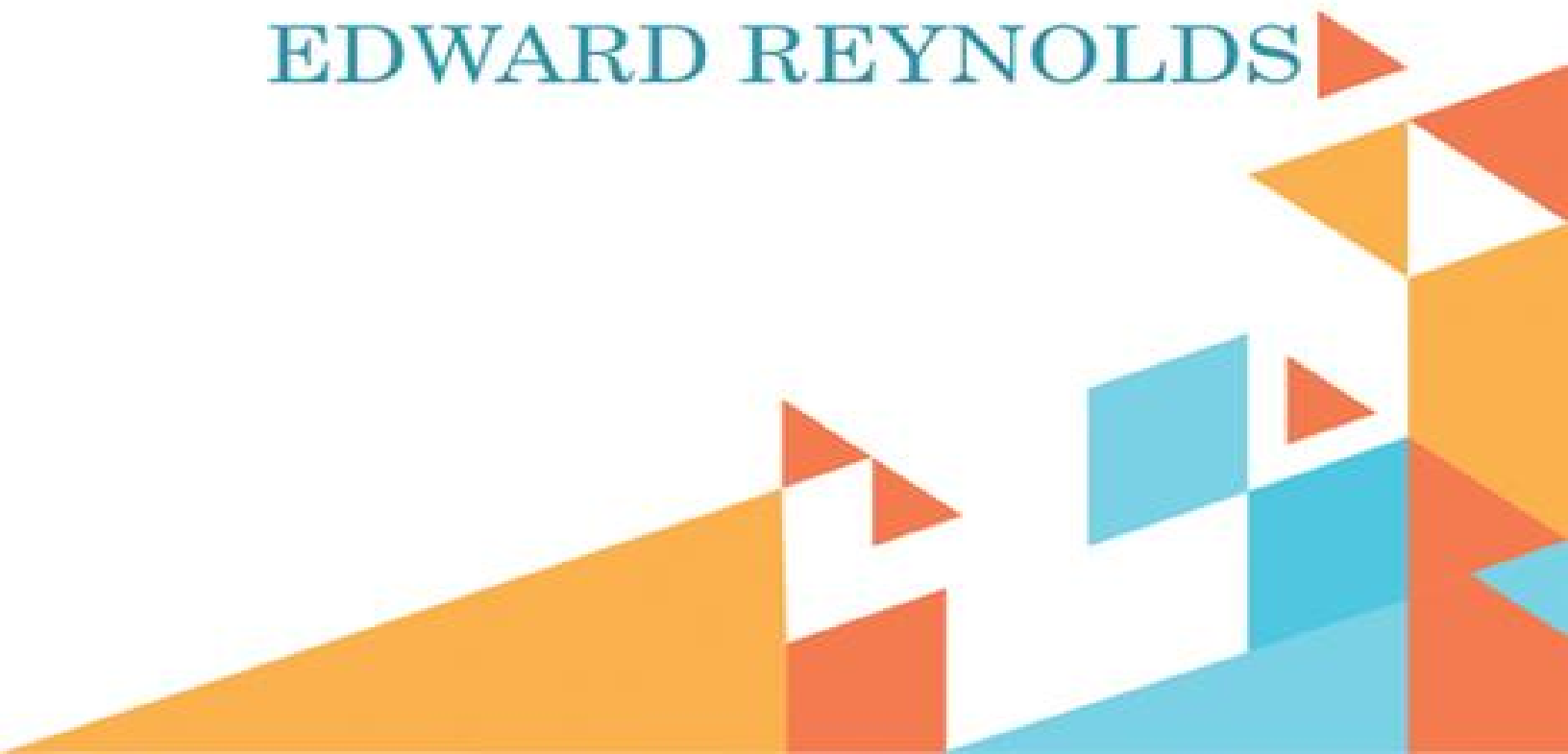


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AN EXPLICATION OF THE HUNDRED AND TENTH PSALM

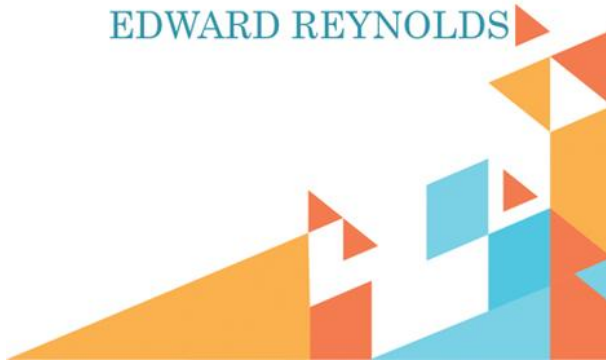
EDWARD REYNOLDS



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Herein, the various aspects of CHRISTIAN Religion contained within are thoroughly discussed. The topics covered include the exaltation of Christ, the authority of his Kingdom, the qualities of his subjects, His Priesthood, victories, sufferings, and resurrection, all of which are extensively explained and applied.

This work is based on a series of sermons delivered at LINCOLN'S INN by EDWARD REYNOLDS, formerly a Fellow of Merton College in Oxford and later the preacher to the aforementioned Honorable Society, as well as the Rector of the Church of Braunston in Northamptonshire.

LONDON, Printed by Felix Kyngston for Robert Bostocke, and available for purchase at his shop in Paul's Churchyard under the sign of the Kings Head. 1632.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THOMAS, LORD COVENTRY,

Baron of Ailsborough, and Lord Keeper of the great Seal of England,
etc.

Most Noble Lord,

It was Saint Augustine who once devoutly expressed his great delight in Cicero's Hortensius, which he considered a highly encouraging work promoting the love of wisdom, free from any bias or sectarian influence. However, he noted that his delight in the book was somewhat diminished because it lacked any mention of Christ. For without the Name of Christ, nothing, however refined and elaborate it might be, could fully capture the affections of those who had been inclined toward nobler pursuits. Similarly, Gregory Nazianzen, the renowned theologian, valued all his Athenian learning, in which he excelled, only as something insignificant compared to Christ. He followed the example of Saint Paul, who, though he excelled in the Jewish Religion beyond many others, discarded it all as worthless in light of the surpassing knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord.

Observing these sacred sentiments in those holy men, along with my many experiences of your Lordship's abundant favor, I am emboldened beyond my natural disposition to dedicate these humble works of mine in God's Church to such an esteemed name. There is no other reason for seeking your Lordship's attention or support for this book except for one crucial aspect – just as Saint Augustine couldn't find it in the writings of Plato or Cicero – and that is the book's focus on that High and holy Person, the knowledge of whom is not only our greatest learning but our Eternal Life.

In this confidence, I dare to present this public testimony of my utmost humble duty and profound gratitude for your numerous acts of favor and generosity, not only towards me but also towards others who have been blessed by your Lordship's kindness.

May the Lord Jesus, our eternal Melchizedek, bless your Lordship in all the honorable endeavors to which He has called you, and may you be constantly refreshed and guided by His Holy Spirit. May He keep you steadfast as a faithful Patron of the Church, which He purchased with His own blood, and as a worthy instrument of justice, honor, and tranquility in this kingdom.

Your Lordship's most humbly devoted, Ed. Reynolds.

To the Reader:

Christian Reader, when I first decided to share some of my humble works with the public, my intention was to add to the existing Treatises a portion of what I now present to you, focusing on the praises of the Gospel of Christ, the means by which the life of Christ is engendered within us. Considering my own weaknesses, the frequent demands of my service where these pieces were delivered, and the abundance of writings of this nature already in circulation, I had little reason to burden the world a second time with more of my modest contributions to the work of the Sanctuary.

However, as I continued to work on this project, I found it growing into a substantial volume. Moreover, I realized that it might be both

more welcomed and beneficial to treat an entire Scripture together, especially considering the noble nature and seemingly challenging meaning of this particular Psalm. Hence, I resolved to contribute my humble offering once more to the treasury of the Temple, which, I hope, will be accepted, if for no other reason than that it bears the Image and Inscription of Christ upon it.

Some passages included herein were originally delivered in different orders and on other Scriptures, while others were spoken at different locations and on different occasions. Nevertheless, as they are relevant to the flow of the discourse, I deemed them suitable as natural components rather than disjointed and incongruous fragments.

I kindly request you to overlook any errors that may have slipped through during the printing process and any unsuitability of the Page Titles (which, while most of the book was under printing during my absence, were arranged by others who attended to it). Any significant slips that might affect the coherence of the text, I have noted together.

With my humble works now in your hands, I submit them to your favorable judgment and entrust you to the Blessing of God.

I remain,

E. R.

Christ Jesus the Sum of Holy Scriptures.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand; until I make thine enemies thy footstool. - PSALM 110:1

CHRIST JESUS the Lord is the essence and central focus of all divine revealed truth. Nothing should be preached to people as an object of their faith or an essential component of their salvation unless it, in some way, relates to or finds its fulfillment in Him. All truths, especially those of divine nature, hold great value and importance. Thus, the Church is duty-bound to declare all the mysteries of God's Counsel revealed in His Word to mankind. The Apostle Paul declared his faithfulness to this duty when he said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of God." However, he concludes that all this Counsel, which he terms "the testimony of God," can be summarized in one crucial aspect – knowing nothing among them, except in his preaching, other than Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. Therefore, preaching the Word is synonymous with preaching Christ, ministers of the Word are ministers of Christ, and learning from the Word is learning from Christ. This is because our faith, works, and worship – the three essential elements of a Christian, encompassing the entire duty of man and the will of God – all find their foundation, growth, purpose, and power solely in and through Christ's crucifixion. Every Christian title holds no significance or value apart from Christ's death.

The Word, in general, is divided into the Old and New Testament, which share the same substance but differ in their dispensations – much like Moses veiled and unveiled. It is evident that Christ is the substance of the entire New Testament, encompassing the History, Doctrine, and Prophecies of Him in the latter ages of the Church. The Old Scriptures are further divided into the Law and the Prophets. The historical portions contain typological prefigurations of the Evangelical Church or provide demonstrations of the general truth of

God's justice and promises, presented as Doctrine and Precept in the Law and the Prophets. Christ, once again, embodies both aspects. He brought Grace to fulfill the requirements and Truth to substantiate the prefigurations of the entire Law. He fulfilled and abolished the ceremonial Law while fulfilling and establishing the moral Law. His obedience to the Law became the foundation of our righteousness, and His Spirit and grace became the foundation of our obedience. Therefore, it is rightfully known as the Law of Christ. As for the Prophets, Christ is their focal point, and they bear witness to Him. He is the Author of their prophecies, for they spoke by His Spirit. Moreover, He is the object of their prophecies, as they spoke of the grace and salvation that would come through Him. The entire Scriptures are nothing but a Testimony of Christ and faith in Him – a testimony of the absolute and universal necessity for all humanity to believe in His name. It is not only a necessity of command, as we are commanded to believe, but also a necessity of means, as He is the sole ladder connecting earth and heaven, the one mediator between God and man. In Him, a final and irrevocable covenant has been established, and there is no name under heaven by which a person can be saved except His.

In light of all these considerations, and having previously acknowledged the insufficiency of any inward or outward principle for human happiness except the Life of Christ, I have chosen to focus on this Psalm to reveal how the Life of Christ is distributed and administered to His Church. This Psalm is one of the clearest and most comprehensive prophecies about the Person and Offices of Christ in the entire Old Testament. It contains fundamental truths that I would not hesitate to call it "Symbolum Davidicum" - the Prophet David's Creed. Almost all the Articles of the Creed we collectively profess are either explicitly stated or clearly implied within this concise model.

Firstly, the Doctrine of the Trinity is present in the first words: "The Lord said unto my Lord." Here, we have Jehovah the Father and "My Lord," the Son, along with the sanctification or consecration brought about by the Holy Ghost. Our Savior Himself explains this term "Said" as the sealing and sanctification of Him to His office (John. 10.34, 35, 36).

Secondly, we see the Incarnation of Christ in the phrase "My Lord," along with His dignity and honor above David, as our Savior explains it in Matthew 22.42, 45. He is "Mine," meaning my Son by descent and genealogy through the flesh, yet also "my Lord" in a higher sense of sonship.

Thirdly, we witness the Sufferings of Christ, as He was consecrated as a Priest (v. 4) to offer Himself once for all and to experience the trials along the way.

Furthermore, the Psalm depicts Christ's Eluctation and victory over all His enemies, including His resurrection ("He shall lift up His head"), His Ascension, and Intercession ("Sit thou on my right hand"). According to S. Paul's argument, His Ascension implies His descent into Hell (Eph. 4.9).

The Psalm also highlights a Holy Catholic Church gathered under the Scepter of His Kingdom, with a blessed and beautiful Communion of Saints. "The Lord shall send forth the Rod of thy strength out of Zion; Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth."

The concept of the Last Judgment is evident, as all His enemies must be subdued under His feet (1 Cor. 15.25), and there is a day of His

wrath, where He will execute judgment over the heathen and gain victory over the Kings of the earth who conspire against Him.

Remission of sins is included in His Priesthood, as He offered Sacrifice for the remission of sins and put away sin through the Sacrifice of Himself (Eph. 1.7, He. 9.26).

Furthermore, the Resurrection of the Body is implied, as Christ must subdue all His enemies under His feet, and the last enemy to be conquered is death, as the Apostle argues from this Psalm (1 Cor. 15.25, 26).

Lastly, we find the promise of everlasting life in the everlasting merit and virtue of His Priesthood ("Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek") and in His position at the right hand of God. From His sitting there and living forever, the Apostle infers the perfection and certainty of our salvation (Rom. 6.8, 11, Rom. 8.17, Eph. 2.6, Col. 3.1, 2, 3, 4, 1 Cor. 15.49, Phil. 3.20, 21, 1 Thess. 4.14, Heb. 7.25, 1 John. 3.2).

To sum up the entire Psalm, without attempting a complex or artificial analysis that would differ among various interpretations, the following themes emerge:

1. The Ordination of Christ to His Kingdom, along with its dignity and virtue (v. 1).
2. The Scepter or Instrument of His Kingly power (v. 2).
3. The strength and success of Christ in establishing a Kingdom of willing subjects, despite the malice of enemies (v. 2, 3).
4. His Consecration to an everlasting Priesthood, enabling Him to acquire this Kingdom (v. 4).
5. His Triumph over the strongest and most numerous adversaries (v. 5, 6).

6. The proof and means of achieving these, found in His sufferings and exaltation. By conquering His sufferings and rising again, He will gather a Church and overcome His enemies.

Verse 1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Here, the Holy Spirit commences with the Kingdom of Christ, describing and magnifying it:

1. Through His anointment and appointment to this office, the Word or Decree of His Father: "The Lord said."
2. By highlighting the Greatness of His person in Himself, yet nearness in blood and nature to us: "My Lord."
3. Demonstrating the Glory, power, and heavenly nature of His Kingdom, where He administers from the right hand of His Father: "Sit thou at my right hand."
4. Emphasizing the Continuance and Victories of His Kingdom: "Until I make thy foes thy footstool."

"The Lord said." Some read it as "certainly" or "assuredly" said, based on the affinity between the original word and "Amen" (differing only in the transposition of the same radical letters). This observation highlights that everything God says about or to His Son is truly faithful and true. Therefore, the Gospel is fittingly called the "Word of Truth" (Eph. 1.13) and a "faithful saying" (1 Tim. 1.15) – something worthy of complete acceptance, belief, and embrace.

The crucial point to be noted here is the Decree, appointment, sanctification, and sealing of Christ to His Regal Office. The "Word of God" in Scripture signifies His Blessing, Power, Pleasure, and Ordination. God's words are not mere empty expressions but are active, carrying an unction and authority with them.

From this, we understand that Christ's Kingdom is not obtained through usurpation, intrusion, or violence, but legally, by order, decree, and investiture from His Father. While all earthly kings may reign by God's providence, not all do so by His approval. Christ, however, is a King both by God's providence and His immediate Consecration. His Father loves Him and has entrusted all things into His hand (John. 3.35). The Father has entrusted Him with the administration of power in the Church, which originally belonged to Himself (John. 5.22). He has made Him Lord and Christ (Act. 2.36), Judge of the living and the dead (Act. 10.42), and appointed Him over His own house (Heb. 3.2, 6). The Father has crowned Him and subjected all things under His feet (Heb. 2.7, 8), highly exalting Him and giving Him a name above every name (Phil. 2.9). Therefore, He is "My King," set up by the Father on His holy hill, based on a solemn decree (Psal. 2.6, 7).

However, we must distinguish between Christ's natural Kingdom, known as *Regnum natural*, which belongs to Him as God, coessential and coeternal with His Father, and His Dispensatory Kingdom, known as *Regnum oeconomicum*, as He is Christ the Mediator. The latter was not inherent in His nature but was given and anointed to Him by His Father, making Him the Head of His Church, a Prince of Peace, and a King of Righteousness for His people. In this role, He was equipped with all the necessary qualifications to administer this Kingdom.

Firstly, God prepared Him a human nature (Heb. 10.5) and by the grace of personal and Hypostatical union caused the Godhead to dwell bodily in Him (Col. 2.9). Secondly, He was anointed with a fullness of the Holy Spirit, not merely a measure for Himself but an unsearchable sufficiency and abundance for the whole Church (John. 3.34, Eph. 3.8, Mal. 4.2). Thirdly, the Kingdom of Christ was

proclaimed and declared publicly through the heavenly voice, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him" (Psal. 2.7, Matth. 3.17, 17.5, 2 Pet. 1.17). Fourthly, He was given a Scepter of Righteousness and commissioned as a Preacher and Apostle to reveal divine truths and testify the things He had seen and heard (Heb. 1.8, Revel. 1.16, 2.16, Psal. 2.9, Isaiah. 16.1, Heb. 3.1, John. 1.18, John. 3.11, 12, 32, 34).

Moreover, Christ was honoured with numerous ambassadors and servants to represent His Kingdom's interests, such as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and teachers, all contributing to the edification and perfection of the Saints (2 Cor. 5.20, Eph. 4.11, 12). He was given dominion over the souls and consciences of men throughout the earth (Psal. 2.8, John. 17.6). Christ possesses authority concerning the Laws of His Church - the power to make Laws (the Law of Faith), expound Laws (such as the moral Law), and abrogate Laws (like the Law of Ordinances) (Matt. 28.18, Mark. 16.15, 16, Matt. 5, Col. 2.14). Additionally, He has the power to judge and condemn enemies (John. 5.27, Luk. 19.27) and the royal prerogative of remitting sins and sealing pardons (Matth. 9.6, John. 20.23), all of which pertain to Him as both Man and God (John. 5.27).

The Quality of Christ's Kingdom is not temporal or secular, ruling over the lives or civil affairs of men. He did not seek to be served, but rather to serve. His Kingdom was not of this World, as He disclaimed any civil power in the distribution of lands and possessions. He withdrew from the people when they attempted to make Him a King by force, and to avoid causing any offense, He paid tribute to Caesar (Matth. 20.28, John. 18.36, Luk. 12.13, 14, John. 6.15, Matth. 17.27). Instead, His Kingdom is spiritual and heavenly, ruling over the souls of men. It binds and loosens the conscience, remits and retains sins,

governs the hearts, captivates the affections, obedientizes thoughts, breaks down strongholds, and silences enemies with His words. It implants fear and astonishment in the hearts of hypocrites and provides peace, security, protection, and assurance to His people.

The way in which Christ enters upon His Kingdom is always by way of conquest. Although the Souls of the Elect are His, His enemies initially possess them, just as Canaan was promised to Abraham but obtained through victory by his descendants. Christ proclaims peace first, but men often resist and do not submit without war. The strong man, representing Satan, will not yield to be overthrown and crucified unless faced with the power of Christ.

From this, we can first learn about the great authority and power of Christ as King. He holds His Crown by direct appointment from heaven and is anointed by God Himself in a more excellent manner than any other kings. Those who seek to diminish the Kingdom of Christ by suggesting that He could have been a King without a Kingdom are mistaken. God has given His Son the souls, hearts, and very thoughts of men to be obedient to His rule. How can anyone withhold from Him what He rightfully possesses?

One of the principal aspects of Christ's Kingdom and power is to cast down imaginations and every arrogant thought that resists the knowledge of God. His Kingdom is not built through forceful compulsion but through voluntary submission and obedience. The wisdom of His power is displayed in how His grace works mightily in producing effects that people willingly and obediently consent to. Christ is able to use the proper and genuine motivations of second causes to bring about His holy, wise, and merciful purposes.

Though Christ does not compel people against their will, He has ordered a way for them to come to Him voluntarily and obediently.

His grace works in such a way that people are swayed toward obedience without destroying their liberty. By the secret and ineffable operation of the Spirit of grace, hearts are opened, judgments convinced, affections persuaded, and consciences awakened. In this calling, there is both a drawing by the Father and a coming by the man (John. 6.44). Grace works effectively and yet sweetly, drawing people with power and yet leaving them free to come willingly.

In summary, Christ's Kingdom is established through conquest, and He holds supreme authority and power as King. His grace works effectively but sweetly in bringing people to willingly submit to His rule. Through the power of the Spirit of grace, hearts are swayed toward obedience without coercion, allowing them to freely come to Christ.

Once again, we can learn from this the duty we owe to this King—the honour and subjection that is due to Him. The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son, anointing Him with the office and abilities of a King, as judgment signifies the entire duty of a King (Psal. 72.1). Hence, our Saviour infers that everyone should honour the Son just as they honour the Father (Job. 2.22, 23), with the same worship, reverence, and submission. God has highly exalted Him, giving Him a name above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, which represents His divine person and power and is a name of salvation to us, every knee should bow (Phil. 2.9, 10).

The Psalmist expresses this duty as "kissing the Son." This gesture signifies three things: love, worship, and service. A kiss is a symbol of love and thus represents our duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle requires (1 Cor. 16.22, Eph. 6.24). To kiss in Scripture also denotes worship and service. Just as men who sacrifice "kiss the

calves" (Hos. 13.2, Job 31.26, 27), all creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth worship the Lamb, ascribing blessing, honour, glory, and power to Him (Revel. 5.8, 14). Lastly, to kiss signifies loyalty and obedience. Samuel kissed Saul when anointing him King over Israel (1 Sam. 10.1), and in the same manner, we owe obedience to Christ. We are called to be ruled by His mouth, His word, which is the Law of Christ with binding power (Deut. 18.19, John. 3.34).

We must learn to take His commands as coming from God, for He speaks His Father's words and in His name (Deut. 18.19, John. 3.34). It is our wisdom and duty, regardless of our status or position, to kiss His Son, bow unto His name, and be obedient to Him (Psal. 2.10, 12). Great men often neglect God and His ways, yet the wrath of God shows no distinction between them and others (Exod. 20.19). In the end, all will stand in equal condition before Christ's judgment seat. Just as kings feared the presence of prophets and apostles, no titles, wealth, or strength will protect anyone on that day.

It is Christ Himself whose ambassadors we are, and through us, men have to deal with Christ. He requires this for our peace and His glory (Exod. 20.19, 2 Cor. 4.7, 1 Cor. 3.7, Rom. 9.16, 2 Cor. 1.24, Eph. 4.20, 21). It is audacious and reckless for those who defy the power of Christ speaking through His servants. The Apostle warns that there will be no escape for those who neglect such great salvation (Heb. 2.3). However, this is the constant folly of natural men who refuse to have Christ reign over them, as they say, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us."

First and foremost, every person must be subject to some King, either Christ or sin, as they divide the world and establish their separate kingdoms (John 8:34). Those who choose sin become slaves and servants, devoid of liberty. On the contrary, Christ elevates all

His subjects to be like kings, as seen in Revelation 1:6. His Kingdom is characterised by righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17).

Secondly, if people believe that being subjects of sin can keep them out of Christ's judgment and rule, they are mistaken. Every person will be brought under His authority, either as His children under His grace or as captives under His wrath. As the Lord declares, "As I live," every knee shall bow before Him (Romans 14:10-11). Christ will either be a source of life or death, a reason for the rise or fall of many in Israel, a sanctuary or a stumbling block. Everyone must either be saved by Him or judged by Him. There is no place to hide or escape from His Kingdom, as it extends to every corner of the earth, and all His enemies will be found and brought in.

Thirdly, it would not be significant if a person could resist Christ's authority successfully. But, as the Lord questions in Ezekiel 22:14, can your heart endure or your hands be strong on the day that He deals with you? What will you do in the impending desolation when you are plundered? Where will your glory be? What will become of the king you served before? Perhaps your money is your idol, and you are held in bondage to your possessions. However, in the face of the wrath to come, all your silver and gold will be worthless, and only rust will join in judgment against you. Maybe you serve the trends and fashions of the world, delighting in your youth, the desires of your heart, and the sights before your eyes. Yet, you will not rise from your grave dressed in your finest clothes, nor will you appear before Christ like Agag gorgeously attired. You will not rise to play but to be judged. It could be that you serve your own lusts and another's beauty, but what pleasure will there be in the fire of lust when it turns into the fire of Hell? What beauty will you find on the left hand of Christ, where the characters of everyone's hellish conscience will be written on their face? You may serve your own

vanity and pretensions, but what good will it be to be admired by your fellow prisoners and condemned by your Judge? In short, if you serve any of your own evil desires, they rule over you here and will condemn you there, for they are your gods here and will be your devils there.

The second aspect in the description of Christ's Kingdom is the greatness and proximity of His person to David. David refers to Him as "my Lord" for two reasons: through the Spirit of Prophecy, he foresees Christ's incarnation and birth from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of Jesse, making Him David's Son. Additionally, through the Spirit of Faith, David believes Christ to be his Redeemer and Savior, thus acknowledging Him as his Lord. As prophesied, a virgin shall conceive and give birth to a Son, signifying His incarnation and lineage from David. His name shall be Immanuel, meaning "God with us," indicating His authority over David. Christ is both human as David's Son and divine as the Mediator, making Him David's Lord. He was subject to Mary, His mother, as a human, and simultaneously, He was her Lord and Savior (Luke 2:51, Luke 1:46-47). As a human, He was briefly made lower than the angels to experience death, but as the Mediator, being both God and Man in one person, He was exalted far above the angels. All the angels worshipped Him, and His ministers served Him (Hebrews 2:7, 9; Hebrews 1:4, 6, 7). Therefore, the term "Mine" directs us to consider Christ's kinship with David as His Son and His superior dignity above David as His Lord.

From this, we gather that although Christ was a human, He was more than a mere man. By the law of nature, no son can be the lord over his father; authority does not ascend in such a way. Hence, there must be something beyond nature in Christ to make Him His Father's sovereign, as our Savior argues based on these words

(Matthew 22:42, 45). Therefore, Christ is a Lord to His people, having dominion and being the salvation of His own forefathers.

A Lord. First, By the right of Creation. For He existed before all things, and through Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17), which the Apostle uses as evidence of His Sovereignty. To us, there is only one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things exist, and through whom we exist (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Secondly, By the right of Sonship and Primogeniture, as the chief, the firstborn, the Heir of all things. He is not in the House as Moses was, a Servant, but a Son over His own House (Hebrews 3:5, 6). That is, He was not a Servant but Lord in the Church, as the Apostle elsewhere distinguishes. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves as Servants (2 Corinthians 4:5). For in the Scriptural context, being the firstborn signifies Principality, Excellence, and Dominion. God says, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the Kings of the earth" (Psalms 89:27). Similarly, in Job, "the firstborn of death" is the same as the "King of terrors" (Job 18:13, 14). The Apostle also states, "The heir is the Lord of all" (Galatians 4:1). Hence, from His primogeniture and designation as the inheritor of all things, He establishes His preeminence and honor even above the Angels (Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 1:2, 4).

Thirdly, By the right of His Uncion, Office, and Mediatorship, to which He was appointed by His Father. He was destined to have preeminence in all things, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell" (Colossians 1:18, 19). Here, "fullness" refers either to the fullness of the Godhead bodily, as the Apostle mentions in Colossians 2:9, or the fullness of the Spirit of Grace, as referred to by S. John in John 3:34. In both respects, He is Lord over all: in one, by the Dignity of His Hypostatic union; in the other, by the grace of

His heavenly unction; and in both, as the Mediator and Head of the Church. Hence, the Apostle states, "God hath made Him Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), and through the fulfillment of His office, in His death, resurrection, and revival, He became Lord both of the dead and the living (Romans 14:9, Revelation 5:12).

Thus, He is Lord in two respects: Firstly, a Lord in Power and strength. He has the Power to forgive sins, to quicken whom He wills, to cleanse, justify, and sanctify, to provide succor in temptations, to raise from the dead, to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him, to hold fast His sheep, to cast out the accuser of the brethren, to put down all His enemies, and to subdue all things to Himself. Secondly, a Lord in Authority; to judge, to anoint, to employ, to command whom and what He wills. He alone is Lord over our persons, our faith, and our consciences. To Him alone, we must say, "Lord, save us lest we perish," and to Him alone, we must say, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

And such a Lord Christ was to His own forefathers. They all partook of the same Spiritual food and drink, even from that rock which was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:3, 4). He was the essence of the Ceremonies, the fulfillment of the Prophets' teachings, the realization of the Promises, the joy and salvation of Patriarchs and Princes, the desire and hope of all humanity. To us, the Gospel is a historical account, narrated and delivered by the hands of witnesses; to them, it was a promise and prediction, conveyed by the hands of Prophets. The Apostles continued the labor of the Prophets, and both served the same common salvation. The Prophets sowed the seed of hope, and the Apostles reaped the same seed when it was fulfilled. The ancient Jews were not saved solely by temporal promises, nor did their faith solely rely on Ceremonies or earthly matters. Just like our preachers,

they were inspired by the same Spirit of Christ. Hence, the Doctrine they preached, the faith and obedience they required, and the salvation they foretold were the same as ours. Just as the same Sun illuminates both the stars above and the earth beneath, the same Christ was the Righteousness and salvation of both His forefathers and His descendants. Their faith could not be perfected without ours, meaning that their faith found its completion and fulfillment in the better thing provided and exhibited to us. For the Law, which consisted of carnal commandments and outward ceremonies, did not bring about perfection, neither in grace nor in individuals. But through the introduction of a better hope, that is, Christ (who is our hope of glory and their hope of deliverance, as He is the only means by which we draw near to God), those who are sanctified are perfected forever (Hebrews 7:19, Hebrews 10:14).

Therefore, if Christ is our Lord, we must trust in Him and depend on Him for our present sustenance and future expectations, for He never fails those who wait upon Him. Those who believe in Him shall not be put to shame. Indeed, faith is necessary to acknowledge Christ as Lord. No one can call Jesus Lord except by the Spirit, for other lords are visibly present with us, overseeing and directing our service with their own eyes and power. But Christ is absent from our physical senses. As the Apostle says, "Though I have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know I Him no more." Therefore, it requires faith in the heart to fear, honor, and serve Him with utmost fidelity, to obey His commands more absolutely and universally than the threats and decrees of the greatest Princes, and to strive for acceptance not only when He is present but also when He is absent. This kind of faith allows us to perceive His presence through His Spirit, to affirm the truth, authority, and Majesty of His commands, and to hear the Lord speaking from heaven. By the secret and powerful revelations of His Spirit through the Word to our souls, we

find evident and invincible proofs of His living presence through the power of God and His mighty voice in the Ministry of His Word to our consciences. Thus, when the Apostle declares, "We are absent from the Lord," he quickly adds, "We walk by faith." This means we labor to offer all our service and obedience to our Lord, even in His absence, because through faith (which brings presence to unseen things and substance to hoped things), we know that He exists and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Indeed, though many may call him Lord, very few truly and sincerely esteem him as such. Only those who serve him in this manner and walk after him by faith are the ones who genuinely declare themselves to be his. As the Lord himself says, "If I am a Master, where is my fear?" (Malachi 1:6). It is not mere lip service or verbal acknowledgement that makes one a true servant of Christ. It is the one who diligently follows his will, trembles at his word, and labors in his service.

The heart of a person cannot have two Masters, for it can only be whole and undivided in its allegiance. We cannot serve Christ while also serving anything else that competes with him. The reason being that these two Masters are contrary to each other, and one cannot be pleased or served without the disapproval of the other. The Spirit that dwells in us envies and grudges any service done to the Lord, for the friendship of the world is enmity against God (James 4:4, 5). Hence, the Apostle warns that if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, as these are conflicting principles with contrary spirits and desires, leading to conflicting loyalties.

Moreover, both Masters have more than enough tasks to occupy a person entirely. Satan and the World have lusts that can fill the whole mind and heart of their most active and diligent servants, for

all that is in the world is lusts. The heart of man is wholly or most eagerly inclined to do the evil it is tasked with. On the other hand, Christ is a great Lord with much more business than all the time and strength of his servants can bring about. He requires obedience in every thought of the heart, grace and edification in all our words, respect for God's glory in all our actions. Our whole being, soul, body, and spirit should be sanctified throughout until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Christ has an abundance of services that require the might, strength, abilities, time, and calling of all his servants. These include worship, fear, communion, love, prayer, obedience, and submission towards God and himself. Towards ourselves, there are tasks like watchfulness, repentance, faith, sincerity, sobriety, and growth in grace. We also have responsibilities towards others as instruments and fellow members, such as exhortation, reproof, direction, instruction, mourning, rejoicing, restoring, relieving, helping, praying, and serving in all ways of love. There is so much evil to be avoided, so many slips and errors to be lamented, so many earthly desires to be crucified, so much knowledge and mysteries to be learned, so many false principles to be unlearned, so much good to be done for oneself, and so much service to be done for others and to bring glory to our Master.

Therefore, it is absurd to merely call him Lord, Lord, to profess verbal subjection, yet not do the things he requires (Luke 6:46). True service to Christ demands action and a wholehearted commitment to follow him faithfully in all aspects of life.

The third aspect to consider regarding the Kingdom of Christ is its Glory and Power, signified by his position at the right hand of the Lord. In the Scriptures, God's right hand is a figurative expression

representing his strength, power, majesty, and glory. The Psalmist says, "This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Psalms 77:10), where God's power is symbolized as a right hand, contrasting with the Psalmist's weakness.

Isaiah also describes the right hand of the Lord as spanning or extending the heavens (Isaiah 48:13). The Psalmist speaks of God's strength and salvation by his right hand (Psalms 118:14, 15, 16), and his fury is likened to the cup of his right hand (Habakkuk 2:16). God strengthens, helps, and upholds his people by the right hand of his Righteousness, meaning by his power and faithful promises. When they are weak, he strengthens them; when they fear and falter, he helps them; when they are falling, he upholds them (Isaiah 41:10). On the other hand, the Psalmist warns that the right hand of wicked men may be filled with falsehood, indicating that their confidence in their own power may deceive them or others to whom they promise aid (Psalms 144:11).

Therefore, when it is said that Christ sits at God's right hand, it signifies the great honor, judicial office, and plenitude of power bestowed by God the Father upon his Son. After his incarnation and nativity, and his justification by the Spirit in his resurrection, among other dignities, he was received up into glory (1 Timothy 3:16). This is comparable to the honor shown by Solomon to his mother when she sat at his right hand (1 Kings 2:19). The Apostle also highlights the distinction between Christ and the Levitical Priests, as they stood daily ministering, whereas Christ, after his offering, sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:11, 12). This emphasizes that Christ is the Lord, while they are merely servants. Furthermore, their work needed repetition, but Christ's offering was complete once for all, after which he rested or sat down again.

Thus, Christ's position at the right hand of Majesty and glory signifies his great exaltation, as God has highly honored and elevated him, giving him a name above every name.

Firstly, Christ's Divine nature, although it cannot be intrinsically improved or gain more glory (as it essentially possesses all fullness of glory), was readvanced in the context of his office's administration. When he humbled himself for the economy and administration of his mission, he did not strip away any of his divine glory; rather, he allowed it to be overshadowed by the likeness of sinful flesh and humbled under the form of a servant, like the light of a candle hidden within a dark and enclosed lantern. Therefore, declaratively or through manifestation, he is magnified at God's right hand, as the Apostle puts it, declared to be the Son of God by Power when he rose from the dead and returned to his glory (Romans 1:4). While in the abstract sense, we cannot say that the Deity or Divine nature was exalted in any other way than by clear manifestation in the man who was once despised and accused as a blasphemer for claiming equality with God, in a concrete sense, and due to the communication of properties between the natures in the unity of one person, it is true that just as God saved the world through his blood and the Prince of life was crucified, and the Lord lay in the grave, God was also humbled in the form of a servant and exalted at the right hand of Majesty.

Secondly, the human nature of Christ is most exalted by sitting at God's right hand because, by virtue of his Hypostatic union, he has a comprehensive and immediate claim to all the glory that can be conferred upon the human nature. During his time amongst humanity, the exigencies and duties of the Office he had undertaken for us made him a man of sorrows and temporarily veiled the beams of the Godhead and Divine glory from his human nature. However,

after completing that dispensation, the intimate association of the natures in one person allowed the communication of all glory from the Deity that the human nature could receive. By the Spirit of Holiness, he was filled with treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and grace, enabling him to fulfill the role of Mediator, and he became the first fruits, the firstborn, the heir of all things, the head, and Captain of the Church. Moreover, he was equipped with an abundance of the Spirit to sanctify his brethren and make them joint heirs and firstborn with him. Similarly, by the Spirit of glory, he is filled with unparalleled perfections beyond the capacity or comprehension of all the angels in heaven. He is not merely full of glory; he possesses all the fullness of glory that a created nature united with an infinite and boundless fountain could receive.

Therefore, we should learn from this that we must adopt the same mindset as Christ—to humble ourselves first in order to be exalted in due time, to complete the works of self-denial and service owed to God, so that we may enter into our Master's glory. Just as Christ entered through the way of blood, we should rely on Him for all the supplies of the Spirit, for the strength of grace, and for the influences of life. He is our treasure, our fountain, our head. It is through His free grace and voluntary influence that all our faculties are habituated and fitted for a heavenly existence, animating us to act righteously. He not only provides the strength and initial impetus for our actions, but also concurs with us in our ongoing efforts.

Just as an instrument with an edge cannot cut anything without the assistance and movement of the artisan's hand, a Christian, even with a willing heart and habitual readiness to work, can achieve nothing without the constant supply, assistance, and coexistence of Christ's grace, which stimulates, moves, and applies that habitual power to specific actions. He is the one who not only grants us the

will to do good but also empowers us to carry out those deeds by His grace. Without Him, we are powerless, and all our abilities come from Him.

One might argue that if we can do nothing without a second grace, what is the purpose of the initial grace given to us? Why should we stimulate that grace and gift of God within us when it can achieve nothing without further assistance from Christ's Spirit? In response, I say that just as light is necessary for seeing, yet seeing requires an eye, so too without the assisting grace of Christ's Spirit in our holy duties, we can achieve nothing, and yet this grace presupposes an implanted, seminal, and habitual grace that predisposes the soul to perform these duties.

Furthermore, just as in the course of natural effects, although God is a highly voluntary agent, in the ordinary concurrence of a first cause, He works *ad modum naturae*, providing assistance proportionate to the condition and preparation of the second causes. Similarly, in supernatural and holy operations (although not with the same certainty and unalterable constancy), Christ proportionally bestows His assisting and second grace according to the growth, progress, and establishment of the spiritual habits already present in the soul. Hence, the difference in holiness and effectiveness among the saints, with some being more active and unwavering in their holy conduct than others, as some members of the natural body are larger and more full of life and motion than others, depending on the varying distribution of spirits from the heart and influences from the head.

This knowledge should humble and comfort us simultaneously. It humbles us because we can achieve nothing of ourselves and possess nothing in ourselves but sin. All the fullness of grace is in Christ, and thus anyone who possesses any grace must receive it from Him, just

as during the Egyptian famine, anyone with corn received it from Joseph, to whom the granaries and treasures of Egypt were entrusted for that purpose. This humility of heart and acknowledgment of our own emptiness prompt us to always turn to our fountain, to stay in favor with our head, from whom we must constantly receive fresh strength for doing good, bearing evil, resisting temptation, overcoming adversaries, beginning, continuing, and perfecting any duty. Although it is man's heart that performs these actions, it does so with foreign and impressed strength, similar to how iron burns not by its own nature (which is cold) but by the heat it receives from fire. As the Apostle says, "It was not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Likewise, we find comfort in knowing that all fullness and strength reside in Christ as an Officer, an Adam, a treasurer, and dispenser of all necessary provisions to His people, according to their place in His body and the requirements of their conditions or service in His Church. We can be certain that whatever measure He grants to anyone, He still possesses an abundance of Spirit. In fact, He retains His own fullness, always having enough to sustain us through any situation and provide wisdom, compassion, and strength to meet our needs. He serves as a merciful and faithful guardian, husband, and elder brother, appointed by the will of the One who sent Him, to safeguard and perfect all that has been entrusted to Him until the resurrection on the final day. God has instilled in Him a Spirit of faithfulness and compassion for the faithful discharge of this grand Office. He has given us a place in His heart, making us as near and dear to Him as the members of His sacred body are to one another. Therefore, anyone who approaches Him with emptiness, hunger, and faith will not be rejected. Just as it is impossible for Him to hew off and discard the members of His natural body or have any of His

bones broken, it is equally unthinkable for Him to reject the humble and faithful desires of those who earnestly seek Him.

Furthermore, from the exaltation of Christ in His human nature, we should learn to keep our vessels in holiness and honour, as those who anticipate being fashioned like Him in the end. How can anyone truly hope to resemble Christ in the future if they strive to be as unlike Him as possible in the present? As the Apostle said, "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of a prostitute?" Similarly, can we take the nature of Christ, a nature He has glorified so profoundly in His person, and degrade it in our own person to that of a devil? If a Prince were to marry a common woman, would he endure seeing her closest relatives, her siblings, live as servants or prostitutes in his own presence? Now, Christ has united our nature with Himself in a closer bond than marriage, for husband and wife remain two persons, whereas God and man are one Christ. Even death could not dissolve this union; when the soul was separated from the body, the Deity remained inseparable from both. It was the Lord who lay in the grave, and He who ascended was the same one who descended into the lower part of the earth, Matt. 28.6. Eph. 4.10. Should we then defile this nature with wantonness, intemperance, and base affections, which is united so indissolubly with the Son of God? Christ took on our nature to elevate it, and by His Spirit in us, it becomes increasingly exalted as it draws nearer to the holiness He possesses. Therefore, we should strive to walk in a manner worthy of having such a glorious head, conducting ourselves pleasingly in fruitfulness and knowledge. We ought to walk as those who have received Christ and eagerly anticipate His return, Phil. 1.27. Col. 1.10.2.6.3.4, 5.

Secondly, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God signifies the fulfillment of all the Offices He was meant to carry out on Earth for

our redemption. Until all these tasks were completed, He would not return to His glory. As the Apostle says, "He that hath entered into his rest hath ceased from his own works" (Hebrews 4:10). First, He had to perform His Office before entering into His rest. Although He was a Son, and therefore naturally entitled to the inheritance, He had to learn obedience through the suffering He endured before being made perfect again (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Once He offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, making a complete expiation that would never need to be repeated and able to perfect those who are sanctified forever, He then sat down at the right hand of God, awaiting the time when His enemies would be made His footstool (Hebrews 10:12, 13, 14). This is the argument our Savior used when praying to be glorified again with His Father. He said, "I have glorified thee on earth, revealed the glory of thy truth and mercy to thy Church, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self" (John 17:4, 5). The Apostle further states, "He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him" (Philippians 2:8, 9). This indicates the sequence of Christ's Offices. Some were works of ministry and service in the Office of obedience and suffering for His Church, while others were works of power and Majesty in the protection and exaltation of His Church, with the latter necessarily preceding the former. He had to suffer before entering into His glory (Luke 24:26, 46).

This necessity of Christ's descending before ascending is multifaceted. Firstly, it is by God's decree, as He had foreordained it (Acts 2:23, 24). Secondly, it is by God's justice, which required obedience to be satisfied before appeasing it with man, exalting them to His glory again (Romans 3:25; Romans 5:10; Romans 6:6, 11; Ephesians 2:5, 6). Thirdly, it is by God's Word and will, signified in the predictions of the Prophets (Luke 24:46; 1 Peter 1:10, 11). Fourthly, it

is by the necessity of Christ's infinite Person, which, being equal with God, required some preceding descent and humiliation (Ephesians 4:9; John 16:10). The Spirit would convince the world of righteousness, as Christ was to go to the Father and no longer be seen here (John 16:10). This means that the Spirit would, in the Ministry of the Word, reveal to those fully convinced of their sinful condition and humbled by it, a treasure of full and sufficient Righteousness through Christ's obedience wrought for sinners. The reason for this is as follows: our righteousness depends on our ability to stand in God's presence. Christ, having fulfilled His role as our surety on Earth, ascended to glory as our head and advocate, the first fruits, the Captain, the Prince of life, the author of salvation, and the forerunner of His people. His ascension serves as evidence of our justification through Him. First, it shows that He completed the work of our redemption on Earth, overcame death, and was justified by the Spirit from the wrongs of men and the curse of the Law. Therefore, He said to Mary after His resurrection, "Go tell my Disciples, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). This signifies that by His death and victory over it, we are made His brethren and reconciled to God again. Secondly, His Offices in heaven are fulfilled at the right hand of His Father on our behalf, interceding and preparing a place for us, and applying the virtue of His death and merits to us. Had He ascended without fulfilling all Righteousness for the Church, He would have been sent down and seen again, but now He says, "you see me no more, for by once dying, and by once appearing in the end of the world, I have put away sin by the Sacrifice of myself" (Hebrews 9:26, 27; Romans 6:9, 10). The Prophet stated that He was taken from prison and judgment, indicating that the entire debt was paid. Now He lives for countless generations, prolonging His days and having already fulfilled enough Righteousness to justify all those who know Him or believe in Him (Isaiah 53:8, 10). Thus, Christ's deliverance from

prison and His exaltation at the right hand of God are clear evidence that He is fully acquitted of the guilt of sin and the curse of the Law, having accomplished all the works He undertook for our Righteousness.

This also provides ample reason both to humble and comfort the Church of Christ. It humbles us when we realize our inherent disabilities, for if we were capable of completing the works assigned to us, there would be no need for Christ. It is our weakness that necessitated Christ's intervention, our weakness to fulfill obedience, and the weakness of the Law to justify sinners (Romans 5:6; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 7:18, 19). All the strength we possess comes from His power and grace (Ephesians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1), and even this is distributed to us in measure and by degrees. Just as God drove out the Canaanites before His people, little by little, while they were still on Earth, He requires us to live by faith and draw our strength from Christ, awaiting a better condition and glorifying His patience and forbearance, even though we provoke Him every day (Exodus 23:30).

On the other hand, it comforts us against our unavoidable and insurmountable weaknesses. Every good Christian aspires to serve the Lord with all their strength, to be steadfast, immovable, and abundant in the work of the Lord, emulating the angels in heaven. However, they often fall short and experience their own imperfections. Yet, there is great comfort in knowing that although we may not perform our duties as we should, Christ has fully accomplished His, and as a compassionate advocate with the Father, He grants and seeks pardon for all those who seek the Lord with a prepared heart, even if they are not perfectly cleansed (1 John 2:2; 2 Chronicles 30:18, 19).

Moreover, this comfort extends to our struggle with the persistence and adherence of our corruptions, which seem to cling to us as firmly as the very powers and faculties of our soul. Yet, we can trust that the same power that prohibited the fire from burning and dimmed the sun at midday can also remove our corruptions as far from us as He has removed them from His own sight. We can expect Christ, who accomplished all the Offices of suffering and obedience for us while on Earth, and is now exalted far above all heavens at the right hand of Majesty and glory, to fulfill those Offices of Power He now holds. By the supplies of His Spirit, He purges us from sin, strengthens us with His sufficient grace, sanctifies and cleanses us with His Word, and presents us as a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. The same power that brought the Lord Jesus from the dead and did not allow death to hold Him is capable of making us perfect in every good work and preventing corruption from holding us forever (Hebrews 13:20, 21; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 1:19, 20; Romans 6:5, 6; Romans 8:11).

Furthermore, this comfort is a powerful weapon against the fiery darts of Satan, which tempt us to despair and forsake our mercy. If Satan could have held Christ under when He was in the grave, our faith would have been in vain, and we would still be in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). But Christ, having Himself suffered and been tempted, overcame both, and is now able to aid those who are tempted and provide them with mercy and grace in times of need (Hebrews 2:17, 18; Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Lastly, this comfort serves as a shield against death itself. Christ's accomplishment of His Office of redemption in His resurrection from the dead was not only the merit but also the seal and the first fruits of our own resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20, 22).

Thirdly, the sitting of Christ at the right hand of His Father signifies the actual administration of His Kingdom. As the Psalm states, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool," the Apostle interprets this as, "He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Christ died, rose, and revived to become Lord of both the living and the dead, exalted to God's right hand (Romans 14:9). The administration of Christ's Kingdom encompasses several aspects:

First, the publication of established Laws. The sending forth of the rod of Christ's strength out of Zion is understood by the Prophets as the promulgation of His Law, with the Word of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2).

Second, the conquering and subduing of subjects to Himself by converting their hearts and bringing their thoughts into the obedience of His Kingdom. This occurs ministerially through the word of reconciliation and effectually through the power of His Spirit, writing His Laws in their hearts and transforming them into the image of His word from glory to glory.

Third, the ruling and leading of those who have been converted in His way, continually speaking to their hearts and providing them with the exciting, assisting, and cooperating grace of His Holy Spirit. He supplies all that pertains to life and godliness, having called them by His glorious power.

Fourth, the protecting, upholding, and succoring of believers against all temptations and discouragements. Christ's compassion helps them, His power and promises assist them, and His care and wisdom proportion their strength to their trials. His peace recompenses their conflicts, and through patience and experience, their hearts are established in the hope of deliverance.

Fifth, the confounding of all His enemies, thwarting their projects, and holding up His Kingdom amidst their malice. His truth becomes more steadfast and radiant despite their opposition. Those who oppose Him are tormented by the Scepter of His word and will eventually be put under His feet.

Fourthly, the sitting of Christ on the right hand of God signifies His giving of gifts and sending down of the Holy Spirit upon humanity. Traditionally, during times of great joy and solemnity, it has been customary to give gifts and send presents to one another. Likewise, after the wall of Jerusalem was built and the worship of God restored, the people ate, drank, and sent portions to each other. A similar practice was observed among the Jews during their feast of Purim. Even heathen princes distributed donations and gifts to the people on significant occasions.

In the day of His Majesty and Inauguration, when Christ ascended on high and led captivity captive, He also gave gifts to humanity (Ephesians 4:10).

Christ was significantly foreshadowed in the Ark of the Testament. Inside it were the Tables of the Law, signifying that Christ fulfilled the entire Law, and He is the end of the Law for righteousness to those who believe in Him. The Ark also contained the golden pot with Manna, symbolizing the heavenly and lasting nourishment received by the Church from Him. Additionally, the Rod of Aaron, which budded, represented either the miraculous incarnation of Christ in a Virgin or His sufferings expressed through stripes (Isaiah 53:5), and our resurrection with Him, as seen in the budding of a dry rod. It may also signify the sanctifying and fruitful virtue of His word, which is the rod of His strength. Moreover, the Mercy seat

upon the Ark indicates that in Christ lies the foundation of all the mercy and atonement preached to humanity.

For our current purpose, the Ark signified Christ in two main aspects: Firstly, it was overlaid with gold both inside and out, and had a crown of gold around it, denoting the abundant and glorious Kingdom of Christ, who was crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:7). Secondly, it had rings by which it was carried until it finally rested in Solomon's Temple with glorious and triumphal solemnity (Psalm 132:8-9; 2 Chronicles 5:13). Similarly, Christ, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, went about doing good while on Earth (Acts 10:38), and after having ceased from His works, He entered into His rest, which is the heavenly Temple (Hebrews 5:10; Revelation 11:19).

The act of carrying the Ark into its resting place signifies two things: First, it represents a final conquest over the enemies of God. Just as the moving of the Ark signified the procuring of victory (Joshua 6:11, 20), the resting of the Ark denotes the consummation of victory. Hence, the building of the Temple and placing the Ark therein during Solomon's reign marked a victorious and triumphant peace after the great victories of David and the subjugation of all the Canaanites remaining in the Land (2 Chronicles 8:7, 8, 9, 26; 2 Samuel 7:9, 12; Psalm 68:29). Secondly, it signifies the conferring of gifts, as evident in the triumphant song at the removal of the Ark, which was fulfilled literally in Solomon's reign and mystically in Christ (Psalm 68:18). Thus, Christ, our Prince of Peace, now in the heavenly Temple of God, has defeated hell, sin, and death, and He has conquered the Kingdom of Satan. He has received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and bestowed gifts upon humanity (Acts 2:32, 35). Before entering into His rest, the promise of the Holy Spirit was yet to be fulfilled, and His disciples were to wait in Jerusalem for it (Acts

1:4). However, after His departure and intercession at the right hand of His Father, the Holy Spirit was abundantly poured forth upon them (John 14:16, 16:7).

We must note that as Christ's sitting on the right hand of God began, it continues for as long as He remains there. Holy Scripture, which God ordained for gathering His people and guiding them in the militant Church, has long been dictated by the Spirit to holy and chosen instruments, inspired with abundant grace and guided by an infallible Spirit. Yet, in these sacred writings, there exists a profound depth of heavenly wisdom, a sea of mysteries, and an unsearchable treasure of purity and grace. Even if one were to spend their entire life striving diligently to understand God through His word, their knowledge would still be partial, and their holiness would not reach full maturity. Just as enemies are not all immediately under Christ's feet but are gradually subdued, so the Spirit is not instantly conferred in fullness to the members of Christ but is given in measure and degrees according to the voluntary influences of the head and the exigencies of the members. The measure of the Spirit of grace and truth we have here is just the earnest and token of a greater sum (Ephesians 1:14), the seed and first fruits of a fuller harvest (1 John 3:9; Romans 8:23). Therefore, the Apostle speaks of a growing change from glory to glory by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). We should not expect fullness until the time of the restitution of all things, the day of redemption and adoption when the light sown for the Righteous will grow into a full harvest of holiness and glory.

A question arises from the apparent contradiction in Holy Scripture. It is evident that the Spirit of Christ was in the Church long before His Ascension. The Prophets spoke by Him (1 Peter 1:11), the ancient Jews vexed Him (Isaiah 63:10), and John the Baptist was filled with

the Spirit (Luke 1:15). Yet, S. John says that the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified (John 7:39). The answer to this is that the Fathers were sanctified by the same Spirit of Christ as we are, with no difference in substance but only in the accidents and circumstances of effusion and manifestation. It is like light in the Sun and light in a star, the same original light, but varied in dispensation. The truth preached by the Prophets and Christ is the same, but the Apostle observes a difference in the abundance and clarity with which it was given - God spoke in various ways and manners through the Prophets, but unto us, He spoke more plentifully and plainly through His Son (Hebrews 1:1; John 16:25). Though it is true that Abraham and the Fathers saw Christ's day in glimpses and prefigurations, the Apostles saw and heard the things themselves in a more clear and abundant measure. The promises were near at hand in their mouth and before their eyes, and they declared the things they had seen and heard as eye-witnesses (Acts 1:8, 22, 10:41). The perfection of the promises is the work of the Gospel, and the Apostle often attributes it to the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 6:1).

After Christ's ascension to the right hand of power, the Holy Spirit was sent more completely in terms of manifestation and efficacy than ever before. The primary differences are in three aspects: First, in the manner of His mission. In the old Church, the Spirit communicated through dreams, visions, figures, and latent ways. However, in the Evangelical Churches, He came with power, evidence, and demonstration (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5). Thus, He is referred to as the spirit of revelation and knowledge, revealing the manifold and mysterious wisdom of God in Christ to the Church and even to principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:17, 3:10). The Spirit was sent in the latter days with wind, fire, tongues, and earthquakes - all of which have a self-revealing property that cannot be hidden. This

contrasts with the time of the Prophets when God's revelation often occurred through a low and still voice (1 Kings 19:11, 12).

Secondly, the subjects to whom He was sent. Previously, the Spirit only blew upon the enclosed garden of the Jews, but now He is poured out upon all flesh, and this heavenly dew falls not only upon a select few but upon the whole earth. In this way, our Savior distinguishes between Jerusalem and the Spirit (John 4:21, 23). Every believer is part of the Israel of God, and every Christian becomes a Temple of the Holy Ghost. There are no excluded people or places, and anyone who fears God and works righteousness is accepted. Pure hands can be lifted up everywhere.

Thirdly, the measure of His grace. Initially, He was sent only in drops and dew, but later, He was poured out in showers and abundance (Titus 3:6). This is why the grace of the Gospel is often described as "Riches" - to emphasize not only its preciousness but also its abundant presence in the Church. It is worth noting that under the Gospel, the Spirit is likened to things of a spreading, multiplying, and operative nature.

Firstly, let's consider water, not in a small measure for sprinkling or moistening, but for baptizing the faithful (Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:5). Not in a font or vessel that diminishes over time, but in a flowing and living river (John 7:39). Water, apart from its purifying property, has a spreading nature. It has no bounds or limits of its own, like firm and solid bodies, but its confinement is determined by the vessel or container holding it. Similarly, the Spirit of the Lord is not restricted in Himself but only by the narrow hearts of individuals in whom He resides. The Apostle reminds us that we are not limited in the ministry of grace and the dispensation of the Spirit entrusted to us, but our own hearts might not be sufficiently enlarged to receive the

abundance and fullness of heavenly grace offered in the Gospel of salvation.

Secondly, spring water is a growing and multiplying phenomenon, which explains why rivers originating from narrow springs expand significantly in remote channels due to a constant and regular supply - the water lives. Conversely, in pits and torrents, the water diminishes over time. Similarly, the graces of the Spirit are living and springing things; the longer they persist, the more they expand, like the waters of the sanctuary (Ezekiel 36:25). The reason is that they emanate from a fountain that is all life - Jesus Christ (John 4:10, John 14:6, Colossians 3:4).

Thirdly, water's capacity for multiplication extends to its insinuating and softening quality, possessing a fructifying virtue in other things. Just as fruitful trees are planted by the waterside, the Spirit, through searching and mollifying the heart, makes it fruitful in holy obedience (Ezekiel 11:19, 20).

Fourthly, water exhibits tremendous strength in its flow. It moves mighty engines, rolls huge vessels like a ball, and overthrows walls and fortifications. In a similar way, the Spirit of God can demolish all strongholds constructed by human wit or the malice of Satan against the Church. The Lord declares that the horses of Egypt are flesh, not Spirit, indicating that His Spirit can achieve what might and human power cannot. The Spirit of the Lord is able to effect what might and created power cannot. This strength of water enables it to rise as high as its own source and level. Similarly, the Spirit will never cease to elevate the hearts of His people until He brings them up to their fountain and spring-head in heaven.

Fifthly, the Spirit is likened to the rushing of a mighty wind. Scholars have observed that before Christ's time, God spoke to people in a

soft, still voice, which they called Bath Koll. However, during the time of the Gospel, God communicated with a mighty wind, symbolizing both the abundance of His Spirit that He would pour out in the latter days and the strength of the Spirit, like a rushing wind. No matter if someone has walls of brass and bars of iron surrounding their conscience or constructs fortifications of fleshly reason and gates of hell to shut out the Spirit of grace, nothing can withstand the power of this mighty rushing wind. As it is written, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain" (Zechariah 4:7). No mountains or difficulties can hinder the power of God's Spirit. It has the strength to tear down the strongest oppositions and empower even the weakest individuals to carry out the service God desires. Even if mountains stand between Israel and their deliverance, the blind, the lame, pregnant women, and those in labour will be strengthened to climb over the highest precipices (Jeremiah 31:8).

Sixthly, the Spirit is compared to Fire, signifying its multiplying and diffusive property, transforming everything into its own nature. Moreover, it exhibits mighty strength, cleansing or consuming whatever it encounters. If you are like stubble, it will devour you; if you are like stone, it will break you; if you are like gold, it will purify you. The Spirit can melt a hardened heart and purify an impure heart. Surrender your heart to the Spirit as you receive the word, and allow it to shape you into a vessel of honour. However, if you resist and stubbornly oppose the Spirit in the word, know that it is like a leaf crackling in the fire. If you refuse to let it purify you, you cannot prevent it from causing distress. Nothing is more comforting than the light, warmth, and witness of the Spirit. Simultaneously, nothing is more formidable than the conviction, condemnation, and bondage experienced in the Spirit.

Now, let us consider this difference in the measure of the Spirit. Firstly, there is a greater measure of knowledge. As the Lord said, "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:34), and "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Our Saviour informed His disciples that He had made known all things He had heard from His Father (John 15:15), yet He also told them that there were many other things they could not bear until the Spirit of truth came to guide them into all truth (John 16:12, 13). This indicates that the Spirit, upon His arrival, would expand their understanding, enabling them to grasp heavenly wisdom beyond their previous comprehension. Before this, they remained ignorant of many things despite their direct association with Christ in the flesh. Philip was unaware of the Father (John 14:8), Thomas did not know the way to the Father (John 14:5), Peter did not grasp the necessity of Christ's sufferings (Matthew 16:22), and two disciples were unaware of His resurrection (Luke 24:45). All of them lacked knowledge about the nature of His Kingdom (Acts 1:6). Thus, before the Holy Ghost's sending, a more limited knowledge was required for salvation, but afterward, a more comprehensive understanding became necessary, akin to how the value of money from centuries past has diminished over time.

Secondly, there is a greater measure of strength for Spiritual obedience. Those who previously fled from Christ during His sufferings later rejoiced in being counted worthy of suffering shame for His name (Acts 5:41). Persecution for Christ and the trial of faith through various temptations are considered in the Scriptures as gifts and compensations given abundantly to His people (Mark 10:30, Philippians 1:29, Hebrews 11:26, James 1:2, 1 Peter 1:6-7). As our Saviour said, "No man puts new wine into old bottles," meaning that He did not impose rigorous and heavy tasks upon weak and

unprepared disciples while He was with them in the flesh. Therefore, they did not fast during His physical presence. However, as He foresaw the time when He would be taken from them and send the Holy Spirit to strengthen and prepare them for challenging service, He knew that they would then fast and undertake more demanding obedience (Matthew 9:15, 17).

Now, delving further into the sending of the Holy Spirit (which, together with Christ's intercession, was one of the principal purposes of His ascension to the right hand of power), one might question why the Holy Spirit was not sent forth in such abundance upon the Church before Christ's exaltation. The main reason, besides God's purpose and decree, which underlies all His actions (Ephesians 1:11), is given by our Saviour in John 14:16 and John 16:7. It was because the Spirit was to compensate for Christ's physical absence and serve as another comforter to the Church. This role of the Spirit, being a central aim of His mission and one of the significant works resulting from Christ's seat at God's right hand, deserves our attention without any needless or irrelevant digression.

First, the Spirit serves as a Comforter and Advocate for His people, as the word implies and is elsewhere translated (1 John 2:1). He is called another Comforter or Advocate to highlight the distinction between Christ and the Spirit in this aspect. An Advocate by Office is one who takes up the cause of another and pleads it in their name. Thus, Christ, through His Mediation and intercession, acts as an Advocate for His Church, presenting His merits in heaven and advocating for our salvation before the Father. On the other hand, there is an Advocate by energy and operation, where one provides counsel, inspiration, and assistance to enable another to manage their own business and plead their own cause. This is the role of the Spirit, who intercedes on our behalf not in person before God, as

Christ does, but empowers us to approach the Father, emboldens us in our fears, and aids us in our weaknesses when we do not know how to pray (Ephesians 2:18, Hebrews 10:15-19, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 3:16).

In the first place, the Spirit, as our Advocate, justifies our persons and pleads our cases against the accusations of our spiritual adversaries. Just as Christ serves as our Advocate in God's justice system, defending us against the strictness of His Law and the undeniable charge of sin laid upon us, the Holy Spirit acts as our Advocate in God's mercy, empowering us to defend ourselves against the temptations and murderous assaults of our spiritual enemies. The world accuses us with false and slanderous calumnies, falsely attributing actions to us that we never committed. In such situations, the Spirit not only enables us to plead our innocence but also to rejoice in our fellowship with the Prophets who preceded us. We learn to consider the reproaches of Christ as greater riches than the world's treasures and to count ourselves fortunate, for it is not our frail selves that the world's malice targets but the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon us, who is reviled by them (1 Peter 4:14).

Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, not only burdens my conscience with my sins but also tries to exclude me from the benefits of Christ by accusing me of impenitence and unbelief. Yet, the Spirit empowers me to refute the lies of the father of falsehood. Indeed, I admit that I possess a corrupt nature with the seeds of all evil within me, but it was my belief in his lies that led me to this point. I will no longer entertain his wicked reasoning against my peace. I have a Spirit that teaches me to lament the waywardness of my heart, to deny my own will and deeds, to yearn and strive for perfection in Christ, to delightfully adhere to His Law, and to wholeheartedly grasp onto that plank of salvation cast out to me

amidst the shipwreck of my soul. These affections of my heart do not stem from the earthly Adam, for all that is earthly is also sensual and devilish. If they are holy and heavenly, I refuse to believe that God would infuse anything heavenly into a vessel of Hell. I am certain that the One who died for me when I had no desire for Him will not cast me away when I come to Him. The One who has given me a will to love His service and rely on His promises will mercifully accept the will in place of the deed and eventually accomplish the work of holiness He has initiated. Thus, the Spirit, like an Advocate, secures His clients' title against the adversary's sophistical objections. When our vision is clouded by temptations or our evidence is marred by the mixture of corruptions, He skillfully assists our weaknesses and brings to remembrance that which is erased and forgotten.

Secondly, an Advocate guides and instructs his client on how to handle and present their own case. He advises them on which evidence to present, which witnesses to prepare, which proceedings to attend, and how to prepare for their hearing. Similarly, the Spirit directs the hearts of believers in effectively managing their spiritual affairs. He speaks to them from behind, granting them wisdom and prudence in every situation. The Spirit empowers believers to grapple with temptations, serve God in all circumstances, know when to reprove, direct, counsel, or comfort others, when to speak or remain silent, when to exercise liberty or restraint, and how to apply various situations for spiritual purposes. Thus, the Spirit strengthens and instructs believers in managing their hearts to achieve peace for themselves and glory for their Master (Isaiah 30:21, Colossians 1:9-10, Philippians 4:12-13, Ephesians 4:20-21).

Thirdly, an Advocate compensates for the failings of his client. By employing his wisdom and keen observation of the case, he identifies advantages beyond the given instructions and gathers arguments to

further the client's cause that the client may not have noticed. In the same way, the Spirit comes to our aid when we are at a loss for words in prayer or when we do not know what to do, and He presents arguments to God through unspoken cries, secret intimations, and deep and inexpressible groanings. The Spirit presents these petitions before the One who searches hearts and understands the mind of the Spirit, even when we ourselves cannot articulate them. Thus, with the Spirit's assistance, a Christian's soul is enlarged to request things from God that surpass their own understanding (Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 3:19, Philippians 4:7, 1 Corinthians 14:15).

Secondly, the Spirit serves as a comforter by bringing Christ's presence to the soul once again. Firstly, the Spirit elevates a Christian's heart with heavenly affections and a heavenly manner of living, just as a piece of earth, when displaced, naturally moves towards the whole earth. Likewise, a spark of Christ's Spirit within a believer naturally moves upward to Him, who is the fullness of all. Though the nature of man may resist and avoid the path of death, the Apostle desired to be dissolved and united with Christ, for Christ is the center of every Christian's desire (Philippians 1:23, Colossians 3:1-3, Philippians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 5:4).

Secondly, the Spirit brings Christ's presence down to the Christian by shaping Him in their heart, revealing Him and the power of His passion and resurrection to their conscience through the impactful administration of His holy ordinances. Thus, when our Savior speaks of sending the Holy Spirit, He assures His disciples that He will not leave them comfortless; He will come to them. Even though the world may not see Him, the Spirit allows believers to see and experience His presence. This signifies not only the presence of Christ by His Spirit with the Church but also an indwelling presence.

At that time, believers shall know that Christ is in the Father, they are in Christ, and Christ is in them (John 14:18, 20).

Thirdly, the Spirit serves as a comforter through a work of sweet and fruitful illumination. The Spirit not only imparts knowledge but also instils love and comfort in a Christian's heart, allowing them to behold the glory of God with an open face, as if looking into a mirror, and thereby transforming them into the same image, from glory to glory. While the light of other sciences is like candlelight, providing mere illumination, the knowledge of Christ by the Spirit is like sunlight, possessing influence and virtue. This is what the Apostle refers to as the Spirit of Revelation in the knowledge of God. Although there may be no prophetic or extraordinary revelations through dreams, visions, ecstasies, or enthusiasms, the Spirit continues to reveal Christ to the soul according to the measure of spiritual perspicacity and diligent observation of the Holy Scriptures. Through intimate acquaintance with God, the soul experiences heavenly revelations, the harmonious heart's aspiration towards Christ, the gentle influxes and flashes of heavenly light, understanding of the depths of God and Satan, insights into the whole armor of God and the strong man, spiritual conflicts, angelic protection, experiences of mercy, outcomes of temptation, and more. These revelations are constant and heavenly manifestations to the souls of the faithful through the Spirit's illumination of the Word.

Lastly and most importantly, the Spirit acts as a comforter by producing effects of joy and peace in the heart. For joy is always the fruit and companion of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, Acts 13:52), and the joy of the Spirit is unspeakable and glorious (1 Peter 1:8), unlike the empty, false, and deceitful joy of the world. The joy of the Spirit is complete, holy, constant, pure, satisfying, and proportionate to the

capacity of the soul. It surpasses the gladness derived from worldly possessions like corn and wine (Psalm 4:7).

This joy of the Spirit is grounded in every aspect of a Christian's condition, from the beginning to the end. First, the Spirit works joy in revealing and bending the heart to mourn over sin. It is the Spirit of grace and supplication that makes sinners mourn and loathe themselves. Such sorrow is the seed and substance of true joy. Just as Joseph's heart was full of joy when he shed tears upon Benjamin's neck, in holy mourning, the heart can rejoice, for all spiritual afflictions bear peaceful fruit. This was the first glimpse of the Prodigal's joy when he resolved with tears and repentance to return to his Father. An humble and spiritual heart finds sweet contentment in being lowly in its own eyes, just as to a hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet. Sacrifices were to be offered with joy, and the broken heart is the one that pleases God most. There is joy in heaven at the repentance of a sinner, and, therefore, there must be joy in the repentant heart, as it experiences heavenly affections. As the Apostle says, "Let a man become a fool that he may be wise," similarly, let a person become a mourner, that they may rejoice.

If someone objects to how one contrary emotion can be the foundation and motivation for another, and argues that feeling the weight of sin and God's displeasure leaves little reason to boast of much joy, I respond as follows: First, we are not discussing the extraordinary conflicts and struggles with a sense of God's wrath, the breaking of bones, and the burning of bowels that some may experience. Rather, we are referring to the ordinary humbling and repentance that is common to all believers. Secondly, in terms of the Spirit, spiritual mourning and joy are not contrary to each other, nor do they cancel each other out. Like black and white on a wall, which are contrary as qualities, yet harmonious as visible objects in the

eyes, joy and mourning, though opposite in their immediate impact on the senses, not only align with the same principle, the grace of Christ, and the same end, the salvation of man, but can also be subordinate to each other. A dark and muddy color serves as a suitable background for laying gold upon it; similarly, a tender and mourning heart is the best preparation for spiritual joy. Our Saviour compares spiritual sorrow to the pains of a woman in labour, where the pain is not just bitter but leads to joy, for the pain is borne out of a matter of joy (John 16:21).

Secondly, the Spirit not only reveals but also heals the corruptions of the soul, and there is no joy like the joy of a saved and cured person. The lame man, when restored by Peter, expressed the exultation in his heart through leaping and praising God (Acts 3:8). For this reason, among others, the Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because through his healing virtue, he brings joy to the hearts of men. As Christ said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted" (Isaiah 61:6). This healing virtue of Christ is found in the dispensation of his word and Spirit. The Spirit in the word, through which he comes and preaches to men, is compared to the wing of the Sun, as it proceeds from him and was sent to supply his absence, much like a beam does for the Sun (Ephesians 2:17, 1 Peter 3:19). The Apostle refers to this Spirit as the strengthener of the inner man (Ephesians 3:16).

Thirdly, the Spirit not only heals but also renews and revives. When an eye is wounded with a sword, there are two harms: a wound is inflicted, and the faculty is damaged. A surgeon can heal the wound, but the faculty may never be fully restored because total deprivations do not allow for regression or recovery. However, the Spirit not only heals and repairs but also renews and rebuilds the spirits of men.

Just as he heals what was torn and binds up what was smitten, he also revives and raises up what was previously dead (Hosea 6:1,2). This renewal is referred to as the Renovation of the Spirit by the Apostle (Titus 3:5). In this renewal, old things are not merely mended and put together again, for our fall rendered us all unprofitable and of little worth. Instead, all things are done away with, and everything is made new again (2 Corinthians 5:17). The heart, mind, affections, judgment, conscience, and members are transformed from stone to flesh, from earthly to heavenly, from the image of Adam to the image of Christ (Ezekiel 11:19, 1 Corinthians 15:49). This renewal is undoubtedly a cause for great joy, as the Lord comforts his afflicted people (Isaiah 54:11-13).

Fourthly, the Spirit not only renews and aligns the heart but also remains with it to protect and uphold it against all storms and attacks. This further increases the joy and comfort of the Church, as it is firmly established in righteousness, so that no weapon formed against it can succeed (Isaiah 54:14, 17). Victory always brings joy (Isaiah 9:3), and the Spirit of God is a victorious Spirit. His judgment in the heart leads to victory (Matthew 12:20), and before him, mountains are made plain, and every high thing is brought down until he brings forth the headstone with shouts of triumph (Ezekiel 4:6, 7). To Stephen, he was a Spirit of victory against the disputers of the world (Acts 6:10). To the Apostles, a Spirit of liberty in prison (Acts 16:25, 26). To all the faithful, a Spirit of joy and glory amidst persecutions (1 Peter 4:13, 14).

Fifthly, the Spirit not only preserves the heart that he has renewed but also makes it fruitful and abundant in the works of the Lord (Galatians 5:22, Romans 7:4). Fruitfulness is a reason for rejoicing (Isaiah 54:1). Therefore, those who are born of God cannot persist in sin, meaning they are not workers or practitioners of iniquity. They

have the seed of God, that is, his Spirit within them, which enables them (like seed does in the womb or earth) to bear fruit for God. This is partly achieved by teaching the heart and shaping it to align with God's will and Spirit as expressed in the Word, leading the individual to wholeheartedly embrace and affirm the written Law. It is also accomplished by moving, animating, and applying the heart to the obedience of that Law.

