the face. 3. Then Paul said to him, God will smite thee, thou painted wall; and thou sittest judging according to law, and transgressing the law, commandest thou me to be smitten? 4. And those which stood by said, Railest thou on God's high priest? 5. And Paul said, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

1. *Looking earnestly.* Paul beginneth with the testimony of a good conscience, that all the whole multitude may understand that he is unjustly charged with such an heinous offense, as if he had gone about to overthrow the worship of God. It may be, indeed, that a man may offend of ignorance, who will not otherwise be a contemner either of God or of religion; but Paul meant at the first, only with this excuse, to mollify their nettled minds, that he might the better be heard; for it had been in vain for him to have defended himself, so long as that opinion did stick in the minds of the priests, that he was a wicked revolt, [apostate]. Therefore, before he enter the cause, he excuseth himself of that crime, not only that he may purchase favor by that desire which he had to live godlily, but also that he may prevent false accusations, or at least that he may refute unjust prejudices which might have made against him, wherewith he saw the whole multitude infected and corrupted. We know not what he meant to say besides. Notwithstanding, this preface teacheth that no man can rightly handle the doctrine of godliness, unless the fear of God reign and bear the chief sway in him. And now, though he give not the priests so honorable a title here as he did a little before, when he stood upon the steps of the fortress, yet he calleth them brethren, giving them that honor, not because they deserve it, but that he may testify that he is not the cause of the breach of friendship.

2. *And the chief priest.* Luke's narration seemeth not to agree with the usual history; for Josephus writeth thus concerning the high priests of that time, that Quadratus, deputy [proconsul] of Syria, deposing Cumanus

from the government of Judea, commanded him to answer for himself before Caesar, and sent Ananias, the highest priest, bound with him, into whose place who was chosen he maketh no mention, saving that it is likely that Jonathas had the honor given him, who, as he reporteth, was afterward slain by the subtilty and treachery of Felix, deputy [prefect] of Judea, who succeeded Cumanus; for when he had oftentimes told Felix part of his mind, and he could not away with the constancy of the man, he made a compact with one Doras, that he should privily convey in murderers to slay him. Then, as the same Josephus doth witness, king Agrippa made Ismael, the son of Phebeus, priest. But when he was sent by the people to Rome about a certain suit, and was kept there by Popea, wife to Nero, Agrippa putteth in his place one Josephus, whose name was Chabus, the son of Simon. But immediately being also weary of him, he appointeth Ananus, the son of Ananus, to be high priest.

Furthermore, he saith that this last thing happened at such time as, after the death of Festus, Albinus did succeed him. And I see not why some call this Ananus Ananias. That hath indeed some color, in that he is called a Pharisee; also in that it is said that he was bold and stout, who, without any lawful authority, caused James, the Lord's brother, to be stoned. But if we give credence to Josephus, he could not be that Ananias of whom mention is made in this place by Luke, who was then made priest, when many years were past and gone, after that Felix departed out of the province.

I have another conjecture in my head. For there flourished during all that time one Ananias, an high priest, who, excepting the title of honor, was almost chief in the order. And because Josephus leaveth some void time between Ananias and Ismael, it may be that this man had the room of the highest priest in the meantime. [1369] But though this were not so, it appeareth out of Josephus, that Ananias, who died when the city was besieged, was, in the reign of Claudius Caesar and Nero, equal in dignity with the chief priests which were then.

Yea, his authority is so highly extolled, as if he had the chief government, howsoever other men did bear the ensigns of honor. Again, he is called {αρχιερευς} confusedly, [1370] as those who were the highest priests. Now, let the readers ponder and consider, whether the word {αρχιερευς} doth not rather signify in this place *chief* than *highest,* as it doth in many other places. For the Evangelists do everywhere call the priests who were of the course of Aaron {αρχιερεις}, that they may distinguish them from the Levites, who had a more inferior degree of priesthood. Moreover, it may be that that Ananias, who was counted stout and courageous, did supply the high priest's room in his absence. Those things which we have recited out of Josephus are recorded partly in the Twentieth Book of Antiquities, from the third chapter until the eight; partly in the Second Book of the Wars of the Jews.

[1369] "Intermedio illo tempore," during the intermediate time.
[1370] "Promiscue," indiscriminately.

He commanded him to be smitten. We see that there was in this assembly great distemperature. For whereas the high priest was in such rage, that he commanded Paul to be smitten for nothing, he did it undoubtedly with the consent of all the rest; yea, to the end he might win the favor of mad men. The Lord doth suffer the wicked to be so carried away by Satan, that they fall from all show of equity and temperance. For hypocrites would fain bear some show of moderation; and undoubtedly this high priest went about to pretend such gravity as did beseem his person. But the Lord did pluck this visure [mask] from his face, so that there was not found in him so much as the modesty of a mean man, but he poured out his furious force like a beast.

In the mean season, we see what horrible and filthy disorder there was at that day in the Church. Ananias, who was the chief of the council, whereas he ought to have stayed others by his gravity, forgetting all modesty, he enforceth them unto violence and savageness. Therefore they had at that day no regard of discipline, but there remained among them confused barbarism. And no marvel, for they had estranged themselves from God; they had most reproachfully rejected Christ; all their religion was set to sale. Therefore it was meet that they should run headlong into furious madness, which might be loathsome even among profane men, that they might be punished in their own shame for their ungodliness.

3. *God shall smite thee.* Paul cannot put up that injury, but he must, at least, with sharp words reprehend the high priest, [1371] and denounce God's vengeance unto him. For it is no curse, as appeareth sufficiently by the Greek text, but rather a reprehension, joined with the denouncing of a punishment. If any man object, that Paul did not use that modesty which Christ commandeth his to use, when he commandeth them after they have received a blow on the left cheek to turn the right cheek also, (Matthew 5:39) we may readily answer, that Christ doth not in these words require silence, whereby the wickedness and frowardness of the wicked may be nourished; but he doth only bridle their minds, that they may not take that injury, which they have already received, impatiently. Christ will have those that be his to be ready to suffer another injury after that they have already received one; and by this means he represseth all desire of revenge. This is a brief and true definition of patience which beseemeth all the faithful, that they break not out into wrathfulness, that they do not one evil turn for another; but that they overcome evil with goodness. But this is no let but that they may complain of those injuries which they have suffered, but that they may reprove the wicked, and cite them to the judgment-seat of God; so they do this with quiet and calm minds; and, secondly, without evil will and hatred; as Paul appealeth, in this place, unto God's judgment-seat, that the high priest may not flatter himself in his tyranny. Therefore he accuseth him, because he breaketh the law, from which (as he pretendeth) he hath his

[1371] "Silentio… quin saltem expostulet graviter verbis cum pontifice," in silence, without at least sharply expostulating with the high priest.

authority; whence he gathereth, that he shall not escape unpunished.

If any man, being overcome with impatience, do but murmur, he shall not be blameless. But a manifest and sharp accusation, if it proceed from a quiet mind, doth not pass the bounds set down by Christ. If any man say that it is mixed with railing, I answer, that we must always mark with what affection the words be uttered. Christ pronounceth that man to be worthy to be punished by the council who shall only say to his brother *raca;* and as for him who shall say *thou fool,* he maketh him subject to a more heavy judgment (Matthew 5:22). But if opportunity be offered to reprove, we must oftentimes reprehend sharply. Whereby it appeareth, that this only was Christ's drift to keep back his, first, from all indignation, secondly, from speaking anything in despite [1372] of any man. Therefore, let us beware of railing, and then we may not only note in our brethren foolishness, but also it shall be lawful for us to express their offenses by their names when need shall be. So Paul did not speak for his own sake, that he might, with sharp words, requite the injury done to him by the high priest; but because he was a minister of the word of God, he would not wink at an offense which did deserve sharp and serious reprehension; especially seeing it was profitable to bring to light the gross hypocrisy of Ananias. Therefore, so often as we have any dealings with the wicked, if we be desirous to handle a good cause well, we must beware that there break out in us no motion of anger, that no desire of revenge provoke us to break out into railing. But if the spirit of meekness reign in us, we may handle the wicked according to their deserts, as it were out of the mouth of God; yet so that it may appear that we be rather prophets, than that we blunder out anything rashly through immoderate heat.

4. *Those which stood by said* By this it appeareth that they were all sick of one disease. [1373] For why do they not rather blame Ananias, when they saw that he had quite forgotten all modesty, and that he brake out into violence and stripes after a barbarous manner? for even this did turn to the reproach of them all. [1374] But this is a solemn [marked] thing among hypocrites, they look narrowly into other men's faults and wink at their own. Again, this pride is coupled with tyranny, so that their subjects, and those who are under them, may do nothing, but as for themselves, they may do whatsoever they will. So fareth it at this day in Popery, the more liberty that impure clergy doth grant to itself, and the more carelessly it waxeth wanton, and polluteth the whole world with the sins which flow thence, the more straitly do they rule and stay the tongues of the people. Therefore, if any man dare be so bold as once to whisper, a little liberty doth cause them to make outrageous outcries as it were heinous sacrilege.

5. *I knew not, brethren.* Those who think that this excuse of Paul hath in

[1372] "Contumelia," with contumely.

[1373] "Eadem omnes intemperie laborasse," that they all laboured under the same intemperance,

[1374] "In commune illorum dedecus," to their common disgrace.

it no figure, do not well mark the contrary objections wherewith their error is refuted. They say that Paul knew not the high priest, because he had been absent long time; as if he were ignorant that he was chief priest, who is the chief in the council, and hath the uppermost room. Neither was Ananias so base and obscure that Paul was ignorant of his degree. But his words cut off all occasion of disputation, when as he chideth him, because, occupying the place of a judge, under color of the law, he doth, in his rage, that which is contrary to law. Therefore Paul knew what place he had, when he said that he abused his power. Other some invent a more subtle answer, that he spake not here of the mail, but of the office and public person. But, first, the exposition is far fet, [fetched] because, if Paul did reverence the priesthood, he must needs have given some honor to the man which had the same. And now it is not to be thought (forasmuch as the majesty of the priesthood was abolished by the coming of Christ, and that there followed such filthy profanation) that Paul did honor those as he was wont, (as if their perfect and lawful authority did continue) who, under the title of the high priests, did reign as lords without any law or right.

Therefore, subscribing to Augustine, I do not doubt but that this is a taunting excuse. Neither doth that any whit hinder, because plain speech becometh the ministers of the word. For seeing there be two sorts of ironies, one which is covered with subtilty and means to deceive, another which doth so figuratively note out the thing which is in hand, that it doth prick sorer; in this second, there is nothing which doth not well beseem the servants of Christ. Therefore, this is the meaning of the words, Brethren, I acknowledge nothing in this man which belongeth to the priest. Also, he added a testimony of the 22nd chapter of Exodus, (Exodus 22:28) in which place, though Moses speak of judges, yet the sentence is extended properly unto any lawful order. Therefore all dignity, which is appointed for maintenance of civil government, ought to be reverenced and had in honor. For whosoever he be that rebelleth against or resisteth the magistrate, or those who are appointed to rule, and are promoted unto honor, he would have no government. [1375] And such desire tendeth to the disturbing of order. Yea, it shaketh and overthroweth all humanity. Therefore Paul purgeth himself of this crime; yet so, that he denieth that Ananias is to be counted a priest of God, who hath corrupted and perverted all the order of the Church.

But here riseth a question, whether we ought not to obey a ruler, though he exercise tyranny? For if that man be not to be deprived of honor which executeth his office amiss, Paul offended in robbing the high priest of his honor. Therefore I answer, that there is some difference between civil magistrates and the prelates of the Church. For though the exploiting [administration] of earthly or civil rule be confused or perverse, yet the Lord will have men to continue still in subjection. But when the spiritual government doth degenerate, the consciences of the godly are at liberty, and set free from obeying

[1375] "Anarchiam appetit," he longs for anarchy.

unjust authority; especially if the wicked and profane enemies of holiness do falsely pretend the title of priesthood to overthrow the doctrine of salvation, and challenge to themselves such authority, as that they will be thereby equal with God. So it is not only lawful for the faithful at this day to shake off from their shoulders the Pope's yoke, but they must do it of necessity, seeing they cannot obey his laws unless they forsake God.

Acts 23:6-9

Acts 23:6-9

6. And when Paul knew that the one part were of the Sadducees, and the other of the Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: I am judged of the hope and resurrection of the dead. 7. And when he had thus said, there was a dissension among the Pharisees and Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8. For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel, neither spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9. And there was a great cry: and the scribes of the Pharisees' sect arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if the spirit or an angel have spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

6. *And when Paul knew.* The policy [1376] of Paul, whereof Luke maketh mention, doth seem not to beseem the servant of Christ. For the subtilty which he used was inwrapped in dissimulation, which was not far from a lie. He saith that the state of his cause did consist in the resurrection of the dead: but we know that the strife arose about other matters: because he disannulled the ceremonies, because he admitted the Gentiles into the covenant of salvation. I answer, that though these things be true, yet did not he lie. For he doth neither deny that he was accused of other matters, neither doth this make the whole controversy to consist in one point; but he saith truly that the Sadducees were therefore offended with him, because he did hold the resurrection of the dead. He knew that those who had conspired together against him were enemies also one to another. [1377] He knew that his own conscience was clear; and it had been an easy matter for him to prove his cause good before just judges. Yet because he seeth them cry out on him clamorously, and that he had no place granted to defend himself, he setteth his enemies together by the ears. Whereby it doth also appear, that they were carried away through ignorance and blind zeal. Therefore we must note that Paul did so begin, as that he was desirous truly and plainly to unfold the whole matter; and that he did not craftily refuse to make a pure and sound confession, such as, the servants of Christ ought to make; but because the way was stopt before him, neither could he be heard, he used the last remedy, [1378] to declare that his adversaries were carried headlong

[1376] "Stratagema," stratagem.
[1377] "Intestinis dissidiis laborare," were involved in intestine dissensions.
[1378] "Extremo remedio," an extreme remedy.

with blind hatred. For the end doth show, that those are not guided with reason or judgment, who are carried out of the way by mutual discord.

Now, if any man, which darkeneth the light of doctrine, excuse his craft, by the example of Paul, he is easily refuted. For it is one thing for a man to provide for himself alone with the loss of truth, and another to lead the professed enemies of Christ from resisting him, that they may strive among themselves.

Furthermore, we see the nature of the wicked, though they disagree among themselves like enemies, yet when they are to make war against the gospel, they forget their own garboils [strifes]. For Satan, the father of discord, doth procure this one consent only among his, that they may be of one mind and of one affection, to extinguish godliness. So we see that the factions which are in Popery hot, [1379] are quiet only so long as they join hand in hand to oppress the gospel. For which cause, the disciples of Christ must be more courageous to foster and nourish truth, that, being joined together, they may the better resist. Also, we gather by this what manner of peace the Scripture commendeth unto us. Christ saith that the peace-makers are the children of God, (Matthew 5:9) and this is true, that they must do what they can to bring all men that they may grow together [1380] under the Lord. Yet this doth not hinder but that we may, (fighting under the banner of the same Lord) as it were, with the sound of the trumpet, stir up the wicked, that they may, like Midianites, one slay another, (Judges 7:22) so that both simplicity of zeal, and the wisdom of the Spirit, direct us hither.

One part were Sadducees. We see here again, as in a glass, how deformed and confused the ruin of the Church was at that day. Faith is the soul of the Church; nothing is more proper to faith than agreement, nothing more contrary than sects. And this thing must needs follow, when every man (setting aside the word of God) did draw his disciples unto his own inventions. For there is no other holy bond of unity than the natural and plain [1381] truth of God. So soon as men depart from that, no marvel if they be dispersed and drawn hither and thither like members pulled asunder.

Therefore, the beginning of sects among the Jews was the corruption of the law; like as the Lord did revenge the profanation of his word, which was corrupt with diverse inventions of men, with like punishment in Popery. Wherefore, we must the more fear, lest horrible and more lamentable scatterings hang over our heads than was that which was in time of Popery, whereof there appear some tokens. And no marvel, seeing we provoke the Lord to wrath so many ways with our unthankfulness. But though the face of the Church be blotted and blurred with many spots and blots; and what manner of deformity soever fall out hereafter, let us comfort ourselves with this, that as God was careful then to deliver the Church wonderfully from destruction,

[1379] "Fervent," prevail.
[1380] "Fraterne," like brothers, omitted.
[1381] "Simplex et genuina," simple and genuine.

so through his grace there shall always some seed continue. It cannot be, indeed, but that godly minds will somewhat despair, when they see things so far out of order; but let us learn straightway to hold up that buckler, that the Lord, who, in such a thick mist of errors, in such a heap of superstitions, in the unbridled licentiousness of sects, did preserve his Church among the Jews, will never suffer the same to be quite put out wholly in the world.

The same thing did likewise happen in Popery. For when as the worship of God was overthrown there, the doctrine of salvation was oppressed, the kingdom of Christ was thrown down, and ungodliness did openly reign, yet God did save certain hidden remnants, and there was always some wheat in the chaff. It is very profitable to confer these examples together. When as we inveigh at this day against Popery, the hired patrons thereof cry out on the other side, that nothing is more absurd than that we should imagine that the Church of God was extinguished during many ages, as if we did imagine that God had no people left, when those had forsaken him who ought to have maintained his pure worship. Yea, we complain that those tyrants did corrupt the Church, that the temple was by them profaned, so that it did not greatly differ from an hog's-sty, that the flock of Christ was scattered abroad, and his sheepfold broken down. Finally, that the Church was hidden from the eyes of men, yet so that the Lord knew his elect, though they were dispersed, and did brood them under his wings. And by this it appeareth how foolishly the Papists brag and boast of the titles of honor, in that not the common sort, or any private men, but the priests themselves did in times past divide the Jewish church by deadly dissension.

Wherefore, there is no cause why we should be afraid stoutly to resist the pride of the Pope and of all his adherents, with whom we have the same combat which the prophets and apostles had with the priests of their time. And as the reverence of the Church did not keep back holy men, but that they did molest the tyranny of the wicked priests, so we must not be terrified with vain visures, [masks] under which the Papists do vainly boast, seeing they have, notwithstanding, cast from them the doctrine of godliness. It is certain that the people were then divided into three sects; but Luke doth only make mention of the Pharisees and Sadducees, omitting the Essenes, because it was most fit for his purpose thus to do. And though this be the common opinion concerning their names, that the former took their name of separating, because they withdrew themselves from the company of other men, by reason of their reigned holiness; and that the second sort took their name of righteousness, as if they were called *zeduchim;* notwithstanding, for mine own part, as I have said elsewhere, I am rather of their mind who say that the Pharisees took their name of interpreting. For *phrus* signifieth exposition, whereupon also interpreters are called *phruschim;* and we know that the Pharisees, being not content with the natural doctrine of the law and prophets, did put in many inventions which they said they received [1382]

[1382] "Per marius tradita jactabant," boasted, bad been handed down.

of the fathers.

8. *The Sadducees say.* Though Luke maketh mention of three points wherein these sects did dissent, yet shortly after he bringeth [1383] them to two, because there is like respect to be had of spirits and of angels. Therefore, he saith that the Pharisees did confess both; to wit, that the dead shall rise again, and that human and angelical spirits are immortal. And here Luke declareth in what sense the apostle professed himself to be a Pharisee, not because he did subscribe to all their inventions, but only in the resurrection of the dead. We know how sharply Christ reproveth their errors, (Matthew 22:29) therefore, it had been good that some exception had been added, [1384] lest any man might think that Paul was one with them in all things. Now, though the Sadducees did deny the resurrection, yet may we not think that they were altogether like to the Epicures, [Epicureans]. For they did confess that the world is governed by the providence of God, and that every man is rewarded for his works. In this point they were sounder than the Epicures, [Epicureans]. But they did dote too grossly, when they included the rewards of righteousness and the punishments of wickedness in this life. For that I may omit the Scripture, experience doth teach, that as well the godly as the ungodly are either punished with many miseries, or else gently [1385] dealt withal; and that the wicked do oftentimes live in wealth and pleasures, when as the worshippers of God are oftentimes miserably tormented; as it is Psalm 73:4. Therefore, whosoever esteemeth the judgment of God by the present estate of men, whether it be good or bad, he must needs fall away from faith at length unto Epicurish contempt of God.

Now, this is beastly blockishness to rest in an uncertain and transitory life, and not to be wise above [1386] the earth. For which cause we must flee from that error as from a detestable monster. For though godliness have the promises of the earthly life also, yet because we be most miserable if our hope stay still in this world, the children of God must begin with this, that they may lift up their eyes toward heaven, and think continually upon the glory of the last resurrection.

Neither angel nor spirit. This place is expounded two manner of ways. [1387] Many refer it unto the Holy Ghost, which seemeth to be unlikely. For howsoever the Sadducees be to be holden excused in other errors, yet because the Scripture doth so often repeat the name of the Spirit, I will scarce believe that they denied that which the Pharisees believed only lightly and obscurely. For even these men had no distinct faith concerning the Holy Spirit, that they did acknowledge the proper person of the Spirit in the substance of

[1383] "Restringit, it," restricts.
[1384] "Itaque addenda fuit exceptio," therefore, it was necessary to add the exception.
[1385] "Benigne et indulgenter," kindly and indulgent1y.
[1386] "Nec sapere," and not have a feeling or relish.
[1387] "Tribus modis," in three ways.

God. [1388] Some will have angel and spirit to signify one thing, [1389] as if one thing were spoken twice. But to what end was it to repeat a thing which was plain enough? I warrant you, that member which followeth did deceive them, where Luke seemeth to make no distinction. But we showed the reason before; because, seeing the souls of men and angels are of one and the same nature and substance, they be both placed in one order. Therefore, I do not doubt but that this is Luke's true meaning, that the Sadducees did deny angels, and also all manner of spirits.

Now, forasmuch as Paul crieth that he is a Pharisee in this point of doctrine, he doth flatly condemn all brain-sick fellows, who at this day are in the same error. For there be certain profane and unlearned men who dream that angels and devils are nothing else but good and evil inspirations; and lest they want some color, they say that all that came from the heathen which the Scripture hath concerning good and evil angels, whereas that opinion which was common in the world had his [its] beginning from the heavenly doctrine. But the heathen did with their lies pollute that doctrine which they had from the Fathers. As touching men's souls, because even at this day certain miscreants do feign that the souls do vanish away in death until the day of the resurrection, their madness is likewise refuted by the testimony of Luke.

9. *There was a great cry.* That sedition whereof Luke spake a little before is more plainly expressed in this place; to wit, that they were not only of diverse opinions, but did strive clamorously with outcries. Wherefore, {ϛασις} doth signify somewhat more than dissension. Furthermore, this place doth teach what mischief disagreements bring with them. For because they take their beginning for the most part of ambition, men proceed thence unto contention, and straightway stubbornness breaketh out. When they be come thither, because there is no place left either for judgment or moderation, they can no longer judge of the cause. Those who did detest Paul begin at a sudden to defend him. It was well done, if they had done it with judgment. But because they inveigh against the Sadducees, they are so inflamed with hatred against them, that they be blind in Paul's matter. For which cause we must beware of heat of contention, which disturbeth all things.

If the Spirit. This ought undoubtedly to be expounded of the Holy Ghost. And nothing could be spoken either more godly or modestly. For so soon as it is apparent that any doctrine is revealed from heaven, those do wickedly resist God who do not receive the same. But how is it that the scribes do so suddenly count Paul a prophet of God whom they were once ready to have murdered — whom they had condemned with their prejudice until the contention arose? [1390] Furthermore, as they did cut their own throats with these words as with a sword, so God would have them to be to us teachers to instruct us, that we despise not the oracles which come from

[1388] "Propriam Spiritus hypostasin… in Dei essentia," the proper personality of the Spirit in the divine essence.

[1389] "Synonnyma esse," to be synonymous.

[1390] "Cum Pharisaeis," with the Pharisees.

heaven. Notwithstanding, we see again that those stand in doubt who take not good heed, and are not careful to mark the word of God; and that they waver so often as any thing is brought to light, because they be unworthy to understand the certain truth. Wherefore, if we be desirous to have our studies governed by the spirit of discretion, let us apply ourselves to learn.

Acts 23:10-16

Acts 23:10-16

10. And when there arose a sore dissension among them, the chief captain feared lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces by them, and he commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him from them, and to bring him into the camp, 11. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, lie of good courage, Paul: for as thou hast borne witness of me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness of me at Rome also. 12. And when it was day, certain of the Jews gathered themselves together, and bound themselves with a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. 13. And there were more than forty men which had made this conspiracy. 14. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves with a curse, that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. 15. Now therefore signify ye to the chief captain and council that he bring him forth to you tomorrow, as if ye would know somewhat more certainly of him: and we, before he come near, are ready to kill him. 16. But when Paul's sister's son heard of the lying in wait, he came and entered into the camp, and told Paul.

10. We see again what a cruel mischief contention is, which so soon as it doth once wax hot, hath such violent motions, that even most wise men are not well in their wits. Therefore, so soon as any beginning shall show itself, let us study to prevent it in time, lest the remedy be too late in bridling it when it is in the middle, because no fire is so swift as it. As for the chief captain, as he was appointed to be the minister of God's providence to save Paul's life, so he delivereth him now the second time by his soldiers from death. For though the chief captain defend [1391] him so diligently, for no other purpose save only that he may prevent uproars and murder; yet the Lord, who from heaven provided and appointed help for his servant, doth direct his blind hands thither.

11. *And the night following.* Luke declareth that Paul was strengthened with an oracle, that he might stand courageously against terrible assaults when things were so far out of order. Surely it could not be but that he was sore afraid, and that he was sore troubled with the remembrance of things to come. Wherefore, the oracle was not superfluous. Those former things whereby he was taught that God cared for him, ought to have sufficed to nourish his hope, and to have kept him from fainting; but because in great

[1391] "Succurrit," succour.

dangers Satan doth oftentimes procure new fears, that he may thereby (if he cannot altogether overwhelm God's promises in the hearts of the godly) at least darken the same with clouds, it is needful that the remembrance of them be renewed, that faith, being holpen with new props and stays, may stand more steadfastly. But the sum is, that Paul may behave himself boldly, because he must be Christ's witness at Rome also. But this seemeth to be but a cold and vain consolation, as if he should say, Fear not, because thou must abide a sorer brunt; for it had been better, according to the flesh, once to die, and with speed to end his days, than to pine away in bands, and long time to lie in prison. The Lord doth not promise to deliver him; no, he saith not so much as that he shall have a joyful end; only he saith, that those troubles and afflictions, wherewith he was too sore oppressed already, shall continue long. But by this we gather better of what great importance this confidence is, that the Lord hath respect unto us in our miseries, though he stretch not forth his hand by and by to help us.

Therefore, let us learn, even in most extreme afflictions, to stay ourselves upon the word of God alone; and let us never faint so long as he quickeneth us with the testimony of his fatherly love. And because oracles are not now sent from heaven, neither doth the Lord himself appear by visions, we must meditate upon his innumerable promises, whereby he doth testify that he will be nigh unto us continually. If it be expedient that an angel come down unto us, the Lord will not deny even this kind of confirmation. Nevertheless, we must give this honor to the word, that being content with it alone we wait patiently for that help which it promiseth us.

Moreover, it did profit some nothing to hear angels which were sent down from heaven; but the Lord doth not in vain seal up in the hearts of the faithful by his Spirit those promises which are made by him. And as he doth not in vain beat them in and often repeat them, [1392] so let our faith exercise itself diligently in the continual remembrance of them. For if it were necessary that Paul's faith should be oftentimes set and stored up with a new help, there is none of us which needeth not many more helps. Also, our minds must be armed with patience, that they may pass through the long and troublesome circuits of troubles and afflictions.

12. *And when it was day.* By this circumstance, Luke showeth how necessary it was for Paul to gather new and fresh strength of faith, that he might not quake in most great and sudden danger. For being told of this so desperate madness of his enemies, he could not otherwise think but that he should lose his life. This vow whereof Luke speaketh was a kind of curse. The cause of the vow was, that it might not be lawful for them to change their purpose, nor to call back that which they had promised. There is always, indeed, in an oath a secret curse, [1393] if any man deceive or forswear, but sometimes to the end men may the more bind themselves, they use certain

[1392] "Inculcat," inculcates.

[1393] "Tacita execratio," a tacit execration.

forms of cursing; [1394] and they make themselves subject to cruel torments, to the end they may be the more afraid. This history doth teach that zeal is so bloody in hypocrites, that they weigh not what is lawful for them, but they run carelessly whithersoever their lust doth carry them. Admit we grant that Paul was a wicked man, and worthy to die, yet who had given private men leave to put him to death? Now, if any man had asked why they did so hate Paul, they would quickly have answered, because he was a revolt [apostate] and schismatic; but it was but a foolish opinion, and an opinion conceived of an uncertain report concerning this matter which had rashly possessed their minds.

The same blindness and blockishness doth at this day prick forward the Papists, so that they think nothing unlawful for them in destroying us. Hypocrisy doth so blind their ears, that as men freed from the laws of God and merit they are carried by their zeal sometimes unto treachery, sometimes unto guile, sometimes unto intolerable cruelty, and, finally, to attempt whatsoever they will. Moreover, we see in this history how great the rashness of the wicked is. They bind themselves with a curse that they will eat no meat till they have slain Paul, as if his life were in their hands. Therefore, these brain-sick men take to themselves that which the Lord doth so often in Scripture say is his, to wit,

"To have the life and death of those men whom he hath created in his hand,"
(Deuteronomy 32:39).

Moreover, there be not only two or three who are partners in this madness, but more than forty. Whence we do also gather how willing and bent men are to do mischief, seeing they run together thus on heaps. [1395]

Furthermore, seeing Satan doth drive them headlong into their own destruction, how shameful is then our sluggishness, when as we scarce move one finger in maintaining the glory of God? We must use moderation, that we attempt nothing without the commandment of God; but when God calleth us expressly, our loitering is without excuse.

14. *They came to the chief priests.* Seeing that the priests agree to such a wicked and ungodly conspiracy, by this they prove that there was in them neither any fear of God, neither yet any humanity. They do not only allow [approve] that which is brought before them concerning the murdering of the man by laying wait, but also they are ready to be partners in the murder, that they may deliver him into the hands of the murderers, whom they would have made away some way, they pass not how. For what other thing was it to take a man out of the hands of the judge and to slay him, than like murderers to rage even in the very place of judgment? The priests surely would never have allowed [approved] such a wicked purpose if there had been in them any drop of godly and right affection, or of humane feeling.

[1394] "Anathematis," of anathema.
[1395] "Turmatim," in crowds.

Moreover, they did what they could to bring destruction upon all the people and themselves also. But the Lord did by this means disclose their wicked impiety, which lay hid under a color of honor.

16. *Paul's sister's son.* We see in this place how the Lord doth cross the purposes of the ungodly. He permitteth them to attempt many things, and he suffereth their wicked endeavors, but at length he showeth even in the twinkling of an eye [1396] that he doth from heaven deride whatsoever men go about upon earth.

"There is no wisdom," saith Solomon, "there is no counsel against the Lord,"
(Proverbs 21:30).

Whereto that of Isaiah doth answer,

"Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: speak the word, and it shall not stand,"
(Isaiah 8:10).

This is set before our eyes to be considered, in this present history, as in a glass. The matter was almost dispatched, that Paul should come out on the morrow to be slain as an avowed sacrificed. [1397] But the Lord doth show that his life is most safely kept, so that whatsoever men go about all is in vain. As for us, let us not fear but that his providence, whereof he showed some token then, reacheth even unto the defending of us, because this promise continueth sure,

"There shall not an hair fall from your heads," etc.
(Luke 21:18).

Moreover, it is worth the noting, that he worketh sometimes by means unlooked for to save those that be his, that he may the better exercise our faith. Who would have thought that a boy would have disclosed their lying in wait, which those who were partners in the conspiracy thought was known to none but to themselves? Therefore, let us learn to lean unto and stay ourselves upon the Lord, though we see no ordinary way to save ourselves, who shall find a way even through places where nothing can pass.

Acts 23:17-24

Acts 23:17-24

17. And when Paul had called unto him one of the centurions, he saith, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to show him. 18. And he took him, and led him unto the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and desired me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath somewhat to say to thee. 19. And the chief captain took him by the hand, and went aside with him, and asked him, What is it that thou hast to say to me? 20. And he said, The Jews have

[1396] "Ipso articulo," at the very nick of time
[1397] "Devota victima," a devoted victim.

conspired together to desire thee that thou bring forth Paul into the council tomorrow, as if they would know somewhat more certainly of him. 21. But do not thou obey them: [1398] for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, who have bound themselves with a curse, that they will neither eat nor drink until they have slain him: and now they be ready waiting that thou shouldst promise. 22. Therefore the chief captain let the young man go, and commanded him, Tell no man that thou hast told me these things. 23. And when he had called unto him two under captains, he said, Make ready two hundred soldiers that they may go to Cesarea, and horsemen seventy, and two hundred with darts, [1399] [or javelins] at the third hour of the night. 24. And make ready beasts, that they may set Paul thereon, and bring him safe to Felix the governor.