Lastly, those whom the Spirit has thus prepared, he seals with the testimony of their adoption, which is the earnest and guarantee of their inheritance. This begets a lively hope, a confident expectation, a faithful reliance on the promises, and an indescribable peace and security. Through these fruits of faith and hope, a glorious joy is poured into the soul, so full and intimately mingled with them that it is as impossible to destroy the one as it is to remove the other. The joy derives its sweetness and stability from the evidence of hope and the excellence of the thing hoped for.

From all that has been said about the abundant mission of the Spirit after Christ's ascension, we should learn how to receive the Gospel of salvation with the right affections. The Holy Spirit was generously poured out on the Ambassadors of Christ to teach us, and our heavenly conduct should express the power we have experienced in our hearts through the Gospel. We ought to live as children of the light, in a manner befitting the Gospel of Christ, adorning our high profession and not receiving God's grace in vain.

Consider first that the quickened word will have an effect—either to convict unto righteousness or to seal unto condemnation—similar to how the sun can either melt or harden, and rain can ripen crops or weeds. It is like a King's sceptre, which can rule subjects or subdue enemies, or like a Goldsmith's fire, which can purge gold or devour

dross. The waters of the sanctuary can either heal places or turn them into salt pits (Ezek. 47.11).

Secondly, the judgment upon those who despise the Spirit of Christ in his word will be proportionate to the abundance of the Spirit revealed. The contempt of a great salvation and a glorious Ministry will bring a severer condemnation (Heb. 2.2, 4). Our Saviour said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin" (John. 15.22). Sins against the light of nature cannot be compared to sins against the Gospel. Just like the earth that drinks in the frequent rain but produces nothing but thorns and briars, such a land is rejected and near to cursing (Heb. 6.7, 8).

Thirdly, even now, God will not always strive with flesh. There is a Day of Peace, which he calls "our day," a day wherein he entreats and beseeches us to be reconciled. But if we judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life and obstinately continue in sin, there may come a time when God withdraws his Spirit and leaves us to the infatuation of our own hearts. We may no longer be cleansed until God's fury rests upon us (Ezek. 24.13).

We can also understand from this doctrine the foundation of the Church's comforts, which rest on Christ as the first comforter, working our reconciliation with God, and on the Spirit as another comforter, testifying and applying the same to our souls. The continuous supply and assistance of the Spirit is the Church's only consolation against the dominion and growth of sin. Though the temptations of lust in our members are strong and seem insurmountable, we must remember that Christ possesses a greater fullness of the Spirit than we have of sin. In the new covenant, God promises to put His Spirit into us, saving us from all our impurity (Ezek. 36.27, 29). Even if we have only a small seed or sparkle of the

Spirit, upheld and nourished by small supplies, it is stronger than legions of lust. Just as a little salt or leaven can season a large lump, or a few drops of spirits can strengthen a whole glass of water.

The Spirit is aptly called a Spirit of judgment and burning, as one judge can condemn a thousand prisoners, and a little fire can consume much dross. Though the Spirit is received and supplied only in measure, like a smoking and suppressed fire, it will still break forth in victory and judgment against all resistance. In us, there is nothing that feeds the Spirit, only that which resists and quenches it. However, the remarkable virtue of the Spirit of Christ in His members is that it can nourish itself. That is why the Spirit is sometimes likened to fire (Isaiah 4:4, Matthew 3:11) and sometimes to oil (Hebrews 1:9, 1 John 2:27), signifying that it is self-nourishing. The grace we have already received is preserved and activated by new supplies of the same grace. We can be confident that these supplies will be given to all who ask for them, through the efficacy of Christ's prayer (John 14:16), His and His Father's promise (John 16:7, Acts 1:4), and by virtue of His role as the head and vital principle of all holiness and grace for the Church. These are permanent attributes, and thus their effects are never entirely interrupted.

Lastly, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God signifies His intercession on behalf of the entire Church and each of its members. The Apostle affirms, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that is dead, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). This aspect of Christ's priesthood will be discussed more appropriately in the fourth verse.

Now, let us turn our attention to the last point in this first verse,

which concerns the continuity and triumphs of Christ's Kingdom, expressed in these words: "until I make thy foes thy footstool." Each word in this statement carries significant meaning. While it is generally preferable not to divide or dissect holy Scripture, as doing so may diminish its essence, certain parts, deliberately designed as models and summaries of fundamental Doctrine (such as this Psalm), can be likened to little maps of vast territories, where every word holds weight and carries crucial importance.

First, we encounter the term "until," signifying the duration or extent of Christ's Kingdom. The One responsible for subduing Christ's enemies under His authority is the Lord Himself. The manner in which this is accomplished is described as "ponam" and "ponam scabellum" – placing His foes under His feet like a stool. Victory, being a relative concept, presupposes the existence of adversaries, and though not explicitly detailed here, their enmity is assumed. This hostility manifests itself in various ways against Christ in His mediatorial roles.

As a Prophet, there is enmity against His truth. People adulterate it with human teachings and traditions, substituting divine doctrines with their own interpretations. Some wish certain divine truths were removed from the Scriptures, as they clash with their worldly desires, prioritizing their own pleasures over devotion to God. This enmity extends to His teachings, as people resist and quench the guidance and conviction of His Spirit in the Word, refusing to hear His voice and rejecting God's counsel.

As a Priest, there is enmity by undermining His Person, sufferings, righteousness, and merits. And as a King, enmity is directed towards His worship, with some disregarding it through profane neglect, while others engage in idolatry or corrupt it with superstitions. His

ways and service are met with ungrounded prejudices, with people misjudging them as burdensome, unfruitful, or unfair, leading to deliberate disobedience, as they follow their own hearts instead.

It is crucial to recognise the endurance of Christ's Kingdom, as well as the ongoing conflict with those who oppose it. This verse serves as a potent reminder of Christ's authority over His enemies and the ultimate victory that awaits His Kingdom.

This is a point that individuals should earnestly examine within themselves, as the enemies of Christ are not only found outside the Church but also in its midst where His Kingdom is established (verse 2, Isaiah 8:14). The danger lies in the subtlety with which Satan and a sinful heart can deceive themselves. It is a sobering truth that people may outwardly profess and falsely believe that they love the Lord Jesus, while inwardly being genuine enemies to His Person and Kingdom, similar to the Jews who accused and the Heathen who crucified Him. Jesus was set up to be spoken against, a rock of offense, and a stumbling stone rejected by the very builders themselves.

Among the Philippians, there were false brethren who professed to be Christians but revealed their enmity towards the cross of Christ through their indulgence in worldly desires and sensuality (Philippians 3:18-19). Honouring the bodies of departed Saints with beautiful sepulchers can be a testimonial of sincere love and esteem for their persons and graces. The Holy Ghost, in honour of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, recorded that they embalmed Jesus' body and laid it in a new tomb (John 19:38-41). However, our Saviour pronounces a woe against the Scribes and Pharisees for building the tombs of the Prophets and adorning the sepulchres of the righteous (Matthew 23:29). The fault was not in the action itself,

but in the hypocrisy of their hearts and the incongruity of their other practices. Their plausible pretext of honouring the Prophets was a means to gain protection and approval for their attempts against Christ in the minds of the people. Although they claimed they would not have done as their Fathers did, Jesus reproves this hypocritical belief, highlighting that persecuting Prophets was a national and hereditary sin for them. Their malice against Christ was an intensified manifestation of the same hostility their Fathers showed towards the Prophets. Just as a man, when mangled by various enemies, suffers equally whether a foot, hand, arm, or head is cut off, their hypocrisy and pretended honor only added to the injury they inflicted.

Thus, just as the Jews admired the Prophets outwardly but harboured the same root of fury as their forefathers who shed their blood, people today may claim to love Christ while inwardly harbouring bitterness and animosity towards Him, His Spirit, and His ordinances. Though they may outwardly boast that they would not have participated in the crucifixion, their hearts may reveal the same rancorous disposition as those who cried, "Crucify him, crucify him."

There are many reasons why the heart can be misled in its love for Christ, and I will briefly touch upon some of them. One of the main reasons is the widespread acceptance and endorsement that the Gospel of Christ receives among the rulers of this world. In Christian societies, these rulers subject themselves to the Gospel voluntarily and openly establish it through the force of public laws. However, it is essential to recognise that a mere human inducement cannot be the foundation for genuine spiritual faith and affection. The argument used by the Pharisees to dissuade belief in Christ, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" (John 7:48), has

become one of the principal reasons why many now profess to believe in Him. They follow the example and laws of rulers whom they trust more on the basis of authority than personal conviction.

In Jewish history, we see that when the twelve tribes were united under one government, they all consented to a unified religion. But when the kingdom split under Jeroboam, their worship practices also divided. Those who were once zealous for the Temple in Jerusalem became superstitious about Dan and Bethel. The Prophet explains this by saying, "They willingly walked after the commandment, namely, of Jeroboam" (Hosea 5:11). As soon as the prince exercised his authority, the people readily aligned their beliefs and practices according to his word. When statutes were made by Omri and idolatrous counsels were confirmed by Ahab's own actions, the people were eager to follow them (Micah 6:16).

Thus, even the best kind of wicked people, who received the Gospel with gladness (a symptom of love), fell away in times of persecution, as Jesus pointed out (Matthew 13:21). This shows that when Christ is abandoned due to persecution, the love that was previously bestowed upon Him was likely superficial, sustained by the support and protection of public power against persecution. True love for Christ must be founded on a deeper and more genuine faith that endures even in the face of adversity.

Secondly, a significant number of people profess faith and love for Christ solely based on their upbringing and education. The main reason for their religious beliefs is not rooted in any personal conviction of its excellence, but rather in the customs and traditions handed down by their ancestors. This practice essentially builds a divine faith on human authority, elevating man to the place of God. Such a faith is inherently flawed because different religions cannot

be founded on the same principles. What serves as a true and adequate foundation for faith and love in Christ cannot be compatible with the beliefs of Islam or idolatry. Therefore, when a professed Christian's love for Christ is no different from a Turk's love for Muhammad, or when one's reasons for believing in Christ align with why an idolater rejects Him, such faith and love are merely empty presumptions. This not only dishonours the Spirit of Christ but also deceives the individuals themselves.

There exists a natural instinct in the human mind to revere and uphold the traditions of their ancestors. They tend to detest novel opinions that seem to contradict the established doctrines they have been raised with, especially in matters of religion, where eternal salvation is at stake. The Jews fiercely contended for the Temple in Jerusalem, while the Samaritans fervently defended their Temple on Mount Gerazim. Both sides were equally zealous in upholding their respective traditions, even though our Saviour himself pointed out that they worshipped what they did not truly understand, merely following the customs of their predecessors.

An amusing satirical depiction can be found in the combat of two neighbouring towns in Egypt, passionately defending their ridiculous idols, each adhering to their distinct worship practices due to different upbringing and beliefs.

In such cases, whether it be a professed Christian or a devout Muslim, their motivations are similar: a blind and stubborn attachment to the religion they were brought up in, a natural inclination to favour familiar opinions, and a high regard for the individuals from whom they received their teachings. These individuals lack true spiritual conviction and personal experience of the goodness and truth that genuine followers of Christ find in their

faith. We can observe this same pattern in the Jews' obstinacy against the prophets, as they responded to the prophets' arguments with the practices and traditions passed down from their ancestors (Jeremiah 9:14, 11:10, 44:17, Acts 7:51).

Thirdly, the heart can be misled into thinking it loves Christ when, in reality, it is driven by self-love and a desire to promote personal interests. Christ will judge the love or hatred of individuals towards Him based on their love or hatred towards His brethren and followers (Matthew 25:40, 45), for in their afflictions, Christ Himself is afflicted. Love for Christ should be evident in service and compassion towards His people, as exemplified when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep."

However, there are many individuals everywhere who have allowed their self-love to override any love for their fellow Christians. They show no pity for the souls or temporal needs of those with whom they claim to share a fellowship in Christ's body. Instead, they lavish more on their own pride, luxuries, and pleasures, spending on themselves rather than on helping the poor and needy. At the day of judgment, despite their professions of love for Christ, it will be evident that these individuals formally denied Him in their actions, just as if they had publicly sworn, "I know not the man," like Peter did.

The Apostle indicates that the Corinthians' genuine concern for the needs of the saints served as a sign of their true subjection to the Gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 9:13). Christ is present not only in His poor members but also in the power of His ordinances and the light of His Spirit shining forth in the lives of the godly. Yet, if we react with impatience and hatred when His Word exposes our secret sins and hypocritical intentions, or when the lives and fellowship of

the saints shame and convict our empty profession, then it is evident that we harbour similar feelings towards Christ Himself. If we had lived in His days, we would have expressed the same bitterness towards Him as we do towards those whose lives reflect His Spirit more abundantly.

Jesus warned that the world would hate His followers because they have been called out of the world and have a Spirit that is contrary to the Spirit of the world. Similarly, many who profess Christ may inwardly hate Him because their faith is not based on any experiential goodness in Him but rather on self-love and selfish interests, which subordinate Christ to their personal gains.

We can see this parallel in the Samaritans who claimed kinship with the Jews when they received favour from Alexander and denied it when they faced persecution from Antiochus. Likewise, in times of distress, enemies of Christ have sought refuge in Christian churches and pretended to be His followers to escape calamities, only to turn back to their malice afterwards.

Even today, among Christians, we find individuals who, against their own better judgment and conscience, conform to the vanities and ways of the world, fearing the potential disrespect or disadvantages they might encounter if they fully submit to Christ's truth. They hesitate to live according to the narrow rules of S. Paul, avoiding all appearances of evil, reproofing unfruitful works of darkness, speaking edifying words, rejoicing in the Lord, responding to evil with good, and living circumspectly before God—all because of concerns for their personal projects and ambitions.

If such purposes as these cause people to falter in their punctual and rigorous adherence to the Gospel of Christ and His holy ways, despite our baptismal vow strictly binding us to them, imagine the

challenges that would have attended the naked and outward profession of Christ in the primitive times. Such individuals would have likely fallen into outright apostasy and denied the Lord who redeemed them. Our Saviour has already resolved this situation in the case of those unregenerate men noted in the stony ground: when faced with persecution, they are tested to see whether they loved Christ or themselves in their profession. When times of trial occur, they will undoubtedly fall away and be offended, as their love for pleasure and worldly gains prevents them from a sincere and wholehearted obedience to the true power of religion.

Love follows a certain rule: its motions and desires are strong, and thus, the soul strives for excellence and perfection in anything it loves. This holds especially true in religion because when the soul loves something in this realm, it loves it under the apprehension of the greatest good. Consequently, it sets the strongest and most industrious desires of the soul upon it. The Apostle explains that the love of Christ, that is, the love of Him shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, constrains us to live for Him and aspire after Him who died and rose again for us. Love is as strong as death; it will not be denied. It acts as the wing and weight of the soul, directing all thoughts and desires towards an intimate unity with the object of affection. It stirs up zeal to remove any obstacles that may stand in the way, and in the absence of the object, creates a sense of longing and softness to receive its impressions. It leads to a hastening of the soul to meet and embrace it.

Throughout holy Scripture, we find expressions of the Saints reflecting this deep love: "Comfort me with apples, stay me with flagons, for I am sick of love," "my soul breaketh for the longing which it hath unto thy judgments at all times," "the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee," and many more.

True love for Christ ignites strong desires and an earnest aspiration for the soul to walk in all things well-pleasing and to be fully conformed to Him. Just as the Apostle said of spiritual hope, we can truly say of love (which is the fundamental affection and the root of all others): "He that hath it indeed in him, purgeth himself even as Christ is pure."

Love for the world and its desires may coexist with a formal profession, but it cannot coexist with the truth and power of a genuine love for Christ and His government. Love is always the principle and measure of our actions; they will reflect the nature of the love we hold.

Fourthly, there may be something akin to love in natural individuals towards Christ, based on the historical assurance and persuasion of His current glory, surrounded by mighty angels and filled with all the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, grace, power, and other excellent attributes that can attract love even from an enemy. They acknowledge that He has procured great blessings for mankind, delivering them from the guilt of sin and the impending wrath to come. If they could only be exempted from His spiritual governance and granted permission to live according to their own desires, they would eagerly desire it.

This kind of love can be compared to how Samson encountered a lion as an enemy when it was alive, but after it was slain, he found honey in its carcass. While Christ's bodily presence and powerful preaching, which brought sinners to their knees and spoke with unparalleled authority, may have been uncomfortably terrifying to many (as it was to the Scribes and Pharisees), now that He is out of their sight and His witnesses are the ones who proclaim His message, they may

pretend much admiration and thankful remembrance of His death, which is full of sweetness for all who come to Him. Just as specific dependencies and expectations can lead a person to flatter and adore the greatness of a living potentate while professing abhorrence for other deceased tyrants or those with different intentions, the same reasoning can cause individuals to hypocritically flatter and fawn over Christ Himself, even though He is absent, while simultaneously harboring perfect hatred towards the image of His Spirit manifested in the power of His Word and in the lives of His people.

Even the Scribes and Pharisees, who blasphemed His Spirit and plotted His death, were willing to gain from His demise, as they confessed, "It is expedient for us that one die for the people."

Lastly, a false love for Christ may be rooted in a mistaken belief of love for His ordinances. It is true that one who loves the Word and worship of Christ as His own also loves Him as the Author of them. However, there are cases where the supposed love for these ordinances may be based solely on superficial and self-serving motives. The Lord, speaking to His Prophet, revealed that some people would come and sit before him, pretending to be His people, and they would hear his words, but they would not act upon them. Their mouths may show much love, but their hearts were set on covetousness. Here, there is love in appearance, but falsehood in the heart.

So, what is it that they truly love in the Prophet's ministry? The answer becomes clear in the following statement: "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." In other words, they are not concerned about God's will in the ministry, but only the pleasing aspects of presentation, such as graceful action, eloquence, learning, sweet

speech, and other qualities that appeal to their natural inclinations. It is like someone being moved by a skillful painting of their enemy, not because they have any affection for the person but merely due to the artist's craftsmanship.

Similarly, a person who hates the life and Spirit of God's Word, finding it in opposition to their own spirit of lust and worldly desires, might still be taken in by the wit, eloquence, learning, or charm of those who dispense the Word. Such an individual can deceive themselves into believing that they genuinely love God's Word, when in reality, their admiration is directed solely towards human qualities. Even if such enticing elements are absent, the desire to pacify their conscience, gain social credit by conforming to Church practices, or some other ulterior motive may lead them to maintain an outward appearance of love for God's ordinances, while their heart remains deceitful.

Furthermore, a person may outwardly boast about having access to God's oracles, believe and affirm the truth within them, gladly hear their teachings, and refrain from certain worldly corruptions. However, none of these outward displays can be taken as clear evidence of their love for Christ in His Word. This form of external adherence does not guarantee genuine love, as even unbelieving Jews, Herod, Ahab, Simon Magus, foolish Virgins, and apostates could have attained some of these superficial levels without true love for Christ.

To clarify this important matter concerning the evidence of a person's love for Christ, we must first understand that love for Him is not a natural inclination. By nature, every individual is an enemy to Christ and His Kingdom, just as the Jews said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." This enmity stems from the fallen nature

inherited from Adam, which is in stark contrast to the heavenly image of the second Adam. We are not born with the likeness of Christ; instead, we must undergo renewal.

It is crucial to recognize that our love is directed towards what is akin to us. Love acts like fire, drawing similar elements together. Our love for Christ, therefore, must be of a spiritual nature. It is grounded in two main causes. Firstly, it is based on the proportionality between Christ and all our desires or capacities. We are captivated by the evidence of His unsearchable and boundless goodness, which makes Him incomparably beautiful and altogether lovely. A heart with a spiritual view of Christ can perceive dimensions of love and sweetness in Him that exceed the knowledge of any creature. In all worldly things, no matter how intricate or delicate they may be, hearts that revel in them can still detect flaws and imperfections. There is always something undesirable or in need of modification. However, in Christ and His kingdom, there is nothing unlovely. In Him, perfection prevails, while in man, corruption abounds. Christ's fullness becomes the central treasure of the human soul, leading to love as a universal habit and principle, facilitating every service that brings us closer to this center. Love becomes the weight or force that sets every faculty in motion, making obedience to His commandments a joy, for love is the fulfillment of the law. True love for Christ keeps the heart united and directs it entirely toward God. A divided heart leads to an unsteady life. Just as the movements of the heavens are harmoniously guided by a common circumvolution from east to west, even though each celestial sphere moves in its unique way, similarly, though different saints may have varying struggles and temptations, being animated by the same Spirit unites them in a steadfast and consistent motion towards Christ.

Imagine a stone placed beneath the moon's concave; despite the fire, air, and water it must pass through, it would hasten towards its own place. Likewise, even though a person may encounter countless obstacles and conditions in their journey towards Christ, including adversity, fear, temptation, and challenging circumstances, if their heart truly loves Christ and considers heaven its home, nothing can completely discourage them from pressing onward towards where Christ, the forerunner, has already gone.

Secondly, the true love for Christ is founded upon recognizing the profound connection between the soul and Him, the mutual inhabitation and possession that exists between them. Thus, our love for Him in this aspect is akin to self-love, and therefore, immensely powerful, as Christ and a Christian become inseparable. The more convinced the soul is of this unity, the stronger its love for Christ becomes. We love Him because He loved us first, as stated in 1 John 4:16, 19. Our Saviour, based on the woman's perception of God's abundant love in forgiving her numerous and grave sins, draws a conclusion about the extent of her love for Him. He remarks, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47).

Now, true love for Christ and His Kingdom, grounded as it is in the soul's profound connection to Him, will undoubtedly manifest itself in various ways. Firstly, in an all-encompassing manner, the soul will wholeheartedly embrace and cherish the Spirit of Christ. It will warmly welcome and value the inner promptings, directions, and inspirations of the Spirit. The soul will diligently listen to His voice, guiding its path and will readily receive the inner seal and testimony of His promises. It will be cautious of the stubbornness of its own nature, which tends to resist and rebel against the Holy Spirit's influence.

Secondly, the soul will have a deep affection for God's Ordinances (through which He is still active in His Church by His Spirit). The Law of God will find a suitable and coincidental place in the heart of such a person. They will receive the Word in its purity, not yielding to human inventions that may adulterate it or distort its true meaning. They will avoid the spiritual treachery of wit and imagination or any form of heresy and contradiction, which seeks to impose human ideas onto God's divine teachings. The Word will be received with the acknowledgment of its power, majesty, and authority, akin to thunder uncovering hidden corruptions and purging deceit from the heart. The soul will humbly submit its imagination and fleshly reasonings, subjecting all thoughts to the obedience of Christ. They will embrace the Word as a wholesome potion, allowing it to search their innermost places and purge stubborn lusts that have hitherto resisted removal. They will be careful not to harden their hearts and reject God's counsel, avoiding the danger of rebuffing His Word and resisting the call of Christ, which could lead to the soul's downfall.

Lastly, the soul will embrace the spiritual essence of the Word, wholeheartedly subscribing to its closest precepts. It will allow the Word to cleanse the heart thoroughly, and God's commandments will prevail and guide above any considerations of fear, love, profit, pleasure, credit, or conformity. The soul will be content to walk the narrow path, exposing its deepest corruptions to be revealed and removed, and patiently enduring the saving yet severe blows of the spiritual sword.

In one word, he will humbly set aside the pride of his own intellect. If he is taught the evident truth of God, even in its simplest form, without any embellishments or contributions of human fancy, he will discern the difference between the author (God) and the instrument

(the messenger). With awe and reverence in his heart, he will receive God's word from any source, understanding its divine origin.

Thirdly, in this case, the soul will dearly love every member of Christ's body. The love for Christ and His followers are inseparable. Though the love due to Christ is of a higher proportion than to fellow human beings, our love for our brethren serves as both evidence and measure of our love for Christ. The Apostle John questions how one can claim to love God whom they haven't seen if they lack love for their brethren whom they have seen. Love for fellow humans requires transcendency in love, as God's goodness is beyond our understanding. Thus, it is certain that one who does not love a fellow member of Christ does not truly love Christ. The progress of brotherly love aligns with the growth of love for Christ, akin to the relationship between proportions (e.g. one to five as twenty to a hundred) or the motion of a shadow on a dial in response to the Sun's position, though the Sun travels vast distances while the shadow moves only minutely.

Secondly, a true, grounded love for Christ will manifest in the right manner and conditions. Primarily, it must be an incorrupt and sincere love. The Apostle speaks of "grace upon all those that love the Lord Jesus in incorruption or sincerity" (Eph. 6:24). This love goes beyond mere words or superficial professions, extending to the very core of one's being. It compels the heart to love Christ genuinely and consistently, opposing all that stands against His Kingdom.

Moreover, it must be a principal and superlative love, based on the soul's realization that Christ possesses incomparably more beauty and goodness than all the worldly honours, pleasures, profits, and satisfactions combined. The love for Christ must be supreme, with

everything else becoming secondary or even detestable if it draws one away from Him.

Lastly, it must be an exclusive and undivided love, free from competition or rivals. As Christ is the all-encompassing center of our lives, He requires all our affections to be devoted to Him. Just as the rising Sun outshines and diminishes the brilliance of countless stars, so must the love for Christ overshadow and unite all scattered affections that were once directed towards lesser objects.

Lastly, true love for Christ will be evident through natural and genuine effects of this strong and spiritual grace. As previously mentioned, some principal effects include universal, cheerful, and constant obedience to Christ's holy commandments. Jesus Himself said, "If a man loves me, he will keep my commandments; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). There are two aspects to love: love of bounty and beneficence, and love of duty and service. Just as a father truly loves his child when he provides for their well-being and future, a child truly loves his father when they strive to please and serve him. Therefore, the more pure and beneficial a commandment is, the more diligently it will be observed by a sincere and generous love. Knowing that God Himself is good and does good, and His law reflects His holiness, a Christian's soul is enflamed to obey it with sweetness and seriousness, knowing the present reward and future blessings it holds. As the Psalmist proclaimed, "Your word is very pure; therefore your servant loves it" (Psalm 119:140).

Secondly, true love for Christ leads to a willingness to suffer for Him and His Gospel. The Apostle Paul wrote, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). We have seen how human

love for their country or vain glory has driven some heathens to devote and sacrifice their lives. How much more should spiritual love for Christ give us the courage to bear and endure all things for Him, who bore our sins, stripes, and burdens that were heavier than the world could lay upon Him? The holy martyr Polycarp exemplified this when, despite the persecutors' attempts to persuade him to renounce his faith, he chose to die for Christ. His response was, "For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has never done me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" (Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians). The Apostle Paul also declared his unwavering love for Christ, stating that nothing can separate us from the love of God, so nothing should quench our love for Him (Romans 8:38-39). Just as many waters, signifying afflictions and persecutions, cannot quench love, floods cannot drown it (Song of Solomon 8:7).

Thirdly, true love for Christ is accompanied by zeal and a jealous desire to uphold His glory, truth, worship, and ways. While wicked people may pretend to love Christ, they are driven only by self-interest, like ivy that clings to an oak to drain its sap for its own leaves and berries. However, genuine love is deeply concerned with advancing the glory of Christ's kingdom and promoting His truth and worship. It fears any corruption of His truth or violation of His Church. The Apostle Paul expressed this fear and contention for the Galatians, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (Galatians 4:11-16). The Apostles and other ministers displayed similar contention and zeal when faced with false brethren or idolatry hindering the spread of Christ's holy Gospel (Acts 15:2, Acts 17:16, Acts 18:25, Acts 19:8, Galatians 2:4-5, Jude 1:2).

Lastly, there is a longing for His presence, a love for His appearing, and a deep desire to be with Him, which is the best of all. When He

departs from the soul for a while, there is grief and seeking after Him. We wait for His salvation and find delight in His communion and spiritual refreshments. We commune with Him in His secret chamber, His houses of wine, and His galleries of love. These beautiful expressions describe the fellowship that the Church desires to have with Christ, a constant and intimate communion with Him, feasting the soul with His manifestations and graces (Psalm 42:3; 105:4; 2 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Timothy 4:8; Philippians 1:23; Song of Solomon 3:1, 2; 5:6-8; Genesis 49:18; Psalm 119:131; Song of Solomon 1:4; 2:4; 7:5; John 14:21-23; Revelation 3:20).

Having thus, in light of the enemies of Christ, discussed both true and false love towards Him in the world, we now proceed to the specific points mentioned earlier. The first is the term "Until" in the text, which has a twofold relation: to Christ's Kingdom and to His Enemies. Concerning Christ's Kingdom, it signifies both its Continuance and its Limitation. The continuance of His Kingdom is in His own person, fixed and unchanging. He is a King without successors, not subject to mortality or any defect that others might need to fill. The Kingdom of Christ, as previously noted, is either Natural, as He is God, or Dispensatory, given to Him by the Father as Mediator. The Scripture affirms that it is Eternal. It is a kingdom established by the God of heaven and shall never be destroyed, standing forever (Daniel 2:44). "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," signifying the unction and donation (Psalm 2:6). "And in Mount Zion, where God has set Him, He shall reign from henceforth even forever" (Micah 4:7). "Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth forever and ever" (Isaiah 9:6, 7). "Unto the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (Hebrews 1:8). Here, we must distinguish between the substance of Christ's Kingdom and

the manner in which it is administered and dispensed. In its substance, it is absolutely eternal. Christ will be the head and rewarder of His members, an everlasting Father, and a Prince of peace to them forever. In its administration, it shall be "Eternal" in a specific sense, lasting until the consummation of all things. As long as there is a Church of God on earth, there will be no new way of spiritual and essential government prescribed to it, no other Vicar, Successor, Monarch, or Usurper allowed by God. Christ, through His Spirit, shall order and rule the consciences of His people and subdue their enemies. However, when the end comes, He will deliver up the Kingdom to God the Father, and when all things are subjected to Him, He will also subject Himself to Him, so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Christ will return the Kingdom to God, as God had conferred and, as it were, appropriated it to Him, specifically in terms of judiciary dispensation and execution. In this regard, our Savior said, "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment, and has given authority to execute it unto His Son" (John 4:22, 27). Currently, Christ governs His Church through the ministry of His Word and Sacraments and the effusion of His Spirit upon His members. By His mighty, though secret, power, He fights against His enemies, and He will continue to do so until the resurrection of the dead when death, the last enemy, shall be overcome. At that point, in these respects, His Kingdom shall cease, and He will no longer act as a Mediator, showing compassion, defending, or interceding for His Church. However, He will still reign forever as God, coequal with the Father, and will continue to be the Head of the Church, His body. Therefore, although Christ's Kingdom, in terms of the manner of dispensation and present execution, has a limitation until the consummation of all things, in itself, it is an immortal Kingdom without the seeds of mortality or the risk of upheaval. Christ voluntarily resigns His commission and

power as Mediator into the hands of the Father, becoming subject to Him as a part of the great Church, so that God may be all in all.

The grounds for the steadfastness of Christ's government over His Church, and consequently the Church itself, which is His kingdom, include the following:

Firstly, the Decree and promise of God, sealed by an oath, solidified it as an unyielding and unchangeable purpose that the Lord would never revoke or regret. God's Counsels are unalterable (though He may change His works, His will remains constant). But when He seals His Decree with an oath, its immutability becomes beyond question or doubt. In such a case, it is impossible for God to change, for He cannot lie or deny Himself (Hebrews 6:18). It is upon such a Decree that the Kingdom of Heaven is established. The Lord declares, "Once have I sworn by my Holiness that I will not lie unto David" (Psalm 89:35). The word "once" signifies the constancy and steadfastness of God's promise. "By my Holiness" signifies the inviolability of His promise, as if to say, "As long as I am regarded as a Holy God, I will faithfully keep the Covenant I have sworn to David in My truth."

Secondly, it is the free gift of God to His Son, Christ, whereby all power and judgment were entrusted to Him. Power is a compelling argument for proving the stability of a kingdom, especially when supported by wisdom and righteousness, as is the power of Christ. Hence, from His power, He argues for the perpetuity of His Church until the end of the world. He says, "All power is given me in heaven and earth; Go ye therefore and preach the Gospel to all nations; and loe I am with you always to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20). This argument is compelling and emphatic, for though kingdoms of great power have been conquered in the past and may

be in the future, the reason lies in the fact that significant power remains on the adversary's side. And if these kingdoms have been too vast for any smaller force to overthrow, they eventually succumb due to their lack of wisdom to govern such a vast realm or righteousness to prevent or cleanse the corrupting vices of emulation, sedition, luxury, injustice, violence, and impiety, which, in the case of states, are the seeds of their decay and mortality. However, the power of Christ in His Church is universal, containing all power and lacking in weakness. There is no power outside of Him or against Him. Thus, it is not surprising that the argument for the continuity of His kingdom follows infallibly from His abundance of power and the emptiness of His enemies. No man with all sufficiency would permit himself to be mutilated and dismembered, just as Christ would not allow anything to prevail against His Church, which is His fullness. Moreover, this power of Christ is supported by wisdom; it can never fail due to any internal deficiency, for the wisdom is commensurate with the power. He possesses "All power" and "All the treasures of wisdom," enabling power to confound the mighty through weakness and wisdom to nullify the understanding of the prudent through foolishness. Both power and wisdom are upheld by righteousness, which is indeed the essence and strength of a kingdom, the foundation upon which the thrones of Princes are established. The Apostle makes righteousness the basis of the perpetuity of Christ's kingdom, declaring, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8).

Thirdly, the nature of Christ's kingdom is that of growth. Although its origins may seem as small as a grain of mustard-seed or as inconspicuous as Elijah's cloud, barely holding on to existence in the eyes of the world and often becoming a subject of ridicule rather than fear, in the end, it expands to encompass the whole world. This is exemplified by the Apostle Paul when he applies the words of the

Prophet David about the Sun to the Gospel, emphasising that the reach of the Gospel is universal, extending to every corner of the world (Romans 10:18). It is a kingdom that grows and absorbs other kingdoms, replacing them. Just as the little stone in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (which represented the Kingdom of Christ) shattered the great earthly monarchies and grew into a great mountain that filled the world (Daniel 2:34-35), the kingdoms of the earth will ultimately become the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ (Revelation 11:15). The Prophets depict Christ and His kingdom as a Branch, growing up like a standard and ensign for the people (Isaiah 11:1, 10; Zechariah 3:8), a branch that thrives perpetually without withering. The kingdom has no inherent principles of death, and though it may face assaults from adversaries and external threats, such challenges serve only to test and strengthen it, not to weaken or overthrow it. The gates of hell, representing the powers, policies, and laws of darkness, will never prevail against the Church of Christ. He has defeated, judged, and trampled down Satan under our feet. Christ has overcome the world; He has conquered iniquity, turning persecutions into opportunities for the Church's growth and revival. He has transformed afflictions into occasions of glory and rejoicing. Thus, in all the violence and suffering the Church endures, it does more than conquer, for its victory lies not in repelling but in enduring.

And this highlights the sacrilege and audacity of the Church of Rome, which, with a double impious intention, distorts the Scriptures to diminish the honour of Christ and His kingdom. They claim for the Pope and his See in Rome all the infallibility, authority, and fullness of power that actually belong to Christ's body, as well as the stability, constancy, and universality of His Church on Earth. Just as the Donatists in S. Augustine's time, misinterpreting the passage in the Canticles, excluded all the world from being a Church except for a

corner of Africa where they resided, similarly, the Romanists wrongly conclude that all these privileges exclusively belong to them, while excluding other renowned Churches from communion with Christ the Head. The scornful rebuke that Harding directs at the Bishop, who valiantly opposed him and his faction, can be turned back upon himself. For they audaciously curse and exclude all Christian Churches that do not submit to the laws of Rome or regard the Cathedral determinations of the Pope (though some of them have been known to be impure and intolerable) as the infallible Edicts of the Spirit of God, equivalent to the words spoken by S. Peter or Saint Paul. Such arrogance is a clear and defining trait of Antichrist.

It is true that Christ's regal power continually manifests itself in upholding His Catholic Church and revealing necessary truths from His sacred Word for its existence and salvation. However, to confine this power to one man and one See (as if the Pope were infallible only in S. Peter's chair) is a product of pride and ambition with no foundation at all. It arises from a collection of presumptuous human beliefs, some debatable and others outright false, which must be forcibly imposed as indubitable principles and certain foundations before the first stone of Papal authority can be laid. One such belief is the notion that the external and visible governance of the entire Church must be monarchical, with a dominant mistress Church overseeing all others, to which all must unquestioningly conform. Yet, the Apostle tells us that the unity of the Church is gathered by many Pastors and Teachers (Ephesians 4:11-13). Just as several needles touched by several loadstones, all having the same specific virtue in them, accurately point to the same point in heaven as if they were guided by just one loadstone, so the multitude of Preachers, including Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, all come instructed with the same spiritual truth and power towards the Church. As a result, all the faithful, wherever they are taught by these

preachers, unite in heart and judgment under the secret guidance of the same Spirit of Grace, which leads them to the same truth and the same way. They acknowledge no monarch over their consciences but CHRIST, nor any other ministerial application of His regal power in the Catholic Church except through several Bishops and Pastors, who, within their respective domains, possess the same comprehensive ministerial power as the Pope and his Consistory in the See of Rome.

Secondly, they claim that Peter was the Prince and Monarch, the Rock and Head of this Universal Church, and that he alone was the custodian of the keys, all based on the virtue of Christ's promise and commission to him. "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church, feed my sheep, feed my Lambs, unto thee will I give the Keys of the kingdom of heaven." In this regard, Baronius called him the chief stone, *Lapidem primarium*. He asserted that though Christ is the Author and moderator of His Church, He has conferred the Princedom and Monarchy upon Peter. They attempt to hold up this monarchy with various flimsy arguments. For instance, because Peter preached first, they claim he is the Monarch of the Church. However, this argument has long since expired, as his supposed successors scarcely preach at all. If anything, it merely proves that he was the first in order and forwardness to preach Christ, not the chief in dignity and jurisdiction over others. It would be just as valid to argue that James had precedence before Peter because Paul mentioned James before Cephas in a passage where he singled them out as pillars and principal men in the Church.

Another fallacious claim is that because Peter performed miracles, such as curing the lame man at the gate of the Temple, he is the universal monarch. Yet, this logic could also be applied to Paul, who similarly cured a cripple at Lystra. However, the people in Lystra did

not engage in such acute disputes as those in Rome, and they did not consider Paul's miracle as an argument for his share in the monarchy. Similarly, they argue that Peter's pronouncement of sentence upon Ananias makes him the monarch of the universal Church. Again, Paul could be considered in this regard as well, since he passed judgment upon Elimas the sorcerer without receiving any commission from Peter. If both Peter and Paul, guided by the same Apostolical and infallible Spirit of Christ, pronounced judgments, it is unreasonable to conclude a disparity of persons based on the nature of their actions.

Another groundless argument is that because Peter healed the sick by his shadow, he is the monarch of the universal Church. However, this could be used as an argument for Paul's primacy too, as the handkerchiefs and aprons that came from his body also cured diseases and cast out demons. But, in reality, there is no substance in this argument for Peter's principality, just as there is no miraculous virtue in images and relics of Saints.

Moreover, they contend that because Peter was sent to Samaria to confirm them in the faith and lay hands on them to receive the Holy Ghost, and to confound Simon Magus the sorcerer, he is the primate of the Catholic Church with monarchical jurisdiction. Yet, this would make the Pope more monarchical than Peter, as he would not be willing to be sent as an ambassador of the Churches from Rome to the Indians, despite the Gospel being preached among them in recent times. The argument of Peter's primacy based on his mission to Samaria lacks credibility, as he was sent with an associate and not as a sole monarch. Furthermore, if the act of confuting or cursing certain individuals were evidence of primacy, then Paul's cursing of Elimas, Hymenaeus, and Alexander, or S. John's cursing of Cerinthus, should also be arguments of their primacy.

Lastly, they argue that because Paul went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, it proves Peter's monarchy over the Catholic Church. This would be similar to concluding that Elizabeth is a greater woman than the Virgin Mary because Mary went to see Elizabeth. However, there is no argument of superiority in the text; Paul visited Peter as a brother and not to pay homage or receive authority from him as a monarch. Otherwise, Paul would have gone up to Jerusalem immediately, but instead, he stayed for three years and preached the Gospel solely by the commission he received from Christ.

How did S. Paul become so free, and S. Peter so much more humble than any of his supposed successors? The one boldly giving reproof, the other receiving it with silence and meekness in front of all the brethren, many years after their encounter. Surely, in that long period, S. Paul must have learned the appropriate manner to address his monarch and primate. These instances show the shaky foundation on which the formidable Babel of Papal usurpation and power over the Catholic Church is built (which essentially forms the basis of Romish religion and underpins their faith, worship, and obedience). However, we assert that just as Peter was a foundation, so were all the other Apostles as well, as stated in Ephesians 2:20 and Revelation 21:14. They were foundations of the Church not due to their personal dignity, as Christ, the chief cornerstone was, but because of their Apostolic office, which granted them universal jurisdiction in governing and instructing the people of Christ, along with a Spirit of infallibility in revealing God's will throughout the world. Therefore, while Peter had the keys of the Kingdom of heaven to remit or retain the sins of men, the other Apostles possessed the same authority (John 20:23). Christ's charge to Peter to feed His sheep is no different in substance from His commission to them all to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

However, to further bolster their authority, they insist that Peter, in this capacity, was also the Bishop of Rome. Yet, they provide no testimony from Holy Scriptures to support this claim; instead, they rely solely on human tradition, which is unreliable. Moreover, they argue that Peter appointed the Church of Rome to be the monarchical and fundamental see of all other Churches. However, Peter was also the Bishop of Antioch, so why would his personal virtue not apply to his chair there as well? Additionally, they assert that he transmitted all his prerogatives to his successors in that chair, which seems unsubstantiated. Furthermore, they claim that the long succession from Peter until now has been legal and uninterrupted. But if this were not the case, the Church would have been a monster without a head. It is true that some of the Ancients argued from succession in the Church, but this was during a time when the Church was still pure, and they could trace their doctrine directly back to the preaching of the Apostles. However, even in their personal succession, it is well known that various forms of corruption have raised some to the position of Bishop. Additionally, it is uncertain whether every Episcopal ordination of every Bishop has been valid, as it requires both the intention and Orders of the Bishop who ordained them.

These uncertainties and doubts must be the basis of the faith of those who dare to arrogate to themselves the prerogatives of Christ and His Catholic Kingdom. However, I fear I have dwelled too long on this argument.

Again, the stability of Christ's Kingdom is a source of strong confidence and comfort for the entire Church of Christ, even in the face of outward enemies that may seem to overwhelm them. Despite the enemies' alliances, battles, and schemes against the Lord's anointed and His people, they shall all come to naught and be broken

in pieces. The Church of God cannot be extinguished by all the smoke of hell, nor can the power of hell overturn it. The reason for this unwavering confidence lies in the presence of Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 8:9, 10). The anointing received by the Church will ultimately deliver it from the enemy's yoke (Isaiah 10:27). Though at times the Church may appear as desperate as a dry stick in the fire or a lifeless body in the grave, it is not a burial but a sowing. Though it may seem cast away for a season, in due time, it will rise and flourish again (Zechariah 3:2, Ezekiel 37:11). The Church can be assured that the Lord can save and deliver a second time (Isaiah 11:11). He is the same God yesterday, today, and forever, and therefore, the same God the Church has experienced in the past, it shall find Him today and forever in the return and manifestation of His mercy.

This assurance exposes the folly and predicts the confusion of the enemies of Christ's Kingdom. Their evil schemes only give birth to vanity and futility (Job 15:35). Their malicious intent is like the fighting of briars and thorns against the fire (Isaiah 27:4, Nahum 1:10). It is like shooting arrows of a madman against the Sun, which eventually return upon their own heads. It is like puffing a fan against the corn, driving away nothing but chaff, or like the wind beating against sails, or water foaming and raging against a mill, which, by the wisdom of the artisans, are all directed towards useful and excellent purposes. Surely, when the Lord completes His work on Mount Zion, purging away the iniquity and sin, He will return in peace and beauty to His people again.

Consider the preparation of a large building, with heaps of lime and mortar in one place, piles of timber in another, and everywhere rough and unorganized materials, along with a tumultuous noise of axes and hammers. Yet, eventually, the skilled craftsman arranges everything and raises up a beautiful structure. Such is the process of

the Lord in the afflictions and devastations of His Church. Though the enemy intends to ruin it, God intends only to repair it.

This is the perspective regarding Christ's Kingdom in itself.

Now, as it concerns the enemies of Christ, it points out several aspects. Firstly, it highlights the ongoing unconsummated victories and, consequently, the unrest within Christ's Kingdom on earth. Not all of His enemies are yet subdued; Satan still roams, and the wicked schemes and persecutions persist, along with the impunity of desperate sinners. This indicates that Christ still has significant work to accomplish in His Church. But does not the Apostle say that all things are under His feet? (Ephesians 1:22) Indeed, this is true regarding judicial authority, but not in terms of exercising that authority. Christ possesses the power to subdue His enemies, but He chooses when and how to execute it. During this respite, He permits His enemies to rage, revile, and persecute His followers. Every wicked individual is already condemned and carries the wrath of God upon them (John 3:18, 36). However, Christ, in His patience and long-suffering, first offers peace before resorting to the sword (Romans 2:4, Romans 9:22, Deuteronomy 20:10-13, Luke 10:5, 11).

Secondly, this period of respite magnifies the power of Christ's protection and providence over the Church amidst its enemies. The Lord stands on the side of the Church when adversaries rise against it, rebuking the proud waves and setting boundaries for their actions (Psalm 124:1,5).

Thirdly, it reserves the wicked for the great day of Christ's appearing when His power and righteousness will be declared before all the world, and all shall witness His just and victorious dealings with them (Acts 17:31).

Fourthly, it demonstrates Christ's mighty power in their simultaneous destruction. Those who displayed insolence in attempting to dethrone Christ will collectively stand before Him, just as the righteous shall together receive their full salvation (1 Thessalonians 4:17) - the wicked will be bound together and destroyed (Psalm 37:38, Isaiah 1:28).

Fifthly, it allows the wicked to fill up the measure of their sins, and when their measure is full, God executes His righteous judgments. The Scripture refers to wicked men as vessels fitted for destruction, for they first fill themselves with sin, and then God fills them with wrath and shame.

Sixthly, it serves to complete the number of God's Elect, as there are many sheep not yet within His fold, some of whom are descendants of wicked men (John 10:16).

Seventhly, it enables the Church to endure sufferings like Christ did and follow Him into His Kingdom through the same path of afflictions (Colossians 1:24, Revelation 6:11).

Eighthly, it tests the faith of the Church, prompting the faithful to seek refuge in the Lord, to wait on Him amidst His judgments, and to remember that the end of the righteous is peace, while the pride and prosperity of the wicked are transient (Habakkuk 2:1, 3, Psalm 37:2, 10, 20, Psalm 73:18).

Lastly, it aims to detach the faithful from earthly attachments and to kindle in them the longing of the Saints under the altar who cry out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10).

Secondly, "donec" signifies the patience of Christ towards his enemies, but it also denotes that there are definite bounds and limits to that patience. There is an appointed day when He will judge the world with righteousness (Acts 17:31). There is a year of vengeance and recompense for the controversies of Zion (Isaiah 34:8). Those who indulge in excessive rioting may enjoy it for a time, but they are bound by the consequences of their actions, and God will ultimately bring them to judgment. When the day of reckoning arrives, the pleasures of the wicked will be snatched away, and they will find no satisfaction for their wicked hearts. Instead, the memory of their sins will haunt them as an everlasting scourge on their conscience. It is essential, therefore, to avoid the progression of sin by falling into habits of custom, security, insensibility, impudence, boasting, or by rejecting mercy and resisting the voice of the Spirit in the Word. Just as the heat of the sun withers the fruit that falls off the tree while ripening what remains, the Word weakens the lusts a person desires to leave behind and strengthens those the heart clings to.

Let us not follow the examples of Israel and Judah, who met destruction by mocking God's messengers, despising His Word, and rejecting the remedy for their sins. The reckless pursuit of damnation and the rush towards hell will not go unnoticed by the Almighty, and the day of judgment will come.

Thirdly, "donec" signifies the infallible accomplishment of Christ's victories and triumph over His enemies when the time comes for Him to no longer show patience towards them. As the Prophet Isaiah beautifully articulates, the Lord is our Judge, Lawgiver, and King, and He will save us. When the day of trial arrives, He will plead our cause against our adversaries and condemn them (Micah 7:9). Being both the Judge and Lawgiver, Christ adheres to the laws He established. However, as King, He possesses the authority of mercy

and pardon. Yet, when He takes vengeance on His enemies, no one else has the power to pardon or stand against Him. At that day, there will be a glorious manifestation of Christ's Kingdom, and none of His enemies will dare to oppose or challenge Him.

The second aspect previously addressed in this latter part of the verse is the Author of subduing Christ's enemies under His feet [I the Lord]. Wicked individuals will never willingly submit themselves to Christ's Kingdom; instead, they resist and oppose Him in His Word and ways. When God's hand is raised to deliver His Word and threaten against sin, people willfully ignore it (Isaiah 26:11). This prompts God to say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men," highlighting that people persistently resist the Spirit and refuse to submit to Christ.

Despite God's patience and goodness, urging them to repent and flee from the impending wrath, they remain obstinate and unrepentant. Instead of heeding the warning, they accumulate even more wrath upon themselves due to the delay in judgment. Their hearts are wholly set on mischief because they interpret the absence of immediate consequences as an opportunity to continue their sinful ways.

Even if a wicked person were somehow rescued from hell and granted a second chance at mercy, they would inevitably rebel against God and indulge in their lusts once again. Just as clay hardens further when exposed to fire, and metal that once melted solidifies upon removal from the furnace, the hearts of the wicked remain unyielding.

The example of Pharaoh illustrates this phenomenon. Although he acknowledged God's righteousness and his own sin during the rain,

hail, and thunder, once the calamities ceased, he hardened his heart even more and refused to let the children of Israel go.

We often witness people facing illness and coming close to the brink of hell, only to be saved through God's incredible patience, like a brand snatched from the fire. Yet, once they recover a bit, they revert to even more sinful behavior. Despite making hypocritical promises to amend their ways in their extremity, they end up indulging in filthiness, as if seeking revenge against God or making a pact with hell to serve it more fervently if spared.

In conclusion, this highlights the stubbornness and defiance of wicked individuals towards God's call for repentance, despite His patience and warnings.

All the favours and methods that God employs are insufficient to compel wicked individuals to turn to Him willingly. The Lord declares, "Though I redeemed them," they still speak lies against Him, offering insincere cries while howling upon their beds. They refuse to turn to the Lord who strikes them, nor do they seek the Lord of hosts. Despite the numerous judgments sent upon Israel, the burden of the Prophet's message remains, "Yet you have not returned unto me," says the Lord.

It is like trying to dam up a river and using all possible means to divert it, but you can never make it flow backward in its original channel. While wicked individuals may be influenced by various reasons that appeal to their desires, it is impossible to change their nature or redirect them entirely into the path of Christ. There are only two options in the world: the way of life and the way of death. In the Ministry of the Word, the Lord offers us a choice, saying, "I have set before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing. He that believes shall be saved, he that does not believe shall be damned."

To the former, the Lord extends invitations, entreaties, and enticements with promises, oaths, engagements, and the prevention of objections. The Apostle implores, "We beseech you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God." On the other hand, the Lord deters us by warning of the impending wrath and the inevitable end to our lusts with our lives. Like Tertullian once spoke of the Oath of God, we can speak of His entreaties and threatenings.

Blessed are those whom the Lord personally entices and solicits towards happiness. However, miserable are those who refuse to believe or accept God's own entreaties. Unfortunately, we are all naturally inclined towards misery. There is so much atheism, infidelity, and distrust of God's Word in us that we prefer to risk going to hell rather than accepting heaven with limitations. We even make God a liar, bless ourselves in our sins when He curses, and judge Him based on our own standards, as if He pays no attention to our actions. Therefore, it is justifiable for God to repeatedly threaten to remember all the sins of the wicked and act accordingly.

In light of this, we see that people will never willingly submit to the rule of Christ or avoid impending wrath through voluntary submission.

It remains, therefore, that God must take matters into His own hands and compel them to be subject to Christ's authority forcefully. They refuse to submit to His kingdom of grace and mercy, they reject belief in His kingdom of glory and salvation, but they shall be brought under the sway of His wrathful judgment, without any hope of escape or power to resist, as God Himself will do it directly by His own mighty power. He will intervene with His own hand and display the glory of His strength in the just punishment of the wicked. As the

Apostle says, "The Lord will show His wrath and make His power known in the vessels fitted for destruction." (Romans 9:22).

Two means will be used in the destruction of the wicked, as the Apostle reveals: the presence or countenance, and the glorious power of the Lord. The terror of His face and the dreadful Majesty of His presence will slay the wicked. The kings, great men, rich men, chief captains, and mighty men, who were once formidable themselves and acquainted with terrors, will then plead for the mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:15-16; Isaiah 2:10). This is why God's resolution to destroy a people is often expressed as, "I will set my face against them."

The condemnation of wicked individuals on that day will be severe, as the Lord intends to display the glorious strength of His own almighty arm. When the Lord punishes a people now, He demonstrates the extent of strength and power He can invest in His creatures to execute His wrath. But the extreme terror of the last day will be that people will fall directly into the hands of God Himself, who declared, "Vengeance belongs to me, and I will recompense." (Hebrews 10:30-31). Hence, the Apostle questions idolaters, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (1 Corinthians 10:22).

Do we dare to face the Lord in His fury? Are we provoking Him to unleash all His wrath upon us? (Psalm 78:38). Eventually, He will indeed stir up all His wrath against those who deserve it. For this reason, He takes it upon Himself to punish them directly. No creature is capable of bearing the full weight of God's displeasure. There is no vessel that can contain all of His wrath. The Apostle reminds us that we have to deal with God through His Word

(Hebrews 4:13), but He uses the ministry of weak men, veiling His Majesty, so that wicked hearts remain blind to His presence in His Word. When His hand is lifted up, especially in the threats and predictions of wrath from His Word, they refuse to see it. It requires faith to accept the Word as God's own and to recognize His power and authority therein (Micah 6:9). Others may deny that it is from the Lord, but they will come to know that they truly face His judgments when His hand comes down in the execution of His wrath. As the Lord asks in Ezekiel 22:14, "Can your heart endure or your hands be strong in the days when I shall deal with you?"

The Prophet Isaiah also addresses this question: "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites." They have a fearful anticipation of judgment and fiery indignation, as the Apostle explains (Hebrews 10:27). They wonder, "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14). In the words of another Prophet, "Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him" (Nahum 1:6).

Confirmation of this point can be found in these considerations: Firstly, the quarrel with sinners belongs to God; it is His own controversy. The injuries and insults have been directed towards Himself and His Son, and the challenges have been sent to Himself and His Spirit. Therefore, it is no surprise that He takes matters into His own hands, and the quarrel, so intimately connected to Him, may provoke Him to seek revenge through His own immediate power.

Secondly, revenge is His prerogative as the King. As mentioned in Deuteronomy 32:35 and 41, the Apostle infers that it is a fearful

thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:30, 31). This fearfulness can be explained by several aspects. First, it will be a judgment without mercy (James 2:13). There will be no mixture of sweetness in the cup of God's displeasure; it will contain only poison and bitterness. No drop of water will be offered to quench the lake of fire, nor a minute of ease for an eternity of torment. Secondly, it will be fury without compassion. Even in human judgments, where the state's law may prevent a judge from showing mercy, the law of nature would still force him to have some compassion and sorrow for the person he must condemn. No judge is so devoid of feelings for another's misery as to pronounce a sentence of condemnation with laughter. However, the Lord will condemn His enemies without any pity. As stated in Proverbs 1:26, "I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes." Thirdly, it will be revenge and recompense, in full and everlasting detestation of wicked men. This weight of being scorned and abhorred by the One who created them may bear heavier upon them than any other torment they will endure. The wicked may have hated God and opposed Him throughout their time of sin, but God will hate the wicked and direct His face and fury against them as long as He remains the Judge of the world.

Thirdly, this can be observed in the beginnings of hell in wicked men on earth. When the conscience is opened, and sin, which lay dormant before, rises like an enraged lion to attack the soul; when the Lord allows flashes of His glittering sword to break in like lightning upon the spirit, amazing sinners with the glimpses and first fruits of hell; when He melts the stubborn hearts of men and crushes them to powder—what is all this but the secret touch of God's own finger upon the conscience? There is no creature in the world whose ministry the heart can discern in the stirrings and invisible workings of a guilty and restless spirit.

Fourthly, let us consider the torments of wicked angels. From where do they originate? There is no creature strong enough to inflict upon them a sufficient recompense of pain for their sin against the Majesty of God. As for the debates among scholars regarding physical fire in hell and the application of corporeal agents to affect spiritual substances, they are but the fruitless speculations of those ignorant of the Scriptures and the terror of the Lord, who is Himself a consuming fire. The devils themselves acknowledge Christ as their Tormentor, even when He merely rebuked them; there was no fire or other creature applied by Him, but only the Majesty of His own word, power, and person, which elicited from them that fearful cry, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29).

Lastly, let us consider the heaviness of Christ's own soul, His agony and sense of the curse due to our sin when He was in the garden. The trouble, astonishment, and extreme anguish of His soul caused that woeful and remarkable sweat. What was the source of all this? We read of no devils let loose to torment Him; they were tormented at His very presence. There is no mention of other angels commissioned to afflict Him; there was an angel sent to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). It is unreasonable to think that the fear of bodily death, which was the only thing men could inflict upon Him, was what caused those drops of blood and bitter cries. There were no seeds or principles of such tormenting distress in His innocent soul and most pure body. His compassion towards the misery of sinners and His knowledge of the guilt and cursedness of sin were as great at other times as they were then. So, what else could it be but the weight of His Father's justice, the conflict with His Father's wrath against the sins of humanity, that brought such extreme heaviness upon His soul? He was our surety; He stood in our place. If the strokes due to our sin were laid upon Him by God, how much heavier shall His hand be upon those whom He thoroughly hates?

But will not the angels be the executioners of God's wrath upon wicked men? I answer, the angels shall indeed have their role in the coming of the Lord. Firstly, as attendants, to manifest the majesty and glory of Christ to the world (2 Thessalonians 1:7; Matthew 24:31). Secondly, as executors of His will, which is to gather both the elect and the reprobate, to bind up the wicked like sheaves or sticks for the fire (Matthew 13:30, 24:31). However, the Lord will still interpose His own power. Just as a schoolmaster may assign one student to bring another to punishment, but ultimately delivers the stripes himself.

But why is it said that the Father shall put Christ's enemies under His feet? Doesn't Christ Himself also do it, as granted by the Father? Yes, undoubtedly. God has bestowed upon the Son the authority to execute judgment and has placed in His hands a rod of iron to shatter His enemies like a potter's vessel. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does likewise (John 5:19, 27; Psalms 2:9). However, we must note that subjecting Christ's enemies under His feet is a work of divine power. While it is attributed to Christ as an Officer, it ultimately belongs to the Father, who is the source of all divine operations. Just as God is said to have presented His Son as a propitiation (Romans 3:25), and yet the Son Himself came down and manifested Himself (Philippians 2:7, 8; Hebrews 9:26). Similarly, the Father is said to have raised Christ from the dead (Acts 2:32; Romans 6:4), and yet the Son raised Himself by His own power (John 10:18). The Father is said to have seated Christ at His right hand in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20), and Christ is said to have seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3, 10, 12). Likewise, the Father is said to give the Holy Spirit (John 14:16), but the Son promises to send Him Himself (John 16:7). Therefore, here, though the Son has received sufficient power to subdue all His enemies under His feet (for He is capable of subduing

all things unto Himself - Philippians 3:21), the Father, in demonstrating His displeasure against the enemies of Christ and affirming His Son's victories, will also subdue all things unto Him (1 Corinthians 15:27, 28).

Oh, how I wish that people would be persuaded by the terror of the Lord to flee from the impending wrath! If only they would consider the weight of God's heavy hand and seek refuge in the Rock of mercy when they see the storm approaching. It is nothing but atheism and unbelief that blinds people to the vengeance of God. Therefore, just as the Lord has reinforced His promises with an oath, providing strong consolation for those who take refuge in the hope set before them (Hebrews 6:17-18), He has also confirmed His threats with an oath. "If I lift up my hand to heaven and say, 'I live forever—I will render vengeance to mine enemies, I will reward them that hate me'" (Deuteronomy 32:40-41). Again, "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works" (Amos 8:7). And once more, "I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow" (Isaiah 45:23). All this is done so that secure and obstinate sinners might have even stronger reasons to flee from the impending wrath.

Oh, how wretched we are, who do not believe God even when He swears! The stupidity of men is astonishing—they neither believe the words nor tremble at the oath of God. He warns us to flee from the wrath to come, but we hasten to meet it head-on. With unclean and intemperate ways, we fill up our measure, bringing premature deaths upon ourselves, eager to hasten to hell and test whether God is a liar or not. Indeed, this is the inevitable outcome of every profane excess that men rush into. Every person has a great deal of atheism in their heart by nature, but such desperate stupidity greatly amplifies it, leading men to the hellish presumption of those in the Prophets, who

declared, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; It is not the Lord, neither shall evil come upon us, the Prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them. The days are prolonged and the vision shall fail; this man prophesieth of things afar off, of dooms day, of things which shall be long after our time" (Jeremiah 5:12-13).

To these men, in the words of the Apostle, I say that even though they may sleep and see nothing, and mock at the promise of Christ's coming, their damnation does not sleep and will come upon them soon enough, like an armed man. "Be not ye mockers," says the Prophet, "lest your bands be made strong." Contempt for God and His judgments will only make Him bind the judgment tighter upon us. He will conquer the proudest of His enemies. We may mock, but God will not be mocked. He who shoots arrows against the Sun will never reach high enough to violate it; the arrows will return upon his own head. Disregard for God and His threats only tightens the knot of our damnation and makes our situation more hopeless.

Moreover, there is no atheist in the world who, at some point or another, does not feel the horrors in his own heart and the records of his own conscience, knowing that a destruction is decreed, and a day of slaughter is coming for the bulls of Bashan.

Others I have known who do acknowledge the terror of the Lord, yet they continue desperately in their presumptions, falling into two dangerous pitfalls. First, they reason in this way: "Perhaps I belong to God's Election of Grace, and then He will bring me in, in His time. In the meantime, His mercy is greater than my sins, and it's not for me to hurry His work until He wills it Himself." Oh, what perverseness it is for man's wickedness to disrupt the Order of God! His Rule is that we should infer our Election from a holy life, diligently adding one grace upon another to make it sure to

ourselves. We shouldn't reason from our Election to our calling, nor neglect all diligence until our Election becomes evident. It is true that Christ's mercy is infinitely wider than even the worst rebellions of men, and it is possible that He might rescue such a wicked disputer from the fire like a brand. But then be aware that every desperate sin you now willfully run into will eventually cost you such bitter agony and bloody tears that you wouldn't be willing to endure them to gain the most pleasurable delights your heart currently desires. Meanwhile, it is a risky venture upon God's patience for any person, expecting God's favor, to steal time from His service and turn the possibility of God's mercy into an opportunity for sinning.

The Ninevites drew a different conclusion from these premises. They covered themselves and their animals with sackcloth and cried mightily to God, turning everyone from their evil ways and violence. Their resolution was, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we do not perish?" The Prophets teach us to use the possibility of God's mercy in another way. "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and He repents of the evil." "Who knows if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him, etc." Again, "Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be that you shall be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger."

However, there are also desperate individuals who hellishly argue against the service of God. They may say, "Perhaps the decree has been made, and I am rejected by God. Why should I then labor in vain and try to oppose His will? Instead, since I have no hope of heaven hereafter, why not indulge in my own ways and lusts here?" Such wicked Epicures reason, "We shall die tomorrow, so let us eat and drink today." But who are you, O man, to dispute against God?

Why would you abuse the secrets of God to dishonor Him instead of obeying His revealed will? Let the potsherd strive with others of the earth, but let not the clay dash itself against the One who made it.

Remember and tremble at the difference our Saviour makes even amongst the wicked in hell. It will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, on the day of judgment than for those cities that have heard and despised Him. Wicked men are storing up wrath and destruction against their own souls. Every new oath or blasphemy adds to the weight on their conscience. Each renewed act of uncleanness plunges them deeper into hell and gives the devil a tighter hold on them, adding more fuel to their suffering. In hell, a sinner would consider himself blessed if he did not feel the weight and guilt of specific sins, which he could have easily avoided or committed without pain and labor. We see Dives in hell begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue in the mighty flame. Now, imagine a person in a burning furnace; what comfort could a drop of water offer against such intense heat? Certainly, the relief from that one drop could not compare to the punishment of the smallest sin, the least idle word, or unprofitable thought. And yet, in that extremity, not even a drop of refreshment is allowed against the lake of fire.

O, may people consider in time how dreadful it is to fall into the hands and arouse the jealousy of the living God. If they humble themselves under His mighty hand and prepare to meet Him in the way of His judgments, the moment their heart yields to God, He will meet them in their return and show them His goodness. He delights in mercy and does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men. He takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but finds much more delight in welcoming them into the arms of Christ rather than placing them under His feet.

The last thing observed was the Manner of this victory, expressed in those words, "To put, and to put as a stool under Christ's feet." This expression, that the conquest of Christ's enemies shall be as effortless as moving a stool into its place, reveals two things:

First, the ease of God's victory over the enemies of Christ. They are before Him as nothing, less than nothing, the drop of a bucket, the dust of a balance, a very little thing. What is heavier than a mountain, what is easier than a touch, what is lighter than chaff, or softer than wax? And yet, those who appear strong and immovable as mountains to men, will turn into chaff at God's mere touch and flow away in His presence. If a man had a deadly pestilence of infallible infection, how easily could he avenge himself on his enemy by merely breathing in their face? Now, the breath of the Lord is like a stream of brimstone to devour the wicked. Just as easily as fire consumes flax or stubble, as effortlessly as poison invades the body, as readily as a rod of iron breaks a potter's vessel, as readily as a burdensome stone crushes what it falls upon, God's wrath consumes His enemies, and even more irresistibly.

Let us not dwell long on such a certain and obvious truth. We know that it is far easier to destroy than to build up. Demolition requires no art compared to the skill needed for construction. Those things which take a long time to grow can be suddenly extinguished. Therefore, since God has the power and wisdom to create the creature, it is no wonder that He can easily destroy it.

Furthermore, God's power is fueled by His jealousy and fury against sinners. Anger is the sharpener of strength, and in equal terms, it will make a person prevail. Nothing can withstand a fire once it is enraged. Now, God's displeasure is kindled, and it breaks forth like a devouring lion or a bereaved bear against the sins of men, Deut.

29.20. The fire of the Lord's revenge erupts upon the enemies of His Son like the implacable rage of a jealous man.

Moreover, our disposition and preparedness for the wrath of God contribute to the ease of His victory. Strength itself may tire out in vain against a subject incapable of injury. However, if the paw of a bear meets with the thin substance of a man's heart, it can easily tear it to pieces. Every action is most quickly finished when the subject is prepared for it. It is easier to make a print in wax than in adamant, or to kindle a fire in dry stubble than in green wood. Now, wicked men have readied themselves for wrath and are the procurers and architects of their own destruction. They are vessels, and God never lacks stores of wrath, so the condemnation of a wicked man is akin to drawing water from a fountain or filling a bag from a heap of treasure.

Lastly, consider our utter destitution of all help and succor. Even fire among pitch might be extinguished if one could pour down an abundance of water upon it. But the wicked shall have no strength, either in or around them, to prevent or remove the wrath that is to come. Here, they may have some feeble aids (such as they are) to resist God in His word. Wealth and greatness may provide for their lusts, the support of the wicked world may encourage them in their ways; Satan and the wisdom of the flesh may supply them with arguments and put a veneer on their uncleanness. However, when the lion comes, the shepherd cannot protect the sheep, and when the fire comes, the rotten post shall perish along with the varnish that covered it. He who was strong enough here to provoke God shall ultimately be bound hand and foot, and thus, have no capacity left to resist Him or to flee from Him.

There is a foolish disposition in the hearts of people to think that they will always remain in the same state they are currently in. The proud and wicked person says to himself, "I will never be moved, I will never face adversity. God has forgotten, He hides His face, He will never see it." Even the Prophet David fell into this grave error, saying in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved." This was also the vain conceit of the fool in the gospel who said, "You have much laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Secure and wicked individuals have always spoken this way, believing that no evil will come upon them and that they will have peace even if they walk in the desires of their hearts. They live as if tomorrow will be like today, or even better. Similarly, in times of affliction, people wonder if the Lord has forgotten to be gracious and if He has closed His loving kindness in displeasure. They may feel that their hope is lost, and they are cut off from any relief. They believe they will never overcome such afflictions or pressures. Both of these attitudes stem from a lack of faith in God's power to subdue all enemies under Christ's feet.

If people would only consider how easily God can break down all their defenses and sweep away their lies, how effortlessly He can strip them of all the provisions for their lusts, they would be more fearful of Him and not cling to things that bring no profit. They would be careful not to abuse their youth, strength, time, and abilities, as if they had an endless supply within themselves. They would realize that their well-being is not solely in their own hands. The scythe can cut through green grass as easily as dry stubble, and consuming fire can melt the hardest metal as well as the softest wax. The reason why people, in times of extreme distress, make strong resolutions, vow repentance, and promise to amend their ways, but then return to their old habits once the crisis is over, is because their senses made them feel the nearness of God's hand. If they had faith,

they could always perceive His presence and maintain their good resolutions.

We should remember that God is not only a God near at hand but also afar off. He has said that in the fullness of their sufficiency, wicked people shall be in straits. He can ruin their plans in the blink of an eye. Just as He cut off Belshazzar while feasting, Herod while in his royal attire, and brought down Babylon, Tyrus, Haman, and Jezebel, He can act swiftly against sinners. Even though death and judgment may seem distant, God can make them close when He desires. The damnation of the wicked is swift, and they are near to cursing. His judgments are like lightning, quick to catch up to sinners. He only needs a month, a morning, or even a moment to consume His enemies and bring desolation upon those who thought they would live as ladies forever, never considering their end.

Though a sinner may do evil a hundred times and their days be prolonged, it will ultimately go well only for those who fear God. The wicked cannot prolong their own days.

Furthermore, when it comes to afflictions and temptations, it is a clear sign of the lack of faith in people's hearts and a foolish action to blame and scold our Creator for thinking that we are completely overwhelmed by present pressures. If we only consider that it is as easy for God to subdue our enemies and rebuke our afflictions as it is for us to put a stool under our feet, then we would learn to wait on Him in all our distresses. When we cannot answer difficulties or extricate ourselves from doubts and fears, we should acknowledge that His thoughts are above ours and His ways beyond our understanding. This should lead us to completely rely on His power. God frequently uses this argument to strengthen His Church: "Fear not the fear of men, nor be afraid, but sanctify the Lord of hosts

himself, and let him be your fear. Who are you to fear a mortal man, or the Son of Man who will be like grass? Yet, you forget the Lord your maker and live in fear because of the oppressor. Where is the fury of the oppressor? If it is marvelous in your eyes, should it be marvelous in mine eyes?" says the Lord of hosts. "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?" Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord and whose hope is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the waters, not worried in times of drought. Even when the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails due to thirst, the Lord will hear them, the God of Israel will not forsake them. Even in difficult times, when everything seems to be failing, they will rejoice in the Lord and find joy in the God of their salvation. He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we can ask or think. God would not repeatedly lead people to depend on His power if they were not prone to judge God based on their own limited abilities and to doubt His power in times of crisis.

Secondly, the idea of putting Christ's enemies under His feet not only signifies easiness but also order and beauty. When Christ's enemies are under His feet, there will be a right order in things. It will become evident that God is a God of Order, and that is why the day this happens is called the Time of the Restitution of all things (Acts 3:21). Putting Christ's enemies under His feet is an act of justice, and justice is the most orderly virtue, maintaining beauty in society as it embodies symmetry and proportion. Everything out of its place is out of order, but when things are in their proper places and proportions, there is beauty and comeliness. In a great house, there are various vessels, some made of wood and brass, others of gold and silver. Some are used for honorable purposes, others for base and lowly ones. If all these were jumbled together in one room, it would be evident that things were out of order. However, when the plates

are in one place and the brass and wood in another, we recognize the decency and cleanliness of such a house. Similarly, if a body has the most exact temperature and delicate complexion, but any of its members are misplaced - like an eye in place of an ear or a cheek in place of a forehead - there can be no beauty in such a body. The same applies to the Church; until God places each person in the right position, the order of the Church is imperfect. That's why when Judas was put under Christ's feet, it is said that he went "to his own place" (Acts 1:25).

Why then should anyone complain about the prosperity of wicked men or view God's ways as irregular and unfair, thinking that there is no benefit for those who walk righteously while the proud and wicked thrive? This is like reviling the craftsman while he is still working on his creation. The pieces are not yet assembled in their proper joints, so it is not surprising that the beauty and order of God's works are not immediately evident. Everything has its beauty in its appointed time; even though the corn in the field may appear weak, and the weeds seem to flourish and overshadow it, wait until the harvest, and it will become clear which is meant for the storehouse and which for the fire. Go into the sanctuary of the Lord and look with faith to the day of God's righteous judgments, and you will see that the ways of the Lord are just, even if transgressors stumble or take offense.

Secondly, from this, everyone can learn how to bring beauty and order into their own lives, namely by subduing the enemies of Christ - the lusts and evil desires within them. Laws, as we know, are the ligaments and sinews of a state, the strings, so to speak, that when touched and guided by skillful leaders, produce the excellent harmony seen in well-structured societies. The more they prevail, the more unity is maintained, faction diminished, and community

nurtured in people's minds. Similarly, when the scepter of Christ, the law of the mind, the royal law of liberty and grace, prevails more over the lusts of the heart, the harmony and complexion of such a soul become more excellent.

Now, the final aspect in this verse is "Scabellum pedibus tuis" – "A stool under thy feet." Things are under Christ's feet in two ways: either by way of subjection, as servants to Him, for He has dominion over all the works of God's hands and has all things under His feet. The Apostle says that God set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, power, might, and dominion, not only in this world but also in the world to come. God put all things under His feet and appointed Him as the head over all things for the Church. This is also expressed by St. Peter: He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to Him. The second way is by way of victory and triumph, and in this manner, all of Christ's enemies are put under His feet. This is the most appropriate way. The members of Christ are indeed under the head; the sheep of Christ are in His hands, and no one can pluck them out of His hand. The lambs of Christ are in His arms and bosom, and He shall gather them and carry them. But the enemies of Christ are under His feet, to be trampled upon until their blood is squeezed out, and His garments are stained with it. The countless multitudes of the wicked in the world will be like clusters of ripe grapes to be cast into the great winepress of God's wrath and trampled by Him, who rides a white horse, conquering and victorious, until the blood flows out of the winepress, reaching up to the horse's bridles. This expression signifies a complete victory in holy Scripture – the adversary is laid even with the ground, crushed, and trampled upon. This was the curse of the Serpent, that it would crawl on its belly in the dust, and that the seed of the woman would bruise its head. Similarly, it is the

curse of God's enemies that they should lick the dust, and that the feet of the Church and the tongues of her dogs should be dipped in the blood of her enemies. Thus, David put the people of Rabbah under harrows, and Jehu trampled Jezebel under his horse's feet. Therefore, the Church chooses this phrase to express the magnitude of her calamity: "The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in the midst of me; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men. The Lord has trampled the Virgin, the Daughter of Judah, like grapes in a winepress."

Now, this act of putting Christ's enemies as a stool under His feet reveals two aspects concerning Christ: First, His Rest; and secondly, His Triumph. In the Scripture, the term "stand" (as I mentioned earlier) denotes ministry, while "sit" signifies rest; and there is no posture more comfortable than sitting with a stool under one's feet. Until all of Christ's enemies are under His feet, He has not fully entered into His rest. It is true that in His own person, He is at rest; He has completed the work assigned to Him and has therefore entered into His rest. He has already ascended on high and led captivity captive. However, in His members, He still suffers, not in terms of pain or passion, but through sympathy and compassion. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15). Just as through His own sufferings, He learned obedience to God, He also learned compassion and, consequently, mercy and fidelity towards His followers. For no one can be more tenderly faithful in the affairs of another than someone who, through personal experience, understands the consequences and necessities involved. Thus, He is said to be afflicted in all the afflictions of His people. The Apostle informs us that the afflictions of the Saints fill up the remainders or what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Although the Church is referred to as the fullness of Christ, who is already so full that He fills all in all (and the Church does not serve to supply His defects but to

magnify His mercy), the sufferings of the Church are regarded as completing the sufferings of Christ. Even though Christ's sufferings were already full, with a consummatum est to seal up both their measure and merit, our sufferings are called His, not to add or improve upon them, but to honour and dignify us. They demonstrate Christ's compassion towards us and our union and conformity with Him, but they do not imply any lack of virtue in His sufferings or any value of merit in ours, nor do they constitute any ecclesiastical treasure or surplus resulting from a combination of both. These sufferings are highly profitable for the edification of the Church but are unworthy and base for the expiation of sin. They are beneficial for the comfort of individuals but do not contribute to the justice of God. So, although Christ rests from suffering in Himself, He does not rest in His Saints; while the Serpent cannot harm the head, it is still bruising His heel. From this, the Apostle draws a valid inference: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God," and it is a glorious rest that will arise from the downfall of their enemies. When the wicked perish, the people of God shall see it and rejoice, and they shall metaphorically wash their feet in the blood of their adversaries. God's revenge against His enemies will bring relief. The Lord says, "Ah, I will ease Myself of My adversaries, I will avenge Myself of My enemies" (Isaiah 1:24). This is the comfort that the Lord gives His people – they will be full when their enemies are hungry, and He will appear to bring them joy while their enemies are ashamed.

This should serve as a lesson to wicked men, warning them to be cautious about persecuting the followers of Christ, for in doing so, they openly oppose the One they claim to worship. It is certain that all the plots and schemes devised against Christ's kingdom and His laws are nothing but futile imaginings that will never come to fruition. In the end, He will avenge the cause of His people and, despite all the power and malice of hell, will grant them a place in

heavenly realms with Him, where He has already brought them virtually and representatively.

This should bring comfort to the faithful in all their sufferings endured for Christ's sake. Firstly, because in doing so, they are becoming conformed to Him; secondly, because they are becoming associates with Him; and thirdly, because they are assured that they are on the path to rest. The Apostle rightly states that it is just for God to repay with tribulation those who trouble His followers, while granting rest to those who endure affliction when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. As Saint Peter adds, since the believers share in Christ's sufferings, they will also share in His glory when it is revealed, resulting in exceeding joy. This joy will be even greater because it will stem from the everlasting subjugation of the enemy under Christ's feet, and those whom the persecutors mistreated and despised here will be judges alongside Christ in that realm.

Secondly, it also symbolizes the Triumph of Christ when He shall place His feet on the neck of His enemies. The Apostle declares that He triumphed over them on the Cross (Colossians 2:15). Two words relate to the forms of triumph - Expoliation and Publication - representing the pomp and victory to the faithful. He spoiled principalities and powers, meaning He disarmed them, taking away all their trusted weapons and dividing the spoils (Luke 11:22). Satan's primary weapon was the Law, which stood against us and enslaved us, but Christ, by nailing it to the Cross, freed us from its tyranny. Consequently, Satan was deprived of his other armory, including the allurements of the world. Through faith in Christ, we can now overcome the world, perceive its promises as hollow, and its threats as empty. Its treasures are less valuable than the reproaches of Christ, and its afflictions are insignificant compared to the glory revealed in us - momentary and light in their duration.

In the Cross of Christ, Satan's power and wisdom were cunningly outwitted and disappointed. Thinking he had triumphed by consuming Christ, he encountered an unexpected twist - Christ crucified turned out to be the wisdom and power of God. Through death, Christ chose to destroy the one who held the power of death (1 Corinthians 1:24, Hebrews 2:14). Christ then exhibited this victory and the spoils publicly to the world. The Cross became His triumphal chariot and the pageant of His spoils. Though it appeared ignominious to the carnal eye, those who were called saw through the eyes of faith - Hell defeated, Satan confounded, his kingdom ruined, the earthly desires of the old nature crucified, and captivity led captive.

In fact, no other conqueror's triumph was ever marked by opened graves, the resurrection of the dead, the conversion of enemies, the acclaim of mute and inanimate creatures, the darkening of the Sun, the trembling of the earth, the compassion of rocks, the amazement of the world, and the wonder of heavenly angels, as was Christ's triumph on the Cross. If He achieved such a victory there, how much greater will His triumph be at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where He is crowned with glory and honor? On that great day, known as the Day of the Lord Jesus, He will consummate His triumph over all enemies, arriving with an entourage of angels in a chariot of fire, with all unbelievers bound before His Throne, and with the applause and admiration of all the Saints.

This brings abundant comfort to the faithful in their conflicts with Satan, sin, temptations, or corruptions. They fight under Christ's protection and with His Spirit, who has already triumphed. He counts our temptations as His own and shares His victories with us. Christ turned the world's most perplexing situations into a source of comfort for His disciples (Luke 21:25-28). Therefore, when heavy

temptations assail us, causing discomfort, fears, faintness, despair, sinful conformity, or similar challenges, let us not rely on our own strength or resources. Instead, let us have faith in Christ's victories and the promise made to Him as the Head and Captain of the Church. Through Him, we can overcome all things and, like Him, escape the midst of our enemies.

In the fable, one great cat was more valuable than a thousand foxes with all their tricks, yet the fox was eventually caught. Similarly, our enemies may come against us with countless strategies and methods to deceive us, but our comfort lies in having "one great" refuge - to look upon the Cross of Christ and entrust our souls to Him, knowing that no one can take them from His hands. When David confronted Goliath, he did not engage in close combat but defeated him from a distance with a sling and a stone. Likewise, we should not engage in intimate combat with Satan, as Christ did that for us. Instead, our way to prevail against him is to use faith as a sling and Christ as a stone. He will find a way to enter and defeat the proudest enemy.

We are besieged by enemies, including our own sinful tendencies, the burdens of the flesh, the trials of the world, and the fiery darts of Satan. In these extreme situations, the Apostle advises us to focus on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. He will come soon, and we should trust in Him. He is within reach of our faith and the cry of our prayers. He is at the right hand of power, standing up in defense of His Saints. Just as the Egyptian's closeness to Israel brought them nearer to ruin and Israel closer to deliverance, so our closeness to our own lusts can be perilous. The Lord promises to deal with the sins of His people as He dealt with the Egyptians - subduing their power, purging them away, and casting their remnants into the depths of the Sea, removing them from us entirely.

The ground of all this assurance is in God Himself, His Covenant, and His Mercy. Our condition may change, but God's mercy remains constant, rooted in His grace and not in our merit. If the root of the Covenant were in us, it would vary with our changing circumstances, but because it is in God's grace, His mercy remains unchanging and without repentance. It is bestowed without reason or merit on our part.

Lastly, this Foot-stool under Christ's feet, concerning his enemies, signifies four things: First, the extreme shame and everlasting humiliation they shall endure, the complete abasement of all that exalts itself against Christ. In human victories, the defeated often negotiate some honourable terms; even as captives, they maintain their dignity. But to be reduced to a stool for the Conqueror to insult, to lick the dust like a serpent, to crawl out of holes like worms, to be so low that no further calamity or dishonour can degrade a person—this is the height of shame. Bajazet, the grand Signior, suffered the greatest indignity when Tamerlane, his adversary, trampled upon his neck. Valerian, the cruel persecutor of the Church, was trodden underfoot by Sapoires, the Persian King, and afterwards kept like a beast. This represents the utmost degree of revenge, devoid of mercy or compassion. Hence, the enemies of Christ and His kingdom will face utter and everlasting shame. As the faithful will lift up their heads with boldness in the day of redemption, the wicked will fall flat on their faces, clinging to the dust. When the books are unsealed, consciences laid bare, witnesses presented, and the secrets of impurity exposed, the mouths of the wicked, who now dispute against Christ's ways and challenge His commands, will be eternally silenced. They will resemble a caught thief, their faces ablaze with trembling, confusion, and astonishment. Even the best among us find enough shame in sin; how much more for those who surrender to vile and dishonourable affections?

Secondly, this also denotes the burden that wicked people must bear. Just as a foot-stool bears the weight of the body, so the enemies of Christ must bear the weight of His heavy and everlasting wrath upon their souls. Sin may seem light at the time of committing it, like a small cloud in the eyes of the Prophet's servant, but eventually, it gathers into a tempest that, if not repented, will sweep away and overwhelm the soul. Weighty bodies affect the senses differently depending on their location. A vessel or piece of timber easily moved by hand on water may become immovable on land, requiring much greater strength. Similarly, sin may appear light when committed, but when judged, it becomes unsupportable on the conscience. Like a wild ass in heat, freely traversing its ways and snuffing the wind, the wicked indulge in pleasure and mirth, but when sin matures and brings forth death to the soul, they will find it bitter, tormenting, and poisonous. When the Son of Man's heavy displeasure falls upon anyone, it grinds them to powder. The burden is so heavy that people would prefer to bear the weight of rocks and mountains eternally on their backs rather than face the fury of Him who sits upon the Throne. On that great day, the wicked will vainly plead with mountains and rocks to fall upon them and shield them from the wrath of the Lamb. They would rather endure the weight of the heaviest creature than the fury of Him who sits upon the Throne.

Thirdly, this also indicates a just and equal recompense for ungodly men. The Lord often matches punishments to the nature and extent of the sins committed. He who denied a crumb of bread on earth was denied a drop of water in hell. Man, in his pursuit of godlike status, was debased to the level of perishing beasts. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire and perished by the Lord's strange fire. Sodom and Gomorrah burned in unnatural lusts and were drowned in an unnatural tempest of fire. An apostate in the days of S. Cyprian who blasphemed against Christ was immediately struck dumb, unable to

seek mercy from Christ. Eutropius the Eunuch, when advising the Emperor to deny malefactors the sanctuary of the altars, inadvertently deprived himself of mercy and a chance of escape when he later needed it in vain. Thus, Christ will deal with His enemies on the final day. While here they trample upon Christ, His word, His ways, and His followers, in the end, their own measure will be returned to them. They will have to confess as Adonibezek did, "As I have done, so God has requited me." Even the least among Christ's followers, whom they scorned, will become witnesses and co-assessors with Christ to judge the wicked angels, treading them underfoot and taking them captive, who once oppressed them. Those who despised them will bow at their feet. Those who gathered against Zion, demanding to see her defiled, will themselves be gathered like sheaves into the floor. The Daughter of Zion will rise and thresh them with horns of iron and hooves of brass. Then, the enemies of the Church will see her shame and be trodden down like the mire of the streets. As a result, may all the Lord's enemies perish, while those who love Him shine like the mighty sun.

Lastly, we can observe the great power and wisdom of Christ in turning the malice and mischief of His enemies to His own use and advantage. He arranges wicked individuals in such a way that, despite their intent to destroy His kingdom, they inadvertently serve His glorious ends, causing admiration among believers. Just as a great house requires vessels of dishonor for daily service, in God's great house, wicked men act as utensils and household instruments like footstools and staves—objects of no pleasure, but still serving a good purpose. The Assyrian became the Rod of His anger, the axe for pruning, and the saw threatening His people. Pharaoh was a vessel used to display the glory and power of God's name. It is necessary, as our Savior said, for offenses to come, and, as the Apostle declared, there must be heresies. Just as a skilled physician employs poisonous

and harmful ingredients for beneficial purposes, the Lord, in His wisdom, uses wicked men and their intentions to achieve His righteous and marvelous ends. He secretly and mightily directs their wicked designs, magnifying His power and providence and furthering His people's faith and godliness.

Christ's Prophetical Office

The Lord will send the sceptre of your strength out of Zion; Rule in the midst of your enemies. - Psalm 110:2

This verse continues the discussion about the Kingdom of Christ and reveals the form of its spiritual administration. Here, another aspect of Christ's role is subtly implied—the Prophetical Office. This office involves the execution of His regal authority within the militant Church. The essence of this administration can be summarized in two main aspects. Firstly, it deals with military matters, aiming to subdue enemies and protect His people. Secondly, it involves civil and judicial matters to govern, preserve, and honor His Kingdom. Both aspects are present in this Psalm. The former is expressed in the latter part of this verse, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." The latter is found in the third verse, "Thy people shall be willing," while the means of achieving these objectives are conveyed in the first part of this verse, "The Lord shall send forth the sceptre of your strength out of Zion."

Every King has his royal prerogatives and distinct honors proper to his position, which no one else can exercise except under his authority. If we examine them closely, we will find that many of these prerogatives are applicable to Christ in His Kingdom, just as they are to any secular ruler. Firstly, Kings have "Armamentaria publica," the public arsenal for military provisions and the authority over public arms. The Apostle refers to this when he speaks of the King bearing the sword, as arms properly belong to him, and others can use them only under his allowance and protection. Similarly, Christ alone possesses the public armory of a Christian. The weapons of our spiritual warfare are powerful only through Him. Moreover, He is the

armor and protection of a Christian, and we are commanded to clothe ourselves in the Lord Jesus.

Additionally, the "via publica" or public road is the King's way, where people walk freely under the protection of their Sovereign. Similarly, the law of faith and obedience under which we walk, referred to as the Law of Christ by S. Paul, is called the "Lex Regia" or royal law of liberty by S. James. As long as we abide by this law, we are under the protection of Christ's promises and His Angels.

Furthermore, lands that have no evident claim or lordship by anyone else belong to the Prince who has supreme and universal dominion over his territories. This truth is undoubtedly applicable to Christ in His Kingdom. If anyone can truly say, "Lord, I am not the servant of any other Master; no other King has rightful dominion or peaceful possession of my heart," then they can rightly infer, "Therefore, Lord, I am your servant, and my heart belongs to You." While it is true that other lords have ruled over us in the past, now we declare that only You, Lord our God, have dominion over us.

Additionally, personal prerogatives like "Vectigaliae" (taxes), "Census" (censuses), "Tributes," and "Customs" are due to Princes for the Ministry and Office they fulfill under God. Similarly, in Christ's Kingdom, there is worship that the Psalmist declares is due to His name. Those who come to the Temple, a representation of Christ, are not to come empty-handed but should bring offerings as testimonies of their reverence and willing submission to that worship. Just as Abraham offered a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek, a figure of Christ, to express loyalty, so do we offer our worship and homage to Christ. When the people of Israel entered the land of Canaan, symbolizing Christ's Church, those who accepted their peace proclamation became tributaries and servants to Israel.

Solomon, a foreshadowing of Christ's peaceful kingdom, levied a tribute of bond-service on the surrounding nations, and foreign princes brought him gifts as tokens of his greatness and wisdom.

So, when the wise men, the first fruits of the Gentiles after Christ's appearance, came to submit to His kingdom, they opened their treasure and presented Him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Similarly, the authority and valuation of public coins belong solely to the prince; it is his image and inscription that make them valid. Likewise, in Christ's Church, only He possesses the power to establish new ordinances. Anything without His image or express authority is not valid before God, and corrupting His constitution would be a notable contempt against His royal prerogative.

Moreover, the power of judging the persons and causes of men is a unique prerogative, the administration of which comes from the prince as the source of all human equity, under God. In the hands of inferior officers, acting as the mouth of the prince, justice and peace are executed. Christ Himself proclaimed that the Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son and has given Him the authority to execute judgment.

Another royal prerogative is the power to pardon condemned persons and deliver them from the terror of the law's sentence. Such mercy shines from the diadems of princes. In Christ's Church, He holds the power to forgive sins, a sacred royalty that not only suspends but permanently revokes and nullifies the sentence of condemnation under which every person is born.

We also find royal ornaments, such as a Crown, a Throne, and a Scepter, in various traditions, sent as testimonies and confirmations of dignity. Likewise, the Scriptures mention the honors belonging to

Christ, that He was crowned with glory and honor, and possessed a Throne and a righteous scepter for His kingdom.

These are some of the principal royalties that belong to Christ in His kingdom. This passage reveals a Throne, a Scepter, ambassadors, and armies as symbols of His sacred power. Now, let us first consider the words and then draw relevant observations as they present themselves.

First, what is meant by the Rod of Christ's Strength or His Strong Rod? It refers to something on which a person may lean or place the whole weight of their body when they are weary. However, when spoken of in the context of Christ's kingdom, it is understood as a scepter or rod of majesty. I won't dwell on the various interpretations among Expositors. Some see it as the branch that grows from the root of Jesse, while others view it as the wood of the cross or the body of Christ born of a Virgin. Some understand it as the kingdom of Christ's power, where the sign represents the thing signified. The references to the body and cross of Christ, unless we interpret them as the virtue of Christ crucified, do not seem as relevant to the Prophet's purpose. The rest, however, agree on one interpretation. For a clearer understanding, we may look into the Scriptures to find what things were sent out of Zion. There are two main aspects: First, the word of the Lord or His holy Gospel. "The Law shall proceed out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4.2). Secondly, the spirit of the Lord, which was first sent to Zion. The Apostles were instructed to wait for the promise of the Father in Jerusalem, and from there, the Spirit was poured out into the world (Acts 1.4, 2.17). Both the word and the spirit are the power or strength of Christ. His word is a Gospel of power unto salvation (Rom. 1.16, 2 Cor. 4.7, 10.4), and His spirit is a spirit of power (1 Cor. 2.4, 2 Tim. 1.7), also referred to as the finger and the arm of the Lord

(Luke 11.20, Matt. 12.28, Isaiah 53.1). Thus, the Rod signifies the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ.

Secondly, what is meant by God sending this Rod of Christ's strength? It signifies the manifestation of the Gospel, as we did not know it before it was sent. It is a gift of the Gospel that we did not possess before it was sent, and it includes the invitations of the Gospel. We were once without God in the world and strangers to the Covenant of promise until it was sent. It also refers to the commission of the Dispensers of the Gospel, who receive their authority from heaven and are not to speak until they are sent.

Thirdly, what is meant by sending it out of Zion? This phrase contrasts with Mount Sinai, from where the Law was sent with thunders, fire, and great terror to the people of Israel. As the Apostle explains, "You have not come to the mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire... but you have come to Mount Zion" (Heb. 12.18, 24). The opposition between Sinai and Zion represents the two covenants of the Law and of Grace, or of bondage and liberty (Gal. 4.24, 25). Zion was the place where the tribes gathered to worship the Lord, where the people prayed, and where God mercifully dwelt among them. It was a place of holiness and the first to witness the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel after Christ's Ascension. By synecdoche, it can also refer to the entire Jewish Church, to whom the Lord first revealed His Covenant of Grace in Christ (Acts 3.26, Acts 13.46, Rom. 2.10).

Rule Thou - which means "You shall rule" - is a common form where the imperative is used to represent the future indicative. It is not a command related to any service, but rather a promise, a commission, and a dignity conferred upon Christ.

"In the midst of thine enemies" has different interpretations. Some understand it as the transformation of the hearts of Christ's enemies, converting them as captives to obedience. Others see it as the wonderful effect of the power of Christ's kingdom, where His Word and Spirit sustain the Church despite all surrounding adversaries. The Church has always been and will continue to be plagued by various adversaries - heretics, hypocrites, false brethren, profaneness, temptations, persecutions, and spiritual wickedness. Yet, amidst all these challenges, the Church of Christ thrives like a Lily among thorns. "In medio" denotes two aspects: "Dominium plenum" and "dominium securum" - a complete and full government without hindrance or impediment, where the Church remains firm like a rock in the sea or a stronghold in an enemy's city. The Church's rule is secure and confident, as expressed in the phrase "media dominantur in urbe." The Church of God is like a burdensome stone that cannot be removed from the place where Christ plants it, and all the efforts of the earth's people cannot overcome it (Zech. 12:3). It is a secure and confident government, as illustrated by the Shunamite woman's response that she dwells among her own people, indicating safety and contentment (2 Kings 4:13). Similarly, when the people of the synagogue attempted to harm Christ, He passed through the midst of them with confidence, safety, and assurance (Luke 4:29-30). As the Prophet felt secure and peaceful in the midst of the Syrian siege (2 Kings 6:14-16).

With this understanding of the words, we observe three of Christ's principal regalities: His Scepter, the Word of His Gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit and endorsed by God the Father; His Throne, represented by Zion, the Church of the Jews, from where His Scepter extends; and His victorious, complete, and secure government - "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

First, the Scepter here represents the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ. Christ is likened to a Shepherd towards his Flock, the Church (Isaiah 40:11). He is described as a great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20), signifying His Power and Majesty over them, and a good Shepherd (John 10:14), highlighting His care and tenderness towards His Sheep. In the Scripture, Kings are referred to as Shepherds to lead, feed, and govern the people. For instance, David was taken from the sheepfolds to shepherd Jacob and Israel (Psalm 78:71; 2 Samuel 5:2). Thus, Christ is both a Shepherd and a King. "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David — I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince among them" (Ezekiel 34:23-24). Prophets and Teachers are also called Shepherds in the Scripture (Jeremiah 23:1, 4), making Christ a Shepherd and a Bishop. "Ye were as sheep going astray, but now ye are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). Therefore, we find in the Scripture that Christ has two pastoral staves, symbolizing His great care and dual role in His Church. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want - I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). "I took unto me two staves, the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands, and I fed the flock" (Zechariah 11:7). Thus, the Rod of Christ's strength or His strong staff represents three aspects: As a staff of strength, it signifies the power of Christ. As the Scepter of a King, it symbolizes the majesty of Christ. As the staff of a Bishop or Prophet, it indicates the care and oversight of Christ over His Church. From this, we derive three observations: First, Christ, through His Gospel and Spirit, is full of power and strength towards the Church. Second, Christ, through His Gospel and Spirit, exudes Glory and Majesty towards His Church. Third, Christ, through His Gospel and Spirit, demonstrates care and tenderness towards His Church.

First, the words of the Gospel, accompanied by the Spirit, are full of power and strength. No one can deny that Christ, in His own person, is full of power. Just as the power of a Prince is primarily seen in his laws, edicts, pardons, and gracious patents, so is the power of Christ magnified towards the Church in His Gospel, which serves as both a Covenant of mercy and a Law of obedience. It is worth noting how Christ often bestows His own titles and attributes upon His Gospel. Thus, the Apostle speaks of Him and His word as one and the same. "The word of God is quick and powerful — a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, neither is there any creature which is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." In one verse, the word is Christ Himself, which has led some learned individuals to interpret "the Word" as the essential Word of God or the person of Christ Himself. However, this appellation is not used by any of the sacred Writers, but solely by His beloved Disciple, Saint John. For instance, the Apostle speaks of Christ being crucified amongst the Galatians, though we know He was crucified in His person at Jerusalem. S. Paul could not do that which he curses others for doing, "Crucify again the Lord of Glory." Thus, at Jerusalem, Christ was crucified in person, while at Galatia, He was crucified in the ministry of His Word. The same crucifixion was vividly presented in Saint Paul's preaching as it was acted upon Christ's person. Christ is just as present with His Church now in the spiritual dispensation of His ordinances as He was physically present with the Jews during His earthly life. This is why we find the same attributes given to both. Christ is called "the power of God" and "the wisdom of God," while the Gospel is elsewhere referred to as "the Power of God" and "the wisdom of God in a mystery to them that are perfect." Additionally, Christ is known as "the Lord of glory," and the Gospel as "the Gospel of glory" or "the glorious Gospel." Christ is called "the prince of life" and "the Word of life," while the Gospel is also known as "the Word of life." Christ is a

Judge, and the Word of Christ is also a Judge. "The word which I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day." Christ is a Savior, and the Gospel of Christ is a Salvation too. "We know," says Christ to the woman of Samaria, "what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." By "Salvation," we understand the Oracles of God that were committed to that people, as it is from them alone that we know what and how to worship. This usage is not uncommon in the holy Scriptures. For instance, the Apostle speaks of the Word spoken by Angels being steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiving a just recompense of reward. He then questions how one shall escape if they neglect so great Salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord. Here, "Salvation" is set in opposition to the Word spoken by Angels, signifying the Law of God or the ministry of condemnation, and must, therefore, signify the Gospel of Christ. The Apostle also informs the unbelieving Jews that the "Salvation of God," meaning the Gospel of God, is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it. He further states that the engrafted Word is able to save the souls of men. All these instances indicate that as Christ is the Power and Image of His Father, the Gospel is, in a sense, of Christ. For this reason, the Apostle refers to the Gospel as the Face of Jesus Christ: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Where else do we behold the glory of God but in a mirror? And what is that mirror but the Word of God, as S. James calls it? Christ typically exercises His power or reveals His glory in these ordinances that we dispense. He walks in His Church with a sword in His mouth and a Rod in His mouth, signifying that He demonstrates no greater manifestation of His strength than in the Ministry of His Gospel. The Gospel is sometimes likened to a sword, a hammer, and a fire, as well as a savor of life and death, to illustrate its mighty workings that can affect life and death

through a mere scent or breath, just as it can through a blow or wound.

To delve into this point more distinctly, the power of the Gospel of Christ manifests in two regards: as a savor of life unto life for His Church, who shall be saved, and as a savor of death unto death for His enemies, who shall perish. In many ways, the Gospel of Christ and His Spirit act as a Rod of strength for His Church.

Firstly, it is instrumental in their calling and conversion from the power of Satan unto God. Satan is a formidable and armed adversary, equipped with a full panoply of military instruments, and to make matters worse, he possesses the hearts of men before Christ intervenes. Therefore, whatever draws a person from the clutches of this Lion and forces them away from his dominion must be much stronger than he. The Apostle commends the power of the word using this very argument, highlighting that it is a sword capable of overcoming principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Moreover, the old man within our nature is another strong force, a reigning king, who vehemently opposes the word and will of Christ and clings to the disease rather than accepting the remedy. Once again, the power of the Gospel is praised by the Apostle, emphasizing that it is mighty through God in pulling down strongholds and demolishing imaginations or fleshly reasonings.

When Christ silenced the winds and the sea with just two words, "Peace, be still," those witnessing were astounded by His power and asked, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" However, the conversion of a person is an even greater work than calming the sea, which may sometimes become calm on its own when the wind subsides. The wicked, indeed, resemble the

sea, but not at all times; rather, they are like a troubled sea that cannot rest. Just as the sea is subject to various motions—internal boiling and restlessness, regular tides influenced by the moon, numerous random disturbances caused by the force of the winds and its own waves, one wave precipitating, impelling, and repelling another—so are the hearts of wicked men, turbulent due to natural concupiscence, swayed by sinful pleasures, influenced by worldly ways, provoked and enticed by Satan, and constantly immersed in a tempest that causes their actions and words to be mired and defiled.

However, in the ministry of the word by a seemingly weak person, Christ stills the raging sea of the wicked hearts, calms their lusts, corrects their disorders, scatters temptations, and brings about a smoothness and tranquility of spirit in their souls.

Undoubtedly, when this transformation occurs, the soul cannot help but be amazed at its own recovery and marvel at the marvellous and unseen power that could swiftly subdue such turbulent passions and restore them to tranquility and beauty once more. It is akin to the wonder expressed in the Scriptures: "What ailed thee, O thou Sea, that thou fleddest? And thou Jordan, that thou wert driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs?" This expression signifies God's power towards His people during their triumphant entry into the Land of Canaan, and we can apply it to the conquest and possession of souls by the word.

What ailed a person that their usual course was suddenly forgotten, and they were driven back from their prior channel? What caused those once steadfast and mountainous lusts to flee like frightened sheep at the voice of a man? And what caused those minor corruptions and intemperances, which were once merely regarded as habits and weaknesses rather than sins, to scatter like lambs before

the word of Christ? A person might have entered the church with a full tide of lusts, each thicket in their heart, every thought and imagination sheltering a flock of evil affections. However, upon leaving, the tide was pushed back, the course altered, the hidden depths uncovered, and their lusts subdued. What brought about this change? They had only heard an hour's discourse, the same as others, yet their tide did not rise higher; instead, these demons were cast out, and the streams were turned back by the very finger of God Himself.

When a minister of Christ can softly awaken a dead man whom no thunder could rouse, and that man rises up to give glory to God, when Christ calls people to deny themselves, to rise above their own desires, to forsake family and self-interest, to relinquish possessions and crucify their sinful tendencies, to part with sins that they once considered their prized adornments and mainstay for survival, to stand resolute against the world's allurements or discouragements, to become symbols of scorn and objects of hatred within their own homes, to view persecutions as rewards and endure them with not only patience but gratitude and joy, to constantly contend with enemies, engaging in lengthy conflicts with worldly and dark forces, to believe in unseen things and hope for the unknown—all the while refusing to consult with human reasoning and holding God's word in higher regard than anything else—certainly, whatever can accomplish such great feats with the voice of a frail human must indeed be a "Rod of strength." It is akin to the rod of Moses that led the Israelites through the seas to a destination they had never seen or known before (Isaiah 55:5).

Secondly, the Gospel of Christ serves as a Rod of strength in the justification of people, as it is the Scepter of Righteousness, a word of reconciliation, a Gospel of salvation, a Law of the Spirit of life, a

ministration of the Spirit, of life, and of Righteousness. It opens prisons and proclaims liberty to captives. In these aspects as well, it is full of power. The Law of God had a formidable power, symbolized by thunderings and terrors during its administration at Mount Sinai. The Apostle refers to it as a Schoolmaster to discipline and lead us to Christ, and the Psalmist likened it to an iron rod that could break in pieces all the potsherds of the earth. However, in comparison to the power of the Gospel, the Law itself was weak and unproductive, only able to bring destruction, not edification. The Law could merely keep one down if they were already fallen; it could never raise them up again. But the power of the Gospel is far greater, capable of forgiving sins and releasing their bonds. It is a testament to the mighty strength of God's mercy that it can pardon iniquities, transgressions, and sins. Preaching the Gospel of Christ in His name and authority is a clear indication of the plenary power bestowed upon Him in both heaven and earth. The very dispensation of this word of reconciliation, entrusted to the Ministers of the Gospel, regardless of how ungrateful the world may regard them, honours them with a title of immense power—to be called Saviours, to have the custody of the keys of heaven, ministerially and instrumentally under Christ and His Spirit, saving souls and covering the sins of people. Hence, that word which, spoken by a feeble human, can reconcile a child of wrath to God and, within an hour, absolve and erase sins accumulated over many years, which were as numerous in the souls of people as stars in the firmament, must undoubtedly be a "Rod of strength."

Thirdly, the Gospel of Christ serves as a Rod of strength in the sanctification of people, as it is the Scepter with anointing. It is a Sanctifying Truth, a heavenly teaching, forming Christ within the soul, writing the Law therein, and manifesting the power and image of Christ in the conscience. Just as touching a seal to a marble or

adamant stone leaves behind an indelible impression, so does the Gospel leave a profound impact on our naturally hardened hearts. When a holy word, gently laid upon our hearts, leaves the imprint of its purity, when something as small as a grain of mustard-seed transforms an earthly soul into its own nature, when the eyes, hands, and mouth of Christ, embodied in the ministry of His word, breathe life into a child from the brink of death, when gazing into a mirror not only reflects our own faces but changes them into the image of another face shining upon us—how can we not conclude that the word capable of such wonders is indeed a "Rod of strength"?

Fourthly, the Gospel of Christ serves as a Rod of strength in the preservation and perseverance of the Saints, like Aaron's Rod, which blossomed, and its blossoms did not perish but remained in the Ark as a testimony of God's power. Just as those buds and the Manna in the Ark did not decay, so does the word of the Gospel in the hearts of the faithful. The Apostle affirms that we are kept by the power of God unto salvation, and S. Jude states that God's power keeps the Saints from falling and presents them faultless before the presence of His glory. This power of God is represented by the Gospel of Christ, referred to as an incorruptible seed by S. Peter and an abiding seed by S. John. When a tree bears perpetual fruit, unaffected by changing seasons, like the one in S. John's Paradise producing twelve different kinds of fruit every month, one can deduce that it possesses extraordinary vital power. Similarly, when Christ, through His word and the efforts of His laborers in the vineyard, fulfills His promise to the Church that every branch bearing fruit in Him not only preserves its fruit like Aaron's Rod but also brings forth more fruit and experiences abundant life, it is evident that the word instrumental in creating such an imperishable condition is indeed a "Rod of strength," a Rod hewn from the tree of life itself.

Fifthly, the Gospel of Christ serves as a Rod of strength in comforting and supporting the faithful, a Rod of Beauty and of Binding, binding that which was broken and bestowing beauty for ashes and the garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness. It quenches all fiery darts and refutes all the bloody reasonings of Satan against the soul. It acts as a staff offering comfort and sustenance even in the valley of the shadow of death, an expression commonly used in Scripture to signify all kinds of fears, terrors, and dreadful calamities affecting the soul or body. It encompasses the entire misery of our natural condition (Luke 1:79). David, the Prophet, vividly describes the extremities he had endured, including physical and emotional afflictions, as well as the terror of facing lions and overwhelming floods. All these, and more, are encompassed by the phrase "the shadow of death." Yet, in such dire circumstances, it was the word and the Spirit of God that supported him. He found comfort in his affliction, saying, "This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has revived me." When afflictions brought him close to the brink of darkness and the grave, God's word breathed new life into him and made him flourish. If it were not for delighting in God's Law, he believes he would have perished in his affliction. When witnessing a person facing multiple burdens, such as the weight of sin, God's displeasure, a wounded Spirit, a weakened body, and scorn and temptations from Satan and the world, yet not turning to lies or relying on human wisdom or help but leaning solely on God's word, trusting in it at all times, and placing all expectations upon it as their only comfort and support in such dire circumstances, one cannot help but acknowledge that this word is indeed a "Rod of strength."

Lastly, the Gospel of Christ serves as a Rod of strength in sanctifying and blessing our temporal things, as it is a staff of bread. It reminds us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. It is not the mere creature that sustains

us, but the blessing that prepares the creature for our use. The promises of God in Christ, concerning both this life and the life to come, sanctify the gifts of God when received with gratitude. The fall of man brought pollution upon creation, cursing the stone and timber of a man's house, snaring his table, poisoning his food, and bringing distractions and terrors upon his bed. This corruption clung to the temporal things as firmly as blackness clings to the skin of an Ethiopian or sin to the soul of man. All of God's creations were misused and converted into instruments and provisions for lust. The glorious lights of nature became tools to serve the pride, covetousness, adultery, and vanity of a lustful eye. The delicacies of the earth, air, or sea became materials to feed the luxury and intemperance of a lustful body. The honors and promotions of the world fueled the haughtiness and ambition of a lustful heart. The word of the Gospel, which can cleanse this corruption from the temporal things and infuse them with life, strength, and comfort, must indeed be a "Rod of strength."

Secondly, the Gospel and Spirit of Christ are a rod of strength, especially against the enemies of Christ and His Church. They have the power to repel and avenge all their injuries, frustrate the schemes of Satan, triumph over persecutions, and obtain a treasure that no malice or fury of the enemy can take away. It bestows a nobility of mind that no adversary can diminish and a sense of security and calmness of spirit that worldly storms cannot extinguish, just as the darkness of a cloud or the turbulence of a wind cannot blot out the luster or disturb the order of celestial bodies. With heavenly wisdom, it prevails against the gates of hell and silences every opponent. The Word is always ready to avenge disobedience, hardening the faces of men and arming them to resist those who attack them.

The power of the Word towards wicked individuals manifests itself in several ways. Firstly, it operates through a profound work of Conviction. The Spirit was sent into the world to convict it through the ministry of the Gospel, which embodies the foundation of the strength being discussed. All that the Word accomplishes is done through the conviction of the Spirit. This Conviction can be seen in two aspects: Conviction unto conversion, wherein the hearts of people are remarkably swayed by the invincible evidence of the Spirit of truth. They come to recognize and acknowledge their wretched condition due to sin while remaining in unbelief. They take upon themselves the appropriate shame and humiliation and give glory to God for His righteous and just severity, even if it means their destruction. Consequently, they are persuaded, through the terror of the Lord, to value any deliverance from that state that is offered to them. They admire, adore, and eagerly embrace any terms of peace and reconciliation presented to them. They willingly and humbly submit to the righteousness of Christ's scepter and to whatever form of spiritual governance He chooses to establish in their hearts. The remarkable aspect of this is that it makes people yield under any terms. When we witness how a seemingly insignificant stone grows into a mighty mountain, toppling kingdoms worldwide; when we see Emperors and Princes submit their necks and scepters to a doctrine initially met with opposition everywhere, a doctrine that is diametrically opposed to the natural inclinations of human hearts, a doctrine that preaches self-denial and promises reward from someone they have never seen, and even if they had seen Him, would find no apparent beauty that would make Him desirable. And this reward, whatever it may be, is deferred for a long time, offering no immediate assurance, but merely relying on faith in the One who promises it, all while facing numerous afflictions for His name's sake. How can we not see that wise and influential people would eagerly listen to such terms if there were not a demonstrative and compelling

evidence of truth and goodness therein, capable of silencing objectors and answering all objections? I have expounded on this point in greater detail in another Scripture.

Secondly, there is a Conviction unto condemnation for those who resist the saving power of the Gospel and the Spirit of grace. It compels them to abandon their strongholds and forces them to acknowledge the truth they do not love. We see our Savior engage in disputes with the Jews until they were unable to respond. He promised that His messengers would do the same, giving them a mouth and wisdom that adversaries could not gainsay or resist. We find this promise fulfilled as the enemies of Stephen were unable to resist the Spirit by which he spoke. Apollos powerfully convinced the Jews by showing through Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. This is counted amongst the qualifications of a Bishop, to be able to convincingly argue against gain-sayers and silence the mouths of unruly deceivers whose aim is to undermine others. The excellent virtue of God's Word lies in its ability to conclusively address and counter corrupted reasoning, leaving no gaps or evasions unchallenged or unprevented.

Thus, we can observe how the Prophets, in their ministry, consistently challenged the Jews and presented them with dilemmas, from which they could not escape the consequences. Either there must be a fault in them or in God, who rebukes them. The Lord asks, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they have gone far from me? Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, or a land of darkness, for them to claim, 'We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?'" The Lord continues, "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. I raised up your sons to be Prophets and your young men to be Nazarites. Is it not even so, O children of Israel?" Here, the Scriptures employ a

rhetorical figure known as "Communicatio," engaging in debate and deliberation with the opposing party, presenting the case so clearly that one can challenge the adversary to reach a determination based on what they believe the merits of the cause require. "How shall I pardon thee for this? And how shall I do for the daughters of my people? Set me in a way, determine the controversy yourselves, and I will stand to the issue which your own consciences shall make. O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my Vineyard." In essence, they are urged to decide their own cause.

When a group of armed men came to apprehend Christ and He pronounced just two words, "I am he," they all fell backward to the ground. This reveals a display of mighty power and evidence of Majesty in the words He spoke. If such an impact was made when He was to die and be judged by the world, how much more powerful will His reign and judgment over the world be? Now, Christ reigns and judges the world through His Word, and even more so after His ascension. He promised His Apostles that they would do greater works than He had done. It is awe-inspiring to witness someone proudly opposing Christ in His Word, relying on their own wisdom and using a few postulates and deductions from God's Word to defend their stance, only to be compelled to silence themselves, condemned by their own witness, left without support, and imprisoned without bars. The Word penetrates and presents invincible evidence that forces them to see their own conscience affirming the truth that condemns them and exposing all the delusions they had fashioned to deceive themselves. Who can deny that the rod of God's mouth is truly "Virga virtutis," a rod of strength, an iron rod capable of handling all human reasoning, just as a hammer shatters a potsherd, which may feel hard as a rock to a man's hand but is too brittle to endure the blow of an iron rod?

It is intriguing to observe how boldly people engage in sins under the guise of customs, fashions, or other corrupted reasonings, contrary to the clear and literal evidence of holy Scriptures (whose most immediate and grammatical sense is always the soundest unless there is an apparent and unavoidable error in doctrine or morals that follows). People will justify the causes of the wicked for reward and skillfully use wit to present a better facade for a worse matter. Yet the Lord expressly says, "Thou shalt not speak in a cause to wrest judgment; thou shalt keep thee far from a false matter, for God (whom thou oughtest to imitate) will not justify the wicked." People may follow sinful world trends, wear strange and excessive clothing, style their hair in peculiar ways, and spend time on lustful and unprofitable pursuits without considering that their eternal condition depends on how they use that precious moment of time. Though the Lord clearly instructs, "Be not conformed to this world," and warns that those who follow the world's course are aligning with the Prince of the power of the air, many still disobey. The Lord will punish those who adopt the fashions of idolaters or other nations or engage in cross-dressing. Even nature itself teaches that it is shameful for a man to wear long hair. Nature itself taught an honest Heathen to resist the sins of his age and not conform to the world, despite the excuse that commonness takes away the wrong, and that what would be considered a sin if committed by one becomes a mere fashion when imitated by many.

In conclusion, the Apostle is definitive when he declares, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor covetous, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Many may still not yield to this conclusion, but their consciences cannot deny that they fall into these categories. If we were to address these individuals with the words of the Prophet, saying, "Produce your cause," says the Lord, "bring forth your strong

reasons," says the King of Jacob, they would ultimately find that their reasons are like themselves—vain and lighter than nothing. The Word of the Lord will ultimately prevail and sweep away all their refuge of lies.

Secondly, the power of the Word towards wicked men is evident in how it affrights them. There is a spirit of bondage and a sense of death that accompanies the Word, in addition to the spirit of life and liberty. Guilt is an inevitable consequence of sin, and fear arises from the manifestation of guilt. Once the heart is convinced of this truth, it will tremble even at the slightest provocation, such as the stirring of one's own conscience. How much more then at the voice of the Lord, which can shake mountains and make the foundations of the earth tremble? If I were to witness a prisoner at the bar passing sentence upon their Judge, and the Judge subsequently trembling and compelled to acknowledge the verdict, I would be astonished at such a reversal of roles. Yet, in Scripture, we find examples of this happening. Micah, a prisoner, pronounced death upon King Ahab; Jeremiah, a prisoner, proclaimed captivity for King Zedekiah; and even Paul, in chains, preached about judgment to Felix, who was in his robes, causing Felix, his own Judge, to tremble. The fact that not all the wicked in the world tremble at the Word is not due to any lack of strength in the Word or because of the stubbornness in the hearts of men to resist it. Rather, it is solely due to their ignorance of its power and evidence. The Devils, stronger and more stubborn creatures than any man, tremble at the Word because of their full illumination and the invincible conviction brought upon their consciences by the power of the Word. Even if men were as hard as rocks, the Word is a hammer that can break them; if they were as sharp as thorns and briars, the Word is a fire that can devour and torment them; if they were as strong as kingdoms and nations, the Word is able to uproot and overthrow them; if they were as fierce as

dragons and lions, the Word is capable of treading upon them and binding them.

Thirdly, the power of the Word is seen towards wicked men in that it serves as a judge to them. "Son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody City?" says the Lord. "Yea, thou shalt show them their abominations." When wicked men are confronted with their filthiness through the Word, the wrath of God seems to be sealed upon them. Our Savior affirms, "He that rejecteth me, the Word which I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." The Apostle adds that if someone disbelieves or is unlearned and all prophecy comes in, they will be convinced and judged by all, and the secrets of their hearts will be laid bare. In some sense, the Word even executes death and judgment upon wicked men. Hence, it is said that the Lord would smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of His lips. The Word of the Lord is referred to as fury by the Prophet, signifying that when wrath and fury are poured out upon a land, they are the effects of God's Word. If a pestilence devastates a city, and a sword comes to take away those who remain, it is solely the Word that flays, while the instruments act in accordance with the Word of God. Thus, the Prophet declares that wise men perceive the voice of God and hear His rod. This juxtaposition of a rod being seen and a voice being heard indicates the transposition and interchange of properties between the Word of God and His punishments. This signifies that towards wicked men, the Word possesses a judging and tormenting power. As our Savior stated, "For judgment, I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." If it is objected here that Christ claimed, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," and that He came not to condemn the world, but to offer salvation, I answer that there are two outcomes of Christ's coming and,

consequently, His Gospel. The primary and essential purpose of the Gospel is to proclaim salvation and to provide a way of escape from the impending wrath. However, when men deliberately resist and neglect this great salvation, Christ becomes to them a stumbling block, and the Gospel becomes a scent of death leading to death, similar to a remedy intended for healing but hastening a person's end when their body is unresponsive to it and the disease is firmly rooted. In the same way, the Word of God acts as a two-edged sword for the wicked, an edge in the Law and an edge in the Gospel, condemning them from every side. If they turn to the Law, it cannot save them because they have broken it; if they turn to the Gospel, it will not save them because they have scorned it.

Fourthly, the power of the Word towards wicked men is evident in how it accelerates their sins, making them even more sinful and hastening the filling up of their measure. As Christ said, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." Just like a tree fastened to a wall, where the heat of the sun is more constant and intense, it produces ripe fruit ahead of the usual season. Similarly, a people continuously exposed to the light of the Gospel and frequently receiving its teachings will inevitably yield summer fruit – sins that ripen quickly, bringing them closer to a state of curse. There is only a year's difference between such a tree and the fire. In the Scriptures, we observe that the sins of Israel and Judah, for which they were sometimes plagued with captivity, did not take as long to ripen as the sins of the Canaanites, upon whom no light had shined. Although the land experienced periods of rest for forty or eighty years, we never find that they were allowed to provoke the Lord to His face for four hundred years straight. For instance, when God sent a prophet to reveal the guilt and consequences of their sins to Nineveh, He gave

them a very short time to either repent or have their sins ripen. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed."

Fifthly, the power of the Word towards wicked men is evident in the rage and madness it provokes in them. When a man faces a formidable enemy, he puts on all his armor and gathers all his strength for resistance. Similarly, when the Word of Christ stirs up the rage and lusts of men, compelling them to erect strongholds and high imaginations, even using the wisdom and strength of hell's gates to withstand it, we must conclude that it is indeed a Rod of strength. Even the most composed and devout hypocrites have, due to the power of this Word, been thrown off their mask of demureness, becoming vehemently bitter and angry against its majesty. They are filled at one time with wrath, another time with madness, and yet another time with envy, indignation, contradiction, and blasphemy. They are even cut to the heart, like reprobates in hell, gnashing their teeth. The Gospel carries such a searching power and extreme opposition to the lusts of men that if it does not subdue them, it will inflate them to the point of disturbing even the grave and prudent men of the world with brutish and unseemly emotions like rage and fury, driving disputers away from their arguments. Sin cannot tolerate being disturbed, let alone being surrounded and confronted with the curses of God's Word. So, like a hunted beast in desperate distress, turning back and summoning its utmost strength to seek revenge on its pursuers and save its life, wicked men, to protect their lusts, unleash all their rage and open all their sluices of pride and malice to resist the holy truth relentlessly pursuing them. They behave in a manner akin to beggarly masters with their servants or bankrupts with their creditors, who, unable to pay their debts, pick fights and create excuses to withhold payment. Similarly, stubborn men in lawsuits, when their case fails, try to compensate with rage and passion. Wicked men behave in the same way with God and His

Word. When they should render the service God requires of them, which they are unwilling and unable to do, and when He presents His case and enters into controversy with them, convicting them in the court of their own consciences so that they cannot resist, they have no choice but to either submit (which they refuse to do) or oppose the Word with malice when they cannot with reason. Until men are persuaded to cast aside all wickedness and excess, they will never receive the engrafted Word with meekness, for until then, it remains a binding Word that seals their guilt and condemnation upon them.

Lastly, the mighty power of the Word towards wicked men is evident in how it transforms them, leading to their partial persuasions and partial conversions towards goodness, restraining them from the lusts they cherish, and compelling them to external acts of conformity devoid of genuine inner principles. The humbling of Ahab, the observations of Herod, the incomplete persuasion of Agrippa, the forced obedience and flattery of the dissembling Jews, the attempts and offerings of hypocrites in matters of religion, and the inclinations and yearnings of unsettled wills towards Christ, are all significant evidence of the power and majesty inherent in the Gospel. It is akin to witnessing a millstone suspended in the air, not falling straightforwardly and rapidly, but swaying, wavering, and floating about in an indecisive motion, as if deliberating which way to go – at times yielding to its own weight and, at other times, lingering or attempting to ascend. Such an enigmatic virtue and peculiar impressions that delay the natural descent of such a weighty object leave one in awe. Likewise, when we see individuals who still retain the inclinations of their corrupt nature, which drive them with a potent impetus towards sin and perdition, nonetheless yearn for goodness and, when they succumb to their lusts, do so with great hesitancy and conflict within their natural conscience, we must

acknowledge the tremendous strength in that Word, which sets bounds to the raging sea of such pride.

Hence, the messengers of Christ entrusted with the dispensation of this Rod of strength can draw instruction on how to conduct themselves in their ministry. Few individuals will relinquish any of the power bestowed upon them, as everything, in its own way, seeks to assert power. Christ has entrusted us with the guardianship of His own power, and therefore, we should wield it as a word of power, capable on its own, without the dilution of human whims or the superstructure of human opinions, to work mightily for the salvation of those who believe and for the conviction of those who gainsay. Our commission is to hold the great men of the world accountable. It is true that ministers of the Gospel are servants to the Church, demonstrating compassion by sympathizing with the afflictions, infirmities, and temptations of God's people, and ministering to their needs with comfort, instruction, and exhortation in righteousness. In humility, we serve those of lower standing and condescend to those of weaker understanding. Even the Angels in heaven are servants to the Church of Christ in this way. However, we are servants only for the good of the Church, to serve their souls, not to serve their whims. Therefore, we are servants who can also command. We are to "command and teach," and no one should despise our youth. We are also instructed, "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you." The most despicable ministers are those who, through ignorance, flattery, or any base and ambitious motives, betray the power and majestic simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. When delivering God's message, we must not then become servants of men. As the Apostle declared, "If I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ." To subject the truth of God to the whims of men and to make the Spirit of Christ in His Gospel conform and compromise with human lusts is to play the runaway

from our office, and to prostrate the Scepter of Christ to the mockery of men. The Word possesses a profound majesty and authority when delivered with the Spirit of Christ. He taught with power and authority, as one privileged to speak without concern for people's opinions, and wherever His Spirit is, this power and liberty of Christ will manifest. Christ has granted this power to His ministers so that they may commend themselves in the consciences of those who hear them, so they may stand firm against the pride and scorn of men, so they may go forth as armies against the enemies of His kingdom, so they may speak boldly as they ought to speak, so they may not permit His Word to be bound or His Spirit to be restricted by the whims of men.

Again, we should all strive to embrace the Word with its inherent power and lay our vulnerable parts open to it. Even though a cock is a seemingly weak creature, its crowing can cause a lion to tremble. Consider the insignificance of a bee to a bear or a mouse to an elephant. Yet, when a bee stings a bear's nose or a mouse gnaws at an elephant's trunk, such small creatures can torment the mightiest adversaries with ease. Indeed, the proudest of individuals have their tender spots where a sting can enter. The conscience is as sensitive to God's displeasure, as susceptible to His wrath, and as subject to His Word in a prince as in a beggar. Just like David's stone that found its mark, the Word can penetrate the mightiest Goliath. Therefore, we should open our consciences to that Word, expecting the Spirit to accompany it, and receive it with humility and trembling, just as Josiah did. We should learn to fear the Lord in His Word and recognize His name and power within it. As the Lord said, "Will you not fear me? Will you not tremble at my presence, who made the sand a boundary for the sea?" The sea, though immense and powerful, is held in check by the seemingly weak and easily swept away sand. Similarly, words spoken by a despised man may appear

weaker than the raging army of lusts experienced by the world. Yet, the Lord has ordained that these words be used to tame and subdue those lusts, so that men might learn to fear His power.

Furthermore, the Word should teach us to rely on God in all things, for He is all-sufficient, a sun, a shield, and an exceeding great reward, as proclaimed in the truth and promises of His Gospel. While all creatures in the world are filled with vanity, uncertainties, and disappointments, often deceiving when one relies on them the most, the word of the Lord stands firm, founded on the immutability of God's truth. When a person makes it their refuge, they rely on God's omnipotence, and the strength of the Almighty is engaged to help them. Asa remained safe when he depended on the Lord's promises against the mightiest host of men ever recorded, but when he turned to other aids, he only brought perpetual wars upon himself. Similarly, Jehoshaphat's throne was established and the fear of the Lord fell upon surrounding kingdoms because he honoured the Word of God and taught it to his people. Whenever Israel and Judah forgot to lean on God's Word and resorted to human alliances, associations with idolatrous people, compliance with superstitions, and other fleshly counsels, they found these to be nothing but lies, like flimsy waxen and wooden feasts designed to deceive the ignorant. These things proved too weak and unstable to support those who relied on them. Therefore, let us not rest on our own wisdom or build our hopes and securities on human foundations. Instead, in all circumstances, let us hold fast to God's Covenant, to this staff of His strength that can uphold us in any extremity.

Again, since the Gospel wields such sovereign power to strengthen us against all adversaries and temptations, to guide us in our paths and callings, and to fortify us in the Grace of Christ (for a Christian's knowledge of the Word forever determines their strength and

comfort), we must strive to embrace God's Word, store it in our hearts, and enrich ourselves with its knowledge. In heaven, our blessedness will reside in knowing and communing with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Hence, on earth, the Gospel and the Spirit serve as a foretaste and provision of heaven, as they initiate this knowledge and fellowship. Anyone who claims to desire heaven while neglecting the desire to know as much of God as He is willing to reveal on earth is only deceiving themselves and misleading others. The Gospel represents a Christian's patent and charter, the evidence of their salvation; it embodies their treasure of blessings and privileges, the source of pride for this life and the next; it serves as a Christian's armory, equipping them to confront the temptations and conflicts posed by their fiercest adversaries; it stands as their sole tool and instrument, empowering them to undertake any act of piety, charity, loyalty, or sobriety; and it acts as their only mirror, reflecting their own image, teaching them to deny themselves, and revealing the face of God in Christ, prompting them to desire and follow Him. Therefore, for anyone to be ignorant of the Gospel is to forfeit their Christian identity and regress into a state resembling that of a heathen. As the Psalmist said, "Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You." Ignorance renders a person no better than a heathen. As the Apostle admonished, "But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus." A mere title or profession does not make a person a genuine Christian, setting them apart from other heathens. Instead, it is the knowledge of Christ in His Spirit and Gospel that truly distinguishes a Christian. Just as one can be outwardly a Jew but uncircumcised in their heart, one can bear the title and name of a Christian yet remain a heathen in their heart, even more dreadfully than Sodom and Gomorrah or Tyre and Sidon, for they have rejected the Salvation of the Lord and deemed themselves unworthy of eternal life.

Lastly, if there is indeed such power in the Gospel, we should strive to bear witness to the testimony that God gives of His Word through holy conduct. It is a disgrace to God's ordinances when people in their lives deny the virtue that God testifies to be in them. Wicked individuals are said to crucify Christ again, to shame Him, and to make God out to be a liar, not that these things can truly happen, but because their evil actions make it seem as if they do. In this sense, the Gospel may appear weak because the pride of people resists its saving power. However, these individuals must understand that the Word does not return empty to God; it accomplishes some work, whether it ripens weeds or corn. There is both thunder and lightning in the Word; if one does not break a heart, the other will scorch it. If the heart is not humbled by the Word, it will surely wither and bear no fruit.

Should clay boast against fire because, although it can melt wax, it cannot melt clay? Is it not the same power that hardens one substance and softens another? Is not the Word a sweet aroma to God, both in those who perish and those who are saved? Certainly, there is as remarkable a power in adding another death to someone who was already dead (essentially killing a dead person) as there is in multiplying and extending life. To those who perish, the Gospel is a Savor of death unto death—a word that accumulates the damnation of wicked individuals and stores up wrath upon wrath. If it does not convert, it will undoubtedly harden; if it does not save, it will certainly judge and condemn.

The Lord never discards His Gospel. Just as He commanded the gathering of the broken pieces of loaves and fishes so that nothing would be wasted, He will not allow any fragment of His spiritual manna to go to waste. We find instances where the Lord instructed His Prophets to preach even when He foretold that their words

would not be heard. "You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; you shall also call to them, but they will not answer you." "Son of Man, I send you to the Children of Israel, to a rebellious nation; they are impudent children and have a stubborn heart. Yet you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are rebellious." "They will not listen to you, for they will not listen to Me, for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." Surely, when the Lord takes pains through His Prophets to call those who will not listen, He does not do so in vain; they shall eventually realize that a Prophet has been among them. Therefore, just as the Apostle said that the Gospel is a sweet aroma even to those who perish, we find that messages containing nothing but curses against obstinate people have been as sweet as honey to those who preached them. "I ate the scroll," said the Prophet, "and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey." Yet, the scroll contained only lamentations, mourning, and woe. Jeremiah did not desire the day of woe, but he did earnestly agree with the false Prophets in their predictions of safety. Nonetheless, due to his unwavering service to God and the glory that God would manifest in punishing the sinful people, the Word of Prophecy entrusted to him was the joy and delight of his heart. In every respect, the Gospel of Christ is a word of power, and in it, we do and must rejoice.

Again, as I mentioned before, this Rod of strength serves both as a Scepter of Majesty and a Pastoral staff. It represents the administration of Christ's Kingdom, which involves the dispensing of His Gospel as both a word of Majesty and of care. Therefore, there are two remaining observations to be made from these words, "Rod of your strength."

Firstly, the Gospel of Christ, accompanied by His Spirit, is a word of great glory and Majesty. We must always consider these together, for

as S. Peter said, "We preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12). The Spirit is distinctively linked to the Gospel and does not belong to the Law at all, when viewed by itself as a separate covenant. Though it leads to liberty when proceeding out of Zion, as an appendix and addition to the Gospel, by itself, it results in bondage. Therefore, when the Apostle illustrates the excellence of the Gospel compared to the Law, he refers to one as a ministry of death and of the letter, and the other as a ministry of the Spirit and life. This indicates that the Spirit is peculiar to the Gospel of grace. Hence, this Spiritual Gospel of Christ is the Scepter of His Kingdom, and as a royal emblem, it conveys Glory and Majesty. It is a Gospel full of glory. Even the typical prefigurations of the mercy, which is the main focus of the Gospel of Christ, are honored with the name of Glory in the Scriptures. The garments of the Priests, symbolic of the Evangelical Righteousness of the Saints, were made to reflect glory and beauty. The Tabernacle, serving as evidence and seal of God's Evangelical presence with the people, is referred to by Prophet David as a Tabernacle of honor, the place that God filled with His own glory. The Ark of God, signifying the Gospel under veils and shadows, is referred to as "The Glory of Israel," a term usually applied to Christ when the Psalmist says, "All Kings shall see thy glory." The Temple in Jerusalem, representing God's Rest, is called a glorious Rest, a glorious high throne, a house of glory, beauty, and holiness. At its first Dedication, the Glory of the Lord filled it, indicating God's presence. The true glory of the Temple was not in the gold or silver that adorned it, but in the evidence of God's presence, which was like a cloud at the time but was truly a Sun, as the Prophet calls Him. This glory also filled the second Temple, making it more glorious than the first, despite being less magnificent in its structure. Following a similar line of reasoning, if the blood of bulls and goats sanctified for the purifying of the flesh, then how much more effective must the blood of Christ be! Thus, if

the Types of Evangelical things were so glorious, then the Gospel itself must be infinitely more glorious. This is why Christ and His Gospel are frequently referred to with the same attribute of glory. Christ is called the Glory of the Lord and of His people Israel, and the Gospel is described as a glorious mystery, a Royal Law, and a ministry of glory. In fact, it is glory itself, as I understand that passage of the Apostle where he speaks of walking worthy of God, who has called us to His Kingdom and glory, referring to the knowledge of His Gospel. This glory captivates and amazes even the most glorious creatures of God.

To examine this point more closely: The glory and majesty of the Gospel of Christ can be seen primarily in four aspects: in its Author, in the Promulgation and dissemination of it, in the Matter it contains, and in the Ends or purposes for which it serves.

Firstly, in its Author: Many things of little worth have become famous due to their authors, akin to how the unremarkable children of renowned parents maintain their reputation and nobility by association. However, from those who are impure, some uncleanness will inevitably taint their works. The Gospel, on the other hand, is truly a glorious Gospel because it is the Gospel of the blessed God. There is glory in all of God's works since they are His creations, for it is inconceivable that such a great Creator would ever engage in ignoble work. Thus, the Prophet David uses "his glory" and "his handy work" interchangeably to signify the same thing: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handy work. This denotes that anything He puts His hand to carries evidence of glory. Yet the Prophet also suggests that there is even more glory in the law of His mouth than in the works of His hands. The Lord is better known by Zion, and His name is more esteemed in Israel than in the entire world. The more God imparts of Himself to any of His

works, the more glorious they become. And in His Gospel, there is nothing wherein God has revealed Himself more fully, where He can be so completely known, communicated with, relied upon, and praised. The Gospel is like a mirror that allows the blessed Angels to perceive and admire the unfathomable riches of His mercy towards the Church, a view they couldn't gain through their own observation of His glorious presence. In the created universe, we witness God's power and wisdom at work, guiding everything with precision through the secret vigor of His providence, sustaining the existence He granted them, and directing them towards the glorious ends for which He created them. In the law, we see God's justice and retribution, with threats of punishment and the execution of wrath on those who transgress it. However, in the Gospel, we encounter God's abundance and boundless compassion. He humbles Himself to show mercy to His enemies, taking upon Himself the punishments for the injuries inflicted upon Him. He doesn't merely offer pardon; He earnestly pleads with His own prisoners to be forgiven and reconciled. In the created universe, He is a God above us; in the law, He is a God against us. But in the Gospel, He is Immanuel, God with us, God like us, God for us.

Nothing reveals God's godliness as much as His mercy in the Gospel. He is invisible in Himself, and we can only see Him through His Son. He is unapproachable in His essence, and we can only approach Him through the Son. Therefore, when He reveals His glory to Moses, He doesn't direct him to the Creation or Mount Sinai; instead, He places Moses in a rock (symbolizing Christ) and proclaims the Gospel to him. Moses had prayed, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." How does the Lord grant this prayer? He declares, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee," revealing Himself predominantly through His mercy. The Lord, the Lord God, is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. This reveals that God's glory is most prominently manifested in His goodness. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity and overlooks the transgression of His people's remnant?

Moreover, although the Law is indeed from God, as its Author, and thus may seem to possess no difference in excellence compared to the Gospel in that regard, we must note that even by the remains of Creation, much of the Law, and consequently insights about God, might have been discovered through human inquiry, as exemplified by some notable philosophers and wise heathens. However, the Gospel is a mystery forever concealed from the grasp and suspicion of human nature, wholly dependent on divine revelation. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the hearts of men the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The Apostle speaks of the mystery of the Gospel, signifying that it surpasses the observation, learning, or comprehension of nature to even suspect it. Even the natural curiosity of angels could never have unveiled it; it is revealed to them through the Church. If it hadn't been for the sake of the Church, the angels in heaven would have remained ignorant of this glorious mystery. The fall of man was so dire that only the infinite and unfathomable wisdom of God could find a remedy for it. If the Lord had shown mercy to man but stopped there, saying, "You are wretched, and I am righteous; my wrath is heavy, and your condition is woeful. Yet, I cannot help but have compassion on you. Therefore, I leave it to you to find a way to reconcile my justice and mercy, to devise a means for me to show you mercy without compromising my justice and the righteous demands of my offended justice, and I will abide by it." If mercy had been confined within these limits, and the method of our redemption left to human discovery, we would have remained in a desperate state, utterly unable to conceive or even imagine a way of escape. Just as

creatures, before their existence, could not conceive their emergence from the nothingness they were before, so fallen man could not have the faintest notion of any feasible way to deliver himself from the misery into which he had fallen. Even if all the learning in the world were gathered in one person, and that person spent all their time and effort trying to envision a sixth or seventh sense, which might be expressly fashioned amongst the infinite ideas of God's power and omniscience as the five senses already created, they would remain as ignorant of the desired conclusion as when they began. All human knowledge of natural things arises from reflecting on the phantasms or ideas, impressions formed by our senses, which constitute a notional existence of things in human memory, resulting from external and sensible perceptions of their real existence. Yet even in that case, a sixth or seventh sense would still belong to the same category and have some kind of connection with the senses we already possess. However, a new Covenant, a new life, a new faith, a new salvation are all entirely beyond the realm of nature. That two should become one, yet remain distinct as God and man do in one Christ, that the Creator should become one with His creation; that the One above all should humble Himself; that the One who fills all should empty Himself; that the One who blesses all should be Himself cursed; that the Ruler of all should become a servant; that the One who is the Prince of Life and the sustainer of all things should undergo dissolution and death; that mercy and justice should unite and embrace each other; that the debt should be paid, yet pardoned; that the fault should be punished, yet forgiven; that death, like Samson's lion, should contain life and sweetness and be used to destroy itself; these and similar Evangelical truths are mysteries beyond the comprehension of all the learned minds in the world.

The belief in the Gospel requires a spiritual light that goes beyond what human reason alone can achieve. We can observe that each

person in the Trinity plays a role in teaching the mystery of the Gospel. The Father reveals it to humanity, as Jesus said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." It is also written in the Prophets, "They shall all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." Similarly, the Son teaches it to humanity, being referred to as the "Angel of God's Covenant and Counsel," the one who reveals the deep plan of his Father's counsel regarding the restoration of mankind. He alone opens the bosom of his Father, unveiling the secret and compassionate affections of his Father to the world. Therefore, he is called a Teacher sent from God, speaking from heaven in the ministry of the Gospel. The doctrine he imparts is called a heavenly doctrine and a heavenly calling, denoting that they are beyond the comprehension of an earthly understanding. It is a wisdom that comes from above.

The Holy Spirit is also a Revealer of the Gospel to the faithful. He was sent to convict the world not only of sin but also of righteousness and judgment, which are essential aspects of the Gospel. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God, including His unfathomable love, wisdom, and counsel revealed in the Gospel. Hence, the Gospel is known as the Law of the Spirit of life, the ministration of the Spirit, and the Revelation of the Spirit. No one can genuinely acknowledge Jesus as Lord except by the Holy Spirit's guiding influence. While some may superficially acknowledge Him as Lord due to external conformity to the discipline and profession they follow, their hearts will not truly submit to His obedience without the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. It is only the Spirit that leads people to genuinely acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Christ is not the power or wisdom of God to just anyone but only to those who are called, meaning those to whom the Spirit witnesses the righteousness found in Him.

Thus, the proclamation of the Gospel is the responsibility of humanity, but its effective teaching and revelation to the soul is a joint work of the Holy Trinity. It is the Holy Trinity that opens the heart to pay attention and persuades the heart to believe the Gospel as something worthy of wholehearted acceptance. Therefore, the Gospel is truly a glorious thing when we consider its original and author.

Hence, we can infer that regardless of what people may think about the ministry and dispensation of the Word, neglecting and scorning it is, without a doubt, an act against Christ Himself, and that too in His glory. Whoever rejects His Word also rejects His person. The sin of a person against the words spoken in the name and authority of Christ, and in the dispensation of the office entrusted to us, is equivalent to the sins of those who despised Christ in His physical presence. Now, some may argue that Christ is in heaven, so how can our actions harm Him? However, even though He resides in heaven, which serves as His royal court, He still has dealings with the earth as one of the chief territories of His dominion, and through the ministry of His Word, He continues to speak from heaven.

Christ, through His Apostle Paul, preached peace to the Ephesians, who were far off. In the Prophets, it was His Spirit testifying of His sufferings and glory. He gave manifest proof of His own power, speaking through His Apostles. Therefore, when someone refuses to obey the words of a minister while warning them about the coming wrath, and fails to recognize the Lord's voice therein, but instead persists in following their sinful ways, being blasphemous, luxurious, proud, revengeful, and riotous, considering it base to mourn for sin and unnecessary to humble themselves to walk with God—yet, due to social conformity, professes faith in the Lord Jesus—that person is a blatant liar. As the Apostle said, he makes God a liar as well, by not

believing in the record that God gave of His Son, which is that He should cleanse His people from filth and purify them with a spirit of judgment and burning. This purification is compared to refining silver and purging the priests to offer righteous offerings to the Lord.

Such a person goes against the mercy covenant they claim to hold on to, as one of the great promises of the Covenant is the cleansing of filthiness and idols. It also contradicts the fear of God they profess to have, as the fear of the Lord is a clean thing. Furthermore, it is inconsistent with the sprinkling of the blood of Christ they claim to have, for the blood of Christ not only cleanses lives but also consciences from dead works, making them inwardly labor for purity of heart. The person goes against the fruitfulness of grace they boast about, for the Spirit of grace poured from on high makes the wilderness a fruitful field. Finally, it contradicts the properties of faith, for true faith purifies the heart and is inseparable from a pure heart and a good conscience.

Why is it considered treason to harm a Judge in their ministry on the bench or deemed an injury to the state to show indignity to an Ambassador of a great prince? The reason is that in such roles, they are public and representative figures, and their well-being or harm affects the state. Similarly, the case is the same between Christ and His Ministers in their holy function. The expressions are interchangeable: sometimes it is "the Gospel of Christ," sometimes "My Gospel," sometimes "the preaching of Jesus Christ," and sometimes "My preaching." In the synergy and partnership with Christ and God, just as He saves, so do we; just as He forgives sins, so do we; just as He judges wicked men, so do we; just as He beseeches, so do we—pleading for reconciliation and urging not to receive the grace of God in vain. We act through His Grace, and He acts through our ministry.

Therefore, anyone who disregards any conviction from the Book of God (and disobedience is considered as despising His Word) or persistently engages in known sin or neglects evident duties, is fighting against Christ Himself, rejecting His mercy, and shutting their ears to the Lord's entreaties. Such a person commits a direct sin against Heaven. If they continue in this manner, they will come to know that flaming fire awaits those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, whenever we come to the Word, whether read or preached, we should approach it with the expectation of hearing Christ Himself speaking from heaven to us. We must bring affections of submission and obedience befitting His presence. "Let him who has an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches." "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people." Christ's sheep discern His voice in the dispensation of the Gospel and will not recognize the voice of strangers. The Thessalonians and the men of Berea had the honor of setting themselves in God's presence during the preaching of the Word, expecting His authority and receiving it in His name.

Would anyone dare to rush with a naked weapon into the presence of their prince and scornfully throw back their personal commands at him? How much more should we not dare to come armed with high thoughts, proud reasonings, and stubborn resolutions against the majesty of the Lord Himself, who speaks to us from heaven? "Receive with meekness," says the Apostle, "the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." The Word does not mingle or incorporate, nor does it change or save the soul unless it is received with meekness. This means coming with a resolution to lay down our weapons, to humble ourselves before God, and to submit fully to Him. One who is quick to wrath, setting up strong and fretful

emotions against the purity and power of the Word, will be slow to hear or obey it. For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. A proud hearer will not live a profitable life.

Hence, whenever we approach the Word, we should conclude that God might convict us in our master vein. We may have profaned His glorious name, which we should fear for its greatness, love for its goodness, and adore for its holiness. God may confront us with the guilt of this great sin, as He has declared that anything beyond a simple "yes" or "no" is sinful. And whatever is sin, is Hell to our soul. Perhaps we are vain individuals who keep the company of loose and riotous men, and the Lord may bring upon our conscience the charge from His Word not to associate with fornicators, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and not to follow a multitude to do evil. Though hand may join in hand, sin will not go unpunished. We may be guilty of oppression and unjust gain, and the Lord may remind us of the instructions of Nehemiah and the restitution of Zacchaeus.

In any of these or similar cases, if we can come with the heart's temper of Saint Paul, not consulting with flesh and blood but asking, "Lord, what would You have me do?" or respond like Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears," or with the resolution of Cornelius, "I am here present before God to hear all things that shall be commanded of God," or if we purpose in our hearts to cleave to God's holy will in all things, then we truly give glory to God through His Gospel. It is not merely about giving some money for the maintenance of the Word or showing some support to its dispensers (though sadly, few repay ministers with the double honor that God, not they, deserve). Rather, it is about parting from our lusts and crucifying our old selves, which honors the Word of God.

If a man had thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil and would give them all up for God's worship, or if he had enough children to buy every sermon in times of famine with the sacrifice of a son, even that would not be enough to give due glory to God's ordinance. Men naturally love their lusts, the products of their evil hearts, more than their lands or their children. To truly give God the glory He deserves, we must act justly, love mercy, walk humbly before Him, acknowledge His name in the voice of the minister, and rid ourselves of wicked treasures. This is the only way to give God the glory that is rightfully His. (Micah 6.6, 10).

Secondly, the Gospel's glory is evident in its promulgation and publishing to the world. This can be seen both in the initial Promulgation through Christ's personal preaching and in the full Revelation through the sending of the Holy Ghost to chosen vessels who were to carry this treasure to all corners of the earth.

Regarding the initial Promulgation, we can observe a certain state and glory in Christ's preaching. He sent forerunners to prepare His way and announce His approach, like heralds proclaiming the arrival of a prince. These messengers were sent ahead of Him to every city and place He intended to visit, so that people might prepare themselves and welcome this Prince of Glory. Unlike a simple visit between ordinary men, when a prince plans to visit a place, there is a formal announcement and officers are sent out to give notice, so that suitable preparations can be made. In a similar way, Christ knows that we are unprepared to welcome Him, with our hearts filled with sin and our consciences burdened, so He sends His officers before Him with His own provisions, such as Humility, Repentance, Desire, Love, Hope, Joy, and a hungering and thirsting for His appearance. Then, when He is esteemed worthy of all acceptance, He comes Himself.