17. *Calling unto him.* Paul was not so desirous of life, but he would have made haste to die, if the Lord had thought it good so to be; but because he knoweth that he serveth Christ upon that condition, that he may no less live than die to him, he doth not neglect to avoid the danger which was revealed to him. And though he be fully persuaded that God is the keeper of his life, yet he doth not wait until God put forth his hand out of heaven to work a miracle, but doth rather use the remedy which is offered him; nothing doubting but that it is appointed by God.

Thus must all the ministers of Christ deal, that being furnished with invincible constancy, so far as their calling requireth, they fear not danger, and yet that they cast not away themselves through rashness. Let them call upon the name of the Lord cheerfully, even amidst the pikes; [1400] and yet let them not contemn those helps which are offered; otherwise they shall be injurious to God, in that they are not only not moved with his promises, [1401] but also despise the means which he hath appointed for their deliverance.

19. *Taking him by the hand.* In that the chief captain did show himself so courteous to the young man, in that he led him by the hand into a secret place, in that he vouchsafeth to hear him so gently, all this must be attributed to the grace of God, who promised to give his people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, (Exodus 3:21) who useth to mollify hard hearts, to tame fierce spirits, and to fashion those unto all humanity, whom he hath determined to use as means to help those that be his. A man trained up in the wars might no less have given this young man the repulse, whom he knew not, than have despised Paul's suit. Therefore, the Lord, who hath in his hand the hearts of men, did frame the profane man to give ear unto him. Also, it was well that he knew before how furiously they raged against Paul, that he might the more willingly succor a miserable and forsaken man. Those who are in authority are taught by this example what a great virtue courtesy

[1398] "Tu vero ne morem gesseris illis," but do not thou grant their request.
[1399] "Lancerios," lancers.
[1400] "In mediis augustiis," in the midst of straits.
[1401] "Ad ejus promissiones surdi," deaf to his promises

is. If it had been a hard matter to come to him, [1402] he might, through ignorance, have delivered Paul to the Jews to be put to death. So oftentimes magistrates do fall into many and great offenses through their own pride, because they will not admit those who would give them good counsel.

CalIing unto him. And here we see the providence of God yet more manifestly; for though this be the drift of the chief captain: to prevent a public uproar, whereof he should have given an account before the governor, yet he executeth the counsel of God in delivering Paul. For he was to gather soldiers together; also, the city must needs be stripped of the garrison, and the voyage required some cost. Therefore: we must so consider the wisdom of the chief captain, that our faith lift up her eyes into heaven: and understand that God doth guide the heart of a profane man by a secret instinct, and that he is at length a guide to Paul and the soldiers, that he may come safe to Cesarea. The third hour of the night was the end of the first watch. Therefore, it is all one as if the chief captain did command that the soldiers be in readiness at the second watch. Luke calleth those who carried darts *lancearios,* who being more lightly weaponed, were placed in the wings, when as the soldiers which pertained unto the legions were more fit for set war. [1403]

Acts 23:25-35

Acts 23:25-35

25. And he wrote a letter after this sort: 26. Claudius Lysias to the most mighty ruler, [prefect] Felix, sendeth greeting. 27. This man being taken of the Jews, and almost killed of them, did I rescue, coming upon them with soldiers, after that I knew that he was a Roman. 28. And being desirous to know the cause for which they did accuse him, I brought him into their council: 29. Whom I perceived they accused of questions of their law, having in him no crime worthy of death or of bonds. 30. And when I was certified of the laying await of the Jews, I sent him straightway unto thee, and gave commandment to his accusers, that they should tell those things before thee what they have against him. Farewell. 31. And the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul, and brought him by night unto Antipatris. 32. And on the morrow when they had sent away the horsemen that they might go with him, they returned to the camp. 33. When they were come to Cesarea, and had delivered the epistle to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. 34. And when the governor had read it, and had asked of what province he was, and had known that he was of Cilicia; 35. I will hear thee, saith he, when thine accusers are come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

25. *And he wrote a letter.* First, we must briefly admonish the readers

[1402] "Si difficilis ad eum fuisset accessus," if he had been of difficult access.
[1403] "Statariae militia?," stationary warfare.

who have not been conversant in histories, that this Felix was brother to Pallas, who being Caesar's freeman, became equal with the chief of the city in wealth and power. Yea, moreover, the senate gave him the ornaments of the praetor, not without titles of filthy and shameful flattery. Therefore, seeing the servants of Claudius abusing his folly, did rule the Roman empire at their pleasure, and chiefly Narcissus and Pallas, no marvel if this latter did appoint his brother to be governor of Judea. The sum of the epistle tendeth to this end, that the chief captain may help Paul with his prejudice; [1404] and may admonish Felix of the injuries of his adversaries, and may so discredit them, that they may not be able to do him any hurt.

27. *This man being taken.* This was spoken odiously concerning the Jews, that he might purchase more favor for Paul, that a man, being a Roman, was by them sore beaten, and almost slain; also, he commendeth him for the right and privilege of his freedom, that he may be the more courteously handled. Furthermore, this commendation was not purchased by prayer or flattery, neither was it bought with money. How came it to pass, then, that the chief captain did show himself so courteous freely to an obscure man, and whom all men did hate, save only because the Lord had appointed him to be his servant's patron? Therefore, we see how he governeth the tongues and hands of the infidels to the profit of those that be his.

29. *Whom I perceived* In this place he acquitteth Paul, so far as his judgment could reach. But let us note that a profane man speaketh. For among the people of God it is an offense worthy of no less punishment, to corrupt the doctrine of godliness with wicked, and false opinions, than to do injury to, or commit wickedness among men. The Romans would not have suffered their superstitions, or reigned worshippings of their gods, to be freedom; [1405] but forasmuch as they made no account of the law of God, yea, seeing they were desirous to have the same quite put out, it was among them no fault to believe Moses and the prophets no more, or to trouble the Church with false opinions. Therefore, there was a law, that the governors should not meddle with such matters; but that those who were abiding in the provinces should so retain their religion, that if anything were done contrary to the same, the Roman magistrates should not meddle with the punishing thereof. This is the reason why the chief captain thinketh it no offense to have moved questions concerning the law. And under color hereof, unlearned men will have leave granted to themselves and others amiss to cause trouble. The Lord saith far otherwise, who doth more sharply punish the violating of his worship, than any injuries done to men. And surely nothing is more absurd than to let those who rob God of his honor escape scot free, [1406] seeing theft is punished. But as the chief captain careth not for the Jewish religion, so the false accusations and slanders of the Jews are refuted, wherewith they

[1404] "Suo praejudicio," by bearing previous testimony in his favour.

[1405] "Convelli," to be plucked up, eradicated.

[1406] "Quam sacrilegiis impunitatem dare," than to let blasphemers escape without punishment.

would gladly have burdened Paul.

30. *When it was showed to me.* The second part of the epistle where the chief captain doth bring the adversaries into contempt, [1407] because they went about to kill Paul treacherously. Whence it is also gathered, that they trouble Paul unjustly, and that they sought so sore against his life without any cause. For if they had persecuted him lawfully, they would have trusted to the goodness of their cause, and not have suffered him to be judged according to law. Now, when as they seek to kill him, it appeareth that they have no reason.

32. *And the next day.* Though Luke did not express before that the soldiers were commanded to return before they came at their way's end, yet it is certain, that they were appointed to accompany him only unto that place where the chief captain thought Paul would be safe; for he went out privily in the night. And the chief captain knew that so soon as they had finished some part of their journey, there was no farther danger, because the adversaries could have no hope to overtake him; and that it was no point of wisdom [1408] to send part of the garrison far away.

[1407] "Odium in adversarios retorquet," retorts upon his adversaries their hatred.

[1408] "Tutum… non esse," it was not safe.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24

Acts 24:1-9

Acts 24:1-9

1. And after five days the chief priest Ananias came down with the elders, and one Tertullus, a rhetorician, who came before the governor against Paul. 2. And when Paul was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that we live in great peace by means of thee, and seeing many things are restored in this nation by thy providence, 3. That allow we ever, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thanks. 4. But lest I become tedious unto thee, I pray thee hear us a little of thy courtesy. 5. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of debate unto all the Jews throughout the whole world, and an author of the sect of the Nazarites: 6. Who did also go about to pollute the temple; whom when we had taken, we would have judged him according to our law, 7. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him from us, 8. Commanding his accusers to come down unto thee: of whom thou mayest, if thou wilt inquire, know the certainty of all these things whereof we accuse him. 9. And the Jews added, saying that these things were so.

1. Seeing Ananias goeth down to Cesarea to accuse Paul, it maketh the conjecture more probable, which I brought before touching his priesthood. For it was not meet for the highest priest to take such a journey. Therefore some other man was highest priest at that time; and Ananias being one of the chief priests, forasmuch as he was in great authority, and was withal a stout [1409] man, did take this embassage upon him. He bringeth with him a train, and that of the worshipful company of elders, that the governor might be moved with their very pomp to condemn Paul. But forasmuch as Paul did use no eloquence, they had no need to hire a rhetorician to contend with him in eloquence. Moreover, they did exceed both in dignity and also in multitude, so that it was an easy matter for them to oppress a poor man, and such a one as was destitute of man's help. Therefore it was a sign of an evil conscience, in that seeing they were men of great experience, exercised in public affairs, and skillful in matters pertaining to courts, they hire a rhetorician. Eloquence is, I confess, the gift of God; but in this matter they went about nothing else but to deceive the judge therewith.

[1409] "Strenuus," active. his innocence.

And Luke declareth this, therefore, that we may know that the Jews did omit nothing whereby they might oppress Paul; and that they might not only prove him guilty, [1410] but so dash him out of countenance, that he might not be able to defend himself; and so let us consider that it came to pass by the wonderful providence of God, that Paul did so stoutly endure such sore assaults. Wherefore, if it so fall out at any time that a godly man being alone be beset with a great number of enemies, let him call to mind this history, and let him be of good courage. As David doth likewise exhort us by his own example,

"If tents were pitched about me, I will not fear,
because thou art with me," (Psalm 27:3).

2. *Seeing we live in great peace.* Tertullus useth a preface nothing appertinent to the matter; because he commendeth Felix wisdom and virtues that he may purchase favor. Therefore it is a filthy and flattering *exordium.* Not that I am of their mind who reprehend Tertullus for speaking the judge fair, and for seeking to win his favor. For it is not always disagreeing with the right and lawful form of pleading to commend the judge; and there may reasons be brought on both sides (as they say) touching this matter. But I mislike nothing but this which is altogether corrupt. For the rhetorician doth insinuate himself under false praises, that he may darken the matter which is called in question. For to what end doth he speak of peace and a well ordered state, save only that Felix may think that the safety of Judea consisteth in condemning Paul, and that he may examine the matter no further? Moreover, it appeareth by Josephus, how covetously, cruelly, and voluptuously, Felix behaved himself in that province. The unworthy and tragical murdering of the highest priest, Jonathas, because he set himself against his dissolute tyranny, was already past; [1411] and, finally, almost at the very same time, Claudius Caesar was enforced with the complaints of the whole nation, to put Festus in his place, and to call him to answer for himself.

Therefore we see how shamefully this orator did lie. And seeing all Paul's adversaries sing the same song, we see that they be blinded with hatred and malice, and that they treacherously betray the state of their country; neither do they pass what befall them so Paul may die the death.

Where Erasmus translateth it, *Many things are well done,* the old interpreter seemeth to come nearer unto Paul's meaning, who saith, that {κατορθωματα} are wrought, which signifieth as much as *reformations* or *dressings.* Therefore Tertullus commendeth the industry of Felix, because he had cleansed Judea from many corruptions, and he restored many things which would otherwise have decayed; [1412] to wit, to the end he may the more greedily seek to purchase the favor of the nation (which he knew was

[1410] "Perverterent ejus innocentiam,"

[1411] "Jam praecesserat," had already been committed.

[1412] "Quae alioqui pessum ibant," which were otherwise becoming worse.

otherwise offended with him) by the death of one man.

5. *For we found this man.* Tertullus doth aim at a double mark. The first is this, that Paul may be delivered to the Jews, because they be very skillful in matters which concern the worship of God and the law of Moses. But and if he deny this, he layeth to his charge a crime worthy of death, because he procured contention [1413] among the people. They knew that the Romans did hate nothing more, therefore they urge that the sorest against Paul. This doth Tertullus amplify when he saith, that Paul had moved the Jews throughout the whole world. But I wonder why he addeth that he is the author or chief of the sect of the Nazarites, which we know was rather a praise than a dispraise among the Jews. I think that they mean not those who, according to the old and lawful custom of the law, did consecrate themselves to God, but those troublesome murderers who did also vaunt and boast that they were zealous men. [1414] Some [1415] think that Nazarites are here put for Christians, which may very well be. But if we like the former exposition better, he doth craftily lay to Paul's charge that he was one of that sect which the Romans did hate. For whereas these zealous men would above all other have been counted for notable observers of the law, they advanced a color of zeal as a banner to stir up the minds of the common people. Nevertheless, these good men, who are so zealous over their liberty, do not spare the chiefest maintainers thereof, so they may cause Paul to be hated by means of them. They would have commended the Nazarites as courageous defenders of the law, if it had not been in this matter, but now, as if they did infect the whole world, they seek to bring upon Paul great reproach by saying that he is one of them. Moreover, they slander Paul impudently, for no man did think that he was guilty of that crime. Therefore they lay to his charge, no less wickedly than maliciously, a crime which they take up at their foot, [1416] and invent without all color. But such is the careless security of hypocrites, that they think they may do whatsoever they will, so they color their doings with zeal.

6. *Who went about to pollute the temple.* It was a light and almost a frivolous accusation to lay this to his charge before the Roman governor, who could have wished that the temple had been turned topsy-turvy. But because nothing was more fit for procuring uproars than the polluting of the temple, he doth craftily accuse Paul thereof, as if he should say, that it was no thanks to him that Jerusalem was not on an uproar; and that he carried such a firebrand as might have procured sore hurt if he had not been prevented. Also he includeth that other thing, that because Paul had offended in matters of religion, it did belong properly to the Jews to give

[1413] "Seditionem… concitaverit," stirred up sedition.

[1414] "Tumultusos illos sicarios qui se etiam plausibili nomine vociferabant zelotas," those tumultuary assassins who, assuming a specious name, boasted of being zelotae, (zealous)

[1415] "Quae factio circiter illud tempus emerserit; imo ex Josephi historia colligitur jamtunc fuisse grassatos," about this time that faction had broken out, nay, it appears from Josephus that it had even then made considerable progress, omitted.

[1416] "Crimen velut ex trivio aereptum," some charge, picked up, as it were, in the streets.

judgment in that matter. And here he complaineth also of the chief captain Lysias, because he robbed them of their right. Therefore his drift is, to obtain at the hands of the ruler that he will restore to them that which Lysias had taken from them. This is also not void of subtilty, in that Tertullus doth discredit the chief captain, because he dealt more courteously towards Paul than the priests would he should; and glancingly he bringeth him in suspicion, because he dare not openly accuse him. But the question is, whether they could hope that the governor would grant them so much, seeing the Roman magistrates alone were to sit upon life and death? I answer, that he maketh in this place some semblance of equity, as if they were purposed to handle him more gently than he deserved. For though they might not condemn any man to death, yet they might use some light chastisement as was scourging. Nevertheless, Tertullus doth not cease to desire before the president to have him put to death.

8. *Having made inquiry.* A good [1417] request, that the governor do not give sentence before he thoroughly examine and know the matter; and that he do not condemn Paul before he be lawfully convict. But how dare they put in these conditions, seeing their own consciences do accuse them of unjust dealing? I answer, that they had witnesses in readiness; and that they do not offer themselves to prove the matter until they do call them; [1418] though there were another end. For they did hope that Felix would be so persuaded with such glorious words, [1419] that he would turn over unto them the man whom they did accuse for a condemned man, whom they might handle at their pleasure. In sum, the more fierce they be upon him, and the more they were puffed up with some affiance they had in themselves, they think they shall get the upper hand by this means, because the party arraigned shall have no license granted to defend himself. Thus do false accusers boldly boast that their matter is plain, that they may blind the eyes of the judges.

Acts 24:10-21

Acts 24:10-21

10. And Paul answered, after that the governor had beckoned to him that he should speak, With a better mind do I speak for myself, forasmuch as I know that thou hast judged this nation this many years: 11. Seeing that thou mayest know that there are yet but twelve days since that I came up to Jerusalem to worship. 12. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, or causing any concourse of people, neither in the synagogues, neither in the city: 13. Neither can they prove those things whereof they accuse me. 14. But this I confess to thee, that according to the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all

[1417] "AEqua," just, equitable.

[1418] "Nec se ad probandum offerre nisi suo arbitrio," and that they do not offer proof unless he decide that it shall be taken.

[1419] "Ampullis," bombast.

things which are written in the law and the prophets; 15. And have hope toward God, that the same resurrection of the dead which they wait for, shall be both of the just and unjust. 16. And herein I study always to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men. 17. And after many years I came and brought alms to my nation, and offerings. 18. Wherein they found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, neither with unquietness [tumult]. 19. And certain Jews out of Asia, who ought to have been present here, and to accuse if they had any thing against me. 20. Or else let these same here say if they have found any iniquity in me when I stood (or seeing I stand) in the council; 21. Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, I am judged of you this day of the resurrection of the dead.

10. *And Paul.* The state of Paul's defense is not conversant in the quality; but he denieth the crime that was laid to his charge; not that he was ashamed of the gospel, or afraid of the cross, but because that was no place to make any full confession of faith in. Therefore, omitting the cause of the gospel, which his accuser had not touched, he answereth simply unto the crimes whereof he was accused. But before he come thither, he saith that he doth the more willingly answer for himself before Felix, because he had long time been governor of Judea; because, peradventure, some new governor [1420] would have been sore moved hearing such things laid to his charge. He doth not commend the virtues of the governor, but he saith that he is glad, because he is of great experience, that he may judge more justly. [1421] This is surely a sincere and free manner of defending, to set matter against words. Yet Paul seemeth to gather amiss, that Felix can know the time of his coming, because he had been governor many years. I answer, that this is said therefore, because it is likely that he will deal more moderately; as if he should say, Because thou hast been acquainted with their conditions long time, I have the better hope that they shall not deceive thee. For want of skill doth make judges too credulous, and doth enforce them to make too much haste.

11. *To worship.* First, it is certain that he came for other causes, and he will afterward confess that this was the chief, that he might bring alms for the sustentation of the brethren. But we may well excuse him, because it was not of necessity that he should give an account of his coming; only he meant, by the way, to excuse himself of corrupt religion. Wherefore, though he came to Jerusalem for some other cause, yet this is always true, that he came with no other mind, but to profess himself to be a worshipper of God, and to approve the holiness of the temple by his worshipping. The other question is more hard, how he saith that he came to worship, seeing the religion of the temple was already abolished, and all difference of the temple [1422] taken away? I answer in this place likewise, that though he do not make

[1420] "Propter inscitiam," through ignorance, omitted.
[1421] "Composite," calmly.
[1422] "Omne tempii discrimen," all distinction or temple.

his purpose known, yet he doth not lie or dissemble. For the faithful servants of Christ were not forbidden to worship in the temple, so they did not tie holiness to the place, but did lift up pure hands freely without making choice of places (1 Timothy 2:8). It was lawful for Paul to enter into the temple after he was come to Jerusalem, that he might make his godliness known, and there to use the solemn rites of the worship of God, because he was void of superstition; so he did not offer any propitiatory sacrifices which were contrary to the gospel. Therefore religion did not compel him to come to Jerusalem according to the appointment of the law, as if the sanctuary were the face of God as in times past; yet he doth not abhor the external worship which was unto men a testimony of godliness.

12. *Disputing with any man.* Paul had no need to deny any of these things if he had done them; because he might have answered for himself that it was well done. He had been one of the scribes which disputed daily; neither were they forbidden either by the law or by custom, but that they might assemble themselves together [1423] to be taught. Yea, to this end there were in divers places of the city synagogues, wherein they met together. Moreover, he knew that both Christ and also his apostles had done the same thing. Also he might easily have turned [retorted] back upon his adversaries the crime which they did object to him, who did daily use the very same things. But because he aimeth at no other thing at this present, but to refute the false accusations of his adversaries, and to prove that importunate men had unadvisedly molested him for no cause; he intreateth not of the lawfulness of the fact, (as they say) but only of the fact. And he standeth chiefly upon this point to refute that slander, because he was burdened to be [1424] a raiser of tumults. Therefore he concludeth that he was falsely and unjustly accused; because the adversaries had never proved those things which they had alleged. This ought to have been sufficient to discharge him, seeing he was thus burdened with wicked lies, whereas there rested in him not the very least suspicion that could be devised.

14. *But I confess.* Because they had laid to Paul's charge impiety and the polluting of the temple, he purgeth himself of both now, that Felix may understand that his adversaries were moved with evil will. [1425] For though the religion, which is pretended, be false and preposterous, yet the study thereof did oftentimes find favor with men, who took no great heed. Wherefore it was to be feared lest Felix, if he had conceived any sinister suspicion of Paul, should not only have pardoned the zeal of the priests, but also have granted their requests. Wherefore Paul doth also refute this point of the accusation; and that so, that he doth not touch the faith of the gospel, because (as we have said) that was no fit place for making confession thereof. But what is this that he saith, that he worshippeth God according to the way which

[1423] "Turmatim," in crowds.

[1424] "Delatus fuerat tanquam," was charged with being.

[1425] "Sola malevolentia impelli," were instigated by sheer malevolence.

they call heresy? Some think that this is added like to a concession; because the enemies take that in evil part which ought to be attributed to judgment and right election; as if Paul had said, that that form of religion which he had followed is, indeed, called heresy, but unworthily. But seeing that name was not infamous either among the Jews or Gentiles, it is unlikely that he maketh answer before a profane man, touching that which they counted everywhere rather a commendation than any vice. When Christians have conference together, the Spirit of God commandeth that heretics be counted detestable; and he teacheth us to beware of heresies, because they bring upon the Church plague, dissension, and wasteness. Therefore, it is a thing not to be suffered among the people of God, whose safety consisteth in the unity of faith. But because the Jews did then openly boast of their sects, that excuse, whereof we spake of late, was superfluous. Therefore, it remaineth that he do either mean that he is a Pharisee, or that he call the Jewish religion or the profession of the gospel (without infamy) heresy; because they were distinguished from the use and custom of all nations. Seeing he did before confess himself to be a Pharisee, there shall no inconvenience ensue, if we say that he doth repeat the same now; especially seeing he speaketh shortly after of the resurrection of the dead. But because this first point doth only contain a confession concerning the worship of the God of the fathers, I think that he doth rather speak generally of the Jewish religion, or of the Christian faith which did flow thence. Paul was a citizen of Rome, notwithstanding as he came of the Jews by his ancestry, he confesseth that he continueth in the religion which he had learned of the fathers. And to this end doth the adverb of likeness tend; for it showeth a known thing, namely, the manner of worship whereunto the Jews were addicted. He maketh express mention of the God of his fathers, because it was not lawful for a man that was a Roman to receive the doctrine of the law unless he had come of the Jews. Also he toucheth his adversaries, which handle him so cruelly; whereas, notwithstanding, they both worship one God. I (saith he) worship the same God (according to the manner delivered by mine ancestors) which they themselves worship, and even as they worship him. Neither doth that hinder because he was fallen from the ceremonies of the law, and was content with the spiritual worship of God. For Paul thinketh it sufficient for him to wipe away that blot of impiety which his adversaries had falsely cast upon him. Therefore the Papists are ridiculous, who feign that Paul alloweth [approveth] all manner [of] antiquity. We, say they, worship the God of our fathers with Paul, as the custom was delivered to us from hand to hand; as if (even they themselves being judges) it were sufficient for the Jews or Turks to hold up the same buckler against the faith of Christ. But the apostle meant nothing less than simply to ground religion in the authority of ancestors, and to defend his godliness with that defense, which might have been common to all the superstitions of the Gentiles; he meant only to stop the mouth of his adversaries. Nevertheless, he taketh this for a plain

matter, that the fathers, from whom the Jewish religion came, were good and sincere worshippers of God; so that the Jews, which were not degenerate, might well boast, that the God of their fathers whom they worshipped was the only Creator of heaven and earth; and that the country gods [1426] of all the rest of the world were mere and vain inventions.

Believing all things. A short exposition of the sentence next going before. For, because he had not simply affirmed that he worshipped God, but did add this word {ουτως}, or so: he doth now set down how he worshippeth God. Whereby it appeareth what great heed he taketh for fear he entangle himself in those accidental [1427] superstitions which reigned among the Jews. As if any of us do at this day answer the Papists, that he worshippeth the God whom they profess, as we be taught out of the law and out of the gospel. By this let us learn that God is not rightly worshipped, so that our obedience can please him, unless it be of faith, which is the only ground-work of godliness. For he (to the end he may prove himself to be the servant of God) doth not thrust upon them bare ceremonies; but he saith flatly that he believeth. Furthermore, this place containeth a profitable doctrine, that this is the only foundation of right and true [1428] faith, for a man to submit himself to the Scripture, and reverently to embrace the doctrine thereof. Furthermore, Paul doth in this place divide the Scripture into the law and the prophets, that he may the more plainly prove that he doth not dissent from the universal consent of the Church.

15. *Hoping in God.* We must note the course of his speech. For after that he hath professed that he believeth the Scripture, he doth now add the hope of the resurrection to come, that it may appear that it cometh not from the understanding of the flesh, [1429] or from the decrees of men, but it is conceived out of the word of God. Thus doth the reverence of the Scripture go before, [1430] that it [1431] may hold us fast bound, and it is the beginning of faith. After that the knowledge of those things which God hath revealed there doth follow, being coupled and linked with sure hope. And whereas he maketh them his fellows, it is referred unto the sounder sort. Though it be not to be doubted, but that he seeketh, by this means and policy, to bring them out of their lurking places into the clear light, and that before Felix; as it shall again appear by the conclusion of the defense. But in this place, the general resurrection is defended [asserted] against certain brain-sick fellows, who restrain the same unto the members of Christ. But as Paul doth in this place say that all men shall rise again, so by the plain voice of Christ all are cited; [1432] some unto judgment, some unto life (John 5:29).

[1426] "Gentiles," the Gentile.
[1427] "Adventitiis," adventitious.
[1428] "Orthodoxae," orthodox.
[1429] "Carnis sensu," from carnal sense.
[1430] "Praecedit," take precedence
[1431] "Ejus anctoritas," its authority
[1432] "Promiscue," promiscuously.

16. *And herein do I study.* There is no sharper prick to prick men forward, with all desire to lead a godly and holy life, than the hope of the last resurrection, as the Scripture teacheth in many places. Therefore, when Paul will effectually exhort the people anywhere, he calleth them back to remember the same (Philippians 3:20). Wherefore, it is not without cause that he saith in this place, that staying himself upon this faith, he hath endeavored to live purely before God, and righteously among men. And surely an evil conscience is as good as a thousand witnesses to accuse [1433] men of blockishness, that they may gather for a certainty that they do not earnestly and thoroughly believe eternal life, after which they never long. He calleth it a conscience, {απροσκοπον}, that is, without offense, where the servants of God labor to remove all lets which hinder their course. And he putteth two parts of the conscience. For there is a certain inward sense or feeling which beholdeth [1434] God alone, and thence cometh faithfulness and integrity which we use towards men. At length, when he saith that he hath constantly followed as well godliness in worshipping God, as just dealing among men, he signifieth unto us that those do indeed hope for the last resurrection who are never weary of well-doing. For this word always doth signify perseverance in a straight course.

17. *And after many years.* His meaning is, that he had not of long time been at Jerusalem, but was conversant in other countries far distant, and that after long time he came now to bring alms, and to offer to God the sacrifice of thanks. Whereby doth also appear their want of good nature and their unthankfulness, because, seeing he had by all means deserved the goodwill of all the whole nation, they recompense him so evil. This place doth expound the former, where mention was made of worshipping. For it is certain that Paul came not purposely to offer in the temple, because he purposed to do that after he was come. But he doth only recite what the Jews found in him, which was of greatest weight for the matter which was now in hand. At length, when he saith that he was found in the temple doing this, and that having used first solemn purging, and, secondly, quietly without raising any tumult, he cleareth himself again of both crimes. For his purifying did witness that he did not pollute the temple; and, secondly, forasmuch as he did it quietly without any multitude, there was no suspicion of tumult.

19. *Certain Jews.* This is an imperfect speech; yet the sense is plain, that these men of Asia, as it should seem, had caused a tumult without cause, of whose absence he complaineth; as if he should say, Ye which lay so many things to my charge, cannot tell how the matter standeth; but you bring before the judgment-seat of the governor a tale which was rashly believed. But those who are to be blamed for the matter, and who were as fans to set all on fire, appear not. After that Paul hath turned back

[1433] "Ad coarguendos," to convict.

[1434] "Respicit," has repect to.

[retorted] the crime upon others, taking to himself a good courage, he doth now appeal unto the adversaries which are present, willing them if they know anything by him freely to utter it; though I dissent from Erasmus and the old interpreter in the participle {σταντος}, for they translate it in the present tense; and they expound the word {συνεδριον}, or *council,* of the sitting of the governor, which I think is far from Paul's meaning. For his meaning is, in my judgment, that he was ready to give an account of all things in their council. And that they knew nothing then which they can lay to his charge, because they began to stir only for this one voice, when he said that he was judged of the resurrection of the dead; that is, that he suffered all this trouble for no other cause, save only because he did hope for the resurrection of the dead. Whereby it appeareth that they now coin a new accusation for no cause, because, if there had been in him any fault, they would not have concealed it then. It is likely that they had farther talk, and that they came nearer together, [1435] because we shall see elsewhere that they did contend about Christ; but it was Luke's drift only to declare how well Paul had cleared himself of the false accusations of his accusers.

Acts 24:22-27

Acts 24:22-27

22. And when Felix heard these things, he deferred them, certainly knowing those things which did appertain unto that way, and said, When the chief captain Lysias shall come, 1 will thoroughly know your matter. 23. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and that he should suffer him to have ease, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister to him, or to come to him. 24. And after certain days came Felix with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, and he called Paul, and heard him concerning the faith which is in Christ. 25. And as he disputed of righteousness and temperance, and of judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, For this time go thy way; and when I have convenient time, I will send for thee. 26. He hoped also that Paul would have given him money to loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27. And when two years were expired, Porcius Festus came into Felix room: and because Felix would do the Jews a pleasure, he left Paul bound.

23. *When Felix.* It appeareth that Felix (though he pronounced nothing concerning the matter) did perceive that Paul was burdened with no fault of his own, but with the malice of the priests. For when Luke saith that the matter was deferred until the coming of Lysias, he putteth in this instead of a reason, that the ruler did perfectly know those things which did appertain unto the way, by which words, I think, is signified, either that through long experience he had been acquainted with the conditions of the priests, and

[1435] "Et proprius quasi manu conserta congressos esse," and came, as it were, to close quarters.

knew full well how they were wont to behave themselves; or else that he saw by these things which had been spoken on both sides how frivolous the accusation was, which is confirmed by the courteous and remiss [1436] usage of Paul; for he putteth a centurion in trust with him, that he may have the more liberty. Others had rather read it in one text in the person of Felix: when Lysias, who doth better know the truth of this matter, is come, I will then give judgment. But they let [draw] and gather this racked sense from a reason which is scarce firm. They say that this word *way* is nowhere taken for the doctrine of the law without some addition. But I do not interpret it of the law, but of those sects whereof no strangers were ignorant. No man did doubt but that the Pharisees did hold the immortality of the soul. Therefore, seeing it was a thing so common, no marvel if Felix do acquit Paul. Furthermore, it were hard to take *way* for the knowledge of the fact. And I see not how this can hang together, that the governor doth confess that Lysias was more expert in the law than he. But his innocency is made more famous and evident by this, because a profane man did straightway give such a prejudice [1437] thereof that he did suffer him to be visited and holpen by his friends, being, as it were, exempted from the order of prisoners. Also, we gather by this that Paul's companions and the residue of the Church had not forsaken him. For to what end had it been to grant liberty to his friends and acquaintance to have access unto him unless they had been present, had showed themselves to be careful for him, and had been desirous to do their duty? [1438] Therefore, let us learn by this example, that so long as we may, and are able, we must not defraud the martyrs of Christ of any manner of comfort whilst they labor for the gospel.