Moving on to the more complete publication of the Gospel (for Christ's personal preaching was just the beginning of His teaching), we see that just as princes perform special acts of magnificence and honor during their solemn Inauguration, such as opening prisons, proclaiming pardons, creating nobles, and distributing gifts to the people, so did Christ to testify the glory of His Gospel. He reserved the full publication of it for the day of His ascension and His glorious readmission into His Father's presence. When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men, namely, the Holy Ghost, who is referred to as the Gift of God in Acts 2:38, Acts 8:20, and John 4:10. The Holy Ghost is also described in the plural form as Gifts, as in Revelation 1:4, symbolizing the abundance and variety of graces poured out on the Church. These gifts include wisdom, faith, knowledge, healings, prophecy, discerning of spirits, miracles, and tongues—all imparted by the Holy Spirit according to His will. These gifts were bestowed for Evangelical purposes, namely, to perfect the saints, serve in the ministry, and edify the body of Christ. Saint Peter tells us that the Holy Spirit is a spirit of glory, and thus the Gospel, which was more abundantly promulgated through His outpouring, must indeed be a Gospel of Glory too.

And this becomes even more evident in the more solemn promulgation of the Gospel, where there was an abundant outpouring of glorious light and grace into the world. During His state of humiliation, the Sun of Righteousness was somewhat obscured, veiled in the likeness of sinful flesh, sharing in our common infirmities, experiencing poverty and the grief caused by human sin, and overshadowed by His divine virtue while appearing as a servant. He bore the weight of the guilt of sin and the burden of God's law, endured the ignominy of a lowly death, and agonized under the curse of that death.

But when He ascended on high, like the Sun in all its glory, He dispelled all these mists, and now sends forth the radiant beams of His Gospel and Spirit. These two wings bring Him to the Churches, and beneath them lies the treasure of healing and salvation for the world. Even John the Baptist, the last and greatest of all the Prophets who foretold of Christ, acknowledged that he was less than the least in the kingdom of heaven, in comparison to those upon whom the Promise of the Spirit was shed abroad. The full Revelation of the Gospel outshined all the previous prophecies and the Law, not by abolishing them, as the ceremonies were abolished, but by surpassing them in excellence and glory.

The full Revelation of the Gospel is likened to an effusion of the Spirit, not in dew, but in showers of rain that multiply into rivers of living water. The rain of the Spirit flows from heaven like a spring, giving rise to wells of Salvation and a sea of knowledge. These attributes signify two things: First, the abundance of spiritual grace and knowledge through the Gospel, which should flow like a River. Second, the growth and increase of this grace and knowledge, which should be living water, multiplying and swelling like the waters of the Sanctuary, until it becomes a boundless and immeasurable sea of eternal life.

Indeed, the virtues of the Spirit in the Gospel, as symbolized by this living water, are truly glorious. It quenches the wrath of God, that otherwise consuming and unquenchable fury which devours the adversaries with everlasting burnings. It satisfies the thirsty soul's desires, for the Spirit is both medicine and food. It heals the soul's dull and apathetic appetites, and at the same time, satisfies those desires. The Spirit is both a Spirit of supplication, directing us to pray, and a Spirit of grace, fulfilling those requests and satisfying the desires it prompted. The Spirit cleanses, purifies, softens, and

removes the barrenness of our natural hearts. It overflows and communicates itself to others. It withstands and subdues every obstacle set against it. And it continues and multiplies until the end.

From this, we learn how to abound in grace and glory and how to be transformed into the image of Christ. Just as the beam and light of the Sun carry its heat and influence, the light of the Gospel of Christ conveys the virtue and gracious workings of His Spirit upon the soul. Therefore, we should seek the various graces that satisfy the soul's desires and heal its bruises only by the waters of the Sanctuary, that is, in the knowledge of the word of truth, which is the Gospel of Salvation. The more of this glorious light a person has, the more proportionate growth in other graces they will experience. Thus, the Apostle links the growth of grace with the growth in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they mutually support and nourish one another.

Saint Paul emphasizes that the knowledge of God's will in wisdom and a spiritual manner is the foundation for fruitfulness in every good work. This, in turn, becomes an incentive to increase in knowledge. The motions of grace in the soul are akin to the heavenly orbs, which derive their measure and proportion of motion from the supreme. Similarly, the proportion of all other graces in the soul arises from the measure of our spiritual and saving light. When a person's mind is thoroughly convinced of the necessity, beauty, and glory of heavenly things, strong impressions of these truths are made on all subordinate faculties. We are naturally drawn towards things with prior apprehensions of their goodness, and as these apprehensions penetrate the true and intimate worth of that thing, the soul's motions towards it are strengthened accordingly.

Just as the hinder wheels of a coach move as fast as the leading wheels, the subordinate powers of the soul are governed in their manner and degree of working towards grace by the spiritual representations of truth and excellence in the understanding, enlightened by the light of the Gospel. The Apostle illustrates this by his own example, explaining that the excellence of the knowledge of Christ drove him to earnestly pursue Him. The knowledge of the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings motivated him to reach forth and press forward towards the mark of the high calling set before him.

Thirdly, the Glory of the Gospel of Christ with His Spirit can be seen in the matters it contains, namely the Glory, Excellencies, and Treasures of God Himself. As the Apostle says, with open face, we behold in the spiritual ministration of the Gospel, the glory of the Lord, like seeing an image in a mirror (the veil of carnal ignorance removed by the Spirit). We are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. The Apostle combines the ideas of Man as the image and glory of God, indicating that anything having the form and resemblance of God must be glorious. But how do we, in the Gospel, see the Image of the invisible God? The Apostle explains that God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Image and exact representation of His Father's glory, just as the impression on wax reflects the form of a seal. Christ fully embodies every excellence of God, so when we see Him in the Gospel, we also see the glory of the Father.

The Gospel is like the face of Jesus Christ, vividly displaying His grace and Spirit to the soul as if He were physically present with us. If a glass could retain an unvanishing image of a man's face even in his absence, we could rightly say that the glass is the face of that

man. Likewise, since Christ is most perfectly represented in His Gospel (so that when we finally meet Him in person, we can say, "This is indeed the very person who was long ago exhibited to my faith in the Gospel"), it is justly called the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the Gospel, we see the Image and glory of God. Just as the same light shines from the Sun upon a glass and from the glass upon a wall, the same glory shines from the Father upon the Son and from the Son upon the Gospel. Thus, in the Gospel, we behold the unsearchable treasures of God, for His treasures reside in His Son. This is why preaching the Gospel is often referred to as preaching the Kingdom and the riches of Christ in other places, to emphasize the glory of the things revealed in the Gospel to the Church.

The Gospel contains the glory of God's wisdom, a manifold and varied wisdom, as the Apostle speaks, which is why he calls Christ and His Gospel by the name of Wisdom. We preach Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God to those called, and we speak wisdom to those who are mature. This wisdom reconciles God's attributes of mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace, which seemed at odds after the fall of man. It also reconciles the world of obstinate and rebellious enemies to God, sanctifies the whole creation through the blood of the cross, and repairs the ruins caused by sin. It unites Christ and His Church, though distinct in nature, and brings together Jews and Gentiles, overcoming their former animosities to share in the same mysteries. In summary, this wisdom surpasses even the admiration of the blessed Angels, for it finds a way to satisfy God's offended justice by showing mercy and saving sinners, rather than through their confusion or annihilation.

Furthermore, the Gospel contains the Glory of God's goodness and mercy, His good-will towards humanity, bringing glory to God and peace to the earth. It is like a love-token or commendatory letter

from the Lord to His Church. While God's providence demonstrates some measure of goodness to all, the Gospel contains a heap and miscellany of universal mercy, conveying an interest in all His goodness to the soul. It imparts God's special and gracious mercy, making all things good to us as gifts and legacies from Christ. It also reveals the glory of God's power and strength as the Power of God unto salvation.

The Gospel encompasses the glory of God's grace, replacing His fury with favor and man's weakness with strength. Where the Law brought wrath and curses against man for his inability to fulfill it, the Gospel brings abundance—a kingdom of grace, removing the curse of the Law through God's favor and empowering us to overcome the flesh's lusts by His Spirit within us. Finally, the Gospel offers glimpses and first fruits, seals and assurances of God's heavenly kingdom to the soul through the promises, testimonies, and comforts of the Spirit. It is rightly called the Gospel of the kingdom, for it unveils the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which begins on earth but continues into eternity. Just as a person born in Ireland, when transplanted to England, remains under the same king and law, so a Christian, whether on earth or in heaven, remains in the same kingdom—the kingdom of the Gospel on earth and the kingdom of glory in heaven. These and many other glorious matters are contained within the Gospel.

Here we discover how and where we should behold God to abide in His glory and find comfort. We must not gaze upon His immediate brightness and essence, nor let our intrusive curiosity pry into the secrets of His unrevealed glory, for He is a consuming fire, an invisible and unapproachable light. We may catch a glimpse of His mercy in the proclaiming of His grace, and see the beams of His

power in the publishing of His Law, but all of this is under a cloud, concealed by His might. His face no mortal can see and live.

We must not solely look for Him within ourselves. Though once we saw Him in our nature, created in His image with righteousness and holiness, that image has now been obliterated, replaced by the likeness of Satan and the old Adam. Neither should we solely seek Him in Mount Sinai, in His Law, lest the fire consume us and the arrows pierce us through. There, we find nothing but rigor, unforgiveness, wrath, and vengeance.

Instead, we must seek Him in His Son, getting to know both the Father and the One He has sent. There is no fellowship with the Father except through the Son. We may have knowledge of His hand, His works, and His punishments without Christ, but we cannot truly know His bosom, His counsels, and His compassions. We cannot know His image—His holiness, grace, and righteousness—nor experience His presence and comforts here and His glory hereafter, except in and through Christ.

While we can know God through the world and perceive His eternal power and divinity in the Creation, this knowledge alone is barren and unfruitful, unable to suppress unrighteousness. Even the wise men of the world, when they knew God, failed to glorify Him as God and fell into vain imaginations, disregarding the truth revealed in the Creation, and thereby lived in unrighteousness.

Similarly, we may know God through His Law, where His glory was manifested when He came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran, but this knowledge brings death and makes us flee from God, hiding ourselves out of His presence. We become His enemies and fall short of His glory. The Law is like a fiery law, not only in its origin, spoken out of the midst of the fire, but in its nature

and operation, heaping fire and curses upon the soul. It is called the ministry of death.

Yet, to know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is both fruitful and comforting. In Christ, we know the pattern for our walk, the life we must live, and the treasure from which we are supplied. We know the One in whom we have believed, the One we can confidently turn to in all our trials and distresses. In Christ, we encounter God full of love, compassion, attentiveness to our prayers, watchful over us, fighting for us, communing with us, preserving us, transforming us, faithful to keep covenant with us, guiding us in wisdom, redeeming us, and ready to reward us with glory.

Therefore, let us rest in this Rock, that God's goodness may pass before us and communicate the mysteries of His kingdom and glory. By Him, our persons are accepted, our prayers received, our services regarded, and our acquaintance and fellowship with the Lord are increased through the blessed Spirit shed abroad in His Gospel upon us.

Lastly, the Gospel of Christ is glorious in its ends, effects, or purposes, and it is in this regard that the Apostle often extols its glory above the Law. The Law had its own glory, evident in the thunderings and lightnings, the radiance of Moses' face, the trembling in God's presence, the service of the Angels, the sound of the trumpet, the ascending smoke, and the quaking of the mountain. However, the glory of the Gospel was far more excellent, constituting a better Covenant and a more outstanding ministry. The Law had weaknesses and limitations (both terms implying a diminished glory), and thus it could not perfect anything. Yet, what the Law could not achieve due to its weakness through the flesh, the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (which is a paraphrase for the Gospel,

as evident in 2 Cor. 3:6) accomplished for us – setting us free from the law of sin and death. Therefore, while the Law was glorious, the Gospel surpassed it in many respects, as stated in 2 Cor. 3:10.

Let us now take a closer look at the spiritual glory of the Gospel of Christ and its excellent ends and purposes. First, it is replete with light, enlightening, comforting, and guiding those who once dwelt in darkness and the shadow of death, leading them to the path of peace. Light was the first of all created things, and the Apostle extols it as a glorious aspect of the other celestial bodies (1 Cor. 15:41). How much more glorious is the light of the Gospel? The Apostle calls it "a marvellous light," and thus the kingdom of the Gospel is depicted with light and glory, signifying their intermingling significance (Isaiah 60:1, 2, 3). The knowledge of the Gospel infinitely surpasses all other forms of learning in value, both because of its object – God manifested in the flesh – and its ultimate purpose – reconciling and bringing humanity unto God. It is a knowledge that surpasses all other knowledge, bestowing fullness, even the fullness of God. This knowledge is so excellent that all other human excellences are as nothing compared to it. What Angel in heaven would trouble himself with metaphysical, mathematical, or philological contemplations, which are considered the highest delicacies that human reason delights in, when they have the glorious presence of God and the joys of heaven to occupy their noble thoughts?

Yet, we find the Angels in heaven humbly stooping down with great eagerness to contemplate the wondrous light and profound mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, even turning their eyes away from the express glory before them in heaven. In all other forms of learning, a Devil in hell (the most cursed of all creatures) might surpass the greatest achievements of humans. However, in the learning of the Gospel and in the spiritual revelations and evidences of the benefits

of Christ to the soul, there exists a knowledge that even exceeds the comprehension of any angel of darkness; for it is only the Spirit of God who truly knows the things of God. Julian the Apostate once scornfully mocked Christian Religion, claiming it to be an illiterate rusticity and a naked belief, while true polished learning belonged to him and his Pagan faction. He even forbade Christians from using schools and human learning, deeming them unfit for their faith. This persecution was considered by the Ancients as cruel as the other bloody massacres carried out by his predecessors. Although the most learned Father could have rightfully refuted such a slander and demonstrated, through canonical books of holy Scripture and the works of scholars of their faith, their profound learning, invincible argumentation, and powerful eloquence comparable to any Heathen Author (for I dare challenge all the Pagan learning in the world to parallel the writings of Clemens of Alexandria, Origen, Justin, Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius, Augustine, Theodoret, Nazianzen, and the other champions of Christian Religion against Gentilism), they instead responded that the authority upon which their faith was built came to the soul with self-evidence and invincible demonstration, surpassing all the disputes of reason and the learning of Philosophy. Therefore, although the Gospel may have been an offense to the Jews, opposing the honor of their Law, and foolishness to the Greeks, challenging the pride of their reason, to those who were perfect, it revealed hidden and mysterious wisdom capable of convincing gainsayers, converting sinners, comforting mourners, providing wisdom to the simple, and guiding a person with spiritual prudence. Despite the prejudices of the world, the one who is acquainted with God in Christ through the Gospel possesses the Father of wisdom, the Treasurer of wisdom, the Spirit of wisdom, and the Law of wisdom to equip him for all his endeavors. The Gospel is not lacking in sufficiency; rather, it is our lack of intimate

acquaintance and knowledge of it that may make the children of this world seem wiser in their generation than the children of light.

Secondly, another glorious purpose and effect of the Gospel is to serve as a ministry of Righteousness, a proclamation of pardon to the world, so comprehensive that no sin is exempt except for the contempt of the pardon itself. In this aspect, too, the Gospel surpasses in glory. As the Apostle states, if the ministry of condemnation had glory, then the ministry of righteousness excels in glory even more. It is indeed glorious for a person to forgive an offense, and the Lord demonstrates His glory to Moses by proclaiming His forgiveness of iniquity, transgression, and sin, encompassing multitudes of sins and sins of all degrees. This magnifies the Lord's mercy and thoughts towards sinners above all human ways and thoughts, just as the heavens are higher than the earth, for He abundantly pardons and multiplies forgivenesses for those who turn to Him from their ways. This justifying faith, where we rely on God's power to forgive and conquer our sins, is said to give glory to God. Abraham did not waver in faith but gave glory to God by relying on His power and faithfulness. In contrast, unbelief makes God appear as a liar and dishonors Him by robbing Him of the glory of His truth, while despair denies the power of God and magnifies the guilt of sin. Murmurers and unbelievers speak against God and limit Him, questioning the glory of His power and truth. Hence, another glorious effect of the Gospel of Christ lies in being a ministry of righteousness, reflecting the power, truth, mercy, and fidelity of God that we trust in by faith for the forgiveness and subduing of sin.

Thirdly, another glorious purpose of the Gospel is to function as a ministry and a law of life. If the ministry of death had glory, then the ministry of the Spirit surpasses in glory even more. The Law itself,

when unaccompanied by the Spirit, is merely a lifeless directive, showing a person what they should do without granting the power to do it. If Moses were to speak to us alone, he could only instruct us in what we ought to do, but could not enable us to do it. Moreover, the Law can, at times, possess a malignant quality, arousing and intensifying our sinful desires, much like how the Sun shining on a dung-hill releases foul odors, making it even more putrid. However, the Gospel, through the Spirit, not only teaches but also empowers. It shows us what we should do and provides us with the strength to do it. In this way, we not only behold the glory of God in the Gospel but are also transformed into the same Image, from glory to glory. This transformation can be likened to the reflection of the Sun's glory upon a glass and from that glass onto a wall, producing an extraordinary image of its own light. Similarly, from the glory of the Gospel, which is like a glass reflecting God's Image, the same glory is formed in the heart, like another glass reflecting His Image. This is what the Apostle refers to as "the forming of Christ in the soul" and "being planted into the likeness of His death and resurrection."

Fourthly, the Gospel is glorious in its Judicature. The Spirit in the Gospel not only convicts of righteousness but also of Judgment. In other words, the Spirit establishes a throne in the hearts of people, dethrones the prince of this world, and expels him. It empowers people's hearts to act as upright Judges, with truth and victory, against their own lusts. They can now pass judgment, condemn, and crucify their once cherished sins, even if those sins were as dear as their own limbs. They cast away all their idols like filthy rags and judge and avenge themselves. As the Scriptures say, "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do anymore with idols? In that day, saith the Lord, every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: After that I was turned, I

repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh." Thus, the governance of the Gospel in the heart leads a person to be strict in sentencing every sin, to eliminate their beloved lusts like Haman, and to surrender themselves to the obedience of Christ. They now conduct their lives, trade, treasure, privileges, freedom, and fellowship with heaven under the gracious and peaceful rule of a heavenly Prince.

Fifthly, the Gospel is glorious because it is an enduring ministry and an immortal seed. As the Apostle said, if the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, then the ministry that remains is even more glorious (2 Cor. 3:11). The Gospel has the power to keep a person blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus. It prevents us from being shaken or overthrown by the forces of darkness. There is ample strength in it to repel and wisdom to counter all the temptations and assaults from those who seek to harm our salvation. Whether the world tempts us with temptations from all sides – be it disgraces, persecutions, discomforts, or reproaches – the Gospel offers us sure promises and mercies. This assurance is enough to withstand all the discouragements that the world may throw our way. We can confidently declare, "I know whom I have believed, I know that he has overcome the world, I know that he is able to keep what I have entrusted to him until the last day." In the meantime, we find that we are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to us. We are at a point of distance and defiance; the world may despise us, but we remain indifferent to its allure.

When pleasures, honors, and enticing baits try to draw us away from God, our faith in the Gospel easily overcomes the world. The Gospel provides both promises and first-fruits of treasures far more precious and substantial than anything the world can offer. Even the reproaches endured for Christ's sake are considered greater riches

than the treasures of Egypt. The promises and performances of Christ are immeasurably greater, surpassing any worldly wealth.

Fifthly, the Gospel is glorious because it provides a daily sacrifice of godly living and a daily feast of a tranquil conscience. These experiences bring more sweetness to the afflictions endured for Christ than all the profits, pleasures, or worldly achievements, which are tainted with the guilt of sin. When Satan or our own reasoning rises against Christ's kingdom within us, the Gospel serves as a storehouse of armory to repel them. Faith can extinguish the fiery darts, and the weapons of the Spirit can subdue even the thoughts of the heart, leading to obedience to Christ. No weapon formed against it can prosper, and every tongue that rises against it in judgment will be condemned. The Gospel is like a staff that carries a person across any Jordan and provides support and comfort in times of darkness.

The Word of God does not only sanctify individuals but preserves their holiness as well. Without the treasure of the Word in the heart, the slightest thing could easily lead a person astray and cause them to turn away from Christ. Afflictions could make us doubt God's love for us and prompt us to murmur, complain, and struggle under His hand. However, the Gospel helps us see afflictions as gentle corrections from a loving Father, pruning and preparing us to bear more fruit.

The Gospel teaches us to rest our hearts in God, assuring us of hope in Israel and balm in Gilead. It urges believers not to hastily limit or misunderstand God but to patiently wait for His salvation, which will come at the right time, both acceptable and beautiful.

Furthermore, the Word of God supports faith in times of temptation. It enables believers to discern the voice of Christ and reject deceptive teachings and distractions. The Apostle warned the Elders of

Ephesus about the danger of false teachings and encouraged them to rely on the Word of God to build them up and protect them from deceitful schemes.

The Word of God also keeps our hearts sharp and ready for service, scraping away the rust and lethargy that can accumulate within us. By continuously abiding in the doctrine of Christ and being doers of the Word, we can remain steadfast and unswerving in our faith, never turning away from the grace of Christ. Those who treasure the Gospel in their hearts and grow in knowledge will not be easily led astray or become apostates.

Lastly, the Gospel is glorious because it endows the soul of a Christian with noble and majestic qualities. There is no nobility greater than that of the Gospel, granting believers the highest privilege of being called the Sons of God, kings and priests before Him, and part of a Royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people. The presence of the Gospel honours a land, just as the Oracles of God were a source of honour to the Jews. It inspires magnanimity, lofty thoughts, regal affections, and a heavenly ambition to pursue the greatest good. The main ends of a Christian are noble, seeking the favour of God, fellowship with the Father and the Son, the Grace of Christ, and the peace of the Church. Their desires are directed towards heavenly things, and they become agents in promoting the glory of Christ and dismantling the kingdom of Satan alongside the blessed Angels of God.

Every Christian is entrusted with a talent, a specific service within the body of Christ. The Gospel is a public treasure committed to the care of each Christian, akin to having a key to the Church and a responsibility for the honour of Christ's kingdom. Just as peers of the realm have their stations around the throne during the coronation of

a prince, Christians are called to hold the Crown on the head of their Saviour, striving to establish His throne through preaching, defending, praying, and practising the Gospel.

The Bishops and Pastors of the Church are entrusted with preaching the Gospel, serving as heralds and fore-runners of Christ to prepare the way in the hearts of people. Princes and judges of the earth are called to defend the Gospel, guarding it against enemies like lions around the throne. This Gospel is the law of Christ's throne, and it falls to Christian rulers to protect and encourage obedience to it. Just as David, Solomon, Josiah, and Hezekiah upheld their duties to establish and promote God's worship, Christian princes should follow their example in protecting the Gospel.

Lastly, every Christian is tasked with practising and adorning the Gospel, praying for its spread, and courageously standing for its truth in their respective places and stations. Neglecting these duties would betray and dishonour the Kingdom of Christ and lead one to deviate from the high and public condition God has placed them in.

Furthermore, it instills a spirit of fortitude and boldness into the hearts of individuals. This boldness enables them to resist the corruptions of their times, to walk contrary to the world's ways, to confront the sins and scorn of others, and to be courageous advocates for a despised truth or religious power. They are unashamed of their persecuted beliefs and are willing to stand alone against prevailing factions, just like Paul did against the contradictions of the Jews, and Peter and John against a Synod of Pharisees. Like the indomitable champions of Christ such as Athanasius, who stood against the power of Constantius and the conventions of heretics, and faced the general flood of Arianism in the world. Ambrose bravely faced the wrath and terror of the

emperor, not daring to deliver the blood of Christ to someone who had shed much innocent blood.

Chrysostom fearlessly confronted the pride and persecution of Empress Eudoxa, while Luther stood against the mistress of fornications and the princes of the earth. He even admitted that if it had been possible, he would have stood against a whole city full of devils. Throughout history, Christians have stood strong against the fires, fury, and torturous methods employed by those who persecuted the Church. Moreover, the Gospel grants boldness even in the face of the universal fire that will melt the Elements and shrivel up the heavens like a scroll.

The Apostle emphasizes that our love is perfected when we have boldness on the day of judgment because, as we are in this world, we have His image and love within us. This allows us to stand confidently before God, dwelling with the consuming fire and everlasting burnings. Whoever can stand before the Lord, putting on the Lord Jesus, may not be beyond the reach or immune to harm, but they are impervious to the malice of men. They may be killed, but they can never be overcome.

Recalling the courage of Elijah, who boldly refuted Ahab's false accusations, and Micaiah, who spoke the truth despite the Courtier's flattery, illustrates this unwavering courage. Similarly, Amos, who stood firm against the unworthy instructions of Amaziah, and Jeremiah, who fearlessly denied Irijah's false accusations, demonstrated their unwavering constancy.

The list of unbending constancy (or, as the Gentiles termed it, obstinacy) includes remarkable individuals such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, Cyprian, Pionius, Sabina, Maximus, and countless other holy martyrs. They challenged inventions, resisted cruelties,

withstood flatteries, and with the simple declaration "Christiani sumus" (We are Christians), they overcame all tyrannies, extinguished the fires, and silenced the proudest of persecutors. The multitude of their examples would require more time than is available to recount their unwavering courage and determination.

Moreover, the Gospel bestows a certain radiance and awe upon those in whom it reigns, making them shine as lights in the world, surpassing their neighbors in excellence, and inspiring others with a sense of dread and reverence. Even in dire circumstances, such as Jeremiah's imprisonment in a dungeon, God bestowed majesty and honor upon him to the extent that the king sought his counsel and held him in awe due to his prophetic persona. Similarly, when Herod observed John the Baptist's righteousness and holiness, he felt fear and awe, acknowledging the dread-inspiring presence of holiness. The Council of Scribes and Pharisees, who later showed hostility towards Stephen, could not deny the majesty of holiness radiating from him. They steadfastly looked upon him and saw his face glowing like that of an angel.

The mighty power of the Gospel also humbles unbelievers, causing them to fall on their faces and recognize the presence of God in those who proclaim it. This was evident in the trembling prison keeper who, upon witnessing the faith of Paul and Silas, sought their guidance on the path to salvation.

Lastly, the Gospel brings a profound sense of liberty and joy to the hearts of individuals. It grants a glorious freedom to their consciences, allowing them to be commanded only by Christ and liberated from the subjection of others. This liberty is sacred and unique to the Gospel, providing true freedom for the soul.

In conclusion, these noble effects of the Gospel manifest as evidence of its majestic glory in the hearts of men. It illuminates their lives, invokes reverence and fear, and brings forth true liberty and joy. The Gospel is truly a Gospel of great joy, as proclaimed in Luke 2:10.

Now, let us draw some inferences from this valuable and excellent doctrine of the glory of the Gospel. Firstly, we learn what liberty and sincerity the Ministers of Christ should employ in the administration of His Kingdom through the Word. In terms of liberty, just as the officers of a prince who go ahead to prepare his way boldly strike and disperse unruly crowds, we, as messengers of Christ, are sent with His royal proclamation of peace to make room in people's hearts for Him. We open the everlasting doors so that the King of Glory may enter in. Therefore, we must boldly wield the Rod of His mouth, crying out loudly without holding back. Our mission is not only to teach but also to command with authority, commending ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God.

The Apostle Paul also makes use of the glory of the Gospel in this context. Because of the blessed hope and assurance of doing excellent works through this glorious Word, he uses great boldness in speech. Why should one who brings glad tidings of glorious things, offering the blessed hope of eternal life, be afraid or ashamed of their role? Even in the face of persecution, Paul was not ashamed to preach the Gospel of Christ in Rome because it was the Power of God unto Salvation. There is no shame in being a Savior. Thus, it is both an honor and a duty for the dispensers of the Gospel to speak boldly as they should, and it is the people's responsibility to pray for the Spirit to accompany such a glorious message. The early saints prayed for the Apostles to speak God's Word with all boldness.

This duty is essential because, as dispensers of all God's counsel, we must not withhold any word that God has commanded to be made known to the people. The things revealed are for them and their children. When the Angel of the Lord released the Apostles from prison, he commanded them to stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life, and some of these words will require boldness. When we confront sin and lay the axe to the root of the tree, when we cut off sinful habits like a surgeon dealing with an inveterate wound, or when we rescue people from the fire of destruction, there will be a need for great boldness. Just as a surgeon should not be faint-hearted or bring a trembling hand to such a crucial task, so must we approach our duty with courage and steadfastness.

Secondly, the most severe message we are tasked with, and one that people are often unwilling to hear, is ultimately for their own good. Just as the Apostles found it sorrowful to hear of Christ's departure, yet He assured them that it is beneficial for them that He goes away. The first message we convey to people is about Christ's absence, correcting their false beliefs and presumptions of being in Him, and highlighting the distance and lack of familiarity between them. Despite these hard truths, we are not their enemies; rather, we speak the truth because it is our duty. It is the people's duty and advantage to listen to all that is told to them from God, for all Scripture, both the reproofs and corrections as well as the teachings and instructions in righteousness, is profitable and leads to the perfection of the Saints. Thus, we should not pick and choose what to preach or practice.

Thirdly, we bear responsibility for the blood of the people if we fail in our duty. Ignoring their sins will harm both them and us, just like two people embracing each other in a river, leading to the drowning

of both. The Lord instructed His Prophet not to fear the people's faces and to speak all that He commands, or else He would confound the Prophet before them. If we fail to warn the wicked from their wicked ways so they may live, their blood will be required at our hands. It is not fitting for us to be bolder in declaring our sins and glorifying them than to save and serve God.

Fourthly, we must speak in the person of Christ and in the power of His Spirit. As representatives of Christ, we must speak as the Oracles of God, using His words as if He Himself were speaking through us to the people. Our goal is to demonstrate that Christ is speaking through us so that people may be convinced that God is truly in us and that we are filled with the power of His Spirit. Therefore, we must exercise spiritual discretion and unwavering constancy against the sins of men, as these go against the two main pillars of Satan's kingdom: his craftiness and his weapons of power. The Spirit of the Lord brings liberty and will not be constrained; He will not keep silence. Those who speak by the Spirit of Christ must do so with some likeness and proportion to His authority and power, for they have been entrusted with the responsibility of building up the Church.

Finally, a partial, unsearching, and unreprieving Minister is one of God's curses and scourges upon a place, a precursor to a final and dreadful visitation. "The days of visitation and recompense come," says the Lord. When the Prophet acts foolishly and the spiritual person appears to be mad due to the multitude of iniquities and great hatred, it is a warning sign. If a person, pretending to be spiritual, walks in deceit and falsehood, betraying their sacred office, or if they prophesy of wine and strong drink, promoting and encouraging sinful indulgence, they shall be the prophet of the people. Consequently, when the Lord seeks to punish a rebellious people

who reject His Gospel and consider themselves unworthy of His great salvation, He may remove their Candlestick and take away His light from them. Alternatively, He may seal the mouths of His Prophets, silencing their reproof and purging them no longer from their filthiness. In some cases, God allows their Prophets to be infatuated and deceived by Satan, becoming vessels of lying spirits in their mouths, leading to their destruction, as we have witnessed in the downfall of Ahab and the captivity of Judah.

Once again, as Ministers of the Gospel, we must employ both freedom and sincerity in its dispensation, for it is a glorious Gospel. The Apostle draws this conclusion after devoting a whole chapter to emphasizing the Gospel's magnificence. He asserts, "Therefore, since we have this ministry," meaning the dispensation of such a Gospel entrusted to us, "we faint not." Instead, we renounce deceitful tactics, such as using plausible reasoning and fleshly apologies to cover up unclean practices (which false prophets employ). We do not resort to human sleights or trickery to sway people with every wind of false doctrine, as sinners willingly fall for such deception. We also do not handle the Word of God deceitfully, corrupting and adulterating it with erroneous interpretations that deaden its inherent power to purge and wrestle with human lusts. Instead, we manifest the truth through spiritual and transparent demonstrations, leaving no room for falsehood or deceit to hide. We seek to commend ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God, not pandering to their fancies or humors, but appealing to their conscience, which is aligned with God. Thus, our goal is for them to bear witness to the truth we speak, recognizing it as not mere human wisdom but the Word and wisdom of God, acknowledging its conviction, judgment, and penetration, leading them to glorify God and confirm that He is present in us in truth. All of this is done in the sight of God, aiming to

please and approve ourselves in His eyes as His servants doing His work.

This is what the Apostle refers to as "uncorruptness," gravity, sincerity, and soundness of doctrine, which even adversaries cannot find fault with or speak against. We must not attempt to embellish the Gospel with our own inventions or the fanciful constructions of human wit and imagination. Though such additions may appeal to worldly reason, they are like mingling glass beads with a chain of diamonds or adding lime to pure and generous wine. In reality, they become hiding places for unclean lusts to shelter under, allowing corrupt minds to be captivated by superficial charms. Just as Agag, while splendidly attired, failed to perceive the bitterness of death, and Sisera, amidst luxuries, remained oblivious to the nail and hammer that awaited him. Some are like Praxiteles the Painter, mentioned in Clem. Alex., who deceived simple people by having them worship the image of his mistress under the guise of Venus. Similarly, some cunningly impose their own fanciful visions and empty wit upon unsuspecting listeners, contrary to the gravity and seriousness required by the Gospel's foundation. They delude others by presenting their inventions as the indisputable truth of God's Word, essentially putting the holy Prophets and Apostles into fools' coats. While these individuals may take pride in their cleverness, it is evident that the Gospel of Christ rejects human contemperations as resolutely as a marble wall rejects a straw roof or the noonday sun dismisses the light of a candle. Those who cannot appreciate the naked simplicity of the Gospel without the allure of human wit reveal their lustful cravings, and their eyes are blinded by the god of this world.

Moreover, the glory of the Gospel reveals how it should be admired and embraced by all, just as it is by the blessed Angels themselves. It

is a faithful saying, deserving of wholehearted acceptance, to be received with open minds, and gazed upon with immense joy, much like the way the Wise Men were captivated by the Star. The Gospel is worthy to be enshrined in the crowns of Princes and etched into the soul of every Christian, illuminated like a beam of sunlight. Its message is clear: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Throughout history, the faithful have always found beauty in the feet of those who bring them glad tidings of their King, in the arrival of this Word of grace and salvation. The Scripture aptly describes this aspect, highlighting the Lord's mercy, which does not confine the Gospel to one fixed location, demanding that all nations make efforts to seek it, as was the case for the Jews in Jerusalem. Instead, the Gospel is offered as an itinerary salvation, reaching out to the very doors of humanity, even to those who might never have ventured outside to seek it.

Imagine a person in a sad and disheartened state, whose heart would open wide, and spirits would soar to embrace someone coming with a message of news more lovely and acceptable than they could have ever imagined. Just as Joseph was summoned from prison to Pharaoh's Court, and Jacob saw the chariots that would take him to his son Joseph, bringing them comfort after their distresses, so too would people be revived and comforted by the Gospel's message.

When Caligula, the Emperor, summoned Agrippa (who was later struck by an Angel) – previously bound in chains and imprisoned by Tiberius – and granted him new garments, a diadem, and prestigious titles, people found it hard to believe such a wondrous change. Extraordinarily good things are often difficult to believe. Similarly, when the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, it was as if they were dreaming; the deliverance seemed like an imaginary wish come true.

Peter, upon being freed from prison, thought he was seeing a vision; Jacob had trouble initially believing the news of Joseph's life and honor, and the Disciples were so overjoyed they couldn't initially believe in the Resurrection of Christ.

So, what does the Gospel bring as good tidings? It is a message of salvation, opening prisons and freeing captives. It brings our King to us and also makes us kings in our own right. It bestows upon us a joy that the whole world cannot take away. As Jesus said, "Your joy no one will take from you." Unlike the joy that Caligula bestowed upon Agrippa, which could be taken away by Claudius or even the Angel, the joy of the Gospel remains constant. Even though Angels, who might think earthly joys are insignificant compared to theirs, call it a great joy (Luke 2:10).

It is a joy comparable to a precious treasure, worth more than anything a person possesses. It is like a victorious harvest, with abundant rewards of peace and plenty, offering not only an escape from danger but also a rich reward. This joy is full and free from sorrow, it is pure bliss, and there is no room for sorrow when one possesses it. It is a joy that dwells within the heart, transforming everything around it into happiness. Various trials and temptations cannot diminish this joy, just as fire cannot diminish gold's value. It remains undiminished, a constant source of joy. As the Apostle said, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

Moreover, this joy turns the reproaches of men into riches. Amidst all tribulations, it becomes our peace and glory. Therefore, when we rightly comprehend and embrace this fullness of joy, it becomes entirely worthy of all acceptance. The Prophet also referred to the time of the Gospel as "tempus acceptabile," the acceptable time or year of the Lord. It is not limited to just the first year of Christ's

preaching, as Baronius mistakenly believed, but rather, the Apostle uses the same phrase to encompass the entire time of the evangelical dispensation.

If we examine the Church, we can witness the profound acceptance that this Gospel has received. Just as Zacchaeus eagerly welcomed Christ into his home, the brethren in Jerusalem warmly received the Apostles. The men of Berea embraced the Word with great eagerness and open hearts. The Galatians treated Saint Paul with utmost respect, equating him with Christ Jesus Himself, for Christ and His Gospel are inseparable.

In the Gospel, there is the parable of a man who sold all he had to obtain it, and the Saints earnestly contended for it, striving to enter the kingdom of heaven with zeal. Though they suffered the loss of all for Christ, they considered godliness as a great gain. It is like throwing goods overboard in a shipwreck to save one's life, and in this case, one does not lose anything on the journey to heaven. A person's life becomes the ultimate treasure in such an adventure.

By nature, we are all inclined towards self-destruction, like a stormy sea unable to escape ruin or abandon ourselves. However, in the Gospel, Christ shows a way to get out of ourselves, to escape the tempest, to walk on the sea without sinking, and to be in the world without being swallowed by it. A person who realizes the danger casts off everything that weighs them down, recognizing it as a significant deliverance to be saved from the tempest of wrath.

People often take great risks to acquire temporary riches, going to the depths of rocks for diamonds or into the earth for gold and silver. The Saints have shown similar affection for the Gospel. If they must labor in mines for Christ, they are willing to do so, knowing that they possess a treasure there that even emperors cannot comprehend—a

wealth far more precious than anything else. If they must face fire or wrestle with wild beasts to attain Christ, they do so willingly and gratefully, considering it a valuable and rewarding exchange.

The Governor said to Saint Cyprian, the blessed martyr, "Consider your life and do not be obstinate against your own safety. Think carefully for yourself. Do what is commanded of you. In such a just cause, there is no need for further consultation." To Polycarp, the officers urged, "Have pity on yourself, sacrifice, and save your life." However, the martyr replied, "For eighty-six years, I have served Christ, and He has done me no harm. I will not do as you persuade me."

In Basil, there was a rich and blessed Virgin condemned to the fire for her faith in Christianity. She was offered her life and status back if she worshipped idols, but she remained steadfast in her resolution, saying, "Let life be lost, let wealth perish. I will find more life in Christ than in myself. All the Emperors and Physicians in the world cannot guarantee my life tomorrow as it is today. But in Christ, my life not only endures but thrives. I gain more by losing my own life. My life in Him is hidden and safe from all harm and persecution by men. I possess unsearchable riches in Him that can never be stolen away because they are inexhaustible. It is as impossible for thieves to extract the mines of India or steal the Sun from its orbit as it is for human violence to take Christ away from me."

Likewise, Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, when a prisoner to Charles the Fifth, was promised freedom and restoration of dignity if he attended Mass. But he firmly responded, "I acknowledge the Emperor as the highest authority on Earth, but God as my Lord in Heaven. I cannot serve two masters. Christ is more welcome to me in bonds than the honors of Caesar without Christ."

In the past, the Gospel found acceptance among renowned individuals of great worth. We should treat it similarly, placing it above our greatest glory. Just like the Thessalonians, we must receive it with joy amid afflictions, stand with Christ in His temptations, and consider His Gospel as glorious as the stars in the darkness of the night or a torch that blazes brightest when shaken.

This alone proves our love for Christ to be genuine and incorrupt when we embrace His Gospel for its own sake and see Christ full of glory, grace, and truth in any situation. It is like Saint Paul rejoicing not only in the name and profession of the Cross of Christ but also in conforming and obeying it, in the virtue of the Gospel that crucifies him to the world and the world to him.

During times of peace and religious freedom, it's easy for people to praise the Gospel because they benefit from it. Like the Persians who, if the bloody decree had been enforced, would have slaughtered the Jews, yet turned to Judaism when the Jews were allowed to defend themselves against Haman's malice, merely because they feared the Jewish people. Similarly, the woman of Samaria showed interest in Christ's living water primarily because it promised to quench her thirst, so she wouldn't need to draw water from the well anymore. This kind of service is like Ephraim's labor, content as long as she receives her work and wages together, like an unharnessed heifer treading out the corn. It's a hypocritical obedience driven by self-interest and immediate rewards.

However, true and sincere love for Christ is proven when we can accept the Gospel despite facing persecution. Persecution has always been a part of the Church's existence, and anyone living godly will experience it. Even in Abraham's time, the most glorious Church on earth had persecutors, just as it continues today. Saints of God have

always been regarded as wonders, madmen, proverbs of reproach, and objects of scorn. But the Lord uses persecution to make His Gospel even more glorious, for it gives people the strength to endure scorn and reproach for the sake of the Gospel.

Receiving the Word with joy amid affliction sets an example that magnifies the sound and glory of the Gospel. Therefore, every person must be ready to face affliction when embracing the Gospel, leaving wicked company, abandoning flattering and selfish desires, forsaking one's own ways, risking undeserved scorn, disreputation, and misunderstandings, and still valuing the precious truths of the Gospel highly. This readiness to endure affliction for the sake of the Gospel shows true acceptance of the Word.

If a person cannot come to the conclusion that they are willing to be bound and die for the name of Jesus, prioritizing their life, liberty, peace, credit, and worldly comforts less than finishing their course with joy, fully surrendering their will to God, then their apparent profession and acceptance of the Word is akin to the Gadarenes' courtesy in meeting Christ, merely wanting to be rid of Him.

Lastly, we should learn from this to embrace another Christian duty, which is to live out this glorious Gospel in a holy and upright manner. The Apostle consistently emphasizes this aspect of Christ's Gospel: that our conduct should align with it, that we should adorn God our Savior's teachings in everything we do, that we ought to walk worthily of the One who has called us to His kingdom and glory. We are called to manifest the virtues of Him who has brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We must not receive the great grace of reconciliation in vain but live in a manner worthy of this excellent standard, as befits a royal nation, a people of glory, a unique and chosen inheritance, fervently dedicated to good deeds.

Remember Nehemiah's challenge to his enemies: "Should such a man as I flee? Shall we, who have the Gospel of Christ as our guide, conform to another Law?" The purpose of preaching the Gospel is to live for God. Would the son of a King dress in rags or associate with lowly and ignoble individuals? Through the Gospel, we are granted the great honor and privilege of being called the sons of God. Should we then walk as servants of Satan? Would any Prince tolerate seeing the heir to the throne live in bondage to his most hated enemy and vassal?

The greatest glory of the Gospel over the Law is that it is a Law of life and freedom. It transforms people into the image of Christ and enables them to be what it requires of them. Continuing to live according to the ways of the world as we did before is, in effect, making the Gospel as weak and unprofitable as the Law. How can we claim to be wise, as the Prophet questioned, and possess the Law of the Lord, if we walk unworthy of such a great grace? It would be in vain, just as if the ordinances had never been written or revealed to us.

So, it is necessary to inquire how we should adorn and display the glory of the Gospel. I would answer that the greatest honor we can give to the Gospel is to establish it in our hearts as our sole rule for living. We should prefer it above our own counsel and not mix it with the wisdom and reasoning of the flesh. Our conduct should align with its teachings, and we must not bend it to serve our own selfish purposes or rules. The Apostle exhorts us, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," meaning that we should shape our lives according to the doctrine of Christ, giving it the highest place and the final say in our hearts.

The Gospel contains all wisdom; it is able to make us wise unto salvation, fully equipping us for every good work. Therefore, what can the reasoning of the flesh contribute to what was already perfect wisdom? Why should we distort or manipulate the Gospel to suit our own desires or preferences when it offers such complete guidance?

Saint Paul, despite being learned and possessing strong intellect, immediately surrendered to the Gospel upon its revelation. He did not consult with human reasoning or compare the Gospel with the principles of his carnal wisdom. He did not try to dispute against God's grace or conform to the mystery of Christ only as far as his own reason or worldly ambitions would allow. Instead, he submitted all his thoughts and laid down the weapons of the flesh at Christ's feet, relying solely on the Gospel as a treasury of wisdom and allowing it to govern his heart entirely.

Yet, it is a terrible audacity in many people to twist and manipulate the Gospel to accommodate their own sinful desires. They use various tactics to widen the path of life, looking at it through the lens of their own desires. When confronted by the clear teachings of the Word, they find evasions and excuses to escape its demands. How many sins could people avoid, and how greatly could they cultivate the image of Christ in their hearts if they, like David, made the Law their counselor and weighed every action, especially those they feel reluctant about, against the straight balance of the Scriptures, not the deceitful balance of human customs?

We ought to remember always to walk in Christ, making Him the rule, the way, the end, the Judge, the companion, and the assistant in all our actions. Just as the members of the body act in fellowship with the body, animated by the same common soul, Christian

individuals should do nothing except as parts of Christ, moved by the same gracious Spirit that is in Him.

This is the essence of being Christians and the consent we give in our Baptism to the Covenant of Christ. We pledge not to follow or be led by Satan, the world, or the flesh, which represents earthly, sensual, or devilish wisdom. Instead, we commit to being guided by the Spirit of regeneration, whose seal we receive in our sacramental washing. Yet, what has become of the Christianity of many who seem to forget their purification? They live as if they have never been baptized into Christ, as if they have never truly learned about Him.

It is a puzzling contradiction that a tongue that has just proclaimed itself Christian and responded with "Amen" to a clean and holy prayer can suddenly spew forth blasphemies, oaths, lies, revilings, obscenities, and all the dark fumes of hell from the heart. Hands that were recently reaching out to receive sacred pledges and the most solemn mysteries of salvation, and that were engaged in distributing alms or lifting up prayers to heaven, can suddenly resort to greed and cruelty. Feet that carried them into the Lord's Sanctuary in the morning can, later in the day, lead them to immoral places.

Eyes that were seemingly fixated on heaven, contending with the tongue and hands to present earnest prayers to God, can, in the blink of an eye, become captivated by lustful or adulterous sights. Is this not a renunciation of their Baptism, tearing off the seal, and erasing their subscription from the covenant of grace? It is as if they deny the Lord who redeemed them, repent of the salvation they sought, and dishonor the Gospel they hypocritically profess.

Therefore, the first honour we can bestow upon the Gospel of Christ is to establish it in our hearts as the most suitable guide for all wisdom and the sole principle governing our actions.

Secondly, we continue to honour the Gospel of Christ by obeying it as our perfect rule. Firstly, through the obedience of faith, we receive and rely on it, embracing the covenant it reveals as the sole hope set before us. This act of trust in God for salvation is a profound acknowledgment of His glory and praise. As the Apostle highlights the surpassing glory of Christ over Moses, he urges us to heed His voice and avoid falling into an evil and unbelieving heart. We, he says, bring praise to God's glory when we trust in Christ.

Secondly, we honour the Gospel of Christ through obedience and holiness in our daily lives. When, for the sake of the Gospel's honour, we can deny ourselves, forsake our sinful desires, and abandon all that we once cherished as worthless and impure, we exemplify the image of Christ in our conduct. Truly learning from Christ means manifesting His life in ours, walking as He did, and being like Him in this world, with the same mind, judgment, and affections that were in Christ. The faithful honour God by sanctifying His Sabbath and glorifying Him through bearing abundant fruit.

Thirdly, we honour the Gospel of Christ through steadfastness and perseverance in our faith and obedience. To stand firm and unyielding in our course without wavering or repenting is a testament to the excellence of the Gospel. The Apostle instructs us to walk in a manner befitting the Gospel, so that he may hear of our affairs and find that we stand fast in one spirit. Lusters bring inconsistency and restlessness, rendering the soul like weary and unwell bodies never finding ease in any posture or condition. Wicked individuals flit from one indulgence to another, never satisfied by any and consumed by their endless intemperance. Only when the Gospel is spiritually embraced does the soul find treasures sufficient to rest in, seeking nothing more.

Therefore, falling away from the truth, power, or purity of the Gospel is akin to shaming Christ and crucifying Him again. Just as in Baptism, when we renounce sin and turn to Christ, we publicly shame sin and nail it to the Cross of Christ, so reverting from Christ to sin and turning our hearts back to Egypt is to shame Him again, as if He were somehow deficient in power or unfaithful in the promises we once professed to trust. If the Israelites, as they contemplated, had actually rebelled against Moses and physically returned to Egypt, it would have been a mockery of that proud nation, their former slaves willingly resuming their enslavement after boasting of deliverance. Similarly, if a person renounces the service of a noble individual and turns to menial matters for subsistence, mouths will open and suspicions will arise, doubting whether this individual, despite the high regard and great expectations surrounding them, is truly honourable or merely an empty shell, publicly disgraced by their own servants. In the same manner, when individuals apostatise from the power and profession of the Gospel of Christ, wicked people are quick to blaspheme and form bitter prejudices against our exalted and holy calling. If anyone boasts in the Law but then breaks it, they bring even greater dishonour to God. As the Apostle says, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Hence, constancy in Christ's service bestows upon Him the glory of an honourable master and His Law the reverence of a royal law, silencing the ignorance of those foolish individuals who lie in wait for opportunities to blaspheme God's name and His doctrine.

Fourthly, the Gospel of Christ is honoured when the Spirit of unity prevails, and people's judgments and affections converge towards it. When all sincere believers unanimously strive together and earnestly contend for it; when everyone who has been acquainted with it, both in the past and present, glorifies it with their support and endorsement, it must truly be a glorious Gospel. Nothing has ever

been able to deceive all people, nor have so many ever conspired to deceive others. When philosophers vied for supremacy within their respective schools of thought and each gave the next place to Plato, it was undeniably concluded that his philosophy was the most excellent, as it was honoured by the equal support of all the rest, beyond personal biases and preferences. How much more glorious must the Gospel be, which bears the joint testimony of angels and all holy men since the beginning of time? Therefore, when the Apostle demonstrates the greatness of this heavenly mystery, he uses a word that signifies the consent of people, "without any doubt" or by "universal confession," saying, "Great is the mystery of godliness."

Does it not magnify the glory of a law when there is such wisdom, power, equity, majesty, and beauty in its essence that every true subject in a realm concurs with constant and uniform love and obedience to it? Let us, therefore, exhibit the glory of the Gospel not only through our joint confessions but also in our united obedience to it, and in our unanimous zeal and contention for it. Let our brotherly affections and compassion towards one another be a testimony to our dedication to the Gospel. For schisms and disaffections among Christians bring much dishonour to their holy profession, as their failings and disagreements, by the unreasonable behaviour of wicked individuals, lead to the Gospel being discredited alongside them. Hence, the Apostle draws a parallel from the unity of Christ in Himself and concludes that such unity should also exist among His followers. Is Christ divided? Does He have differing opinions or show partiality? As Christ is, so should we be, to avoid giving the impression that we have received another Christ or another Gospel different from what has been handed down to us.

Fifthly, the Gospel of Christ is honoured when we earnestly study and delve into its depths, making serious and diligent inquiries into

its mysteries. Saint Paul disregarded all other knowledge and discarded anything that might hinder his pursuit of this excellent treasure. If people possessed the spirit of the Apostle or those blessed angels who yearn to explore the Gospel of Christ, they would not squander precious time on shallow and unfruitful studies, nor waste the lamp of reason within them on empty and unenlightening pursuits. Instead, they would dedicate more time to examine the charter of their salvation (the Word of God) and familiarise themselves with Christ in advance, so that when they stand in His presence, they may be welcomed as friends and not as strangers. Just as those who plan to journey to foreign lands prepare themselves with the language, topographical knowledge of the country, and general understanding of the customs, manners, and hospitality of the natives, we all profess a journey to heaven—a pilgrimage in this present world—to have our conversation where we hope for our eternal abode with the Lord in the future.

In the Gospel of Christ, we have a kind of map, a topographical delineation of the glorious mansions prepared for the Church, a glimpse and description of the customs of that heavenly realm, and some rudiments of the heavenly language. In short, we have more than enough not only to prepare ourselves for it but also to ignite the deepest desires of our souls for it—just as exiles or captives yearn to return to their native country. If, however, we neglect to study the Gospel or acquaint ourselves with it, if we claim to desire the sight of Christ in heaven but turn our eyes away from the blessed view of His face that we can have every day in the mirror of His Gospel, then we are essentially proclaiming to the world that either our hopes of heaven are feeble or our care for it is little to none. I firmly believe that in the holy Scriptures, there is an abundance of knowledge, grace, and the spirit of Christ, and through Him, of the Father (and these are the very things that make heaven the home and hope of

humanity). Thus, anyone who neglects to study the Scriptures, treating them as a sealed book, would be just as reluctant—even if the gates of heaven stood wide open—to relinquish their earthly pursuits and spend their time in the enjoyment and contemplation of that glorious realm.

Lastly, we honour the Gospel when, in our greatest distresses, we make it our refuge, our door of escape, the foundation of all our hope and comfort, the sole anchor to steady our souls in any spiritual tempest, the only support to lean on in our darkest moments. No matter what other worldly comforts people may rejoice in for a while, they will all prove as fleeting as sparks from a fire or the blaze of thorns, offering no lasting or substantial light to the soul. When sinners in Zion become fearful and overwhelmed by the weight of guilt, when the troubled conscience poses that dreadful question to itself, "How can I dwell with devouring fire? How can I dwell with everlasting burnings?" there is no answer that can quell this scorching terror except that found in the same chapter, "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

One cannot simply sponge away these deep and embedded sorrows, which, together with sin, penetrate the very core of the soul. Vain company, worldly pursuits, and youthful pleasures may momentarily distract from them, but these sorrows will return stronger than before. However, if you truly seek comfort, seek out your pardon, and fly to the court of mercy established in the Gospel. This was the argument our Saviour used with the man sick of the Palsy: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." No worldly affliction touches a person's life more intimately than sickness, and yet, just as the heart of a wicked man remains sorrowful even in the midst of laughter because it is burdened by the guilt of sin, so the heart of a

godly person may find cheerfulness amidst pain and sorrow, knowing that their sins are forgiven.

To conclude this point, let us consider these reasons to encourage us in fulfilling this essential duty: Firstly, it is a matter of honour to walk in a manner that befits the Gospel, for the Gospel is the Christian's source of glory and should be treasured in the heart as the highest privilege. The Spirit of God does not tolerate the profaning of sacred things as if they were common or unclean. Belshazzar used consecrated vessels from the Temple for indulgence and revelry, but God made these vessels turn into cups of trembling and astonishment. Herod violated the tombs of the Saints in a sacrilegious quest for presumed hidden treasures, and fire rose from the earth to consume those overly ambitious searchers. Antiochus ransacked the Temple of the Lord; Heliodorus emptied the consecrated funds from their treasury; Pompey desecrated the Sabbath and the Sanctuary; Crassus robbed the house of God of ten thousand talents. If we examine the outcomes of these insolent acts, as has been true throughout history, we find that stolen bread contains gravel to choke those who devour it and that sacrilege leads to ruin and brings an end to the lives and plans of profane individuals. Therefore, if the Lord was so protective of the symbols of His Gospel, how do we think He can tolerate the dishonouring of the Gospel itself through an unsuitable profession or the trampling of the blood of the Covenant as if it were common or unclean?

The contempt of the Gospel is more dishonouring to each person of the blessed Trinity than any other sin. It undervalues the wisdom of the Father, the great mystery and plan of redemption that was concealed from previous ages. What indignity is it for a person to shut out the light of the sun just to enjoy the pitiful benefit of darkness, gazing upon the false glitter of rotten wood or earthly

slime, the deceit of which would be exposed by the true light? It undervalues the Son of God, leaving Him standing at our doors with His locks wet with the dew of heaven, as if He desired to sneak into our souls. He empties Himself, humbles Himself, denies Himself, suffers the wrongs of men and the wrath of God, and after all this, His precious blood, shed with such woeful agonies, is treated as nothing more than the blood of a common criminal, and His sacred body, broken for us, is no different from the bodies of the thieves crucified with Him. It is an indignity beyond comprehension to the Spirit of Grace when we allow Him to wait in vain at our houses of mercy, our "Bethesda," spending His sacred breath in the ministry of reconciliation, repeatedly pleading with our souls to be willing to be saved, yet we harden our hearts, stop our ears, and cling to the pride and stubbornness of our own reasoning, until we even weary Him and drive Him away.

Now, there is a certain rule: God will not lose any honour due to men's sins. If they refuse to give Him the glory of His mercy, He will display the glory of His power and justice by treading down the proud enemies of Christ under His feet. As those who honour Him will be honoured, those who bring disgrace upon His truth and covenant will undoubtedly encounter shame and dishonour in the end.

Secondly, we should avoid scandal. The Gospel is the light of a nation, and sins committed in the light are more impudent and offensive. Scandal leads to sin by misleading the weak, encouraging the obstinate, and providing an opening for adversaries to revile our holy profession. It also brings sorrow by hurting the hearts of the godly and troubling their righteous spirits with immoral conduct.

Thirdly, we should learn to walk in a manner befitting the Gospel, even in respect to the state, as the Gospel is the foundation of true peace and tranquility in a nation. Those who demonstrate the power of the Gospel are like lions protecting the throne of their king. Righteousness establishes the throne, but sin brings reproach upon any people. Just as one Joseph in Egypt served as a storehouse for the entire kingdom, one Elisha was like an army of chariots and horsemen for Israel, one Moses acted as a fence to keep out the flood of wrath that threatened the people, and one Paul became a safe haven, an anchor, and a deliverance for all those with him on the ship. If the stars fall, we should expect tempests to follow; if the salt loses its flavor, preservation becomes unlikely. If Christians live as if they have no Gospel or as if they follow a different Gospel, what can we expect but God to either punish us or forsake us, to send His judgments or curse His blessings?

Lastly, the Gospel makes sin more filthy if it does not purify it, like a taper in the hand of a ghost making the ghost seem even more ghastly. Sweet ointment causes foul and strong odors to become worse than they were before. Likewise, the sweet fragrance of the Gospel makes the sins of men more odious and repulsive in the eyes of the Almighty. Therefore, we see the fearful judgment that the Apostle pronounces against those who, having experienced the good Spirit of God and been enlightened and affected by His grace, later fall away, leading to an impossibility of repentance or renewal. Though some have twisted this passage to wrongly suggest that sin committed after regeneration is unpardonable, we should instead learn from it that prior enlightenment from the Gospel tends to aggravate the sins committed against it. In light of all these considerations, we should strive to walk in a manner worthy of such a glorious Gospel and of such a great salvation.

In this discussion, we have extensively addressed the Rod of Christ's strength, as it represents an Ensign and Rod of Majesty. Now, let us turn our attention to its role as an episcopal Rod, symbolizing a great sense of heedfulness and tender care. The Apostle provides a precept to the Pastors of the Church, urging them to take special heed to the entire flock, for they are overseers appointed by the Holy Spirit. Vigilance and care over the flock are fundamental characteristics of a bishop, as the Apostle himself professes that he carries the daily care of all the Churches.

This perspective highlights another crucial point from the passage: Christ, in the ministry of His Gospel and the dispensation of His spirit, is full of care and tenderness towards His Church. This attribute is what distinguishes Christ from mere hirelings, who neglect the flock, allowing the wolf to scatter them. In contrast, Christ diligently keeps His flock, ensuring none are lost, and prays to the Father to protect them in His name.

The Lord entrusted the Church to Christ as their Head, giving them to Him not as a mere gift relinquishing His interest or care, but as a blessed deposit, the choicest of His jewels, a precious casket among all Creation's treasures. Christ's charge is to polish, preserve, and present them faultless and spotless before His glorious presence on the last day. For this purpose, Christ received a Commandment of the greatest care and tenderness, to lay down His life for His sheep and not lose any that were given to Him but to raise them up on the last day.

Therefore, any lack of care or compassion from Christ towards His Church would be evidence of unfaithfulness. He was appointed as a merciful high priest, filled with tender affections and a heart full of compassion by the Spirit of God, so He could empathize with the

distresses of His people and ensure their salvation. His care for the Church is unparalleled, like the sea is full of waters. Such is the depth of His love and concern for His people.

Christ's Care for His people is notably evident in various ways. Firstly, it is seen in how He apportions and measures out to each individual their due portion of His Word. Despite the countless occasions and needs of His diverse members, He provides specific passages that are perfectly suited to them. This demonstrates that His Care extends to every single person. A faithful bishop should differentiate between individuals and distribute the Word accordingly, ensuring that each receives their rightful portion. Some may be like lambs in Christ's flock, young, tender, and easily frightened; others may be more mature sheep with greater strength. Some may be akin to cumin seeds, while others are like fitches or harder grains. Different individuals may require a gentle guiding hand, while others need a more substantial staff or flail. Christ tailors His care to match the various stages and conditions of His people.

For those in the midst of heavy burdens or deep afflictions, He provides consolation and support. To the weak and fearful, He extends His arms and carries them in His bosom, showering them with His abundant compassion. To the broken-hearted, He brings healing; to captives, liberty; to mourners, joy and praise. To the bruised reeds, whom curses may crush, and the smoking flax, whom temptations may discourage, He attends with such loving care that the seed of holiness within them grows from sincerity to victory and perfection.

In essence, Christ caters to the needs of both the strong and the weak among His flock. He feeds and confirms the strong, while He cures and restores the weak. He presents trials to the strong to exercise

their faith and provides cordials to strengthen the weak. He addresses the unique conditions and private demands of each member, and this care is evident in His Word. His provisions cover any lack, His remedies cure any ailment, His comforts soothe any distress, and His promises answer any doubt. His guidance is available in every difficulty, and His weapons equip against any temptation. He offers preservatives against sin and restoratives for those who falter. In Christ's Word, there are garments to clothe the nakedness, food to satisfy hunger, medicine to cure diseases, armor to protect the person, and a treasure to provide for future generations.

If I am wealthy, I find in the Gospel the wisdom of God to guide me; and if I am poor, I discover there the promises of God to enrich me. If I hold a position of honor, the Gospel reveals to me the weight of my sins, making me aware of my unworthiness, and it offers rules of moderation to cultivate humility. If I am of humble status, I am comforted by the Communion and relationship with Christ, the sharing in the divine nature, and the adoption by God the Father, elevating me to nobility.

For the learned, the Gospel provides a law of charity to direct their knowledge towards edification. And for the unlearned, the Gospel contains the Holy Spirit, who searches the depths of God and imparts wisdom to the simple. He reveals secrets to the innocent, commands light to shine out of darkness, and unveils the knowledge of the glory, fullness, and love of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Through this, even the most ignorant can learn of Christ, in whom there is greater wisdom, diverse and admirable curiosity, abundant and satisfying fulfillment, and proportion to the boundless desires of a soul rectified by Him. In Christ, there is more fruit and salvation, which

should be the ultimate goal of every Christian's learning, than in all other knowledge past or present.

In every circumstance and in all things, the Gospel teaches me how to be content in times of scarcity and abundance, and how to achieve all things through Christ who strengthens me. The abundant Care of Christ over a Christian is magnified wonderfully in the Gospel, regardless of the estate they are placed in. Often, in the greatest difficulties, His care is most evident, like waters running strongest in narrow passages. When we walk in darkness without light, when we thirst for water and find none, it is then that His help is most apt, and it is our best opportunity to rely on Him.

Throughout the Gospel, we see examples of God's care for His people in their direst straits. The Israelites were miraculously delivered from their Egyptian bondage and guided through the wilderness by His presence and provision of Angelic food. Isaac was spared on the altar, as the Lord showed His mercy. Jacob feared his brother Esau, but found comfort in wrestling with an Angel stronger than Esau. Peter grieved after denying Christ, yet he was the first to receive news of Christ's Resurrection. Paul was visited by an Angel while on a ship, and Peter was freed from prison by an Angel. The distressed woman at Christ's sepulcher was comforted by an Angel. In all these instances, Christ's care for His people is revealed, especially in their most extreme circumstances.

And this Care is further commended, as it solely springs from the grace and compassion of Christ. There is no inherent affection in us to desire it, and there is no virtue in us to deserve it. Even when we were in our sinful state, content with our own pollution, He multiplied His goodness and used an earnest and persistent mercy to bring us to life. We didn't seek after Him, we didn't even inquire if

He was worth seeking. We were outsiders to His Covenant, strangers to His name, yet He extended numerous invitations to us, saying, "Behold me, behold me," to a people not called by His name. In our weakness, filled with impotency; in our sinfulness, full of antipathy; in our enmity, obstinate and rebellious; when we cared not for Him, turned our backs, stopped our ears, and allowed Him to shower us with sermons, sacraments, mercies, and afflictions in vain, even then, He magnified His compassion towards us. He cared for us when we neglected ourselves and rejected Him. He bestowed His mercy not only on the unthankful but also on the injurious.

However, for those who deserved none, a little compassion would have been sufficient. For those who provoked scorn and displeasure against themselves, just a small measure of mercy might have been enough. Yet, the care and tenderness of Christ are abundantly magnified in that it encompasses all the components of the most supreme mercy. Nothing more could have been done than what He has already done for us.

First, as the foundation and origin of all mercy, He possesses an overflowing love without limit or measure, a heart turned towards us, with bowels rolling and sounding, a love that surpasses all knowledge, far beyond human thoughts or comprehension, and surpassing the merits of men.

Secondly, there is a deliberate and inquisitive desire to do good, an internal debate, a consultation and planning on how to show mercy. It is as if His grace argues with man's sin and His own severity. He contemplates, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. True, thou hast been unto me as the rulers of

Sodom and as the people of Gomorrah. But shall I be unto thee as I have been unto them? Am I not God, and not man? Shall I change my covenant because thou hast multiplied thy backslidings?" The Lord uses human expressions to depict His dealings with men, as if their sins have presented Him with difficulties in showing mercy. He ponders how to place them among the children and give them a pleasant land, despite their desperate situation and their hindrance to His merciful intentions. He will put filial affections, awe-inspiring thoughts, and unwavering resolutions in their hearts so that they won't turn away from Him. He declares, "I will melt them and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?" The Lord sets Himself to study and devise mercy for His people, as they elevate their sins in arrogance to challenge His Covenant, He assembles His thoughts of mercy to conquer their sins.

Thirdly, there is constancy and continuity in this Care of Christ. His mercy endures, and His compassions never fail, but are renewed every morning. The mercies of Christ, also known as the mercies of the Covenant made with David, are called "Sure mercies" because they have a foundation in God's everlasting love and counsel. They are confirmed by His faithfulness, immutability, and oath. If His mercies were not constant, if He were not the same yesterday, today, and forever in His truth and faithfulness to His Church, if He were to abandon us every time we turn away from Him, leaving us to our own devices without supplying us with His Spirit's daily support to withstand our sinful nature, we would be children of wrath every day anew. However, the abundant care of Christ in the Gospel reveals that despite our weakness and earthly affections, God's right hand of righteousness can uphold us. Though we may tend to backslide, He remains unchangeable in His Covenant with His people and mighty in His power and mercy towards their sins, both to cover them with His righteousness and to heal and prevent backslidings in the future.

Fourthly, in order to serve in such a humble capacity, Christ humbled and emptied Himself. He willingly subjected Himself to His own Law, became the child of His own creation, took on not just the appearance but the weaknesses of sinful flesh, descended from His throne, and took on humble rags. In short, He became poor for our sake so that we might be enriched through His poverty. Many among men may be willing to show mercy as long as it aligns with their status and greatness, as it may elevate their honour and heighten their reputation in the eyes of others. However, when it comes to the point where a person must humble themselves to do good to another, where their compassion becomes beneficial to a miserable person only if they endure shame and take on a servile condition for them, exchanging places with the one they pity, it becomes a rare find indeed to discover someone who will willingly sacrifice their own honour for the redemption of another. Yet, this is the manner of Christ's Care for us. Although He is the Lord of Glory, the brightness of His Father's Majesty, and the perfect representation of His being, He humbled Himself to endure shame and contradiction from sinners to be the Author and finisher of our faith.

Fifthly, this humbling and emptying of Himself was not merely metaphorical; it was also real and substantial. It demonstrated Christ's incredible Care for humanity, as for their sake, He expended the greatest cost and drew from a richer treasure than anything heaven or earth could offer. The Apostle declares, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your vain conduct, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." He willingly made a sacrifice of that which no one would willingly bestow upon themselves and that which was naturally closest to Him, namely, His soul in His body and His blood in His veins. He poured it out as the blood of a malefactor for us.

Sixthly, besides the great price He paid to His Father for us, Christ has opened another treasure of His Grace and Spirit, from which He provides us with daily supplies and places in our hands a heavenly stock to better manage and improve our salvation. He sets up His Spirit in our hearts, engaging and communing with us, teaching us the ways of the citizens of heaven, and how to store treasures there, where our ultimate abode must be – engaging in conversation and commerce with innumerable companies of Angels, and with the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and also with the general assembly or Church of the first-born, which is enrolled in heaven.

Lastly, in addition to all of this, He makes preparations and provisions for our future. He not only gives, but He prepares things for those who love Him, and whatever may be lacking now, He will make up for it in the riches of His glory. His departure from the earthly Church (in terms of His physical presence) and returning to His Father were for our benefit. He was not obliged to change His place for His own glory since His heaven was within Him as a fountain, and indeed, it is His presence that brings glory to heaven. Therefore, Saint Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, noting that it is not heaven, but Christ's presence, that is the glory of the Saints. So, His return to heaven was for our sake. He said, "I sanctify myself for them" and "It is expedient for you that I go away" to seal and secure our full and final redemption. He obtained eternal redemption for us first, and then He entered into the holy place. It was also expedient to prepare a place for us, so that the glory given to Him could be given to us. Raised up together with Him, we may likewise sit together with Him in heavenly places, for when the head is crowned, the whole body is invested with royal honor. Through the virtue of His Ascension, He opened the kingdom of heaven for all believers. Even the Fathers before Christ's time entered not in without respect to that consummate redemption which He was to

accomplish for His Church in the fullness of time. It's like a man being admitted into actual possession of land, only in virtue of covenants and under the anticipation of a payment to be performed later. Hence, we see how the abundant Care of Christ manifests towards the Church in numerous ways.

Furthermore, by the Gospel, all the fruits and benefits thereof redound unto the faithful. In the Gospel, He feeds and strengthens them even in the presence of their enemies, preparing them a table and feeding them with His rod. He shows them marvelous things according to their deliverance from Egypt. Our Savior calls His Gospel "The children's bread." It quickens, strengthens, and makes them fruitful in spiritual works.

Secondly, He upholds them from fainting; if their strength ever fails, He leads them gently and teaches them to go. Just as Jacob led his cattle and children softly, according to their ability to endure, Christ leads out His flock, holding His children by the hand, teaching them to walk, and drawing them with the cords of humanity – with meek and gentle guidance, like how parents treat their children, not their beasts – and with bands of love. Just as an Eagle hovers over her young, spreading her wings and carrying them on her wings, so does the Lord, in His Gospel, tenderly guide and instruct the faithful towards strength and salvation. He deals with them as a compassionate nurse cares for a tender infant, condescending to their strength and capacity. When we stumble, He keeps us; when we fall, He lifts us up; when we grow faint, He carries us in His arms; when we grow weary of doing good, the Gospel is full of encouragements to strengthen us, full of spirit to revive us, full of promises to establish us, and full of beauty to attract us. Even in what seems like a wilderness, a maze without an escape or view of

deliverance, He opens a door of hope, alluring and speaking words of comfort to us.

Thirdly, He heals our diseases – our corruptions and backslidings. Even the best of us can be led astray from the right path, drawn away and enticed by our own desires, driven by the temptations of Satan, and affected by the disapproval or allurements of the world. We may be burdened with carnal prejudices against God's ways, thinking them burdensome, unprofitable, and unfair. We might be prone to flinch away and hide from God, turning aside to follow the crooked paths our corrupt hearts devise. In such cases, it is Christ's concern and mission to gather what is scattered, seek what is lost, bring back what has been driven away, bind up what is broken, strengthen what is sick, and restore those overtaken by faults through His Spirit of meekness. His Gospel is like the trees in the Sanctuary – not only for nourishment but also for healing.

Fourthly, as He heals our diseases and gives us strength, He removes our fears and provides comfort and refreshment amid enemies and dangers. He promises to make a Covenant of peace with us and cause evil to cease out of the Land, ensuring that we can dwell safely even in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. In times when Assyrian troubles tread upon our Land and Palaces, He raises up shepherds and leaders, especially ministers of His Gospel, in abundance to establish the hearts of His people against all dangers. This is the Shilo who brings tranquility and peace to the Church, even when the Scepter departs from Judah. When our hearts are filled with doubts and distress, disturbed by the fear of God's displeasure, accused by the Law, pursued by adversaries, and self-condemned, Christ stills the raging sea, commands the evil spirit to be silent, wipes away tears from our conscience, and refreshes it with living waters – the sweet communion of His Spirit and the abundance of His graces.

Lastly, He keeps a continual watch over us through His spiritual presence and protection. Just as Jacob testified his great care for Laban's good, that drought consumed him by day and frost by night, and he could not sleep, so does the Lord commend His care for the Church as the keeper and watchman of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. His presence guides His people in their pilgrimage, and they have daily recourse to Him for comfort and support. In times of great tempest, when Christ was asleep in the ship, His disciples awoke Him and questioned, "Master, don't you care that we perish?" But when He rebuked the wind and sea, He also rebuked their fear and unbelief. He calmed the storm in their hearts, for they couldn't see Him watching over them in providence even as His body slept.

The reasons behind this great Care that Christ testifies towards His Church in the Gospel are as follows:

Firstly, He is our kinsman, and there is an affinity in blood, which naturally leads to care and tenderness in affection. Amongst the Jews, if a woman's husband died without leaving any offspring, the nearest relative was to take care of her and carry on the name of the deceased on his inheritance. Similarly, if someone became poor and had to sell their possession, the nearest kinsman had the first option to recover and redeem it. The Apostle uses this idea to prove the mercifulness and fidelity of Christ in sanctifying or bringing many sons to glory. He was not ashamed to call us brethren and made Himself like us in all things. We can observe from Scripture that Christ has almost all the relations of consanguinity, indicating that His care is universal and for all kinds. He is like a Father, saying, "Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me," and the care of a father is to govern, nourish, instruct, and provide for his children. He is like a mother, carrying His young ones in His bosom, gathering them like a hen her chicks, and giving them comfort from

the breasts of consolation. He also acts with care and compassion. He is a Brother, saying, "Go to my brethren," and the care of a brother is to counsel, advise, and comfort. A brother is there for adversity. Lastly, He is a Husband to whom we are married, and that encompasses all care: to love, cherish, instruct, support, protect, have compassion, share secrets, and be present. A father may support his child, but cannot suckle it; a mother may breastfeed, but cannot ordinarily provide a portion; a brother can give counsel, but cannot fully give himself to his brother; a husband may comfort his wife but should not correct her. No degree of nearness can fully meet all the aspects of love, but Christ is presented to us in all relations of blood and unity, signifying that there is no case or condition of the Church in which His care will be powerless or deficient. He is capable of correcting, nourishing, instructing, counseling, comforting, and providing for it.

Secondly, He is our Companion in sufferings; He Himself suffered and was tempted. This is a significant reason for His care towards us and the basis for our confidence in Him. We have a High Priest who can empathize with our weaknesses, having been tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Thus, He is able to help those who are tempted and show compassion to those who are astray because He experienced infirmities less severe than the burden of sin.

Thirdly, He is our Head, which establishes a closer unity with us than the relation of affinity. He and His members together form one Christ. As the Head, He is the seat of Care and the source of influence to the rest of the body. All the wisdom, spirits, and senses in the head function as in a Watchtower or Council-chamber, working together to provide for the welfare of the whole body. The eye sees, the ear hears, the tongue speaks, the mind works, the memory retains, all for

the good of the other members, and they all have the same care for one another.

Fourthly, He is our Advocate and Mediator, the sole practitioner in the court of heaven, and therefore he must be fully engaged in the affairs of his Church. It is His role to handle the cases of those who approach Him, seeking His favor and intercession to plead their causes. He is both faithful and merciful in this position, equipped with an immeasurable anointing of the Spirit and vast abilities to handle all the matters concerning His Church. Whoever seeks His counsel and intercession will not be turned away or have their cause refused. We can take comfort in the assurance that even if our matters seem inexcusable, merely seeking His counsel and relying on His wisdom, power, fidelity, and mercy to expedite our affairs, to show compassion for our situation, and to rescue us from our own shortcomings can change the outcome entirely. It can produce a completely opposite result to what the evidence of the case would have indicated.

We can observe that people with exceptional abilities in the law delight in grappling with difficult cases, demonstrating their expertise by clearing matters of great intricacy and complexity. In the same way, Christ considers Himself most honored and the power and wisdom of His Cross magnified when He is trusted with cases of extreme difficulty, horrifying guilt, and utter darkness of the soul. These cases challenge not only human presumptions but also hope, faith, conjectures, and even thoughts that the hearts of men can muster in seeking mercy. Yet, He is trusted by those whose thoughts and ways are infinitely above our own. When someone fears the Lord, obeys the voice of His servant, walks in darkness, and has no light, they can still place their trust in the name of the Lord and lean on their God. When the soul can go to Christ with such complaints

and acknowledgments as these, acknowledging its own unworthiness and the weight of its sins and sorrows, yet trusting in the unsearchable riches of His love and peace, then the price and power of His blood are most highly honored. Christ delights in showing the greatness of His skill in the salvation of the greatest sinners and giving life to those who once crucified Him. The more desperate the disease, the more honorable the cure. He loves to save sinners like Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the crucified thief, and even persecutors and blasphemers, proving His ability to give life to those who once sought His death.

Fifthly, He is our Purchaser, our Owner; we belong to Him by the Father's grant, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them unto me," and by His payment to the Father, "ye are bought with a price." Christ has fully paid for every good thing concerning the Church with His own precious blood. He will not let His sacrifice be in vain; He ensures the fulfillment of the redemption He has earned. This is the greatest proof of His care and fidelity; He is not just a servant but a Lord, and His care extends over His own house. An ordinary advocate is faithful only because of his duty, but the cases he handles do not touch his heart personally as he has no personal interest in them. However, Christ is faithful not only as a servant, like Moses, but as the Lord of His own house. The affairs of the Church concern Him as closely as they concern the Church itself. In His role of intercession, He pleads His own causes with His Father. If these causes were to fail, He would lose something infinitely more precious than anything else in the world—namely, the price and merit of His own blood. These are the reasons for Christ's great care towards His people.

From here, we should learn to have faith and dependence on Christ in all our needs, knowing that we are under the protection and

provision of the One who cares for us and is able to help us. A right understanding of God in Christ and His Gospel of salvation will greatly strengthen our faith. Just as Paul was not ashamed of persecution because he knew in whom he had believed, we too should not doubt Christ's care or power. We can confidently commit the keeping of our souls to Him against the last day. Even when everyone else abandons us, the Lord will not forsake us. The reason people often trust in themselves or their friends is because they are sure of their care and willingness to help. However, if they were to compare the affections of Christ to other forms of support, they would choose to place their hopes and assurance in Him.

This understanding of God's care and power led the three children to stand firm against the edict of an idolatrous King, saying, "Our God is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us." It also gave Abraham the confidence to offer his son without hesitation because he relied on God's promise and power. He believed that God was able to raise his son from the dead, just as He had given him to Abraham from a dead body and a barren womb. On the other hand, the lack of trust in God's care and power is the basis of all doubt. When people consider God as if He had forgotten to be gracious, as if He had cast them out of His sight, or as if He had abandoned them, they become fearful of secondary causes and seek help from things that cannot truly benefit them. Therefore, the Lord allows secondary causes to fail and disappoint a person, because He desires to be glorified by our reliance on His all-sufficiency and protection. He allows friends to fail, promises to be uncertain, and assurances to vanish so that we may learn to trust in Him alone. Since man is weak in himself, he must rely on something outside of himself for sustenance. When a person realizes that creatures are deceitful and secondary causes are in vain, and when they consider that God is "I Am," a certain rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, their soul finds it good to

draw near to God, to live under His fidelity, and to cast all their cares on Him because He cares for them.

Indeed, having a right understanding of God will help us exercise our faith in any situation. When we are wealthy, it's easy to put our trust in our abundance and feel secure on our mountaintop, thinking we'll never be shaken. However, if we truly grasp that it is God who grants us the strength to be wealthy and empowers our riches to benefit us, we'll recognize that He can diminish the greatest estate with imperceptible decay. Even in the midst of abundance, He can lead us into straits and embitter our lives with His displeasure, making us find no sustenance from our resources. If we reflect on God's great wisdom and deep counsels, we'll understand that His plans will stand, and He can turn the wisdom of the wise into folly and outwit them in their schemes. No matter how powerful we think we are with worldly strength and human alliances, God can intervene, thwarting our plans, and disrupting our ambitions. He can employ even the smallest and most unexpected elements to oppose the mightiest opposition.

On the other hand, when faced with poverty and extreme hardship, we should remember that God is the God of the valleys as well as the hills. He reveals Himself on the mountaintops and in the depths of our struggles. He knows the days of the upright and satisfies them even in times of famine. While young lions may famish for hunger, God provides abundantly for His own. When things seem incredible and impossible to us, they are effortless and achievable for Him. He can lead us through desolate places and provide sustenance through miraculous means. When the lights of the sun and moon fail, He remains an everlasting light and glory to His people. He is like a caring Father who pities us and, as a heavenly Father, understands and meets all our needs. Even when we lack the wisdom and strength

to counter the alliances and challenges that come our way, He watches over and empowers those who walk uprightly. He can engineer events, reveal solutions, and clear the way for us.

Similarly, in our spiritual condition, when we find ourselves despairing like Cain, thinking our sins are too great to be forgiven, it is because we have not rightly perceived God in Christ through the Gospel. We fail to see Him as a caring God who looks after us and as a source of strength. Despair arises from the sense of sin and wrath, considering it as an overwhelming and insurmountable evil. Victory comes either from our own inner strength or through the help of a power greater than our own. When we despair due to sin, it's often because we recognize our everlasting inability to overcome sin by ourselves. However, this sense of despair can be a positive force that leads us to turn to Christ.

Secondly, despair may arise from a misunderstanding of either the Power or Care of those who could help us. At times, it stems from misjudging God's power, for the forgiveness of sins is an act of omnipotence. When the Lord proclaims Himself as a forgiver of iniquity, transgression, and sin, He introduces it with titles of His power. Pardoning malefactors is a prerogative that belongs only to Princes. Bearing burdens requires great strength, and patience, especially towards sinners, is an act of power, while impatience is a sign of weakness. Hence, those with the weakest emotions are often the most revengeful. Children, old men, sick, or indigent individuals are more susceptible to anger and least capable of digesting an offense. Therefore, to believe that sin is too great to be forgiven is to misjudge the omnipotence of God. However, despair typically proceeds from misjudging God's affection and goodwill towards us. The soul perceives Him as having abandoned all care or concern for it. This is an error regarding God's benevolence, the extent of His

mercy, and the depth of His thoughts towards sinners. He has declared His willingness for all to be saved and has provided examples of His longsuffering. His invitations are in general terms, so no one may preempt damnation but rather look unto God, knowing that He cares for their soul. No matter how crimson a person's sins may be, or how obstinate they are in continuing in them, as soon as they are willing to turn, God is willing to save. As soon as they have a heart to seek, God has a tongue to proclaim salvation to them. Therefore, the way to trust in Christ is to see Him as the Bishop of our souls, the Officer of our peace, the One who cares and provides for us. He has promised to save to the uttermost, to supply His Spirit and Grace in times of need, to provide daily bread and abundant life, and to be with us always until the end of the world, never failing us or forsaking us.

Moreover, this teaches us our duty towards one another, to display the affections of members and the mind of Christ by compassionating, considering, and seeking the good of one another. We are to bear one another's burdens and not merely seek our own pleasure but the edification of our neighbors. Even Christ did not live to please Himself. A person cannot live honorably or die in comfort if they live solely for themselves and do not imitate Christ by showing prayers, compassion, and support for their brethren.

Now, the basis of all this power, majesty, and mercy of the Gospel is presented to us in two words. First, it is the strength of Christ; Secondly, it is sent by God Himself. The Lord will send the Rod of His strength out of Zion.

Here, we can first observe that the Gospel is Christ's own power and strength, and the power of God the Father, who sent it forth. The Apostle refers to it as "The Power of God unto Salvation," and "the

demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power," so that our faith should rely not on the wisdom of men but on the Power of God. Hence, in one place, we are said to be taught by God, and in another, to be taught by Christ. It is called both the Gospel of the blessed God and the Gospel of Christ, signifying that whatever the Father does in His Church, the Son does as well. The Father makes known His merciful will only through His Son. Just as in the Son, He reconciled the world to Himself; in the Son, He revealed Himself to the world. No one has seen the Father, except the Son, to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. Christ is both the Substance and the Author of the Gospel. Just as in the work of our Redemption, He was both the sacrifice and the Priest to offer it, and the Altar to sanctify it, similarly, in the dispensation of the Gospel, Christ is both the Sermon, the Preacher, and the Power that blesses all. He is the Sermon, as the Apostle states, "We preach Christ crucified, not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." He is the Preacher, and we are warned not to refuse Him who speaks. He came and preached peace to those far off and those nearby. Lastly, He is the Power that gives life to His own word. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear shall live, for as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give to them eternal life," etc. He is the Lord of your faith, and we are merely the assistants of your joy. He is the Master in the Church, and we are but your servants for Jesus' sake. He is the chief Shepherd, the Lord of the sheep, the sheep belong to Him; we are only His stewards, entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, and to us is committed the dispensation of the Grace of God. Therefore, the Word is His, and the service is ours.

From this, both the Ministers of the Word and those who hear it may learn their respective duties. Firstly, we should speak as the Oracles

of God, as the Servants and Stewards of a higher Master, whose Word we preach, and whose Church we serve. Therefore, we must do His work as those who are standing in His place, preaching Him and not ourselves. There is no greater sacrilege than to put our own image upon the Ordinances of Christ, to create another Gospel than the one we have received. Saint Paul dared not please men because he was the servant of Christ; neither did he preach himself because he was the servant of the Church. By doing so, men even attempt to usurp Christ's throne and intrude upon the sacred and unique dignity that the Father has given to His Son alone, which is to be the Author of His Gospel and the sole and complete object of all Evangelical Preaching. This sacrilege of self-preaching manifests in three ways. First, when individuals make themselves the authors of their own preaching, preaching their own inventions and using their own minds to forge a new faith. They distort the pure Word of God, poisoning and perverting it. The Prophet calls this "lying visions" and "dreams of men's own hearts," while Saint Peter refers to it as "perverting or making crooked the rule of faith," and Saint Paul as "huckstering, adulterating, and using the Word of God deceitfully." This reminds me of a saying in the Prophet: "The Prophet is the snare of a fowler in all his ways." We know that birds are caught with the same food they usually eat, but it may be adulterated with some venomous mixture to intoxicate the bird or put into a trap to imprison it. In a similar manner, there were carnal Preachers in the Prophets' and Saint Paul's time who turned the truth of Christ into a snare, subjecting the Church to bondage. The origins of this perverse behavior include, firstly, the seductions of Satan outside of men, to which they are sometimes given over as a punishment for their sins and the sins of others. Secondly, envy towards the efforts and esteem of those who are faithful. This was one of the sources of Arius' cursed heresy, as reported by Theodoret. Thirdly, impatience with the spirituality and simplicity of the holy Scriptures, which is often

accompanied by the prevalence of some carnal desire, leading to the notorious waste or defilement of the conscience. Once a person has abandoned a good conscience and no longer seeks truth to enlighten, purify, and keep their conscience towards God, they will easily shipwreck their faith and exchange the truth for any thriving error. This impatience with the Spirit of truth in the Scriptures caused heretics of old to reject some parts and add more to the Canon of sacred Scriptures, and in these days, to super-add traditions and apocryphal additions thereto. Moreover, those who are considered pure and universally accepted also use licentious and carnal glosses that distort the Scripture to accommodate and conform to their desires and biases rather than seeking to rectify their own hearts according to the Rule of Christ.

Secondly, men preach themselves when they become the object of their preaching, advocating self-dependency and self-sufficiency, as if they were equal saviors with Christ. This was the preaching of Simon Magus, who claimed to be a great power of God. It was also seen in Montanus and his followers, who proclaimed him as the promised Comforter, and in Pelagius and his associates, who, though they acknowledged the name of grace to avoid criticism, concealed their proud heresies under equivocations and ambiguities. Similarly, in the times of Prosper and Hilary, and among some ancient Schoolmen, there were teachings about pre-existent congruities for the preparation of Grace and co-existent concurrences with the Spirit for the production of Grace. Moreover, the papists with their doctrines of indulgences, authoritative absolution, merits of good works, justification, and other similar beliefs, effectively challenge and contradict the Apostle when he refers to Christ as the able and sufficient Savior.

Thirdly, men preach themselves when they make themselves the end of their preaching, focusing on their own abilities, emotions, and ambitions, rather than seeking the Lord. When out of envy, covetousness, ambition, or any other self-serving motive, individuals deviate from the Lord's message and manipulate the Truth of God to suit their own purposes. When they stand on God's holy mount as if on a stage to act out their own interests and seek personal advancement. When the truth of God, the death of Christ, the kingdom of heaven, the fire of hell, the souls of men, and the salvation of the world are made subordinate to the boundless pride of an atheistic Diotrefes. Examples of such behavior can be found in those who, during the reign of Emperor Constantius, spread Arianism, and in those who, during the time of Saint Cyprian, instigated persecutions against the Church. Similar actions ensnared the ten Tribes of Israel until they were utterly destroyed and blinded the two Tribes until they were taken captive by the Babylonians. These are the dreadful consequences of taking away the Gospel of Christ from Him and making it the instrument not of His strength, but of our own pride or passion. Hence, we must always remember that the Gospel belongs to Christ alone, and this should encourage us to preach it as we ought.

First, with authority and confidence, without remaining silent or turning a blind eye to the sins of people. While in our private and personal interactions, we should demonstrate modesty, humility, and meekness towards everyone, when it comes to the work of our Master, we must not show partiality or be intimidated by the faces of people. Even Paul, while imprisoned, was unafraid to preach about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come before a corrupt and lascivious ruler, though it made him tremble.

Secondly, with wisdom, like a scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven. Saint Paul was careful to work as a wise master-builder. Just as Christ responded to his enemies with such depth of wisdom that they were utterly amazed and unable to find any fault in his answers, we too should conduct ourselves in a manner that avoids blame on our ministry and prevents the truth of God from being criticized or put at a disadvantage. Sometimes, sacred truths can be delivered in such an unseasonable, unstructured, and incoherent manner that they may open the mouths of opponents rather than silence them, and even discredit the truth instead of converting adversaries. The Apostle teaches us to make a difference in how we address others, saving some with compassion and others with fear. This means speaking a word in due season, as Jesus did, communicating in a way that people can understand, pressing the Word upon the conscience with suitable reinforcements to convince their judgments and appeal to their affections. It is not just knowledge in general that wins souls, but the right use of that knowledge and wise application to individual circumstances. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge properly. The Apostle skillfully engaged with the Corinthians, using heavenly craft to capture their attention. He employed similar wisdom when dealing with the philosophers of Athens, not provoking them, but seemingly completing what they themselves lacked in their inscription to the unknown God, revealing that very God to them whom they worshipped without knowing. In this manner, he honored their learning and debated about a resurrection and against idolatry to show that Christian Religion was not contrary to the learning or rectified reason they professed. Likewise, he displayed wisdom when speaking to King Agrippa, acknowledging the king's knowledge and respect for the Prophets, and then appealing to his inclination to embrace the Gospel. In all circumstances, he denied his own liberty and made himself a servant to all, adapting to the perspectives and needs of others to save some and promote the

Gospel. His love for souls led him to take on the affection of every individual and accommodate himself to each person's temperament, seeking to avoid offending the weak, exasperating the powerful, disheartening beginners, or frightening away potential converts. He became all things to all people for their salvation. The same love is due to all, but the method of cure is not the same for everyone. With some, love labors in pain, with others it rejoices in hope, some it edifies through labor, and others it fears to offend. To the weak, it stoops; to the strong, it raises itself. It is compassionate to some and severe to others, but an enemy to none and a mother to all. All of this is done not by deceiving the truth, but by pitying the sinner. This wisdom is not of the flesh, nor is it learned from men. The Scripture alone is sufficient to make the man of God wise for the work of salvation.

Thirdly, with meekness, as it is the offspring of wisdom. As Saint James says, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom." The Gospel is Christ's Gospel, and it must be preached with Christ's spirit, which was meek and lowly. When the disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans for their disrespect towards Christ, he rebuked them gently and compassionately, saying, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of." A true evangelical spirit is always meek and merciful. The Apostle teaches that if someone is caught in a fault, those who are spiritual should restore them in a spirit of meekness. Similarly, we should instruct those who oppose themselves with meekness, hoping that God will grant them repentance and knowledge of the truth.

Lastly, with faithfulness, as the Gospel belongs to Christ and not to us. We are His servants and stewards. Christ himself was faithful

even though he had the authority as the Son over his own house and could have assumed more liberty to do his own will. Therefore, it is even more crucial for us, as his officers, to be faithful. We must not hide or withhold anything that the condition and exigency of the souls entrusted to our care require us to speak. We must not add, diminish, or deviate from our commission, preaching different versions of the Gospel in different places. Instead, we must deliver only the counsel of God and watch over the souls of people as those who will be held accountable for our stewardship.

Furthermore, since the Gospel is Christ's own Power, we must learn two duties from it. Firstly, we should receive it as coming from Him with the affections of subjects who have been redeemed by Him. When we hear the Word, we should primarily expect to hear His voice and seek Him speaking from heaven. Christ's sheep turn away from the voice of strangers and listen to Him. Two things primarily reveal the voice of Christ in the ministry of the Word: First, it is a spiritual and heavenly doctrine that touches the soul with a magnetic virtue, turning thoughts, affections, conscience, and conversation from earthly concerns to Him. Secondly, it is a powerful and piercing doctrine. If the Word speaks to your conscience, searches your heart, reveals your lusts, makes your spirit burn within you, convicts and judges you for your transgressions, and binds up your sores and cleanses your corruptions, then it is undoubtedly Christ's Word, and it should be received with appropriate affections.

First, with faith: if we consult with flesh and blood, we may find ourselves prone to cavil against the truth. Those who reject Christ do not receive His Word. A fleshly heart cannot submit to a heavenly doctrine. Christ and His Apostles endured the contradiction of sinners everywhere they went. However, Christ has the authority to overrule the assents of conscience against all the mists and

sophistical reasonings of the flesh. He is the only Author and source of all heavenly doctrine for the Church. Only He possesses the authoritative and infallible Spirit that can command the subscription and assent of conscience. Christ alone can say with boldness to the soul, "Believe me." No authority of men or churches, be it Episcopal, Papal, or Synodical, can usurp the power to overrule the faith of men or impose immediate and doctrinal necessity upon conscience in any matters that are not ultimately and distinctly resolved in the evident authority of Christ in His Word. Even Saint Paul did not dare to assume dominion over the faith of men, and neither did Saint Peter allow any elders, including himself, to overrule or prescribe to the heritage of God. The hearts of men must only stoop and attend to Christ's Word, which they must receive with faith, knowing that it is not just the breath of a man, but the message of Christ, who is true in His threatenings, faithful in His promises, and pure in His precepts. If they do not receive the ministry of the Word in this way, they render the holy ordinance of God void, though it must never return in vain. The Word of God works effectually only in those who believe. It may have some effect on hypocrites and wicked hearers according to the measure of their imperfect faith, but it works effectually, consummating a perfect work, only in those who believe. For others, it proves to be an abortion, withering in the blade.

Secondly, with love and a willing heart, without despising or rejecting it. No one can be saved if they do not receive the truth with love, just as the early Saints did, with joy and eagerness, accepting it from a child like Samuel, or a woman like Abigail, or an infirm and persecuted Apostle like Paul. In this way, we demonstrate our homage to Christ, even when we allow the least among us to lead us.

Thirdly, with meekness and a humble spirit, showing reverence and submission to it in all things. Twisting, evading, or perverting the

word is an offense against Christ, just as altering or tampering with a patent drawn by the King's own hand would be an offense against him. Patience and obedient acceptance, even in times of affliction, show that a person truly regards the word as God's own word and embraces it fully. Only the one who puts off the old ways and corrupt desires of their former life and is renewed in the Spirit of their mind can truly be considered as someone who has heard and been taught by Christ and received the Truth in him.

Furthermore, since the Gospel is the instrument of Christ's own strength, and its effectiveness depends on the virtue it receives from its superior cause, we should always seek Christ for the success of his word. He alone is the teacher of hearts and the author of faith. Only He has the power to call people out of their spiritual graves and to give life to whom He wills. While we may have the ministry, He holds the power in His hands, teaching us to depend on Him and have a personal relationship with Him, for He alone can send a blessing with His word and teach His people to profit from it.

Another aspect of the power of the word is that it is sent from God. The Lord shall send forth the Rod of thy strength. From this particular point, we can draw some useful observations.

Firstly, God's appointment and ordination give existence, life, authority, majesty, and success to His own word, as well as boldness and protection to His servants. When He sends His word, He ensures its prosperity. For instance, when Moses questioned his ability to go to Egypt to deliver his brethren, God encouraged him with the assurance of His presence and appointment, saying, "I will be with thee, I have sent thee. Do not I make man's mouth? I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say." Even prophets like Amos, who were not originally trained as such, were called and sent by the

Lord to prophesy to His people. This divine appointment made them resolute in their office, speaking against idolatry and flattery fearlessly. Similarly, the Apostles, though unlearned and simple, stood boldly against the learned council of Priests and Doctors of the Law, declaring, "We ought to obey God rather than men." To resist the power or progress of the Gospel is to oppose God Himself.

Secondly, considering that the Gospel is sent forth by God, revealed and proclaimed from Zion, we can observe that Evangelical learning did not come into the world through human discovery or observation. It surpasses the scope of all reason or natural inquiry, and neither men nor angels ever knew it except through divine revelation. The Apostle frequently refers to it as a Mystery, a profound and hidden Mystery, which was kept secret since the beginning of time. There is a Natural Theology derived from observing the works of God, discerning causes and effects, and recognizing the law of nature within our hearts. However, there is no natural Christianity. Nature cannot discover it on its own; it requires the assistance of a Spirit of faith when revealed. The Jews stumbled at it, finding it dishonorable to their Law, while the Gentiles mocked it as absurd in their Philosophy. It remained a Hidden and secret wisdom, entrusted solely to Christ for execution and proclamation. In God, it was an Eternal Gospel, as Christ was the lamb slain in the predetermined counsel and decree of His Father. However, it was not revealed until the time of Christ's solemn inauguration into His Kingdom, when all things were gathered together in Him. The purpose and ordination of the Gospel were eternal, but its preaching and manifestation were reserved for the time when the Jews persisted in their unbelief, allowing the Gentiles to be called in.

This teaches us to marvel at the unfathomable judgments of God towards the former ages of the world, where people walked in

ignorance, devoid of any knowledge of the Gospel or natural abilities to find it. The following truths affirm this:

First, without knowledge of Christ, there is no salvation. Eternal life is to know Him whom God sent, Jesus Christ, through His knowledge shall many be justified.

Second, Christ cannot be known through natural light; instead, it requires Evangelical and revealed light. The natural man cannot comprehend the things of the Spirit of God; they are spiritually discerned.

Third, the light of the Gospel was initially sent only to the Jews, as the firstborn people, with a few extraordinary dispensations and privileges given to some early fruits of the Gentiles. God showed His word to Jacob and His statutes and judgments to Israel, and He had not dealt similarly with any other nation. The means of salvation were generally not afforded to other people; the world, through its wisdom, did not know Him.

Fourth, the distinction in dispensation, giving saving knowledge to one people and withholding it from others, was not based on any preceding differences or merits in the people; it was solely due to God's love. The Lord chose the Jews as a special people above all others not because they were numerous (in fact, they were the fewest), but because of His love for them.

Fifth, the Gospel's concealment from others was according to God's own will and counsel. He forbade men to go into the cities of the Gentiles without a special gift and commission. The same benevolence determined both the revelation and the hiding of the Gospel; it is all in accordance with God's good pleasure.

If all these truths are accurate, then we should both marvel at the inscrutability of God's judgments towards the Gentiles of old, as human presumptions are inadequate to measure God's ways and judgments towards sinners. Additionally, we should eternally adore His compassion towards us, for He has reserved these times of light for us and, out of His unfathomable grace, has allowed us to see the fellowship of the great mystery hidden in Him from the beginning of the world, even making us partakers with the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

Thirdly, as the Gospel of Christ is sent forth from God, we can further observe that it serves as a message and invitation from heaven to humanity. Its purpose is to invite and persuade people towards salvation. The Lord sends His Son to various places, presenting Him before people's eyes, calling, knocking at their doors, and beseeching them to be reconciled. His word is placed at our doors, in our mouths, and ears. Instead of erecting a standing sanctuary or city of refuge for salvation, God appoints ambassadors to carry this treasure to people's houses, inviting, entreating, commanding, and compelling them to come to His feast of mercy. This is truly an unsearchable richness of grace, as mercy, pardon, preferment, life, and salvation are offered and must be sought and accepted. It is equally unfathomable that wicked individuals would trample upon such pearls and neglect such a great salvation when it is offered to them. On the final day, these acts of mercy, Christ's humility, the entreaties of His Spirit, proclamations of pardon, approaches of salvation, days, years, ages of peace, ministers of the word, the book of God, and the great Mystery of Godliness will rise up in judgment to testify against their souls.

Lastly, since the Gospel is sent from God, those entrusted with its dispensation must heed their calling and not intrude upon such a

sacred task without God's call. This calling can be twofold: extraordinary through immediate instinct and revelation from God, accompanied by infused gifts (which we are not discussing here); and ordinary, through the imposition of hands and ecclesiastical designation. In this ordinary call, three things are to be considered. Firstly, an act of God's providence directing a person towards a course of study, shaping their mind towards learning, and placing them in schools and colleges for nurturing and preparing them for God's Church. Merely being placed under God's providence in education is not sufficient to assume His commission for this office; instead, one should also find that their heart's desire is to serve in His Church, with the strongest delight in the relevant types of learning. When a person's gifts and qualifications align more suitably with this calling than with other learned professions, and with other qualifications accompanying these, they may safely conclude that God's providence and direction lead them to this service where their gifts are most suitable. Secondly, the proper qualification of the person to be ordained into this ministry should be considered. Just as no prince would send an unskilled person for an honorable embassy to a foreign prince, we should not assume that the Lord would send unprepared and foolish instruments for the important task of perfecting the Saints and edifying the Church. King Jeroboam's dishonor is recorded for using the lowest of the people, the scum and offscouring of men, to be priests unto the Lord, treating religion as a secondary matter to serve policy. The two qualities essential to this office are fidelity and ability. The Apostle advises entrusting faithful and able men with the teachings heard from many witnesses, who can then teach others as well.

We are stewards of a gift no less than the Grace of God and the Wisdom of God. This grace, referred to as "a manifold grace" by S. Peter, and the wisdom, known as "the manifold wisdom of God" by S.

Paul, are the most precious treasures ever revealed to humanity. We hold and distribute these invaluable treasures, including the incorruptible and precious blood of Christ, the exceedingly great and precious promises of the Gospel, the word of God's grace, and the unsearchable riches of Christ.

As stewards, faithfulness is required of us, so that we do not defraud Christ of His purchase, which is the souls of men, or deprive men of their price and privilege, which is the blood of Christ. We must not condone the sins of men or hide the truth of God. Our role is multifaceted, requiring us to be watchful like a seer, to speak like an oracle, to nourish like a shepherd, to labor like a farmer, to be compassionate like a mother, to be diligent like a father, and to be faithful as servants of God and His Church. In short, we must always be ready, whether it is convenient or not, to exhort, rebuke, instruct, and perform the work of an evangelist, fully proving our ministry. We are accountable for our actions, but we are also assisted by the presence of Christ, motivated by His promises, and encouraged by the example of Christ, His apostles, prophets, evangelists, bishops, and martyrs from the purest times who now rejoice in heaven.

It was the custom of Christ to enter the synagogues on the Sabbath to read and explain the Scriptures to the people. Similarly, S. Paul used to reason in the synagogues and open the Scriptures on the Sabbath days. The early Christians also maintained the practice of gathering on Sundays, reading passages from the apostles and prophets, followed by a sermon by the senior or president, exhorting and instructing the people to live according to the divine truths they had heard. This practice of expounding the Scriptures continued, as evidenced by the homilies of S. Chrysostom and Origen's mention of frequent Scripture explanations in their times.

Our Church, in her ecclesiastical constitutions, has emphasized the importance of this duty, requiring every approved preacher to deliver a sermon every Sunday and to dedicate time in the afternoon for catechizing the younger and less knowledgeable individuals about Christian principles. Neglecting this essential duty is deeply lamentable, especially as we witness the thick and palpable darkness in the minds of people concerning fundamental doctrines such as the passion, merits, and redemption of Christ, and faith in them.

Let me conclude this point with the assertion and profession of Holy Augustine: The life of a bishop or minister is no doubt pleasurable and easy if done superficially and flatteringly, but in God's sight, nothing is more shameful, miserable, and condemnable. Augustine declared that he never missed his Episcopal service and attendance, except for other necessary church duties.

Regarding the necessary qualifications for fulfilling this significant role, I believe there are two main aspects. First, learning is essential for accurately guiding people's consciences and preventing misinterpretations of Scripture. Second, spiritual wisdom or prudence is required to apply the truth appropriately to specific situations, which is akin to being a wise builder. As the latter aspect is diverse, with countless unique cases and conditions that defy general rules, I won't delve into it here but instead direct the reader to the wise counsel of holy individuals who have provided guidance on this matter.

In terms of learning, there are two crucial tasks that come with this high calling: instructing the scholar and convicting the adversary. Achieving excellence in these two areas necessitates proficiency in various fields of learning. These include knowledge of languages to comprehend the original idiom and emphasis of the holy Scriptures,

acquaintance with the arts to discern their connections, argumentation, and structure, familiarity with the customs, histories, and antiquities of civilizations like the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The insights from these fields are crucial for a clear understanding of numerous passages in the holy Scriptures. Moreover, expertise in the art of disputation, taught to rhetoricians by Aristotle and Quintilian, is essential to expose and refute the cunning arguments of adversaries. Even Julian the Apostate complained about Christians using the weapons of the Gentiles in their debates, leading him to forbid them from attending schools of learning. Lastly, understanding the histories and antiquities of the Church is vital for tracing the lineage of doctrines, identifying the roots of heresy, and effectively countering the reproaches of audacious adversaries who accuse us of innovation.

Considering these requirements, we cannot help but marvel at the audacity of those who boldly intrude into the sacred and awe-inspiring office of teaching, even when they themselves need to be taught the foundational principles of the Scriptures. They become instructors of the uninformed before they have learned from the knowledgeable. Many of them leap into this role straight from their manual trades, while others do so prematurely, neglecting a serious pursuit of education in grammar, logic, and other essential disciplines. Such an office, to which the most learned and devout individuals of the past trembled to approach, should not be taken lightly. My advice to such individuals is akin to what Tully once offered to Aristoxenus, a musician, who recklessly ventured into philosophical complexities, attempting to determine the nature of the human soul based on his art: "Let them leave these matters to their master, Aristotle, and focus on what they are best suited for – in this case, let them teach themselves to sing." They should dedicate

themselves to pursuits more befitting their capabilities and leave weighty matters to those better equipped for such tasks.

Lastly, for this calling, the imposition of hands and the official act of the Church are indispensable for ordaining and consecrating individuals, granting them the actual power to preach the word, administer the sacraments, and perform all ministerial duties that contribute to the edification of the followers of Christ. This authoritative act by the Church must be based on sufficient evidence of the individual's faithfulness and ability (for hands are not to be laid on anyone haphazardly).

With this, I conclude the discussion of the first of Christ's regal powers mentioned in the text – the scepter of his kingdom.

Now let's turn our attention to the second aspect, which is the Throne of his Kingdom, known as Solium. The Lord shall send the Rod of thy strength out of Zion. This conveys to us, firstly, that the Church of the Jews held a prominent position as the original and central Church among all others. Therefore, our Savior instructed his Disciples to stay in the City of Jerusalem until they received power from on high. The Apostle also affirmed their superiority and excellence over other peoples because they were entrusted with the Oracles of God. They possessed the Adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of God, and the promises. Christ himself was born among them. All the Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and authors of the Holy Scriptures hailed from their lineage. No other Church can boast such privileges or present such authentic records of precedence as the Church of the Jews. That's why they are referred to as God's firstborn and the first fruits of the creatures. While others were initially seen as strangers and dogs, they were recognized as The Children of the Kingdom.

Their names, Zion, Jerusalem, Israel, became identifiers for the entire Church of God, even among the Gentiles. Though Christ came as a Savior for all, he was sent to be a Prophet and Preacher specifically to them. The Apostle referred to him as the Minister of the Circumcision, signifying the Jews. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Initially, when he commissioned his Apostles, he sent them only to the cities of the Jews. Later, Gentiles were integrated into their fold, joining after their rejection and refusal of the Gospel. The Christians in Judea served as their example in the profession of faith, and rules and regulations from that Church spread to other congregations as authoritative and necessary guidelines. The Churches of the Gentiles owed a debt to the Jewish Church, as they partook of their spiritual teachings. Although they are currently a rejected people, they will be gathered again and restored as a glorious Church when the fullness of the Gentiles is complete. In the meantime, their dispersion contributed to the conversion of the Gentiles. Despite being adversaries to the Christian faith, they bore witness to the Scriptures from which Christians drew their beliefs. There is no stronger evidence in a cause than the affirmative testimony of an enemy to that cause. If the Church of Rome possessed such compelling evidence from the book of God to justify their assumed primacy, they would undoubtedly boast and impose it upon others with pride, given their current confidence on much weaker grounds.

From this, we must learn to avoid the sins that led to the downfall of that people, primarily their rejection of the cornerstone and their refusal of the Gospel of Christ – similar to what every stubborn and unbelieving sinner does to himself. Their actions made them the most hated and forsaken among nations and invited the severest wrath upon them, as they rejected Christ when he came to his own. As the Apostle said, "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and

thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." Furthermore, we should pray for the fullness of the Gentiles and the restoration of this people to their esteemed position and original privileges. We owe them a debt as we inherited the promises made to them. Thus, it is only fitting that we advocate for them now, as they did for us before, saying, "We have a little sister, or rather an elder sister, and she hath no breasts, the oracles and ordinances of God are taken from her; What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" (Cant. 8:8).

Secondly, this highlights the calling of the Gentiles into the same fellowship and mystery that was initially preached to the Jews, so that they may become part of this mother Church and hold onto the garments of the Jews, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." The Church of Jerusalem served as a beacon, a sign, and a public sanctuary to which the nations would come, like doves flocking to their windows. Evidence of this merciful purpose was seen in the cases of Rahab, Job, Nineveh, the Wise Men, and others, who were the forerunners and early recipients of God's grace among the Gentiles. This purpose was later fully revealed through Christ's unlimited commission to his Apostles: "Go preach the Gospel to every creature."

Now, reflecting on ourselves, what were we that God would bring us this far? As Saint Paul said, we were filled with all unrighteousness, not understanding God nor seeking after him. We were fully engulfed in sin, ruled by the course of the world, the Prince of the air, and the lusts of the flesh. We were without God in this world, with no hope for the world to come, vessels of lust and poison, destined for destruction and misery. We were a foolish people, not seeking or inquiring after God. Yet, he chose us, setting his own people aside,

and called us to know his love and mercy in Christ. And not like many other Gentiles, who hear of him but have his doctrine corrupted by heresy and his worship defiled with superstition and idolatry. For us, he has purged his floor and given us the pure wheat without the chaff. He has allowed the light of his glory to shine purely upon us, solely in the face of Jesus Christ, without any human additions or contributions. We should praise him for this, and as we have received Christ purely, we should strive to walk worthily in him. We should run to him who called us when we did not know him and encourage one another to come together like doves to the Church's windows. We should earnestly defend this truth, a responsibility he has entrusted us with. We must continually repent and remember our first works, lest such an excellent privilege be taken away from us. For there is no wrath more severe than losing the Gospel and having the Candlestick removed from us.

Thirdly, this signifies the difference between the two covenants, one from Sinai and the other from Zion. Initially, the Law came from Sinai, where, though the end was merciful, the manner was terrifying, resulting in nothing but bondage. But later, it was sent from Zion with the Spirit of grace and adoption, observed with joy and freedom, like those who know that God will treat them as a loving father treats his obedient child. For in my servant, I look for the perfection of the work, but in my son, I look for the affection and disposition of the heart.

Lastly, this highlights that the seat of saving truth, the custody of the promises, and the Gospel of salvation still belong to the Church of God, to Zion. Without the Church, there is no Gospel, and therefore, without the Church, there is no salvation. The Apostle refers to children born outside the Church as unclean. Above all congregations, the Church holds the excellent privilege of being the

Treasurer of Christ's riches and of presenting the Word of life to humanity. In this sense, the Apostle calls it the pillar and foundation of truth. Not that it gives being to the Church, for the Law must not fail or perish, nor does it impose a sense, canonize, or make the truth authoritative. The Church is upheld by the Word, not vice versa, for it is built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, namely, the fundamental doctrine they laid. The Church acts as the guardian of the truth, the source from which this glorious light shines forth. The Covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of God, and the promises pertain to her. Her duty and honor are to be the Candlestick that holds up the Word of truth, to attest to its evidence and excellence through her ministry, authority, consent, and support. This helps to gain respect for the Word among outsiders and strengthens believers' conviction in the truth. The Church should not dishonor the Word by asserting authority above it, as that leads to contentious religious controversies where factions vie for power. Rather, the Church's role is to willingly submit to the truth, to promote it in people's affections, and establish others in love and obedience to it. The Church's authority is not a jurisdictional authority above the Scriptures but a dispensational and trustworthy authority to proclaim, exhibit, and present God's truth to the people. The Church's duty is to preserve knowledge and demonstrate the truth from the sacred Scriptures themselves, but it does not possess infallibility or authority to bind others' consciences to accept expositions of Scripture based solely on "ipse dixit," the Church's say-so.

To conclude this point, we must note that the Church's role concerning the holy Scriptures is as follows: First, some parts are hard to understand, as Saint Peter mentioned, due to allegorical and figurative expressions or obscure connections with other parts or dependence on external learning. However, the knowledge of such

things is not absolutely necessary for salvation. While distorting difficult passages may lead to damnation, ignorance arising from their inherent obscurity, not neglect, is not damnable. Second, some things have evident meaning but are hard to believe due to their supernatural nature, such as Christ being the Son of a Virgin or his death and resurrection. The difficulty lies in convincing the mind to assent to these truths. Third, some things are easy to understand and may even be easy to believe in their nature, but they are hard to obey and put into practice, like repentance and forsaking sin. Thus, considering these differences, we can understand the role and power the Church has concerning matters of the holy Scriptures.

First, regarding difficult passages in terms of their sense and meaning, it is the duty of the Church to explain them to God's people with humility and moderation. In this regard, God allows the learned some Christian freedom while always submitting their opinions to the spirits of the Prophets, as long as they do not contradict the Analogy of faith, the general peace and unity of the Church, and the rules of charity, piety, loyalty, and sobriety. They can confidently express their own interpretation and, for the Church's further edification, explain what they believe is primarily intended in such challenging passages. However, no Church or individual can go beyond this point. If anyone were granted an infallible spirit, enabling them to provide a clear and undoubtable exposition of all holy Scriptures, eliminating all uncertainties in the Text and doubts in people's minds, then why do so many difficulties still persist? Even among our adversaries, there are several conjectures and explanations, so how can someone with such a gift of infallibility absolve themselves from envy and misuse of God's grace, especially when they fail to use it to clarify the Scriptures and resolve the perplexing differences?

Secondly, for those passages that are easy to understand in their meaning but hard to believe due to their elevated and profound nature (such as all Articles of faith and matters of absolute necessity, which are clear in their terms but not evident to human reason), the Church's role is not to bind people's consciences to believe these truths based on its authority. The Church does not have dominion over the faith of individuals, nor is it the ruler in Christ's flock. How can a scrupulous mind, seeking to examine matters thoroughly, be certain of the power the Church claims in this case, or be sure that this group of people should be believed in their religion when they do not afford the same honour to any other group? Instead, the Church's role is to labor diligently to demonstrate the credibility of these beliefs and to reveal to individuals the essential and profound beauty of the Gospel, which becomes evident to spiritual minds and hearts elevated to a level of understanding suitable to their divine nature. The Church should also strive to detach people from relying solely on their own reason or corrupted judgment and to foster in their hearts an experience of the Spirit of grace and obedience to the holy truths they already accept. Through these preparations and persuasions, the heart becomes receptive and eventually perceives more clearly, with spiritual insight, the evidence of those initially difficult truths. Thus, the Church's role in matters of faith is one of introduction and guidance, but the infallible and unquestionable assent of faith is engendered by that spiritual taste, experience, and understanding of the heavenly sweetness of divine doctrine, wrought in the heart through the ministry of the Church and the special concurrence of almighty God. It is solely the Spirit of God that writes the Law in people's hearts, searches the things of God, and grants knowledge of them.

Thirdly, for those passages that are difficult to be obeyed rather than understood, the Church's task is to impress upon the conscience the

necessity of obedience, to persuade, rebuke, exhort, and encourage with all authority.

This should teach us all to love the Church of Christ and pray for the peace and prosperity of Zion's walls. We should seek the purity, spirituality, power, and influence of the Word within it, which is capable of upholding its own honour in the minds of people when faithfully proclaimed. Therefore, we must strive to maintain, support, and promote the Gospel, encouraging truth and discouraging error. We should stand firm against all the schemes and advantages of its enemies and hold the candlestick steadfast among us. We must hold the truth firmly, never betraying or forsaking it, nor distorting or disguising it. This is what it means to be a pillar and to uphold the Gospel of Christ. While the Papists may boast about the Church, they actually possess far less of its true nature than other Churches because they hinder the pure service and ministry of the Word. Instead of promoting the Word of life, they suppress it, denying the people of Christ the use of the Gospel and diminishing the significance of His Sacrament. They perpetuate an ignorant worship and lead people to pray for unknown things, thereby discrediting the Word of truth and undermining its certainty, sufficiency, clarity, authority, and power in the minds of believers. It is evident that the more anyone opposes the light and general knowledge of the Word of truth, the less they embody the nature of the Church, regardless of how they may boast about it.

The last aspect observed in this second verse, among the regalities of Christ, is His rule and government in His Church through His holy Word, despite all attempts and schemes of its enemies against it. "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" signifies that Christ's rule will be safe, secure, undisturbed, without danger, fear, or risk, even with enemies surrounding Him. Their plans will be foiled, their

purposes will vanish, and their decrees will not stand. Their persecutions will only increase the testimony of Christians, and their suffering will triumph over the malice and wrath of men.

Christ's kingdom is twofold: His kingdom of glory, which will have no end, where He will rule over His enemies and crush them under His feet, and His kingdom of grace, where He governs among His enemies through the scepter of His Word. The latter is the kingdom referred to here, indicating that Christ will gather a Church and people to Himself through the preaching of His Gospel on earth, despite the malice, power, or strategies of His enemies. Satan may seem more rampant, heresy and darkness may appear thicker, and persecution more prevalent, but they will never be able to destroy the Vine the Father has planted or overcome the body of Christ. The Gospel will be preached until the end of the world, and Christ will be with it, granting it success. Even if the Kings of the earth rise up and Rulers gather against the Lord and His Christ, their efforts will be in vain, and the One seated in heaven will scornfully laugh at them.

The certainty and perpetuity of Christ's Evangelical Kingdom do not depend on the nature of the Church itself, either as a whole or in its parts. Even Adam and Eve were a Church initially, a people under the law of obedience and worship of God, yet they fell from that elevated state. The Prophet tells us that if the Lord had not left a small remnant, the Church would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah. However, the grounds for its certainty and perpetuity are as follows:

Firstly, the Decree, ordination, and appointment of God (Psalms 2:7, Acts 10:42, Hebrews 3:2). Whatever plans men may devise, the counsel of the Lord will prevail.

Secondly, God's gift to Christ (Psalms 2:8, John 17:6, John 10:29). The heathen were given to Christ, and none can take them away from Him.

Thirdly, God's Oath, sealing His unchangeable decree and Covenant with Christ (Psalms 89:35-36). Christ's seed will endure forever, and His Throne will be as the Sun before God.

Fourthly, Christ's own Purchase and the price He paid for it. The virtue of His blood lasts to the end of the world, shedding from the beginning to the end, and its merit and efficacy continue while He sits at the right hand of God.

Fifthly, Christ's Power to safeguard the ownership He has acquired. His sheep hear His voice, and He gives them eternal life; no one can pluck them out of His hand.

Sixthly, the Father's Command to Christ, to lose nothing of all that the Father has given Him.

Seventhly, Christ's Love and Care for His Church, as His Spouse, under His protection.

Eighthly, Christ's Intercession, which is not for the world but for those given to Him by the Father.

Lastly, Christ's Promise to be with the preaching of His Gospel until the end of the world, granting it success in gathering and perfecting the Saints.

This answers the first question: whether the Church may fail on earth. Mystically, spiritually, and universally, the Church can never fail, as there will always be a true Church of Christ on earth, not only by the certainty of the event but also by the certainty arising from the

irresistible causes on which the existence of the mystical body of Christ depends. However, when considering the Church in specific parts and places where the Gospel is planted, and hierarchically and politically, as a group of people professing the faith of Christ and organized into a peaceful and orderly government, it is possible for a Church to fail or be extinguished from its place. The examples of the ten tribes and the Church of the Jews serve as reminders of this possibility. The man of sin, the Son of perdition (Antichrist), is said to be revealed by apostasy, indicating that he would arise from the corruption or falling away of an eminent Church in a mysterious and imperceptible decline.

A second question that arises is whether, since the Church does not completely disappear from the earth, what remains of it is always visible? To this, we respond that if we consider the Church as the spiritual and mystical body of Christ, it remains somewhat invisible because the qualities and principles that constitute a person in the body of Christ, such as Faith and the Spirit of Grace, are invisible things. They can be seen by an eye of Charity in their fruits but not with certainty in their infallible being.

Secondly, if we view the Church as a group of people professing the true Doctrine of Christ, we say that when individuals genuinely profess it, it is impossible for their faith not to manifest in its fruits. The kingdom of Christ is like leaven in the heart, which will eventually show its influence in the whole lump. Even in the worst ages of the Church, we can find some who have upheld the truth against the overwhelming tide of ignorance, error, and idolatry that engulfed the world, akin to gray hairs scattered amidst a dark mane. Just as fire, when singled out from ashes, is evident by its own nature, though it may be concealed when buried within.

However, when we consider these believers as a collective, contributing to an external body or Church, it is possible that the number of true professors may be so few that they are persecuted, maligned, suppressed, and marginalized without any distinct, conspicuous, or self-governing entity of their own. In such instances, it can be justified to say that the Church was not always visibly distinct—where the few true followers of Christ, in power and purity, lacked a free, open, uncontested, and separate ecclesiastical body that was markedly different from the tyrannical and pompous hierarchy under which they endured. Though Christ rules amidst his enemies, these adversaries may be so numerous, and Christ's faithful subjects so few, that the wheat may remain hidden amidst an abundance of weeds, though it is inherently visible.

This explanation also answers the question of where our Church stood before the Reformation initiated by Luther. The Reformation did not create a new Church; instead, it purified it. Even the Papists themselves acknowledged the need for purging, as evident in their Council of Trent. The difference lies in the fact that the Council claimed to reform matters of discipline and manners, whereas we also reformed points of doctrine. Just as when Christ purged the Temple of buyers and sellers, it was the same Temple afterward as before. Similarly, when one separates wheat from chaff, it remains the same corn as before. In those corrupt ages, true followers of Christ, who did not deny their faith, resided where Satan held his influence. The members of Christ were among the rulers of Antichrist. We are not a newly-established Church; we are the same Church that, since apostolic times, has held the common and necessary foundations of Faith and Salvation. In later ages, these foundations were perverted and overturned by Antichristianism, but valiant defenders of the faith have vindicated them, pruning the

Lord's Vine, removing the stones, and driving out the pests from His Vineyard, without creating something entirely new.

The point that Christ rules in the midst of his enemies provides great confidence for his Church, as it does not rely on its own corruptible strength but on the invincible Promise, decree, oath, power, and love of God. No matter how fiercely the enemies rage, they cannot dethrone Christ or extinguish his everlasting Gospel. It is akin to a Shepherd facing a Lion, as the Prophet compared it. Either Christ is unable to protect his people, which contradicts Saint Jude's assurance that He is able to keep them from falling and present them faultless, or He is unwilling, which goes against Saint Paul's declaration that sanctification is the will of God. Neither His Power nor His will is dependent on human concurrence, nor is it nullified by us. His grace influences both our will and actions, and His gracious promises stand firm: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. I will heal their backslidings; I will save them freely." His Covenant and holy nature remain unchanging, ensuring the preservation of His people.

Furthermore, the words offer some specific insights. Firstly, Christ's kingdom in this world is a Kingdom of the Cross, beset with enemies and fiercely opposed. Those who embrace it must be ready to conform to their head; a Cross was His Throne, and Thorns were His Crown. Anyone desiring to live godly must be prepared to face persecution and afflictions, for entry into His Kingdom often requires suffering. It comes as no surprise that the world hates the Church of Christ, for it hated Him first. His Word is resisted, disobeyed, belied, and, if possible, silenced and corrupted; His officers are mocked and mistreated; His followers are persecuted and

reviled; His Spirit is rejected and grieved; His worship is neglected and polluted; His ways are slandered and blasphemed.

The strange reception of Christ's Kingdom can be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, it is a New Kingdom, entering the world by challenging and dispossessing former lords, thus facing opposition. Secondly, it is an invisible, inconspicuous, unattended, desolate, and seemingly ignoble kingdom. It began with Christ in the form of a servant, suffering on the Cross. None of the worldly Princes or learned individuals supported or helped establish it; instead, they considered it offensive and foolish. Thirdly, it is a universal kingdom, with Christ admitting no partners or rivals in His Government. Body, soul, and spirit must belong wholly to Him. When Tiberius proposed Christ's worship to the Roman Senate, they rejected it because He demanded to be worshipped as God alone. If Christ would allow some earthly affections to coexist with Him, He might be more tolerated. However, as He requires absolute devotion, with no room for evil affections to share His domain, the world cannot abide Him. Lastly, and most importantly, it is a heavenly and spiritual Kingdom, not of this world. Thus, it is met with resistance from the devils of hell and the lusts of the flesh.

Furthermore, even where Christ's Throne and Kingdom are established, He has enemies. Satan maintains a presence even where Christ dwells. Just as a Wenne (a growth) in the body appears to be part of the whole, it is actually an enemy and thief within. Similarly, Ivy around a tree may appear to embrace it, but it eventually kills and chokes the tree. People may claim to be Christians, like a Wenne, outwardly resembling true members, but inwardly, their hearts may harbor resentment against the power of His truth and Spirit. They may approach God with their mouths, honoring Him with their lips, yet their hearts are far from Him, being taught by the precepts of

men. In the Apostles' times, false brethren and teachers infiltrated the Church to undermine its freedom, introducing damnable heresies and speaking lies in hypocrisy, corrupting Christ's Doctrine under the guise of devotion and humility. Antichrist is likened to a Whore, as he seduces the Christian world with expressions of love and creeps peaceably into Christ's Kingdom through flattery. Among these enemies under the guise of Christian worship, some are heretics, corrupting Christ; some are schismatics, dividing Him; some are hypocrites, mocking Him; and some are evil workers, not even conforming externally. They all deny Him in one way or another.

Let us, then, learn to examine our hearts, for we may deceive ourselves by pretending to love Christ when we truly do not; we may seek after Him, yet lack the genuine desire to find Him; we may come to Him as unruly children, not out of love for His teachings, but out of fear of His punishment; we may call Him our husband, yet remain wedded to our own sinful desires; we may receive baptism in His name, just as Simon Magus did; we may preach about Him, like the false brethren; we may follow Him, as the multitude did, not for His words or miracles, but merely for the loaves of bread; we may bow before Him, as His crucifiers did; we may call on His name, just as hypocrites did, saying, "Lord, Lord," and yet never truly entering the kingdom of heaven; we may confess and believe in Him, as even the devils do in hell; we may offer Him our lips, eyes, tongues, knees, and hands, yet our hearts may still belong to Satan. All this amounts to making Him a mock-king, similar to what the Jews did when they crucified Him.

Another point to note is that Christ's Word and Spirit are stronger than any opposing force. His glory lies in the fact that His kingdom comes to fruition through conquest, much like Canaan did for Israel.

Hence, at the very inception of His kingdom, when it could have been easily crushed, He allowed His enemies to unleash their utmost malice and shed the blood of His people. Through this, it became evident that though they fought against Him, they could not prevail, and His counsel would always stand and flourish, consuming and breaking apart all kingdoms that opposed it. The Ensign of the Gospel became feared, causing His enemies to flee from it.

God's jealousy for His Church can be observed in how He thwarts the schemes and obstructs the progress of those who plot against it, much like He did with Pharaoh. He can dissolve confederacies, disrupt counsels, and sow seeds of treachery, unfaithfulness, and mutinous attitudes among His enemies, as He did with the Midianites, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites when they gathered against His people. He can confound their plans, making them the architects of their own ruin, as seen in the consultation of Rehoboam with his young advisors or Jeroboam's idolatrous policies, or Haman's gallows.

Yet, ruling in spite of His enemies is only part of His kingdom's power. His dominion also extends to their consciences, bringing them under His sway and striking them down. Even the devils in hell, the most defiant sinners, tremble before Him. His reign breaks rocks apart, instills fear, passes judgment, seals fates, hardens hearts, threshes pride, and lets sinners taste the bitterness of the damnation that awaits them. This retribution hovers over them and swiftly approaches.

Let us, therefore, be cautious not to become enemies of Christ by opposing the power and progress of His word, or rejecting the evidence and purity of His Spirit in people's lives. It would be like attempting to pull the Sun out of the sky or for a wave to contend

with a rock. Those who gather against Christ's Church and attack the Rock will eventually be ruined by their own malice, much like Samson's foxes were burnt amongst the corn they set on fire. The Lord can turn the enemies of His Church into the authors of their own downfall and bring forth His Church with rejoicing and multiplied blessings.

So, who desires a tranquil and secure life, protected from all evil? Let that person become a subject in this conquering kingdom, seeking refuge under Christ's banner and protection. Those who walk uprightly will walk securely, finding safety in the Name of the Lord, which is like a strong tower. The righteous can flee to it and be safe, for the Lord is like a Sun and a shield, the source of all goodness. He will give grace and glory, and will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly. He provides protection against all evil. As the Psalmist David said, "I will not be afraid of ten thousand men that surround me." When there seems to be no way out, and no natural possibility of escape, the Lord can open a door of deliverance to rescue His Church. Just as a person on the king's highway is under the king's protection, those who walk in Christ's way are under His care. Therefore, let us not complain about the world's troubles or grumble against God's wise dealings with His Church on earth. When He punishes, He does so in measure, less than our sins deserve. When we examine our ways, return to Him, and seek Him, He knows how to work His own glory in our deliverance. Those chosen for a glorious building must first undergo hewing and squaring with the saw and hammer. Likewise, Christians whom the Lord takes the greatest delight in are often prepared through trials and challenges. Those who tremble in themselves may confidently expect to rejoice in God.

Furthermore, this is the honor of Christ's kingdom to be a peaceful, quiet, and secure kingdom, not only after victory but also in the midst of enemies. As the Prophet said of Christ, "He shall be the peace when the Assyrian, the enemy, is in the land." We find peace in Him even amid tribulations in the world. Christ Himself said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword," yet the Apostle also affirmed that He came and preached peace to those far and near. How can these statements be reconciled? It's like saying of a Rock, "Nothing is more peaceful because it is never stirred, yet nothing is more troubled because it is constantly under attack." Similarly, the Church is nothing more peaceable because it is established upon a Rock, but also nothing more unpeaceable because that Rock is in the midst of seas, winds, enemies, and persecutions. Nonetheless, the Prophet's conclusion remains certain: "The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

Your people shall be willing in the Day of your Power

Your people shall be willing in the Day of your Power, in the Beauties of Holiness from the womb of the morning; you have the dew of your youth. - Psalm 110:3.

The Prophet previously spoke of Christ's reign over His enemies, and now he speaks of His reign over His people, describing the kind of subjects or soldiers Christ would have. I will not burden you with various interpretations (due to the numerous metaphors and translations), but in a few words, I will offer those that I believe are most literal and relevant to the context.

Your people, that is, those whom you receive from your Father and gather to yourself by setting up the standard and Ensign of your Gospel, shall be willing. The word signifies a people of great willingness and devotion, or as it is used elsewhere (Psalms 119:108), they shall be free-will offerings unto you. The abstract is used for the concrete, and the plural for the singular, signifying how exceedingly forward and free they shall be. Just as the Lord, to signify that his people were rebellious, says they were Rebellion itself (Ezekiel 2:8). So, the meaning is, your people shall devote themselves to your government with ready and cheerful willingness, offering themselves as a reasonable sacrifice. They shall possess a liberal, free, noble, and unconstrained spirit in your service, becoming volunteers in the wars of your Kingdom.

In the Day of Your Power, or Of Your Armies, we may understand two things, both aiming at the same general sense. Firstly, it means the day when you shall assemble your soldiers together, when you

shall set up your Ensigns for them to seek, that is, when the preaching of your Gospel shall sound like a trumpet, calling men to prepare themselves in armies to fight your battles. On that day, all your people shall willingly gather under your banners and freely devote themselves to your military service. Secondly, it may signify the means by which this free and willing devotion in your people is wrought: when you send forth the Rod of your strength, when you command your Apostles and Ministers to go forth and fight against the kingdoms of Sin and Satan, and when you reveal your Power and spiritual strength through the dispensation of your Ordinances, then they shall willingly relinquish their former service and wholly devote themselves to you, to fight under your banners and take your part against all your enemies.

In the Beauties of Holiness can also be understood in different ways. It might refer to your Holy Church, which can be called the Beauty of Holiness, with allusion to the Temple in Jerusalem. The tribes would gather there in troops, as if in armies, to present their free-will offerings and celebrate other services of the Lord. Alternatively, it may be interpreted causally, as in the Day of your Power, when you reveal your strength and Spirit, and in the Beauties of Holiness, when you demonstrate the exceeding beauty and loveliness of your Holy ways and services, your people will be persuaded with free and willing devotion of heart to undertake them. Lastly, it might imply that those who willingly devote themselves to Christ, to be Soldiers and Sacrifices unto him, are not only armed with strength but adorned with inward graces that make them beautiful in his eyes, just as the Priests who offered sacrifices to the Lord were clothed in Holy and Beautiful garments. Thus, holiness has all beauties in it and is what makes a person lovely in the eyes of Christ.

From the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth. There is a middle point after those words, "The Womb of the Morning," which may seem to separate the clauses and make those words refer solely to the preceding. In this relation, there might be a double sense perceived in them. Either like this, "In the Beauties of Holiness," or "in Holiness, very beautiful, more than the Aurora or womb of the morning when she is ready to bring forth the Sun." And then it becomes a notable metaphor to express the glorious beauty of God's ways. Alternatively, "Your people shall be a willing people from the very womb of the morning," meaning from the very first formation of Christ in them and shining forth upon them. They shall rise out of their former nakedness and security and adorn themselves with the beautiful graces of Christ's Spirit, like clothing of wrought gold and raiment of needle-work. With gladness, rejoicing, devotion, and willingness of heart, they shall be brought unto the King and present themselves before him as volunteers in his service. But because the learned believe that the middle point is only a distinction for convenient reading, not a separation of the sense, I shall therefore rest in a more widely accepted exposition.

Your children shall be borne in great abundance unto you by the seed of your word in the womb of the Church, as soon as the morning or the sun of righteousness shall shine forth upon it. Just as the dew is borne out of the cool morning air as out of a womb, distilling down in innumerable drops upon the earth, so your elect shall be borne unto you by the preaching of your word and the first approach of your heavenly light, in innumerable armies. This explanation aligns well with the harmony of Holy Scripture, which uses the same metaphors for the same purpose in other places. The Remnant of Jacob, says the Prophet, shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord. And Christ is called the Bright-morning-star, the Day-spring, and the Sun of Righteousness. The time of the Gospel is referred to

as the time of Day or the approach of Day. So, "from the womb of the morning" means from the heavenly light of the Gospel, which is the wing or beam whereby the Sun of Righteousness reveals himself and breaks out upon the world. Just as the rising sun rejoices like a Giant to run his race, so shall the succession increase, and armies of the Church of God shall be continually supplied.

The words, thus unfolded, contain a vivid description of the subjects in Christ's spiritual Kingdom. Firstly, described by their Relation to him and his ownership of them as "Your People." Secondly, by their present condition, indicated by the word "Willing" or "Voluntaries," and if we take "Your People" and "Armies" as synonymous terms, it signifies that they are military men. Thirdly, by their complete and universal resignation, subjection, and devotion to him. For when he conquers by his word, his conquest is wrought upon the wills and affections of men. "Your people shall be willing." The foundation of this willingness is further added (for this is the chief understanding of those words), "The Day of your Power." Thus, the willingness of Christ's subjects is brought about by the power of his grace and Spirit in the revelation of the Gospel. Fourthly, they are described by their honourable attire and military robes in which they appear before him and attend upon him, "In Beauties of Holiness," meaning in the various and manifold graces of Christ, like a garment of diverse colours. Lastly, they are characterized by their multitude, age, and manner of birth; they are the dew of the morning, as numerous as the small drops of dew, and they are borne to him out of the womb of the morning, just as dew is generated, not on the earth, but in the air, by a heavenly calling and the shining of the morning-star and day-spring upon their consciences. "You are all the children of light," says the Apostle, "and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

I mentioned earlier that I do not support the mincing and crumbling of Holy Scriptures. However, in these parts of them, which serve as models and summaries of Christian Doctrine, I believe that every word carries weight, just like a rich jewel with worth in every sparkle. First and foremost, let us observe Christ's ownership of his people - "Your people" - all the Elect and Believers belong to Christ. They are His people, His own sheep. There exists a mutual and reciprocal ownership between Him and them. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." His desire is towards me. I say this not only because He is God, with an inseparable dominion over us as His creatures. All things were created by Him and for Him, and He is over all, God blessed forever. Nor is it solely because He is the first-born and heir of all things. In that regard, He is Lord of the Angels, and God has set Him over all the works of His hands. But it is also because He is the mediator and head of His Church. In this respect, the faithful are His through a more specific ownership. "We are Yours, You never bore rule over them, they were not called by Your name." The Devils are His subjects. The wicked of the world are His prisoners. The faithful alone are His followers and subjects. His jewels, His friends, His brethren, His sons, His members, His spouse. His, through all the intimate relationships that can be named.

Now, Christ's ownership of us is based on several grounds. Firstly, by Constitution and Donation from His Father. God has made Him Lord and Christ. He has put all things under His feet and given Him to be the Head over all things to the Church. "Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." "Behold, I and the Children whom You have given Me." They were Yours, and You gave them to Me. For just as, in terms of God's Justice, we were bought by Christ in our

redemption, so, in terms of His love, we were given to Christ in our election, so that He might redeem us.

Secondly, by a right of purchase, treaty, and covenant between Christ and His Father. As we had sold ourselves and were now in the enemy's possession, we could not be restored to our original state without some intervening price to redeem us. Therefore, the Apostle says, "He was made under the Law, that He might buy out those who were under the Law." And again, "You are bought with a price." He was our surety, standing in our place and set forth to declare the righteousness of God. God dealt with us in grace, but with Him in justice.

Thirdly, by a right of conquest and deliverance. He has rescued us from our enemies' clutches, dispossessed and spoiled those who ruled over us before. He has delivered us from the power of Satan and transferred us into His own Kingdom. We are His free men; He alone has set us free from the Law of sin and death, and has rescued us as spoils from the hands of our enemies. Thus, we have become His servants and owe obedience to Him as our Patron and deliverer. Just as the Gibeonites, when delivered from the sword of the children of Israel, became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, we, having been rescued from the tyrannous lords who ruled over us, now owe service and subjection to the One who mercifully delivered us. As the Apostle says, "Being made free from sin, you become the servants of righteousness." And, "We are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held, we should serve in newness of Spirit." And again, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

Fourthly, Christ's ownership of us is also established through covenant and stipulation. He entered into a covenant with us, and we became His. Hence, in our Baptism, we are said to be baptized into Christ, to put on Christ, and to be baptized into His name, signifying a complete consecration and devotion to Him as the servants of His family. In the ancient Church, those who were baptized used to don white raiment, symbolizing the livery and badge of Christ, a testimony of the purity and service they vowed to Him. This tradition continues with the retention of the ancient form of vow, promise, or profession in Baptism, where we renounce the Devil and all his works, the world with its pomp, luxury, and pleasures. This solemn and deliberate act is done in response to Christ's questioning and demand. S. Peter referred to Baptism as "the answer, or the interrogative trial of a good conscience towards God." Anyone who conforms to worldly fashions, seeks worldly favors and recognition, and lives according to the sinful maxims of worldly men, indulging in loose living, vanity, lust, pride, luxury, intemperance, impurity of mind or body, or any other earthly and inordinate affection, is, in God's eyes, no better than a perjurer and a renegade, forsaking the service to which they had solemnly committed themselves and disregarding the agreement made with Christ.

Lastly, Christ's ownership of us is affirmed through our communion with Him and participation in His grace and fullness. Everything we are in terms of spirit and life comes from Him; we are nothing of ourselves, and we can do nothing of ourselves. It is all through the grace of Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." And all that we do is also by the grace of Christ. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." When we do evil, it is not us, but sin dwelling in us. When we do good, it is not us, but Christ living in us. Thus, in every aspect, we are not our own; we belong to Him who died for us.

Now, this is a matter of great significance, and it is necessary for us to strive to ascertain and ensure that we truly belong to Christ. There are two ways in which a person may belong to Christ. First, through a mere external profession. In the visible Church, all who identify as Christians are considered His, and His word and teachings are theirs. In this sense, they enjoy various privileges, as the Apostle explains in the case of the Jews. However, if such individuals remain untransformed in their inner selves, they are closer to condemnation than others, facing a harsher judgment for disregarding Christ in His word and Spirit, despite solemnly entering into a covenant with Him during their Baptism. God will not allow His Gospel to be ignored; He will cause it to fulfill its purpose, either to save those who believe or to add to the damnation of those who disobey it. He is more concerned about cleansing His own sanctuary and purging it than empty and barren places. Those who belong to Christ in this manner do so only superficially, like Ivy clinging to a tree from the outside.

Secondly, a person may belong to Christ through being implanted into His Body, which occurs through faith. However, it is essential to note that just as some branches in a tree have a weaker and less fruitful connection with the root, having only enough strength to produce leaves but not fruit, similarly, the degrees of people's grafting into Christ may vary based on the quality of their faith. There is a dead, inactive faith, comparable to Adam after the Fall, merely covering its nakedness with leaves through formal and hypocritical appearances. On the other hand, there is a genuine, lively, and effective faith, serving the purposes for which faith was ordained: to justify the person, purify the heart, resist temptations, guide a person with wisdom and blameless conduct through this present world, act with love, and grow, allowing a person to abound in the service of the Lord. Our Savior makes this distinction, acknowledging that there are some branches in Him that bear no

fruit, and they are removed, while others bear fruit, and they are pruned to bring forth even more. Only these fruitful branches are the ones He desires to claim as His own.

Thus, to truly belong to Christ is what makes us His purchased and peculiar people. There are various ways of proving this, and I will mention a few, as found in the text. First, it is important to understand that Christ is like a Morning-star, a Sun of Righteousness, and therefore He always reveals Himself to the soul with self-evident characteristics. He has the royal prerogative to inscribe "Teste Meipso" (by Myself) in the hearts of people, bearing witness to His own acts, purchases, and covenants. His Spirit comes with power, manifesting itself in various ways, not needing any external confirmations. If Christ dwells in the heart, He will make Himself known. His Spirit is the source of grace and strength, just as concupiscence is the source of sin. It is like a seed in the heart that will grow and show itself. Thus, as the passions of lust take advantage of the faint and imperfect stirrings in little infants, leading to pride, folly, stubbornness, and other childish sins, similarly, the Spirit of grace cannot lie dormant in the heart but will work, move, and reveal its effects. It acts like a Spirit of burning, purifying, comforting, inflaming, and engaging the soul, causing it to stand amazed at its transformation and prompting it to wonder, "If it be so, why am I thus?" External actions can be imitated, but no one can feign the soul's life, sense, or motion. Christ and His Spirit are the internal forms and active principles within a Christian. Christ lives in us, and when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, He will evidence Himself. Therefore, it is impossible for a hypocrite to counterfeit or obscure those intimate and vital workings of Christ's grace in the soul, which demonstrate His presence there.

It is true that a person who fears the Lord may walk in darkness and experience discomfort, unable to see any light. Yet, even in such conditions, Christ does not lack properties to evidence Himself in the tenderness of conscience, fear of sin, striving of the Spirit with God, closeness of heart, and constant recourse to Him in His word. However, the soul may be shut up and overwhelmed, making it difficult to discern Him. The Spirit of Christ is like a seal, a witness, an earnest, a first fruit of the promised fullness to come. It is Christ's own Spirit, shaping the hearts of those who possess it into His heavenly image, leading them to long for more understanding of Him, to be more conformed to Him, and to have a closer and deeper communion with Him. It transforms the soul's direction, redirecting it from earthly and sensual pursuits to higher aspirations, much like a good branch grafted onto a wild stock converts the sap into pleasant fruit.

Furthermore, if a person truly belongs to Christ, a day of power has passed over them. The sword of the Spirit has penetrated their heart, they have been conquered by the strength of Christ's message, and they have felt the impact of conviction like John's axe at the root of their conscience. They have been moved by the fear of the Lord, for Christ's coming is accompanied by a sense of shaking. The conscience has undergone a powerful operation through the Word, even though others may perceive it as mere empty words. The Word works effectively in those who believe and accomplishes its intended purposes. For those who are called, it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:22).

Once again, when Christ comes, He brings beauty and holiness. Those who were once covered in blood and pollution become exceedingly beautiful and renowned for their comeliness, perfected through the beauty He bestows upon them. He enters the soul with

precious oil and garments of praise, bringing comfort, joy, peace, and healing, presenting the Church as a Holy Church without spot or wrinkle to His Father.

Moreover, where Christ comes, He brings the light of the morning, acquainting the soul with His truth and promises, and much fruitfulness, causing the once barren heart to flow with rivers of living water, producing more and more fruit and abounding in the works of the Lord. These are the specific evidences of belonging to Christ, as found in the text, and by these, we must examine ourselves. Do I find in my soul the new name of the Lord Jesus written, indicating that I am not just a Christian in name, but in truth? Is the secret nature and figure of Christ fashioned within me, influencing my heart to love and obey His holy ways? Do I hear His voice and feel the guidance and judgment of His blessed Spirit, directing my path, ruling my inner self, and condemning and crucifying my earthly desires? Am I a serious and earnest enemy to my original lusts and deepest corruptions? Do I feel the workings and stirrings of these sins in my heart with much sorrow and humility, seeking deliverance from them?

Is Christ at the center of my life? Do I find in my heart a willingness to be with Him, both in His word, ways, promises, directions, comforts, and even in His reproaches and persecutions, as well as in His glory hereafter? Is it my primary goal in life to become more like Him, to walk as He walked, and to purify myself as He is pure? Has the terror of His wrath persuaded me and shaken my conscience from its carnal security, leading me to seek refuge from the wrath to come and esteem the feet of those who bring glad tidings of deliverance and peace as more beautiful than the morning brightness? Does His Gospel have an effective transformative power within me, renewing my nature and life daily to His heavenly image?

Is His Word like a seed hidden in my heart, shaping and influencing my conscience, determining, moderating, and overruling my decisions and actions?

Am I cleansed from my filthiness, striving to keep myself pure, comely, and beautiful, a suitable spouse for the fairest of ten thousand? Do I rejoice in His light, living as a child of light, an heir of light, progressing like the Sun toward the perfect day, always laboring to abound in the work of the Lord? If so, I can be assured that I belong to Christ, and that will bring much comfort to my soul.

For when we are Christ's, He cares for us, for ownership is the basis of care. As our Saviour says, a mere hireling, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep. But the good Shepherd knows His own sheep and is known by them, and because they are His, He is careful of them. He watches over us, seeks us out when we stray, and provides for our needs. This is our strongest reason to believe that God will look upon us with favour, despite our many failings, because He is pleased to claim us as His own special people. Though the Church may be full of ruins, He will repair it because it is His house. Even if it appears imperfect, He will pity and cherish it because it is His Spouse. Though it may bear wild grapes and seem unproductive, He will fence and prune it because it is His vine, planted by His own hand, and made strong for Himself. Our only argument to prevail with God in prayer is that, through Christ, we call Him Father and present ourselves before Him as His own. We acknowledge no other Lord or name over us, and therefore, He cannot deny us the things that are good for us.