24. *Felix, with his wife Drusilla.* We said somewhat already concerning the covetousness and corruptions of Felix. Now, as touching his wife Drusilla, the readers must understand that she was daughter to Agrippa the elder, of whose filthy death Luke spake before, chapter 12, (Acts 12:23). She was betrothed to Epiphanis, the son of Antiochus. But forasmuch as the young man would not take on him the rites which the Jews did use, which he promised to do, her brother, Agrippa the younger, (of whom mention shall be made in the next chapter) after the death of his father, gave her to wife to Azizus, king of the Emesenes; from whose company she was enticed by the flattery of Felix. For Felix being taken with her singular beauty, did persuade one Simon, a Jew, born in Cyprus, to persuade and allure her to make a new match. Therefore, it came to pass, that this voluptuous woman, having broken promise with her former husband, did marry with an uncircumcised man contrary to the law. But though she had polluted herself with profane wedlock, yet we may easily conjecture by this place that she had not quite abandoned that feeling of religion which she had of [from] a child.

[1436] "Magis remissa… tractatio," mere indulgent treatment.
[1437] "Tale praejudicium tulit," did so favourably prejudge it.
[1438] "Officio defungi," to do offices of kindness to him.

For Felix would neither have desired to hear Paul, neither would he have vouchsafed to speak to him, unless it had been for his wife's sake. Luke doth not express thus much, but in that he nameth Drusilla, we may well gather that Paul was called for her sake, that he might dispute of the gospel; though such revolts [apostates] be rather tickled with curiosity, than moved with a sincere desire to learn.

He heard him touching the faith. This confession of Paul doth witness, that he did not spare to speak of Christ before, because he was afraid, or because he would escape the trouble of the cross; [1439] but because it was not yet time to speak. Seeing he was cited unto the judgment-seat to answer for himself, it stood him upon to answer concerning the crimes which were objected to him, that he might afterward frankly and freely profess the faith of Christ. Therefore, when he now seeth the gate set open, and opportunity offered for speaking, he is not afraid to offend the governor, neither is he terrified with danger, that he doth craftily make as if he were not a Christian. Therefore, we see that he was as well furnished with invincible constancy as with wisdom and judgment; neither did he ever of set purpose suppress the light of the gospel, but did only make choice of the time.

Now, the wonderful counsel of God is worth the noting in this place, who will have the gospel offered sometimes to the reprobate; not that they may profit thereby, but rather that they may be made inexcusable. It had been better for Felix and Drusilla never to have heard anything concerning Christ; because they did not escape without punishment for refusing the grace of salvation which was offered to them, or for neglecting the same with loathsomeness. Furthermore, we must note this, that certain, by reason of that seed of godliness which is in them engendered, do desire to hear the gospel preached, which, so soon as they have heard, they do by and by either loathe, or else they cannot suffer it. Nevertheless, the preaching of the gospel (what success soever it have) is a good and sweet savor to God; whether it quicken or kill men (2 Corinthians 2:15).

25. *And as he disputed.* Felix hoped that he should take some delight in Paul's sermon; as men who are desirous of new things do willingly feed their ears with subtle disputations; also he meant to satisfy his wife's desire without his own trouble; now, he is enforced to feel that force of the Word of God, whereof he never thought, which driveth away all his delights. Paul, out of bonds, disputeth of the judgment of God; he which had power to put him to death, or to save his life, is afraid and quaketh as if he stood before his own judge; neither doth he find any other comfort, but to send him away out of his sight. Let us first learn by this, what great force of the Spirit of God there was both in the heart and also in the tongue of Paul, because he seeth that he must speak in the name of Christ, he doth not behave himself like an underling; [1440] but he declareth the embassage which was

[1439] "Vel ut se subtraheret a curcis molestia," or that he might escape from bearing the cross

[1440] "Non submisse agit," he does not act crouchingly.

enjoined him, with a grace, as from on high, and having forgotten that he was in bonds, he denounceth the heavenly judgment in the person of Christ. And now seeing Felix' heart is so pricked with the voice of a prisoner, the majesty of the Spirit doth show itself in that also, which Christ extolleth; when the Spirit shall come he shall judge the world, etc., and that force of prophesying, which the same Paul setteth forth elsewhere (1 Corinthians 14:24). Also, that is fulfilled which he saith in another place, that the word of God was not bound with him; which he did not only stoutly maintain and affirm to be true, but which did effectually pierce into the hearts of men, (and that of such as were proud of their greatness) as if it did lighten from heaven.

Again, we must note, that although the reprobate be stricken with the judgment of God, yet are they not renewed unto repentance by that terror alone. Felix is touched indeed, when he heareth that God shall be the Judge of the world; yet he fleeth therewithal from his judgment-seat, (whereof he is afraid) so that this is feigned sorrow, which doth not work salvation. Therefore, repentance requireth such fear as may both engender a voluntary hatred of sin, and may also present a man before God, that he may willingly suffer himself to be judged by his word. And this is a token of true profiting when the sinner seeketh for medicine there, from whence he received his wound. Furthermore, this place doth teach that men are then examined and tried to the quick, when their vices, wherewith they are infected, are brought to light, and their consciences are called back unto the judgment to come. For when Paul disputeth of righteousness and temperance, he did rub Felix sore upon the gall; forasmuch as he was both a man given to filthy pleasure, and also to dissolute riot, and given over unto iniquity.

26. *Hoping that money.* Though Felix had thoroughly tried Paul's integrity, so that he was ashamed to take money of the Jews for condemning him; yet forasmuch as he was a covetous man, and a man given to corruptions, he would not acquit him for nothing; for this cause he doth often call Paul, that he may with fair words put him in some hope of deliverance. [1441] For judges which gape after money do insinuate themselves thus, when as they will make way for corruptions. Whence we gather, that it was but a vain and transitory fear wherewith Felix was taken when he heard Paul dispute, seeing hope of gain doth compel him to call for him whom he was enforced with fear to send away. How did Felix hope for some reward at the hands of a poor man, and one that was destitute? for that ghoul would not have been content with a small prey. I do not doubt but that (as those who have the law and right to sell are witty and can perceive things [1442]) when he saw the Jews did make such earnest suit to have Paul put to death, he smelled somewhat afar off touching him; [1443] to wit, that he was none of the

[1441] "Liberationes redimendae," of purchasing deliverance.

[1442] "Ut sagaces sunt et acuti qui jus habent venale," as those judges who act ve-nally are sagacious and acute

[1443] "Aliquid procul de ipso subodoratum esse," he had some distant idea of what kind of a

common sort; but such a man as was in great favor with many. Wherefore, he did not doubt but that many of his friends would willingly bestow cost to redeem him.

27. *And when two years were expired.* Seeing Paul knew that the judge who did gape for gain would be favorable to him so soon as he should offer him money, and seeing he had sufficient time to gather the same; it is likely that he did not only bear with the brethren, [1444] but also detest such bribery, wherewith the holiness of civil order is shamefully polluted. Now, whereas governors use to let loose such prisoners as they know are not guilty when they go from the province, Felix took the contrary way to win favor. The Jews had often complained of his filthy gain, of his extortion, cruelty, and unruly government. Claudius Caesar being wearied with so many complaints, did call him out of Judea; to the end the Jews may not spite him so sore, he leaveth Paul bound; so that he maketh the guiltless servant of God, as it were, an offering for his evil deeds, that he may therewithal appease the priests.

person he was.

[1444] "Pepercisse fratribus," spare the brethren.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25

Acts 25:1-8

Acts 25:1-8

1. Then when Festus was come into the province, after three days he went up to Jerusalem from the city of Cesarea. 2. And the high priests and chief Jews informed him of Paul, and besought him, 3. Desiring favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying await to kill him by the way. 4. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would go thither shortly. 5. Therefore, let them, saith he, which are able among you, go down with me, and if there be any fault in this man, let them accuse him. 6. And after that he had staid more than ten days among them, he went down to Cesarea; and on the morrow he sat down in the judgment-seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. 7. Who being come, those Jews which came from Jerusalem stood about him, laying many and great crimes to Paul's charge, which they could not prove. 8. Forasmuch as he answered, That he had neither offended anything against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, neither against Caesar.

1. *Then when Festus.* The second action is described in this place, wherein Paul hath as hard a combat, and is in no less danger than in the first. Seeing he was left in bonds, Festus might suspect that the cause was doubtful, and so gather an unjust prejudice. But there was another thing which was cause of great danger. We know that new rulers, because they will win the favor of those who are in the provinces, use to grant them many things at their first coming; so that it was to be thought that the death of Paul should be to Festus a fine means to win favor with all. Therefore, the faith of the holy man is assailed afresh with a new trial, as if the promise had been vain whereto he had hitherto trusted; but the grace of God doth so much the more plainly show itself in delivering him, because, contrary to all hope, he is delivered out of the jaws of death. The Jews prevent the governor with their false accusations, yet they do not as yet seek to have him punished, but they do only desire that he may not be brought into any foreign court to plead his cause. They desire that ambitiously as a great benefit, which was to look to equal. How is it then that they do not obtain, save only because God doth hold the mind of Festus, so that he doth stoutly deny that which he was afterward ready to grant? And as the Lord did then hold his mind bound

with the secret bridle of his providence, so when he granted him freedom of will he bound his hands, that he could not execute that which he would. Let this confidence support us in dangers, and let it also stir us up to call upon God; and let this make our minds quiet and calm, in that the Lord, in stretching forth his hand, and breaking such a strong conspiracy, did show an eternal example of his power in defending his.

5. *Those, therefore.* It is in the Greek word for word, [literally] Those who are mighty or able; yet he meaneth those who can conveniently. Also, we may easily conjecture, that they did object the trouble and charges, and besought the governor that he would not make weary with a superfluous journey so many of their chief men, and also certain which were very aged; but would rather (which he might easily do) command Paul to be brought by a few keepers [guards]. Therefore, lest they complain that he is burdenous unto them, he unloadeth them of this necessity, and giveth them leave to choose out from among themselves such as they will. In the mean season, he doth sufficiently declare that he doth not believe their false reports; and he professeth that he will be an upright judge, and will do nothing but according to the truth of the matter. The next sentence also is diversely read among the Grecians. For some books [manuscripts] have the same which is in the old interpreter but eight or ten days. If this reading like us, the sense shall be, that the governor came shortly after to Cesarea, lest the Jews should be importunate upon him under color of his long tarriance. The other reading, which is more usual among the Grecians, shall have another meaning; though he stayed long enough at Jerusalem to hear the matter, yet did he not hearken to their requests, who would have Paul brought thither; whence we may gather a probable conjecture, that he already knew of their laying await.

7. *Many and grievous crimes.* So long as Paul lived under the law, his integrity was well known and famous. Again, when he was converted to Christ, he was a singular pattern of innocence. Yet we see how he is subject to many slanders, cruel and false accusations. And this is almost always the estate of the servants of Christ, wherefore they must be the more courageous, to pass valiantly through evil report and good report; neither let them think it strange to be evil reported of where they have done good.

In the mean season, they must do their endeavor, that they may not only have a clear conscience before God, but that they may be very well able to defend themselves before men, when they have time and place. For Paul doth not fail in his cause, but courageously setteth the defense of his innocency against their false crimes. Furthermore, let us note that the wicked can never be bridled, but they will speak evil of good men, and will impudently slander them; for they resemble the nature of Satan, by whose spirit they are led. Therefore, whereas we be commanded to stop the mouth of the wicked, it must not be so taken as if he shall be free from all backbiting, [1445] whosoever

[1445] "Ab omni falsa obtrectatione," from all groundless detractation.

shall behave himself uprightly, but that our life may answer for us, and may wipe away all blots of false infamy. So we see the adversaries of Paul, though they had a favorable judge, yet their slanders were all in vain, seeing he did defend and avouch his innocency by his deeds. And yet it is likely that they wanted not false witnesses, neither were they slack in suborning them; but because the Lord giveth his servants invincible strength, so that the brightness of honesty doth drive away their vain clouds; they are ashamed, and at length they depart from the judgment-seat with this infamy, that they were false accusers. But the defense of Paul doth show what things the Jews laid principally to his charge. The first crime was ungodliness against God, that he overthrew the law and polluted the temple; the other, rebellion against Caesar and the Roman empire, because he raised tumults everywhere. He was helped by the singular grace of God to answer and refute both, who maketh the innocence of his as bright as the morning.

Acts 25:9-12

Acts 25:9-12

9. And Festus, being willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10. But Paul said, I stand before Caesar's judgment-seat, where I must be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou thyself knowest full well. 11. And if I do injury, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be nothing of these things whereof they accuse me, no man can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar. 12. Then spake Festus with the council, and said, Hast thou appealed to Caesar? to Caesar shalt thou go.

9. *And Festus.* Whether Festus knew somewhat of their laying await, (which we may well conjecture) or whether he were altogether ignorant thereof, he dealeth unjustly with Paul; and we see how soon those are drawn unto all corruption which are not guided by the Spirit of God. For Festus doth not openly contemn or hate Paul; but ambition, and peradventure also desire of gain, got the upper hand, so that, for pleasing the other part, he doth unjustly bring him in danger of death; also, it is likely that he was enticed with the smell [hope] of some reward to hearken so courteously to the priests. Notwithstanding, I marvel that he giveth Paul leave to choose, and doth not rather, according to this authority, command them to carry him whether he would or no. Surely we gather that he was kept back with fear, lest he should infringe the privilege of the city of Rome, [1446] which was a very odious crime. Notwithstanding, he studied craftily to persuade Paul not to refuse to be judged at Jerusalem. For he was not ignorant of that which indeed came to pass, that a citizen of Rome might lawfully appeal, so that he could then go no farther. Nevertheless, it was no thank to him that

[1446] "Jus Romanae civitatis," the privilege of a Roman citizen.

he was not delivered into the hands of murderers. [1447]

10. *I stand at Caesar's judgment-seat.* Because Paul seeth that he is betrayed into the hands of the Jews through the ambition of the governor, he objecteth the privilege of the city of Rome. He had submitted himself modestly, if he had commanded him to do [1448] that which was just and equal. Now, because the governor doth not his duty willingly, necessity compelleth the holy man to defend himself by law; and by this means the Lord delivereth him now again, even when he was almost given over into the hands of the enemies. And whereas he desireth to have his matter handled before Caesar's judgment-seat, he doth not, therefore, make the doctrine of the gospel subject to the judgment of a profane and wicked man; but being ready to give an account of his faith everywhere, he appealeth from that court where he could no longer hope for equity. Furthermore, though the citizens of Rome did retain their privilege, yet the order was then altered, because the Caesars had taken into their own hands the judging of the people, [1449] as if they would be good maintainers and patrons of common liberty.

To the Jews have I done. Because those whose consciences do accuse them, and which mistrust their matter, fly unto certain odd excuses and exceptions, Paul turneth away from himself this opinion. And surely the ministers of Christ ought to have no less care to make their innocency known than to save their life. If Paul had flatly denied to answer for himself, the enemies would have triumphed, and the doubtfulness of an evil conscience should have been objected to him to the reproach of the gospel. But now when he citeth the governor himself to be a witness of his integrity, and doth refuse no punishment if he should be found guilty, he cutteth off all occasion of slanderous reports. Therefore, he showeth that he doth not seek to save himself by turning his back, [1450] but flyeth unto the fortress of a just defense, that he may there save himself from injury, seeing his adversaries have hitherto handled him unjustly; and now refusing to deal with him any longer by law, they go about to have him murdered. Neither doth Paul go behind the president's back to tell him that he doth unjustly, in that he doth so dally with his accusers; and therewithal he doth, as it were, bridle his lust, so that he dare go no farther.

11. *I appeal unto Caesar.* After that he hath professed that he doth not refuse to die if he be found guilty, he freely useth such helps as he could find at the hands of men. Wherefore, if we be at any time brought into like straits, we must not be superstitious, but we may crave help of the laws and politic order. Because it is written, that magistrates are made and appointed by God to the praise of the godly (Romans 13:3; and 1 Peter 2:13). Neither was Paul afraid to go to law under an unbelieving judge; for he which appealeth

[1447] "Quo minus sceleratis latronibus mactandum objiceret," that he did not expose himself to be murdered by nefarious assassins.

[1448] "Si impetrasset," if he had obtained.

[1449] "Judicium populi," the right of judging (formerly) in the people,

[1450] "Tergiversandi," by tergiversation.

commenceth a new action.

Therefore, let us know that God, who hath appointed judgment-seats, doth also grant liberty to his to use the same lawfully. Therefore, those mistake Paul who think that he doth flatly condemn the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 6:1) because they require help of the magistrate for defense of their right, seeing he reproveth in that place a manifest fault, to wit, because they could suffer no wrong, and because they were too much set upon suing one another, whereby they caused the gospel to be evil spoken of.

12. *Festus having talked with the council* The governors did use to have certain of the chief citizens which did attend upon them, and sat with them in judgment, that they might decree nothing without the consent of the council. Furthermore, it doth seem that Festus pronounced this with indignation, when he said interrogatively, Hast thou appealed to Caesar? to wit, because it grieved him that he could not do the Jews such a pleasure as he desired; though I leave that indifferent, because it is neither of any great importance, and it leaneth only to a conjecture.

Acts 25:13-21

Acts 25:13-21

13. And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came to Cesarea to salute Festus. 14. And when they had stayed there many days, Festus rehearsed Paul's cause to the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds of Felix: 15. About whom, when I came to Jerusalem, the high priests and elders of the Jews informed me, requiring judgment against him. 16. To whom I answered, It is not the custom of the Romans for favor to deliver any man that he should perish, before he that is accused have his accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him. 17. Therefore, when they were come hither without delay, on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought. 18. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation concerning such things as I supposed: 19. But they had certain questions concerning their superstition (or religion) against him, and concerning one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20. And because I doubted of this question, I asked him if he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things. 21. And when Paul had appealed, that he might be kept unto the knowledge of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept until I might send him to Caesar.

13. *And after certain days.* This long narration tendeth to this end, that we may know that though the handling of the cause were broken off, yet were Paul's bands famous; and that he was nevertheless brought out of prison, that he might make profession of his faith, and dispute touching the gospel before a famous auditory; and again, that though he were contemned, yet was he not counted a wicked person, lest the glory of Christ should be

abased by his slander and reproach, yea, that he had more liberty to preach the gospel being in prison, than if he had lived free in a private house.

King Agrippa and Bernice. It is certain that this Agrippa was son to Agrippa the elder, whose filthy and detestable death was set down in the twelfth chapter. When this man was made king of Chalcis, in his uncle's stead, after the decease of his father, he did afterward obtain a more large dominion. [1451] Bernice, of whom mention is made in this place, was his own natural sister, which was first married to Herod; king of Chalcis, her uncle, and did keep herself widow a certain season after his death, yet she did not live honestly and chastely during that time; for her great familiarity with her brother Agrippa was suspected. And to the end she might not be counted an incestuous person, she married with Polemon, king of Cilicia. Notwithstanding, because she gave herself more to lust than to chastity, she forsook him. The historiographers do nowhere say that she was her brother's wife; and Josephus, in his Life, assigned her a dominion of her own in part of Galilee. Therefore, it is to be thought that forasmuch as they were hardened in their wickedness, they dwelt together, not regarding what men did say; yet did they abstain from marriage, lest their incestuous marriage should betray and also augment their crime. Neither is it any marvel that he came for honor's sake to salute the governor, who did reign only at the will and pleasure of another, and did depend upon the beck and favor of the Emperor of Rome, which he was to retain and nourish by means of the governor.

14. *When many days.* Therefore, when (after some time was spent) they wanted matter of talk, as idle men use to invent somewhat whereon they may talk, mention was made of Paul; for Luke meant to note that, when he said that after many days were idly spent, Festus told the king of a certain man which lay bound. And although he doth here both touch the malice of the priests, and also make a show of wonderful equity on his part, yet in that he shortly after cleareth the party which was accused, he condemneth himself unawares, when as he confesseth that he was enforced to appeal that he might not be carried to Jerusalem.

But when Festus commendeth the Romans, he showeth what doth beseem judges. And if nature did tell profane men thus much, that they must admit no such favor as may oppress the guiltless, how much more must judges (who have the light of the word of God) be careful to avoid all corruption.

18. *They laid no such crime to his charge.* I marvel why Festus doth say, that there was no such crime objected to Paul as he supposed, seeing he was accused of sedition; but we may again conjecture by this, yea, plainly know, that their accusations were so vain, that they ought not to have been brought before the judgment-seat; as if a man did utter a slanderous speech unadvisedly. For which cause he saith, that the state of the cause did consist in questions of the law. Therefore, we see that he putteth a difference between those offenses which were wont to be punished by man's laws, and

[1451] "Tetrarchiam," tetrarchy.

the controversy which was between Paul and the Jews; not that the religion ought to be corrupted freely, [1452] or that their malapertness is tolerable, who overthrow the worship of God with their own inventions; but because the man being a Roman, cared not for Moses' law; therefore he speaketh so disdainfully when he saith, that they did strive about their superstition; though this word {δεισιδαιμονια} be taken of the Grecians, as well in good as evil part; to wit, because the worshipping of false gods was common in all places. Notwithstanding, his meaning is, that he careth not what manner of religion the Jews have. And no marvel if a man which was an ethnic, [heathen] and had not learned that the rule of godliness must be fet [sought] from the mouth of God, know not how to distinguish between the pure worship of God and superstitions.

Wherefore, we must hold fast that mark whereby we may discern the one from the other, that there is no godliness but that which is grounded in the knowledge of faith, lest we grabble [grope] in darkness. Moreover, the Romans were so drunken with prosperous success, that they thought that they were more acceptable to God than any other; as at this day the Turks, by reason of their manifold victories, deride the doctrine of Christ. This was a lamentable case, that a man being an unbeliever and idolater, sitteth as judge amidst the Jews, to give judgment of the sacred oracles of God according to his ignorance, but all the fault was in Paul's adversaries, who did not care for the majesty of God, so they might satisfy and obey their own madness. Notwithstanding, there rested nothing for Paul to do, but to clear himself of those crimes which were laid against him. So at this day, though inward brawls, which are among Christians, do defame the name of Christ and his gospel among the Turks and Jews, yet the defenders of holy doctrine are unworthily blamed, which are enforced to enter the combat.

Of one Jesus. It is not to be doubted but that Paul intreated, both gravely and with such vehemency as became him, of the resurrection of Christ; but Festus, by reason of his pride, thought it no meet matter for him to occupy his head about. He doth not, indeed, openly deride Paul, but he showeth plainly how negligently he heard him when he disputed of Christ. Whereby we see how little preaching availeth, yea, that it availeth nothing at all, unless the Spirit of God do inwardly touch the hearts of men. For the wicked do lightly pass over whatsoever is spoken, as if a man should tell them a tale of Robin Hood. [1453] Wherefore, there is no cause why the carelessness of many should trouble us at this day, seeing Paul prevailed nothing with Festus. But this place doth witness that many speeches did pass in the handling of the matter, whereof Luke maketh no mention. For he had spoken nothing as yet of Christ, and yet this latter narration doth show that Paul intreated seriously before the Jews of his death and resurrection. Which could not be, but he must needs intreat of the principal points of the gospel. Therefore, I

[1452] "Impune violari." he violated with impunity.

[1453] "Acsi quis fabulas narraret," as if one were telling them fables.

guess that Paul did so handle the matter, that when he had refuted the false accusations of the Jews, wherewith they went about to burden him before the governor, having gotten a fit occasion, he began afterward to speak freely of Christ.

Acts 25:22-27

Acts 25:22-27

22. And Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also myself hear the man. Tomorrow, saith he, thou shalt hear him. 23. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the common hall with the chief captains, and the principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought. 24. And Festus saith, King Agrippa, and all men which are present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews hath called upon me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25. Yet have I found that he hath committed nothing worthy of death, and because he hath appealed unto Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth unto you, and chiefly unto thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I may have somewhat to write. 27. For it seemeth to me an unmeet thing to send a prisoner, and not to show the crimes whereof he is accused.

22. *I would also.* By this we may gather that Agrippa did so desire to hear Paul, that he was ashamed to make his desire known, lest Festus should think that he came for some other end than to salute him. And it may be that not only curiosity did move him to be desirous to hear Paul, but because he did hope to profit by hearing him. Notwithstanding, we may easily gather by this how cold his desire was, because he suffered many days to pass before he showeth any sign of his desire, because he was more in love with earthly commodities, which he counted better. Neither durst he make any words; neither did he pass for uttering any speech until such time as Festus did of his own accord will him so to do. So that the holy minister of Christ is brought forth as on a stage, that a profane man may cheer up his guest, save only that Festus will be holpen with the advice of Agrippa and his company, that he may let Caesar understand how diligent he is. But the matter was turned to another end by the secret providence of God. Neither need we doubt but that such report went abroad as made much for the confirmation of the godly; and it may be also that some of the hearers were touched, and did conceive seed of faith, which did afterward bring forth fruit in due time. But admit none of them did embrace Christ sincerely and from his heart, this was no small profit, that the unskillful were appeased after that the malice of the enemies was discovered, that they might not be inflamed with such hatred against the gospel. Impiety was made ashamed, and the faithful did gather new strength, so that they were confirmed more and more in the

gospel.

23. *And on the morrow.* Agrippa and his sister do not come like humble disciples of Christ, but they bring with them such pomp and gorgeousness as may stop their ears and blind their eyes; and it is to be thought that like haughtiness of mind was joined with that gorgeous and great pomp. No marvel, therefore, if they were not brought to obey Christ. Notwithstanding, it seemeth that Luke maketh mention of the pomp, that we might know that, in a great assembly, and before choice witnesses, whose authority was great, Paul had leave granted not only to plead his matter as a party defendant, but also to preach the gospel. For he cometh forth as in the person of a teacher, that he may set forth the name of Christ. So that the truth of God brake out of his bands, which was forthwith spread abroad everywhere with a free course; yea, it came even unto us. By this word {φαντασια}, Luke understandeth that which we call commonly preparation or pomp. [1454] But there must other furniture be brought unto the spiritual marriage of Jesus Christ.

26. *That after examination had.* We cannot tell whether the governor, in acquitting Paul before them, doth seek by this policy to entice him to let his appeal fall. For it was a thing credible that he might easily be persuaded to lay away fear, and to submit himself to the judgment and discretion of a just judge, especially if Agrippa should give his friendly consent. To what end soever he did it, he condemneth himself of iniquity by his own mouth, in that he did not let a guiltless man go free whom he is now ashamed to send unto Caesar, having nothing to lay against him. This did also come to pass by the wonderful providence of God, that the Jews themselves should give a former judgment on Paul's side. Peradventure, the governor goeth subtilely to work, that he may pick out what the king and the chief men of Cesarea do think, that if it so fall out that Paul be set at liberty, he may lay the blame on their necks. For he would not have the priests to be his enemies for nothing, upon whom a good part of Jerusalem did depend, and that was the best way that he could take in writing to Caesar to intermingle the authority of Agrippa. But the Lord (to whom it belongeth to govern events contrary to man's expectation) had respect unto another thing, to wit, that when the clouds of false accusations were driven away, Paul might more freely avouch sound doctrine.

[1454] "Apparentiam," show.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26

Acts 26:1-8

Acts 26:1-8

1. And Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to answer for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand, and answered for himself: 2. I think myself happy, O king Agrippa, because I shall answer this day before thee of all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews; 3. Seeing thou art most expert in all those customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee hear me patiently. 4. My life which I have led from my youth, which was at the first in mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5. Who knew me before since the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most strait sect of our religion 1 lived a Pharisee. 6. And now I stand subject to judgment for the hope of the promise which God made to our fathers: 7. Whereunto our twelve tribes, serving God instantly day and night, hope to come. For which hope, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8. Why doth it seem to you a thing incredible, if God raise the dead?

2. We have declared to what end Paul was brought before that assembly, to wit, that Festus might write unto Caesar as he should be counseled by Agrippa and the rest. Therefore, he doth not use any plain or usual form of defense, but doth rather apply his speech unto doctrine. Luke useth indeed a word of excusing; yet such a one as is nothing inconvenient whensoever there is any account given of doctrine. Furthermore, because Paul knew well that Festus did set light by all that which should be taken out of the law and prophets, he turneth himself unto the king, who he hoped would be more attentive, seeing he was no stranger to the Jewish religion. And because he had hitherto spoken to deaf men, he rejoiceth now that he hath gotten a man who, for his skill and experience, can judge aright. But as he commendeth the skill and knowledge which is in Agrippa, because he is a lawful judge in those matters whereof he is to speak, so he desireth him on the other side to hear him patiently; for otherwise contempt and loathsomeness should have been less excusable in him. He calleth those points of doctrine, which were handled among the scribes, questions, who were wont to discuss religion more subtilely. By the word *customs,* he meaneth those rites which were common to the whole nation. Therefore, the sum is this, that king Agrippa was not ignorant either in doctrine, either in the ceremonies of the

law. That which he bringeth in or concludeth, [1455] wherefore I pray thee hear me patiently, (as I said even now) doth signify that the more expert a man is in the Scripture, the more attentive must he be when the question is about religion. For that which we understand doth not trouble us so much. And it is meet that we be so careful for the worship of God, that it do not grieve us to hear those things which belong to the defining thereof, and chiefly when we have learned the principle, [1456] so that we may readily judge, if we list to take heed.

4. *My life which I have led.* He doth not as yet enter into the state of the cause; but because he was wrongfully accused and burdened with many crimes, lest king Agrippa should envy the cause [1457] through hatred of the person, he doth first avouch his innocency. For we know that when a sinister suspicion hath once possessed the minds of men, all their senses are so shut up that they can admit nothing. Therefore, Paul doth first drive away the clouds of an evil opinion which were gathered of false reports, that he may be heard of pure and well purged ears. By this we see that Paul was enforced by the necessity of the cause to commend his life which he had led before. But he standeth not long upon that point, but passeth over straightway unto the resurrection of the dead, when he saith that he is a Pharisee. And I think that that is called the most strait sect, not in respect of holiness of life, but because there was in it more natural sincerity of doctrine, and greater learning. For they did boast that they knew the secret meaning of the Scripture. And surely forasmuch as the Sadducees did vaunt that they did stick to the letter, they fell into filthy and gross ignorance after they had darkened the light of the Scripture. The Essenes, contenting themselves with an austere and strait kind of life, did not greatly care for doctrine. Neither doth that any whit hinder, because Christ inveigheth principally against the Pharisees, as being the worst corrupters of the Scripture (Matthew 23:13). For seeing they did challenge to themselves authority to interpret the Scripture according to the hidden and secret meaning, hence came that boldness to change and innovate, wherewith the Lord is displeased. But Paul doth not touch those inventions which they had rashly invented, and which they urged with tyrannous rigor. For it was his purpose to speak only of the resurrection of the dead. For though they had corrupted the law in many points, yet it was meet that the authority of that sect should be of more estimation in defending the sound and true faith, than of the other, which were departed farther from natural purity. Moreover, Paul speaketh only of the common judgment, which did respect the color of more subtile knowledge.

6. *For the hope of the promise.* He doth now descend into the cause, to wit, that he laboreth for the principal point of faith. And though he seem to have spoken generally of the resurrection, yet we may gather out of the text,

[1455] "Illatio ista," the inference.

[1456] "Ne praasertim ubi jam principiis imbuti sumus," and especially when we have already been imbued with the principles.

[1457] "Causae sit infensus," be prejudiced against the cause.

that he beginneth with a farther point, and that he did comprehend those circumstances which did properly appertain unto the faith of the gospel. He complaineth that the Jews did accuse him, because he maintained the hope of the promise made to the fathers. Therefore, this was the beginning and also the issue of the matter, that the covenant which God had made with the fathers is referred unto eternal salvation. Wherefore this was the sum of the disputation, that the Jewish religion was nothing worth unless they took heed to the heavens, and did also lift up their eyes unto Christ, the author of the new life. They did boast that they were chosen from among all people of the word. But their adoption did profit them nothing, unless they did trust to the promised Mediator, and look unto the inheritance of the kingdom of God. Therefore, we must conceive much more than Luke doth plainly express. And surely his narration tendeth to no other end, save only that we may know of what things Paul intreated. But what this was, and in what words he uttered it, we cannot tell. Nevertheless, it behoveth us to gather out of a brief sum those things which appertain unto this disputation, which was freely handled before Agrippa, when Paul had free liberty granted to him to plead his own cause.