Secondly, if we belong to Christ, then He will certainly cleanse and purify us, making us suitable members for the body. "I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee," says the Lord, "and thou

becamest mine." Immediately following this, He declares, "Then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee." Just as every fruitful branch in Him is pruned to bear even more fruit, He purifies us as His own special people. As the Prophet David says, He will undoubtedly purify us so that we may be honourable vessels, sanctified and fit for the Master's use, prepared for every good work. He will provide us with all the necessary supplies of the spirit of grace, according to the place He has assigned us in His body. Grace and glory will He give, and He will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly, for our belonging to Christ grants us the right to all good things. "All is yours, and you are Christ's."

Thirdly, if we belong to Christ, then He will spare us. It was the argument used by the Priest, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." When the Lord claims us as His own, He will be jealous for His people and show them pity. He says, "They shall be mine, in the day that I make up my jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Just as a servant receives wages for his work, Christ does not merely reward the dignity of the work, but values the willingness and loving, obedient disposition of the heart. He overlooks the failings and weaknesses that stem from lack of skill or strength, praising the efforts and pardoning the mistakes. Thus, the Lord deals with His children.

Fourthly, if we belong to Christ, then He will pray for us. "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine; and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, &c." Therefore, we can be certain of receiving help in all times of need, knowing that the Father always hears His Son. Even the things we ask for ourselves in fear, weakness, and ignorance, if they align with God's will and are

prompted by the Spirit in our hearts, Christ Himself intercedes on our behalf. This is the foundation of our confidence in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and we receive what we desire from Him. Just as the world hates us because it hated Him first, so the Father loves and hears us because He loves and hears His Son first.

Fifthly, if we belong to Christ, then He will teach us, commune with us, reveal Himself to us, and lead us with His voice. He calls His own sheep by name, leads them, and goes before them. When He enters into covenant with His people, they become His, and He writes His Law in their hearts and teaches them. As the Prophet David says, "I am thy servant, give me understanding," because of the special relationship with Him, he asks to know God in an even more special manner. While the earth is full of God's mercy, with much of His goodness revealed to all nations, those who are called by His name desire to have a greater experience of His mercy. "Teach me thy Statutes."

Sixthly, if we belong to Him, He will chastise us in mercy, not in fury. Although He does not leave us unpunished, His punishment is less than our iniquities deserve. He deals with us differently from others, saying, "Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have driven thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure." He corrects us to heal, not to ruin us.

The second aspect discussed in these words is the current condition of Christ's people, who are to be soldiers joining the armies of Christ to combat all His enemies. Just as Christ was, we must also be in this world. No sooner was Christ consecrated as a Mediator through His solemn Baptism than He was tempted by the Devil. Likewise, when anyone surrenders their life to Christ and breaks free from the grip of

hellish powers that held them, Pharaoh and his hosts, Satan and his allies, pursue them with deadly fury, unleashing floods of malice and rage. Hell and death are at peace with wicked individuals; there is a covenant and agreement between them, and Satan maintains his possession in peace. However, when someone stronger than Satan arrives and overcomes him, there arises from that moment an implacable venom and hostility against such a soul. The malice, power, schemes, and machinations of Satan; the lusts and vanities, pleasures, honors, profits, persecutions, frowns, flatteries, and snares of the wicked world; the affections, desires, inclinations, and deceits of our own fleshly hearts will continually assail the soul of a Christian and force it into perpetual combat.

Satan bears an everlasting enmity against the glory, mercy, and truth of God, as well as the power and mystery of the Gospel of Christ. He directs this malice towards all those who have devoted themselves to Christ, whose Kingdom he relentlessly seeks to demolish. He uses his power to persecute it and his craftiness to undermine it with cunning and deceptive tactics. His vast knowledge and experience allow him to modify, alter, mix, proportion, and measure his temptations and spiritual wickedness in such a way that he may subvert the purity of Christ's doctrine with heresy and His worship with idolatry and superstition. He also sows discord and division within the Church through schism and distraction, and seeks to oppress consciences and hinder the progress and growth of the Gospel ministry. This malice of Satan is greatly encouraged both by the corruption of our nature, the armies of lusts and affections that swarm within us, supporting and cooperating with all his suggestions, as well as by the people and elements of this evil world. Wicked individuals provide examples, threats, interests, power, intimacy, wit, tongues, hands, reproaches, persecutions, insinuations, and seductions. The world

offers profits, pleasures, promotions, acceptance, credit, and applause.

By all these means, Satan relentlessly pursues one of two ends with utmost urgency: either to subvert the godly by leading them away from Christ towards apostasy, formality, hypocrisy, spiritual pride, and similar vices, or to afflict them with distress through doubts, insecurity, awareness of sin, opposition of the times, and vexation of spirit. These oppositions of Satan confront a Christian in every aspect or consideration in which they may be perceived: in their spiritual condition, various aspects, temporal relations, actions, or employments. In all these aspects, Satan is determined to overthrow the Kingdom of Christ within them.

In their spiritual condition, if they are weak Christians, he assaults them with constant doubts and fears about their election, conversion, adoption, perseverance, Christian liberty, strength against temptations, persecutions, and more. If they are strong Christians, he seeks to draw them towards self-confidence, spiritual pride, contempt for the weak, neglect of further growth, and similar pitfalls. No natural part or faculty is exempt from Satan's malice, for when Christ comes, He takes possession of the whole person, and thus Satan opposes the whole person. The bodily and sensory faculties are tempted with sinful representations, letting in and transmitting the provisions of lust into the heart, by gazing and indulging in worldly objects, or leading to sinful actions, fulfilling and acting upon the lusts conceived in the heart. The imagination is tempted by satanic injections and distortions, becoming the forge of loose, vain, unprofitable, and impure thoughts. The understanding is tempted with earthly wisdom, vanity, unbelief, prejudices, false persuasions, fleshly reasoning, vain speculations, and curiosities, and so on. The will is tempted towards obstinacy, resistance,

aversion to holy things, and pursuit of worldly desires. The conscience is tempted towards apathy, immobility, and numbness, slavish terrors and signs of damnation, superstitious bondage, carnal security, and despairing conclusions. The affections are tempted towards self-dependence, distraction, excess, and rashness.

In their temporal conditions, whether it be health, wealth, peace, honor, esteem, or their opposites, no aspect is immune to Satan's suggestions, which, through the advantage of fleshly corruptions, may lead individuals away from God. Lastly, in regard to their actions and employments, whether they are divine, pertaining to God, such as acts of piety like reading, listening, meditating, studying His Word, calling upon His name, and the like, or personal, related to temperance, sobriety, self-examination, and gaining a better understanding of their own hearts, or pertaining to others, acts of righteousness, charity, and edification. Also, actions natural, necessary for the preservation of their being, such as sleep and diet, or civil actions, in their professions or recreational activities. In all these, Satan seeks either to distort their performance or divert them from it.

There is, therefore, no condition, faculty, relation, or action of a Christian that is not constantly under the watchful and envious eye of a most raging, wise, and industrious enemy. Hence, it is only reasonable that Christians be military individuals, well-versed in the whole armor of God, so that they may stand firm against the Devil's schemes and extinguish all his fiery darts. Our calling is to wrestle against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, to resist the Devil, to strive against sin, to mortify our earthly desires, to destroy the body of sin, to deny ourselves, to contradict the reasoning of the flesh, to control and curb our concupiscence, to resist and overcome the desires of our evil hearts, to withstand and

counter the attacks of Satan, to confront scorn and dismiss flattery from the world, and to endure hardships as soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our cause is righteous, our captain is wise and mighty, our service is honorable, our victory is certain, and our reward is vast and eternal. In all respects, we have great encouragement to willingly engage in such a war, the outcome of which is the perdition of our enemies, the honor of our Master, and our own salvation.

The third aspect considered was the complete and voluntary devotion of Christ's people to Him. Thy people shall be willing, or a people of great devotion in the day of thy Power. From this, I draw two observations: Firstly, those who belong to Christ as His people willingly submit to His authority, consecrating, resigning, and surrendering their entire souls and bodies to serve in His battles against all His enemies. To grasp this point fully, we must first recognize that, by nature, we are utterly unwilling to be subject to Christ. The carnal mind is hostile to God and does not submit to God's Law, nor can it. If Christ is to rule over us, the body of sin must die; it once crucified Him, and now He seeks retribution. By nature, we willingly submit to no Law except the Law of our sinful desires, and we are filled with rebellion and stubbornness against God's Word and ways. The corrupted love of our nature is fixated on our own ways, much like an untamed heifer or a wild donkey; people wander, exhaust themselves, and stubbornly refuse to turn away from their full sway of lustful desires. They bid God to leave them and reject the knowledge of His ways; they forsake the paths of righteousness, and with their crooked hearts, they strive to pervert and distort the Gospel of Christ to justify their sins. This stands in stark contrast to David's holy desire: Make my way straight before me.

People are quick to cavil and foolishly criticize God's ways, deeming them too strict, austere, narrow, and restrictive. They exclaim, "I knew that thou wert an austere man," or "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" or "The land is not able to bear all his words." They fear that if they follow the narrow path of exactness and circumspection, they will face unavoidable trouble and harm. Just as Israel, upon hearing of Giants and sons of Anak, lost heart for Canaan and rebelled, seeking to return to their own bondage rather than trusting in God's Promise. Likewise, when a natural person hears about walking in a narrow way with great precision and restraint, forsaking even the slightest evil for the greatest good, they are reluctant to follow. A Christian must resolve to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, just as the Israelites followed the cloud and pillar of God's presence through giants, terrors, and temptations. However, some may turn back to their iniquities and refuse to hear the words of the Lord.

Secondly, they see God's ways as unprofitable; they question, "Who will show us any good?" The wicked in Job ask, "What can the Almighty do for us?" They feel that living by their conscience in all aspects of life is impractical. Despite the Lord's assurance that His words do good to those who walk uprightly, that godliness holds promises even in this life, and that He will honor those who honor Him, they still doubt the benefit of following God's ways.

Thirdly, they view God's ways as unequal and unreasonable, seeing them as a strange, mad, and foolish strictness, more like a figment of a speculative mind than a solid truth. These prejudices lead people to wrestle with the Spirit of Christ, resisting His promptings, quenching His suggestions, and disputing against Him. There is a bitter and irreconcilable enmity between these people and the Spirit.

Secondly, we can observe that despite this natural aversion, many are compelled by the Power of the Word to offer unwilling services to Christ, driven by the spirit of bondage, the fear of wrath, the evidence of the curse due to sin, and the vigilance of conscience. The Lord says, "They have turned their back unto me, and not their face," which reveals the disposition of their will. However, in times of trouble, they cry out, "Arise and save us," showing their compulsory and unnatural devotion. They may engage in external ceremonies and offer sacrifices, seeking the Lord, but they do not truly find Him, for He has withdrawn Himself. It is like when the Lord sent lions among the Samaritans, and they inquired about His worship out of fear, but still served their own gods. This compulsory obedience does not arise from a fear of sin but rather a fear of hell. This becomes evident in their readiness to find excuses to avoid true dedication, consulting carnal reason to silence doubts, evade responsibilities, and delay their service to God. They take every opportunity to put off and procrastinate, attempting to escape the Word of Grace.

For example, Felix, when frightened by Saint Paul's discourse, deferred a more convenient season to hear him. Similarly, the unwilling Jews, when rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, said, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built," thereby neglecting the warnings and distorting the words of Scripture, deceiving themselves and denying the Lord's message. The Prophet says, "The word of the Lord is to them a reproach, they have no delight in it," indicating that when I preach your words to them, they view me as a slanderer rather than a Prophet. Therefore, if you want to understand the nature of your devotion, remove all thoughts of danger, the workings of the spirit of bondage, the fear of wrath, and the dread of hell. If, even after removing these factors, you still wholeheartedly dedicate yourself to Christ, desiring to be more like Him, that is a clear sign of an upright heart.

Thirdly, we can observe that by the Power of the Word, there may still be a certain inclination, a languid and incomplete will, bound by secret reservations, exceptions, and conditions of its own. This makes it mutable and inconsistent with every new situation. For instance, when the hypocritical Jews made a solemn declaration to the Prophet Jeremiah, saying, "The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not according to all things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee unto us," they probably meant what they said at that moment. However, in the end, it turned out to be nothing more than a wishful and incomplete resolution, a zealous moment of hidden hypocrisy that later revealed itself and contradicted their earlier statement. When Hazael responded to the Prophet, asking, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do thus and thus?" he likely meant his words genuinely, feeling horror at the suggestion of committing such heinous acts. But this too was only a fleeting inclination, a momentary surge of good nature that easily faded with changing circumstances. Similarly, when Judas asked Christ, "Master, is it I that shall betray thee?" despite his heart being the abode of deep-seated hypocrisy, it is possible, and perhaps even likely, that upon hearing Christ's woeful judgment against the betrayer, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born," he momentarily repented and resolved to abandon his treacherous plan. However, as soon as the storm subsided and he was tempted by greed, he fearfully reverted to his previous intentions. The people who returned and sought God in earnest were momentarily sincere, but their devotion was not grounded and quickly wavered. Their hearts were not steadfast in His Covenant. When Saul, driven by his innate integrity, acknowledged David's righteousness above his own and wept for his actions, he spoke earnestly at that moment, but later he returned to pursue David again and had to make the same acknowledgment of innocence. Similarly, in general services to God, people may express wishes and positive inclinations towards the

truth, and they may have faint and uncertain resolutions to follow it. However, if these inclinations lack a firm foundation and do not stem from the entirety of their heart, if they are not borne from a thorough mortification of sin and evidence of grace but are rooted in weak and wavering principles that can be swayed by any new temptation, then they are like letters written in sand, destined to vanish like morning dew, leaving the heart as hard and dry as it was before. A young man, loved by Christ for his earnestness and eagerness, came to learn from Him the way to heaven. Yet, we later discover there were secret reservations within him that he had not realized. Upon Christ's revelation of these hidden conditions, the young man became disheartened and repented of his initial resolution (Mark 10:21-22).

The Apostle speaks of a Repentance that is steadfast, unchanging, and resolute (2 Cor. 7.10), subtly implying that there is also a Repentance that needs to be repented of, that arises from an incomplete will, allowing for hidden and unnoticed reservations. This kind of Repentance, when these reservations come to light, falters and fades away, leaving the unfaithful heart to regret its initial repentance. Saint James tells us that a double-minded person is unstable in all their ways (James 1:8), never consistent or constant in following any rules. This division of the mind can be seen in this way: On one side, the heart is captivated by the immediate pleasures of sin, while on the other, it is drawn towards the desire for future salvation. Depending on which side is more dominant at a given time, sin is either embraced or suppressed. Many people, when moved by a compelling Sermon or faced with sickness, are quick to make promises, vows, and declarations of better living. However, as the allure of sin resurfaces, they eagerly return to their old ways, like a person who has recovered from a fever but soon returns to their previous habits with even greater fervor. This double-mindedness is

like the balancing of a scale; whichever side holds more weight determines its direction, up or down.

Just as I see vapour rise from the earth to the air and might think it would never stop ascending until it reaches heaven, but in reality, this motion is caused by either internal heat expulsion or external heat attraction. When these influences wane, and the vapour becomes denser, it falls back down. Similarly, the affections of those weak and indecisive desires in people, who, like Agrippa, are only half-convinced to believe in Christ, are susceptible to changing conditions.

However, when Christ's power is at work in the hearts of people through his word and Spirit, they become free-will offerings, fully willing to obey and serve him in all situations. Their hearts are stirred up, and His Spirit makes them eager for the work and service of the Lord (Exod. 35.21). They offer themselves to God, presenting their members as weapons of righteousness (2 Chron. 30.8, Rom. 6.19). They come to Christ, drawn by the teaching of His Father (John 6.45), run to Him (Isaiah 55.5), gather together under Him as their common head, and unite with mutual encouragement towards the mountain of the Lord (Hos. 1.11, Isaiah 2:2-3). They wait upon Him in His Law (Isaiah 42.4) and enter into a sure covenant, writing and sealing it (Nehem. 9.38). In short, they serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind (1 Chron. 28.9). When the heart is whole, undivided, and wholly devoted, the mind willingly serves the Lord.

The willingness of Christ's people manifests itself in two ways: Firstly, by cultivating sincere and unwavering enmity against all of Christ's enemies, never forming any alliances or collaborations with them, but always being ready to answer the Lord's call, just as David did against Goliath. A true volunteer in Christ's armies is not

deterred by the power, cunning, malice, subtlety, or prevailing influence of any adversaries. They are willing to deny themselves, renounce worldly friendships, defy the temptations of Satan, face danger with courage, prioritize their devotion to Christ over family and possessions, be harsh on themselves, and indifferent to others when it comes to serving their Master. They will follow the Lamb wherever He goes, through honor and dishonor, through praise and criticism, through comfort and hardship, and even through the most formidable challenges. They may receive the Word with affliction, yet they receive it with joy as well. Secondly, this willingness is also seen in fostering deep, constant, and affectionate attachment to the mercy, grace, glory, and ways of God. They strive to conform to Christ, their head, who willingly took on the role of a servant and submitted His will to that of His Father. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalms 40:8). Just as Christ was, so are His followers in this world, sharing the same mindset, judgment, Spirit, and way of life, and therefore, the same will.

This profound and tender affection towards Christ and His ways, where the soul yearns after Him and hastens towards Him, is nurtured by several principles: Firstly, by the awareness of our natural state and a genuine sense of humility. Pride is always the root of disobedience. It was the proud who accused Jeremiah of false prophecy, saying that the Lord did not send him (Jeremiah 43:2). It was the proud who resisted, refused to hear, and rejected obedience (Nehemiah 9:16-17, 29). One must first be brought to deny oneself before being willing to follow Christ and carry their cross. A person must first humble themselves before walking with God (Micah 6:8). It is the poor who truly receive the Gospel, and the hungry who find sweetness in the midst of bitterness. Extreme circumstances make anyone not just willing but grateful to embrace any opportunity for

rescue and survival. When the soul realizes its darkness, the absence of light, and contemplates the consequences of remaining in darkness – being on the verge of Hell, under the wrath of God, burdened with sin and the curse of the Law – it can't help but pursue any chance of deliverance with a heart full of affection. Consider a scenario where a prince presents a malefactor with gruesome punishments and then offers mercy, promising to elevate him to a position of honor and service in the state, like Joseph's transformation from the iron of his soul to public honor. Such a man's heart would melt with gratitude and gladly surrender to the mercy and service of such a gracious prince. Now, the Lord not only deals with sinners in this way, exposing them to the weight and shame of sin and the early signs of eternal vengeance through His word and their own guilty hearts but also reveals Christ as a rock of redemption, extending a hand to save and offering promises of eternal glory. In addition to all this, the Lord touches the heart inwardly by His Spirit, transforming it to a spiritual and divine likeness to Christ. Faced with the horrors of their present state, which are only a glimpse of the infinitely worse to come, and the assurance of wonderful and sweet promises, the seals of eternal favor and communion with God, how can the soul of such a person not eagerly and affectionately seize the great hope set before it? With utmost fervor and eagerness to serve, it willingly yields itself into the hands of such a gracious Lord, ready to be ordered and guided into obedience.

Secondly, this willingness of Christ's people is brought about by a spiritual enlightenment of the mind. The conversion of sinners is rightly called a conviction, as it is accomplished in us "Secundum modum iudicii," in accordance with our rational and intelligent nature. Allow me to suggest (respectfully and subject to better judgments) a firm truth: if a person's mind were thoroughly and

spiritually (as befits entirely spiritual matters) filled with the inherent goodness and truth found in grace and glory, their heart could not outright reject them. Human liberty is not brutish but rational, not about stubbornness or obstinacy, but rather a manner of functioning that is capable of being regulated, varied, or suspended based on the dictates of right reason. The only reason people are unwilling to submit to Christ is that their minds are not adequately enlightened with regard to the spiritual excellence of these things. The Apostle frequently speaks of fulfilling and fully proving our ministry, of preaching the Gospel fully – with the evidence of the Spirit and power, and with a manifestation of truth that commends itself to a person's conscience. The Word of God, the Apostle says, is not equivocal, meaning it is not something that can be accepted or denied at will, but rather a word that contains no lack of evidence within itself and leaves no uncertainty or hesitation in a mind ready to receive it. Just as we can distinguish between incomplete and complete preaching, we can also distinguish between understanding the preached message: in some, it is thorough, while in others, it remains superficial. There are two types of illumination of the mind: one theoretical and purely intellectual, consisting of knowledge; the other practical, experiential, and spiritual, consisting of the illumination of the soul by the light of God's countenance. It is an apprehension of truth that sets the heart ablaze, knowing things as they ought to be known – when the manner and life of our knowledge align with the nature and excellence of the things known. It is when the eye is spiritually opened to believe and seriously conclude that the things spoken are of the utmost value and eternal consequence to the soul, as they pertain to our peace with God. This is the learning of Christ, the teaching of the Father, the understanding of things beyond human knowledge, and the setting of the seal of our own hearts that God is true. It is the evidence of spiritual things, not merely in the brain but in the conscience. In a

word, this is what the Apostle refers to as a spiritual demonstration. And surely, in this case, the heart is never overruled contrary to the full, spiritual, and infallible evidence of divine truths to a practical judgment. The Apostle states that Eve was deceived and thus transgressed, and there is frequent mention of the deceitfulness of sin, signifying that sin entered the world through error and seduction. For indeed, the will is a rational appetite, and therefore, in my view, it does not move towards a good that is fully and spiritually presented to it as the most comprehensive, adequate, and unquestionable object of the desires and capacities of a human soul. The freedom and willing consent of the heart are not lawless or without rules to guide them, but are termed "free" because they move naturally – whether based on a true judgment leading in one direction or a false judgment leading in another – both in a manner suitable to their own condition.

Secondly, this willingness of Christ's people is brought about by a spiritual illumination of the mind. It is true that the unregenerate heart is utterly averse to any good and, therefore, unlikely to be made willing through mere illumination of the mind. However, God never fully and spiritually convinces the judgment, as I have described, without a special work of grace to open the eye and remove all natural ignorance, prejudice, hesitancy, inadvertency, mispersuasion, or any other mental hindrance that may obstruct the evidence of spiritual truth. By doing so, He also shapes and molds the will to accept, embrace, and love those good things of which the mind has become prepossessed.

Thirdly, this willingness of Christ's people arises from the communion and aspiration of the spirit of grace, which is a free spirit, a spirit of love, and a spirit of liberty. It permeates every faculty of man as the soul and guiding principle of their Christianity

or heavenly existence and action. Consequently, it leads every faculty to work towards spiritual ends and objects according to its nature. Just as the soul in the eye enables it to see, and in the ear to hear, and in the tongue to speak, so does the spirit of grace in the mind enable it to understand rightly, and in the will enable it to desire heavenly things freely. It prompts each faculty to move towards Christ in a manner suitable to its inherent nature.

Fourthly, this willingness of Christ's people arises from the apprehension of God's dear love, compassion, and the riches of His most unfathomable grace, revealed in the face of Jesus Christ to every broken and penitent spirit. Love, once apprehended, naturally attracts love. Hence, the Apostle says, "Faith works by love," meaning that faith persuades and affects the heart with God's love for us in Christ. When we are thus persuaded of His love towards us, our hearts are shaped to love Him in return. For who can be convinced of such a great benefit as the remission of sins and not be deeply inflamed with love for Him by whom they are forgiven? And, through this reciprocal love of the heart to Christ, faith becomes effective in producing obedience and conformity to His will. Love is the fulfillment of the Law; a person who loves God would joyfully fulfill every aspect of God's Law if possible. The Apostle states, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome." True love overcomes all difficulties, does not make excuses to neglect any service of God, and holds no prejudices against it. Rather, love sharpens the spirit of a person, making them eager to bear Christ's yoke. A person cannot be said to love Christ if they are not willing to embrace His yoke. It would be like a woman claiming to love her husband but feeling grieved in his presence and preferring the company of strangers.

Fifthly, this willingness of Christ's people arises from the beauty and preciousness of the abundant promises made to us by the love of Christ. It is said of Moses that he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. The reason for this willingness was that he had regard to the recompense of the reward. Similarly, Christ endured the Cross and despised the shame, as the shame did not hinder His willing obedience. The motive was the joy that was set before Him. Likewise, the Apostle Paul expressed that he pressed forward with not only willingness but also urgency and determination to put forth all his efforts – like runners in a race – in holy fervor and emulation. This was all for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, which he saw as a motivating promise. Similarly, the Apostle assures us that a Christian's hope of being like Christ in the future will cause them to purify themselves even as He is pure. When a person reflects on what God has already done for them and what further promises He has made, it naturally leads to profound thoughts of thankfulness and a sense of regret over the slow and limited abilities of other parts to fulfill the urgent and wide desires of a willing soul.

Sixthly, this willingness of Christ's people arises from experiencing the peace, comfort, life, liberty, triumph, and security that accompany the Spirit and the service of Christ. Nothing makes a person more fearful of wars than the dangers and risks involved. However, serving under a Prince whose employments are not only honorable but safe can change the perspective. When that Prince is able and faithful to fulfill promises and assure that no stratagems or enemy forces can harm us, but instead, they will flee as we resist them, who wouldn't be willing to voluntarily engage in such services that are not susceptible to the usual casualties and vicissitudes of other wars? Imagine being able to fight with safety and emerge with honor. David had experienced God's power in delivering him from

the Lion and the Bear, and he was confident that the same God who cared for his sheep would be even more merciful to his people Israel. This gave him the willingness and readiness to face Goliath, whose assurance was only in himself and not in God.

When a person considers what God might have done with them – sending them to hell from the womb, depriving them of the means of grace, leaving them to the rebellion and hardness of their evil heart, subjected to the rage of Satan, their bones burnt and bowels dried up with the view of the wrath due to sin – and contrasts it with what God has done for them – calling them to the knowledge of His will, shining His light on them, answering their prayers, delivering them from temptation and bondage, securing them in His holy place, granting them His favor which surpasses all light, and declaring His favor upon them for a long time to come – how readily will the spirit of such a person conclude, "Lord, you have done all this according to your heart, and I have found so much sweetness in your service beyond all my thoughts or expectations that now, O Lord, my heart is prepared, my heart is prepared. I will sing and rejoice in your service."

Lastly, this willingness of Christ's people arises from the excellent beauty and attractive virtue found in holiness. "Thy Law is pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." Therefore, we find Christ and His Church stoking the flames of love and mutual endearment towards one another, nurturing those yearning, enamored, and enraptured affections and heart sighs through frequent contemplation of each other's beauty. They express their admiration for each other, saying, "Behold, thou art fair, my love, thou hast doves' eyes. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea pleasant, etc." These are the driving forces behind the great devotion and willingness found in the people of Christ towards His service.

And through this, we may test the authenticity of the profession, submission, and obedience that we all claim to have towards the Gospel of Christ. It is only genuine when it arises from a willing and devoted heart, filled with purpose, fervor, and earnestness of Spirit. God, in His mercy, considers the will as if it were the deed itself, because where there is a willing mind, there will certainly be corresponding efforts to fulfill that will and put it into action. On the other hand, God regards the deed as nothing without the will. In the case of Cain and Abel, both made sacrifices, but it was the heart that made the difference between them. Regardless of outward appearances, if a person cherishes iniquity in their heart, God will not hear them.

"Gravius est diligere peccatum quam facere," as Gregory says, "It is a worse sign of an evil person to love sin than to commit it." For committing a sin may result from temptation and weakness, and may be the sin of the one who tempts us, or at least not entirely our own. But our love is fully within our control; Satan can only offer temptation, but it is the heart itself that must choose to love it. Love is as strong as death, and it operates with the strength of the whole person. Therefore, as the will is the seat of love, the service rendered will reflect the nature of that will. The will is the primary mover and the master-wheel in spiritual works, governing all other aspects and ensuring they remain constant. It unifies all the faculties of the soul and body in executing God's will.

The Apostle's words about love being the bond of perfection refer to how love residing in the heart motivates every faculty to perform God's work perfectly. Similarly, love is called "The fulfilling of the Law" because it always aims for the highest and best in the object of its affection, detesting any defects. Just as one who loves learning never stops pursuing it, so is love strong and unyielding. The love of

grace compels a person to abound in the work of the Lord, to strive for perfection, holiness, and blamelessness. It is unreasonable to settle for mediocrity in matters of grace. If we pursue wealth with love, we would aim to be the richest, and if we love honor, we would desire to be the highest. Grace, in itself, is more lovely than any of these things. So, why shouldn't every person strive to be unlike the evil world, to excel beyond their neighbors, to be as holy as God and Christ themselves, and to grow in faith and knowledge to become perfect?

Truly loving grace will never settle for mediocrity but will strive to abound more and more. Such a heart will never think it has reached its full potential. It will keep moving forward, forgetting the past and reaching for what lies ahead. The desires of the heart are strong and can outweigh other natural desires. Just as David's grief made him forget to eat, and Christ's desire to convert the Samaritan woman made Him disregard His hunger, a true heart will persist until it finishes the work it has begun. The wicked do not rest until they have caused mischief, and the enemies of Saint Paul even made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed him. Lust never stops until it completes sin, and in the same way, the love of Christ should never cease until it finish grace.

Secondly, because God is more honoured in the obedience of the will than in the outward actions. Human regulations may govern the latter, but only Grace can rule the former. In this, we acknowledge God as the searcher of hearts, the discernor of secret thoughts, the Judge and Lord over our consciences. As the Apostle says, "Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men," signifying that genuine service to the Lord must come willingly and from within. Working in vain and losing all one has wrought occurs when the service is not done for the true master of the task, the one who alone

rewards it. Therefore, the Apostle advises us to do it wholeheartedly as unto the Lord, knowing that from the Lord we shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for we serve the Lord Christ. He alone is the paymaster of such work, so it should be done solely for Him, seeking His approval and reward.

Before moving on from this point about the willingness of Christ's people, there is a significant and frequently encountered question to be addressed: Can those who truly belong to Christ's people experience fears, torments, discomfort, weariness, and unwillingness in the ways of God? Saint John discusses this matter broadly, stating, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment" (1 John 4:18). It seems that where there is torment and weariness, there is no love. To clarify this issue, I shall present a few points.

Firstly, in general, where there is genuine obedience, there is always a willing and free spirit, to some extent at least. There is a deep desire in the heart and a sincere effort of the spirit to walk in all things pleasing to God, to long for an abundance of Grace, and to have the soul enlarged so as to be fit to follow God's Commandments.

Secondly, there may be a fear that brings pain and torment in two respects. Firstly, there may be a fear of God's wrath, where the soul of a righteous person may experience glimpses and apprehensions of divine displeasure. They might feel targeted by God's arrows of wrath, with their transgressions sealed and reserved against them. The hot displeasure of the Lord could vex their bones and cause distress to their soul. They might even feel forgotten and cast out by God, overwhelmed with fear, trembling, and the horror of death. Christ's fellowship may seem distant, with the soul seeking Him but

not finding Him, and calling upon Him but receiving no answer. In such times, a person may fear the Lord while being in darkness and without light.

Secondly, there may be a great fear even in performing spiritual duties. A broken and dejected person may tremble in God's service due to a deep sense of their own unworthiness. They might apply God's stern questions to wicked people, feeling unworthy to partake in holy and sacred matters and approach them with reluctance and shame. For example, Ezra said, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God: for our iniquities are increased over our heads" (Ezra 9:6). Similarly, a poor woman healed by Christ experienced fear and trembling as she approached Him to tell the truth about her healing.

However, there is a significant difference between the fear of the righteous and that of the wicked. The fear of the wicked arises from the evidence of guilt, while the fear of the righteous stems from a tender apprehension of God's majesty and His pure eyes that cannot tolerate impurity. This type of fear does not lead to dislike or hatred of God or disobedience against Him. Rather, it drives the righteous to strive for obedience and well-pleasing, even though it may bring discomfort and distraction of spirit. Slavish fear may force a person to perform their duty in any way possible, without consideration of the manner of doing it. On the other hand, this filial fear, though uncomfortable, dissuades the heart from the duty itself, feeling unworthy and unfit to perform such a precious duty in a holy manner.

Thirdly, while the righteous may experience fear and discomfort, they might also encounter weariness and unwillingness in God's service. Like Moses' hands on the mount that grew weary and hung

down, their spirits may be dampened by carnal affections or tired by the difficulty of the work. Temptations might also pull them back from wholehearted obedience to the truth. A sense of deadness, heaviness, insensitivity, inactivity, confusion of heart, and the influence of worldly lusts and earthly cares can distract and reduce the cheerfulness of even the best among us. This natural sluggishness and resistance of the will to God's service prompt the frequent exhortations to stir ourselves up, prepare our hearts to seek the Lord, and not be weary of well-doing. These exhortations address the disposition of sluggishness and the inherent reluctance of the will toward God's service.

Fourthly, the level of discomfort and weariness arises from several factors. Firstly, it comes from the strength of the corruptions that still remain within us. The more fleshly desires the heart retains, the more it is inclined to turn away from God and His ways, making holy duties burdensome. Even the will is affected by this, leading to an inclination towards spiritual actions that may not be as strong as desired. David praised God for the special grace that enabled them to offer willingly in spite of these struggles (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Secondly, it may be due to the dullness or sleepiness of grace in the heart, which requires constant revival, nurturing, and attention. Without this, grace may accumulate rust and be overshadowed by the bitter roots of corruption within. Just as a rusty key cannot easily open a lock, a neglected grace cannot readily open or expand the heart towards God.

Thirdly, the discomfort may result from the relentless and immodest nature of strong temptations and intrusive suggestions that frequently assail the spirit, causing unrest and unsettling the heart's peace. Satan aims to rob us of grace and uses our own lusts against

us to achieve this. Additionally, he seeks to deprive us of comfort, keeping us in a state of unease and suspicion. The constant opposition and struggle created by these temptations can lead to weariness even in the most devout. The Apostle warns against this weariness, citing Christ's endurance of sinners' contradictions as an example (Hebrews 12:3).

Fourthly, the current burden of some recent grievous sin can entirely dishearten the heart from seeking anything good. As seen in David's reaction after his murder and adultery, the weight of such sins can lead to prolonged insecurity. Similar to how Jonah fell asleep in the ship after fleeing from God, a state of insensitivity and inability to act is often a consequence of notable and rebellious sin. When the conscience is burdened by fresh sin, it faces a difficult task in renewing the tears of repentance. This type of work is often accompanied by fears and reluctances. Furthermore, it diminishes the boldness and assurance to approach God with peace, as it brings shame, horror, and a lack of peace. Sin disorients a person from God, leading them into thickets and bushes of sinful desires. Consequently, the soul may feel ashamed and unwilling to approach God, knowing that it will be confronted with the companions of sin it once delighted in.

Fifthly, the discomfort and weariness in God's service can arise due to the Spirit's desertions. The Spirit of God works as He pleases, and it is through Him that our wills are directed towards obedience. If the Spirit is grieved and withdraws, being sensitive and jealous, our progress may slow down, and our motion may become sluggish. These and similar reasons may lead the best of us to experience fears, discomforts, and reluctance in serving God.

However, despite all this, fifthly, none of these reasons completely deter the will, though they may hinder it to some extent. Even in their deepest heaviness and unpreparedness of spirit, the faithful still have a stronger inclination towards God than any wicked person at their best. They desire to fear God's name (Nehemiah 1:11), their soul longs for the remembrance of Him (Isaiah 26:8), they are genuinely displeased with their own spiritual flaws and discomforts (Psalm 42:5), they yearn to be enlarged to follow God's commandments (Psalm 119:32), they set their affection on God and His service (1 Chronicles 29:3), they prepare their hearts to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 30:19), and they earnestly contend for joy and freedom of spirit (Psalm 51:8, 11, 12). In short, they dare not neglect the duties, even when their hearts lack readiness and willingness, and they serve the Lord even when He seems distant. As Jonah declared, "I said, I am cast out of your sight, yet I will look again towards your holy temple" (Jonah 2:4). The one who fears the Lord will obey His voice, even when walking in darkness and having no light (Isaiah 50:10).

Therefore, the faithful can find comfort in knowing that their wills remain devoted and surrendered to God. However, they must also humble themselves, acknowledging the daily struggle of a backsliding and weary spirit in His service. They should be encouraged to stir up the spirit of grace within themselves and maintain a fresh and frequent communion with Christ. The more they experience and know Him, the greater their delight in Him, hastening them to apprehend Him in fruition, being already apprehended by Him and carried to heavenly places in assurance and representation.

While we are still in this world, our faith may have some lack, mixed with moments of unbelief and distrust (1 Thessalonians 3:10, Mark 9:24). The presence of corruptions, temptations, afflictions, and

trials may generate fears, discomforts, weariness, and unpreparedness in serving God. These experiences should stir a longing for our heavenly home, prompting us to groan and wait for the adoption and the redemption of our bodies. We should pray for the fulfilment of God's promises and the hastening of His Kingdom, where we will be transformed into universal spiritual purity, free from the remnants of corruption and the struggles between the law of our members and the law of our minds. There, all deficiencies of grace will be made whole, and the measure and first fruits of the Spirit we receive here will be crowned with everlasting perfection.

In this world, we are like the stones and materials being fitted and prepared for Solomon's Temple, and it is no wonder that we may appear crooked, knotty, and uneven, subjected to the hammer and blows. However, when we are brought into the heavenly building above, there will be nothing but smoothness and glory upon us. There will be no more noise of hammers or axes, no dispensation of Word or Sacraments, and no application of censures and severity. Instead, each one will be filled with the fullness of God, faith will turn into sight, hope will turn into fruition, and love will be endlessly captivated by the presence of God, the face of Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the communion with all the saints. This concludes the first observation from the third particular regarding the willingness of Christ's people.

There was further observed in this context the Principle of this Willingness, [In the day of thy power, or, of thine armies], which means that when God sends out Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Doctors, and Teachers to manifest His Word and Spirit to people's consciences, the heart of Christ's people is made willing to obey Him through an act of Power, or by the strength of the Word and Spirit. It is not merely enticed, but it is conquered by the Gospel of Christ (2

Corinthians 10:4, 5). Yet, this is not a compulsory conquest, as that would go against the nature of a reasonable will, which ceases to be itself if compelled. Instead, it is an effectual conquest. The will, like all other faculties, is naturally dead in trespasses and sins, and a dead man cannot be brought back to life through enticements or compelled to comply with exact suitability to nature through force. Therefore, a person is made willingly subject to Christ not by mere moral persuasions or violent impulses but by a power that is supernatural, spiritual, or Divine. This power works in a manner that is sweetly adapted to the disposition of the will, never destroying it but perfecting it. Hence, the Apostle states that it is God who works in us both to will and to do (Philippians 2:13). God first shapes our will according to His own, and then, through that will and its commanding acts, sanctified and continually assisted by the Spirit of grace, He sets the other powers of our nature in motion to obey His will.

In this regard, the Prophet David praised God for enabling him and his people to offer willingly in the service of God's house and prayed that God would always maintain that willing disposition in the imaginations and thoughts of His people (1 Chronicles 29:14, 18). The Apostle affirms that our faith stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 4:5). Likewise, it is called the faith of the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead (Colossians 2:12).

To further clarify how Christ's people are made willing by His power, let us consider some brief relevant points. First, the will is a free agent or mover, possessing within itself an indifferency and undeterminateness toward several things, so when it moves or doesn't move, or moves in different ways, it acts according to the condition of its own nature.

Secondly, this indifferency is twofold: habitual, belonging to the constitution of the will, which is an original aptitude or intrinsic non-repugnancy in the will to move toward contrary extremes, to work, or to suspend its own working; and actual, which is in the exercise of the former, as objects present themselves. This actual indifferency can be either a freedom to choose good or evil or a freedom to will or not to will.

Thirdly, despite the will's freedom, it may have its freedom determined in such a way that, in certain conditions, it cannot do what it should or refrain from what it should, or it cannot do what it should not or refrain from what it should not. Fallen man, without the grace of God, is free only to evil, whereas Christ, in His obedience, was free wholly to good. Man is free to evil, but he does it voluntarily and cannot voluntarily leave it undone. On the other hand, Christ is free only to good, and while He does it most freely, He could not freely omit doing it.

Fourthly, in this state of affairs, the will does not act towards moral objects without some other concurrent principles that sway and determine it in different ways. So, the will is the moving faculty (*principium quod*), and the other is the quality or virtue by which it moves (*principium quo*). In natural individuals, these qualities are the flesh or the original concupiscence of our nature, which causes the will's motions to be influenced by the will of the flesh. In the regenerate, it is the Grace and Spirit of Christ, to the extent that they are renewed.

Fifthly, as the will is always directed either by the flesh or the spirit towards its objects, it does not move towards either without the prior conduct and guidance of practical judgment, whether enlightened by grace to judge rightly or influenced by corrupt affections to misguide

the will. The will, being a rational appetite, never moves without the apprehension of some goodness and suitability in the object it moves towards.

Sixthly, the judgment is not fully enlightened to understand spiritual things in their immediate and extensive beauty and goodness unless it is guided by the Spirit of Christ, which leads a person to have the same mind, judgment, opinion, and understanding of heavenly things as Christ Himself (Philippians 2:5). This Spirit of grace first works on the judgment to rectify it and to convince it of the evidence and necessity of the most universal and adequate good that is presented. This leads to the renewal of the whole nature, with Christ being formed in both the will and affections, as well as in the understanding. Just as the body in the womb is shaped all together in proportionate degrees and progressions of perfection, so, at the same time when the Spirit of grace, through heavenly illumination, is present with the reason's judgment to evidence not just the truth but the excellence of the knowledge of Christ, it is also present with heavenly persuasion and intimate allurements to the will and affections. This sweetly adapts the working of the will to the faculties' exigence and condition, so that they may apply themselves with liberty and complacency, as required by both their own nature and the quality of obedience needed, to desire and pursue those excellent things that are set forth in such spiritual evidence through the ministry of the Word. Just as the same soul enables the eye to see, the ear to hear, and the hand to work, when Christ is formed in us by His Spirit, every power of the soul and body is proportionately enabled to work in its appropriate manner, to the right apprehension and voluntary pursuit of spiritual things. The same Spirit, by the Word of grace, fully convinces the judgment and lets the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shine upon the mind. And, by that same Word of grace, the will is proportionally aroused and assisted

to love and desire it. As the understanding is elevated to spiritual perception, the will is also empowered to spiritually love heavenly things.

From all of this, we can observe that the work of the Spirit of grace, by which we become volunteers in Christ's service, and through which He works in us both to will and to do those things which we were not obedient to and indeed could not be, is both a sweet and powerful work. It is like the raising of a man from the dead, to which the renewing of a sinner in the Scriptures is frequently compared. This work is of great power, yet it is remarkably suitable to the integrity of the creature, and thus brings about an exact complacency and delight with it. In the holy Scriptures, we often find that the same effect may be attributed to different causes, depending on their respective influences. For instance, the obedience of Christ to His Father was the most free and voluntary service, considering His holy and undistracted will. Yet, it was also most certain and infallible when we consider the sanctity of His nature, the abundance of His unction, the fullness of His uneducible and unerring Spirit, the mystery of His hypostatic union, and the communication of properties between His natures, making any action done by Him justly called the action of God. Thus, it was impossible for Him to sin.

Similarly, the passive obedience of Christ was most free and voluntary in terms of His own will, as He willingly humbled and emptied Himself, laid down His own life, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Yet, it was necessary for Christ to suffer according to the predetermined counsel and purpose of God (Acts 4:28). Although soldiers did not break His bones, they had the strength and liberty to do so, but what was most certainly fulfilled in

respect of the truth and prediction of the holy Scriptures was brought about by free and voluntary actions of second causes.

When the hearts of individuals voluntarily dedicate and submit themselves to the kingdom of Christ, it is both an effect of power and an act of conquest if we consider it with respect to the Spirit of grace, which is the formal virtue that brings it about. Yet, if we look at it with respect to the heart itself, which is the material efficient cause, it is a most free, sweet, and natural action, precisely suited to the exigency of the second cause, and arising from it with the utmost delight, proportionate to the measure of the grace of illumination or spiritual evidence in the mind, removing our natural blindness, prejudices, and misconceptions, and to the measure of the grace of excitation, assistance, and cooperation in the heart, overcoming its natural obstinacy and reluctance.

In short, there are only three things required to constitute a free and voluntary action. Firstly, it must be accompanied by the judgment of reason. Secondly, it must possess internal indeterminateness and an equal disposition towards various possibilities. Thirdly, the will must have control over its own actions. All these aspects harmoniously align with the point of the text, which highlights that the heart is made willing to obey Christ through an act of power.

Firstly, the power we are talking about is solely that of the Word and Spirit, both of which always operate in the ordinary course of God's dealings with men, guiding them through judgment and conviction, teaching and demonstration, which is fitting for rational minds.

Secondly, regardless of the direction in which the will is led by the Spirit of grace, it still maintains an inherent tendency towards all possibilities. Thus, if it had moved in another direction, that motion would have been just as natural and suitable to its condition as the

one it follows now. The determination of the act does not extinguish its liberty.

Thirdly, when the Spirit, through the power of the word of grace, works in us, the will still retains control over its own actions. It is not forcibly or compulsorily swayed but acts on its own, quickened and activated by the sweetness of divine grace, as the seed of that action, in accordance with the well-known saying of Saint Augustine, "Certum est nos velle cum volumus, sed Deus facit ut velimus" (It is certain that we will when we will, but God makes us willing). Thus, we can see how the subjection of Christ's people to His kingdom is both a voluntary act in terms of human will and an act of power in terms of God's Spirit, inwardly enlightening the mind with spiritual evidence not only of the truth but also of the excellence and supreme goodness of the Gospel of Christ, and inwardly touching the heart, shaping it to a lovely conformity and obedience to Christ's ways.

The reason why an act of power is necessary to conquer the wills of sinners and bring them to Christ lies in the profound enmity, stubbornness, reluctance, rebellion, weariness, and averseness – in short, the fleshly nature – that dominates the wills of human beings by default. This natural inclination leans towards evil, resisting the good, driven by selfish desires and worldly pursuits. There are external fears and internal conflicts, allurements on one side, and threats and fears on the other. The devil, in his depth and cunning, plots to keep the human soul bound to him, the chief ruler of humanity. Temptations, both sly and forceful, try to pull the will away from Christ. There are strong prejudices, deep reasoning, lofty imaginations, scornful notions about the purity and power of Christ's ways. The heart is deceitful, misled by misconceptions and presumptions about the ease of future reformation or the security of

current peace. Carnal hopes, worldly dangers, and unfulfilled ambitions can all be strong assumptions that hold the will captive.

To overcome these hindrances, including denying sinful desires, abandoning harmful connections, subduing passions, enduring worldly persecutions, and resisting the endless temptations of Satan, it is hard to believe that the will could break free and choose Christ on its own. Without God's Spirit intervening, just like the Angel did for Lot in Genesis 19:16, to take hold of the will while it hesitates and longs for its old ways, gently conquering it with mercy and leading it, drawing it, carrying it like an eagle does her young on her wings, or sometimes forcefully pulling and snatching it away from the fire through the terrors of the Lord, using the power of His Word and wrath.

In truth, the natural heart possesses such extreme stubbornness, wickedness, and an inherent aversion to God and His service that without the grace of Christ intervening, no one would willingly turn to Him or accept His salvation. By the same reasoning that one person perishes, all others would too, as every individual shares the fundamental and original enmity towards the ways of grace, inherent in all human nature.

Reflecting on these truths should rightly humble us, for neither the promises of heaven, the sacrifice and emotions of Christ, nor the terrors of hell can persuade us to turn away from our sins. Only through the sweet and gracious power of the Holy Spirit can the Lord subdue and conquer our souls unto Himself. Even if a man were to rise from the dead and vividly describe the dreadful and eternal horrors of hell, or if a person's capacity were expanded to comprehend the wrath, fury, and vengeance of a provoked God and the depth of guilt and sin within a soul, just as the most intelligent

devils of hell conceive them, it wouldn't change the desperately evil nature of man's heart.

Even if an Archangel or Seraphim were sent from heaven to reveal the infinite glory of God's presence, the full pleasures of His blessings, the beauty of His ways, the intimate conformity between His divine nature and the holiness in creation, the unfathomable love of Christ in His Incarnation and sufferings, and the immeasurable virtue and preciousness of His blood and prayers, still the heart of man is so desperately wicked that without the blessed operation and concurrence of God's gracious Spirit, it would remain impervious to any evidence. No amount of cries and flames of hell or armies of heaven could conquer it. Only God's Spirit possesses the might and power to rescue a person from the clutches of sin.

The Holy Spirit's expressions throughout the Scriptures effectively depict the wretched condition of the heart by nature: willfulness and self-will, refusing to listen and submit to Christ's reign; multiple wills within one person; rebellion, stubbornness, and opposition to God's Word; impudence, hardness of heart, and deceitful thinking against God's Law; obstinacy and persistent dwelling in mischief; holding fast to deceit; self-hardening and self-obduration.

In conclusion, it is clear that the human heart's depravity is beyond human means to overcome. Only God's Spirit can bring about a transformative change in us. Let us acknowledge our impotence and utter unworthiness, and attribute the glory of our conversion solely to God.

They have stubbornly resisted and turned away, their hearts are uncircumcised, unable to hear or seek after God. They scorn and disregard the messages of the Lord, questioning His Word and the promise of His coming. They doubt and deny His Word, saying it is

not true. Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? They wrestle, resist, and fight against the Word, rejecting God's counsel and opposing His Holy Spirit. They are filled with rage and uncontrolled affections, despising goodness, and consumed by traitorous, headstrong, and prideful thoughts. Their lusts are brutish and immoderate, like an untamed beast without reason or restraint. In short, they are trapped in a hellish abyss of unsearchable mischief, which is insatiable.

Considering all these difficulties, it is impossible for any reasonable person to imagine that such a heart could be overcome with mere moral persuasions or anything less than the mighty power of God's grace. Therefore, we should willingly acknowledge that all our conversion and salvation are attributable to Him. We are exceedingly weak and powerless when it comes to doing good, entirely unprofitable and unfit for our Master's use. Yet, we are so strongly driven by our own desires towards destruction that nothing can stop us except for God's immediate power. Hence, we must acknowledge that the glory of our conversion belongs only to God's name.

Moreover, this consideration should motivate us to gather all our strength in the Lord's service, to redeem our misspent time, and to strive even more passionately for the kingdom of heaven. We once exerted abundant energy in pursuing sinful desires with no end or hope in sight. How wonderful it would be if we could serve God with the same vigour and willingness as we served ourselves and Satan in the past! We tirelessly pursued sinful desires that led to vanity, shame, and death. Now, in the service of Christ, we have a greater prize before us – an eternal city, enduring substance, and an imperishable crown. We have Christ's promises to strengthen, His angels to guard, His Spirit to lead, and His Word to enlighten us. In short, we have a soul to save and a God to honour.

Though we have a long way to go and limited time to do it, with so many challenges to overcome, temptations to resist, promises to believe, precepts to obey, mysteries to study, and works to finish, we should still exert whatever strength we have to honour God. If I could serve God on earth as He is served in heaven, even with the strength of angels and glorified saints, it would still pale in comparison to God's good will in my redemption and His power in my conversion. Even if all the angels in heaven tried to persuade and turn a person away from sin, it would not be enough without the concurrence of God's Spirit and power. Therefore, since the Lord has graciously provided joy, liberty, and tranquility in His service here on earth and promises a full, sure, and great reward for our encouragement, it is only fitting that we devote ourselves to honouring Him with our weak and impotent faculties.

The fourth aspect highlighted in this verse pertains to the attire in which Christ's people should present themselves for his service – "In the Beauties of Holiness." These words refer back to those mentioned earlier, either to the word "People" or to the word "willing." If referring to "People," they serve as further description of Christ's subjects or soldiers, who will be adorned like servants in a prince's court, beautifully arrayed akin to the priests of the Law, whose garments exuded beauty and glory. Schindler explains it as "In societate sacerdotum" – in the company of priests. If related to the word "willing," then it signifies the reason and inducement behind their great devotion and submission to Christ's kingdom. Just as people assemble in groups to the Lord's house, attracted by the Beauty of His Holiness, or as individuals flock to witness an honourable and grand ceremony, so shall Christ's people be drawn to gather around Him, allured by the beauty of His banners, and they shall come together in multitudes like doves flocking to their windows. However, we interpret these words, we can observe that

Holiness is a glorious and beautiful thing. The holy oil, used to consecrate all the vessels of the Sanctuary, symbolizes the Spirit that sanctifies us, making us kings and priests unto God. It is a composition of the purest and most delicate ingredients crafted by the skill of an apothecary. Thus, our Saviour refers to His Spouse as the "fairest of women," denoting that no other beauty in the world can be compared to Holiness. This is why our Faith and Holiness are referred to as a Wedding Garment, for at weddings, people usually adorn themselves with the most costly and beautiful attire. We are commanded to "Put on the Lord Jesus" and to "Put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, and meekness," indicating that we must clothe ourselves with attributes of holiness. The Church is likened to a Bride adorned with her choicest ornaments, brodered work, silk, fine linen, bracelets, chains, jewels, crowns, gold, and silver, signifying the beauty of holiness. Christ, the husband of the Church, is described as the most amiable and lovely, the desire of all nations, and the allurement of all hearts. Even Jerusalem, the palace of this glorious couple, is depicted using the most precious and desirable things imaginable – jasper for the walls, gold for the pavement, pearls for the gates, and precious stones for the foundation, with the Lord Himself as its light. In contrast, due to sin, we are full of filthiness and deformity in both flesh and spirit, clothed in filthy garments, and covered from head to foot with blains and putrefactions. It is only through the holy Word of God that we are cleansed from our filthiness and pollution. Christ sanctifies us through the washing of water by the Word, that He may present to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. Therefore, the Apostle Saint Peter encourages Christian women to adorn their inner selves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God holds great value, rather than focusing on outward appearances to please others. This truth is also evident in the actions of hypocrites; no one would pretend to possess

vices that they do not truly have unless they are compelled by the desire to impress their wicked associates. Even Saint Augustine lamented the corruption of his nature, as he sometimes boasted of wickedness he dared not practice in front of his wicked companions. Similarly, no woman would apply dung or ink on her face; people usually counterfeit that which is beautiful in itself. Hence, Holiness receives the commendation of an adversary's endorsement, which is a strong testimony to its beauty and excellence.

This point becomes clearer when we consider the Author, Nature, properties, or Operations of this Holiness. Firstly, the Author is God himself, through his Spirit. The Apostle says, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," and "the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will." Therefore, the Spirit is referred to as a spirit of Holiness, by whose power Christ's resurrection from the dead declared him to be the Son of God. This illustrates the correspondence between raising from the dead or imparting life where there was none before and the sanctification of a sinner. The Apostle calls it the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" and the "forming of Christ in us," signifying the revitalizing and creation of us for good works. From all this, we observe that just as Creation brought beauty to the empty and unshaped Chaos when it was transformed into the orderly frame we now admire, and just as the reunion of a living soul with a dead and ghastly body restores its beauty, so does Holiness bestow beauty upon the soul of a man that was previously filthy.

Furthermore, we must recognize that God did not create man for some ordinary, low, or inferior purpose (though Solomon says that all creatures were made beautiful in their time). Instead, there was a pause, a consultation, and a display of extraordinary wisdom, power, and mercy in the formation of man. God made man for His own particular delight, companionship, and communion, as one with

whom He would enter into a more intimate league and covenant. "The Lord hath set apart the man that is godly for himself. This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise, I will magnify the beauty of my glorious virtues in those whom I have sanctified for myself." Thus, we see the perfect comeliness the Lord bestowed upon His people when He entered into a Covenant with them and made them His own – those who were always to lean on His bosom and stand in His presence (Ezekiel 16:8, 14).

The Church is the Lord's own House, a Temple in which He will dwell and walk; it is His Throne, where He sits as our Prince and Lawgiver. In this regard, it must be extraordinarily beautiful, for the Lord will beautify the place of His Sanctuary and make the place of His feet glorious. Now, if Holiness makes us God's building, not as the rest of the world is for His creatures to inhabit, but as a Temple for Himself to dwell in, as a gallery for Himself to walk and refresh Himself in, then certainly Holiness, which is the Ornament and engraving of this temple, must be a glorious thing, for there is much glory and wisdom in all God's works.

Secondly, when we consider the Nature of Holiness, it undeniably appears very Beautiful. In general, it involves a relation of conformity, just like all Goodness, except that of God. No creature is so self-sufficient as to have its being from itself, and therefore its goodness cannot originate within itself. The Rule and End determine the goodness of any created thing. Therefore, that which should not work for its own end should not work by its own rule. Those who have a higher authority determining their ends must also be subject to the laws that lead to those ends. Sin arises when individuals make themselves the source of all their actions, relying on their own will, wit, reason, or resolutions. Sin is called "our own ways," "the lusts of our own hearts," and "our own counsels" because it originates

absolutely from ourselves without any constituted rule to moderate or direct it.

Holiness is thus seen to consist in conformity, and its beauty is to be conjectured according to the excellency of the pattern it refers to. The pattern of our Holiness is God Himself. "Be you holy, as your Father which is in heaven is holy." Other creatures exhibit some imprints and paths of God, making them beautiful in their time. However, man had the image of God created in him, with God's pure, right, holy, good, wise, and perfect will set up in his heart as a Law of nature. This Law was meant to animate, form, and organize every motion of the heart, every word of the mouth, and every action of the soul and body according to the will of God. After man cast away this image, God, in His mercy, renewed Holiness in him by another pattern, exhibited in another manner. He made man conformable to the Image of His Son, the heavenly Adam, who is the Image of the invisible God, the express Character of His Father's brightness, a Sun of righteousness, a morning star, the light of the world, and the fairest of ten thousand. Therefore, Holiness, when compared with these beautiful patterns, consists in conformity and commensuration to the most beautiful things.

Thirdly, if we consider some of the chief Properties of Holiness, we shall find it equally beautiful in that regard. First, Rectitude and Uprightness, sincerity, and simplicity of heart. God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions, meaning they have sought various devious ways to satisfy their crooked affections. David prayed, "Make thy way straight before my face," and the Apostle instructed, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." True Holiness is straightforward, without falsehood, guile, perverseness of Spirit, deceitfulness of heart, or veering off course. It has one end, one rule, one way, and

one heart. In contrast, hypocrites are called "Double-minded men" in the Scripture because they pretend to follow God but also chase after the world. They are like a wall with uneven swelling, not perpendicular or level to its foundation. Rectitude, sincerity, and singleness of heart are always seen as beautiful in the eyes of both God and man.

Secondly, Harmony and Uniformity within itself. The philosopher compares a just man to a dye, which is even and consistent from all angles, falling on an equal bottom no matter how it is turned. Similarly, Holiness keeps the heart steady and consistent in all conditions. Like a watch that may be shaken by the movements of its carrier but remains undisturbed in its inner workings, a holy person may face many temptations and disturbances, yet the frame of their heart, the order of their affections, and the governance of their spirit remain unaffected, holding on in the same tenor.

Just as in the body, any part that exceeds the due proportion destroys the beauty and acceptability of the whole, Holiness is about proportion and symmetry. It involves exact obedience, an equal respect for all of God's commandments, a hatred of every false way, and a universal work upon the whole spirit, soul, and body. Every joint is supplied, and every part is fashioned in proportion. There can be no excess of grace, for the more of it we have, the better. Christ can supply any deficiency and make up whatever is lacking for the fashioning of Christ in us. Thus, Holiness shapes the whole person. Neglecting any faculty of the soul or any part of God's service or law (I mean a consistent and constant neglect) makes one undoubtedly a hypocrite and disobedient to all.

An actual and total breach of any one commandment (total, meaning when the whole heart commits it, even if it may not execute all the

possible aspects of the sin) is implicitly, habitually, interpretatively, and conditionally a breach of all. The soul stands similarly disaffected to the holiness of every commandment, and the person would undoubtedly venture to break any other commandment if the same misguided reasons and conditions that led to the first breach were to equally induce them. In God's account, he who commits any one of these abominations has committed all these abominations (Ezekiel 18:10-13). Therefore, in a Christian man, when there is a consistent life and vigor of holiness in every part, and they all conspire to the same ways and ends, there must necessarily be an excellent beauty.

Thirdly, growth and further progress in these proportions also contribute to perfect beauty and comeliness. Holiness is not a stagnant state but a thriving and growing thing. The Spirit is like a seed, the Word is like rain, and the Father is the Husbandman. Therefore, the life of Christ within us is abounding and full of growth (John 10:10). The rivers of the Spirit of Grace spring up unto eternity (John 7:36). In Christ's mystical body, there are no monsters or dwarfs, but all grow to the perfect stature that becomes them, even to the measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-13). Christ does not remain an infant in us but continually grows in the hearts of the saints. Wherever there is faith and holiness, there is an innate desire for augmentation. Faith has a growing nature, and charity abounds (2 Thessalonians 1:3). Holiness stimulates this desire for growth, as seen in the disciples' plea, "Lord, increase our faith," and in David's prayer, "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

Fourthly, besides the rectitude, harmony, and maturity in Holiness, there is another property that makes its beauty surpass all others, and that is indeficiency. Christ, as our measure of growth, never

experienced old age or decline. He never saw corruption. In our journey of growth, we progress from strength to strength, like the sun to the perfect day. Yet, there is no sinking or setting of Holiness in the heart. Those planted in God's house continue to bring forth fruit in their old age and remain fat and flourishing. As our outward man decays, our inward man grows day by day. Our Holiness is a branch of the life of Christ in us, and it never naturally tends toward decay, as that is a sign of death (Hebrews 8:13).

Lastly, if we consider the operations of Holiness, it will also reveal its beauty, for it has none but gracious and honourable effects. It fills the soul with joy, comfort, and peace, with unspeakable and glorious joy, peace, quietness, assurance, songs, and everlasting joy. Holiness opens the eyes of the blind, unstops the ears of the deaf, makes the lame leap, the dumb sing, and turns wilderness and parched ground into springs of water. It grants the soul feasts of rich and refined delights, bringing it into the banqueting-house with apples and flagons. It allows the soul to commune with God in Christ, to see Him, access Him, and boldly stand in His presence, enjoying the most holy delights and intimate conferences with Him in His bed-chamber and galleries of love. In short, Holiness garners the admiration of people, secures the protection of angels, and, more significantly, draws the eye and heart, the longings and ravishments, the tender compassions and everlasting delights of the Lord Jesus.

I have emphasized those aspects of holiness that reflect inner beauty because all the Spirit's graces inherently beautify. However, the word "holiness" properly signifies "Decus" or "Ornatum," which metaphorically refers to outward adornment, expressing the internal excellence of the soul, conveying two more points to us.

First, the people of Christ are not only sanctified within but also have an interest in the unblemished holiness of Christ, with which they are adorned like a precious ornament. Thus, the Priests of God are said to be clothed with righteousness, and we are said to put on Christ. Christ's righteousness is often likened to long white robes that cover our sins, hide our nakedness, and shield us from God's wrath. In the eyes of His justice, we appear as if we were part of Christ Himself, just as when Jacob wore Esau's garment, he assumed Esau's identity and received the blessing. God regards us in Christ as if we have fulfilled all righteousness, as if there were no grounds for contention or exception against us. This, indeed, is the beauty of holiness: the model, prototype, and origin of all beauty.

Secondly, from the metaphorical allusion (as is commonly understood), it also conveys that all the people of Christ are like priests unto God, offering sacrifices acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ. They possess all the privileges and duties of priests. We have the liberty to approach God, entering the holiest through the blood of Jesus. We have the privilege to consult and commune with Him, serving as His Remembrancer. Just as His Spirit reminds us of His words, He, too, serves as our Remembrancer to God, recalling His mercy and promises, making mention of Him, and giving Him no rest. We are also entrusted with the knowledge of truth, propagating it to others, just as the priests kept and taught the knowledge in the past. In the Gospel, this knowledge overflows the earth, making every person, in a spiritual sense, a priest, an instructor, and a builder of others. We offer Him the sacrifices He now delights in: thanksgiving, a broken and contrite spirit, praise, confession, good works, and mutual communication with one another. In essence, we offer our entire selves, consecrated as a kind of first fruit unto God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Every person who truly belongs to the Kingdom of Christ possesses these holy affections and

conscientiously fulfils them as part of their calling and the duties of their life.

We see, then, that Holiness is the badge of Christ's subjects. They are called "The people of his Holiness." Israel was consecrated unto the Lord, set apart as the first fruits of His increase, dedicated to His service. The livery of Christ's servants is the same holy Spirit with which His own human nature was clothed. In the Tabernacle, all the vessels and ministerial instruments were anointed with holy oil, signifying that every Christian should be sanctified by the Spirit of God. Christians are like temples, and each member is like a vessel and instrument for the Master's use. The Spirit of holiness distinguishes Christ's sheep from the wicked of the world. Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, having received the Spirit which is of God, not of the world.

Holiness sets us apart for God's service, His presence, and His enjoyment. It protects and privileges us from the wrath to come, the day when God separates between the precious and the vile, making up His jewels. Without holiness, no one can serve, see, or escape God, do His will, enjoy His favor, or avoid His fury. Our services without holiness are worthless, likened to dung in God's sight. Offering mere external rituals or acts of worship without genuine holiness is futile and provokes God.

If there is sin that warms your heart and you are unwilling to part from it, be cautious of bringing it into God's presence or offering it as worship. God will reject such offerings. If unclean affections are harbored in the heart, all worship and service to God become meaningless. Grace makes a believer sure of salvation, but it does not lead to recklessness or security in living. Any great and presumptuous sin that wastes the conscience disqualifies a person

for the kingdom of heaven. Holiness is not the cause of salvation, but it is the path to it. If one falls from holiness and purity of conscience, repentance is needed to turn back on the path towards heaven.

There is an Order in the salvation of men, many intermediate passages between their calling and their glory: Justification, repentance, sanctification form a scale or ladder between earth and heaven. If one falls from holiness and purity of conscience, they must begin the whole work of repentance again. They shall never reach the top until they recover the step from which they fell.

If, in this case, it is true that the righteous shall scarcely be saved, then where shall that man appear whom God will find without this garment and seal upon him? Just as a person who least expects it may be thrown into the sea during a tempest, those who have neglected their spiritual condition will undoubtedly be in great danger when the day of wrath arrives. Therefore, we should strive to approach God's throne with our spiritual garments and mark upon us. All other worldly accomplishments, such as learning, honors, talents, promotions, earthly hopes, and dependencies, will not accompany us beyond this life. We may witness them or the comforts they bring departing from us.

Consider Achitophel, wise like an oracle of God, but he lived to see his wisdom forsake him, and he died like a fool. Haman, with great honor, experienced it leaving him, and he suffered the most degrading death he planned for his enemy. Jehoiakim, a king, saw his crown taken away and was buried like an ass, dragged unceremoniously outside the city gates. In the end, there will be nothing left for anyone to trust in except God, angels, or our fellow humans. If God is against us, even if everything else is on our side, what is a handful of stubble compared to a world full of fire? Yet, it

will not be an advantage as the contest will be one-on-one between God and a sinner. The good angels joyfully do God's will, while the wicked rejoice in harming others. The former will be ready to testify against sinners, and the latter will be gathered together to face the wrath of God on the Throne.

Oh, what would a person give then for the holiness they now despise? What covenants would they be willing to subscribe to if God would show mercy when the time for mercy is past? Would one be content to return to the earth and live there a thousand years under contempt and persecution for God's service? Indeed, yes, not just under His service, but even under rocks and mountains, if it means being hidden from the wrath of the Lamb. Would one be willing to go to hell and serve God there for a thousand years amidst hellish torments and the reviling of damned creatures? Again, yes, for even in hell, it would be infinitely better to be God's servant than His enemy.

Let us be wise for ourselves now. The conditions presented then will be far from easy to fulfill, and we are currently offered much easier conditions when we are invited to follow God's commands.

Lastly, we learn from this that none will be willing to come to Christ until they see beauty in His service. With a carnal eye, they cannot perceive it, as their hearts are naturally filled with prejudice against it. They may view the way of religion, as the Word requires, as mere phantoms of speculative thoughts, an unreal and airy concept existing only in the imaginations of a few who envision the shape of a Church, similar to how Xenophon envisioned a Prince or Plato envisioned a Commonwealth. Consequently, though they may not openly reject it with their tongues, inwardly, they are prone to set aside the rigor and exactness the Scripture demands. This includes

radical obedience, such as being willing to give up our most cherished possessions, forsake sinful desires, deny ourselves, subdue our earthly impulses, follow Christ through all difficulties, resist spiritual wickedness, familiarize ourselves with God's counsel, and more. Instead, they resolve to follow certain moderate principles that they believe will get them to heaven while still holding on to the world and their sinful desires.

It is an acknowledged truth that our natural spirit is in opposition to the spirit of purity and power in the world. Therefore, submitting willingly to the latter will encounter many internal conflicts and external discouragement and contempt. Christ was appointed as a sign of contradiction to be spoken against, and this was true in the days of Israel and Judah, as it is now in the visible Church of Christ. Those of the flesh tend to persecute those who walk after the spirit, and Christ's professed followers often become His greatest adversaries. Satan uses this prejudice against Christ's kingdom, making it appear despicable and contemptuous in the eyes of others. No one comes under Christ's rule until the Holy Spirit removes this prejudice through evident evidence.

For this reason, the ways of Christ are presented as beautiful, even amid crosses and afflictions. The Church acknowledges Christ as the fairest of ten thousand, even when she is afflicted and persecuted for His sake. Christ holds His Church in high regard, viewing her as a beautiful structure, despite the trials she faces. Our aim should be to display the Beauty of the Gospel through a shining and blameless conduct, so that the enemy has no occasion to blaspheme or turn away from this path due to our indiscretions, affectations, unnecessary reservations, deformities, unfounded scrupulosities, excessive worldly affections, or any other shortcomings of those who profess not just the name but the true power of religion. Any

resemblance of the faithful to the world will be used by the wicked to accuse their profession, as they lack the understanding or charity to distinguish between God's rule and human error.

The Apostle urges submission to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, as it is God's will that through righteous behavior, we may silence the ignorance of foolish people. Their ignorance will not primarily target our persons but the truth and religion we profess, especially if we needlessly resist any such ordinances that we could obey without sin.

The last thing noted in this verse is the multitude of Christ's followers and the manner of their birth: "From the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth. Your children are born in great abundance unto you, like the dew that falls from the morning womb."

From this, we can observe that in the day of Christ's power, during the morning of his Church, a multitude of children was born unto him. This promise was made by the Lord to Abraham, not limited to his physical descendants but also encompassing his children of promise, symbolized by the stars and the dust for multitude. The Prophet applied this promise to the Israel of promise, as those according to faith among the Gentiles. The faithful are said to flock like doves to their windows and to gather like a sea of great waters—144,000, along with countless others—all sealed and standing before the Lamb.

This multiplication of followers occurred when Christ sent out his armies and the rod of his strength into the world. Before this, God allowed people to follow their own ways, even instructing his Disciples not to enter the cities of the Samaritans or the Gentiles during his lifetime. However, after his ascension, he led captivity

captive, triumphing over the ignorance and thralldom that held the world captive, and poured out his Spirit abundantly on people of all sorts—visions for the young, dreams for the aged, and his gracious Spirit to all.

The preaching of Christ's Apostles converted many more people than his personal preaching, magnifying the excellence of his spiritual presence over the carnal superstitions that sought a physical presence of Christ on earth. Christ himself promised the All-sufficient Remembrancer to his Church, except some still seek other means, such as the crucifixes and images they erect, which Scripture disapproves as teachers of lies and vanity. Instead, the Lord's word and Sacraments, the living and full images of Christ crucified, are sufficient for salvation, opened and presented to consciences through holy ordinances and offices in the Church, such as the preaching of his word and administration of his Sacraments.

After Christ's ascension, the word of God grew mightily and prevailed, with men daily added to the Church, and the Savor of the Gospel made manifest in every place. The believers were described as a multitude, and many men and women were added to the Lord. The believers were like ten to one compared to the number before, as men from all languages of the nations held onto the skirt of a Jew, saying, "We will go with you," eager to enter the Kingdom of heaven with great fervor, like Saul laying hold of Samuel's mantle.

The reason behind this is to highlight the magnification of Christ's exaltation, spiritual presence, and power in the Church. During his time on earth, his physical presence and preaching were confined to one people due to the limitations of his bodily form. He took on our human nature with all its conditions and restrictions. However, his Spirit and power extend over the entire Church, and through them,

he walks among the congregations. While the Jews opposed and crucified him when he was physically present, to demonstrate the greatness of his power through the Gospel, he chose to depart and leave behind a few poor and persecuted individuals, aided by the virtue of his Spirit, to perform works that the whole world could not resist.

He could have disseminated the Gospel through the ministry of angels, as he did with the Law, or anointed his apostles as rulers and defenders of his faith. Instead, he preferred to have them remain poor and despised, so the world would overlook them and consider them of lowly status, allowing his Spirit to be glorified even more through their ministry. God chose the weak, foolish, and despised things of the world to confound the wise and mighty, so that no human being should boast before him. Hence, the Apostle acknowledged his weakness and trembling in his ministry, so that people's faith would not rely on human wisdom but on the power of God. They carried this precious treasure in earthen vessels, so the power would be attributed to God, not themselves. It was not by human might or strength but by God's Spirit, as the Lord proclaimed.

The Church grew most during times of persecution, bearing the greatest fruit in the worst circumstances, signifying the power of Christ's Kingdom beyond human opposition. The Apostle spoke of an effective door open to him despite facing many adversaries, indicating that the Gospel succeeded even when resisted. Persecutors, like Herod, aimed to destroy Christ's Kingdom in its infancy, yet it was during such times that the power and protection of the Holy Spirit were most magnified. In the Church's early days, with the dragon standing before the woman ready to devour her child, countless people were converted. Even the mighty rulers who

persecuted Christianity were eventually brought to submission, not by fighting but by witnessing the faith of dying Christians.

Just as a tree shaken sheds more fruit and burning incense diffuses a sweet aroma, persecuted Christianity flourishes even more through the power of the Holy Spirit, whose foolishness is wiser and weakness stronger than any opposition or contradiction from men.

But if there are such vast numbers belonging to Christ's Kingdom, can universality and a visible display be true indicators to distinguish the Church of Christ? To this, I answer that a true characteristic note or difference should be uniquely associated with that which it identifies and befitting to it. Something common to many cannot be a clear indication of a specific entity. Universality is, in fact, common to Antichristian, idolatrous, and malignant Churches. The Arian heresy spread across the world with the support of the Imperial authorities, infiltrating various Churches. The symbolic whore was depicted as sitting upon many waters, representing people, multitudes, nations, and tongues; she intoxicated the Kings of the earth with the wine of her corruption, leading all nations astray. Therefore, when considering the multitudes in the Church, we need to approach the matter from different angles.

First, if we examine the Church on its own, it is indeed a vast body. However, when compared to the larger, prevailing, and malignant part of the world, it appears to be a little flock, much like many grains of corn hidden under a larger heap of chaff. Secondly, while the Church today may have many followers compared to the old Jewish Church, it still falls short when compared to the adversaries of the Church as a whole. Roughly thirty parts of the world consist of either idolatrous or Muslim populations, and the remaining eleven serve Christ in such diverse ways that it seems as if there were

multiple Christs, Gospels, or paths to the same end. Thirdly, although Christ always has a numerous offspring, different ages exhibit varying levels of purity and prominence depending on the administrations and outpourings of the Spirit upon his people. In some periods, the Doctrine remains uncorrupted, and the profession and acceptance of Christ are more universal than in others. During the time of the Apostles, many were born unto Christ due to the abundant measure of the Spirit poured out upon them (Titus 3:6). Similarly, during the times of early persecutions, many were also born to Christ, as God glorified the foundations of his Church and the power of his Spirit above the pride of men. When Imperial Laws and favor first supported the Church, it became very widespread and conspicuous as the emperors embraced it, and thus the world followed.

However, after a prolonged period of peace and great dignities corrupted the minds of the Church's leaders, leading them to prioritize pomp over purity, the mystery of iniquity grew like a weed and overshadowed the true faith. It first manipulated and then subdued the power of princes, bewitching the Kings of the earth with its deceptions.

In spite of this, we can recognize God's mercy even in the darkest times. During ages when the Church was oppressed, many still surrendered themselves to Christ. As described in Revelation 12:1,4, the woman was with child and delivered, even in the midst of persecution by the Dragon. In the wilderness, God provided a place of refuge, defense, and sustenance for his Church. For example, during the harsh times of Arianism when heresy dominated the world, and in the ignorant and challenging periods when Satan was unleashed, God raised notable instruments to defend his truth and preserve his Church. Although these followers were often driven to

solitary places and had to avoid assemblies led by heretical and Antichristian teachers, God's grace still shone through.

We also learn not to judge individuals, places, or times hastily. Just as God had seven thousand faithful followers in Israel when Elijah believed he was the only one left, not everyone exhibits the same boldness or confidence in their faith. Nicodemus, for example, approached Christ under the cover of night, yet Jesus did not reject him. Therefore, we must refrain from immediately passing judgment on our neighbors as cold or lifeless in their faith if they do not immediately display the same level of courage and public boldness as ourselves. Some people are naturally more reserved, introverted, and less sociable. Others, due to the nature of their positions, roles, and callings in the Church, need to exercise more caution and circumspection in their public demeanor. They may be required to be more discreet in their approach to faith than others.

Paul, for instance, was zealous and eager to confront a great confusion when Gaius and Aristarchus were dragged into the theater during a riot (Acts 19:30-31). However, the wisdom of the disciples and some of his chief friends shone through as they advised him against taking any risks. Gregory Nazianzen made an insightful observation about S. Basil, a prominent figure who tirelessly worked to reconcile the differences and conflicts within the Church. Gregory noted that, due to prevailing adversaries and the condition of the times, Basil abstained from certain controversial words used more freely by others of lower rank. This wise decision was made out of necessity because, as an eminent person with significant influence in the welfare of the Church, it was not prudent for Basil to use provocative language that could incite hostility from opponents and bring unnecessary danger upon himself and the Church of God.

Indeed, if all Christians earnestly contend for the truth while avoiding harsh and severe expressions that may breed obstinacy in adversaries or suspicion in onlookers, differences among believers might be more peacefully resolved, and the truth would find more steadfast acceptance.

Furthermore, we find encouragement to continue walking in the ways of Christ because we are in good and plentiful company. We have many fellow believers who will stand with us in times of suffering and who will comfort and encourage us. Just as the people of Israel, when they solemnly ascended to meet the Lord in Zion, encountered one troop after another, finding more companions as they advanced towards a common goal, we, as Saints on the journey to meet the Lord in heaven, are not alone. We have the privilege of traveling with an innumerable company of angels and righteous individuals, who serve as a source of mutual encouragement along the way. Unlike Elijah, who felt isolated, we have no excuse for being unwilling to openly profess the truth and power of our faith. We are not like a lamb in an empty space, devoid of comfort or company; rather, we are assured of an excellent guard and convoy on our journey towards Christ's Kingdom. The Apostle emphasizes this by referring to the multitude of believers as a great cloud of witnesses, urging us to be encouraged as we patiently run the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

Finally, this should remind us to cherish the multitudes, the gatherings, and the fellowship of the Saints. We ought to converse frequently with one another, offering encouragement and support, and not neglecting to assemble together, as some do. We should join in mutual desires, sharing the same holy thoughts and affections. Our hearts, souls, and judgments should be unified, walking by the same rule, and besieging heaven with united prayers. We must be of

service to the City of God and to each other as fellow members. Therefore, the Lord has bestowed various gifts upon different individuals, not giving any one person all the gifts, so that we may work together toward a common goal and unite our diverse graces in love for the edification of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11, 13).

Now, the process of producing or procuring these multitudes is described using two metaphors: a womb and the dew of the morning. The birth of Dew is a celestial generation. While what is exhaled is an earthly vapor, the heavenly operation transforms it into Dew. No human skill can achieve this. Moreover, it is imperceptible and hidden in its making. You may see it when it has fallen, but you cannot witness how it is formed. Lastly, it is a sudden birth, occurring in a single night or morning when it is both conceived and brought forth. In this, we find four distinctive characteristics.

First and foremost, it's crucial to recognize that all of Christ's subjects are also His children. They are born unto Him. Christianity represents a spiritual birth, and unless a person is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God. In this context, there exists a Father – Christ, who is our Father by generation. As it is written, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me"; and we are His brethren by adoption. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Moreover, there is a Mother, symbolized by Jerusalem above, who is the Mother of us all.

In addition to this, there are subordinate instruments, such as the holy Apostles, Evangelists, Doctors, and Pastors. They are sometimes referred to as Fathers because they beget us in Christ, as seen in the scripture, "I have begotten you through the Gospel." At other times, they are considered Mothers, bearing and bringing forth spiritual

growth. As expressed in the scripture, "of whom I travel in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

The foundation of these Children of Christ lies in the holy seed, which is the Word of God, living and enduring forever. When someone is newly born unto Christ, their heart transforms like paper from a press or a garment from a perfume, taking on the qualities of spiritualness and holiness found in the Word. There is a formative virtue or energy – the work of the Spirit of grace in conjunction with the Word. The truth is obeyed not merely by the Word but by the Spirit, as the scripture says, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Water symbolizes the seed, and the Spirit represents the formative virtue that quickens and animates that seed.

The process of bringing forth these Children of Christ is characterized by throes and pains both in the Mother and in the Child. Those who minister the Word undergo much trouble and care, toiling in pain for the spiritual birth of the Children of Christ. As stated in the scripture, "I travel in pain again. I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." Similarly, the Child, as a sinner, experiences pain when leaving behind the warmth and pleasure of their former condition. The coming of Christ into the soul is not without shaking, as the scripture expresses, "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

With the new nature comes a new conversation, imitating God's goodness in works and walking as Christ walked, as seen in the scripture, "that as God is good in himself, and doth good in his works." Alongside this new nature, there are new privileges and relations, such as being the Sons of God, the brethren of Christ, the citizens of heaven, and part of the household of the Saints.

Furthermore, there is a new communion and society with the Father and the Son through the Spirit, as well as fellowship with the Holy Angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, as expressed in the scripture, "the fellowship of the Father and the Son by the Spirit."

And there is pain in the Child too; a sinner does not leave the warmth and pleasure of their former condition without pain; Christ's arrival brings a shaking to the soul. This signifies a new being or nature – a transformation from our old ways and the formation of something new. The old things pass away, and all things become new – the same holy nature, mind, judgment, will, affections, motions, desires, dispositions, and spirit that were in Christ are now wrought in us. Thus, the one who possesses this hope purifies themselves, just as Christ is pure. We ought to be patient as He is patient (Heb. 12:2), holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:15), humble as He is humble (John 13:14), compassionate as He is compassionate (Col. 3:13), and loving as He is loving (Eph. 5:2). In all things, we strive to show Christ's likeness in our nature and affections.

A new conversation, corresponding to our new nature, should follow. Just as God is good in Himself and does good in His works (Psalms 119:68), so should we be like Christ (1 John 4:17) and walk as He walked (1 John 2:6). We develop new appetites and desires for spiritual nourishment, seeking the sincere, immediate, untempered, and uncorrupted milk of the Word, which comes with all the spirits and life in it, that we may grow thereby.

This transformation brings forth new privileges and relations – we become the Sons of God, the brethren of Christ, the citizens of heaven, and part of the household of the Saints. We also experience a new communion and society, sharing in the fellowship of the Father and the Son by the Spirit. Furthermore, we enjoy fellowship with the

Holy Angels, experiencing their love, ministry, and protection, as well as fellowship with the spirits of just men made perfect. We share in the seeds and beginnings of the same perfection and participate in the same Spirit of holiness, anticipating the same glory and final redemption.

In the meantime, we ought to walk as Children of the light or, as it is said here, as Children of the morning. The Day is given to us to work in, and therefore, in the morning, as soon as we have our Day ahead of us, we should strive to walk honestly. Night-works are often associated with deeds of uncleanness, violence, and dishonor, as they require the cover of darkness to hide them. Thieves and adulterers are known to operate in the night (1 Thes. 5:2, Job 24:15, Prov. 7:9). But works of Christianity are honorable, exemplary, and beautiful – they are royal works and themselves light (as Christ said, "let your light shine before men"), so they should be done in the light.

If we are Children, we should express the affections of Children – the innocence, humility, and dove-like simplicity of little ones. As Sons of God, we should strive to be blameless, pure, and without rebuke, even though we may possess the understanding of men. Like newborn babes who desire the sincere milk of the word to grow, we should eagerly seek God's teachings (1 Peter 2:2). Just as a breast pacifies a little infant, the word and worship of God should work upon us in all situations and deviations (John 4:6, 8, 34).

The Love of Children is a love of thankfulness, loving the Father who begot them (1 John 5:1). We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Our love should manifest through obedience, as faith works through love (Gal. 5:6). Love fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:10), and if we love Christ, we will keep His words (John 14:23) with reverence and awe, just as a Son honors his Father (Mal. 1:6). When we call on

the Father, we should pass our time here in fear and reverence (1 Pet. 1:17).

The faith of Children is a simple reliance on their Father for sustenance and support (Matthew 6:31-32). In the same way, we should depend on God for our needs and have hope and assurance in His provision for our future (1 Peter 1:4). As Children, we can approach God with our prayers and requests, for He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba Father" (Gal. 4:6).

Note 2: The Birth of a Christian is a divine and heavenly work. God acts as both Father and Mother to the Dew, displaying His power as a Father and His care as a Mother. He is the Progenitor and Genitrix, as indicated in Clem. Alex. Metripater, signifying that the causalities present in second agents are eminently and perfectly united in Him, as all things are resolved into a first unity. Job questioned, "Hath the Rain a Father, or who hath begotten the Drops of Dew?" No one but God is the parent of the Dew; it does not rely on or expect any human involvement or causality (Micah 5:7, Isaiah 55:10). Similarly, the call and conversion of a person to Christ is a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1), a work of God in us (Colossians 2:12). It is a birth not of human blood, fleshly desires, or human will, but a divine birth of God (John 1:13, 1 John 3:9). Paul may plant, and Apollo may water, but it is God who must bless both; it is God who, through them as instruments, brings about the growth. He begot us through His own will (James 1:18). Ministers are like a fragrance of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15). It is not the outer appearance, but the inner essence that diffuses a sweet scent. The effectiveness of the Minister's labor does not depend on their abilities but on Christ, whom they preach, and it is Christ who works upon the soul. Even when I labored more abundantly than all others, it was not me but the grace of God that was with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).

It is, therefore, improper to show partiality based on human distinctions when it comes to the faith of God. The seed of this spiritual generation can only be given to us through earthen vessels, by individuals who share the same passions and weaknesses as others. Therefore, when pure and good seed is sowed here and there, attributing anything to individuals would diminish God's role. In situations where there are fewer gifts, lesser talents, and lower probabilities, God may and often does bring about a greater increase than expected. It is similar to Daniel's Pulse, where the excellence of the power is attributed to God and not man. Even when the seed is sown by a lame or leprous hand, it does not alter the outcome; the success of good seed does not depend on the hand that sows it but on the earth that covers it and the heavens that nurture it. In the same way, the efficacy of the word does not depend on human virtue but on the heart that contemplates it and the Spirit that sanctifies it.

When you approach the word, come with the appropriate affections for it. Just as not all soil can bear every seed—some can grow wheat, while others can only handle pulses—there must be a readiness before there can be fruitfulness. Christ had many teachings that his Disciples couldn't grasp at the time because the Comforter had not yet been sent to guide them into all truth. Those who have exercised their senses through practice are ready for solid food. The truth of the Gospel is a heavenly truth, and it requires a heavenly disposition of the heart for it to flourish. It is considered wisdom by those who are mature, but it may be seen as foolishness and offensive by others. The only reason the word of truth doesn't prosper is that the heart is not prepared for it. The seed itself is the same for all soil, but it thrives only in the honest and good heart. Rain is the same for all land, but it has no effect on rocks due to their inner hardness and incapacity. The Pharisees had covetous hearts and mocked Christ; the Philosophers had proud hearts and scorned Paul. The Jews had

carnal hearts and were offended by the Gospel; the people in the wilderness had unbelieving hearts, and the preached word didn't benefit them. On the other hand, a heavenly heart comes with the affections of a Scholar, eager to be taught by God; with the affections of a servant, willing to be commanded by God; with the affections of a Son, open to be educated by God; and with the affections of a sinner, seeking to be cured by God. It acknowledges that it is the Lord from heaven who speaks in the Ministry of the word to a mere mortal made of dust and ashes. Consequently, the person puts their hand on their mouth, dares not argue with God or wrestle with the evidence of His holy Spirit, but rather falls upon their face, giving glory to God. They believe when God promises, tremble when God threatens, obey when God commands, and learn when God teaches. Such a person always approaches with meekness and humility of spirit, ready to absorb the word.

Lastly, we must learn from this to look to God in all His ordinances, expecting His arm and Spirit to be revealed there. We should call on and depend on Him for the blessing of it. If a person, upon entering God's house, could pour out their heart in these two things: a Promise and a Prayer. "Lord, I am now entering Your presence to hear You speak from heaven to me, to receive Your rain and spiritual Dew, which never falls in vain, but brings about a harvest of either grace or judgment. My heart is prepared, O Lord, my heart is prepared to learn and love any of Your words. Your Law is my Counselor; I will be guided by it. It is my Physician; I will be patient under it. It is my Schoolmaster; I will be obedient to it. But who am I to promise any service to You? And who is Your Minister that he should do any good to me without Your grace and heavenly call? Therefore, please reveal Your Spirit to me and work in me what You require of me." If a person could approach the word with such a sweet preparation of heart and open their soul when this spiritual

Manna descends from heaven, they would find the truth in what the Apostle says, "You are not restricted by us or our ministry; we come to you with abundance of grace, but you are restricted only by your own hearts—by the hardness, unbelief, incapacity, and negligence within you—which receive in drops what falls down in showers."

Note 3: The birth of a Christian is both divine and mysterious. Just as the wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes, so it is with everyone who is born of God, as our Savior said (John 3:8). The Spirit of God's voluntary presence and influence in the soul, empowering and emboldening a person, is of a highly secretive nature. Even though its power is immense, it appears as nothing more than a voice (one of the most intangible and fleeting things). Like dew falling in small, imperceptible drops or a child being formed through slow and imperceptible progress (as the Prophet David expressed, "Fearfully and wonderfully am I made"), so is the birth of a Christian to Christ—a secret, hidden, and inward calling known as "Vocatione Altâ," as Saint Augustine termed it. It is through a deep and intimate energy of the Spirit of grace that Christ is formed within, and the soul is transformed into a spiritual being. When a person hears this voice, it seems to come from behind, with no visible speaker; there is a force within that others may not notice, even though they also hear the voice externally. This is why it is noteworthy that the men who were with Paul at his miraculous conversion are said to have heard a voice in one account (Acts 9:7) and not heard the voice in another account (Acts 22:9). They merely heard a voice and were astonished, but Paul heard it distinctly as the voice of Christ and was thus converted.

Note 4: Just as the birth of a Christian is divine and secret, it is also sudden. In natural generations, the larger the creature, the slower

the production—consider the elephant's ten-year gestation. In human endeavors, great works take time and deliberate effort to mature. However, in spiritual births, individuals are born unto Christ like dew, which is conceived, formed, and produced all in one night. Paul went from being a wolf to a sheep, from a persecutor to a disciple, and soon after became an Apostle of Christ. Similarly, the nobleman in Samaria could not fathom turning famine into plenty in a single night. Likewise, a person who comprehends the deep-rooted nature of sin and guilt in the soul may find it hard to believe in a sudden change. Yet, such is the birth of individuals to Christ—it happens swiftly and unexpectedly. "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child." Just as the earth brings forth in one day and a nation is born at once (as spoken of Jerusalem, the mother of us all, in Isaiah 66:7-8).

You are a Priest forever after the Order of Melchizedek

"The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a Priest forever after the Order of Melchizedek." - Psalm 110:4

From discussing the kingly role of Christ and its administration through the power of His Word and Spirit, conquering a willing people to Himself, the Prophet now turns to His priestly office. The significance and value of this role are previously applied to the Church. It is worth noting that although the tribes were forbidden to intermarry and create confusion among themselves (Numbers 36:7), the royal and Levitical tribes could intermingle and unite, suggesting that the Messiah, to whom such confusion was avoided, would embody both kingly and priestly attributes. This is evident in examples like Jehoiada, the priest, marrying Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram (2 Chronicles 22:11), and Aaron, from the Tribe of Levi, taking Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab from the tribe of Judah (Exodus 6:23, Numbers 1:7). As such, Mary and Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah the priest, are referred to as cousins (Luke 1:36). In the Law, these two offices were distinct. The Apostle states that our Lord arose from the Tribe of Judah, a tribe for which Moses said nothing about priesthood (Hebrews 7:14). Consequently, when King Uzziah encroached upon the priest's office, he was afflicted with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:18, 21). However, among the Gentiles (where Melchizedek is believed to have been a priest), it was not uncommon for the same person to hold both kingly and priestly positions.

The words contain the Doctrine of Christ's Priesthood. Its Quality is described as Eternal, and its Order is not of Aaron, but of Melchizedek. The foundation of both aspects is God's unchangeable decree and counsel; He cannot repent of it because He has confirmed it with an Oath. Let's examine the words in the order they are presented.

"The Lord hath sworn" - Here, two questions arise: First, how does God swear? Second, why does He swear in this particular case of Christ's Priesthood? The Apostle clarifies the first question in one word, "by himself," as mentioned in Hebrews 6:17. So, God swears by Himself. In other instances, He is said to swear by the excellency of Jacob, which means by Himself (Amos 8:7, 6:8). For instance, when God said, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in blessing I will bless thee" (Genesis 22:16), it implies that God would deny Himself if His word did not come to pass (which is impossible, as stated in 2 Timothy 2:13). When God interposes His holiness, saying, "I have sworn by my Holiness that I will not lie unto David" (Psalm 89:35), it signifies that it is as impossible for Him to break His word as it is for Him to be unholy.

Regarding the second question of why God swears in this particular case, the answer is primarily to demonstrate the unchangeable and certain nature of His words (Hebrews 6:17). For example, when God says, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth, and it shall not return" (Isaiah 45:23), it confirms the unalterable nature of His covenant. God's oath assures the immutability of His promise to those who rely upon it. In certain instances, when God declares something, there may be an implicit reservation for altering or revoking that word through a subsequent declaration. But when God swears any absolute act or promise of His own, there is no ground for revocation beyond what was known at the time of making it. This

oath seals and assures the unchangeability of His promise to those who place their trust in it.

Secondly, it is to highlight the excellence and superiority of that which bears the great seal of Heaven, the Oath of God, confirming and establishing it. As the Apostle declares, "Inasmuch as not without an oath, He was made Priest, by so much was He made a surety of a better Testament" (Hebrews 6:20, 22). This is a consequence of the former, for the Ministry of the Gospel is more glorious and abiding than what was done away with (2 Corinthians 3:11). The more solemn and sacred the institution, the more excellent the Priesthood. The Oath of God was the seal by which He designated and consecrated His Son to that great Office in a more solemn manner of ordination than was customary for others. As it is written, "God the Father sealed Him" (John 6:27), not merely saying, "Ye are God's," but declaring, "He hath sanctified" His Son (John 10:34, 36).

Thirdly, it demonstrates God's great compassion and goodwill in establishing the hearts of people in comfort and assurance. He confirmed His promise by an oath "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17, 18). An oath among men settles disputes and resolves differences; how much more secure should the hearts of people be when God sets His Seal upon His mercy and covenant, leaving no room for doubt or hesitation? Thus, in the Scripture, the Saints mention the Oath of God to strengthen their hearts against fears and dangers. For example, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:20). The bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even Thy Word (Habakkuk 3:9), meaning that God fought for His people and

remembered His Covenant of mercy, which He had sworn to Abraham, the Father of the faithful, and repeatedly reaffirmed to his descendants, the tribes. This serves as the foundation of the Church's comfort and stability. Though we daily deserve to have God revoke His Covenant of mercy with us, He remains faithful to the Oath He has sworn (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8, 9, 5). There was enough wickedness in the world to warrant another flood after Noah's time; the same reasons that led to it still existed (Genesis 6:12, 13, 8:21). Yet, God's Oath binds Him to His mercy (Isaiah 54:9).

The meaning of this first Clause, therefore, is this: The Lord, to demonstrate the immutability of His Counsel, the unchangeableness of Christ's Priesthood, the superiority of it over the Priesthood of Aaron, and the strong consolation that Saints may receive, has sealed it with an Oath. Thus, Christ is a Priest by an irrevocable decree.

It signifies the solemn call of Christ to the office of Priesthood, just as He was called to the office of King in verse 1. He did not take this honor upon Himself, as Nadab and Abihu did when they offered unauthorized fire to the Lord, nor did He encroach upon it like Uzziah. Instead, He was ordained, begotten, and called by God to this role, according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:5, 10). He was sanctified, sent, and given a commandment and work to do (John 10:18, 36, 37). He was referred to as a Servant or a chosen officer appointed for a specific task (Isaiah 42:1, 49:5, 53:11, Philippians 2:7). This demonstrates the agreement of the entire Trinity in Christ's Priesthood. First, the Father's consent is seen in His act of ordination, as it is written, "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27) and "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Hebrews 5:5, 6). Secondly, the Son voluntarily undertook the role as the Surety of the Covenant (Hebrews 8:22). The Apostle combines God's Will and Christ's submission, as Christ declares, "Lo,

I come to do thy Will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9, 10). There was a Covenant between God and Christ, wherein Christ undertook an office of service and obedience for mankind, to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin, and be made subject to the Law, among other things. In return, God promised to prolong His days, give Him a seed and generation without number, an everlasting Kingdom, a portion with the great and a spoil with the strong, a Name above all others, and joy and glory after completing His work. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit anointed Him and was present with Him throughout His life, forming Him in the womb of the Virgin and descending upon Him at His baptism by John, thereby consecrating and empowering Him for this great role (Isaiah 61:1, 42:1, Matthew 3:16, 17, Hebrews 1:9).

If God calls Christ to His Priesthood by a solemn Oath and appoints Him as the Surety of a better covenant, we should take special notice of this fact, for when God swears, He must be heeded. The more excellent something is, the more earnestly we should be devoted to it. As the Apostle warns, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, so sure a covenant?" (Hebrews 2:1, 3).

This is the only foundation on which we can anchor ourselves in times of trouble, doubt, or fear of the Spirit. It is not our own will or strength that sustains us from ruin, but God's Oath, which makes Christ a Priest able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him. Just as Saint Paul and his company found comfort in a great tempest, believing that no one's life would be lost because of God's promise (Acts 27:20, 24, 25), we too can find solace in casting anchor upon God's covenant, established by an oath. We must learn to hope beyond hope, be strong in Him when we are weak in ourselves, be faithful in Him when we are fearful in ourselves, and be steadfast in Him when we stagger in ourselves. In the midst of Satan's attacks and our own corruptions, we can find sufficiency in

His Grace to answer and fend off all challenges (2 Corinthians 12:10). We can cling to His covenant and seek refuge in the hope set before us when we are unable to stand on our own (Isaiah 56:6, Hebrews 6:18). It is challenging when we have a clear view of our own filthiness and guilt due to sin, not to give up on ourselves and our salvation as hopeless. In such times, we must consider God's Oath and Covenant with His people, assuring us that He will not reject us for our sins. As the Scriptures proclaim, "Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, though their land was filled with sin against the holy One of Israel" (Jeremiah 51:5). God's compassion and unchanging nature are evident as He declares, "My People are bent unto backsliding, yet I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not Man" (Hosea 11:7, 9).

Secondly, not to leave them under the burden of sin indefinitely, but to heal their backslidings in due time (Hosea 14:4). He not only removes our transgressions from Himself, but also from us to such an extent that it is as possible for the East and West to meet as for a person and their sin (Psalm 103:12). Though we have burdened Him with our sins and wearied Him with our iniquities, He will not remember our past sins (Isaiah 43:25) nor see the sins that remain (Numbers 23:11). He forgives and subdues these sins because of His Truth to Jacob and His mercy to Abraham, fulfilling the oath He made to our fathers long ago (Micah 7:18, 19, 20). He has given us firm ground to stand on and a solid foundation to hold on to – a Promise and an Oath – so that we may have strong consolation (Hebrews 6:18). As the Apostle says, all the promises of God in Christ are "yes" and "amen," signifying their truth and certainty, confirmed by Christ's Oath or, at least, His strong and confident affirmation (2 Corinthians 1:20). This emphasizes not only the stability but also the universality of God's promises.

There are many aspects in Christ's call to His Office that confirm this consolation and upon which the troubled soul can anchor:

First, He has received a command and call from the Father for His service, making Him a faithful Servant, as God chooses only faithful servants. He was sent as an Apostle and High Priest to preach God's Will and reconcile humanity, and He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, just as Moses was (Hebrews 3:1, 2). If He is faithful, we can trust Him to fulfill the work given to Him. "Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Secondly, Christ voluntarily submitted Himself, giving Himself for His Church and laying down His own life (Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:14, John 10:11). Though equal with the Father, He willingly concurred with the decree, emptying Himself and taking the form of a servant, lowering Himself for a time even below the Angels, so that He could be commanded. This not only highlights His fidelity as a servant but also His exceptional mercy as a co-agent in the decree that appointed Him to this office. He is not only a faithful High Priest but also a merciful one, making reconciliation for the sins of humanity (Hebrews 2:17).

Thirdly, He is anointed by the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and Himself (John 10:36, John 17:19). He has received power and authority from the Father (Matthew 28:18, John 5:27, John 17:2) and also has power within Himself (John 10:18). The Spirit with which He came into the world empowers Him perfectly to save all who come to Him (Hebrews 7:25). Alongside His fidelity and mercy, there is added ability.

In Christ's call to His Office, we find a foundation of consolation for troubled souls, firmly anchored in His fidelity, mercy, and ability to save completely.

Fourthly, just as Christ received an office and a service, He also received a Promise from His Father, which greatly encouraged Him in this service. This promise is twofold. Firstly, the promise of a great multitude, gathered to Him through the execution of His office, and a triumphant victory over all His enemies. God bestowed upon Him the honour of being the King of a mighty People, whom He would save and sanctify to Himself. They were given to Him (Psalm 2:8, John 17:6). Hence, in addition to His Fidelity, Mercy, and Power, there is an added sense of Possession to the people He saves. And who would not use all faithfulness in their own business, show all mercy towards their own offspring, and exercise all the power they possess to rescue their own household from danger? Christ, as a Son over His own house, faithfully serves His people, who are His house (Hebrews 3:6). Secondly, there was the promise of great Glory and a Crown that His assumed human nature would receive after fulfilling His service. After a brief time of being made lower than the Angels, He was to be crowned with Glory and Honor (Hebrews 2:7). Thus, we can be sure that He has fulfilled all righteousness and accomplished all that He was meant to do on Earth because He is now in glory and beyond our sight. His sufferings preceded His glory (1 Peter 1:11). This is the Apostle's argument as to why we are not still in our sins, but delivered from them, because Christ is risen (1 Corinthians 15:17). "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). This is also the basis for his argument on why we should hold fast to our faith and confidently approach the Throne of Grace for help in time of need, for we have a great high Priest who has entered into Heaven (Hebrews 4:14, 15, 16).

Fifthly, just as Christ had a Promise from the Father to encourage Him, He also had a Nature from us that inclined Him towards the

execution of His Office. He was made of a woman, taking on human form in all respects except sin, being tempted and afflicted just as we are. Therefore, there are two comforting aspects a believer may rely on in Him during times of discomfort. Firstly, His Sympathy, for beyond His essential mercy as God, He also showed mercy learned through being like us. He was made like His brethren in all respects so that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17). His compassion is evident in His concern for the hunger of the multitude because He knew hunger Himself (Matthew 15:32, Matthew 4:2). He also displayed compassion towards Mary and Martha in their sorrow because He Himself was acquainted with grief (John 11:33, 35, Isaiah 53:3). Furthermore, His compassion is seen in His dealings with Peter during his state of abandonment, as He Himself knew what it was to be forsaken (Luke 22:61, Matthew 27:46). This is the Apostle's assurance that we shall receive mercy and grace to help in time of need because Christ understands our weaknesses and has experienced temptations similar to ours (Hebrews 4:15, 16). Secondly, His consanguinity; He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He is our Goel, our Kinsman, and thus our Redeemer (Hebrews 11, Ruth 3:9, 4:4).

"And will not repent."] Although God has spoken things that He has revoked, like the destruction of Nineveh and the death of Hezekiah, these revocations imply a tacit condition, appropriate for those specific cases, and thus they may be concealed due to the various circumstances. God is most unchangeable in all His ways, counsels, and purposes, which stand forever. Nothing can make God wiser, more merciful, more provident, or more powerful than He was before. Therefore, nothing can truly change His will or cause Him to repent of His previous actions or resolutions. With Him, there is no variation or shadow of changing. He is not a man that He should repent (Malachi 3:6, Numbers 23:19). However, in His mercy

towards our weaknesses, God condescends to use human expressions, while maintaining the steadfastness of His own working, which remains unchanged by the contingencies of secondary causes. He speaks according to our understanding, but He acts according to His own counsel. Thus, God is said to repent when something He once willed to happen is subsequently, by the counsel of the same will, caused not to be. This does not alter His own counsel; rather, it is a matter of His willing the change of circumstances, causing something to exist for a period of time and then to cease. As an analogy, when a rope is fixed to both sides of a river, drawing a boat backward or forward does not change or alter the rope itself. Similarly, the same will and counsel of God remains constant and unaltered in the various changes of the things brought about or removed by it.

Now, when not only God's counsel is unchangeable in itself, but He has also ordained a Law, Covenant, or Office that He intends to endure forever, without either natural expiration or external abolishment, then God is said not to repent. To apply this to the present matter: The Apostle speaks of a new covenant established upon the new Priesthood of Christ (for Priesthoods and Laws go hand in hand; when one is changed, the other necessitates a change, Heb. 7:12). He introduces this new Covenant, founded on God's Oath, which renders the preceding covenant old and transitory. He states, "A new Covenant, He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). He also asserts that the first covenant was disannulled because of its weakness and unprofitableness (Heb. 7:18), and this even applies to the moral Law—the law whose righteousness was to be fulfilled in us by the Spirit of Christ, specifically in sincerity and love, which is the bond of perfection and the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 8:3, 4). To fully understand and apply these words to the priesthood of Christ

and the Law of Grace, or the second covenant grounded upon it, it is necessary to address two questions. Firstly, has God repented of the Law, which was the rule and measure of the Covenant of works? Secondly, on what reasons or grounds does the immutability of the second Covenant or Law of grace stand?

Regarding the first question, the Psalmist tells us that the Commandments of God are sure and stand fast forever and ever (Psalms 111:7, 8). We should note that the same form of speech used by the Lord to demonstrate the stability of the new covenant is also employed by our Saviour to express the stability of the Law. He says, "It is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass, than for one tittle of the Law to fail" (Luke 16:17). Now, the Law has a twofold obligation: one primary obligation is to obedience, to which is attached a promise of righteousness or justification; the other secondary and conditional obligation is to malediction, assuming disobedience. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). If no tittle of the Law must fail, then neither of these two obligations must fail; both must be fulfilled. In this sense, it seems that the first Covenant is not removed despite its weaknesses.

To resolve this, we must note that when it comes to the validity or invalidity of the Law, there are only five possibilities. Firstly, it must be obeyed, but it is not, as all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). Secondly, it must be executed upon people, and the curse or penalty must be inflicted, but it is not, as there is no condemnation for those in Christ (Romans 8:1). Thirdly, it must be abrogated or extinguished, but it is not, as even Heaven and Earth would pass away sooner. If there were no Law, there would be no sin, as sin is the transgression of the Law, and there would be no judgment, as the world will be judged by the Law. Fourthly, it could

be moderated and interpreted favorably by rules of equity to lessen its severity, but it cannot be, as it is inflexible, and no part of it can be altered. Lastly, while the Law remains with its obligations, it can be dispensed with to some extent toward certain individuals, such that a surety is admitted (with the agreement of all involved parties: God willing to allow, Christ willing to perform, and Man willing to enjoy) to fulfill all the duties and suffer all the curses of the Law on behalf of the person who should have done and suffered them. Thus, neither the Law nor any part of it is abrogated concerning its obligations, but they are all reconciled in Christ through the second covenant.

However, in terms of a covenant or rule of righteousness between us and God, He has repented of it and removed that office or relation from it, so that righteousness should come to us through the weakness and unprofitableness of the Law in achieving that purpose due to the sin of Man. Nevertheless, the Law is still relevant to justification, as the fulfillment of the whole Law is always in some way presupposed. In the first covenant, we were to fulfill the Law in our own persons, while in the second, Christ is appointed and allowed to do it for us. He fulfilled all the obligations of the Law through active obedience in His life and passive obedience in His death. Now, through faith, we become one with Christ, and the grace of God counts us as part of the same mass and sum with Him, attributing to us what He accomplished. There is no righteousness without reference to the Law of God, but we are not justified by the Law itself; we are justified by grace, as it is God's favor, contrary to the strict demands of the Law, that allows the righteousness of the Law fulfilled by one to be accounted to another. A man is considered righteous, just as a wall may be seen as red or green. This happens in two ways: either through the color inherent in and belonging to the wall itself, or through the same color in a transparent body like glass, which externally affects the wall as if it were its own and conceals its

true inherent color. Similarly, in the strict covenant of the Law, we should be righteous through inherent righteousness and our own actions, but in the new covenant of grace, we are righteous through the righteousness of Christ shining upon us and presenting us in His color to the Father. In both covenants, the righteousness from which the denomination arises is the same (namely, satisfying the demands of the whole Law), but the way we obtain right and ownership to it is vastly different. In one, we have right through the Law because we have fulfilled it ourselves, while in the other, we have right solely through grace and favor because someone else's fulfillment of it is bestowed upon us and counted as ours. This is the gracious covenant of which the Lord says, "I have sworn and will not repent."

To resolve the second question, regarding the reasons for the immutability of the covenant of Grace, we must understand that things can be of various sorts, and accordingly, they may be mutable or immutable in different ways. Some things are absolutely immutable due to the nature of the thing itself. This means that the abrogation or alteration of such things would result in dreadful consequences and evident disorder, including dishonor to God and confusion among other things. For instance, if we were to conceive a scenario where a man is free from worshipping, reverencing, acknowledging, loving, or trusting in God, it would lead to complete disorder and God being robbed of His essential honor, which is inseparable from His divinity.

However, an entire covenant cannot be immutable in this manner. In a covenant, there is a mutual agreement and consent between God and Man. After Man fulfils his duty, God promises to bestow a reward. There is no binding necessity in God to confer such a reward, nor is there an absolute power in Man to demand it from God. God

bestows His goodness freely and without any necessity on His creatures.

Secondly, some things are merely *juris positivi*, meaning they are not intrinsically necessary and do not result from the nature of the things themselves. These things are free to exist or not exist, and they can continue or cease without any inherent determination to their nature. All covenants fall under this category. God could have chosen not to enter into a new covenant with humanity, just as He did not enter into a covenant with fallen angels. He could have retained the power to reconcile and call back His mercy at any time. So, why is this covenant immutable, and why does Christ's Priesthood possess everlasting and unchangeable vigor for all generations of people? The Apostle provides two reasons for this in Hebrews 6:17-18: The Promise and the Oath of God.

First, the Promise gives the creature a right that it did not have before, and this Promise determines God's Will for its existence. It is not left to an indifferent state of being or not being part of the Covenant. The Promise serves as the foundation for a just claim that we, through faith, can make upon God's Fidelity, Justice, and Power to fulfill it. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9). The righteous God shall give us a Crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). Righteousness and justice, along with mercy, form the basis for the forgiveness of sins and salvation, not based on any merit in us but on the promise of God. Though it was mercy that prompted God to make the promise, once He has promised, His truth, fidelity, and righteousness bind Him to fulfill it. It is as impossible for God to break a promise or lie to David as it is for Him to be unholy or deny Himself (Psalms 89:35, 2 Timothy 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Secondly, the Oath of God pledges His own Being, Life, Power, Truth, and Holiness to uphold what He has ratified. The immutability of the second Covenant and of Christ's Priesthood depend on these two factors: God's Promise and His Oath.

Here, we see the foundation upon which all our comfort and assurance rests. It does not depend on our own strength, power, liberty, or inherent grace, as these are prone to waste and be deceived by Satan and the world. Instead, our comfort and assurance come from God's unchangeable mercy and covenant. This was David's salvation and desire – he found rest in the fact that God had established an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, even when his house fell short of God's required beauty and purity (2 Samuel 23:5).

When our conscience is burdened with the sense of sin and fear of our unsteadfastness in God's covenant, we find support in knowing that God is one (Galatians 3:19). Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He is always ready to welcome those who return to Him (Isaiah 64:5, Luke 15:20). If we were to treat others as we have treated God, we would be despised, forsaken, and faced with revenge, without receiving grace or favor again. However, God is not like humans (Hosea 11:9). His compassion is in and from Himself, and He does not take advantage of our failings to alter His dealings with us (Psalm 103:8-14). Despite our daily failures, His compassions never fail, and we are not consumed because of His immutable mercy (Lamentations 3:22, Malachi 3:6).

God's blessing upon His adopted people is irreversible because He is God, not man, and thus cannot repent or retract His promises (Numbers 23:19, 20, 21). If the sun were immovably fixed in one place, like during Joshua's time at the destruction of the Kings

(Joshua 10:12, 13), shutting out its light would not change its position; it would still be there, ready to shine upon us again. It would be a lamentable state for us if every time we provoked God's justice, He revoked His mercy. Our salvation should not depend on the frailty and mutability of our own nature, and our life should not be left solely in our own keeping.

Grace inherent in us is as mutable as it was in Adam, and Satan remains as malicious and impetuous against us as he was against Adam. We have temptations, weaknesses, and enemies surrounding us, and without the Lord's support, we would depart from His grace daily. Like water left to itself, we would quickly revert to our original state. Therefore, our remaining comfort lies in the fact that even though we often turn away from God, He never turns away from us. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

The heart of the best person is like the wheels in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:16) – mutable, perplexed, hindered, and distracted within itself. Grace and flesh sway in different directions, lacking stability. But the constancy of motion in those wheels came from being joined to the living creatures, who did not return when they moved (Ezekiel 1:17-21). Likewise, the stability of the faithful in the covenant does not come from themselves, for they are like wheels, but from being united to Him through the Spirit of life, who cannot repent or turn away from the covenant of mercy He has made.

Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Let us now discuss the Priesthood of Christ, which is sealed and made immutable by God's oath. The Apostle explains that every high priest is ordained for men in matters pertaining to God, offering gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1). These sacrifices come in two forms

– Eucharistic, as testimonies of homage, duty, and service, and Hilaristic or expiatory, to wash away sins and appease God's justice.

In this regard, a Priest is meant to be a mediator, standing between God and men, impartial and faithful to God's justice and truth, yet compassionate and merciful towards the errors of men. Christ fulfills this role perfectly. He is zealous for His Father's righteousness and glory, declaring the righteousness of God (Romans 3:25), while also showing compassion towards the errors and miseries of His Church, expiating and removing them (Colossians 2:14).

Let us proceed to explore this Priesthood. First, we must understand the necessity for such a Priest. There can be no need for a Priest (in the sense intended here) unless there exists a guilty creature and a righteous God. If man were innocent in relation to God, there would be no need for atonement, and if God were unrighteous in dealing with man's sin, there would be no just debt of satisfaction.

Every creature is inherently subject to the Creator, for all things were made for His glory (Proverbs 16:4, Romans 9:21). This subjection implies a debt of service to the Creator. Creatures cannot escape being subject to some law and owing obedience to their Maker. God gives every creature its being with the purpose of carrying out specific operations according to His will. The most excellent creatures are ministers doing His pleasure (Psalm 103:20-21), while others have laws and rules of working set by His wisdom (Ezekiel 1:25-26, Psalm 104:19). No creature exists for itself alone, but all are directed towards the general end of serving and glorifying the Creator.

Considering this, we see the necessity for Christ's Priesthood as a mediator between guilty humanity and the righteous God. Christ's role is to offer the perfect sacrifice to reconcile and atone for

humanity's sins, fulfilling the requirement of justice and mercy. Through His Priesthood, Christ becomes the everlasting mediator, ensuring that God's mercy and justice are reconciled, and man's redemption is achieved. This is the foundation of Christ's unchangeable Priesthood, sealed by God's oath, and it is through Him that we find true comfort and assurance.

Secondly, no creature is inherently immutable in its being or the operations and services it owes to God. It is God's unique attribute to be without variation or shadow of changing (James 1:17, Malachi 3:6). There was a time when the Sun stood still, moved backward, and was filled with darkness, showing that creatures are not inherently unchangeable. The constancy observed in their motions comes from the wise providence that guides them towards their end without deviation (Ezekiel 1:17). However, when God's glory and will demand it, the laws of nature can be altered. Mountains tremble, seas cleave asunder, rivers run back, and the earth opens as the laws of nature stand still temporarily, as if suspended or repealed by the Supreme Cause (Ezekiel 1:24-25).

Thirdly, as man is a reasonable creature, God appointed him to serve Him in a rational manner, making choices based on judgment, discretion, and election. Our service to God is called a reasonable service (Romans 12:1). David is said to have chosen the way of truth and the precepts of the Lord, while Moses chose the afflictions of God's people and the reproaches of Christ over the pleasures of sin or the treasures of Egypt (Psalm 119:30, Hebrews 11:25-26). The phrase "Holiness" in Scripture is referred to as "Judgment," signifying that the Spirit of holiness works in the obedient by way of reason and conviction, thus called the "Spirit of Judgment" (Isaiah 4:4, John 16:11, Matthew 12:20). God did not establish any over-ruling law or determinating virtue over the operations of man, as in other

creatures, to allow man to truly work out of the conduct of judgment and election of will.

Fourthly, there can be no deviation from a reasonable service or true active obedience (properly called so) for the obedience of brutes and inanimate creatures (which is rather passive than active) without some intrinsic depravity and, consequently, some fundamental demerit or obligation to punishment. Guilt is the proper consequence of sin, resulting from it and inseparable. It is inconceivable that a creature, on its own and corrupted by its own reason and judgment, would willingly forsake the service of the One to whom it is naturally and inevitably subject. By doing so, it would become unprofitable, abominable, and unfit for the Master's use and the holy ends for which it was originally created. Such an act would also incur the displeasure and provoke the revenge of the righteous Creator, who, for good reasons, had placed it under such service.

Fifthly, from everything discussed so far, it becomes evident that God is not unjust but most holy and righteous. Firstly, He made a Law for man to obey by forbidding the eating of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This act demonstrated that man possessed nothing by personal, immediate, or underived right, but all was granted to him as a donation and indulgence. God had the right to make any Law, and man had the original power to obey due to his natural and necessary subjection to the Creator. Secondly, God attached a curse and penalty to the violation of that Law, which was a just demonstration of His glorious justice. The disobedience to that Law inevitably led to censure and punishment. Thirdly, God created man in a mutable condition, allowing him to stand or fall by his own election. This decision was based on the fact that God desired man's obedience to be guided by judgment and free choice, not by fatal necessity or absolute determination.

Sixthly, this is where the fall of man comes into the picture. It was a willful and chosen transgression of a Law under which man was justly created. Consequently, man was necessarily and rightfully subject to malediction if he transgressed. Being God's creature, he was subject to His will, and being His prisoner, he was justly subject to His wrath. The magnitude of this judgment was proportional to the justness of the precept, the ease of obedience, the unreasonableness of the transgression, and the certainty of the punishment.

Now, as a result of the fall of man, great mischief befell the world, and intolerable injury was inflicted upon the Creator: Firstly, man's dominion and authority in God's holy command were violated. Secondly, God's justice, truth, and power in His most righteous threats were despised. Thirdly, the pure and perfect Image in which man was created, characterized by righteousness and true holiness, was completely defaced. Fourthly, the glory that the creature should have brought to God through active service was lost and taken away. Thus, the restoration of things to their original order and perfection requires two essential accomplishments: First, a satisfaction of God's justice; and secondly, a reparation of man's nature. These two must be accomplished by a middle and common person who possesses zeal towards God for satisfaction and compassion towards man for restoration. This person must bear man's guilt and punishment to satisfy God's justice while being filled with God's Spirit and holiness to sanctify and repair human nature. The Priest mentioned here by David is that person.

At this point, the learned theologians present a sort of conflict among God's holy Attributes, and with the liberty granted by the Holy Spirit's language in holy Scripture, they speak of God in terms familiar to humans, as if He faced some difficulties and dilemmas

due to the conflicting demands of His various attributes: Justice demanded the condemnation of a sinful and therefore justly accursed creature, a demand that was upheld by His truth to fulfill the threatening, "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." On the other hand, Mercy pleaded for favor and compassion towards man, who was woefully deceived and overthrown by Satan, and Peace sought reconciliation and pacification between an offended Judge and an undone creature. In response, the infinite wisdom and counsel of the blessed Trinity devised a way that even the Angels of heaven marvel at and are astonished by, a way to reconcile these divergent pleas of His attributes. It was determined that a Priest, one from the blessed Trinity, would be the solution—a Priest ordained by the Father, voluntarily taking on the responsibility, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit for the task. This Priest would serve as both a Surety and a Head over sinful men—suffering their punishments and sanctifying their natures. As a Surety, He would pay man's debt to God, and as a Head, He would restore God's Image to man. Thus, in Him, mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (Psalms 85:10).

Therefore, the necessity for the Priest mentioned here is rooted in the sweet harmony and mutual alignment of God's Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace. This will become clearer by considering three aspects. Firstly, God had no intention to utterly destroy His creation, primarily for two reasons, as we can discern from the Scriptures. Firstly, due to His free and eternal love and the infinite delight He takes in mercy, which inclines Him to abundantly pardon and show loving kindness on earth (Micah 7:18; Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 103:8; Isaiah 55:7; Jeremiah 9:24). Secondly, because of His delight in being actively glorified through His creatures' voluntary service and subjection. He is glorified when they bear much fruit (John 15:8), and He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but

desires them to turn from their ways and live (Ezekiel 33:11). God achieves unbloody conquests by His patience, goodness, and forbearance, leading people to repentance and obedience to Christ. He delights in witnessing things in their original rectitude and beauty and considers Himself more glorified in their services than in their sufferings. God loves to have a Church and generation of people who serve Him in the midst of their enemies. He cherishes the gates of Zion, where He is solemnly worshipped and served, more than all the dwellings of Jacob (Psalm 87:2). Thus, He resolved not to destroy all humanity, lest there be no religion on earth. When the Angels fell, not all of them fell, and many continued to glorify Him through their service. However, when Adam fell, all of mankind fell in him, leaving no tree in this Paradise to bear fruit unto God. Therefore, God was pleased to restore mankind. These reasons explain why the Lord chose not to utterly destroy man, but they alone do not demonstrate the necessity of a Priest to mediate between God and man.

Secondly, God had no intention of allowing sin to go completely unpunished, and this is due to several reasons. Firstly, His profound hatred towards sin. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity; it provokes nausea and abhorrence in Him (Habakkuk 1:13; Psalm 5:6; Zechariah 8:17; Revelation 3:16; Amos 5:21-22; Isaiah 1:13-14). Secondly, His commitment to Truth and the Law established against sin, which He will not abolish in the slightest (Matthew 5:18). It would be utterly inappropriate, especially to God's wisdom and righteousness, for sin, which provokes the execution of punishment, to lead to the abrogation of His Law. The Law was established to prevent precisely that outcome. Thirdly, due to His terror and awe-inspiring Majesty, as God desires people always to tremble before Him and be persuaded away from sin (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). For this reason, people should always fear Him because He reserves the punishment of sin entirely to Himself. Our

Savior warned, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and thus, we ought to serve Him with reverence and godly fear, for He is a consuming fire (Hebrews 10:30; 12:28-29).

Thirdly, in addition to all this, there is the everlasting impotence of man to either satisfy God or repair himself. God's justice is infinite, and man wronged it; His glory is infinite, and man attempted to spoil and rob Him. On the other hand, man is both finite and greatly weakened by sin (for in the Apostle's words, to be a sinner and without strength are equivalent terms - Romans 5:6, 8). Thus, there can be no proportion between the finite and the infinite, and consequently, no satisfaction can bridge the gap. Man is entirely incapable of fulfilling God's will, as he is entirely carnal (Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14). He is also utterly incapable of enduring or breaking through God's wrath due to his lack of strength and obedience. When we combine all these factors, the absolute necessity for a Priest becomes evident. God will not execute the severity of His Law, as that would lead to the eternal loss of man's enjoyment of Him and deprive Him of the service and voluntary subjection of His creatures. Yet, He will not abolish His Law either, as that would enable the abuse of His justice, question the truth in His threats, and result in men neglecting His dreadful Majesty, just as the wooden king was ignored by the frogs in the fable. He will not punish those whom He loves because of His compassion, but He will not overlook the sins He hates because of His jealousy towards Himself. Since the fall, man and sin have become inseparably linked, like fire and heat, yet God will show mercy to man while exacting vengeance for sin. Thus, a way must be found to transfer man's sins to another person capable of bearing them and to attribute man's righteousness to another who can cover him. This is accomplished in our High Priest.

He bore the curse of the Law, fulfilled the righteousness of the Law, received the remission of man's sins, and through Him, all things were made new again. In Christ, the world had its surety making satisfaction to God's justice, and God had His Ambassador reconciling the world back to Himself. All these demonstrate the necessity for a Priest to restore fallen man.

From this, we learn, firstly, how much we ought to hate sin, as it brings God's Law, Justice, and power against us. Just as hateful as it is to God, it should be equally detestable to us, as it is the root cause of our misery, the vanity of creation, and God's dishonor. God will undoubtedly avenge sin; even if He spares us, He will not spare the sin, for which His beloved Son had to be punished. Therefore, we must not treat lightly what weighed so heavily on Christ's soul. What pleases us should not be what caused His suffering. We must not allow what brought Him to the cross to occupy a place of honor within us. We should not dare to esteem as light the sins for which Christ died. Many sins are regarded by others in practice, as well as by certain denominations in their doctrine and profession, as light and venial sins. Indeed, they are venial *per exoratore[m] Patris Christum* (as Tertullian phrases it) through Christ, who is a prevailing Advocate with the Father. However, let us not dare to consider as light that for which Christ died. It would have been disastrous for humanity if Christ had not borne, in His body on the cross, the guilt not only of our grave transgressions but also of our idle words, vain thoughts, and loose actions. If major sins were like the spear and nails, certainly minor sins were the thorns that pierced His head. Thus, we should follow David's example and hate every evil way because God hates it and will not let it go unpunished. We must avenge Christ's quarrel against the lusts within us that nailed Him to the cross and crucify them for Him. Christ was crucified so that our

old selves could be crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that we should no longer serve sin (Romans 6:6).

Once again, we witness the profound necessity for a Priest, highlighting our profound indebtedness to our merciful God, who graciously aided us in our direst need. We should love Him, recognizing that He loved us first. Our bodies and spirits should glorify the One who redeemed us at great cost. Like willing volunteers, we must fight for Him who triumphed on our behalf. Our gratitude should overflow towards Him, who showed such compassion to us when we were lost and without hope. We must stand in awe and reverence of the unfathomable richness of His wisdom and goodness, for He found a way to rescue us when we were hopelessly lost.

God had no need for us or our service, and He could have glorified Himself through our just destruction. It is beyond expression to describe both the mercy of God and the duty of man when considering how God summoned His profound wisdom and counsel to save a group of desperate fugitives who had allied with His greatest enemies to resist and dishonor Him. It would have perplexed the wisdom of the world, even though misery is often astute in devising images of deliverance, to find a way to reconcile God's wrath and man's sin and lead to heaven. It would have challenged the heavenly intelligences and the united counsel of the blessed Angels to harmonize God's mercy in saving man with His justice in condemning sin, to pour out hell on sin and yet bestow heaven on sinners.

If God had said to us, "You are miserable creatures, but I am a merciful God. I cannot deny the demands of my justice, nor can I deny the pleas of my mercy. Find me a sacrifice that satisfies my

justice, and I will accept it for all of you," where could man have found a creature with the capacity to hold or the strength to bear the sins of the world or God's wrath? Where could he have found, in heaven or on earth, among men or Angels, a Priest courageous enough to accompany such a sacrifice into the presence of such a consuming fire? Or where could he have discovered an Altar on which to offer and sanctify such a tremendous sacrifice? The misery of man was too profound and intricate for all the wisdom of creation to devise a deliverance.

So, if God Himself studied to save me, it is only fitting that I strive to serve Him. All my wisdom, counsel, thoughts, and desires should be directed towards living acceptably and gratefully unto Him, for He, who could have glorified Himself through my downfall, instead humbled and unglorified Himself for my salvation. Anyone who fails to grasp the horror of sin, the infinite hatred of God against it, the weight of His wrath, the curse of the Law, the mystery and vast dimensions of God's love in Christ, the preciousness of His sacrifice, the purpose and merit of His death, or any of those unfathomable riches of God manifested in the flesh, cannot truly crucify vanity, lust, pleasure, or any earthly attachment for Him again. Such a person finds more satisfaction and wisdom in their sinful ways and the deceptions of Satan and their fleshly mind than in the profound grace and merciful plans that the Angels yearn to understand.

Therefore, in conclusion, we should strive to deeply feel the necessity we have for such a Priest. This is precisely why so few avail themselves of this precious fountain - they place their trust in their own murky and cracked cisterns at home, never truly and profoundly recognizing their own needs. It is not enough to merely say or confess with words that I have nothing, or to know theoretically that

I lack; rather, it is the experience and keen awareness of my want that will drive me to seek relief from outside sources.

If a person were to seriously consider and ponder these thoughts: "I am heavily preoccupied with the affairs and transient occurrences of this present life, which will quickly vanish like a weaver's shuttle or a tale told. I have another eternal life to live after this is over. All my toil here is for the back, the belly, the purse, and future generations. But am I not closer to myself than to my money? Am I not closer to my soul than to my body or offspring? I must exist in that eternal life when neither I nor my descendants have backs to be clothed, bellies to be fed, or names to be upheld. So why am I not as deeply engaged and concerned about this as I am about the other? Do I not know that one day I must stand before the consuming fire, be weighed in the balance, and woe unto me if I am found wanting? I cannot appear before Him alone without a Priest to mediate for me, to shield and protect me from His fury, and to reconcile me to Him once more. My person needs a Priest, as it is burdened with infinite Guilt, which only He can cover. My nature needs a Priest, as it is veiled with deep and pervasive corruption, which only He can heal. My sins need a Priest, as they are exceedingly sinful in number and nature, which only He can forgive. My services need a Priest, as they are tainted and contaminated with many shortcomings and impurities - only with Him can they be accepted."

If people were to seriously contemplate such thoughts, it would be inconceivable that rational and thoughtful individuals, those who are deeply reflective in other matters, and who seek evidence and certainty, would neglect such a crucial matter as their connection with that Priest who alone can clothe their persons with His righteousness, cleanse their nature with His Spirit, wash away their sins with His blood, and sanctify their prayers, alms, and all religious

devotions with His incense and intercession. Otherwise, all of these would have to endure the trial of a fire that would consume them all. Instead, they are often overlooked and resolved upon by the deceptive presumptions of the heart rather than the testimony of God's Holy Spirit. Reflect on what I have said, and may the Lord grant you understanding in all things.

The second aspect we need to consider regarding the Priesthood of Christ is the qualification of the person fit to be our High Priest. Legal sacrifices were inadequate to cleanse away sin due to their inferiority. They did not actually expiate sin (Heb. 9:9, 12), but only served as reminders and commemorations of sin (Heb. 10:3). It was necessary for heavenly things themselves to be purified with better sacrifices (Heb. 9:23). Without their typical relation to Christ (Gal. 3:23) and the instrumental virtue derived from Him (Heb. 9:13), these sacrifices were entirely weak and unprofitable (Heb. 7:18), much like a shadow that has no substance of its own and can't provide refreshment without the body it belongs to.

This is evident, first, by their repetition, as once the conscience is purged and there is forgiveness of sin, there is no need for further offerings (Heb. 10:2-18). Repeated sacrifices indicate that the person for whom they are offered remains in the same condition as before. Secondly, their variety - there were various gifts and sacrifices for sins, such as bulls, goats, calves, and lambs (Heb. 5:1, 8; 8:3; 9:9, 12, 13). This shows that no single offering was sufficient to typify the full expiation accomplished by Christ, who offered only one sacrifice, perfecting forever those who are sanctified (Heb. 10:12, 14).

If legal sacrifices were inadequate, then it follows that legal Priests would also be unfit for such a significant task. After all, the goodness of the Priest depends on the virtue of the sacrifice they bring. The

Apostle provides several arguments to support this: First, the sinfulness of the Priests themselves - they needed expiation, making them incapable of mediating for others' sins (Heb. 5:3, 7, 27). Secondly, the carnal nature of their institution, being based on a temporary, perishable, and merely external ordinance (Heb. 7:16) that merely represented the examples and shadows of heavenly things. Thirdly, their mortality - they could not continue due to death, whereas our Priest must live to make intercession. Lastly, their continuous ministry and repetitive services, never reaching a point of completion that would allow the Priest to rest. They had to stand daily ministering and offering, while Christ, after offering one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:11, 12).

Now, let me show you the qualifications of this Priest. A Priest, in general, is appointed for people in matters pertaining to God, to offer sacrifices for the obtaining of righteousness and remission of sins.

Firstly, as Christ is a Priest, it is necessary for him to be a Mediator and a Surety between the parties involved, so that he may have someone to whom and others for whom he can offer a sacrifice. Every Priest acts as a mediator, standing between God and the people, intercepting and bearing the iniquity even of their sacred offerings. This mediation requires the consent of both parties involved, for a mediator cannot mediate for just one side. God gives His consent by laying our iniquities on Christ and making His soul an offering for sin, thereby declaring unity with us. Man gives consent by receiving Christ through faith, becoming not only God's friend but also His child (John 1:12).

Secondly, not every mediator is a Priest. Some mediate through entreaty, prayer, and request, obtaining but not deserving or

purchasing remission for others, such as Joab and the Widow of Tekoah on behalf of Absalom (2 Sam. 14). Yet there are mediators who act as Sureties, like Christ, who is not only a Mediator but also the Surety of a better covenant (Heb. 8:6; Heb. 7:22). He did not procure remission of our sins through favor and request; instead, He was set forth to declare the Righteousness of God (Rom. 3:25). As such, a mediator like Christ, standing between God and us, must also be a Priest, for the debt we owed to God was blood, and without shedding of blood, there is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

Thirdly, being such a Priest, Christ needed a Sacrifice that matched the debt owed to His Father. This debt was the forfeiture and subjection of our Souls and Bodies to God's wrath and the curse of the Law. Thus, Christ had to have a Soul and a Body to pay as a surety for our Souls and Bodies (Isaiah 53:10; Matt. 26:38; Heb. 10:5, 10; 1 Pet. 2:24). He had to be human to offer a suitable Sacrifice, so that it could stand in place of that which it represented. Furthermore, being our Kinsman, of our blood, He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:11, 14, 17; Deut. 18:15). This fittingness also allowed for the transmission of His Righteousness and the infusion of His Spirit onto us. The Sacrifice had to be without blemish or sin, so Christ, as High Priest, is Holy, Harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). He offered Himself without spot unto God, requiring no Sacrifice for Himself (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). Moreover, the Sacrifice had to be without any defects, so that it alone would be sufficient and effective in bringing perfection and salvation to humanity, leaving no lingering conscience of sin (Heb. 7:19, 10:14).

Fourthly, there needed to be a perfect Sacrifice, suitable for the purpose it was appointed for, and an Altar on which to offer it to the Father. It is the Altar that gives the offering its sanctification—God

accepts it through the Altar, and it gains virtue, merit, and value for the people. This Sacrifice had to satisfy God and justify humanity, accomplished through the Altar on which it was offered—the Divine Nature. Through the Eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself without blemish to God, purifying our consciences from dead works (Heb. 9:14). As God sanctified Himself as man, we too are sanctified through the virtue and merit of His Sacrifice (John 17:19). Christ had to be both God and man—the medium of participation—before He could be the medium of reconciliation. This allowed Him to bear the weight of sin and the Law and to offer a Sacrifice sufficient to satisfy God's Justice and redeem the sins of the world.

Fifthly, as the Virtue of the Deity was truly attributed to the Sacrifice (for it to have value and virtue), and that Sacrifice was Christ's own life, soul, and body, as He acted not only as Priest but also as Surety, His person stood in place of ours to pay the debt of blood. Therefore, He had to offer Himself (Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 2:24). His person needed to be equivalent in dignity and representation to all those He mediated for, and for whom He suffered. This made it necessary for God and man to be one in Christ, united in the same infinite person, the nature of both being His. The human nature could not subsist by itself, but found dependence and support in the person of the Son, existing within Him like a graft in a stock. From this unity of the person arises the Communication of properties between the natures. Because of the unity of the person, we attribute to one nature what is common to the other, not by confusion or transfusion, but by Communion in one end and in one person. For instance, Scriptures attribute human properties to the Divine Nature, like "the Lord of Life was slain" (Act. 3:15) or "God purchased the Church with his own blood" (Act. 20:28). Similarly, they attribute Divine properties to the Human Nature, such as "the Son of Man came down from heaven" (John. 3:13) and "the Son of Man shall ascend where he was

before" (John. 6:62). This Communication of properties allows virtue to be derived from the Altar to the Sacrifice, as it was the Lord of Glory who was crucified. His passions, in relation to the person who bore them, were both Human and Divine, for the person was God and Man. Secondly, the unity of the person supporting the Human Nature with the Divine enables one sacrifice to apply to all men. The Person of the Son is infinitely more than equivalent to the persons of all men, just like one diamond to many thousand pebbles. The obedience of this sacrifice was the obedience of God, hence possessing more virtue and pleasingness than the demerit or malignity in the sin of man.

Now, the Person in whom the two Natures are united is the second person in the Holy Trinity. He was the one against whom the first sin was primarily committed, as it was an aspiration to be wise and like God, and hence the mercy is all the more glorious because He undertook the expiation. Through Him, the world was created (Col. 1:16, 17; John 1:3), and therefore, when it was corrupted, He chose to renew it and bring many Sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). He bore the exact likeness of His Father (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15), and thus, through Him, we are renewed after God's image (Col. 3:10). Being the Son of God by Nature, His mercy is further magnified as He makes us Sons through Adoption, becoming joint heirs with Him, the heir of all things.

So, it was fitting for us to have such a High Priest who serves as an equal mediator between God and Man. He acts as an officer appointed to declare God's Righteousness toward man and as a surety ready to purchase our pardon and deliverance. Moreover, He becomes one with us in the fellowship of our nature, passions, infirmities, and temptations, readily suffering for us as He suffered with us. Simultaneously, He is one with God the Father in His Divine

Nature, thereby having the virtue of His sufferings and resurrection to satisfy God's Justice, justify our persons, sanctify our nature, purify our services, raise our dead bodies, and present us as a glorious Church to His Father, spotless and without blemish. All these attributes united in one Person, enabling the Divine Nature to infuse virtue, merit, and acceptability into the sufferings of the human, and the dignity of that person to exceed that of all other men. This person, one of the three, magnifies the glory of mercy even more remarkably. In summary, two things are required for our High Priest: a Grace of Union to unite the person as God and man in one Christ and a Grace of Unction to equip Him with the fullness of the Spirit, enabling Him to perform such a momentous task (Isaiah 11:2).

From all this, we should learn the following: First, to marvel at this great mystery of God manifested in the flesh and justified in the Spirit. It is beyond our understanding, the love that ordained God to become man, the Creator of the world willing to be despised as a worm, all for the salvation of rebellious beings who could have rightly been left in chains of darkness, destined for the same destruction as the fallen angels. Secondly, we must constantly bear in mind the enormity of sin, which no sacrifice could atone for except the blood of God Himself. God's Justice against sin is severe and unyielding, demanding nothing less than His own suffering and emptying of Himself to pacify it. Oh, consider the wretched condition of a person who must bear the weight of that wrath against sin, which even Christ Himself, with the strength of the Deity to support Him, the fullness of the Spirit to sanctify and prepare Him, the comforting message of an Angel, the assurance of being a beloved Son, and the voice of His Father from heaven testifying to Him, was deeply troubled and agonized by. Those who end up in hell will not

only endure His vengeance, but also the eternal loathing and abhorrence of God, making their torment even more unbearable.

Thirdly, we must offer praise to God for the great honour He has bestowed upon our human nature in the incarnation of His Son. In Christ, our nature is anointed with more grace and glory, and filled with more unimaginable perfections than all the angels in heaven combined. Although for a brief period, He was made lower than the angels for the purpose of His suffering, He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with all angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him. Indeed, we must express our gratitude for the infinite mercy displayed in the sacrifice of His Son, leading to our reconciliation and favour with Him, the justification of our persons from sin's guilt, the sanctification of our nature from sin's corruption, the inheritance reserved for us in heaven, and the communion and fellowship we have with Christ in His merits, power, privileges, and heavenly likeness. As the Apostle says, we are now considered as Sons of God, and though we do not fully grasp what we shall become, we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

From the previous discussion on the Personal Qualifications of our High Priest, we can easily discern the third aspect inquired about, pertaining to the Acts or Offices of Christ's Priesthood—or rather, the different facets of the same action, for it is all interconnected. There are two Acts involved in the execution of this office. The first is the Act of Oblation, where Christ offered Himself once for all as a complete sacrifice and full compensation for the sins of the entire world (Heb. 9:14, 26). Our debt to God was twofold. As His creatures, we owed Him active obedience by fulfilling the duties of the entire Law. And as His prisoners, we owed Him passive obedience by willingly enduring the curses of the Law. Christ was

made under this Law to redeem us by fulfilling all righteousness on our behalf, for we were under the precepts and penalties of the Law ourselves. Thus, He became a Sacrifice for sin to intercept the wrath that was breaking out upon us (2 Cor. 5:21).

God's great mercy is evident here, for He chose not to punish sinners directly, even though He would not spare sin. Instead, He accepted a Sacrifice, in the form of Christ, which stood before Him like the body of sin alone, under the title of a Sacrifice (Gal. 3:13). This Sacrifice is complete and ultimately formalised by Christ's willingness to offer Himself. He is referred to as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as He was silent and obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Phil. 2:8). Christ's death was necessary in regard to God the Father, as it was predetermined to happen (Acts 4:28). This preordination alone does not make it a Sacrifice, as God the Father was not the Priest, and the action of the Priest is what gives the essence of a Sacrifice to what is offered. In regard to men, His death was violent, as they put Him to death with wicked hands (Acts 2:23, 3:13). This also does not make it a Sacrifice, for they were not Priests, but rather murderers of Christ.

However, in regard to Himself, Christ's death was voluntary. He willingly laid down His life and had the power to take it up again (John 10:17, 18). This voluntary offering and obedience to God is what transforms it into a Sacrifice. He was delivered by God, by Judas and the Jews, and He yielded and gave Himself up (Gal. 2:20, Eph. 5:25). In the eyes of God, it was an act of justice and mercy (John 3:16, 17, Rom. 3:25). To men, it appeared as murder and cruelty (Acts 7:52), but in the perspective of Christ, it was an act of obedience and humility (Phil. 2:8). This voluntary act of Christ is what gives it the essence of a Sacrifice. Just as martyrdom, when

individuals give their lives for the truth and service of the Church, is called a Sacrifice (Phil. 2:17).

If it is objected here that Christ's death was against his own will, as he greatly feared it (Heb. 5:7) and earnestly prayed against it (Matt. 26:39), as if it was contrary to his desires, I would respond that this does not hinder but rather commend his willingness and obedience. In his private capacity as a Man, he had the same natural affections, desires, and aversions as other men. Therefore, he rightfully feared and avoided the bitter cup, knowing that he was about to face a woeful and arduous struggle. However, in his public role as a mediator, a surety, a merciful and faithful high Priest, he willingly and obediently submitted to it. This willingness, in his official capacity, was even greater because, in his nature, his will could not help but shrink from it. True willingness lies not in serving a cause that aligns with our natural inclinations but in serving despite nature's recoil and hesitation. While Christ's human nature desired to avoid the suffering, he showed obedience by willingly bearing the burden and submitting to God's will, even if it meant drinking the bitter cup.

The second Act in the work of Christ's Priesthood is the act of Application, or the virtual continuation of this Sacrifice until the end of the world, which is accomplished through the Intercession of Christ. This intercession requires power and superiority over all his enemies, breaking through the guilt of sin, the Curse of the Law, and the chains of death, which could not hold Him. Moses' vision of the burning bush serves as a striking analogy to Christ's Sacrifice. The burning bush represents the Sacrifice, the fire symbolises the suffering, and the bush's resilience against the fire signifies Christ's victory in overcoming all sufferings, which would have consumed any other man. Christ's power was evident in His Resurrection,

where He was declared the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4), and in His ascension, leading His enemies captive (Eph. 4:8) and sitting at the right hand of God, above all principalities and powers (Eph. 1:19, 20). These actions paved the way for presenting His Sacrifice before the mercy-seat, the consummation of His Priesthood. Without this, He would not have been a Priest. The Apostle states, "We have such an high Priest, who is set down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; for if he were on earth, he should not be a Priest, seeing that there are Priests who offer gifts according to the Law" (Heb. 8:1, 4). Just as the Priest offered outside the Holy place and then brought the blood into the holiest of all (Heb. 13:11), Christ's act or office was not complete until He entered with His blood and presented His offering in the holiest of all, not made with hands (Heb. 9:24). Therefore, if Christ had remained on earth, He would not have been a complete Priest since there were other Priests there, and they would not give way until His Priesthood was fulfilled. The entire symbolic system was to pass away when the reality—Christ's Oblation—was fully realized, just as the Levitical Priesthood would give place to the accomplished truth. Thus, Christ's Oblation represented the Truth foreshadowed in the Priests' sacrifices, and His entrance into heaven mirrored the Truth represented in the Priests' presentation of blood in the holiest of all. Both of these needed to be accomplished before the Levitical Priesthood could pass away.

Therefore, to fully explore the Priesthood of Christ, it is necessary to delve into the Doctrine of his Intercession at the right hand of his Father. The Apostle refers to this as the Appearing of Christ for us (Heb. 9:24), which is a legal term borrowed from human courts. In these courts, when the plaintiff or defendant is called, their attorney appears on their behalf. Likewise, when we are summoned by God's justice to defend ourselves against accusations, we have an Advocate

with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous—who stands up and intercedes for us (1 John 2:2). Just as the high Priest entered the sanctuary with the names of the twelve Tribes on his breast, Christ entered the holiest of all on our behalf. Thus, the Apostle says that Christ Apprehended us (Phil. 3:12), and we now sit together with him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).

The virtue of Christ's Sacrifice, through which he reconciled us to the Father, is demonstrated through two aspects of its Merit: First, there is expiation or satisfaction by way of price. Second, there is an Inheritance obtained through purchase and acquisition (Eph. 1:14). Christ, for two purposes, was made of a woman and placed under the Law (Gal. 4:4): to redeem us from the curse under which we lay, and to regain the inheritance we had forfeited. In this context, adoption refers to every good thing that belongs to us as part of our sonship with Christ, including the Inheritance of glory (Rom. 8:17, 23).

All of this was accomplished through the obedience of Christ's death, which served as the act of impetration or procurement in the treaty between God and Christ. However, further execution, real effectualness, and actual application of these benefits to us were needed. Just as it had to satisfy and purchase from God's perspective, it also had to provide actual redemption and inheritance from our perspective. This is achieved through the intercession of Christ, which serves as the commemoration, or rather continuation, of his Sacrifice. He offered the Sacrifice once, yet he remains a Priest forever because the Sacrifice once offered forever remains before the mercy-seat. This process can be likened to the Legal Oblations, where first, the beast was slain on the Altar, and then the blood, together with incense, was brought before the mercy-seat (Leviticus 16:11-15).

Thus, Christ was first slain, and then by his own blood, he entered into the holy place (Hebrews 9:12, 10:12). The sacrifice occurred on earth, outside the gate, but the application or conferring of redemption happened in heaven (Hebrews 13:11-12). The sacrifice was based solely on Christ's death as its merit, but its application was brought about by Christ's life as its immediate cause. His death obtained redemption for us, and his life conferred it upon us. As a result, in the Scriptures, our justification and salvation are attributed to the life of Christ.

Christ was delivered for our offenses and rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25). If Christ had not been raised, our faith would be in vain, and we would still be in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). His resurrection is what convinces the world of righteousness because he goes to the Father (John 16:10). Furthermore, because Christ lives, we shall live also (John 14:19). If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (Romans 6:8). Having been made perfect or consecrated forever, Christ became the Author of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8, 7:28). He is able to save perfectly because he lives forever (Hebrews 7:25). While we were reconciled in his death, it was not enough for our acquittal and entry. Christ had to be our forerunner, leading the way for us. Thus, the Apostle emphasizes the importance of Christ's life in a "much more" sense. Being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:10), not in terms of merit, but in terms of efficacy for us.