7. *Whereunto our twelve tribes.* Paul complaineth before Agrippa, that the state of the Church is come to that pass, that the priests set themselves against the common hope of all the faithful; as if he should say, To what end do those of our nation, who worship God carefully, and spend both days and nights in the duties of godliness, sigh in their prayers, save only that they may at length come unto eternal life? But the same is the mark whereat I aim in all my doctrine; because, when the grace of redemption is set before men, the gate of the kingdom of heaven is set open therewithal. And when I preach the author of salvation raised up from the dead, I offer the first-fruits of immortality in his person; so that the former confirmation of his doctrine was taken out of the Word of God, when he cited the promise made to the fathers. Now, in the second place, he addeth the consent of the Church. And this is the best way to maintain and avouch the opinions of faith, that the authority of God go foremost; and that then the consent of the Church come next. Though we ought therewithal wisely to make choice of the true Church, as Paul doth teach us in this place by his own example; for though he knew that the priests did pretend the visor [mask] of the Church against him, yet he doth boldly affirm, that the sincere worshippers of God are on his side, and he is content with their defense. For when he meaneth [nameth] the twelve tribes, he doth not speak generally of all those which came of Jacob according to the flesh; but he meaneth those only which did retain the true study of godliness. For it had been an unmeet thing to commend the nation generally for the fear of God, which was only in a few.

The Papists deal very disorderly in both; who, by the voices and consents of men, oppress the Word of God, and give also the name and title of the Catholic Church to a filthy rabblement of unlearned and impure men,

without any color or shame. But if we will prove that we think as the true Church thinketh, we must begin with the prophets and apostles; then those must be gathered unto them whose godliness is known and manifest. If the Pope and his clergy be not on our side, we need not greatly to care. And the true affection of true religion is proved by continuance and vehemency, which was of singular force at that time, principally when the Jews were in greatest misery.

8. *Why should* I do not doubt but that he proved that both by reason, and also by testimonies of Scripture, which he taught concerning the resurrection and the heavenly life. But for good causes doth he call back those unto whom he speaketh unto the power of God, lest they judge thereof according to their own weak capacity. For nothing can more hardly sink into men's brains, than that men's bodies shall be restored when as they be once consumed. [1458] Therefore, seeing it is a mystery far surpassing man's wit, let the faithful remember how far the infinite power of God doth reach, and not what they themselves comprehend; as the same Paul teacheth in the third chapter to the Philippians (Philippians 3:21). For when he hath said that our vile bodies shall be made like to the glorious body of Christ, he addeth immediately, "according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." But men are for the most part injurious [1459] to God, who will not have his arm to reach any farther than their understanding and reason can reach; so that so much as in them lieth they would desire to restrain the greatness of his works (which surpasseth heaven and earth) unto their straits. [1460] But, on the other side, Paul commandeth us to consider what God is able to do, that being lifted up above the world, we may learn to conceive the faith of the resurrection, not according to the weak capacity of our mind, but according to his omnipotency.

Acts 26:9-18

Acts 26:9-18

9. And I verily thought that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10. Which thing I also did at Jerusalem; and I shut up many of the saints in prison, having received power from the high priests; and when they were put to death, I gave sentence. 11. And punishing them oftentimes throughout all synagogues, I enforced them to blaspheme; and being yet more mad upon them, I did persecute them even into strange cities. 12. And as I went to Damascus for this intent, with authority and commission from the high priests, 13. At midday, king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, passing the brightness of the sun, shine round about me and those which journeyed with me. 14. And when we were all fallen to the

[1458] "Ubi in nihilum redacta fuerint," after being reduced to nothing.
[1459] "Maligni… et injurii," malignant and injurious,
[1460] "Ad suas angustias," to their narrow capacity.

earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? But he said unto me, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16. But rise, and stand up upon thy feet: for to this end did I appear unto thee, that I may make thee a minister and witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and also of those things wherein I will appear unto thee; 17. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18. That thou mayest open their eyes, that they may be converted from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by the faith which is in me.

9. *And I truly.* If Paul had not spoken more things than those which Luke hath hitherto recited, his speech had not hanged well together. [1461] Whence we prove that which was said before, that after that he had spoken of the covenant of God, he intreated of the grace and office of Christ, as the matter required. And he repeateth the history of his conversion for this cause, not only that he may remove from himself all suspicion of lightness, but that he may testify that God had called him, and that he was even enforced by a commandment coming from heaven. For, seeing that he was, contrary to his expectation, suddenly made a sheep of a wolf, such a violent change is of no small importance to purchase credit to his doctrine.

Therefore, he amplifieth that his heat and vehement desire which he had to punish [1462] the members of Christ, and also that stubbornness whereunto he was wholly given over. If he had been nousled [brought] up in the faith of Christ from his youth, or if he had been taught by some man, he should have embraced it willingly and without resistance, he himself should have been sure of his calling, but it should not have been so well known to others. But now, seeing that being inflamed with obstinate and immoderate fury, being moved with no occasion, neither persuaded by mortal man, he changeth his mind, it appeareth that he was tamed and brought under by the hand of God.

Therefore, this contrariety is of great weight, [1463] in that he saith that he was so puffed up with pride, that he thought he should get the victory of Christ, whereby he teacheth that he was nothing less than made [1464] a disciple of Christ through his own industry. The name of Jesus of Nazareth is taken in this place for the whole profession of the gospel, which Paul sought to extinguish, by making war ignorantly against God, as we may see. [1465]

10. *Which thing I did.* He proveth by his very facts with what force of zeal he was carried away to strive against Christ, until greater force did

[1461] "Abrupta esset," would have been abrupt.

[1462] "Nocendi," to persecute

[1463] "Magnum ergo pondus habet ista antithesis," there is a great force, therefore, in the antithesis.

[1464] "Nihil minus… quam factum," that he was by no means made.

[1465] "Hoc modo," in this way.

pull him back, and made him go the quite contrary way. Furthermore, his adversaries were witnesses of this his vehemency, so that it was most certain that he was suddenly changed; and undoubtedly the priests would never have put him in any such office, unless he had behaved himself courageously in exercising cruelty; and it was meet that he should be very courageous who should satisfy their fury. This is also to be noted, that Paul was not ashamed to confess how sore he had offended against God, so that that might turn to the glory of Christ. It was to him undoubtedly reproachful, to have been carried away with blind zeal, so that he enforced those to blaspheme which did desire to serve God; to have troubled the good and simple diversely; to have given sentence of the shedding of innocent blood; finally, to have lifted up his horns even unto heaven, until he was thrown down. But he doth not spare his own estimation, but doth willingly utter his own shame, that the mercy of God may the more plainly appear thereby.

Wherefore, there could no sinister suspicion rest in his speech, seeing that (without having any respect of himself) he saith, that he did utterly offend [1466] in those things whereby he got the praise of all the people. Therefore, he condemneth his very zeal of madness, which others did honor.

Whereby it appeareth how filthy the ambition of those men is, who are ashamed simply to confess, if they have offended through ignorance or error. For although they do not altogether excuse the same, yet they go about to lessen or paint these things, for which they ought humbly with sorrow and tears to crave pardon. But though Paul might have retained the fame of a courageous man, yet he confesseth he was a madman. For the participle which Luke useth importeth thus much, that he compelled many to blaspheme. By this we know that there was great corruption even in the very first fruits of believers, seeing that having first professed themselves to be disciples of Christ, and being afterwards discouraged with fear or stripes, they did not only deny him, but also spake evil of his blessed name. Though the very denial itself containeth an horrible blasphemy.

13. *At midday, O king.* The narration tendeth to this end, that king Agrippa may understand that it was no vain visure or ghost, neither was it any such trance as brought him into some madness, so that he was destitute of judgment. [1467] For though he fell to the earth for fear, yet he heareth a plain voice; he asketh who it was that spake; he understandeth the answer which was made, which are signs that he was not beside himself. Hereupon it followeth that he did not rashly change his mind, but did godlily and holily obey the heavenly oracle, lest he should of set purpose proceed to strive against God.

16. *But rise.* Christ did throw down Paul that he might humble him; now he lifteth him up, and biddeth him be of good courage. And even we

[1466] "Ultro sibi in crimen imputat," voluntarily charges upon himself as criminal.

[1467] "Quae mentis sanitatem vel judicium illi eriperet," as deprived him of his sober senses, or the power of judging.

are daily thrown down by his voice to this end, that we may be taught to be modest; but look whom he throweth down, he doth raise the same again gently. And this is no small consolation, when Christ saith that he appeared to him not as a revenger to plague him [1468] for his madness, for those stripes which he had unjustly and cruelly given, for his bloody sentences, or for that trouble wherewith he had troubled the saints, for his wicked resisting of the gospel, but as a merciful Lord, intending to use his industry, and to call him to an honorable ministry. For he made him a witness of those things which he saw, and which he should afterward see. This vision was worthy to be recorded, by which he learned that Christ reigneth in heaven, that he might no longer proudly contemn him, but acknowledge that he is the Son of God, and the promised Redeemer; he had other revelations afterward, as he saith in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and 12th chapter (2 Corinthians 12:1).

17. *Delivering thee.* He is armed in this place against all fear, which was prepared for him; and also he is prepared to bear the cross; notwithstanding, seeing he addeth immediately that Paul should come to lighten the blind, to reconcile those to God which were estranged from him, and to restore salvation to those which were lost; it is a marvel why he doth not also promise that they shall on the other side receive him joyfully, who shall by means of him receive such and so great benefits. But the unthankfulness of the world is noted out unto us in this place, because the ministers of eternal salvation are far otherwise rewarded, as frantic men do rail upon their physicians. And Paul is admonished, that whithersoever he shall come, a great part of those to whom he shall study to do good shall hate him, and seek his overthrow. And he saith plainly, that he is appointed to be a witness both to Jews and Gentiles, lest that turn to his reproach, because he made the gospel common to both alike. For the Jews had conceived such deadly hatred against him for this cause, because it grieved them that the Gentiles should be made their fellows. And though they made a show that this did proceed of zeal, because they would not have the covenant which God made with the posterity of Abraham profaned, by being translated unto strangers, yet mere ambition did prick them forward, because they alone would be excellent, all other being underlings. But in the person of one man, all godly teachers are encouraged to do their duty, that they be not hindered or kept back with the malice of men from offering the grace of God unto miserable men, though they be unworthy.

18. *That thou mayest open their eyes.* Paul, in taking to himself that which is proper to God, doth seem to exalt himself too high. For we know that it is the Holy Ghost alone which doth lighten the eyes. We know that Christ is the only Redeemer which doth deliver us from the tyranny of Satan. We know that it is God alone who, having put away our sins, doth adopt us unto the inheritance of the saints. But this is a common thing, that God

[1468] "Qui poenam exigat," to punish him.

doth translate unto his ministers that honor which is due to himself alone, not that he may take any thing from himself, but that he may commend that mighty working of his Spirit which he doth show forth in them. For he doth not send them to work, that they may be dead instruments, or, as it were, stage-players; but that he may work mightily by their hand. But it dependeth upon the secret power of his Spirit that their preaching is effectual, who worketh all things in all men, and which only giveth the increase.

Therefore, teachers are sent, not to utter their words in vain in the air, or to beat the ears only with a vain sound, but to bring lively light to the blind, to fashion again men's hearts unto the righteousness of God, and to ratify the grace of salvation which is gotten by the death of Christ. But they do none of all these, save only inasmuch as God worketh by them, that their labor may not be in vain, that all the praise may be his, as the effect cometh from him.

And, therefore, we must note, that so often as the Scripture doth extol the external ministry so honorably, we must not separate it from the Spirit, which quickeneth the same even as the soul doth the body. For it teacheth in other places how little man's industry can do of itself. For they must plant and water, but it is God alone which giveth the increase (1 Corinthians 11:6). But because many are hindered by their own ignorance and malice, that they cannot reap such fruit of the gospel as they ought, we must note this description, which setteth before our eyes briefly and plentifully that incomparable treasure. Therefore, this is the drift of the gospel, that being delivered from blindness of mind, we may be made partakers of the heavenly light; that being delivered from the thraldom of Satan, we may be turned to God; that having free forgiveness of sins, we may be made partakers of the inheritance among the saints. Those which will rightly profit in the gospel must direct all their senses to this end; for what good shall the continual preaching thereof do us, if we know not the true use thereof? Also, the way and means to attain to salvation is described to us, all men boast that they be desirous of salvation, but few consider how God will save them.

Therefore, this place, wherein the means is prettily comprehended, is, as it were, a key to open the gate of heaven. Furthermore, we must know that all mankind is naturally deprived of those good things which Christ saith we have by believing the gospel; so that it followeth that all are blind, because they be lightened by faith; that all are the bond-slaves of Satan, because they are set free by faith from his tyranny; that all men are the enemies of God, and subject to eternal death, because they receive remission of sins by faith. So that nothing is more miserable than we, if we be without Christ, and without his faith, whereby it appeareth how little, yea, that nothing is left for the free will of men's merits. As touching every part, this lightening is referred unto the knowledge of God, because all our quickness of sight is mere vanity and thick darkness, until he appear unto us by his truth. That reacheth farther which followeth afterward: To be turned from darkness to

light; for that is when we are renewed in the spirit of our mind.

Therefore, in my judgment, this member, and that which followeth, express both one thing, to be turned from the power of Satan unto God. For that renewing which Paul declareth more largely in the second chapter to the Ephesians, (Ephesians 2:10, and Ephesians 4:23) is expressed in divers forms of speech. Remission of sins followeth next, whereby God doth freely reconcile us to himself, so that we need not doubt but that God will be favorable and merciful to us. At length, the furnishing and filling of all things is put in the last place; to wit, the inheritance of eternal life. Some do read it falsely in one text, among those who are sanctified by faith, because this word is extended unto the whole period. Therefore, the meaning thereof is, that by faith we come unto the possession of all those good things which are offered by the gospel. And faith is properly directed unto Christ because all the parts of our salvation are included in him. Neither doth the gospel command us to seek the same anywhere else save only in him.

Acts 26:19-23

Acts 26:19-23

19. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: 20. But I preached first to those which are at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and through every region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and be turned unto God, doing works which become those which repent. 21. For this cause the Jews, having caught me in the temple, went about to kill me. 22. Therefore, seeing I have obtained help of God, I stand until this present day, testifying both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come to pass: 23. Whether Christ should suffer, whether he should be the first that should rise from the dead, to show light to the people, and to the Gentiles.

19. He declareth now briefly to what end he rehearsed the history of his conversion; to wit, that Agrippa and the rest might understand that he had God for his author of all those things which the Jews condemned of sacrilege and apostacy. He speaketh to Agrippa by name, because he knew that Festus and the Romans knew not what an heavenly vision meant. Now, it appeareth that there is nothing in the very sum of his doctrine which dissenteth from the law and the prophets; whereby the oracle doth win greater credit, whereby Paul was commanded to teach nothing but that which was agreeable to the Scripture. Conversion, or turning unto God, is joined with repentance, not as some peculiar thing, but that we may know what it is to repent. Like as, also, on the contrary, the corruption of men and their frowardness [1469] is nothing else but an estranging from God. And because repentance is an inward thing, and placed in the affection of the heart, Paul requireth, in the

[1469] "Pravitas," depravity.

second place, such works as may make the same known, according to that exhortation of John the Baptist: "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance," (Matthew 3:8). Now, forasmuch as the gospel calleth all those which are Christ's unto repentance, it followeth that all men are naturally corrupt, and that they have need to be changed. In like sort, this place teacheth that these men do unskillfully pervert the gospel which separate the grace of Christ from repentance.

21. *They went about to kill me.* He complaineth in this place of the iniquity of his adversaries, that it may thereby appear that their cause and conscience were both evil. [1470] For if Paul had offended they might have gone to law with him; and even there should they have stand [stood] in better state, seeing they did far pass him both in favor and authority. Therefore, their madness doth testify that they are destitute of reason. Whereas Paul saith that he was saved by the help of God, it maketh for the confirmation of his doctrine. For how is it that he reacheth out his hand to help him, save only because he acknowledged his minister, and because he will defend the cause which he alloweth [approveth?]. Moreover, this ought to have encouraged him to go forward so much the more boldly in his office, in that he was thus holpen by God. For it had been a point of an unthankful man to withdraw himself from him which had holpen him. By which example we be taught, that so often as we be delivered from danger, the Lord doth not therefore prolong our days that we may afterward live idly, but that we may do our duty cheerfully, and be ready to die every hour to his glory, who hath reserved us to himself. And yet Paul did not forget how much he was indebted to the chief captain; but in this place he commendeth the help of God, that he may show that it became him to spend all the rest of his course in his service by whom he was delivered, though that came to pass, and were done through the industry and by the hand of man.

Testifying both to small and great. We have said elsewhere that it is more to testify than to teach, as if there were some solemn contestation made between God and men, that the gospel may have his [its] majesty. And he saith that he is a witness both to great and small, that king Agrippa may perceive that this doth appertain even to him; and that when the gospel is offered even to every simple man, that doth no whit hinder but that it may ascend even unto the throne of princes. For Christ doth gather all men into his bosom with one and the same embracing, that those who lay before in the dunghill, and are now extolled unto so great honor, may rejoice in his free goodness; and that those who are placed in high degree of honor may willingly humble themselves, and not grudge to have some of the base and contemptible multitude for their brethren, that they may be made the children of God. So in the first chapter to the Romans, he saith that he is indebted both to the fools and to the wise, lest the Romans should be

[1470] "Malam causam ipsos agere mala conscientia," that they pleaded a bad cause with a bad conscience.

kept back with the confidence which they might repose in their wisdom from submitting themselves to his doctrine. By this let us learn that it is not in the teacher's will to make choice of his hearers, and that they do no less injury to God than defraud men of their right, whosoever they be which restrain their labor unto great men, whom God doth join with those which are small. It were too cold to restrain this unto ages. [1471] Wherefore, I do not doubt but that Paul taketh away the exception which used to be between the noble and ignoble, because he was neither afraid of the dignity of the one, neither did he loathe the baseness of the other, but did show himself a faithful teacher to both alike.

Saying no other thing. First, this is worth the noting, that Paul, to the end he may bring in fit and substantial witnesses of his doctrine, doth not take the same from among men, but he citeth Moses and the prophets, to whom the Lord had granted undoubted authority. And surely this is one principle to be observed, when we will teach soundly, to utter nothing but that which did proceed out of the mouth of God. Secondly, this is worth the noting, that these were the principal points of the disputation which Luke doth now touch; that this was the proper office of Christ, by his death to make satisfaction for the sins of the world, by his resurrection to purchase righteousness and life for men; and that the fruit of his death and resurrection is common both to Jews and Gentiles. But forasmuch as there is no manifest and (as they say) literal testimony extant in the law concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, undoubtedly they had some doctrine delivered by hand from the fathers, out of which they did learn to refer all figures unto Christ. And as the prophets, which did prophesy more plainly of Christ, had their doctrine from that fountain, so they made the men of their time believe that they delivered unto them no new thing, or which did dissent from Moses. And now Paul did either not finish his apology, or else he gathered more evident testimonies of all those things wherein he professed Moses and the prophets to be his authors.

The first of those which. There were some other whose resurrection went before Christ's in time; namely, if we admit that the saints of whom the Evangelists speak (Matthew 27:52) did come out of their graves before Christ, which may likewise be said of the taking up of Enoch and Elias (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11). But he calleth him in this place the *first;* as in another place the first fruits of those which rise again (1 Corinthians 15:23). Therefore, this word doth rather note out the cause than the order of time, because, when Christ did rise again, he became the conqueror of death and Lord of life, that he might reign forever, and make those who are his partakers of [his own] blessed immortality. Under this word light, he comprehendeth whatsoever doth pertain unto perfect felicity, as by darkness is meant death and all manner of misery. And I do not doubt but that Paul alluded unto the sayings of the prophets,

[1471] "Ad aetates hoc restringere," to confine this to periods of time.

"The people which walked in darkness saw great light,"
(Isaiah 9:2).

And again,

"Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall be seen upon thee," (Isaiah 60:2).

Again,

"Behold, those which are in darkness shall see light,"
(Isaiah 42:16).

Again,

"I have made thee a light of the Gentiles," (Isaiah 49:6).

And it appeareth by many oracles that the light of life should come out of Judea, and should be spread abroad among the Gentiles.

Acts 26:24-32

Acts 26:24-32

24. And as Paul answered for himself, Festus saith with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25. And Paul said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and sobriety. 26. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom I also speak freely: for I think that none of these things are hidden from him; for this was not done in a corner. 27. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28. And Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou briefly persuadest me to become a Christian. 29. And Paul saith, Would to God that not only thou, but also all which hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30. And when he had thus spoken, the king arose, and the governor, and Bernice, and those which sat with them. 31. And when they were gone apart, they talked together between themselves, saying, This man doth nothing worthy of death or bonds. 32. Then Agrippa said to Festus, This man might have been loosed, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

24. *Festus said with a loud voice.* This outcry which Festus doth make doth show how much the truth of God prevaileth with the reprobate; to wit, though it be never so plain and evident, yet is it trodden under foot by their pride. For though those things which Paul had alleged out of the law and prophets had nothing in them which was anything like to madness, but were grounded in good reason, yet he doth attribute the same to madness, not because he seeth any absurdity, but because he refuseth those things which he doth not understand. Nothing was more foolish or more unsavory than the superstitions of the Gentiles, so that their high priests were for good causes ashamed to utter their mysteries, whose folly was more than ridiculous.

Festus doth grant that there was learning packed [1472] in Paul's speech;

[1472] "Reconditam eruditionem," recondite erudition.

nevertheless, because the gospel is hidden from the unbelievers, whose minds Satan hath blinded, (2 Corinthians 4:3) he thinketh that he is a brain-sick fellow which handleth matters intricately. So that though he cannot mock and openly contemn him, yet he is so far from being moved or inwardly touched, that he counteth him a man which is frenzy [frenzied] and of mad curiosity. And this is the cause that he cannot away to mark what he saith, lest he make him mad also; as many at this day fly from the word of God, lest they drown themselves in a labyrinth. And they think that we be mad because we move questions concerning hidden matters, and so become troublesome both to ourselves and also to others. Wherefore, being admonished by this example, let us beg of God that he will show us the light of his doctrine, and that he will therewithal give us a taste thereof, lest through obscurity and hardness it become unsavory, and at length proud loathsomeness break out into blasphemy.

25. *I am not mad.* Paul is not angry, neither doth he sharply reprehend Festus for his blasphemous speech; yea, he speaketh unto him with great submission. [1473] For it was no place for reprehension, and it became him to pardon the ignorance of the man, seeing he did not set himself face to face against God. Also, he had respect unto his person [office]. For though he were unworthy of honor, yet was he in authority. And yet for all that he doth not therefore give place to his blasphemy, but he defendeth the glory of the word of God. Whereby we do also see, that not caring for himself, he did only take thought for his doctrine. For he doth not vaunt of his wit; [1474] he doth not labor in defense of his wisdom; but he is content with this defense alone, that he teacheth nothing but that which is true and sober.

Furthermore, [the] truth is set against [1475] all manner [of] fallacies and fraud: sobriety against all manner [of] frivolous speculations and thorny subtilties, which are only seeds of contention. Paul doth, indeed, refute Festus' error; yet we may gather by this, which is the best manner of teaching, to wit, that which is not only clean from all fallacies and deceit, but also doth not make the minds of men drunk with vain questions, and doth not nourish foolish curiosity, nor an intemperate desire to know more than is meet, but is moderate and good for sound edification.

26. *For the king knoweth of these things.* He turneth himself unto Agrippa, in whom there was more hope. And, first, he saith that he knew the history of the things; but he calleth him straightway back to the law and the prophets. For it was to small end for him to know the thing which was done, unless he did know that those things which had been spoken before of Christ were fulfilled in the person of Jesus which was crucified. And whereas Paul doth not doubt of Agrippa's faith, he doth it not so much to praise him, as that he may put the Scripture out of all question, lest he be enforced to stand

[1473] "Honorifice eum corrpellat," addresses him in terms of honour.
[1474] "Acumen," acuteness.
[1475] "Opponitur," is opposed to.

upon the very principles. Therefore, his meaning is, that the Scripture is of sufficient credit of itself, so that it is not lawful for a man that is a Jew to diminish any jot of the authority thereof. And yet Paul doth not flatter him; for though he did not reverence the Scripture as became a godly man, yet he had this rudiment from his childhood, that he was persuaded that nothing is contained therein besides the oracles of God. As the common sort of men, though they do not greatly care for the word of God, yet they acknowledge and confess generally and confusedly that it is the word of God, so that they are letted with some reverence either to reject or to despise the same.

28. *And Agrippa said unto Paul.* The apostle prevailed thus far at least, that he wrung out of king Agrippa a confession, though it were not voluntary, as those use to yield who can no longer resist the truth, or, at least, to show some token of assent. Agrippa's meaning is, that he will not willingly become a Christian; yea, that he will not be one at all; and yet that he is not able to gainsay, but that he is drawn after a sort against his will. Whereby it appeareth how great the pride of man's nature is until it be brought under to obey by the Spirit of God.

Interpreters expound this, {εν} {ολιγω} diversely. Valla thought that it ought to be translated thus, Thou dost almost make me a Christian. Erasmus doth translate it *a little.* The old interpreter dealeth more plainly [1476] *in a little;* because, translating it word for word, he left it to the readers to judge at their pleasure. And surely it may be fitly referred unto the time, as if Agrippa had said, Thou wilt make me a Christian straightway, or in one moment. If any man object that Paul's answer doth not agree thereto, we may quickly answer; for seeing the speech was doubtful, Paul doth fitly apply that unto the thing which was spoken of the time. Therefore, seeing Agrippa did mean that he was almost made a Christian in a small time, Paul addeth that he doth desire that as well he as his companions might rise from small beginnings, and profit more and more; and yet I do not mislike that that {εν} {ολιγω} doth signify as much as almost. This answer doth testify with what zeal, to spread abroad the glory of Christ, this holy man's breast was inflamed, when as he doth patiently suffer those bonds wherewith the governor had bound him, and doth desire that he might escape the deadly snares of Satan, and to have both him and also his partners to be partakers with him of the same grace, being in the mean season content with his troublesome and reproachful condition. We must note that he doth not wish it simply, but from God, as it is he which draweth us unto his Son; because, unless he teach us inwardly by his Spirit, the outward doctrine shall always wax cold.

Except these bonds. It is certain that Paul's bonds were not so hard, ne [nor] yet did they cause him such sorrow, wherein he did oftentimes rejoice, and which he doth mention for honor's sake, as being the badge of his embassage, (Galatians 6:17), but he hath respect to those to whom he

[1476] "Simplicius," more simply.

wisheth faith without trouble or cross. For those who did not as yet believe in Christ were far from that affection to be ready to strive for the gospel. And surely it behoveth all the godly to have this gentleness and meekness, that they patiently bear their own cross, and that they wish well to others, and study so much as in them lieth to ease them of all trouble, and that they do in no case envy their quietness and mirth. This courtesy [1477] is far contrary to the bitterness of those who take comfort in wishing that other men were in their misery.

31. *They spake together.* In that Paul is acquitted by the judgment of them all, it turned to the great renown of the gospel. And when Festus agreeth to the rest he condemneth himself, seeing he had brought Paul into such straits through his unjust dealing, by bringing him in danger of his life under color of changing the place. And though it seemeth that the appeal did hinder [1478] the holy man, yet because this was the only way to escape death, he is content, and doth not seek to get out of that snare; not only because the matter was not even now safe and sound, [1479] but because he was admonished in the vision that he was also called by God to Rome (Acts 23:11).

[1477] "Humanitas et moderatio," humanity and moderation.
[1478] "Damnosa esse," was injurious to.
[1479] "Res jam non erat integra," matters were no longer entire.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27

Acts 27:1-8

Acts 27:1-8

1. And after that it was decreed that we should sail into Italy, they delivered both Paul and also certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the band of Augustus. 2. And we entered into a ship of Adramyttium, purposing to sail by the coasts of Asia, and we launched forth, having Aristarchus of Macedonia, a Thessalonian, with us. 3. And the next day we arrived at Sidon, and Julius did courteously intreat Paul, and suffered him to go to his friends, that they might refresh him. 4. And when we were gone thence, we sailed hard by Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5. And when we had sailed on the sea which is over against Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6. And when the centurion had found there a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy, he put us in it. 7. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and were scarce come over against Cnidus, because the wind did let us, we sailed hard by Crete, beside Salmone; 8. And with much ado we sailed beyond it, and came to a certain place which is called The fair havens, near unto which was the city of Lasea.

1. Luke setteth down Paul's voyage by sea most of all to this end, that we may know that he was brought to Rome wonderfully by the hand of God; and that the glory of God did many ways appear excellent in his doings and sayings even in the very journey, which did more establish his apostleship. He is delivered to be carried with other prisoners; but the Lord doth afterward put great difference between him and the evil-doers, who were in bonds as well as he. Yea, moreover, we shall see how the captain doth loose him, and let him be at liberty, when the rest lie bound. I know not what band that was which Luke calleth the band of Augustus, unless, peradventure, it be that which was commonly called the praetor's [1480] band, before the monarchy of the Caesars. And Luke setteth down in plain words, that they were put in a ship of Adramyttium; because they should sail by the coast of Asia. For Adramyttium is a city of Aeolia. I cannot tell out of what haven they launched. Because they could not sail with a straight course to Sidon, unless the maps do greatly deceive me, we may well guess that they were brought thither, either because they could find a ship nowhere else, or else

[1480] "Praetoria," the Praetorian.

because they were to take the other prisoners, of whom mention is made, out of that region.

2. *And there continued with us.* Luke seemeth so to commend one man's constancy, that he nippeth the rest. For there were more which did accompany him to Jerusalem; whereof we see two only which remained with him. But because it may be that the rest were letted with some just causes, or that Paul refused to have them to minister unto him, I will say nothing either way. Neither is it an unmeet thing to say [1481] that Luke had some special reason for which he doth commend this man above the rest, albeit he was but one of many. Surely, it is likely that he was a rich man, seeing he was able to bear the charges whereat he was by the space of three years, having left his house. For we heard before (Acts 17:11) that many of the chief families in Thessalonica did receive Christ, and Luke saith, for honor's sake, that Aristarchus and Secundus came with Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4). Therefore, let it suffice us to hold that which is certain and good to be known, that there is set before us an example of holy patience, because Aristarchus is not wearied with any trouble, but doth willingly take part with Paul in his trouble, [1482] and after that he had been in prison with him two years, he doth now cross the seas, that he may likewise minister to him at Rome, not without the reproachings of many, besides the loss of his goods at home, and so great charges.

3. *He suffered him to go to.* Paul might have hid himself [1483] in a large city, which joined to the sea; but he was bound with the oracle, that he could not withdraw himself from the calling of God. Again, because the centurion had so courteously entertained him, that he suffered him to go to his friends, that they might dress and refresh him, whom he might have left in the stinking ship, [1484] he ought not nor could he provide for his own life, with the other man's danger, without filthy treachery. [1485] Neither must we in any case suffer those who have courteously intreated us to be deceived by their courtesy through our fault. Let the readers fet [seek] the voyage whereof Luke speaketh out of those which describe places and countries; [1486] only I say thus much, that all that which is said tendeth to this end, that we may know that their sailing was dangerous and tempestuous, after that they were once gone out of the haven of Sidon, until they came near to Melita; and that afterward the mariners did strive long time with contrary winds, until a cruel storm [1487] arose, whose end was shipwreck, as we shall see.

[1481] "Nec vero absurdum est," and there is no absurdity in supposing.
[1482] "Sponte eandem cum Paulo fortunam subeat," spontaneously shares in Paul's fortunes.
[1483] "Latebras nancisci poterat," might have found a place of concealment.
[1484] "Navis prodore," the stench of the ship.
[1485] "Turpi perfidia," base perfidy.
[1486] "Ex geographis," out of geographers.
[1487] "Saevior procella," a fiercer storm.

Acts 27:9-20

Acts 27:9-20

9. And when much time was spent, and when sailing was now jeopardous, because all the time of fasting was now passed, Paul admonished them, 10. Saying unto them, Sirs, I see that this voyage will be with hurt and great loss, not only of the burthen and of the ship, but also of our souls, [lives]. 11. But the centurion believed rather the governor and the master of the ship, than those things which were spoken of Paul. 12. And because the haven was unfit to winter in, many took counsel to depart thence, if by any means they might come to Phenice, and there winter. That is a haven of Candia, and lieth toward the south-west and by west, and north-west and by west. 13. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing to obtain their purpose, when they had loosed nearer, they sailed beyond Candia. 14. But not long after there arose over against it a stormy wind, which is called Euroclydon. 15. And when the ship was caught, and could not resist the wind, we let her go, and were carried away. 16. And when we were carried into a certain isle called Candia, [Clauda] we could scarce get the boat: 17. Which they took up, and used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into syrtes, [quicksands] they strake sail, and so were carried. 18. And when we were tossed with an exceeding tempest, on the morrow they lightened the ship; 19. And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. 20. Furthermore, when neither sun nor stars appeared now many days, and no small tempest lay upon us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

9. *When sailing was now jeopardous.* He doth not only mean that the winds were contrary then, but also that the time of the year was not then commodious, which he expresseth more plainly afterward, when he saith that the fast was passed; for I think that this word was added by way of exposition, to note the end of harvest. Neither do I pass for that, that that solemn time of fasting, whereof Luke speaketh, was strange to the centurion and the rest of the mariners; for he noteth out the times of the year according to the custom of the Jews. Furthermore, we need not doubt but that it was the harvest [autumnal] fast. Though I am not of their mind who think that it was one of the four fasts which the Jews did appoint after the carrying away into Babylon. For Luke would not have put down simply, without adding any distinction, the third fast, which was in the seventh month, seeing it was not more famous than the rest, being commanded to be kept because of the death of Godolia, and because of the destruction of the rest of the people. Again, I cannot tell whether that custom were retained by the people after their return. It is more likely that he meaneth the feast of the atonement, wherein the Lord commanded them to humble their souls seven days. And they began the tenth day of the seventh month; whereto partly September and partly October doth now agree (Leviticus 16:29). Therefore, seeing they

were now entered into October, it is said, not without cause, that sailing was jeopardous at that time. But and if you refer it unto hunger, (as some do) I do not see what sense can be gathered thence; for they had as yet store of wheat in the ship, so that they needed not to be hunger starved. And why should he say that the time of the voluntary fast was passed? Moreover, it shall hereafter appear by the text, that they were, therefore, exhorted by Paul to stay because winter was at hand, whose sharpness [severity] useth to shut up the seas. For though he were assured that God would govern the ship, yet he would not tempt him rashly by making too great haste.

11. *But the centurion.* The centurion is not reproved because he hearkened rather to the master and governor of the ship than to Paul. For what should he have done? For though he did well like [1488] Paul's counsel in other matters, yet he knew that he was unskillful in sailing. Therefore he suffered himself to be governed by those which were expert, which was a point of a wise and modest man. Yea, very necessity did almost compel him to do this; for the haven was not commodious to winter in. Neither did the governor give counsel to commit the ship to the main sea, but to thrust into the next haven, which was almost in view. So that, with taking a little pains, they might commodiously pass the winter. Luke reciteth this not in vain; but that we may know that Paul was from the beginning furnished with the sense of the Spirit, so that he did better see what things were profitable than did the masters. We know not whether he were taught by oracles, or whether he gave this counsel through secret inspiration. This is certain, that it served afterward to his commendation. Furthermore, in that he saith that they sailed beyond the coast of Candia, until they were caught and carried away; our friend Beza doth justly reprove the error of interpreters in this word {ασσον}, who make of an adverb the name of a city.

15. *When the ship was caught.* Luke saith that that fell out here, which useth to fall out in extreme danger; namely, they suffered themselves to be carried of the winds. Seeing they were first gone some space, and the mariners thought that all things fell out as they would have it, undoubtedly they did deride Paul's admonition; as rash men use commonly to wax proud if fortune favor them. Being now caught, they are grievously punished for their boldness; yea, when they drew near to an haven, [1489] they were no less afraid lest they should break the ship, than they were before of overturning the same. Luke doth diligently note all these things, out of which we may gather, that the storm was so vehement and fierce, and that it continued still at one stay, that they were still in danger of death. Also he declareth, that they did courageously use all remedies which might save them from suffering shipwreck, and that they spared not the merchandise and tackling; whence we gather that they were enforced, with a lively feeling of danger, to do what they were able. And Luke addeth, that when they had essayed all

[1488] "Plurimum deferret," he had very great deference for.

[1489] "Insulam," island.

things, they despaired of their safety. And surely the very darkness of heaven was as it were a grave. Neither need we doubt but that the Lord meant by this means to commend and make more notable the grace of their deliverance which ensued shortly after. Nevertheless, he suffered his servant to labor with the rest, until he thought he should die. For he did not appear unto him by his angel, before it might seem that he was past hope of recovery. Wherefore his body was not only tossed amidst many storms, but his soul was also shaken with violent tentations. Notwithstanding the end doth show, that he stood upright by faith, so that he did not faint. Luke speaketh nothing of his prayers; but because he himself saith afterward that the angel of God, whom he served, appeared to him, it is likely that when others did curse both heaven and earth, he made his prayers to God, and so was quiet, and did patiently tarry the Lord's leisure. And whereas he saith that all hope of safety was taken away, it must not be referred unto his sense, but only unto the means which men could use; [1490] as if he should say, that things were so far out of order, that there was no safety to be looked for at men's hands.

Acts 27:21-32

Acts 27:21-32

21. But after long abstinence Paul stood in the midst and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened to me, and not have loosed from Candia, neither have brought upon us this injury and loss. 22. And now I exhort you that ye be of good courage: for there shall be no loss of any man's life, but only of the ship. 23. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I worship. 24. And he said to me, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, behold, God hath given thee all those which sail with thee. 25. Wherefore be of good courage, sirs: for I believe God that it shall be so, as it hath been told me. 26. But we must fall into a certain island. 27. And when the fourteenth night was come, as we sailed in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the mariners supposed that some country appeared to them. 28. And when they had sounded, they found it twenty fathoms: and when they were gone a little farther, they sounded again, and they found it fifteen fathoms. 29. And fearing lest they should have fallen into some rough places, having cast four anchors out of the stern, they wished for day. 30. And when the mariners sought to fly out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under a color as if they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, 31. Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Unless these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved. 32. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and they suffered it to fall away.

21. *After long abstinence.* Though Luke doth not plainly express how the mariners and soldiers behaved themselves, yet he doth plainly distinguish

[1490] "Ad humana media," to human means.

Paul from them, declaring that he stood in the midst of them that he might comfort their faint hearts; for no man is fit to exhort but he who is himself an example of constancy and fortitude. Furthermore, Paul deferred this exhortation until they were all even at the last cast. We may easily gather out of the common custom of the infidels, that they raged and made much ado at the first. A moderate and soft voice could never have been heard amongst those cries and tumults. Now, after they be weary with working and howling, they sit still all in a damp, and Paul beginneth to speak to them. Therefore, it was meet that they should languish like men half dead, until they were somewhat quiet, and could hear a man which would give them good counsel.

Notwithstanding, Paul seemeth to deal unseasonably, when as he objecteth to them foolishness, because they would not do after his counsel when all was well, seeing that they knew that he was inexpert in sailing, as he himself also knew how unskillful and ignorant he was.

But if we consider what an hard matter it is to bring men unto soundness of mind, this reprehension was very profitable. Paul's authority should have been nothing worth, neither should it have moved them any whit, unless they should know this, that it had not gone well with them because they had despised him before. Chiding is indeed cruel, and bringeth no comfort; but if it be tempered with some remedy, it is now a part of the medicine. So, after that Paul had made the mariners attentive, and had taught by the very event that they ought to believe him, he exhorteth them to be of good courage, and promiseth them safety. And this is a token of no small boldness, when he saith that they ought to have obeyed him. Therefore, he testifieth by these words, that he spake nothing unadvisedly; but did command them to do that which God had prescribed. For though we do not read that he had some especial revelation then given him, yet he himself knew that the Spirit did secretly govern him, so that he might without fear take upon him to give counsel, seeing he had the Spirit of God to be his guide. Whereby that doth better appear which I touched of late, that Paul in speaking thus doth awake the mariners, that they may more attentively hear what he will say. Otherwise, it had been a ridiculous thing for a man which was in danger of drowning, to promise safety to those who were partakers with him in like calamity.

23. *For there stood by me.* Lest he might be accused of rashness, for promising so fully that they should be all safe, he bringeth in God for his author and witness. Neither is it to be doubted but that he was fully persuaded that it was a true vision, so that he did not fear Satan's jugglings. For because that father of lies doth oftentimes deceive men under a color of revelations, God did never appear to his servants, either by himself or by his angels, but he put them out of doubt by showing them some plain and evident tokens; and, secondly, did furnish them with the spirit of discretion, that they might not be deceived. But Paul doth extol the name of his God in

plain words among profane men, not only that they may learn that the true God is worshipped in Judea, but also that Paul himself doth worship him. They all knew why he was put in prison. Now, seeing angels come down unto him from heaven, they may easily gather that his cause is approved of God. Therefore, there is in these words a secret commendation of the gospel. Nevertheless, we see how Paul triumpheth in his bonds, when he is the minister of safety to so many men, and the interpreter of God.

24. *Fear not, Paul.* He is very desirous to bring to pass that they may give God alone the praise for their deliverance, lest these superstitious men do falsely translate it unto their idols; and by this means he inviteth them unto the true faith. But by this it appeareth how great the men's wickedness is, in that they shut their ears against sound and wholesome counsel, and do forthwith forget the grace of God, though it were familiarly known to them. Yea, (that which worse is) they do not see nor perceive it when it is present before their eyes. But, howsoever, the more part was unthankful, yet this oracle was not revealed without fruit; yea, this was good, that those might be made without excuse who did flatter themselves too much in their deceit. And, seeing it was said that he must be presented before Caesar, it tended to this end, that his confession might the more strengthen the godly, when as they should know that he came forth from God as a witness to confirm and avouch the doctrine of the gospel, and that he was appointed and saved to that end.

Hath given thee all the souls. Luke seemeth to give us to understand by these words, that Paul prayed not only for himself, but also for the rest, that God would save them all from drowning. [1491] And, surely, it is not likely, that, seeing he saw the danger common to them all, he was so careful for his own life, that he cared not for the rest whom he saw in like danger. Notwithstanding, it may be that the Lord did of his own accord prevent his prayers. Neither is it any new thing, that his blessing should reach even unto the unworthy, who are joined to the faithful with any society. So he would have saved Sodom, if there had been ten good men found there.

Here ariseth a question, how far the integrity of the saints doth profit the wicked? First, we must remove the superstition of the Papists, who, when they hear that God is good to the bad, for the good's sake, dream that they be mediators, who obtain salvation for the world through their merits. And they be twice fools in that, that they apply these titles of the living unto the dead; and think that God will be favorable to them for no other cause, save only because he beholdeth them, and therefore they make them their patrons. I omit that, that by extolling men's merits they darken the free goodness of God. Now, that we may answer the question propounded, we must briefly note this, that forasmuch as the good are mixed with the bad, as well prosperity as adversity doth happen as well to the one as to the other; and yet it falleth out sometimes that when the Lord doth spare his,

[1491] "E naufragio," from shipwreck.

he beareth also with the wicked for a time together with them. Again, that there be many causes for which God doth good to the wicked and reprobate for the faithful's sake.

"He blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake,"*

*(Genesis 39:5)

that he might move him to handle this holy man gently. He declared his goodwill toward Paul in saving many men, that he might bear witness of his godliness, that the majesty of the gospel might thereby appear more plainly. But we must note this, that whatsoever benefits God bestoweth upon the wicked, they turn at length to their destruction; as, on the other side, punishments are profitable for the godly, which they suffer together with the reprobate.

In the mean season, this is a singular pledge of God's love toward us, in that he maketh certain drops of his goodness distill from us unto others.

25. *For I believe God.* Paul telleth them again whence he had such boldness, that he affirmeth that though they be amidst infinite gulfs of the sea, yet shall they all come safe to the haven, namely, because God had promised it should be so; in which words the nature of faith is expressed, when there is a mutual relation made between it and the Word of God, that it may strengthen men's minds against the assaults of temptations. And he doth not only exhort the mariners, by his own example, to believe, but doth, as it were, take upon him the office of a promiser, [1492] that he may win credit to the oracle. That which followeth immediately touching the isle is a latter sign, whereby it may more plainly appear after the end of the matter, that this their sailing was not uncertain, otherwise it had been to no end for the mariners to know how they should escape. Therefore, we see how God doth give that safety which he promised, a mark that it may not seem to come by chance. Notwithstanding, we must note, that God kept them still in some doubt, partly that he may exercise the faith of his servant, partly that they may all know that Paul learned that of the Holy Ghost, which he could not as yet comprehend by man's reason. [1493] Notwithstanding, Luke teacheth in the text itself, that he was not believed for all this. For, seeing the mariners thought that there began some country [1494] to appear unto them, it did not agree with the promise made touching their arriving in an isle. Therefore, we see how that they were scarce enforced, even by experience, to think that he spake the truth.

30. *And as the mariners sought.* The grace of the Holy Spirit appeareth in Paul, even in this point also, in that he did wisely admonish that the mariners should not be suffered to fly. For why doth not rather the centurion, or some other of the company, smell out their fraud, save only that Paul may be the minister of their deliverance, even unto the end? But it is a marvel that he

[1492] "Sponsoris," sponsor or cautioner.

[1493] "Quod humano sensu nondum comprehendi poterat," which could not yet be comprehended by human sense.

[1494] "Aliquam regionem mediterraneam," some mainland.

saith, that the rest could not be saved unless the mariners should remain in the ship; as if it were in their power to make the promise of God of none effect. I answer, that Paul doth not dispute, in this place, precisely of the power of God, that he may separate the same from his will and from means; and surely God doth not, therefore, commend his power to the faithful, that they may give themselves to sluggishness and carelessness, contemning means, or rashly cast away themselves when there is some certain way to escape. God did promise Hezekiah that the city should be delivered (Isaiah 37:6, and 35). If he had set open the gates to the enemy, would not Isaiah straightway have cried, Thou destroyest both thyself and the city? And yet for all this it doth not follow that the hand of God is tied to means or helps; but when God appointeth this or that means to bring any thing to pass, he holdeth all men's senses, that they may not pass the bounds which he hath appointed.

Acts 27:33-44

Acts 27:33-44

33. And when the day began to appear, Paul exhorted them all to take meat, saying, This is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, receiving nothing at all. 34. Wherefore I exhort you to take meat; for this no doubt is for your health; because there shall not one hair fall from the head of any of you. 35. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the sight of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36. Then were they all refreshed in their minds, and they also took meat. 37. And all the souls which were in the ship were two hundred threescore and sixteen. 38. And when they had eaten enough, they did lighten the ship. casting out the wheat into the sea. 39. And when it was day, they knew not the land; but they spied a certain haven having a bank, into the which they minded to thrust the ship. 40. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves to the sea; also, having loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, they drew toward the shore. 41. But when they were fallen into a place where two seas met, they thrust in the ship, and the fore part did stick fast, and moved not; but the hinder part brake through the violence of the waves. 42. Furthermore, the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any, after he swam out, should escape. 43. But the centurion, being desirous to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and should escape to land. 44. And the other, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship; and so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to land.

33. *And when the day began.* Whatsoever the mariners think, Paul's faith doth not quail; [1495] but he leaneth steadfastly to the promise which was made to him. For he doth not only exhort them to take meat, as did he

[1495] "Vacillat," waver.

who, in extreme despair, uttered these words, Dine, soldiers, we shall sup in hell; [1496] but continuing steadfast in his prophecy, he willeth them to be of good courage. The force of faith doth therein show itself, when as it armeth us unto patience, and doth valiantly bear off and beat back those assaults wherewith Satan goeth about to shake it. But whereas he saith, that they continued fasting for the space of fourteen days, it may seem absurd and false. There may some one man be found which can abide to fast long, but it is scarce credible of so great a multitude. We may easily answer, That their unwonted abstinence from meat is improperly called fasting; because they had never filled their belly during all that time; because those who are in sorrow and heaviness do almost loathe meat. And because despair was the cause of this their loathing of meat, he affirmeth again that they shall live, so they be of good courage. For a faithful minister of the word must not only bring abroad the promises, but also counsel men to follow God whithersoever he calleth them; and that they be not slothful and sluggish. Furthermore, the meaning of the words is this, God hath determined to save you, this confidence ought to animate you, and to make you merry, [1497] that you be not negligent in your own business.

35. *He took bread.* That he may the better encourage them, by his own example, he taketh bread and eateth. Luke saith that he gave thanks, not only according to his daily custom, but because that served greatly to testify his boldness and good confidence. It is not to be doubted but that Paul himself did that when he took meat, which he commandeth other men; but now he doth not only testify his thankfulness, neither doth he only desire of God that he will sanctify the meat which he is about to eat; but he calleth upon God without fear, who is the author of his life, that those poor wretches, which were drenched in sorrow, might conceive some good hope. And he prevailed thus far, at least, that they gathered so much courage to them as to take meat, who had, through fear, forgotten to care for their life.

37. *All the souls* The number of the men is recited, first, that it may more plainly appear that none of the multitude did perish. For Luke doth not show how many men did swim to the shore, but how many men were then in the ship. Secondly, that the miracle may be made more evident and also famous; for, in man's judgment, it is a thing impossible that two hundred threescore and sixteen men should escape to land, having suffered shipwreck, without loss of any man's life. For it is likely that few had any skill in swimming except the mariners. And though they were somewhat refreshed with the meat which they had eaten, yet they were brought so low with sorrows and wearisomeness, that it is a marvel that they were so nimble as that they could move their arms. And now we must consider what a stir they kept; whereas it is seldom seen that twenty or thirty men do so swim in danger, but one of them doth hinder or drown another. Therefore, God did

[1496] "Apud inferos," with the dead.
[1497] "Alacres," alert, active.

plainly stretch forth his hand out of heaven, seeing all those came to shore safe and sound which had cast themselves into the sea.

38. *And when they had eaten enough.* This circumstance doth show that they were at length moved with Paul's words. It was not yet light, that they could know whether there were any haven near. And yet they cast out into the sea the wheat which remained, that they might lighten the ship. They would not have done this unless Paul's authority had prevailed more with them now than before. But as all unbelievers are unstable, that persuasion did quickly vanish out of their minds.

41. *They thrust in the ship.* And then it might seem that both God had mocked Paul, and that he, with trifling, had brought his partners in a vain hope; [1498] but God did forthwith put away that error by giving them prosperous success. It was meet that when the ship was broken, they should be so discouraged, and that their souls should so melt, that despair might increase the glory of the miracle. For God useth to moderate and govern his works so, that he maketh some show of difficulty by reason of many lets [hindrances] which fall out. By this means he sharpeneth our senses unto greater attentiveness, that we may at length learn that, though all the world strive against him, yet will he have the victory. This is the reason why he had lieffer [rather] draw Paul and his companions to the shore after that the ship was lost, [1499] than bring the ship whole to land.

42. *The counsel of the soldiers.* This was too horrible unthankfulness. Though the soldiers might thank Paul twice or thrice for their lives, yet are they minded to kill him, for whose sake they ought to have spared the rest. He had saved them even as an angel of God; he had given them wholesome counsel; he had refreshed them in the same day when they were past hope; and now they stick not to seek to destroy him, by whom they were so often and so many ways delivered. Wherefore, if it so fall out that we be ill rewarded for our good deeds, there is no cause why the unthankfulness of men should trouble us, which is a disease too common. But they are not only unthankful to Paul, who was the minister of their life, but also their filthy misbelief and forgetfulness of the goodness of God doth betray itself. They had of late received that oracle, that their souls were given to Paul; and now seeing they will be saved after he is dead, what other thing go they about but to resist God, that they may save themselves from death contrary to his will? Therefore, they have now forgotten that grace whereof they tasted against their will in extreme despair, neither doth it taste any longer, [1500] after that they see the haven nigh at hand. But it behoveth us to consider the wonderful counsel of God, as well in saving Paul as in fulfilling his promise; when as he bringeth those men to land, who did what they could to make his promise of none effect. Thus doth his goodness oftentimes strive

[1498] "Socios naufragii vana spe lactasse," had deluded his companions in shipwreck with a vain hope.

[1499] "Fracta," wrecked,

[1500] "Nec amplius quicquam sapit," nor hath it any longer any relish.

with the wickedness of men. Yet he doth so pity the wicked, that, deferring their punishment until so fit opportunity, he doth not quite discharge them; yea, the longer he tarrieth, the more grievously he punisheth, and so by that means he maketh amends for his long tarrying.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28

Acts 28:1-6

Acts 28:1-6

1. And when they were escaped, they knew that the isle was called Melita. 2. And the barbarians showed us no little kindness; for they kindled a fire and received us all, because of the present shower, and because of the cold. 3. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and had laid them on the fire, a viper came out of the heat, and leaped on his hand. 4. Now, when the barbarians saw the beast hang upon his hand, they said among themselves, This man surely is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, vengeance doth not suffer to live. 5. But he shook off the viper into the fire, and suffered no harm. 6. But they thought that it would come to pass, that he would swell and fall down dead suddenly. And as they waited long, and saw no harm come to him, changing their mind, they said he was a god.

1. That doleful spectacle is described in the beginning of the chapter, when so many men being wet, and also all berayed with the foam and filth of the sea, and stiff with cold, did with much ado crawl to the shore; for that was all one as if they had been cast up by the sea to die some other death. After that, Luke declareth that they were courteously entertained of the barbarians, that they kindled a fire that they might dry their clothes, and refresh their joints, which were stiff with cold, and at length that they were saved [1501] from the shower. Therefore, in that Paul commendeth these duties, he showeth his thankfulness; and so great liberality toward strangers is for good causes advanced, whereof there be rare examples in the world. And though common nature doth wring out of the barbarous Gentiles some affection of mercy in so great necessity; yet undoubtedly it was God which caused the men of Melita to handle these men so courteously, that his promise might be sure and certain, which might seem imperfect if the shipwreck had caused the loss of any man's life.

A viper coming out of the heat. The very event did prove that Paul was a true and undoubted prophet of God. Now, that God may make him famous as well by land as by sea, he sealeth the former miracles [1502] with a new

[1501] "Protectos," protected.
[1502] "Oracula," predictions.

miracle; and so he ratifieth his apostleship among the men of Melita. And though there were not many which did profit thereby, yet the majesty of the gospel did shine even among the unbelievers; also this did greatly confirm the oracles to the mariners, which they had not sufficiently reverenced. Neither did the viper come out of the sticks by chance; but the Lord did direct her by his secret counsel to bite Paul, because he saw it would turn to the glory of his gospel.

4. *So soon as the barbarians saw.* This judgment was common in all ages, that those who were grievously punished had grievously offended. Neither was this persuasion conceived of nothing; but it came rather from a true feeling of godliness. For God, to the end he might make the world without excuse, would have this deeply rooted in the minds of all men, that calamity and adversity, and chiefly notable destruction, were testimonies and signs of his wrath and just vengeance against sins. Therefore, so often as we call to mind any notable calamity, we do also remember that God is sore offended, seeing he punisheth so sharply. Neither did ungodliness ever get the upper hand so far, but that all men did still retain this principle, that God, to the end he may show himself to be the Judge of the world, doth notably punish the wicked. But here crept in an error almost always, because they condemned all those of wickedness [1503] whom they saw roughly handled. Though God doth always punish men's sins with adversity, yet doth he not punish every man according to his deserts in this life; and sometimes the punishments of the godly are not so much punishments as trials of their faith and exercises of godliness.

Therefore, those men are deceived, who make this a general rule to judge every man according to his prosperity or adversity. This was the state of the controversy between Job and his friends, (Job 4:7) they did affirm that that man was a reprobate, and hated of God, whom God did punish; and he did allege, on the other side, that the godly are sometimes humbled with the cross. Wherefore, lest we be deceived in this point, we must beware of two things. The former is, that we give not rash and blind judgment of things unknown, [1504] according to the event alone, for because God doth punish the good as well as the bad; yea, it falleth out oftentimes that he spareth the reprobate, and doth sharply punish those who are his; if we will judge aright, we must begin at another thing than at punishments, to wit, that we inquire after the life and deeds. If any adulterer, if any blasphemous person, if any perjured man or murderer, if any filthy person, if any cozener, if any bloody beast be punished, God doth point out his judgment as it were with his finger. If we see no wickedness, nothing is better than to suspend our judgment concerning punishment.

The other caution is, that we wait for the end. For so soon as God beginneth to strike, we do not by and by see his drift and purpose; but the

[1503] "Sine exceptione," without exception, omitted,

[1504] "De hominibus ignotis," of persons unknown.

unlike end doth at length declare, that those differ far before God who seem in men's eyes both alike in the likelihood of punishment. If any man object that it is not in vain so often repeated in the law, that all private and public miseries are the scourges of God, I grant indeed that that is true; but yet I deny that it doth keep God from sparing whom he will for a time, though they be of all men the worst, and from punishing those more sharply whose fault is mean. [1505] Nevertheless, it is not our duty to make that perpetual which falleth out oftentimes. We see now wherein the men of Melita were deceived, to wit, because having not scanned Paul's life, they judge him to be a wicked man, only because the viper doth bite him; secondly, because they stay not the end, but give judgment rashly. Nevertheless, we must note that these are detestable monsters, who go about to pluck out of their hearts all feelings of God's judgment, which is ingrafted in us all naturally, and which is also found in the barbarians and savage men. Whereas they think that Paul is rather guilty of murder than of any other offense, they follow this reason, because murder hath always been most detestable.

Vengeance doth not suffer. They gather that he is a wicked man, because vengeance doth persecute him though he have escaped the sea. And they feigned that the revenging goddess did sit by the seat of Jupiter, which they commonly called {Δικη}; grossly, I grant, as men ignorant of pure religion, and yet not without some tolerable signification, as if they had painted out God to be Judge of the world. But by these words the wrath of God is distinguished from fortune, and so the judgment of God is avouched against all blind chances. For the men of Melita take it to be a sign of the heavenly vengeance, in that though Paul be saved, yet can he not be safe.

5. *Shaking off the viper.* The shaking off of the viper is a token of a quiet mind. For we see how greatly fear doth trouble and weaken men; and yet you must not think that Paul was altogether void of fear. For faith doth not make us blockish, as brain-sick men do imagine, when they be out of danger. [1506] But though faith doth not quite take away the feeling of evils, yet it doth temperate the same, lest the godly be more afraid than is meet; that they may always be bold and have a good hope. So though Paul understand that the viper was a noisome beast, yet did he trust to the promise which was made to him, and did not so fear her plaguy [1507] biting, that it did trouble him; because he was even ready to die if need had been.

6. *Changing their minds, they said.* This so wonderful and sudden a change ought to have inwardly touched the men of Melita, and to have moved them to give the glory to the mercy of God, as they did before to vengeance. But as man's reason is always carried amiss unto extremities, they make Paul at a sudden a god, whom they took before to be a wicked murderer. But if he could not choose but be the one, it had been better for

[1505] "Mediocris," trivial.
[1506] "In umbra et extra teli jacturam," in the shade, and out of bowshot.
[1507] "Pestiferum," pestiferous, deadly.

him to be counted a murderer than a god. And surely Paul would rather have wished to be condemned, not only of one crime, but also to have sustained all shame, [1508] and to have been thrust down into the deep pit of hell, [1509] than to take to himself the glory of God, which thing those knew full well who had heard him preach amidst the storms. Notwithstanding, it may be, that, being taught afterward, they did confess that God was the author of the miracle.

Furthermore, let us learn by this history, with patient and quiet minds, to wait for the prosperous event of things, [1510] which seem at the first to tend toward the robbing of God of his honor. Which of us would not have been terrified with this spectacle which did arm the wicked to slander with all manner of slanderous speeches the glory of the gospel? Yet we see how God did in good time prevent this inconvenience; therefore, let us not doubt but that after he hath suffered his to be darkened with clouds of slanders, he will send remedy in his good time, and will turn their darkness into light. In the mean season, let us remember that we must beware of the judgment of the flesh. And because men do always forget themselves, let us beg of God the Spirit of moderation, that he may keep us always in the right mean. Furthermore, let us learn by this how ready the world is to fall to superstition. Yea, this wickedness is in a manner born with us, to be desirous to adorn creatures with that which we take from God.

Wherefore, no marvel if new errors have come abroad [1511] in all ages, seeing every one of us is, even from his mother's womb, expert in inventing idols. But lest men excuse themselves therewithal, this history doth witness that this is the fountain of superstitions, because men are unthankful to God, and do give his glory to some other.

Acts 28:7-14

Acts 28:7-14

7. And in those places were the possessions of the chief man of the isle, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us courteously. 8. And so it was, that the father of Publius lay sick of the fever and bloody flux; to whom Paul entered in, and when he had prayed, and had laid his hands upon him, he healed him. 9. Therefore, when he had done thus, the rest also, which had infirmities in the isle, came, and were healed: 10. Who did also give us great honor; and when we departed, they laded us with things necessary. 11. And after three months we sailed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose badge was Castor and Pollux. 12. And when we came to Syracuse, we stayed there three days. 13. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after

[1508] "Omni infamiae genere," every kind of infamy.
[1509] "Ad inferos," to the dead.
[1510] "Tristium rerum," of gloomy affairs.
[1511] "Subinde," ever and anon.

one day when the south wind blew, we came the next day to Puteoli: 14. Where we found brethren, and were desired to stay with them seven days: and so we came to Rome.

7. *And in those places.* Because this name, Publius, is a Roman name, I suspect that this man, of whom mention is made, was rather a citizen of Rome than born in the isle. For the Grecians and other strangers were not wont to borrow their names of the Latins unless they were men of small reputation. And it may be that some of the noble men of Rome came then to see his possessions, and is called the chief man of the isle, not because he dwelt there, but because no man could compare with him in wealth and possessions. And it is scarce probable that all the whole multitude of Grecians was lodged there three days. I do rather think, that, when he entertained the centurion, he did also honor Paul and his companions, because, being admonished by the miracle, he did believe that he was a man beloved of God. Notwithstanding, howsoever it be, his hospitality was not unrewarded. For shortly after the Lord restored his father to health by the hand of Paul, who was indeed sick of a dangerous disease. And by this means he meant to testify how greatly that courtesy, which is showed to men in misery and to strangers, doth please him. Although those who are holpen be unmindful and unthankful for that benefit which they have received, or they be not able to recompense those who have done good to them, yet God himself will abundantly restore to men whatsoever they have bestowed at his commandment; and he hath sometimes appointed, to those which be merciful and given to hospitality, some of his servants, which bring with them a blessing. This was now great honor, in that Publius did lodge Christ in the person of Paul. Notwithstanding, this was added as an overplus, in that Paul came furnished with the gift of healing, that he might not only recompense his courtesy, but also give more than he had received.

Also, we know not whether he learned the first principles of faith, as miracles do for the most part win the rude and unbelievers unto faith, [1512] Luke mentioneth the kind of disease that he may the better set forth the grace of God. For seeing it is an hard matter to cure a bloody flux, [1513] especially when the ague is joined therewith, the old man was cured thus suddenly only by the laying on of hands and prayer, not without the manifest power of God.

8. *And had laid his hands upon him* Paul declareth by prayer that he himself is not the author of the miracle, but only the minister, lest God be defrauded of his glory. He confirmeth this self-same thing by the external sign. For, as we saw before, in other places, the laying on of hands was nothing else but a solemn rite of offering and presenting. Wherefore, in that Paul doth offer the man to God with his own hands, he professed that he did

[1512] "Ad docilitatem," to docility.

[1513] "Nam quam difficilis et lenta sit dysenteriae curatio," for since the cure of dysentery is slow and difficult.

humbly crave his life of him. By which example, not only those who have excellent gifts of the Spirit given them are admonished to beware, lest by extolling themselves they darken the glory of God, but also we are all taught in general that we must so thank the ministers of the grace of God that the glory remain to him alone. It is said, indeed, that Paul healed the man which had the bloody flux; but it is plainly expressed by the circumstances which are added, that it was God which bestowed this benefit, making him the minister thereof. Whereas Luke saith afterwards, that others which were sick in the isle were cured, he doth not extend it unto all; but his meaning is, that the power of God, which appeared evidently enough, was proved by many testimonies, that the apostleship of Paul might be thereby ratified. Neither need we doubt but that Paul sought as well to cure their souls as their bodies. Yet Luke doth not declare what good he did, save only that the barbarians gave him and his fellows victual and necessary things when they loosed from the haven. In the mean season, we must note, that though Paul might have withdrawn himself, and have escaped many ways, yet was the will of God to him instead of voluntary fetters, because he was often cited by the heavenly oracle to appear before the judgment-seat of Nero to bear witness of Christ. Again, he knew that if he should run away, he could no longer have preached the gospel, but should have lurked in some corner during his whole life.

11. *In a ship of Alexandria.* By these words, Luke giveth us to understand, that the former ship was either drowned, or else so rent and beaten, that it served for no use afterward; whereby the greatness of the shipwreck doth the better appear. And he setteth down expressly that the badge of the ship of Alexandria, wherein they were carried to Rome, was Castor and Pollux, that we may know that Paul had not liberty granted to sail with such as were like to himself; but was enforced to enter into a ship which was dedicated to two idols. The old poets did feign that Castor and Pollux came of Jupiter and Leda; for which cause they are called in Greek {διοσκουροι}; which word Luke useth in this place, as if you should say, Jupiter's sons. Again, they said [1514] that they are the sign in the zodiac called Gemini. There was also another superstition among the mariners, that those fine exhalations which appear in tempests are the very same. Therefore, in times past, they were thought to be gods of the seas, and were therefore called upon as at this day, Nicholas and Clement, and such like. Yea, as in Popery, they retain the old errors, changing the names only; so at this day they worship these exhalations under the name of Saint Hermes, or Saint Ermus. And because if one exhalation appear alone, it is a doleful token; but if two together, (as Pliny writeth) then they foreshow a prosperous course. To the end the mariners of Alexandria might have both Castor and Pollux to favor them, they had both for the badge of their ship. Therefore, as touching them, the ship was polluted with wicked sacrilege; but because Paul did not make

[1514] "Fabulati," they fabled.

choice thereof, of his own accord, he is not polluted thereby.

And surely seeing an idol is nothing, it cannot infect the creatures of God, but that the faithful may use them purely and lawfully. And we must needs think thus, that all those blots wherewith Satan doth go about to stain the creatures of God through his juggling, are washed away by no other means but by a good and pure conscience, whereas the wicked and ungodly do defile those things which are of themselves pure, though they do but touch them. Finally, Paul was no more defiled by entering into this ship, than when he did behold the altars at Athens; because, being void of all superstition, he knew that all the rites of the Gentiles were mere illusions. Again, the men could not think that he did agree to that profane error; for if he had been to do any worship to Castor and Pollux, though it had been only for fashion's sake, he would rather have died a thousand deaths than once have yielded.

Therefore, because he needed not to fear any offense, he entereth the ship without any more ado; and undoubtedly he did this heavily, and with inward sorrow; because he saw the honor which is due to God alone given to vain inventions. Therefore, this ought to be numbered among his exercises, in that he had those to be his guides, who thought that they were governed of idols, and had committed their ship to their tuition.

12. *When we were come to Syracuse.* Luke prosecuteth the residue of the course of their sailing, that they arrived first in Sicilia. And after that they set a compass [1515] by reason of the tempest and raging of the sea, and sailed over into Italy. And as that haven whereof Luke speaketh in this place is the most famous haven of all Sicilia, so is it farther from the coast of Italy than is that of Messina, over against which is Rhegium, whereof he maketh mention. And it is in the country of the Brutians, as is Puteoli, a city of Campania. But forasmuch as the brethren kept Paul at Puteoli seven days, by this we gather how favorably and gently the centurion handled Paul. Neither do I doubt but that the holy man would have made him a faithful promise that he would always return in due time. But he was persuaded of his uprightness, so that he was not afraid that he would deceive him. And now we gather out of this place, that the seed of the gospel was then sown abroad, seeing there was some body of the Church even at Puteoli.

Acts 28:15-20

Acts 28:15-20

15. And when the brethren had heard of us from thence, they came out to meet us at Appii Forum, and at The three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he gave thanks to God, and waxed bold. 16. And when we were come to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the chief captain of the host; but Paul was suffered to dwell alone with a soldier which kept him. 17. And after three days Paul called together the chief of the Jews; and when

[1515] "Oblique… trajecerint," they made an indirect passage.

they were come, he said to them, Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against the people, or ordinances of the elders, yet was I delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18. Which, when they had examined me, they would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19. But when the Jews spake contrary, I was enforced to appeal to Caesar: not as if I have anything to accuse my nation of. 20. For this cause, therefore, have I sent for you, that I might see you, and speak to you; for the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain.

15. *When the brethren heard.* God did comfort Paul by the coming of the brethren who came forth to meet him, that he might the more joyfully make haste to defend the gospel. And the zeal and godly care of the brethren appeareth therein, in that they inquire for Paul's coming, and go out to meet him. For it was at that time not only an odious thing to profess the Christian faith, but it might also bring them in hazard of their life. Neither did a few men only put themselves in private danger, because the envy redounded to the whole Church. But nothing is more dear to them than their duty wherein they could not be negligent, unless they would be counted sluggish and unthankful. It had been a cruel fact to neglect so great an apostle of Jesus Christ, especially seeing he labored for the common salvation.

And now forasmuch as he had written to them before, and had of his own accord offered his service to them, it had been an unseemly thing not to repay to him brotherly goodwill and courtesy. Therefore, the brethren did, by this their dutifulness, testify their godliness toward Christ; and Paul's desire was more inflamed, because he saw fruit prepared for his constancy. For though he were endued with invincible strength, [1516] so that he did not depend upon man's help; yet God, who useth to strengthen his by means of men, did minister to him new strength by this means. Though he were afterward forsaken when he was in prison, as he complaineth in a certain place, (2 Timothy 4:16) yet he did not despair; but did fight no less valiantly and manfully under Christ's banner, than if he had been guarded with a great army. But the remembrance of this meeting did serve even then to encourage him, seeing he did consider with himself that there were many godly brethren at Rome, but they were weak, and that he was sent to strengthen them. And there is no cause why we should marvel that Paul was emboldened at this present when he saw the brethren, because he did hope that the confession his faith would yield no small fruit. For so often as God showeth to his servants any fruit of their labor, he doth, as it were, prick them forward with a goad, that they may proceed more courageously in their work.

16. *The centurion delivered the prisoners.* Luke doth signify that Paul had more liberty granted him than the rest; for his condition and estate was peculiar. For he was suffered to dwell in an house by himself, having one keeper with him, whereas the rest were shut up in the common prison. For

[1516] "Fortitudine," fortitude.

the general captain [1517] knew by Festus' report that Paul was guiltless; and the centurion, as it is likely, did faithfully rehearse such things as might serve to bring him into favor. Notwithstanding, let us know that God did govern [1518] from heaven the bonds of his servant; not only that he might ease him of his trouble, but that the faithful might have freer access unto him. For he would not have the treasure of his faith shut up in prison, but he would have it laid open, that it might enrich many far and wide. And yet Paul was not so at liberty, but that he did always carry a chain. Luke calleth the general captain {στρατοπεδαρχης}, who was appointed over the army which kept the city, as histories make mention. [1519]

17. *And after three days.* Paul's humanity [1520] was wonderful, in that, though he had suffered such cruel injuries of his nation, he studied, notwithstanding, to appease the Jews which are at Rome, and he excuseth himself to them, lest they hate his cause, because they hear that the priests do hate him. He might well have excused himself before men, if he passed over these Jews and turned himself to the Gentiles. For though he had continually, in divers places, essayed to bring them to Christ, yet they were more and more nettled and moved; [1521] and yet he had omitted nothing, neither in Asia, nor in Greece, neither at Jerusalem, which might mitigate their fury. Therefore, all men would have justly pardoned him, if he had let those alone whom he had so often tried [experienced] to be of desperate pride. [1522] But because he knew that his Master was given of his Father to be the minister of the Jews, to fulfill the promises whereby God had adopted to himself the seed of Abraham to be his people; he looketh unto the calling of God, and is never weary. He saw that he must remain at Rome, seeing he had liberty granted to teach, he would not that they should be deprived of the fruit of his labor. Secondly, he would not have them moved through hatred of his cause to trouble the Church; because a small occasion might have caused great destruction. Therefore, Paul meant to beware, lest, according to their wonted madness, they should set all on fire. [1523]

I have done nothing against the people. These two things might have made the Jews hate him; either because he should have done hurt to the commonwealth of his nation, as some runagates did increase their bondage, which was too cruel, through their treachery; or because he should have done somewhat against the worship of God; for though the Jews were grown out of kind, [1524] and religion was depraved and corrupted among them with many errors, yet the very name of the law and the worship of the temple

[1517] "Praefectus," the praefect.
[1518] "Moderatum," temper.
[1519] "Praefectum praetorio cujus illud officium fuisse ex historiis satis notum est," praefect of the praetorium, to whom it is well known from history that office belonged.
[1520] "Mausuetudo," meekness.
[1521] "Exacerbati," exasperated.
[1522] "Pervicaciae," obstinacy and petulance.
[1523] "Pessimi incendii faces essent," they should be torches to kindle a very bad fire.
[1524] "Degeneres," degenerate.

were greatly reverenced. Furthermore, Paul denieth not but that he did freely omit those ceremonies whereto the Jews were superstitiously tied; yet he cleareth himself of the crime of revolting whereof he might be suspected. Therefore, understand those ordinances of the fathers, whereby the children of Abraham, and the disciples of Moses ought, according to their faith, to have been distinguished from the rest of the Gentiles. And surely in that he did cleave so holily to Christ, who is the soul and perfection of the law, he is so far from impairing the ordinances of the fathers, that none did better observe the same.

19. *I was enforced to appeal.* This appeal was full of hatred and envy for this cause, because the authority and liberty of the Jewish nation did seem to be sore opprest, who could have been content to have lived with their own laws. Secondly, because his defense was joined with infamy and loss of all the people. Therefore he answereth this objection also, because he was enforced with the stubbornness of his enemies to fly to this fortress [asylum]. For he is excused by necessity, because he had no other way to escape death. And after that he had excused that which was done already, he promiseth that he will so handle his matter hereafter, [1525] that he will not labor against the Jews.

20. *For the hope of Israel.* We must understand much more under these words than Luke expresseth; as we gather out of the answer, where the Jews speak of the sect; to wit, repeating his speech, which Luke omitteth. Therefore Paul intreated of Christ, that it might plainly appear that neither the law nor the temple did profit the Jews anything without him; because the covenant of adoption is grounded in him, and the promise of salvation is in him confirmed. Neither did they doubt but that the restoring of the kingdom did depend upon the coming of the Messias; and even at that time their misery and decay did increase the hope and desire of him. Wherefore Paul saith, for good causes, that he is bound for the hope of Israel. Whereby we be also taught, that no man doth hope aright, but he which looketh unto Christ and his spiritual kingdom; for when he placeth the hope of the godly in Christ, he excludeth all other hopes.

Acts 28:21-24

Acts 28:21-24

21. But they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judea touching thee, neither did any of the brethren come and show us or speak any evil of thee. 22. But we will hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning that sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere. 23. And when they had appointed him a day, many came to him to his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, and persuaded them of Jesus out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till night. 24.

[1525] "Ita causam suam acturum," will so plead his cause.

And certain believed those things which were spoken, but certain believed not.

21. *Neither by letters.* The priests and scribes did not hold their peace, because they were become more gentle towards Paul, or to the end they might spare him; that proceeded rather of contempt, or else of despair, because they neither knew how to oppress him when he was so far from them, and his carrying into Italy was [1526] to them instead of a grave. For they did lord it no less carelessly than proudly, so that nobody did trouble them at home. Furthermore, though the Jews come not altogether rightly prepared to hear, yet they show some desire to learn, when as they do not refuse to hear the defense of his doctrine, which is spoken against everywhere. For many do stop the way before themselves with this prejudice, because they cannot abide to hear that which is refused by common judgment, but subscribe to the opinion of other men to the condemning of doctrine which they know not. Nevertheless, this is not without fault (as I said) that they object gainsaying to cause hatred, or to procure evil suspicion; as if it had not been said before by Isaiah, that God should be a stone of offense to all the people. It is uncertain, whether upon the day appointed Paul disputed all the day, or they reasoned one with another; save only, because we may guess, by the circumstance of time, that Paul did not continue speaking still. [1527] For he could scarce have framed a speech which could have continued from morning to night. Wherefore I do not doubt, but that after the apostle had briefly expounded the sum of the gospel, he granted liberty to the hearers to propound questions, [1528] and did make answer to the questions which were objected to him.

But we must note the state of the disputation, which Luke saith is double. For Paul taught first, after what sort the kingdom of God was amongst them, and principally what manner [of] chief felicity and glory that was which was promised to them, which the prophets do so highly extol. For seeing that many of them did dream of a frail estate of the kingdom of God in the world, and did place the same falsely in idleness, pleasure, and in plenty of present good things, it was necessary that it should be rightly defined, that they might know that the kingdom of God is spiritual, whose beginning is newness of life, and the end thereof blessed immortality and the heavenly glory. Secondly, Paul exhorted them to receive Christ, the author of the promised felicity.

And, again, this second point had two members, for it could not be handled profitably and soundly unless he did expound the office of the promised Redeemer; secondly, unless he did show that he is already given, and that the Son of Mary is he in whom the fathers hoped. It was indeed a common maxim among the Jews, that the Messias should come and restore all things

[1526] "Videri poterat," might seem.
[1527] "Uno tenore," without stopping.
[1528] "Vicissim," in their turn.

into perfect order.

But Paul labored another point, which was not so well known; that the Messias was promised, who should, with the sacrifice of his death, make satisfaction for the sins of the world; who should reconcile God to men; who should purchase eternal righteousness; who should fashion men after the image of God, being regenerate with his Spirit; who should, finally, make his faithful servants heirs with him of eternal life; and that all those things were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ crucified. He could not intreat of those things; but he must needs call back the Jews from gross and earthly inventions into heaven, and also take away the stumbling-block of the cross, seeing he taught that there was no other way or means whereby we are reconciled with God.

And let us note, that (as Luke doth testify) Paul took all that which he spake of Christ out of the law and prophets. For true religion differeth from all feigned religions, because the word of God alone is the rule thereof. Also the Church of God differeth from all profane sects in this, because it heareth him speak alone, and is governed by his commandment. And now by this we see the agreement that is between the Old and the New Testaments to establish the faith of Christ; secondly, that double profit of the Scripture which the same Paul commendeth in another place, to wit, that it is sufficient as well to instruct those which are willing to learn, as to refute the stubbornness of those which set themselves against the truth (2 Timothy 3:16; Titus 1:9). Therefore, let those who desire to be wise with sobriety, and to teach others well, appoint themselves these bounds, that they utter nothing but out of the pure fountain of the word. The philosophers deal otherwise, who contend only with reasons, because they have no sound authority, whom the Papists imitate too much, who set apart the oracles of God, and lean only to the inventions of man's brain, that is, to mere folly.

24. *Some believed.* Luke declareth that this was at length the success of the disputation, that they did not all profit [1529] in the same doctrine. We know that the apostle was endued with such grace of the Spirit, that he ought to have moved stones; and yet he could not, after long disputing and testifying, win all men unto Christ. Wherefore, let us not marvel, if the unbelief of many do at this day resist the plain doctrine of the gospel, and if many remain obstinate, to whom the truth of Christ is no less made manifest than the sun at noon-day. Moreover, those return from Paul blind and blockish, who came unto him willingly, as if they had been desirous to learn. If there were such stubbornness in voluntary hearers, what marvel is it if those refuse Christ with a malicious [1530] mind, who swell with pride and malice, [bitterness] and do openly fly and hate the light?

[1529] "Pariter," equally.
[1530] "Amarulento," bitter.

Acts 28:25-31

Acts 28:25-31

25. And when they could not agree, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias to our fathers, 26. Saying, Go to this people, and say, Ye shall hear with your ears, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; 27. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull with hearing, and with their eyes they have winked, lest at any time they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and they be converted, and I heal them. 28. Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they shall hear it. 29. And when he had said these things, the Jews went out from him, and had great reasoning among themselves. 30. And Paul remained two years full in a thing he had hired for himself, [1531] and he received all those which came in unto him, 31. Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus, with all boldness, and no man did let [hinder] him.

25. *And when they could not* The malice and frowardness of the unfaithful is the cause of this, that Christ, who is our peace, and the only bond of holy unity, is an occasion of dissension, and doth cause those to go together by the ears who were friends before. For, behold, when the Jews come together to hear Paul, they think all one thing; and speak all one thing; they do all profess that they embrace the law of Moses. So soon as they hear the doctrine of reconciliation, there ariseth dissension among them, so that they are divided. [1532] And yet for all this we must not think that the preaching of the gospel is the cause of discord; but that privy displeasure, which lurked before in their malicious minds, doth then break out; and as the brightness of the sun doth not color things otherwise than they were, but doth plainly show the difference, which was none so long as it was dark. Therefore, seeing God doth illuminate his elect peculiarly, and faith is not common to all men, let us remember that it cannot be but that, so soon as Christ cometh abroad, there will be a division among men. But then let us call to mind that which Simon foretold of him, that he shall be a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be disclosed (Luke 2:34, 35) and that unbelief which striveth against God is the mother of dissension.

After that Paul. At the first he went about to allure them meekly and gently; now, so soon as he espieth their obstinacy, he inveigheth sharply, and doth severely denounce the judgment of God. For the rebellious must be handled thus, whose pride cannot be tamed with plain doctrine. The same order must we keep; we must gently govern those who are apt to be taught and gentle, but we must cite the stubborn unto God's judgment-seat. Whereas he bringeth in rather the Holy Ghost speaking than the prophet, it

[1531] "In suo conducto," in his hired room.

[1532] "In diversas partes," into different parties.

maketh to the credit of the oracle. For seeing God requireth that he alone be heard, doctrine cannot otherwise be of authority, than if we know that it did proceed from him, and that it did not issue out of man's brain. Again, he declareth therewithal that the stubbornness of one age only is not there noted, but that the oracle of the Spirit is extended unto the time to come.

26. *Go to this people.* This is a notable place, because it is cited six times in the New Testament, (Matthew 13:14; John 12:40; Romans 11:8; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10) but because it is brought in elsewhere to another end, we must mark for what purpose Paul applieth it unto the present cause; namely, he meant with this, as with a mallet, to beat in pieces the hardness and frowardness of the wicked, and to encourage the faithful, who were as yet weak and tender, lest the unbelief of others should trouble them.

Therefore, the sum is, that that was fulfilled which was foretold by the prophet, and that, therefore, there is no cause why the reprobate should flatter themselves, or that the faithful should be terrified, as it were, with some new unwonted thing. And though it be certain that this blindness whereof the prophet spake began in his time, yet John showeth that it did properly appertain unto the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, Paul doth fitly apply it unto that contempt of the gospel which he saw; as if he should have said, This is the very same thing which the Holy Ghost foretold in times past by the mouth of Isaiah. And though this place be diversely applied not only by the Evangelists, but also by Paul himself, the show of contrariety is easily put away and answered. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, say that this prophecy was fulfilled when Christ spake by parables unto the people, and did not reveal to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. For then the unfaithful heard the voice of God with their outward ears, but they did not profit thereby. John saith in a sense not much unlike to this, that the, Jews were not brought to believe, no, not with many miracles, (John 12:37) so that this same prophecy of the prophet was fulfilled.

Therefore, these four agree in this, that it came to pass by the just judgment of God, that the reprobate in hearing should not hear, and in seeing should not see. Now, Paul calleth to mind that which the prophet did testify concerning the Jews, lest any man wonder at their blindness. Furthermore, in the Epistle to the Romans, (Romans 11:5, 7) he mounteth higher, showing that this is the cause of blindness, because God doth give the light of faith only to the remnant whom he hath chosen freely. And surely it is certain that because the reprobate reject the doctrine of salvation, this cometh to pass through their own malice, and that therefore they themselves are to be blamed. But this next cause doth not let but that the secret election of God may distinguish between men; that those may believe who are ordained to life, and that the other may remain blockish. I will not stand long about the words of the prophet, because I have expounded the same elsewhere. Neither did Paul curiously recite the words which are in the prophet; but did rather apply his words unto his purpose. Therefore, he imputeth that making blind,

which the prophet attributeth to the secret judgment of God, to their malice. For the prophet is commanded to stop the eyes of his hearers; and Paul in this place accuseth the unbelieving of his time, because they shut their own eyes. Though he setteth down both things distinctly, that God is the author of their blindness, and that yet, notwithstanding, they shut their own eyes, and become blind of their own accord; as these two things do very well agree together, as we said elsewhere.

In the last remember where it is said, Lest they see with their eyes, or hear with their ears, or understand with their heart; God showeth how clear his doctrine is, to wit, that it is sufficient to lighten all the senses, unless men do maliciously darken themselves; as Paul also teacheth in another place, that his gospel is plain, so that none can be blind in the light thereof, save those who are ordained to destruction, whose eyes Satan hath blinded, (2 Corinthians 4:3).

Lest they be converted, and I heal them. By this we gather that the Word of God is not set before all men that they may return to soundness of mind; but that the external voice soundeth in the ears of many, without the effectual working of the Spirit, only that they may be made inexcusable. And here the pride of flesh doth rashly murmur against God; as we see many object, that men are called in vain, yea, absurdly, unless it be in their power to obey; though we see no reason why God appeareth to the blind, and speaketh to the deaf; yet his will alone, which is the rule of all righteousness, ought to be to us instead of a thousand reasons.

In the conclusion, we must note the wholesome effect of the Word of God; namely, the conversion of men, which is not only the beginning of health, but also a certain resurrection from death to life.

28. *Therefore be it.* Lest the Jews may afterward accuse him of revolting, because he forsaketh the holy stock of Abraham, and goeth to the profane Gentiles; he denounceth that which the prophets did so often testify, that the salvation whereof they were the proper, at least the principal [1533] heirs, should be translated unto strangers. Notwithstanding, whereas he saith that salvation was sent to the Gentiles, he meaneth, in the second place, to wit, after that the Jews had rejected it, as we have said before more at large (Acts 13:46) Therefore, the sense is, that there is no cause why the Jews should complain if the Gentiles be admitted into the void possession after that they have forsaken it. Neither doth he make faith common to all the Gentiles in general, when he saith that they shall hear. For he had full well tried, that even many of the Gentiles did wickedly resist God, but he setteth so many of the Gentiles as believed against the unbelieving Jews, that he may provoke them unto jealousy; as it is in the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:21). In the mean season, he signifieth that the doctrine which they refuse shall profit others.

29. *Having much reasoning.* No doubt, the wicked were more nettled

[1533] "Primarii," primary.

because he cited the prophecy against them; for they are so far from waxing meek when they are reproved, that they are more inflamed with fury. This is the reason why they reasoned [1534] when they were gone out from Paul, because the more part would not be quiet. But seeing there was such disputing, it appeareth that some did so embrace those things which Paul had spoken, that they doubted not to defend and stoutly to avouch that which they believed. But it is in vain for any man to object thereupon, that the gospel of Christ is the seed of contention, which cometh undoubtedly from man's pride and waywardness; and assuredly, if we will have peace with God, we must strive against [1535] those which contemn him.

30. *He received all.* The apostle showed an excellent example of constancy, in that he offered himself so willingly to all those which were desirous to hear him. Surely he was not ignorant what great hatred he did purchase; and that this was his best way, if by holding his peace he might appease the hatred of his adversaries. For a man being desirous to provide for himself alone would not have done thus; but because he remembered that he was no less the servant of Christ, and a preacher of the gospel, when he was in prison, than if he had been at liberty, he thought it was not lawful for him to withdraw himself from any which was ready to learn, lest he should foreslow [neglect] the occasion which was offered him by God, and therefore he did more regard the holy calling of God than his own life. And that we may know that he did incur danger willingly, Luke doth shortly after expressly commend his boldness, as if he should say, that setting all fear aside, he did faithfully obey the commandment of God, neither was he terrified with any danger, [1536] but did proceed to take pains with whomsoever he met.

Preaching the kingdom of God. He doth not separate the kingdom of God, and those things which belong to Christ, as diverse things, but doth rather add the second thing by way of exposition, that we may know that the kingdom of God is grounded and contained in the knowledge of the redemption purchased by Christ. Therefore, Paul taught that men are strangers [1537] and foreigners from the kingdom of God, until having their sins done away they be reconciled to God, and be renewed into holiness of life by the Spirit; and that the kingdom of God is then erected, and doth then flourish among them, when Christ the Mediator doth join them to the Father, having both their sins freely forgiven them, and being also regenerate unto righteousness, that beginning the heavenly life upon earth, they may always have a longing desire to come to heaven, where they shall fully and perfectly enjoy glory. Also, Luke setteth forth a singular benefit of God, in that Paul had so great liberty granted him. For that came not to pass through the winking and dissimulation of those who could hinder it, seeing they did detest religion, but because the Lord did shut their eyes. Wherefore, it is not without cause

[1534] "Disceptaverunt," disputed.
[1535] "Bellare necesse est," we must of necessity war with.
[1536] "Ullis difficultatibus," by any difficulties.
[1537] "Exules," exiles.

that Paul himself doth boast that the Word of God was not bound with his bonds (2 Timothy 2:9).

Indexes

Greek Words and Phrases

- {ἀκρίβεια}: 1
- {ὁριζειν}: 1
- {Δικη}: 1
- {Ενθουσιασμους}: 1
- {Κατα} {το} {αυτο}: 1
- {αλισγημα}: 1
- {απροσκοπον}: 1
- {αργυριον}: 1
- {αρχιερεις}: 1
- {αρχιερευς}: 1 2
- {ασσον}: 1
- {δεισιδαιμονια}: 1 2
- {διοσκουροι}: 1
- {δυναμενος}: 1
- {ειδωλοθητα}: 1
- {εν} {ολιγω}: 1 2
- {ενθουσιασμω}: 1
- {επι} {κυριω}: 1
- {ευγενεστατους}: 1
- {ευγενεστερους}: 1
- {θειον}: 1
- {καθεξης}: 1
- {κακωσαι}: 1
- {καρδιαγνωστην}: 1
- {κατα} {κρατος}: 1
- {κατα} {παντα}: 1 2
- {κατορθωματα}: 1
- {μετα} {αυτων}: 1
- {νομιζεσθαι}: 1
- {ουτως}: 1
- {πειθειν}: 1
- {περιεργα}: 1
- {ποιμαινειν}: 1
- {προσωπογνωσται}: 1
- {πρωτον}: 1
- {ραβδουχοι}: 1
- {σασις} : 1

- {σταντος}: 1
- {στρατοπεδαρχης}: 1
- {συμπαθειαν}: 1
- {συν} {αυτοις}: 1
- {συνεδριον}: 1
- {φαντασια}: 1
- {χειροτονεια}: 1
- {χειροτονειν}: 1
- {ὑποδεδειγμενον}: 1
- {Ελληνες}: 1
- {Ελληνισται}: 1
- {Ελληνιστας}: 1
- {Ενθουσιασμοὺς}: 1
- {Ζωογονεισθαι}: 1
- {Καταλαμβανεσθαι}: 1
- {Κενοτάφια}: 1
- {αιρεσθαι}: 1
- {αναγκαιους}: 1
- {αναστησαι}: 1
- {απο}: 1
- {αποδειξεις}: 1
- {ασφαλως}: 1
- {διακονιας}: 1
- {δυναμις}: 1
- {ει} {αρα}: 1
- {ειδολοδουλεια}: 1
- {εικονοδουλεια}: 1
- {εικων}: 1
- {ελεημοσυνη}: 1
- {επαγγελλεσθαι}: 1
- {επι} {το} {αυτο}: 1
- {ημην}: 1
- {θυμομαχον}: 1
- {κοινωνια}: 1 2
- {λαλουντος}: 1
- {λογον}: 1
- {λογον} {ποιεισθὰι}: 1
- {ουκ} {αρεστον}: 1
- {πᾶιδα}: 1
- {περιτομης}: 1
- {προκεκηρυγμενον}: 1
- {προκεχειρισμενον}: 1
- {προς} {την} {λατρειαν}: 1
- {προς} {την} {προσκυνησιν}: 1

- {προσεκυνησεν}: 1
- {προσκαρτερησαι}: 1
- {ρημα}: 1
- {συναλιζομενος}: 1
- {σωτηρ}: 1
- {τα}: 1
- {τα} {αυτα}: 1
- {τεκμηριον}: 1
- {τεταγμενους}: 1
- {τι} {εστι}: 1
- {τυποι}: 1 2
- {τυπος}: 1 2
- {ψευδεσθαι}: 1

Hebrew Words and Phrases

- {:גראל 1}
- {:דר 1}
- {:ה 1}
- {:הסדי 1}
- {:ח 1}
- {:חסת 1}
- {:כבוד 1}
- {:לחה 1}
- {:מד 1}
- {:סול 1}
- {:סל 1 2}
- {:פכודה 1}
- {:שאול 1}
- {:שחת 1 2 3 4}
- {:שנם 1}

Index of Scripture Commentary

Acts
1 1:1
1:2 1:3
1:4 1:5
1:6 1:7
1:8 1:9
1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13
1:14 1:15
1:16 1:17
1:18 1:21
1:23 1:24
1:25 1:26
2 2:1
2:2 2:4
2:5 2:6
2:11 2:12
2:14 2:17
2:18 2:19
2:21 2:22
2:23 2:24
2:25 2:26
2:27 2:28
2:30 2:32
2:33 2:34
2:36 2:37
2:38 2:39
2:40 2:41
2:42 2:43
2:44 2:46
2:47 3
3:1 3:3
3:4 3:6
3:9 3:11
3:12 3:13
3:16 3:17
3:18 3:19

3:20 3:21
3:22 3:23
3:24 3:25
3:26 4
4:1 4:4
4:5 4:7
4:8 4:9
4:10 4:11
4:12 4:13
4:17 4:19
4:20 4:21
4:23 4:24
4:25 4:26
4:27 4:28
4:29 4:30
4:31 4:32
4:33 4:34
5 5:1
5:3 5:4
5:5 5:7
5:8 5:9
5:11 5:12
5:13 5:15
5:17 5:19
5:20 5:21
5:28 5:29
5:30 5:31
5:32 5:33
5:34 5:36
5:40 5:41
5:42 6
6:1 6:2
6:3 6:4
6:5 6:6
6:7 6:8
6:9 6:12
6:14 6:15
7 7:1
7:2 7:3
7:4 7:5
7:6 7:7
7:8 7:9
7:10 7:11
7:14 7:16

7:17 7:19
7:20 7:22
7:23 7:24
7:26 7:30
7:31 7:32
7:33 7:34
7:35 7:37
7:38 7:39
7:40 7:41
7:42 7:43
7:44 7:45
7:47 7:49
7:50 7:51
7:52 7:53
7:54 7:55
7:56 7:57
7:58 7:59
7:60 8
8:1 8:2
8:3 8:4
8:5 8:6
8:7 8:8
8:9 8:10
8:11 8:12
8:13 8:14
8:15 8:16
8:17 8:18
8:20 8:21
8:22 8:23
8:24 8:25
8:26 8:27
8:28 8:31
8:32 8:33
8:34 8:35
8:36 8:38
8:39 8:40
9 9:1
9:2 9:3
9:4 9:5
9:6 9:7
9:8 9:9
9:10 9:11
9:12 9:13
9:14 9:15

9:16 9:17
9:18 9:20
9:21 9:22
9:23 9:25
9:26 9:27
9:28 9:29
9:30 9:31
9:32 9:34
9:35 9:36
9:37 9:38
9:39 9:40
9:41 9:42
9:43 10
10:1 10:2
10:3 10:4
10:5 10:7
10:8 10:9
10:10 10:11
10:12 10:13
10:14 10:15
10:16 10:17
10:20 10:21
10:22 10:23
10:24 10:25
10:28 10:29
10:30 10:33
10:34 10:35
10:36 10:37
10:38 10:39
10:41 10:42
10:43 10:44
10:45 10:46
10:47 10:48
11 11:1
11:2 11:3
11:16 11:17
11:18 11:19
11:20 11:21
11:22 11:23
11:24 11:25
11:26 11:27
11:28 11:29
11:30 12
12:1 12:3

12:4 12:5
12:6 12:7
12:9 12:10
12:11 12:12
12:15 12:17
12:18 12:20
12:21 12:23
12:24 12:25
13 13:1
13:2 13:3
13:4 13:5
13:6 13:7
13:8 13:9
13:10 13:11
13:12 13:13
13:14 13:15
13:16 13:17
13:18 13:20
13:21 13:22
13:23 13:24
13:25 13:26
13:27 13:28
13:29 13:30
13:31 13:32
13:33 13:34
13:35 13:36
13:38 13:39
13:40 13:41
13:42 13:43
13:44 13:45
13:46 13:47
13:48 13:49
13:50 13:51
13:52
14 14:1
14:2 14:3
14:4 14:5
14:8 14:9
14:10 14:11
14:13 14:14
14:15 14:16
14:17 14:18
14:19 14:20
14:22 14:23

14:24 14:26
14:27 15
15:1 15:2
15:3 15:4
15:5 15:6
15:7 15:9
15:10 15:11
15:12 15:13
15:15 15:16
15:17 15:18
15:19 15:20
15:21 15:22
15:24 15:25
15:28 15:30
15:31 15:32
15:33 15:36
15:37 16
16:1 16:3
16:4 16:5
16:6 16:9
16:10 16:11
16:13 16:14
16:15 16:16
16:18 16:19
16:20 16:21
16:22 16:23
16:26 16:27
16:29 16:30
16:31 16:33
16:34 16:35
16:37 16:40
17 17:1
17:2 17:3
17:4 17:5
17:6 17:7
17:8 17:10
17:11 17:12
17:13 17:16
17:17 17:18
17:19 17:22
17:23 17:24
17:25 17:26
17:27 17:28
17:29 17:30

17:31 17:32
17:34 18
18:1 18:2
18:3 18:4
18:6 18:7
18:9 18:10
18:11 18:12
18:15 18:17
18:18 18:22
18:24 18:25
18:26 18:27
18:28 19
19:1 19:2
19:4 19:5
19:8 19:9
19:10 19:11
19:13 19:16
19:17 19:18
19:19 19:20
19:21 19:23
19:25 19:27
19:29 19:30
19:33 19:34
19:35 19:37
20 20:1
20:3 20:7
20:9 20:10
20:13 20:16
20:18 20:19
20:20 20:21
20:22 20:23
20:24 20:25
20:26 20:28
20:29 20:30
20:31 20:32
20:33 20:34
20:36 20:37
21 21:1
21:4 21:5
21:7 21:9
21:10 21:12
21:14 21:15
21:17 21:18
21:19 21:22

21:23 21:24
21:25 21:26
21:27 21:28
21:30 21:31
21:32 21:34
21:37 22
22:1 22:2
22:3 22:4
22:6 22:9
22:10 22:12
22:14 22:16
22:17 22:18
22:19 22:22
22:24 22:25
22:26 22:28
23 23:1
23:2 23:3
23:4 23:5
23:6 23:8
23:9 23:10
23:11 23:12
23:14 23:16
23:17 23:19
23:25 23:27
23:29 23:30
23:32 24
24:1 24:2
24:5 24:6
24:8 24:10
24:11 24:12
24:14 24:15
24:16 24:17
24:19 24:21
24:23 24:25
24:26 24:27
25 25:1
25:5 25:7
25:9 25:10
25:11 25:12
25:13 25:14
25:18 25:22
25:23 25:26
26 26:2
26:4 26:6

26:7 26:8
26:9 26:10
26:13 26:16
26:17 26:18
26:19 26:21
26:24 26:25
26:26 26:28
26:31 27
27:1 27:2
27:3 27:9
27:11 27:15
27:21 27:23
27:24 27:25
27:30 27:33
27:35 27:37
27:38 27:41
27:42 28
28:1 28:4
28:5 28:6
28:7 28:8
28:11 28:12
28:15 28:16
28:17 28:19
28:20 28:21
28:24 28:25
28:26 28:28
28:29 28:30

Index of Scripture References

Genesis
1
1:13
1:14
3:19
4:13
8:22
11:7
17:7
17:7
17:7
17:7
22:9
22:10
22:17
22:18
23:9
35:7
46:27
49:10
1:27
5:24
8:21
9:4
9:9
17:13
17:13
39:5
Exodus
4:22
4:22
7:13
8:8
8:17
8:24
12:29
12:37

14:10
17:11
19:5
19:6
20:11
20:22
25
25:40
29:41
32:9
33:3
33:5
3:21
8:8
8:32
14:31
22:28
Leviticus
11:21
16:29
18:5
Numbers
6:27
12:6
28:2
12:6
Deuteronomy
4:7
4:8
4:10
4:14
4:32
4:34
7:3
10
10:8
13:3
18:15
18:15
29
30:6
30:12
32:9
32:43

12:23
17:18
27:26
30:11
30:12
32:21
32:39
Joshua
11:22
24:32
1 Samuel
1:3
8:5
8:7
15:28
16:14
24:9
2 Samuel
11:27
14:17
19:27
24:16
1 Kings
5:7
8:23
17:23
2 Kings
6:17
2:11
4:34
19:15
Job
1:12
2:7
4:7
Psalms
1
16:10
20:7
31:6
34:8
44:22
44:23
46:5

46:5
49:15
50:15
65:2
69:9
82:6
89:20
90:3
91:11
110:1
112:9
118:22
118:22
130:4
132:3
132:14
14:3
23:4
27:3
27:3
69:9
69:10
73:4
80:1
81:10
95:7
95:8
115:3
116:10
132:14
138:8
Proverbs
15:8
16:18
16:33
19:17
21:30
Isaiah
2:3
6:6
10:22
11:2
11:4
14:13

14:13
14:14
19:18
23:8
37:14
43:22
48:16
53:4
53:5
55:3
58:7
61:1
65:1
65:16
66:2
66:2
66:5
66:21
8:10
9:2
11:1
20:2
23:18
37:6
42:16
49:6
53:4-8
60:2
66:1
Jeremiah
4:2
17:24
31:34
1:19
5:3
27:2
32:7
Ezekiel
1:4
11:19
11:19
20
20:18
32:40

33:7
37:4
3:18
3:18
3:20
12:5
34:4
Daniel
9:26
10:5
10:12
9:24
Hosea
14:2
Joel
2:29
Amos
5:25
Habakkuk
1:5
Malachi
4:4-6
3:1
Matthew
5:1
5:43
5:44
6:9
7:7
7:7
7:7
10:5
10:7
10:14
11:13
11:28
13:12
13:12
13:17
15:22
15:26
17:5
18:10
18:20

22:32
22:42
24
25:21
26:56
26:70
27:3
27:57
28:20
3:6
3:8
3:15
5:9
5:22
5:39
10:10
11:30
11:30
13:14
22:29
23:13
27:52
28:1
28:20
Mark
1:15
4
6:13
16:15
16:15
16:15
16:15
16:16
16:16
16:47
1:25
4:12
Luke
2:35
2:35
2:42
6:13
8:13
9:5

10:11
10:16
10:16
10:24
12:47
13:21
14:28
21
21:2
24:19
24:25
24:26
24:47
24:48
1:16
1:76
2:29
2:34
2:35
4:35
8:10
10:24
10:39
21:18
23:5
24:1
John
1:14
1:32
1:32
2
3:30
3:30
3:36
4:9
4:25
5
5:24
5:25
5:46
5:47
6:37
6:70
7

7:38
7:39
10
10:9
10:12
10:13
11:18
12
14:6
14:15
14:16
14:25
14:26
15:26
16:7
16:7
16:22
17:3
17:13
18:34
18:36
19:35
19:36
20:22
21:25
1:4
4:22
4:24
5:29
7:18
8:44
10:16
12:37
12:40
17:6
20:1
Acts
1:1-2
1:3-5
1:5
1:6-8
1:8
1:9-11
1:12-14

1:15-22
1:18
1:23-26
2
2:1-4
2:14-21
2:22-24
2:25-31
2:27
2:32-36
2:37-39
2:40-42
2:43-45
2:46-47
3:1-11
3:12-16
3:17-21
3:22-24
3:23
3:25-26
4
4:1-4
4:13-18
4:19-23
4:24-31
4:28
4:32
4:32-37
5:1-6
5:5
5:7-11
5:12-16
5:17-26
5:27-28
5:29-33
5:34-39
5:40-42
6:1-6
6:6
6:7-10
6:11-15
7
7
7:1-4

7:9-16
7:17-19
7:20-29
7:30-34
7:35-37
7:38-41
7:42-43
7:44-50
7:54-58
7:58-61
8:1-4
8:5-13
8:14-17
8:18-25
8:26-31
8:32-35
8:36-40
9:1-5
9:6-9
9:10-12
9:13-16
9:17-19
9:19-25
9:26-31
9:32-35
9:36-38
9:39-43
10:1-6
10:7-16
10:17-23
10:23-29
10:30-33
10:34-38
10:39-43
10:44-48
11:1-18
11:19-24
11:25-26
11:27-30
12:1-5
12:6-11
12:12-19
12:19-25
13:1-3

13:4-12
13:8
13:13-15
13:16-23
13:24-26
13:27-31
13:32-37
13:38-42
13:42-45
13:46-52
17:30
17:31
20:16
20:28
22:3
22:9
1:5
5:34
5:36
5:41
6:5
7:49
9:36
10:26
10:47
11:6
11:28
12:12
12:23
13:46
13:51
14:1-4
14:5-10
14:11-13
14:14-18
14:17
14:19-22
14:23
14:23-28
15:1-5
15:6-11
15:9
15:12-18
15:19-21

15:20
15:22-29
15:30-35
15:36-41
16:1-5
16:6-10
16:11-15
16:16-22
16:23-28
16:29-34
16:35-40
16:37
17:1-4
17:5-10
17:11
17:11-15
17:16-21
17:22-25
17:26-29
17:30-34
18:1-5
18:6-11
18:12-17
18:18-23
18:24-28
19:1-7
19:8-12
19:13-17
19:18-22
19:23-28
19:29-34
19:35-40
20:1-6
20:4
20:7-13
20:14-21
20:22-27
20:28-32
20:33-38
21:1-6
21:7-14
21:15-25
21:18
21:26-30

21:31-40
22:1-5
22:6-11
22:12-15
22:17-22
22:23-30
23:1-5
23:6-9
23:10-16
23:11
23:17-24
23:25-35
24:1-9
24:10-21
24:22-27
25:1-8
25:9-12
25:13-21
25:22-27
26:1-8
26:9-18
26:19-23
26:23
26:24-32
27:1-8
27:9-20
27:21-32
27:33-44
28:1-6
28:7-14
28:15-20
28:21-24
28:25-31
Romans
1:1
1:4
1:10
1:16
1:16
1:17
1:28
1:28
2:25
2:28

3:26
4:11
4:16
4:17
4:17
4:19
5:10
6:4
6:4
6:6
6:6
6:6
6:10
8:37
9:7
10:4
10:4
10:6
10:10
10:14
10:17
11:16
11:23
12:2
12:19
14:4
14:17
14:23
15:6
15:6
15:8
15:16
15:16
15:16
15:18
16:25
1:16
1:20
1:21
1:23
1:25
2:12
3:11
4:10

8:7
11:5
11:5
11:7
11:8
11:33
13:3
14:1
14:2
14:14
14:17
15:9
15:10
15:11
16:25
16:25
1 Corinthians
2:2
2:8
3
3
3:7
3:7
3:11
3:12
3:16
3:16
3:17
4:7
6:9
6:19
9:5
9:9
9:10
10:4
12
12:4
12:28
12:28
13:3
14:18
15:15
15:17
15:23

15:25
15:42
15:51
15:52
15:54
45:37
1:1
1:14
1:26
2:3
3:6
3:6
4:6
6:1
7:19
7:20
8:8
9:2
9:12
9:14
9:15
9:15
9:20
9:20
10:25
10:25
10:25
11:6
11:19
13:12
14:3
14:24
15:23
15:23
2 Corinthians
1:19
1:20
1:20
2:16
2:16
2:16
3
3:6
3:15

5:19
5:20
5:21
8:6
9:7
11:14
41:9
2:15
2:16
3:7
3:15
4:3
4:3
6:5
6:5
7:5
11:2
11:8
11:10
11:14
11:25
11:27
12:1
Galatians
1:1
1:2
1:12-24
1:17
2:9
3
3:2
3:2
3:7
3:16
3:16
3:27
3:27
3:28
6:9
6:17
1:8
2:3
2:9
3:2

3:24
3:26
4:4
4:10
5:1
6:6
6:17
6:17
Ephesians
1:21
1:22
2:3
2:11
2:11
2:12
2:14
2:14
2:14
2:14
2:14
2:16
2:17
3:3
3:4
3:6
4:9
4:10
4:10
4:11
4:15
4:22
5:5
6:19
2:10
2:12
2:14
2:14
3:9
4:1
4:6
4:11
4:23
Philippians
1:21

2:7
2:10
3:21
4:7
1:6
1:18
3:20
3:21
4:6
4:10
4:16
Colossians
1:14
1:15
1:24
2
2:13
2:14
3:3
3:3
2:11
2:11
2:12
2:14
2:16
1 Thessalonians
4:17
5:7
2:13
2 Thessalonians
2:9
2:11
2:12
2 Timothy
2:9
2:11
4:10
2:9
2:24
4:2
4:14
4:16
Titus
1:7

1:12
1:13
3:5
3:5
3:5
3:15
3:16
1:7
1:9
1:9
1:14
1:15
1:15
1:18
1:20
3:3
3:7
3:9
3:10
3:16
3:16
Hebrews
1:1
1:2
2:16
4:12
5:5
6:6
7:1
7:6
8:5
8:5
13:15
1:1
3:7
3:8
11:3
13:8
James
2:5
1:10
1 Peter
1:2
5:5

1:5
2:13
1 John
4:1
Revelation
2:15
Judges
7:22
1 Timothy
2:4
2:8
3
4:7
4:8
5:17
5:17
2 Peter
2:8

Latin Words and Phrases

- A Christo: 1
- A Domino: 1
- A frustratione: 1
- A nobis povocetur: 1
- Ab ejus congressu minus abhorreat: 1
- Ab infausto trocinio: 1
- Ab invocatione et cultu Dei: 1
- Ab ultima aetate: 1
- Ab una urbe: 1
- Ab unico magistro: 1
- Abhorret: 1 2
- Absurdum: 1 2
- Abysso: 1
- Ac dolerent etiam mali sui sensu; neque enim naturam prorsus exuerent: 1
- Ac libentor cursum reflecterent: 1
- Accedit huc quoque obstinata mentiendi audacia: 1
- Accepit hospitio: 1
- Accommodat: 1
- Accommodatus fuit: 1
- Acquieverint: 1
- Acumen: 1
- Ad annum quadragesimum: 1
- Ad cohibendos plebis impetus: 1
- Ad conferendum baptismum: 1
- Ad diaconiam: 1
- Ad diem festum: 1
- Ad eorum dicta attentiores: 1
- Ad extermum: 1
- Ad ignaviam vel tarditatem: 1
- Ad nos docendos: 1
- Ad nostrum agnotheten: 1
- Ad patientiam: 1
- Ad plagam infligendam: 1
- Ad res praeclaras gerendas aptus est: 1
- Ad se trahat: 1
- Ad templi cultum: 1

- Ad vesperum: 1
- Ad vivum depicta: 1
- Adeo tamen intemperanter se gerunt: 1
- Adhibitam fuisse prudentiam: 1
- Admirable speculum: 1
- Adoptio: 1
- Advenis… hospitibus: 1
- Adventitiae mixturae: 1
- Affinitatem: 1
- Aggregare: 1
- Alienorum: 1
- Alios nullo metu fuisse deterritos quin furiose adversus Ecclesiam saevirent: 1
- Aliquot…saecula: 1
- Aliud studium, alius fervor, alia assiduitas exigitur: 1
- Ambigua: 1
- Ambigua lequtio: 1
- Ambitu: 1
- Anathemate ferire: 1
- Animi magnitudine: 1
- Animi magnitudo: 1
- Animosiores: 1
- Annon praeponderet cibus humanis consiliis: 1
- Annon quasi fodiendi sumus: 1
- Ansa praecisa est: 1
- Antesignanus: 1
- Antevertat: 1
- Antevertere: 1
- Antithesis: 1
- Antivertere: 1
- Anxia: 1
- Anxia excusatio: 1
- Anxietate: 1 2 3
- Apertam veritatis lucem: 1
- Apostata: 1
- Apostaticis: 1
- Appendix: 1
- Apposito: 1
- Apte deduci: 1
- Apud quas recepta erat illa lectio: 1
- Apud quos verbum suum deposuit: 1
- Archetypum: 1
- Architectos: 1
- Arculam: 1

- Argento potitus non est: 1
- Articulate: 1
- Artificium: 1
- Astrologia: 1
- Asylum: 1
- Athletas in arenam: 1
- Atqui hoc ordine prius erat, habere boni et mali discrimen, ne temere quicquam improbetur: 1
- Atqui in primis renunciandum erat mundo: 1
- Atqui pessimam et iniquissimam mercedem reportat: 1
- Atrocitatem sceleris: 1
- Audacius: 1
- Augustini argutiam: 1
- Avocamenta: 1
- Benefici: 1
- Blanditiis mulceri: 1
- Bonorum et malorum discrimen a nobis tolli: 1
- Caeco et praecipite impetu: 1
- Candide… probat: 1
- Cantillant: 1
- Captarunt: 1
- Carnis ratio: 1
- Certos testes: 1
- Chiliastas: 1
- Christi: 1
- Christi nomen: 1
- Christum spoliemus: 1
- Circuitu: 1
- Circumvenire: 1
- Clarius: 1
- Coactum: 1
- Codices: 1 2 3 4
- Codicibus: 1
- Commode: 1
- Communi sacerdotum concilio: 1
- Communiter: 1
- Completa: 1
- Complexa: 1
- Compositi: 1
- Conciliant: 1
- Confidant: 1
- Conflata est: 1
- Consequimur: 1
- Consternati: 1

- Constituat suo arbitrio: 1
- Consulataret: 1
- Consulit: 1
- Consumptio exundavit: 1
- Contextus: 1 2
- Contumaciter rejicient: 1
- Converso: 1
- Criminis atrocitatem: 1
- Cujus manu in ea, tanquam in statione, ad tempus locati sunt: 1
- Cujus praeludium: 1
- Cum accessione: 1
- Cum plebe tamencommunicarent sua consilia: 1
- Cupiant: 1
- Cur ergo nunc demum ad gentes se convertit, quasi earurn vocatio ex electi populi infidelitate pendeat: 1
- De patribus apostatis: 1
- Debuit: 1
- Dedecore: 1
- Deformen vasitatem: 1
- Defuncti sunt: 1
- Defunctorie: 1 2 3
- Degeneres: 1 2
- Dei: 1
- Delicias: 1
- Delirium: 1
- Demum: 1
- Depositum: 1
- Desertor: 1
- Detracta baptismo spolia: 1
- Deum precari: 1
- Deum… fabricari: 1
- Dexteritas: 1
- Differt: 1
- Difficultas monstratur: 1
- Discuti: 1
- Distrahitur: 1
- Divinitus vocatum esse eum de quo agitur: 1
- Divinum hominem: 1
- Divortium facere: 1
- Docere: 1
- Doctoris partes implet: 1
- Domare: 1
- Donec promoveat: 1
- Dubium est: 1

- Dura et aspera Paulo adhuc tironi rudimenta haec fuerunt: 1
- Eadem in parentibus et dominis ratio: 1
- Eadum ipsum sympathia tangi: 1
- Eam non negligit: 1
- Eam ubique coluerunt: 1
- Eamque exorcismis non secus elici putant e coelo: 1
- Ecliptica: 1
- Editae: 1
- Efficaciam: 1
- Effugium: 1 2
- Effugium in allegorico sensu captant: 1
- Effutire: 1
- Ejus auspiciis et mandato: 1
- Elegi communibus suffragiis: 1
- Eludunt: 1
- Emergeret: 1
- Emeriti: 1
- Enim consilium Lucae fuit: 1
- Eniti: 1
- Eorum suffragiis: 1
- Epitheto: 1
- Erectos: 1
- Esse mendum: 1
- Esse rebelles: 1
- Et clanculum: 1
- Et compactis arbustis magis abundat: 1
- Et extra rem vagari: 1
- Et mactationi subjectum: 1
- Et probabilis est uterque contextus: 1
- Et restituat in vitam: 1
- Et salutis: 1
- Et ultimum bonum: 1
- Evanescere: 1
- Evangelii doctrinam sparsisse: 1
- Ex duobus absurdis alterutrum: 1
- Ex hoc loco et similibus vulgo colligunt: 1
- Ex nostro stupore: 1
- Ex professo: 1
- Ex sensu Divinae Majestatis: 1
- Ex suis provinciis: 1
- Ex veris principiis perversam consequentiam deducit: 1
- Exasperet: 1
- Excellentiam quae obeundo muneri par futura esset: 1
- Exhibitionem: 1

- Exhibitum: 1
- Exilium populi: 1
- Expavefactum: 1
- Experietur: 1
- Experti sunt: 1 2
- Experto sunt: 1
- Expiandis: 1
- Expiantur: 1
- Expiatione: 1
- Expiationem… peccati: 1
- Expungere: 1
- Exsugunt: 1
- Extemplo ad Supplicium rapi: 1
- Extinguendam: 1
- Extinguere: 1
- Extra eam: 1
- Exulant: 1
- Facem resignamus: 1
- Fallacibus spectris: 1
- Famelicus inhiare mavult: 1
- Familiariter: 1
- Fanatici quidam: 1
- Farragine: 1
- Fastidio pleni: 1
- Feroces illorum spiritus: 1
- Ferrea improbitas: 1
- Ferventissimum: 1
- Festis diebus: 1
- Fidei sinum aperiamus Deo: 1
- Fidei subserviunt: 1
- Fidem figere: 1
- Fides et miracula: 1
- Filio Dei: 1
- Flagitio: 1
- Flectandae: 1
- Flectant ad lenitatem: 1
- Foedae socordiae: 1
- Fortitudine: 1
- Fortitudine et prudentia: 1
- Fortuito: 1
- Fratricidae: 1
- Frena iracundiae suae laxare: 1
- Frugaliter: 1
- Fuisse intentum: 1

- Fulminasset: 1
- Fultura: 1
- Furiose impetunt: 1
- Generaliter de gratia regenerationis: 1
- Gentile… nomen: 1
- Genuino: 1
- Genuinum: 1
- Geographi: 1
- Gratam habeat ac probet: 1
- Gravabant: 1
- Haabet male: 1
- Hac cura involvi: 1
- Hac in parte omnes fuisse hallucinatos: 1
- Haec heroica animi magnitudo: 1
- Haerebit: 1
- Haesissent attoniti: 1
- Hallucinationes in spectris: 1
- Hanc quaestionem lepide diremit Papa: 1
- Hebraismis: 1
- Hic enim erit status: 1
- Histrionici Dei cultores: 1
- Hoc ab initio mundi fuit ingenium, et erit usque in finem: 1
- Hoc enim exigit relatio ut membra inter se respondeant: 1
- Hoc principium quod Paulus tradit Christum esse finem legis: 1
- Hoc tirocinio ad crucem ferendam mature assuefactus fuit: 1
- Homo… stupidus: 1
- Hortatur: 1
- Humanitatis officio se qpud Deum redimere volunt: 1
- Hunc qui titulum sibi… arrogabant: 1
- Hypostasin non designet: 1
- Id nimiae forsan timiditatis fuit: 1
- Idem semper erit finis: 1
- Idiota: 1
- Idiotae: 1
- Ignavia: 1
- Ignominosam: 1
- Ililari: 1
- Illi Deus gratiam conciliat: 1
- Illis valere jussis: 1
- Illis… importari: 1
- Illius dignitas: 1
- Illius os: 1
- Illud arriperet: 1
- Illustre: 1

- Illustre documentum: 1
- Imbutae: 1
- Immodica illa anxietate: 1
- Impediunt ac turbant: 1
- Impetum: 1
- Impia et nefaria conspiratione: 1
- Impliciti: 1
- Impostura: 1
- Imposturis et fraudibus: 1
- Improprie: 1
- Impune: 1
- In angustum locum fuisse constrictos: 1
- In arbitrio nostro: 1
- In commune: 1
- In duces et capita animadverti solet: 1
- In ejus morte: 1
- In fumum abeunt: 1
- In illud praecipitium ruamus: 1
- In melius: 1
- In membris omnibus: 1
- In obsequium Dei: 1
- In populo turbulento et prope indomito: 1
- In prima acie: 1
- In seipsis convicti: 1
- In veteri: 1
- In victimam: 1
- Inane duntaxat esset spectrum: 1
- Inane…nomen: 1
- Inanes virtutum larvae: 1
- Incitat: 1
- Inculcant: 1
- Inculcasset: 1
- Incuria: 1
- Indefatigabili: 1
- Indefessis animis: 1
- Indigenis: 1
- Indulget: 1
- Inepta esset loquutio: 1
- Inepta et absurda erit loqutio, quod Spiritus Sanctus dixerit: 1
- Infensos illi: 1
- Infestis clamoribus: 1
- Inflicta: 1
- Ingens numerus: 1
- Ingenti moerore confundi: 1

- Ingenue: 1
- Ingurgitarunt: 1
- Inhumaniter: 1
- Initium et praeparatio conversionis ad ipsum: 1
- Inobedientiae et contumaciae: 1
- Inquilinis: 1
- Insana cupidine: 1
- Insaniant: 1
- Insipida… aemulatio: 1
- Insoltus: 1
- Instillat: 1
- Interdictis: 1
- Intermedio Sabbatho: 1
- Intra privates parietes se teneret: 1
- Ita impiae defectiones cremen avertit: 1
- Ita loqui de rebus probe compertis: 1
- Ita nulla ratio prohibuit quin Judaeis promiscue et Gentibus operam suam conferrent: 1
- Judaeas: 1
- Judicem a causa abducunt: 1
- Larvatos Ecclesiae praesules: 1
- Latine: 1
- Latius exponit: 1
- Lectoribus obscura essent: 1
- Lente: 1 2
- Leves et inconsiderati homines: 1
- Liberalis et regia castigatio: 1
- Libere: 1
- Liberius in otio et quiete: 1
- Librarii: 1
- Librariorum: 1
- Licentiam: 1
- Linguae commercium: 1
- Longe dissitas: 1
- Longe diversa est ratio: 1
- Luculenter: 1
- Ludos celebraret: 1
- Magis sollicite: 1
- Magnifice ornatum: 1
- Male: 1
- Malorum: 1
- Martyrum probra: 1
- Mediatore interposito: 1
- Medii stare: 1

- Medium fuit temperamentum: 1
- Memorabilem: 1 2
- Memorabilis: 1
- Mentis alienatio: 1
- Mentis excessus: 1
- Migravit: 1
- Minus consentaneum: 1
- Minus dextre quam par esset: 1
- Misceri: 1
- Misere cruciari: 1
- Misere dissipatum: 1
- Modeste conferat: 1
- Modo: 1
- Modulo: 1
- Molliter quiescere: 1
- Momento uno: 1
- Momentum: 1
- Monumentum: 1
- Morti addictum: 1
- Multis locis: 1
- Multum institisse: 1
- Munus: 1
- Musto: 1
- Mutationi: 1
- Mutilum: 1
- Mutuis caedibus: 1
- Nam et externa beneficentia nisi oriatur ex corde, nihili est coram Deo: 1
- Nam mox retro vela flexissent, nisi novum vigorem dedisset ex gaudio nata alacritas: 1
- Nam ut non semper et ubique praesto sint magi qui negotium nobis facessant: 1
- Nati in contempto angulo: 1
- Nativum: 1
- Naturae autem vitium: 1
- Ne census ageretur: 1
- Ne fallax sit ac lusoria: 1
- Ne pigeat: 1
- Ne quis putet: 1
- Nec solliciti sunt si quisquam egeat: 1
- Nec video quorsum attineat ejusmodi subterfugia quaerere: 1
- Nefarium: 1
- Neglecta pietate: 1
- Negligi: 1

- Neminem ex apostolis illi Deus obtulerit: 1
- Nempe… agnoscit: 1
- Nepotes ac pronepotes: 1
- Neque enim Stephanum ignominia notat Lucas: 1
- Neque enim mihi probabile est: 1
- Neque enim simplex admlratio hie notatur, sed ecstasis, quae hominem extra se rapit: 1
- Neque tamen humani quidquam passum: 1
- Neque vero mea interest: 1
- Nihil Herocli fuisse minus in animo: 1
- Nihil absurdi est si partem alteram praetereat: 1
- Nihil se minus captare: 1
- Nihil… fingi potest: 1
- Nimiae: 1
- Nisi ex: 1
- Nisi sua infidelitate degenerent: 1
- Nobis obrepat: 1
- Non carnis nostrae sensu: 1
- Non dubitaverant: 1
- Non esse mirum aut insolens: 1
- Non esse periculum ne unquam nos ac fidem nostram frustratur: 1
- Non est quod perversa eorum judicia amplius moretur: 1
- Non exercuisse in collegas imperium: 1
- Non ita necessariius: 1
- Non laboriosa modo, sed obnoxia sinistris murmuribus: 1
- Non nisi Dei manu: 1
- Non posse eos nisi ex Dei mandato praecipere: 1
- Non procrastinat, sed moras omnes rampit: 1
- Non tamen falsis testimoniis est oppremendus: 1
- Nondum tamen soluta est difficultas: 1
- Nonnisi per populum stetisse quominus levationem citius sentiret: 1
- Nos ad diffidentiam natura plusquam propensi: 1
- Nostra socordia: 1
- Novis rebus: 1
- Nullosque non moveant lapides: 1
- Nundinationi: 1
- OEconomia: 1
- Obcundis: 1
- Obidentia: 1
- Obliqua excusatione: 1
- Oblique: 1 2
- Oblique refutat: 1
- Obmuteceret: 1
- Obscurae fortunas: 1

- Obstrependi: 1
- Occulti fraudis recessus: 1
- Occupationes: 1
- Oculis: 1
- Odor: 1
- Offendicula: 1
- Offendiculos: 1
- Olim: 1
- Omnes… promiscue: 1
- Omnia machinando: 1
- Opera Ananiae formatum: 1
- Operosum: 1
- Oppositas suis capitibus: 1
- Oppportune: 1
- Ordinarium Ecclesiae regimen: 1
- Otiosa frigidaque notitia: 1
- Paedagogiam: 1
- Parabat: 1
- Parcatur: 1
- Partes nostras non omittamus: 1
- Parum rationi consentareum: 1
- Passim occurrunt: 1
- Pastores tamen moderentur: 1
- Patienter foverint: 1
- Pauci exules ac profugi: 1
- Peccant: 1
- Per dubias ambages: 1
- Per eum non stetisse quominus in sensum reprobum conjectus, cum aliis periret: 1
- Per fidem: 1
- Per innumeros anfractus: 1
- Per summas difficultates regno potitus est: 1
- Per varias manus: 1
- Perdimus: 1
- Perfidia: 1
- Perfidiae: 1
- Pergendo secure: 1
- Perpetuam. quietem: 1
- Perspicaces: 1
- Perstringere: 1
- Perstringit: 1 2
- Perversus cultus fuit: 1
- Pervicaciam: 1
- Petamus: 1

- Petrum ad causam dicendam libenter descendere quum ejus factum improbatur: 1
- Petulantla: 1
- Phantasmatibus ac spectris: 1
- Pietatis: 1 2
- Pignoris instar: 1
- Placida: 1
- Plaudente: 1
- Plusquam ferrea: 1
- Ponat obicem: 1
- Populo grati atque probati essent: 1
- Populos: 1
- Possint: 1
- Praecedit: 1
- Praecise: 1
- Praeclarum in speciem et memorabile: 1
- Praeludia: 1
- Praepostera: 1
- Praestantior esset: 1
- Praesules: 1
- Praetextus: 1
- Pravitate: 1
- Praxitati: 1
- Precandi studium: 1
- Precatione momenti: 1
- Primaria sedes: 1
- Primarium exemplar: 1
- Primatum: 1
- Principio quidem erat hoc clusorium: 1
- Pro certo: 1
- Pro confesso sumit: 1
- Pro crasso suo ingenio nihil nisi terrenum et carnale apprehenderent: 1
- Pro modo inaequali: 1
- Probandum: 1
- Probaret: 1
- Probate fidei: 1
- Probatum: 1
- Probe fuisse testatem: 1
- Procul abigendo: 1
- Prodigia: 1
- Profectus: 1
- Progressum: 1
- Proinde ei probari: 1

- Promiscue: 1 2 3
- Promiscue miscere: 1
- Prophetia admoniti: 1
- Propter ejus absentiam: 1
- Propulset: 1
- Prorsus exterminatum: 1
- Proterviam: 1
- Protinus: 1 2
- Providentiae: 1
- Providi homines: 1
- Provocassent: 1
- Prudentia: 1 2
- Prudentiae usum esse patrem: 1
- Pudore confusi: 1
- Putida… figmenta: 1
- Quae ad aequitatem revocet: 1
- Quae fulgere… debuit: 1
- Quae in evangelii summa praetermitti minime debuerat: 1
- Quae omnes illorum delicias violenter discutit: 1
- Quae peculiaris esset Judaeis qui Jerosolymam ex provinciis comeabant: 1
- Quae pretium illis statuit: 1
- Quae sanctae communicatione januam claudit: 1
- Quaeritur tamen: 1
- Quam alias referri: 1
- Quam in edito et undique experto ac patente loco et constituti: 1
- Quam in mendaciis causae suae praesidium constituere: 1
- Quam plurimos: 1
- Quam pro nihilo ducendum sit quicquid decernunt et jubent: 1
- Quamvis immensa locorum distamia sit remotus: 1
- Quando nullus illuc emergere potest: 1
- Quanquam nec sic quidem soluta erit tota difficultas: 1
- Quanto majorem vim ab hominibus percipi aequium est: 1
- Quantum… deberet: 1
- Quantus… torpor: 1
- Quas petere licebit ex Harmonia: 1
- Quasi accidentale erat: 1
- Quasi apparitores: 1
- Quasi legis contemptor: 1
- Quasi obruebat: 1
- Quasi per cuniculos: 1
- Quasi sepulta: 1
- Quasi sepultam: 1
- Qui arctiore vinculo inter se conjuncti sunt: 1

- Qui eos ab efficio abducat: 1
- Qui exterminentur: 1
- Qui impiorum aures deliciis mulceri volunt, non tam respicere profectum: 1
- Qui ingressum obstruat doctrinae: 1
- Qui oriundi essent ex Graecis: 1
- Qui sibi veniam praecidunt: 1
- Qui sponte in ordinem se cogit: 1
- Quibus alibi magis distracti fuissent: 1
- Quibus obrepere suspieio poterat: 1
- Quibus possunt blanditiis: 1
- Quibus vix sufficerent: 1
- Quicquid Dei erat in piaculis: 1
- Quin aliquid simal… audesset: 1
- Quin erumpat in linguae exultationem: 1
- Quin se… subjiceret: 1
- Quin sibi multum placuerit in sua perspicacia: 1
- Quo magis notandum est Anniae exemplum, qui ad secundum mandatum moras omnes abrumpit: 1
- Quo nominie Graeci nunc quod aliis praestat, et tanquam melius praeferendum est nunc quodvis placitum designant: 1
- Quo significat publicam apostolis impositam esse personam, utque ad hoc peculiariter delectos esse: 1
- Quod autem Stephanum fecisse narrat Lucas: 1
- Quod autem omnibus exprobrat paucorum vitium: 1
- Quod liberum relinquo: 1
- Quod mature nascenti malo occurrunt: 1
- Quod non magis excandescunt apostoli: 1
- Quodam, ut ita loquar veterno obruti sunt: 1
- Quorum aemuli haberi volunt: 1
- Quorum perspicacia: 1
- Quotidianae ablutiones: 1
- Quotidie: 1
- Quum opera nostra uti velit Deus: 1
- Quum tam multa offendicula occurrerent: 1
- Ratio ejus et natura: 1
- Re ipsa impios coarguit: 1
- Redditum sibi vigorem: 1
- Reditura: 1
- Reliqua pete: 1
- Reprobari: 1
- Reputent: 1
- Resipit: 1
- Respuenda: 1

- Restrictionem: 1
- Retractare: 1
- Robur exercituum: 1
- Salutis minister: 1
- Samaritae: 1
- Sceleris sui atrocitatem: 1
- Scissuram: 1
- Se adjungerent socios: 1
- Se horrori esse: 1
- Se sentiunt: 1
- Se… objecerit: 1
- Secundo: 1
- Secure: 1 2
- Sed horum malorum indignitas illis est devoranda: 1
- Sed in ea re non est multum momenti: 1
- Sed in eo nimio sunt praeposteri: 1
- Sed longa aliud fnit Dei consilium: 1
- Sed longe diversum praemium hodie reportat nostra incredulitas: 1
- Sed nos totos exuere: 1
- Sed qui suspensos tenet adeoque constrictos: 1
- Sed quia illis divinum aliquid subolet nostra doctrina: 1
- Sed rumpuntur: 1
- Sed tanum hoc quaerint: 1
- Sedulo igitur inculcat: 1
- Semideo: 1
- Semper inexpugnabiles: 1
- Serenissimum regem: 1
- Si fortuito quoslibet accipimus: 1
- Si multa eum latebant: 1
- Si noluisset causam ingredi: 1
- Si quis homicida: 1
- Si volumus ad scopum pervenire: 1
- Sibi affine: 1
- Sibi constiterit: 1
- Sic fuisse implicitos: 1
- Sicut alibi, quum dicit, absconditam esse mundi principibus evangelii sapientiam: 1
- Simplici Dei imperio: 1
- Simplicitas: 1
- Simul: 1
- Simulabant enim nihil sibi esse propositum quam: 1
- Sincero cordis affectu: 1
- Sine controversia: 1
- Sine freno: 1

- Sine involucris: 1
- Societam colant: 1
- Socii et consortes: 1
- Solida: 1
- Solidam et perfectam: 1
- Sonant: 1
- Spartae suae ornandae, (ut est in proverbio: 1
- Speciosi juris praetextus: 1
- Specula: 1
- Statas horas: 1
- Statim: 1 2
- Statim prodient in publicum: 1
- Statione: 1
- Stationes: 1
- Strenue impendant: 1
- Strenuitas: 1
- Stupeant: 1
- Sub vesperum: 1
- Subaudiendae sunt antitheses: 1
- Subaudire: 1
- Subinde sumus experti: 1
- Subito et intemperanter prosilire: 1
- Subito impetu: 1
- Subsannatores: 1
- Subterfugia: 1
- Subtiliter philosophemur: 1
- Suffragiis: 1
- Suggeret mihi: 1
- Suis imposturis fidem facerent magi: 1
- Suis suffragiis: 1
- Summa religio ne quis sumatur: 1
- Suo seculo: 1
- Superbo fastidio: 1
- Superciliose: 1
- Superet ac fugiat: 1
- Superiorem communi sorte: 1
- Superstites: 1
- Supra ingenii nostri captum: 1
- Suspensi: 1
- Suspensos tenuit: 1
- Suspensum allo: 1
- Suspensus licet atque… incertus: 1
- Sustinendo populo: 1
- Symbolum: 1

- Tacent omnes: 1
- Tacite admonet: 1
- Tali dissidio: 1
- Tam graviter: 1
- Tametsi probabilis est: 1
- Tanta crudelitate efferati sunt: 1
- Tanta in fingendis idolis, hominum lascivia fuerit: 1
- Tantum: 1
- Tempore: 1
- Tergiversandi causa: 1
- Tergiversari: 1
- Terror quo correptus est: 1
- Tetrum chaos: 1
- Theatri plausum appetamus: 1
- Tibi per manum meam: 1
- Timiditas: 1
- Tirocenio: 1
- Torvis aut lusciosis: 1
- Tot malis: 1
- Totem Ecclesiae gubernationem horrenda vastitate tunc fuisse confusam: 1
- Totidem ferulae: 1
- Totum fere diem: 1
- Totum humanum genus exosum illi esse et infensum: 1
- Tractent: 1
- Transferendo: 1
- Tumultuantes: 1
- Turmatim multi ad eam transirent: 1
- Tuti: 1
- Ubi nullus ecarguebat superstitionem: 1
- Ultro et ingenue: 1
- Un ejus fidem: 1
- Universae Ecclesiae: 1
- Universalem typum: 1
- Uno quasi impetu in eum versa fuerit: 1
- Usque ad summum fervorem efferamur: 1
- Ut apud se non essent: 1
- Ut communem terrae habitationem, communem aquae, aeris, et coeli usum pauperibus invideant: 1
- Ut de integro violentius saevirent: 1
- Ut de propinquo triumpho cogitare desinant: 1
- Ut det pares servis suis humeros: 1
- Ut doctrinam nostram reddant odiosam: 1
- Ut illis nocendi via non pateat: 1

- Ut ita loquar claudicaret: 1
- Ut more videbimus: 1
- Ut mutuo confecti: 1
- Ut oblique species frustrationis: 1
- Ut omnia profundant: 1
- Ut pacis esset interpres: 1
- Ut peregrinas linguas discere potuerint: 1
- Ut precibus nostris concedat: 1
- Ut pura aliquando ad Dei tribunal sisterentur: 1
- Ut quidam phrenetici delirant: 1
- Ut quotidiana Spiritus augmenta impetremus: 1
- Ut quum homines essent idiotae, summos Papatus theologes sola voce non minus quam fulmine attonitos redderent: 1
- Ut sanctae mulieris virtutibus non fuisse conforme sciremus, et in nomine parum honorifico fuisse quasi dejectam: 1
- Ut serviliter excipient: 1
- Ut sibi caveant et metuani: 1
- Ut solus emineat: 1
- Ut totum suum acumen ignorantiae damnans: 1
- Ut videri posset ab eo: 1
- Utilitas: 1
- Vacationem: 1
- Vacationem sibi sumit: 1
- Vacillaret: 1
- Valde… exosa: 1
- Valere sinamus: 1
- Vel anxietas vel scrupulus: 1
- Vel potius concisus: 1
- Velut in custodiam: 1
- Velut intermedios: 1
- Veluti cornici, uti proverbio dicitur, configere oculos: 1
- Vendicat: 1 2
- Venditant: 1
- Ventura esset: 1
- Vere mutasse: 1
- Verum fuisse fontem ex quo primum fluxit Christanismus: 1
- Veteribus: 1
- Vicissim: 1 2
- Victima expiatrix: 1
- Videtur hic oblique Stephanus Solomonem perstringere: 1
- Vim et energiam conjunctam: 1
- Violenter fracta: 1
- Viri fratres: 1
- Virtutem: 1

- Virtutes: 1
- Virulentos: 1
- Vivifica: 1
- Vulcano devoveant: 1
- Vulgo: 1
- Vult eam ad lucrum prostituere: 1
- Zelotae: 1
- A morte: 1
- A simplici ejus obsequio: 1
- AEmulatore: 1
- AEqua: 1
- Ab ilia genta… originem: 1
- Ab omni falsa obtrectatione: 1
- Ab ultima aeternitate: 1
- Abortivis: 1
- Abrupta esset: 1
- Absurdo: 1
- Absurdum: 1
- Ac flexuosis: 1
- Accessorium: 1
- Acerrimi zelotae legis suae: 1
- Acquiescit: 1
- Acsi quis fabulas narraret: 1
- Acumen: 1
- Acutiori ingenio: 1
- Ad aetates hoc restringere: 1
- Ad coarguendos: 1
- Ad coeleste tribunal: 1
- Ad docilitatem: 1
- Ad ejus impulsum: 1
- Ad ejus promissiones surdi: 1
- Ad humana media: 1
- Ad inferos: 1
- Ad mansuetudinem et sanam mentem: 1
- Ad necessitatem servandae logis: 1
- Ad praesidium: 1
- Ad rem ipsam quaerendam accedere: 1
- Ad se benigne invitet: 1
- Ad suas angustias: 1
- Adduntur jejunia, tamquam adminicula: 1
- Adjungit: 1
- Adventitiis: 1
- Adventu suo: 1
- Aenigmatice: 1

- Aequum: 1
- Afflictum: 1
- Affligit: 1
- Alacres: 1
- Alieni: 1
- Alieno solo: 1
- Aliis compluribus: 1
- Aliqua consternatione tanget: 1
- Aliquam regionem mediterraneam: 1
- Aliquid levationis in posterum afferret: 1
- Aliquid perfecerint: 1
- Aliquid procul de ipso subodoratum esse: 1
- Aliquo Dei sensu imbuti sunt: 1
- Amarulento: 1
- Ambagibus: 1
- Amplum materiam: 1
- Ampullis: 1
- An inde sperassent: 1
- An soli hoc privato officio faciunt: 1
- An voturn exeesserint in medio relinquo: 1
- Anabaptismum invebere: 1
- Anarchiam appetit: 1
- Anathematis: 1
- Animi praesentiam: 1
- Anticipant: 1
- Anticipat: 1
- Anxie se torqueant: 1
- Anxietate animi: 1
- Apostolis nihil minus esse in animo: 1
- Apparentiam: 1
- Applicuit: 1
- Aptas et commodas: 1
- Apud inferos: 1
- Areopagitis: 1
- Argutas: 1
- Argutiae: 1
- Assidue inculcaverat: 1
- Astutiae: 1
- Atqui utrumque respondet optima similitudo et partiurn omnium symmetria et conformitas: 1
- Atrociores: 1
- Atrocissimum: 1
- Attoniti: 1
- Attriti: 1

- Audaciae: 1
- Auspicia: 1
- Austerior est ac durior: 1
- Aut saltem paucis: 1
- Avelli: 1
- Barbaros: 1
- Bellare necesse est: 1
- Benigne et indulgenter: 1
- Caeco levitatis impetu: 1
- Capitale erat: 1
- Captant honestos praetextus: 1
- Carnis sensu: 1
- Carnis sensus: 1
- Catastrophe: 1
- Causae sit infensus: 1
- Cavendum… admonet: 1
- Celebre erat Ecclesiae hospitium: 1
- Centurionos… a tribuno assumptos: 1
- Certum qua ex causa accusaretur a Judaeis: 1
- Certum quidem est, sicuti unus est Deus, ita unam esse ejus veritatem: 1
- Cessatio: 1
- Circulatores: 1
- Circumscribi: 1
- Civis Romani: 1
- Clangente evangelii tuba: 1
- Classicum caught: 1
- Clausula: 1
- Codices: 1 2
- Collapsa erat: 1
- Colludere puellae daemonum cum Paulo: 1
- Colonia Romana: 1
- Coloniae: 1
- Color apprime speciosus: 1
- Commentum: 1
- Commune documentum nobis praebuit: 1
- Communicant cum Christo: 1
- Communis regulae praejudicium: 1
- Compescit: 1
- Composite: 1
- Concinna: 1
- Concinne: 1
- Condonent: 1
- Confusi: 1

- Consulantur geographi: 1
- Consulto…passus fuerit: 1
- Continua serie: 1
- Contumaciter insultaverint: 1
- Contumelia: 1
- Convelli: 1
- Crassius: 1
- Crimen velut ex trivio aereptum: 1
- Cum Pharisaeis: 1
- Cum majore…virtute: 1
- Cura et labore: 1
- Damnosa esse: 1
- De ejus vita sollicitos: 1
- De exitu ipsos celans: 1
- De hominibus ignotis: 1
- De modo visionis: 1
- De reddenda semel vitae ratione: 1
- Debere praejudicium fieri: 1
- Debiles et infirmas: 1
- Decus: 1
- Defunctorie: 1
- Degeneres: 1
- Dei imperio acquiescere: 1
- Delatus fuerat tanquam: 1
- Delibet: 1
- Densrios vel aliquod etiam praestantius numismatis genus: 1
- Deploranda: 1
- Deum statuis vel picturis figurare: 1
- Devota victima: 1
- Difficultas: 1
- Disceptaverunt: 1
- Discessionis: 1
- Dispersum fuisse aliquod prelatis semen: 1
- Disserebat: 1
- Do Epicuro: 1
- Doliis pertusis: 1
- Donaria: 1
- Donec ad vim inferendam sufficerent: 1
- Dubiis: 1
- Dum privatae jacturae dolorem prodit: 1
- Durior: 1
- Dux esset sormonis: 1
- E naufragio: 1
- Eadem omnes intemperie laborasse: 1

- Ebulliunt: 1
- Effugium sapit: 1
- Egit igitur callido artificio aliam personam quam ferret ejus natura: 1
- Ejus anctoritas: 1
- Ejus operam respui: 1
- Elici: 1
- Eliciunt: 1
- Eligere: 1
- Et alios quosvis sceleratos: 1
- Et coactum: 1
- Et horrendum semel fieri ultorem: 1
- Et proprius quasi manu conserta congressos esse: 1
- Eum opponit: 1
- Evangelli: 1
- Evanido: 1
- Ex carceribus: 1
- Ex contempto et ignobili trunco: 1
- Ex diametro inter se essent oppositae: 1
- Ex geographis: 1
- Ex professo infensum: 1
- Ex ruinis: 1
- Ex sua umbra et deliciis prodierant: 1
- Ex traduce Dei: 1
- Exacerbati: 1
- Exacta ratio: 1
- Exarsit: 1
- Exclament cum stupore: 1
- Exegetice: 1
- Exorelsmos: 1
- Experimur: 1
- Experti sumus: 1
- Expiata esse: 1
- Expiationis: 1
- Expostulasset: 1
- Extingueretur: 1
- Extremo remedio: 1
- Exules: 1
- Fabulati: 1
- Facessat: 1
- Familiariter… se insinuet: 1
- Fastidio: 1
- Ferociter repellunt: 1
- Ferrea immanitus: 1
- Ferreum: 1

- Fervent: 1
- Fidei semen: 1
- Fideles suos: 1
- Fiduciae: 1
- Figmento: 1
- Fiunt degeneres: 1
- Flabellum: 1
- Fortitudine: 1 2
- Fortuito: 1
- Fracta: 1
- Fraterne: 1
- Fraterne communicate: 1
- Fucum faceret: 1
- Fulturis: 1
- Futilis et stulta: 1
- Gentiles: 1
- Geographi: 1
- Geographis: 1
- Graeci codices: 1
- Hac tandem se projieiunt: 1
- Hic diversam rationem: 1
- Hoc compendio: 1
- Hoc modo: 1
- Hoc primum praepostere: 1
- Hominum turbam ad defectionem impulerat: 1
- Honorifice eum corrpellat: 1
- Hospitaliter: 1
- Huc accedit: 1
- Hujus accessionis: 1
- Humanitas et moderatio: 1
- Hunc enim finem inter alios habebant ceremoniae, ut sanctum Dei populum a profanis Gentilus discernerent; nunc sublato discrimine, ceremonias quoque abrogari convenit: 1
- Illatio ista: 1
- Illis longe superior: 1
- Imbiberant: 1
- Immane chaos: 1
- Imo libenter et cupide hoc captant effugium: 1
- Impreccatio: 1
- Impulsus: 1
- Impune violari: 1
- Impunitatis: 1
- Impuros et alienos: 1
- In adultis: 1

- In commune illorum dedecus: 1
- In communi… licentia: 1
- In diversas partes: 1
- In ejus obsequium conveniant: 1
- In eo nihil absurdi: 1
- In ergastulis: 1
- In horrendae desperationis abyssum: 1
- In mediis augustiis: 1
- In medio nostri: 1
- In officiis pictatis: 1
- In signum detestationis: 1
- In suis malis obstupuit: 1
- In summa potentia: 1
- In suo conducto: 1
- In tabula: 1
- In theatro: 1
- In umbra et extra teli jacturam: 1
- In verbis: 1
- Inchoato aedificio: 1
- Inculcat: 1
- Indifferenter: 1
- Indigetas et patrios: 1
- Indigna contumelia afficitur: 1
- Infausta: 1
- Inficere: 1
- Inflexibilis: 1
- Infractam: 1
- Ingenua: 1
- Ingenuam: 1
- Ingenuitas: 1
- Initient: 1
- Initio a promptitudine: 1
- Innnib: 1
- Insidiis: 1
- Institutio: 1
- Insulam: 1
- Intentos fuisse ad docendum, et in hoc opere assiduos: 1
- Interius consilium: 1
- Intermedio illo tempore: 1
- Intestinis: 1
- Intestinis dissidiis laborare: 1
- Ipse est solidum corpus: 1
- Ipso articulo: 1
- Ipsos cuiquam esse obnoxios: 1

- Ita causam suam acturum: 1
- Itaque addenda fuit exceptio: 1
- Jam praecesserat: 1
- Jam satis superque admonitus fuerat: 1
- Judicium populi: 1
- Jugo: 1
- Jus Romanae civitatis: 1
- Lancerios: 1
- Laqueo: 1
- Latebras nancisci poterat: 1
- Latronibus infesta: 1
- Legalem culture: 1
- Legitimi: 1
- Legitimum: 1
- Liberationes redimendae: 1
- Liquidam: 1
- Liquidum ejus rei judicium: 1
- Literalis: 1
- Locum: 1
- Locum adhuc habere apud Judaeos: 1
- Longe imparem: 1
- Lucri cupiditas: 1
- Ludicra: 1
- Lusoria: 1
- Magis remissa… tractatio: 1
- Magnum ergo pondus habet ista antithesis: 1
- Malam causam ipsos agere mala conscientia: 1
- Maligni… et injurii: 1
- Mallgnis rumoribus: 1
- Mausuetudo: 1
- Maxime uruntur: 1
- Mediocris: 1
- Mente aliena tam vel perplexum: 1
- Merum…ludicrum: 1
- Minime humanum: 1
- Minus hoc consternat pias mentes: 1
- Mirum est unde repserit quod legitur in Latinis codicibus: 1
- Moderatum: 1
- Morem gerit: 1
- Mundi pac: 1
- Nam quam difficilis et lenta sit dysenteriae curatio: 1
- Naturae infirmitati: 1
- Naufrago: 1
- Navis prodore: 1

- Ne inter eos quidem statim convenire potuit: 1
- Ne praasertim ubi jam principiis imbuti sumus: 1
- Ne quis esset usus: 1
- Nec amplius quicquam sapit: 1
- Nec praeficerentur certae staticni: 1
- Nec sapere: 1
- Nec se ad probandum offerre nisi suo arbitrio: 1
- Nec sereno gaudio potiuntur: 1
- Nec suscipitur causae cognitio: 1
- Nec tamen violenter trahamur: 1
- Nec vero absurdum est: 1
- Necesse fuisset altius sumere exordium: 1
- Nempe, vitandae ambiguitatis causa: 1
- Neque enim…. tutum fuisset in varia hospitia passim distribui: 1
- Nihil a tumultuosis et phreneticis, nihil a gladiatoribus differrent: 1
- Nihil esse absurdi si finem… imposuerit: 1
- Nihil minus in animo illis fuisse: 1
- Nihil minus… quam factum: 1
- Nihil se morari apostolos: 1
- Nimio Pauli rigori: 1
- Nimis indulgent: 1
- Nisi liabellis illis accensae fuissent ad resistendum: 1
- Nisi quatenus alio refertur: 1
- Nisi quod statui potest: 1
- Nititur et contentus est: 1
- Nobiles et plebeios: 1
- Nobis affulsit: 1
- Nobis suppetit facultas: 1
- Nocendi: 1
- Non dubitat: 1
- Non esse omnibus promiscue expositum: 1
- Non fuisse de nihilo confictum: 1
- Non negabant illi Corinthii debitam mercedem: 1
- Non obscurum est: 1
- Non quod: 1
- Non submisse agit: 1
- Nos terrore exanimet: 1
- Novi hospites: 1
- Nulla disciplina imbutum: 1
- Nulla interposita cognitione: 1
- Nullum sibi debere culpam imputari: 1
- Numen quodlibet. a se confictum: 1
- Numinis sui: 1
- Nuper molitus erat: 1

- Nutant: 1
- Oblique perstringere: 1
- Oblique… trajecerint: 1
- Obliquos sermones: 1
- Obnoxia sit: 1
- Obstructos esse Christo ingressus: 1
- Odiose traductus fuit: 1
- Odium in adversarios retorquet: 1
- Officio defungi: 1
- Omne tempii discrimen: 1
- Omnes ad unum: 1
- Omnes pariter: 1
- Omni infamiae genere: 1
- Omnium suffragiis: 1
- Operam suam locare: 1
- Operum: 1
- Opponit Christum daemoni: 1
- Opponitur: 1
- Optimum compendium: 1
- Optimum est non nasci; proximum vero, quam citissime mori: 1
- Oracula: 1
- Originem a veritate duxerant: 1
- Orthodoxae: 1
- Oscularentur venerabundi homines: 1
- Pacem et quitem fidelibus redimere: 1
- Pantheo successit Pantagion: 1
- Pariter: 1 2 3
- Parum consectianea: 1
- Parum opportune interpositum esset: 1
- Pauli infantia: 1
- Paulo et Barnabas aspergeri: 1
- Pedem loco non movit: 1
- Penitus: 1
- Pepercisse fratribus: 1
- Per dura exilia: 1
- Per forum: 1
- Per marius tradita jactabant: 1
- Per obliquas vias: 1
- Per rivos: 1
- Perfidis et malignis: 1
- Periculum est: 1
- Periculum subire: 1
- Perinde agit, acsi se misceret cum mortuo: 1
- Perplexi haerent: 1

- Pervertere: 1
- Perverterent ejus innocentiam: 1
- Pervicaciae: 1
- Pessimi incendii faces essent: 1
- Pestiferum: 1
- Pietatis officio: 1
- Plebi electionem permitti: 1
- Plerique: 1
- Plurimum deferret: 1
- Plus tamen et intestinis dissidiis est periculi ne anlmos nostros frangant vel debilitent: 1
- Politice: 1
- Popularibus: 1
- Praecedit: 1
- Praefectum praetorio cujus illud officium fuisse ex historiis satis notum est: 1
- Praefectus: 1
- Praeordinati: 1
- Praetoria: 1
- Pravitas: 1 2
- Premebant: 1
- Primarii: 1
- Privatim: 1
- Pro sensu carnis nostrae: 1
- Pro violento impulsu et extrinseco ut loquuntur: 1
- Probabile est: 1
- Probasset: 1
- Probatio: 1
- Probrose: 1
- Proconsules: 1
- Prolepsis: 1
- Promiscue: 1 2
- Prompti et strenui: 1
- Propagine: 1
- Propriam Spiritus hypostasin… in Dei essentia: 1
- Proprio carnis sensu: 1
- Proprio elogio: 1
- Propter: 1
- Propter inscitiam: 1
- Prorsus esse defixam: 1
- Protectos: 1
- Protinus: 1
- Prudenter vero Apostoli et Presbyteri Judam et Silam mittendos censuerunt, quo res minus suspecta esset: 1

- Pugnasset: 1
- Puram doctrinam: 1
- Quae Latinis auribus esset durior: 1
- Quae ad farinas valent: 1
- Quae alioqui pessum ibant: 1
- Quae esset zeli moderatio: 1
- Quae factio circiter illud tempus emerserit; imo ex Josephi historia colligitur jamtunc fuisse grassatos: 1
- Quae mentis sanitatem vel judicium illi eriperet: 1
- Quae nobis occulta est: 1
- Quaedam erat desperationis materia: 1
- Qualemcunque Dei cultum: 1
- Qualis ista est quam fingunt similitudo: 1
- Qualiter initiati fuerint Christo: 1
- Quam dextre accommodent: 1
- Quam miraculo praeparatus: 1
- Quam retuli: 1
- Quam sacrilegiis impunitatem dare: 1
- Quam ut classicum protinus caniant: 1
- Quam vivos et spitantes homines: 1
- Quanta confidentia, quale supercilium: 1
- Quantum habeant momenti primariae ecclesiae: 1
- Quasi insculpto sigillo apud eos sancivit: 1
- Quasi per cuniculos obrepit: 1
- Quasi turbas ipsi concitemus: 1
- Qui non prorsus erant degeneres: 1
- Qui non soldant foedus percutere: 1
- Qui poenam exigat: 1
- Quia illos jam sibi tenebat obnoxios: 1
- Quia proconsuli oblatu erat occasio urbis male mulctandae: 1
- Quid enim… affine habet: 1
- Quid illis exprobet Paulis: 1
- Quin amore ad: 1
- Quin tumultuose in eum insurrexeret vulgus: 1
- Quo minus sceleratis latronibus mactandum objiceret: 1
- Quo utitur Paulus: 1
- Quod Lucas nunc prosequitur: 1
- Quod deglutiendis tantum ovibus intenti: 1
- Quod humano sensu nondum comprehendi poterat: 1
- Quod nolint sine profectu tumultuare: 1
- Quod tumultuatur civitas in negotio pietatis: 1
- Quos Ephesi creaverat pastores: 1
- Quos illic imbiberunt mores: 1
- Quotidie: 1

- Rabiosum… impetum: 1
- Rationem reddere: 1
- Re ipsa: 1
- Reconditam eruditionem: 1
- Recte hactenus: 1
- Refixam: 1
- Remoti: 1
- Remotis: 1
- Reos: 1
- Repente effervent: 1
- Repressum: 1
- Res jam non erat integra: 1
- Respicit: 1 2
- Restringit, it: 1
- Rigidus exactor: 1
- Saevior procella: 1
- Salvae maneant: 1
- Salvificam: 1
- Sanciatur: 1
- Sancti hominis pectus: 1
- Schismate: 1
- Scripturae potius quam hominis laus est: 1
- Se accommodaret: 1
- Se apostolorum mentem tenere: 1
- Se… accommodent: 1
- Secundo tandem loco: 1
- Securibus: 1
- Sed ad inchoandum prorsus nulla: 1
- Sed colorem hunc malitiose obtendunt quaerendae invidiae causa. Non tanti erat apud Macedones religio, praesertim Judaica, ut ejus causa homines ignotos, protinus ad caedem raperent: 1
- Sed etiam cure impetu irruisse in turbam: 1
- Sed quam libet simus restricti: 1
- Sed recidisset in merum ludibrium: 1
- Seditionem… concitaverit: 1
- Semicinctia: 1
- Seque eo dictante statuisse quod scribunt: 1
- Serio: 1
- Sermocinandi: 1
- Sesterties an densrios: 1
- Si difficilis ad eum fuisset accessus: 1
- Si ex illiberali quaestu in diem vivunt: 1
- Si impetrasset: 1
- Si non annunciaveris ut se convertat: 1

- Si non pergant usque in illos esse injusti et crudeles: 1
- Sibi praesse: 1
- Sic Galli sacrifici magnae Cybeles caelibatum genuerunt: 1
- Sic praefati: 1
- Sicut magis idonei erant cognitores: 1
- Silentio… quin saltem expostulet graviter verbis cum pontifice: 1
- Simplex et genuina: 1
- Simplicius: 1
- Sincera fides: 1
- Sine aemulatione: 1
- Sine difficultate: 1
- Sine exceptione: 1
- Sine inspectione: 1
- Sine molestia: 1
- Sinistram: 1
- Sinistris ramoribus: 1
- Socios naufragii vana spe lactasse: 1
- Sola malevolentia impelli: 1
- Solatium: 1
- Solidioris: 1
- Sollicite: 1
- Specie: 1
- Specioso exilio: 1
- Speciosum colorem… cur ignoscat: 1
- Spem salutis: 1
- Spernendae ac respuendae: 1
- Sponsoris: 1
- Sponte: 1
- Sponte eandem cum Paulo fortunam subeat: 1
- Spoute vel plaeide: 1
- Sprevisset igitur alto animo: 1
- Statariae militia: 1
- Statim: 1
- Statim plane: 1
- Stratagema: 1
- Strenuus: 1
- Stulti homines: 1
- Stupidam: 1
- Sub praetextu charitatis: 1
- Sub umbra et in otio: 1
- Subeunda: 1
- Subinde: 1 2
- Subinde lasciviant: 1
- Succurrit: 1

- Suffragio: 1
- Summum bonum: 1
- Suo arbitrio: 1
- Suo marte: 1
- Suo praejudicio: 1
- Superare: 1
- Superba confidentia: 1
- Superiores essent: 1
- Supersedant: 1
- Synonnyma esse: 1
- Tacita antithesis: 1
- Tacita execratio: 1
- Tale praejudicium tulit: 1
- Tali stupore magis tolerabilis est: 1
- Talibus rudimentis: 1
- Tam acriter: 1
- Tandem succumbunt: 1
- Tantum: 1
- Temere: 1 2
- Temere transiliat: 1
- Temporale munus: 1
- Tergiversandi: 1
- Tertiam calumniam ex crimine seditionis concinnant: 1
- Tetrarchiam: 1
- Titillibat: 1
- Torpeamus: 1
- Trepidam vitam: 1
- Tribunum cohortis: 1
- Tribus modis: 1
- Tristium rerum: 1
- Trivialis nugator: 1
- Tu vero ne morem gesseris illis: 1
- Tumultuanture: 1
- Tumultuose: 1 2
- Tumultusos illos sicarios qui se etiam plausibili nomine vociferabant zelotas: 1
- Turmatim: 1 2
- Turpi perfidia: 1
- Tutum… non esse: 1
- Ubi ad infideles transiit: 1
- Ubi in nihilum redacta fuerint: 1
- Ullis difficultatibus: 1
- Ultro: 1
- Ultro sibi in crimen imputat: 1

- Unicum scopum: 1
- Unius hominis impulsu et libidine: 1
- Uno tenore: 1
- Unus Magister: 1
- Ut ad contumelias assuescamus: 1
- Ut clancullariis susurris in aurem proprii sacerdotes obmurmuret peccator: 1
- Ut familiariter in ejus sinum exonerent suos affeetus: 1
- Ut fieri solet: 1
- Ut homines ad mutuous conflictus accendat: 1
- Ut improborum hominum calumnias refelleret: 1
- Ut invidiam fugitent, aut periculem formident: 1
- Ut januam regno Dei aperirent: 1
- Ut sagaces sunt et acuti qui jus habent venale: 1
- Ut sui anathematis fulmen Petro et Paulo infligeret: 1
- Utrosque pariter allectos esse: 1
- Vacillat: 1
- Valde infesta: 1
- Valet inter nos: 1
- Vegetat: 1
- Vel inanem et fulinem: 1
- Vel severo et implacabili judice: 1
- Vel ut se subtraheret a curcis molestia: 1
- Ventosis suis clamoribus: 1
- Verbis non contenti: 1
- Verborum circuitu: 1
- Verum quamvis duciter accepti: 1
- Verum quia legis officium est: 1
- Veteranos: 1
- Vicissim: 1
- Victoria: 1
- Videri poterat: 1
- Viguit: 1
- Vilissimas: 1
- Vocem audisse, neminem vidisse: 1
- Vulgo hominum: 1
- correptus fuerit: 1
- induceretur: 1
- sestertii an densrios: 1