To illustrate, just as in buying land, laying down the price grants a meritorious interest, but it is the delivering of the deeds, the resigning of the property, and the yielding up of possession that bestows an actual interest in what has been purchased. Similarly, Christ's death deserved our salvation, but it is through his intercession and life that salvation is applied to us. It was not only

Christ's death that mattered but his victorious dying, making it impossible for death to hold him (Acts 2:24), and this was the foundation of our salvation.

Christ could not justify us until he himself was declared justified. Hence, the Apostle asserts that he was justified by the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16), namely, by the Spirit that quickened him (Romans 1:4, 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18). When Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, he was counted among transgressors (Mark 15:28). He bore our sins on the tree and died as a guilty person under the wrongs of men and the wrath of God. However, when he was quickened by the Spirit of holiness, he cast off the sins of the world from his shoulders and demonstrated that he was a righteous person, and his righteousness was the righteousness of the world.

Our faith and hope began in Christ's death, but they were fulfilled in his life. He was the Author of our faith by enduring the cross, and he was the Finisher of it by sitting down at the right hand of God's throne (Hebrews 12:2). The Apostle sums it all up, stating that it is God who justifies and Christ who died and rose again, now at the right hand of God, interceding for us (Romans 8:33-34).

Now, let's delve more deeply into the nature and excellence of Christ's Intercession. It consists of several elements. First, it involves his appearance, presenting himself as a public person, a mediator, a sponsor, and a pledge on our behalf. Just as Judah acted as a mediator and surety for his brother Benjamin before his father, as seen in Genesis 43:8-9, and as Paul did for Onesimus in Philemon 1:9-10, offering himself to bear the blame, so Christ serves as both a mediator and surety for us (Hebrews 7:22, 8:6).

Secondly, Christ presents his merits as a public satisfaction for the debt of sin and the price for the purchase of glory. The Justice of God

demanded satisfaction, and that's why Christ, called an Advocate, is also referred to as a Propitiation in 1 John 2:2. He intercedes for us based on the right and virtue of the price he paid. Romans 8:32 highlights that God spared not his Son but delivered him up for us all, dealing with him in the full rigor of his Justice.

Thirdly, Christ intercedes on our behalf by presenting his desires, will, requests, and interpellations, applying them to us. For example, in John 17:24, Christ says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

Fourthly, the Father responds positively to Christ's intercession, as Christ is in the Father's bosom, and the Father always hears him (John 11:42). The Father is well pleased with Christ (Matthew 17:5), having called him to this office of being the Master of Requests on behalf of his Church, promising to hear his petitions (Psalm 2:8).

This intercessory role of Christ can be likened to a situation in which Aeschylus, the Tragedian, was accused of impiety, and his brother Aemylus acted as his Advocate, demonstrating his service to the state by revealing the loss of his hand. This act vindicated Aeschylus. Similarly, Zaleucus, who punished his own son for adultery, later interceded and mitigated the punishment. To draw a closer parallel, when a hand steals, the tongue may intercede for a milder sentence. Christ, in his divine preordination, power, and command, could justly suffer on our behalf (John 10:18, 1 Corinthians 6:19), and in virtue of his sufferings, he intercedes on our behalf for all that his sufferings rightfully deserved, whether for the expiation of sin or the purchase of salvation. In this sense, the Apostle refers to the blood of Christ as a speaking or interceding blood (Hebrews 12:24).

From all of this, we can observe the impiety of the Popish Doctrine, which distinguishes between Mediators of Redemption and

Mediators of Intercession. They claim that although the Saints are not redeemers of the world, they act as "courtiers of heaven," mediating intercession for us, and thus we can seek them out. To this, I respond that we must distinguish between interceding or praying for another in different contexts. There is private prayer and public prayer, as some learned men have observed in Christ's own prayers. There's also praying out of charity, or out of justice and office, and praying out of humility with fear and trembling, or out of authority. The latter is not strictly prayer, as prayer involves making requests for unmerited things that we expect from God's gracious promise, not as a transaction of any price or purchase. Instead, it is presenting the will and good pleasure of Christ to his Father, seeking his seal and consent, desiring something in line with his authority to bestow.

Regarding the Saints in heaven and the blessed Angels, it seems to be granted by Cyprian and Jerome, and I see no harm in affirming this if rightly understood. They do pray for the state of the Church militant, as charity remains after this life. However, if so, they do it out of a habit of charity towards the general condition of the Church, not out of an office of mediation. They are not public persons appointed to pray for the Church in general or to present the prayers of particular individuals to God on their behalf. Being such a mediator belongs only to Christ, as true intercession is a public and authoritative act founded on the satisfactory merits of the person interceding. One cannot be a proper Advocate without being a propitiation as well.

This is where the Papists err, for they affirm that the intercession of the Saints with God for us is grounded upon the virtue of their own merits. They pray to the Saints to intercede for them, seeking the benefit of their merits. This is a wicked doctrine for several reasons.

Firstly, it shares the glory of Christ and gives it to others. Secondly, it attributes God's worship to others. Thirdly, under the pretense of modesty and humility, it leads to a cursed boldness of denying the faith, driving people away from seeking God directly and turning them to servants (the Saints), directly contradicting the Apostle's instruction to make our requests known to God (Philippians 4:6). The Apostle assures us that through Christ, we have boldness to approach God (Hebrews 10:19), and the Spirit grants us free access (Ephesians 2:18). But the Papist doctrine encourages people to turn to Saints and Angels, suggesting that sinful men cannot dare to present themselves or their services to God on their own and must rely on the Saints who are supposedly in more favor with God.

The Doctrine of Christ's intercession brings many great benefits to the Church of God. Firstly, it fosters our fellowship with the Father and his Son, as Jesus prayed, "I pray for these, that as thou Father art in me and I in thee, they also may be one in us" (John 17:21). Secondly, it leads to the gift of the Holy Ghost, as Jesus said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17). All the comforts and workings of the Spirit in our hearts are fruits of Christ's intercession.

Thirdly, it offers protection against all our spiritual enemies, as it is Christ who died, rose again, and now makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34). Jesus prayed for our safety, saying, "I pray that thou wouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). However, one may wonder how this part of Christ's intercession is fulfilled when the faithful are still subject to evils, corruptions, and temptations. To understand this, we must recognize that Christ's intercession is available to the faithful immediately, but it operates in a manner suited to the present condition of the Church, allowing room for

another life (eternity). Therefore, we must not expect all things to be accomplished immediately. It is like the Sun shining on the Moon gradually until it reaches its full light, or a King granting a pardon that must be written, sealed, and executed word by word, line by line, and action by action. The execution of our holiness follows a similar order, with Christ's Spirit and grace being distributed in ways most suitable to a life of faith and our hope in a better Kingdom. When Christ prayed for Peter's faith not to fail, it did shake and totter, yet the prayer was not for no failure at all, but to prevent utter and complete failure.

Fourthly, Christ's intercession assures us of our sitting in heavenly places. As Jesus sits there in our flesh and on our behalf, we are raised up together and made to sit with him (Ephesians 2:6). He serves as our Center, being near to us through the unity of the same nature, the quality of his office as our Sponsor, and the Communion of his Spirit (Colossians 3:1, 2).

Fifthly, Christ's intercession provides strength against our sins. Through his Priesthood in heaven, which is his Intercession, the Apostle deduces the writing of the Law in our hearts (Hebrews 8:4, 6, 9, 10). This means that Christ's intercession empowers us to resist sin and live in accordance with God's will.

Sixthly, Christ's intercession brings about the sanctification of our services. The Levitical Priests served as a type, bearing the iniquity of the holy things of the children of Israel so that they might be accepted (Exodus 28:38). Christ, being the Angel of the Covenant, possesses a golden Censer to offer up the prayers of the Saints (Revelation 8:3). There are three-fold evils in man. First, there is an Evil of state or condition under the guilt of sin. Secondly, there is an Evil of nature, corrupted by sin, and with faculties inclined away

from good. Thirdly, there is an Evil in all our services, due to the adherence of sin. Just as touching an unclean thing makes it unclean, and the best wine mixed with water loses much of its strength and native spirits.

Now, Christ, through His righteousness and merits, justifies our persons, absolving us from the guilt of sin. By His grace and Spirit, He purifies our faculties and treats the corruption of sin that clings to us. Lastly, through His incense and intercession, our services are cleansed from the noisomeness and adherence of sin, so that the Lord perceives in them a sweet savor. The Apostle likens the contributions of the Saints towards his necessities to "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, and well pleasing unto God" (Philippians 4:18, Genesis 8:21). This benefit extends throughout the whole life of a Christian. All the ordinary works of our calling, being parts of our service unto God, for we work as servants to the same Master, are sanctified to us and made acceptable to the Father through the intercession of His Son. Christ has made us Priests, enabling us to offer all our sacrifices with acceptance upon this Altar (Revelation 1:6, 1 Peter 2:5, Isaiah 56:7).

Seventhly, there is the inward intercession of the soul for itself, which echoes Christ's intercession in our hearts. The Spirit intercedes for us with groans that cannot be expressed (Romans 8:26). The same Spirit groans within us and, more fully and distinctly, prays for us through Christ. Our Saviour says, "I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). As I understand it, He made this prayer in the world and left a record and pattern of it in the Church. This way, when believers feel the same heavenly desires kindled in their hearts, they can find comfort in the workings of that Spirit of prayer within

them, testifying to the quality of the intercession He will make for them in heaven.

Eighthly, we are to show patience and unweariedness in God's service. Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith. He endured the Cross and despised the shame for the joy set before Him, and now He sits at the right hand of the Throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Lastly, we should approach the throne of Grace with confidence. We have a great high Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has ascended into heaven. Let us hold fast to our profession and come boldly to the throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:14-16). Moreover, after offering one Sacrifice for sins forever, He sat down on the right hand of God, awaiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. From this, the Apostle infers that we have the boldness to enter into the Holiest through the blood of Jesus, and with Him as our high Priest over the house of God, we can draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:12-23).

And all these things are certain to us in the virtue of Christ's Intercession. Firstly, because the Father hears and answers Him (John 11:42, 12:28), and appointed Him to this office (Hebrews 5:4, 5). Secondly, because the Father loves us; Christ does not need to pray to the Father for us, as the Father Himself loves us because we have loved Christ (John 16:26, 27). Thirdly, as Christ intercedes for us, He also has the power to confer what He prays for. He said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter" (John 14:16), and "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Whatever Christ obtained through His prayer, He bestows upon us through His power. Thus, in the Psalms, it is said that He received gifts for men

(Psalm 68:18), and in Ephesians, He gives gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8). Having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He poured out this gift on the Church (Acts 2:33). Such are the great and certain benefits that come to the Church through Christ's Intercession.

Now, turning to the fourth aspect of Christ's Priesthood, we inquire about its Virtue and fruits, which can be summed up in two general words: there is the payment of our debt (*Solutio debiti*), redeeming us from under the Law, and there is an overplus and redundancy of merit (*Redundantia meriti*), acquiring an inheritance and privileges for us. Christ's obedience has a twofold relation: firstly, the relation of a legal righteousness, as it precisely and fully conforms to the Law, will, and decree of the Father. Secondly, there is the relation of a merit beyond the Law, for though it was our debt that we owed necessarily, it was also a surplus that He voluntarily took upon Himself through covenant with the Father, as it was the blood and obedience of God Himself.

Firstly, let us consider Christ's payment of the debt we owed to God, in which he is said to bear our sins. To bear sin means to carry the burden of guilt and the curse of the Law upon oneself. As it is written, "he that troubleth you, shall bear his judgment" (Galatians 5:10). The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20). Similarly, wrath is said to abide on a person (John 3:36), and sin is said to be retained or held in its place (John 20:23). Christ, by bearing our sins in his body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53:4,6), took them off from us, canceled the obligations of the Law against us, and satisfied the offended Justice by fulfilling the Law, which was our debt of service. It was necessary for him to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), and he endured

the Cross, curse, bloody agony, and ignominy of that death, which was the debt of suffering (Hebrews 12:2). The covenant between him and his Father decreed that all this would be done by him as our Head and surety, and thus he tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9, Romans 5:8). A Commutation was allowed, as he stood in our stead, his soul a sacrifice, his life a price, and his death a conquest of ours. Therefore, he is called a price or ransom for all those in whose place he was made sin and a curse (2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13). Although he did not bear any Demerit or inherent guilt of sin (for that arises from sin either personally inherent or naturally imputed, and he, to whom it is accounted, was seminally and naturally descended from the one from whom it is derived), he did bear the guilt of sin in the sense of obligation and subjection to punishment as our surety, being one with us in the sight of God's court of justice, who had deserved punishment imputed unto him.

The fruit of this is the expiation or remission of our sins through the imputing of his righteousness unto us. As he said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his glory" (Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 8:12). This is indeed a remarkable mercy, to have so many thousand talents forgiven, to have such an infinite weight lifted from our consciences, and to have the penalty and curse of so many sins removed from us. Naturally, we were heirs of everlasting vengeance, objects of God's hatred and fiery indignation, exiles from the presence of his glory, vessels filled with misery, written within and without with curses, destined for endless wretchedness. Such was the condition of a sinner, and from all this the mercy of God delivers us.

The way in which Christ's satisfaction becomes beneficial to us for the remission of sin and righteousness is through Imputation, as stated in Romans 4:3, 5, 8, 5:19. No one can stand before God's justice, for He is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). No flesh can be righteous if judged, as God's eyes are too pure to behold iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13) since they are not human eyes (Job 10:4). Now, the entire world is guilty before God and falls short of His glory, lying in wickedness (1 John 5:19). Therefore, we must be justified by a foreign righteousness equal to the offended justice, which is the gracious imputation of God's righteousness to us. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:19–24).

To explain this point of justification by imputed righteousness, we must understand that two things are necessary to consider a man righteous. Firstly, there must be a righteousness that is fit and capable of justifying. Secondly, there must be a rightful ownership or propriety to it, through which it actually justifies. So, let us first inquire what this righteousness is that justifies a person. Righteousness consists of a relation of uprightness and conformity. While God made man upright, they have sought many inventions and turned to crooked paths of their own (Ecclesiastes 7:29, Deuteronomy 32:5). The wicked love crooked ways, wandering aimlessly in their own course (Jeremiah 31:22, Hosea 4:16), whereas the righteous love straight paths (Hebrews 12:13, Psalm 5:8) because righteousness is based on rectitude. This presupposes a Rule to which this conformity must refer. The original prototype and Rule of holiness is God's righteousness itself, as far as His Image is communicable to the creature, or at least as it was initially implanted in man. As it is said, "Be ye perfect, as your father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This does not refer to His infinite perfection (for Adam's sin was trying to be like God in absolute and

independent excellence), but to that perfection of His which is presented to us as an Image and pattern for us to follow. Therefore, the secondary rule of righteousness, or rather the same rule revealed to us, is the Law of God written in His Word, in which God's holiness, as our example, manifests itself to the soul like the sun's light shines through the beam that carries it. Now, in the Law, there are two things: one principal, obedience; the other secondary, malediction, based on the assumption of disobedience. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). Therefore, for justification, two things are required upon the assumption of man's sin: the expiation of sin by suffering the curse and the fulfillment of righteousness anew. While man, in his created state, could have been justified by obedience alone, a fallen man cannot appear righteous before God except through a twofold obedience: one passive, for the satisfaction of God's vindictive justice since we are His prisoners; the other active, proportionate to His remunerative justice since we are His creatures.

But besides the existence of righteousness, there is also a requirement of propriety in the person to be justified, so that it may be their righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16). Now, there can be two types of propriety to righteousness, depending on two different ways of unity. First, there is personal and individual unity, whereby a person is one in themselves, and thus has propriety to a duty performed because it is done in their own person and by themselves alone. Secondly, there is a common unity, whereby a person is one with another, or whereby many are one in some primary aspect, which is the source and origin of them all. This is the basis of imputed righteousness, for under the Law, a person is justified by performing complete obedience in their own person. The Law requires righteousness to be carried out by a created and inherent strength,

and it does not assume or allow any shared principle of righteousness beyond a person themselves. Therefore, legal righteousness is properly referred to as "Our own righteousness," and it stands in contrast to the righteousness of God or that which is imputed by grace (Romans 10:3, Philippians 3:8-9). We see then that in the matter of imputation, whether it is of sin or righteousness, there must always be some form of unity between the parties - the one whose action is imputed and the other to whom it is imputed. It would be absurd and against reason to imagine that the fall of Angels should be imputed to humans because humans had no unity in nature or covenant with the Angels, as we have both with Adam.

This common unity can be of two kinds: either natural, as in the case of Adam, in whom we were seminally contained and originally represented. It was only through Adam that a covenant could be made with all of mankind, reaching equally to all individuals across ages and places. Or voluntary, as in the relationship between a person and their surety, where, in the eyes of the law, they are treated as one person. This unity must be mutual, with one party undertaking to act on behalf of the other, and the other consenting and yielding to it. Such is the relationship between us and Christ, for Christ voluntarily took on the responsibility for us, and we, by the Spirit of Christ, are persuaded and willingly consent to cast our sins upon Him and lay hold of Him in faith.

In addition to the willingness of the parties involved, there is also the need for the consent of the Judge, to whom the debt is owed and whose jurisdiction is in question. The Judge must appoint a form of proceeding for the recovery of His right that aligns with the honor of His person and the satisfaction of His justice. In this regard, God could have refused a surety and demanded the entire debt from the very persons who incurred it due to their fault. So, through God's

grace, we have fellowship with the second Adam just as we have it through nature with the first (1 Corinthians 15:45-48).

Therefore, for imputation to occur between Christ and us, there must be unity. This is why we are said to be justified by faith, and faith is imputed as righteousness (Romans 4:5). However, it is not the mere act of believing (*credere*) itself that is accounted as righteousness, as if it were a work proceeding from us by grace. Instead, faith serves as the bond of union between us and Christ, allowing His righteousness to be imputed to us. Through faith, we are united with Christ and partake in His sufferings and resurrection. When Christ was lifted up on the cross, we, in a sense, were there too. Just as we were all in paradise through our natural and seminal connection with Adam, so we are spiritually united with Christ, with faith being begotten in us, resulting in an actual existence of grace from Him, just as our real existence is from Adam.

In fulfilling all righteousness for us, Christ accomplished it in two ways: through His passive meriting and making satisfaction for the remission of sins, and through His active covering of our inabilities by performing what we could not do for ourselves. He suffered our punishment, being wounded and bruised for our transgressions, and through His stripes, we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

Now, if it is objected that an innocent person should not suffer for a guilty one because guilt is inseparable from sin, we must note that there are two types of guilt. One arises from inherent sin, which is the deserving of punishment in ourselves. The other comes from imputed sin, not through natural union (as in the case of Adam's sin imputed to us) but through voluntary acceptance as a surety. In this latter case, guilt refers to the willing submission to the punishment that another deserved.

Among sinful humans, it is true that the son shall not bear the punishment of the father's sin because they are personally distinct, not appointed to do so, not able to bear them as Christ did for us, and already have their own sins to bear. However, if the son willingly goes along with the father in sinning, it is not strange for him to suffer the consequences, as he becomes a participant in the continuation of the same offense. In this situation, there is willingness in the cause for the punishment too.

Now, in addressing the question of whether an innocent person may suffer for a guilty one, we must first note that God, in His dominion over all things, has the authority to allow pains to befall an innocent person, as seen in the case of Christ. What cause for complaint could any creature have against God if He were to create it in fire and make its dwelling a source of pain? Indeed, don't we ourselves, without cruelty, subject many creatures who haven't wronged us to pain on various occasions?

Secondly, it is not universally unjust for one to bear the punishment of another's sin. We see that the infants of Sodom, Babylon, Egypt, Corah, Dathan, and Abiram were affected by the punishment of sins they themselves had not committed. The Lord reserved the punishment of the fathers for their children, as He punished the sins of three hundred and ninety years all at once (Ezekiel 4:2, 5). Although Cham committed the sin, Canaan was cursed for it (Genesis 9:22, 25). Gehezies alone committed the sin, but the leprosy did not affect only him; it extended to his posterity (2 Kings 5:27). The sin of crucifying Christ was committed solely by the Jews of that age, but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost, even to this day (Matthew 27:25, 1 Thessalonians 2:16). Achan trespassed alone, but he did not perish alone; his sons, daughters, and all that he had with

him also suffered (Joshua 7:24, 1 Kings 21:21, Judges 9:56, 1 Kings 2:33, Jeremiah 22:30).

Thirdly, the fairness of this matter concerning Christ becomes evident when all parties involved are glorified and willing. In this case, no harm is done to anyone. Firstly, all parties are glorified. The Father is glorified in the obedience of His Son, as stated in John 12:27-28 and John 17:4. The Son is glorified, having been made lower than the Angels, but then crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:7, John 17:5). Even the sinner is glorified as they behold Christ's glory (John 17:24).

Secondly, all parties are willing. The Father willingly ordained Christ for this purpose (Acts 4:27-28) and bestowed Him upon us out of love and tender compassion (John 3:16). He found great satisfaction in this divine acceptance (Matthew 17:5) and used His wonderful wisdom to fit it for the manifestation of His glory and mercy, reconciling Him with His creation and exalting His Son. The Son willingly submitted to the task (Hebrews 10:9) and freely loved us, giving Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). Lastly, the sinner is willing, accepting and relying upon Christ's sacrifice, as discussed at length in the previous verses.

In a scenario where all parties are willing and glorified, no injustice is done to anyone.

Fourthly, for an innocent person to suffer justly and equitably on behalf of the guilty, there must be an intimate and close connection between the one who suffers and those who should have borne the consequences. Different types of unions and connections exist: political, as in a state where a few righteous individuals may justly bear the temporary hardships resulting from the sins of the whole society, or where the people may suffer for the sins of their leaders (2

Samuel 24:17, 1 Samuel 12:25); natural, as seen between parents and children, where the sins of one can affect the innocent offspring (Numbers 16:27, 33); mystical, as in the relationship between a man and his wife, where the sins of one may have repercussions on the other (Amos 7:17); stipulatory and consensual, as in the case of sureties or pledges, who bear the punishment for the sins of others they represent (1 Kings 20:39-42); and possessory, as between a man and his possessions, where an individual offers as a sin offering only what rightfully belongs to them (Leviticus 5:6, 7).

In some manner, there was a connection between Christ and us in all these respects. He lived among humanity, belonging to the tribe and society in which He resided, and thus shared in the Roman rule under which the people lived and paid tribute to Caesar. As a man, He had the nature and essence of humanity, subject to all human and natural weaknesses but without sin. He was mystically united with His Church, taking responsibility for the Church's debts and wrongdoings. He entered into a covenant and became a surety for humanity, thus being liable for their obligations. Lastly, He became, in a sense, the possession of His Church, and through faith and prayer, we can present Him to the Father as our own armor and protection against God's wrath.

Secondly, in the innocent person suffering for another, it is necessary for them to have full authority over that from which they partake in their suffering. In the case of suretyship, a person has control over their own resources and may therefore pledge to pay another's debt. However, they do not have control over their own life, and thus may not sacrifice their own life for the release of another from death, except in cases where the Word of God explicitly permits and authorizes it. Christ, on the other hand, had full dominion over His own life and possessed the power to lay it down and take it up.

Despite being subject to the Law in all respects like us, He had the authority, not solely due to the hypostatic union, which did not exempt Him from any obligations of the Law during that time, but rather because of a specific command, constitution, and designation to the service of laying down His life. As He stated, "This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

Lastly, it is necessary that this power be sufficient to endure the sufferings He takes upon Himself and to reclaim His life and former state. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up." So, in summary, according to God's just, wise, and merciful will, through His own obedient and voluntary acceptance, Christ Jesus, united with us in a profound and secret union, possessed the full authority to lay down His life and take it up again, all in accordance with a special command and permission given by His Father. In doing so, He justly bore the punishment of those with whom He had such a close union, who themselves could not have endured it with obedience in their own persons, or with the same glory to God's justice, mercy, and wisdom.

Now, if it is objected that the Scriptures speak of sin being pardoned, which might seem contrary to this concept of payment and satisfaction, the answer lies in the following. First, in the strictness of the Law, the transgressor himself must personally bear the penalty prescribed, for the Law proclaims, "In the day that thou eatest thou shalt die," and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." According to this, every individual shall bear their own burden. Thus, the Law, in its strictness, does not permit any substitution or commutation of one person for another. Secondly, for another person's suffering to bring about the discharge of the guilty party, it requires the will, consent, and mercy of the one to whom the punishment belongs. Their overruling power must allow, not for the altering of the Law's

demands, but for a dispensation regarding the manner of execution and the strictness that otherwise binds wrath solely upon the one deserving of it. In this way, we witness the sweet concurrence of two things: a prior satisfaction by paying the debt and, secondly, a true pardon and remission of that debt to the one for whom it should have been paid. Out of mercy, the rigour of the Law, which would not otherwise permit another to pay on their behalf, is dispensed with.

So we see how Christ suffered our punishment. Secondly, He fulfilled all acts of obedience and righteousness for us; indeed, as a high Priest, He was fitting for us—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He came into the world solely for our sake, and everything He did, He did it for us. Just as the colour of a glass is made by the influence of the Sun's rays shining through it, not inherent in the glass but reflecting upon it as an external quality, in a similar manner, the righteousness of Christ is so imputed to us by the favour of God that we are, in a gracious aspect before God, accounted righteous too. In this sense, I understand the words, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Numbers 23:21). Though indeed there may be iniquity, the Lord looks upon them as clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and thus does not see their inherent iniquity, just as an eye sees the colour of a glass in the wall and cannot perceive its own inherent colour, even though it knows it is present.

Now, we can derive a twofold benefit from this doctrine of Justification by Christ's righteousness imputed. First, it teaches us the great duty of self-denial. We must understand that no righteousness will justify us except Christ's, and His righteousness cannot coexist with the assertion of our own. Undoubtedly, this is one of the most challenging aspects of Christian faith—to place our

trust solely in Christ for our salvation. While we may engage in holy duties such as hearing, reading, praying, meditating, giving alms, or performing acts of charity and devotion, we must always reject any reliance on ourselves and our works. After performing all these actions, we should still regard ourselves as unprofitable servants deserving of rebuke. We must not find satisfaction in our good deeds but acknowledge the insignificance of our solemn services. Even after performing all the good works we can, we should echo Nehemiah, saying, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy" (Nehemiah 13:22), and with David, "To thee, O Lord, belong mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Psalm 62:12). We must recognize that it is God's mercy to reward us based on the uprightness of our works, for He could rightfully judge us for the imperfection of our deeds. We should attribute the praise of our efforts to God while taking upon ourselves the shame of polluting His works within us. The doctrine of justification by works stands in direct opposition to the merits of Christ and His redemption of the world. Although we emphasize the importance of good works in our doctrine, prayers, and exhortations to the people, we hold firm that no faith justifies us before God except a faith that produces good works. While no one can be righteous in the sight of men without holiness, we dare not place our trust in works as the means by which we hope to stand or fall before God's tribunal. Our works, even when done with love and thankfulness to Christ and through the workings of His Spirit in our hearts, are still mingled with our corruptions and therefore require a high Priest to atone for their iniquity. We recognize that in Christ, we have enough to depend on, while in ourselves, we can never find enough. This confidence is grounded in the understanding that if God intended to justify us by works, He would have granted us sufficient grace to fulfil the entire Law, and He would not have left us with a daily prayer to repeat—a prayer that serves as a model for all

our other prayers—asking for forgiveness for our trespasses. How can anyone claim to be justified by works when they must daily confess, "Lord, forgive me my sins, and be merciful unto me, a sinner"? Even if we were able to perfectly fulfil the Law, we would still require justification for sins previously committed, and the only way to achieve this is by laying hold of Christ's satisfaction and sufferings through faith.

Secondly, this doctrine can instill confidence in us against all sins, corruptions, and temptations. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died," etc. Satan is the darkest enemy, and sin is the worst thing he can accuse me of or to which my soul can be subject, for Hell is not as evil as sin. Hell may be of God's making, but sin is solely of my own doing. Hell is made against me, but sin is committed against God. Yet, I know that Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil and answer his arguments and reasonings. Satan says, "You cannot stand before God, for you are a grievous sinner, and He is a devouring fire." But faith responds, "Christ is able to cover and cure my sin, to make it vanish like mist, and cast it as far from me as the East is from the West." Satan counters, "But you have nothing to do with Christ; your sins are too many and too foul." Surely, the blood of Christ is more acceptable to my soul and far more honourable and precious in itself when it covers a multitude of sins. Paul was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious—the greatest of all sinners—and yet he obtained mercy to be a pattern of longsuffering for those who would believe in Christ later. If I had as much sin on my soul as you allege, faith could unload it all onto Christ, and He could swallow them all up in His mercy. But you claim I have nothing to do with Him because I continue in my sin. Yet, does He not call me, invite me, beseech me, and command me to come to Him? If I have the heart to answer His call, He has the hand

to draw me to Himself, even if all the gates of Hell, powers of darkness, or sins of the world stand in the way. But you say I do not obey this call. True, it is pitiful that I am dull of hearing and slow to follow Christ's voice. I lack much faith, but You, Lord, do not quench the smoking flax or break the bruised reed. I believe, and You are able to help my unbelief. I am resolved to trust in Your mercy, to discard all my own burdens, and cling only to this plank of salvation. Yet, faith purifies the heart, whereas you claim I am still unclean. It is true; I am a wretched man, and the motions of sin work in my members. But I hate every false heart; I delight in Your Law in my inner being. I do what I would not, but I consent to Your Law, for it is good. I desire to know Your will, to fear Your name, and to follow You wherever You lead me. These may be mere wishes, the longings and intentions of an evil heart. The shame of my failings belongs to me, but the glory of Your mercy and forgiveness belongs to You. It is too true that I do not do all I should, but do I allow myself in anything I should not? Do I make use of my infirmities to justify, shelter, or excuse myself? Although I fall short in what I should do, I love and delight in them. My heart, spirit, and all the desires of my soul are drawn toward doing what is right. I hate, abhor, and struggle against myself for not doing what I should. I am ashamed of my infirmities as blemishes on my faith. I am weary of them and groan under their weight as burdens on my soul. I have no lust, but I am willing to acknowledge it and crucify it when I do. I may not have received a greater measure of grace, but I admire it and hunger after it, pressing on to attain it. I can embrace Christ and affliction together. I can embrace Christ without the world, and I can embrace Christ without myself. I have gained nothing unjustly, but I am ready to restore any ill-gotten gains. I have not lost any time from serving God due to earthly business, but I am willing to redeem it. I have not pursued sinful pleasures, but I vehemently abhor them. I have not kept evil company, but I despise it. I have never sworn an oath

without remembering it with a bleeding conscience. I have never neglected a duty without recounting it with remorse and indignation. When I see Christ's image in others, I love them more dearly for it and abhor myself for being so unlike Him. Satan, I know I will not fare worse with God because you are my enemy. I know I will fare much better because I have myself as my enemy. Surely, one who can accept Christ offered, admitting Him to purify as well as justify, to rule as well as save, to offer grace as well as mercy, need not fear the powers of darkness or the foulest sins that Satan may lay upon his conscience.

The second great virtue and outcome of Christ's Priesthood was the overflowing abundance of His merit. Firstly, He merits to have a Church, as the very existence of the Church is the result of the great price He paid. Therefore, the Church is referred to as a purchased people (1 Pet. 2:9). As He made His soul an offering for sin, He saw His seed and divided a portion with the great (Isaiah 53:10, 11, 12). The purpose of Christ's Sacrifice was to deliver and select the Saints out of this present evil world (Gal. 1:4).

Secondly, He merits all the good things for the Church that His Father's great love toward the Church resolves to confer upon it. These can be summarized in two categories: Firstly, immunity from evil, encompassing whatever is left to be removed after the payment of our debt or the taking away of guilt and punishment. Such as the Dominion of Sin, as it shall not have dominion over believers (Rom. 6:14). The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the Law of Sin and Death (Rom. 8:2). He that commits sin is the servant of sin, but if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed (John. 8:34-36). He that is born of God does not commit sin, meaning he does not make it his trade or profession, and therefore does not bring it to any perfection. He has received a Spirit of

Judgment that restrains his lusts and a Spirit of burning that purifies his dross (Isaiah. 4:4, Mal. 3:2, 3, Matth. 3:2). Also, there is the Vanity of our Mind, which naturally makes us unable to think or cherish good thoughts (2 Cor. 3:5, Eph. 4:17), and the Ignorance and hardness of our hearts, making us unable to perceive or delight in any spiritual thing (Eph. 4:18, John. 1:5, Luk. 24, 25:45). Moreover, the Spirit of disobedience and habitual averseness from God (Eph. 4:18, Job 20:14). Lastly, there are all those slavish, frightful, and contumacious effects of the Law that terrify the conscience, provoke concupiscence, and force the froward heart into unwilling conformity. The Law is now our counselor, a delight to the inner man, that which was once a lion now has food and sweetness in it.

Secondly, in the virtue of our unity with Christ, we receive numerous privileges and dignities. Through the fellowship of His holy and quickening Spirit, we are anointed to learn His ways and voice. This anointing sanctifies our nature by partaking in the divine nature, renewing God's holy and righteous image within us. It sanctifies us as spiritual Kings and Priests: Kings to order our thoughts, affections, desires, and studies towards Him, to combat principalities, powers, corruptions, and spiritual enemies; and Priests to offer our bodies, souls, prayers, thanksgivings, alms, and spiritual services upon the Altar before His mercy-seat, and to slay and mortify our lusts and earthly inclinations. Through this unity, our actions are also sanctified, becoming services to Him and His Church, pleasing to Him and beneficial to others.

Secondly, through this unity, we experience adoption, another fruit of Christ's Sacrifice. He was born of a woman, under the Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:5). This adoption grants us free access to call upon God in the virtue of His Sacrifice, assured supplies for all our needs, as our heavenly Father knows

them all. We have a certain inheritance and salvation in hope, for we are already saved by hope (Rom. 8:24), and Christ is the Hope of Glory for us (Col. 1:27). Finally, through this unity, we are exalted in our ultimate victory and resurrection, through the fellowship and virtue of Christ's victory over death, being the first fruits of our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 49, Phil. 3:21). We attain complete salvation, presented to Him without spot and blameless in our souls and bodies (Eph. 5:26, 27), and brought unto God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Now, considering all these blessings together, we see an abundance of mercy. Remission of all sins, release from all debts, deliverance from all curses; joy, peace, triumph, security, exaltation above all evils, enemies, or fears; a chosen and acquired royal seed, a gift from God the Father to His Son; liberation from the dominion and service of all sin, vanity, ignorance, hardness, disobedience, bondage, coercion, and terror. We experience sanctification of our persons, natures, lives, and actions; adoption, hope, victory, resurrection, salvation, and glory. Oh, what a price was paid to obtain all this! Oh, what kind of people should we be, for whom it was procured!

The fifth aspect of Christ's Priesthood can be summed up in one word, which is the Duty we owe in response to all of this. First and foremost, we must not receive such a great grace in vain. Instead, we should lay hold of it by faith and make use of it. The Apostle cautions us, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it; for unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:1-2).

God, in Christ, is reconcilable unto us and proclaims peace. However, just as in any reconciliation, both parties must consent to

it. Until we, through faith, give our consent, actually turn to God, seek His favor, and grasp the mercy offered to us, His grace is in vain. Even though God is willing to reconcile through the mediator, Christ, His grace will not benefit us unless we receive it and stop being His enemies.

Consider the sun, a public light in the heavens, but it only benefits those who open their eyes and use its light. Similarly, a court of justice or equity is a public sanctuary, but it only provides relief to those who seek it. Likewise, Christ is a universal salvation for all who come, as stated in John 3:16, and He desires that none should perish but come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). He tasted death for every person (Heb. 2:9), but these benefits are only effective for those who receive Him. Those who receive Him are made the Sons of God through His mercy (John 1:12). Without faith, they remain His enemies.

God in Christ reveals Himself as a God of peace and unity towards us (Gal. 3:20). He presents Christ as an all-sufficient treasure of mercy for all who, in recognizing their own misery, seek refuge in Him (Rev. 22:17). However, until people believe and willingly consent to be reconciled with Him, His wrath remains upon them. Although His Son's death is sufficient for all, it becomes effectual through faith.

Therefore, let us not foolishly bear the weight of God's wrath, the curse of sin, and the burden of the Law on our shoulders when we have such a present remedy and a willing friend ready to ease our burdens.

Secondly, we should strive to experience the power of Christ's Priesthood and Sacrifice working within us, purging our consciences from dead works, renewing our nature, and cleansing us from the power and pollution of sin. As we are sprinkled with the virtue of His sacrifice through faith and the work of the Spirit, we will be

motivated to hate and abstain from sin, which caused such precious blood to be shed and elicited such bitter cries from our merciful High Priest. Instead of living for ourselves, following our own desires and ways, we should live for Him who purchased us, in His service and to His glory. There is no act or devotion too great to reciprocate such immense love – a love that emptied and humbled itself, that became God in the flesh and God on a Cross, to remove from us the wrath and vengeance of the Father and restore us to our original purity and condition. Thus, it is not needless but essential to be rigorously conscientious and scrupulously circumspect in the service we are engaged in, a service characterized by infinite and unfathomable bounty.

Thirdly, we should approach Him with reverence and fear, recognizing that we have received an unshakable Kingdom (Heb. 12:28). As we contemplate the high Priest of our profession, we must not let presumption of His mercy harden our hearts or cause us to stray from God (Heb. 3:1, 8). Instead, we should bear in mind the purpose of His Sacrifice – to acquire a special people for Himself – and be zealous in performing all good works (Tit. 2:14).

Fourthly, we should learn to approach Him with confidence and boldness, knowing that He is a great, faithful, and merciful High Priest. The Apostle encourages us to hold fast to our profession and to come boldly to the throne of grace since we have such a High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16). Furthermore, we can draw near to the holiest with a true heart and full assurance of faith, knowing that we have a High Priest over the house of God (Heb. 10:19-22).

Fifthly, we learn the importance of perseverance and steadfastness in our faith, for He is able to carry us through and save us completely. By holding the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, we

become partakers of Christ (Heb. 3:14). Reflecting on His perseverance in completing His work and considering His power to save us completely will prevent us from growing weary in our service and profession (Heb. 12:2, 3, 10, 23).

Sixthly, we have the privilege of presenting our prayers and spiritual sacrifices on the altar sprinkled with the blood of the great Sacrifice. We have the liberty to approach God through Him, who lives to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25). Through faith, we have access with confidence (Eph. 3:12). Thus, the Lord is attentive to our prayers and hearkens to them (1 Kings 8:52) because He first looks upon us in Christ before accepting our services.

Lastly, we ought to frequently celebrate the memory and commemorate the benefits of this Sacrifice, whereby God has been glorified and we have been wonderfully saved. For this purpose, the Lord has instituted a sacred ordinance in His Church, as a resemblance and commemoration of Christ's death. As we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we show forth the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26). In these ordinances, He is crucified before our eyes (Gal. 3:1). Therefore, the Apostle reminds us not to forsake the assemblies of the Saints, but to exhort and encourage one another (Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25).

Now I turn to the final aspect mentioned in the words concerning the Priesthood of Christ, which is about its Order. "Thou art a Priest forever after the Order of Melchizedek." The Apostle interprets it as "according to the Order of Melchizedek." Melchizedek is only mentioned briefly in two places in the entire Old Testament: first in the account of Abraham returning from the slaughter of the Kings when Melchizedek, the Priest of the most high God, brought forth bread and wine and blessed him (Gen. 14:18-20); and the second

mention is in this passage. Consequently, the things concerning him and his Order are hard to understand (Heb. 5:11). This was the case then, and it would still be so if Saint Paul had not clarified the difficulties and explained how the Type and the Antitype correspond fully, which he extensively does in Hebrews 7.

To comprehend and elucidate the significant aspects in question, several questions arise. First, who was Melchizedek? Secondly, what is meant by "according to the Order of Melchizedek"? Thirdly, why was Christ to be a Priest after his Order and not after Aaron's? Fourthly, why did he bring forth bread and wine? Fifthly, what kind of blessing did he give to Abraham? Sixthly, how did he receive Tithes? Lastly, in what sense was he without father, without mother, without beginning of days or end of life?

Regarding Melchizedek's identity, much has been said with great confidence by many individuals. Some ancient heretics claimed that he was the Holy Ghost, while others believed he was an Angel. Some suggested he was Shem, the son of Noah. Some considered him a Canaanite, specially chosen by God to be a Priest of the Gentiles. There were also those who believed he was Christ Himself, manifested by a unique dispensation and privilege to Abraham in the flesh, as Abraham was said to have seen His day and rejoiced (John 8:56). Furthermore, there is a debate about Salem, the place of which he was King. Some consider it to be Jerusalem, like Josephus and most of the ancients, while others identify it as a city in the half tribe of Manasseh, within the River Jordan, where Jerome reported that some remains of Melchizedek's palace were thought to exist in his time.

I could explore the various views on who Melchizedek was, but when I see that the Holy Spirit deliberately conceals his name, genealogy,

origin, and end for a specific purpose, I cannot help but wonder why people exhaust themselves trying to ascertain that which lacks any solid basis for conjecture and whose lack of evidence is explicitly recorded. It seems unnecessary to make Melchizedek the more fitting type of Christ's everlasting Priesthood.

Secondly, what is meant by "after the Order of Melchizedek"? It signifies the state, condition, or prescribed Rule of Melchizedek, which was "after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:16). This Order did not involve a physical anointing, a legal ceremony, or a human ordination. Instead, it was a heavenly institution and an immediate unction of the Spirit of Life in that extraordinary manner in which he was to be both King and Priest unto God, just like Melchizedek.

Thirdly, why was he not a Priest after the order of Aaron? The Apostle provides an answer: Because the Law did not achieve perfection but was weak and unprofitable, and therefore, it had to be abolished and replaced by another Priesthood. The purpose of the Law was not for people to find rest in it, but to lead them to Him who was to abolish it (Heb. 7:11-12), like the morning star leads to the rising sun and eventually fades away. The ministry and promises of Christ were superior to those of the Law, and consequently, His Priesthood, which involved dispensing them, was also more excellent (Heb. 8:6). When the Law and covenant were to be abolished, the Priesthood established within it was also destined to end.

Fourthly, why did Melchizedek bring forth bread and wine? The Papists, in their attempt to justify the idolatry of their mass, claim that Melchizedek sacrificed bread and wine as a Type of the Eucharist. However, I will not engage in that lengthy controversy as it does not contribute to edification and has caused endless disputes among different factions. In brief, we acknowledge that the Ancients

often consider it as a Type of the Eucharist, but only in a figurative sense, not as a literal prediction or strict prefiguration. For example, "out of Egypt have I called my Son" and "in Rama was there a voice heard" are historically true in another sense but are alluded to in the Gospel narratives about Christ (Matt. 2:15, 18).

Moreover, we note that Melchizedek "brought forth" bread and wine to Abraham as a gesture of hospitality after his victory, as understood by Josephus and Cajetan, rather than offering it as a Priest to God. Also, if he did offer it, he offered genuine bread and wine, whereas the Papists claim to offer the mere appearances of these elements after transubstantiation. Furthermore, the Priesthood of Melchizedek as a Type and Christ as its fulfillment were unique and untransferable. The Papists, on the other hand, make themselves Priests through human and ecclesiastical ordination to offer what they say Melchizedek offered. In doing so, they arrogantly position themselves as successors, vicars, and co-workers with Christ in a Priesthood that was inherently unsharable and untransferrable (Heb. 7:24). This audacious act robs Christ Jesus of the unique honor He assumed for Himself in His peculiar office.

Fifthly, what kind of blessing did Melchizedek bestow upon Abraham? There are two types of blessings. The first is a charitable one, born out of love, where anyone may bless another with good wishes or prayers, like saying, "May the blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord" (Psalms 129:8). The second is an authoritative blessing, given as a King, a Priest, an extraordinary superior, or a public figure, as part of their official duty to effect and convey the desired blessing. The Apostle confirms this, saying, "Without all contradiction, the less is blessed by the greater" (Hebrews 7:7), and this was the case with Melchizedek's blessing. It

was a sealing, assuring, and effectually confirming the promise made earlier in Genesis 12:2-3.

Sixthly, how did he receive tithes? As Calvin suggests, he had the right to collect tithes and received them as expressions of homage, duty, and obedience from Abraham. The Apostle uses this as an argument to demonstrate Melchizedek's greatness above Abraham, which wouldn't apply if it were merely a gift. Gifts, to some extent, may not imply a general inferiority in the receiver, but they do indicate something that can be acknowledged and deserving of recognition. In this case, all acknowledgements are from Abraham to Melchizedek. Furthermore, both Abraham and Melchizedek acted in this matter under the extraordinary inspiration and official capacity, as noted by the learned Cameron.

Lastly, in what sense was Melchizedek "without father, mother, or genealogy"? As Chrysostom suggests, this should not be taken literally and strictly. Instead, the Scripture portrays him as an extraordinary man without detailing his lineage, beginning, end, or race (similar to how Tiberius described Rufus as "Homo ex se natus"). This depiction was intentional, so that Melchizedek could more aptly symbolize Christ's person and excellency. In Christ, these things are genuinely true, but with regard to the type (Melchizedek), we lack the knowledge of his origins, end, or parentage. With these points clarified, you will find it easier to identify the observations that arise between the Type and the Antitype, and I will briefly present them for your consideration.

First, take note that Christ's Priesthood implies kingship, as Melchizedek was both King of Salem and Priest of the most high God. Saint Jerome and Ambrose interpret this as meaning "Regal Priesthood," signifying that Christ was to be a Royal Priest. Through

His merit, He would obtain a kingdom from His Father, and through conquest, He would reclaim it from His enemies. This mystery is obscurely foreshadowed in the allowed marriages between the regal and priestly tribes of Judah and Levi, while other tribes were forbidden such unions, as I mentioned earlier.

Secondly, by offering Himself as a Sacrifice to God, Christ becomes a King of Righteousness or "the Lord our righteousness" to His people. In this sense, He is called "The Prince of life" (Acts 3:15), meaning that He possesses the power to quicken and justify whom He chooses (John 5:20, 21). This power comes from His Sacrifice and perfect obedience, imputed to us and apprehended with faith. By fulfilling the righteousness of the Law and justifying Himself through resurrection, He becomes the Author of righteousness and salvation for us (Hebrews 5:9). Since sin once reigned unto death, grace now reigns unto eternal life through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:21). Therefore, we are said to be justified by the righteousness of God (Romans 3:21, 22), a righteousness granted to us by gift and grace, not inherent in our nature (Romans 10:3). It is a righteousness that God Himself performed in our behalf through the human nature of Christ (Acts 20:28, Philippians 2:6, 7, 8).

This is the foundation of our comfort and the best direction in our miseries and extremities. A king holds the highest authority among men, and his honour and position exist for the well-being, defence, and honour of his people. He is the "Custos Tabularum," the Father, and the Keeper of the Laws. If I lack justice and equity, which are stored in his sacred Bosom as a public treasure, I can freely seek it from him because he is an officer who dispenses righteousness to his subjects. Similarly, Christ is the same for His Church. When I find myself in a miserable state, condemned by the conscience of sin, the testimony of the Word, and the accusations of Satan, I am full of

discomfort. In this situation, what shall I do? Surely, God has set His King on Zion, and He is a King who offers life and righteousness to me. He possesses sufficient grace to quench all sin and the venomous arrows of Satan. In Him, there is a court of peace and mercy to which I can appeal, escaping from the severity of God, the importunity of the Devil, and the accusations and testimonies of our own hearts.

Indeed, Christ must be a King of righteousness to justify us, as our justification lies in the remission of our sins. To pardon sins and dispense with laws is a regal dignity, and God views it as His high and special prerogative, declaring, "I, even I, am He who blotteth out thine iniquity for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25). No man, angel, created power, merit, obedience, rivers of oil, or mountains of cattle, prayers, tears, or torments can wipe away the stains or remove the guilt of any sin. Only a Divine and Royal Power can subdue sin (Micah 7:18).

And this brings us to another source of comfort: being a King of righteousness, Christ is rich in it and has treasures to bestow. Just as we have a kingdom, a treasure, and an abundance of sin, we also have a King who possesses an overflowing reservoir of spirit and grace, a righteousness that surpasses all faith from generation to generation (Romans 1:17). No amount of faith, no matter how great, can exceed the boundless righteousness of our King. It's like a thousand eyes gazing upon the sun; the light continues to reveal itself from eye to eye. Similarly, as a man climbs ten thousand steps to the top of the highest mountain, he never overlooks all the earth or sees beyond all visible objects. Instead, he continues to discover more of the earth and heaven with each step. So, there is an immensity in the righteousness and mercy of God that cannot be exhausted by any sins or fully comprehended by any human faith. As God reveals Himself and the righteousness of Christ to the soul, man

makes further progress from faith to faith. Thus, we should cultivate everlasting thankfulness to this King who is our Melchizedek, a Priest who satisfies His Father's justice and a Prince who bestows His own.

Next, we note that Melchizedek was King of Salem, which means "Peace." Two things are noteworthy here: the place, a city of the Canaanites, and its significance, which is peace. We must understand that Christ is a King of Gentiles, of those who once lived in abominable lusts. As stated in Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:11), "Such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." No matter how sinful or unclean a person may be, their sins cannot overwhelm or outmatch the mercy and righteousness of Christ. He can bring reconciliation and peace even among those who were once estranged from God and immersed in abominable deeds. Regardless of our past, Christ can make us near by His blood, cleanse our crimson sins, and establish an everlasting covenant with us (Ephesians 2:11-14, Isaiah 1:18, Ezekiel 16:60-63). We can see Saint Paul's example in this, as he acknowledged his former persecutions and wickedness but obtained mercy from Christ to become a pattern for all who would believe on Him to eternal life (1 Timothy 1:13-16).

Let us follow Saint Paul's lead: Firstly, love and believe in Christ, accepting that He came to save sinners without restrictions or limitations, even the chiefest of all others. Regardless of the magnitude of our sins, if we carry them as heavy burdens and are willing to forsake them, let us not doubt the power and unfathomable riches of Christ's blood. Mercy is available even for the worst sinner. Secondly, let us echo Saint Paul's praise: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God, to Him who is a King of righteousness, who has abundance for me; eternal, yet born in time

for me; immortal, yet died for me; invisible, yet manifested in the flesh for me; the only wise God, who used that wisdom to reconcile Himself to me and, through the foolishness of preaching, saves the world; be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Secondly, we can note from the word's significance that where Christ is a King of righteousness, He is also a King of Peace. As the Prophet Isaiah calls Him, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), He is the creator and bestower of peace. It belongs to Him by right and He extends it to us. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you," said Jesus (John 14:27). The world may be deceptive or lacking, but peace is His to give. Just as the Prophet Jeremiah calls Him "Righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16), the Prophet Micah calls Him "Peace." "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Micah 5:5). Saint Paul, referring to this, calls Him "our peace" (Ephesians 2:14). Through Him, we have peace with God; we are reconciled and justified by faith (Romans 5:1), so our hearts can challenge any accusation. Through Him, we have peace with our own consciences. Being cleansed by His blood, we have the witness within ourselves (Hebrews 9:14, 1 John 5:10, Romans 8:16). Through Him, we have peace with others. Malice, envy, and hatred vanish when the kindness and love of God our Savior towards humanity are revealed (Titus 3:3-4). All divisions are broken down, and those who were once divided become one in Him (Ephesians 2:14). Then, towards our brethren, there is a love of communion; towards the weak, a love of compassion; towards the poor, a love of generosity—either brotherly love or general love (2 Peter 1:7). There is mercy, charity, compassion, and forgiveness towards all good works. Through Him, we have peace with creation. We use the creatures with comfort, liberty, delight, piety, and charity—as glasses through which we see and steps through which we draw nearer to God. There is no rust in

our gold or silver, no moth or pride in our garments, no lewdness in our liberty, no hostility against walls, no flying roll against stones or beams of the house, no gravel in our bread, no gall in our drink, no snare on our table, no fears in our bed, no destruction in our prosperity. In all circumstances, we can rejoice, do, and endure through Christ who strengthens us. We are under the care of peace, which guards our hearts and minds from fear and enables us to serve the Lord with confidence, boldness, and security (Philippians 4:7). The works of righteousness are accompanied by peace, and the result of righteousness is lasting tranquility and assurance.

Note fourthly, from both these, a peace rooted in righteousness, Blessedness must inevitably ensue, for it is the blessedness of a creature to be reconciled and united with their Maker, to have all disputes resolved, all distances bridged, all barriers removed. Therefore, the Apostle uses Righteousness and Blessedness interchangeably. All people seek blessedness—it is the essence of all desires; nothing is loved except in relation to and in subordination to that. By nature, we are all children of wrath, held under the curse. As many sins as we have committed, we have piled up that many deaths and curses upon our souls, creating walls of separation between us and God, who is the source of blessedness. Until all these are covered, removed, forgiven, and forgotten, true blessedness eludes us. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Romans 4:7). All the blessings we receive from the Most High God come to us through the intercession and mediation of Christ. His sacrifice and prayers grant us access to the all-sufficiency of the One above all, and thus, they assure us against all opposing powers or fears. For what or whom should that person fear, who is one with the Most High God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). When God blesses, His blessing is always effective and successful; it cannot be reversed, nor can it be

disappointed. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and cannot reverse it" (Numbers 23:19-20).

Note fifthly, from Melchizedek's meeting with Abraham upon his return from the defeat of the Kings, we may observe the great eagerness of Christ to meet and bless His people when they have served Him. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness" (Isaiah 64:5). Just as David said, "I will confess my sins," and the Lord forgave the iniquity of his sin (Psalms 32:5). No sooner did David resolve in his heart to return to God, but the Lord preempted him with mercy, anticipating his confession with pardon and forgiveness. "Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness" (Psalms 21:3). Like the father of the Prodigal Son, even though he was still a long way off from the perfection that could strictly be required, as he had set his heart on returning home and seeking forgiveness and readmission, when the father saw him, he was moved with compassion. Swiftly, he ran to him, the father's mercy outrunning the son's repentance, and he embraced him and kissed him (Luke 15:20). We do not find the Lord as quick in His punishments. He is slow to anger and does not unleash all His wrath at once. He is patient and long-suffering, not wishing for anyone to perish but for all to come to repentance. He comes, and He comes again, and after three years of waiting, He still forbears before cutting down a fruitless tree. However, when He comes with a blessing, He does not delay, but He goes before His people with goodness and mercy. How eager should we be to serve Him, who is so ready to meet us on His path and bless us?

Note sixthly, from the hospitality and preparations made by Melchizedek for Abraham and his men, we can observe that Christ,

as King and Priest, is a comforter and refresher of His people, especially in times of spiritual weariness and after their dedicated services. This was the purpose of His anointing, to heal and comfort His people. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). He provides a feast of abundant blessings, as described in Isaiah 25:6, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." He pours out consolations and an abundance of glory upon His people, as stated in Isaiah 66:11. He speaks timely words to those who are weary and turns broken and desolate hearts into joyous flourishing, as mentioned in Isaiah 50:4 and Psalms 51:8. Such a comforting aspect of Christ's nature strengthens the patience, faith, and hope of His servants in their spiritual journey and during times of testing and trials. We have a Melchizedek who will refresh us after our battles are won and meet us with His mercies. If we remain steadfast and wait, we will witness the salvation of the Lord, for He is compassionate and tender-hearted (Exodus 14:13, Joel 2:13). The Lord is near, and He will justify and defend us. His readiness to help us should lead us to challenge and defy all our enemies (Philippians 4:5, Isaiah 50:8-9). Like Abraham, who fought with only three hundred men against four kings, the Lord can give strength, courage, and refreshment to those who engage in His battles. After intense conflicts, the Lord will meet us with redoubled mercies and comforts. Just as in Micah 7:8-9, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall rise, when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me: I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me, he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

Christ can provide all the needed resources to His redeemed ones, guiding them through challenges and granting them peace and joy (Isaiah 51:12).

Note seventhly, the Apostle highlights Melchizedek's receiving of tithes from Abraham in Hebrews 7:2, 4, 6, 8, 9. This signifies that Christ is the receiver of homage and tribute from His people. Every type of Christ as a Priest involves the giving of tithes, and this is not due to anything within Himself but is solely due to the virtue of His typological office. Thus, these tithes ultimately pertain to the supreme Priest, whom these types represent. His personal priesthood is unchanging, eternal, and stands firm, and consequently, the rights attached to it are equally enduring.

If it is objected, "Why then did Christ not receive tithes during his life?" I would answer, firstly, that even though he was the substance, the established typological priesthood was not abolished until after his ministry on earth was completed. His priesthood was only consummated when he sat at the right hand of God. Secondly, during his earthly ministry, he voluntarily embraced poverty for specific reasons related to his state of humility and the dispensation of human redemption (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Now, you might argue, "Christ's priesthood is now consummated, and he is in heaven, where tithes cannot be given; therefore, they are not due because there are no earthly priests representing him." To this, I respond that though he is in heaven in his physical body, he is still present on earth through his ministry and the dispensation of the virtue of his sacrifice. The Ministers of the Gospel act in his place (2 Corinthians 5:20) and should be received as Christ himself (Galatians 4:14). Therefore, people are not excused from rendering God's dues unto him. Firstly, we must give a testimony of homage to

him as we commemorate and proclaim his sacrifice to the people. Secondly, we must reward the labour of those who work diligently, for the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Considering all these aspects together, we can observe that all types of Christ as a Priest received tithes as due. This right was not grounded on anything in or from themselves, but on their typological office, originally pertaining to the Principal Priest whom they represented. Since Christ's person and office are eternal, all the connected rights and dues are also eternal. He has not dispensed with, denied, refused, or revoked this right that his types once enjoyed. Furthermore, he has entrusted his Word's Ministers with the dispensation of his sacrifice and appointed them as his Ambassadors to the Church, to present him crucified in his ordinances. In light of this, I fail to see any reason why these rights should not be due to them in the name and right of their Master, as they were manifestly his rights in his typological representatives, and there is no indication of revocation in his Word.

Without delving into disputes or unwelcome controversies, I must observe that those who toil in preaching and teaching, serving as ambassadors for Christ and revealing the mysteries and treasures of His blood in the Church, should rightfully receive generous support and compensation as homage to Christ and as recompense for their work. They deserve both reverence and a suitable maintenance, as the Apostle said, "They are worthy of double honor." Sadly, many who profess the truth fail in both these respects, even falling short of the heathens' respect for their priests. I recall an incident where a Roman Consul, upon seeing a priest and Vestal virgins walking while he was riding in his chariot, dismounted and refused to ride again until the priestly devotees were seated. In ancient Greece, Egypt,

Rome, and other places, kings and emperors considered it a great honor to be priests for the people.

In Christian history, during the Synod of Nice convened by Emperor Constantine, accusations (or calumnies, as the Historian called them) were brought against some Bishops and Ministers. However, Constantine chose to overlook the specifics, sealed the accusations with his own signet, reconciled the parties involved, and ordered the libels to be burnt. He further stated that even if he were to witness a bishop committing adultery, he would cover the bishop's nakedness with his own royal robe. Constantine's reasoning was not to excuse or ignore the sins of such individuals but to emphasize the high honor due to those who hold such positions and the caution needed to avoid unjustly censuring, misreporting, or scandalizing them. Timothy was advised not to entertain an accusation against a church leader without two or three witnesses, and this highlights the importance of handling such matters carefully.

Constantine's view also warned against the negative consequences of publicizing the sins of those who, through their doctrine, preach the truth and build up the Church. While it is necessary to expose the secret villainies and personal impurities of those who preach lies in hypocrisy to halt the spread of their harmful teachings, such scrutiny should not be applied to those who genuinely serve in their ministerial roles. Their good reputation is crucial not only for their own well-being but also for the well-being of others. Ultimately, the respect and honor bestowed upon those who diligently serve as ambassadors for Christ should be commensurate with the sacredness of their work (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

But let's get back to the point at hand: liberal maintenance is owed to those who work in the word and doctrine, not as an act of mercy but

as a matter of justice, for their hard work. I won't bring up the examples of heathens in this regard, as it would be shameful for Christians. We know that even the priests of Egypt received portions from the king's own treasuries, and their lands were reserved for them (Genesis 47:22). Additionally, they obtained a third of all yearly tributes and levies, as Diodorus Siculus recounts.

Instead, let's focus on the example of God's own Priests and Levites under the Law and the precepts and commands of the Gospel. God values Ministers under the Gospel just as much as those under the Law. If you doubt that a liberal maintenance is now allotted by God, consider what He did allocate for them. First, look at the proportion of their numbers and then the proportion of their maintenance.

It wouldn't be difficult to show that the Tribe of Levi, despite being the thirteenth part of the people in terms of their civil division, was not even the fortieth part of the people. When we compare the numbers, the other Tribes were counted from twenty years old and upward, all those capable of bearing arms up to the age of fifty years, as Josephus reported. Their total number came to six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men fit for war. On the other hand, the Levites were counted from one month old and upward, and yet their total sum was only twenty-two thousand.

If we assume that the number of those in the other Tribes who were under twenty years of age and too old for military service was about half of the rest, the total number of all tribes from infancy upward would amount to at least nine hundred and two thousand men. Of this total, the number of the Levites was just the one and forty-first part. Later, we find that the Levites increased even more (1 Chronicles 33:3), but the whole people grew accordingly. For example, the tribe of Judah, which was previously only seventy-four

thousand, increased to five hundred thousand, and in Jehoshaphat's time, it was at least eleven hundred thousand (2 Samuel 24, 2 Chronicles 7).

So, the Levites were only about a fortieth of the people, making their Tribe almost a quarter as populous as the others. Now, let's consider their maintenance in proportion to their numbers. One might assume that the fortieth part of the people would require only a fortieth part of the maintenance.

However, they received much more than that. Firstly, they had the Tenth of all the increase of seed, fruit, and livestock (Leviticus 27:30). Secondly, they were given forty-eight cities with suburbs for gardens and cattle (Numbers 35:2). These cities were among the best, and in some tribes, the very best, like Hebron in Judah and Gibeon in Benjamin, both Royal Cities. The total wealth of these cities, along with the suburbs, came close to that of a single tribe, even though the country from Dan to Beersheba was only about a hundred and sixty miles long.

Thirdly, they received all the first fruits of clean and unclean beasts, fruits of the earth, and the fleece of the sheep (Numbers 18:13; Deuteronomy 18:4; Nehemiah 10:35), as well as men to be redeemed (Numbers 18:15). Fourthly, they were entitled to all meat offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings, heave offerings, and wave offerings (Numbers 18:9, 10, 11).

Fifthly, they had the privilege of all vows, voluntary oblations, consecrations, and every hallowed thing (Numbers 18:8, 9). Sixthly, except for the Holocaust, they received either the shoulder, breast, skin, or something from every sacrifice offered (Numbers 18:18; Leviticus 7; Deuteronomy 18:3). Seventhly, the males were required

to appear three times a year before the Lord, and they were to come with offerings (Exodus 23:15, 17).

Lastly, they were entitled to various recompenses of injury, including the restitution of the principal and a fifth part (Numbers 5:7, 8). When you consider all the Tithes, the Cities, and these other constant revenues together, the Priests and Levites, who were only about a quarter as numerous as one tribe, ended up receiving about three times the revenues of that one tribe.

But let's leave this argument for now. Instead, let's consider what the Apostle says: "Let him who is taught in the word share all good things with him who teaches." (Galatians 6:6, as Beza well explains). The elders who labor in the word and doctrine are worthy of double honor, as the Scripture says: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Who goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Am I saying these things as a mere man, driven by personal bias or favor towards my own cause or calling? No, the Law also says the same. For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Does God care for oxen, or does He say this entirely for our sakes? In other words, does God provide laws to reward and encourage the labor of animals, while leaving the maintenance and honor of His own immediate officers to the arbitrary and stingy allowances of covetous and cruel individuals? Undoubtedly, this is written for our sakes, so that those who plow may plow in hope, and those who thresh may do so in hope of being partakers of that hope.

This means that the encouragement of Ministers in their service should be based on the hope grounded in God's Law and provision, and not subject to the will and allowances of those against whom they were sent to speak against sin. The Apostle supports this with an unanswerable argument. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much to reap material things from you? If you truly value the heavenly treasures we bring abundantly to you, it is impossible to consider our labor and service towards your immortal and precious souls adequately rewarded with meager and insufficient earthly things.

Do you not know that those who minister in the temple eat of the temple offerings? And those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings at the altar (signifying that their maintenance comes from God Himself, as the offerings at the altar belong solely to Him, and not from men). In the same way, the Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:7-13).

So what does it mean to "live"? First, as human beings, they must have what is necessary for their needs and also what brings them delight. Secondly, as believers, they must have enough to provide for others, as the law of common humanity, and even more so, the law of faith, commands them to do so. For it is said, "He who does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8). Therefore, by the Gospel, they should have enough to save for those they are responsible for, fulfilling their obligations as believers.

Thirdly, they must live as Ministers. They must have the means to fulfill the duties of their calling and set a good example of piety, charity, and hospitality, confirming in practice what they teach in

doctrine (1 Timothy 3:2). The tools of their trade, given the vast and comprehensive scope of learning required in their profession (as there is no aspect of learning that does not contribute to the understanding of Holy Scriptures and to some part of a Divine's work), can be quite costly. Unfortunately, many men preach the Gospel but struggle to find even the most basic of supplies. This ingratitude of the world, along with Satan's malice and cunning, seeks to bring the Gospel itself into contempt and discourage capable individuals from pursuing such an unrewarded calling, as Calvin justly laments.

The excuse of poverty and inability to support the Gospel is commonly used by those who neglect their duty, but let us not be deceived, for God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7), as Calvin explains. If poverty is indeed the reason, should it justify neglecting a moral duty? Can a man spend the Lord's day tending to his shop because he is poor and lacks means? Just as we cannot rob God of His time under the pretense of poverty, likewise, we cannot use poverty as an excuse to withhold His portion.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked with pretenses of poverty and necessity, as Calvin interprets Galatians 6:7. The Apostle Paul commends some for doing good beyond their means, generously giving despite their own poverty (2 Corinthians 8:2-3). However, such contributions are acts of mercy, whereas double honor is rightfully due to Gospel Ministers as a matter of justice.

It is both wrong and foolish to use punishment as an excuse for continuing in fault. The poverty of many individuals may well be a just consequence of neglecting the honor of the Gospel, as God has historically punished contempt and dishonor towards His messengers (2 Chronicles 16:10-12, 24:21-25, 26:19-20, 36:16-17).

On the other hand, if you faithfully fulfill God's decree, that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel, then heed His call. Honor the Lord with your substance and the first fruits of your increase, and your barns will be filled with plenty, and your presses will burst forth with new wine (Proverbs 3:9-10).

Consider from this day forward, from the day the foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? From this day, I will bless you (Haggai 2:18-19). You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test me in this, says the Lord of Hosts. If you will not do it out of duty, try it as an experiment. If I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:9-12).

Paying God His dues has never caused any man to lose, and grudging or scrimping when it comes to the Almighty has never led to prosperity. In conclusion, let us heed the Apostle's doctrine: faithful Ministers are worthy of double honor. And let us follow his exhortation: Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (Romans 13:7).

Lastly, the Priesthood of Christ is an eternal Priesthood. He is without Father or Mother, without beginning of days or end of life. As a man, He was without a Father; as God, without a Mother. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His name is Everlasting Father. His Gospel is an Everlasting Gospel. He was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. The virtue of His blood reaches back to Adam. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world (2 Timothy 1:9). The redemption of those who transgressed

under the first Testament, the remission of past sins, were procured by His Sacrifice (Hebrews 9:15, Romans 3:25). It extends forward to the end of the world; He must reign until all are put under His feet, and He must raise up all through the power and virtue of His victory over death (John 5:26-29).

And finally, it reaches onward to all eternity. While the Acts and administration of His Priesthood will cease when He delivers the Kingdom to His Father and brings the whole Church into God's presence, the virtue and fruits of those Acts will be eternally enjoyed by the Saints in heaven. His Sacrifice secured not a lease or temporary term but an endless life, an everlasting glory, an incorruptible inheritance that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for them.

The Day of Wrath

"The Lord at your right hand shall strike through Kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the Heathen, He shall fill the places with dead Bodies; He shall wound the heads over many Countries." Psalm 110:5-6

In the previous part of the Psalm, we witnessed the description of Christ's roles as King and Priest, along with the resulting effect of gathering a willing people to Himself. Now, the Prophet reveals another consequence of the powerful execution of these roles, demonstrating His victories over all His enemies. This victory is symbolically depicted through a Hypotiposis, which vividly alludes to the manner of human triumphs. Let me briefly explain the meaning before delving into the natural observations that will become evident.

The Lord at your right hand— To set aside interpretations that understand these words to refer to God the Father, the phrase is an Apostrophe of the Prophet to those with whom the Lord Jesus is at their right hand. Some view it as an Apostrophe to God the Father, a triumphant and grateful prediction of the power and judgment He has bestowed upon His beloved Son at His right hand. This maintains the same meaning as in the first verse. It's as if David were saying, "O God, the Father of all power and majesty, you are worthy of all praise, thanksgiving, and honor for granting such power to your Son on behalf of your Church, to strike through Kings, judge heathen, overthrow His enemies, and bring all things under His dominion." Others see it as an Apostrophe to the Church, signifying not Christ's exaltation, as in verse 1, but His care and protection over

His Church. It symbolizes His readiness to assist and defend His own people against the attacks of adverse forces.

Solomon says, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart is at his left" (Eccl. 10:2). This means a wise man's heart is ready and prepared to execute wise counsel and godly resolutions, as David says, "My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared; I will sing and give thanks." On the other hand, a fool's heart is unskilled, inactive, and unprepared when it comes to doing anything; when he faces challenges, he is unready. The readiness and immediate help of God in defending and guiding His Church are often expressed by His presence at its right hand. "Because the Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalms 16:8). "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor to save him" (Psalms 109:31). "I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying unto you, fear not, I will help you" (Isaiah 31:13). It's as if David were saying, "Do not be dismayed or discouraged, O subjects of this King. Just because He is exalted to God's right hand doesn't mean He has abandoned the care and protection of His people. For just as He is at the right hand of His Father in glory and majesty, so is He also at your right hand, standing to execute judgment on your enemies and revealing His powerful protection over you."

Now, as I understand it, there are two reasons for this phrase and expression. Firstly, it emphasizes that Christ's power, providence, and protection do not exclude but rather strengthen, assist, and prosper the ordinary and just efforts of the Church for themselves. The Lord is not there to support our idleness and negligence, but He stands by to give success to our honest endeavors. The sword of the Lord does not fight without the sword of Gideon (Judges 7:18). When Christ performed miracles like feeding and feasting, He did not create wine or bread out of nothing, but blessed and multiplied what

was already prepared through human industry. For example, our Savior had His own fish and bread, but He also instructed His Disciples to catch fish from their own nets and bring them (John 21:9, 10). This illustrates that God's power and providence must not exclude but encourage human industry. He protects us in our ways, not in our recklessness or presumptions (Psalms 91:11). As long as the Church remains brave and steadfast in resisting its enemies, God will undoubtedly be with them to bless that courage and strengthen their right hand. It's akin to the situation when Moses held up his hand, and God fought for Israel. There was Joshua with his sword, and Moses with his hand raised in prayer, and upon those, God bestowed His blessing (Exodus 17:12, 13). Both elements had to concur. If the sword were to cease, the prayer would be in vain, as God does not tolerate temptation. If the prayer falters, the sword's efforts would be futile, as God will not be neglected. It's like a delicate clock; stop one wheel, and the entire motion is hindered. So, if God promises to be present, Joshua must promise to be courageous (Joshua 1:5, 6, 9).

Secondly, this expression signifies the care and military wisdom of Christ, our Captain, in confronting and preventing our enemies, intercepting their blows against us. We observe in Scripture that Satan targets the right hand of the Church, attempting to weaken and assault where there is most danger to him. "Let Satan stand at his right hand" (Psalms 109:6). This can imply either leaving someone vulnerable to Satan's rage, allowing him to execute his will, or setting Satan to hinder the individual's good intentions. For instance, Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the high Priest to resist him (Zechariah 3:1), highlighting Satan's persistent and tireless efforts to resist, disappoint, and overthrow the works of God's worthies in the Church. (Paul once tried to come to you, but Satan hindered us, 1 Thessalonians 2:18). Satan aims to divert the strength of individuals

towards his service. To counter this, the Lord stands there to rebuke Satan and to show the Church that their strength is from Him and is due to Him. Moreover, He is present to overcome the temptations and impulses of Satan.

These are the two interpretations given for the phrase "The Lord at thy right hand." While Scripture may have one literal sense, when two meanings align with the general scope and the main intention of the Holy Spirit in the passage and there's no obvious evidence favoring one over the other, it seems appropriate to embrace both interpretations. So, I'll touch upon both meanings.

"The Lord shall strike through, or wound, or make Kings bleed in the day of His wrath." The phrase "Hath stricken through Kings" is a prophecy of future events, spoken as though they have already occurred. To "strike through" denotes a complete victory and utter confusion of the enemy, causing them to stagger, fall, and never rise again, preventing affliction from recurring (Nahum 1:9, 1 Samuel 26:8). The only difficulty lies in determining who is meant by "Kings"; in this context, it refers to the spiritual enemies of Christ, as His kingdom and warfare are spiritual in nature, and His adversaries are mostly spiritual as well. Therefore, we can understand them as the most potent foes of Christ, whether they be spiritual, such as principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12, 2 Corinthians 10:4), or carnal, like heathen and wicked men (Psalms 2:8-9) and the fat and strong enemies of the Church (Ezekiel 34:16).

In Scripture, our spiritual adversaries are referred to as "Kings." Satan is the Prince of this world, the God of this world, and the Prince of the power of the air. He is also known as the King of the locusts, and sin and original concupiscence act as Kings, reigning

over us if we allow them to. However, we are called not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies (Romans 6:12). Furthermore, the earthly enemies of Christ are also called Kings, such as the ten horns, symbolizing ten Kings who make war with the Lamb (Revelation 17:12). Additionally, the Kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered together against the Lord and His Christ (Acts 4:26-27). Even Death, the last enemy, is depicted as a King, known as the King of Terrors, reigning over mankind (Job 18:14). The victories of Christ extend over all these Kings and their dominions. Some interpret "Kings" to refer to the Roman emperors (1 Peter 2:13-17) and their subsequent overthrow for persecuting the Church. However, since Scripture designates all sorts of Christ's enemies as Kings, and they all oppose His Kingdom in the Church, there is no reason why we cannot understand "Kings" to encompass them all, along with their subjects, armies, and allies. This is similar to how, in great victories, the leaders are said to be overcome even when it is their servants and soldiers who are defeated and slain.

In the day of His wrath, that is, when the insolence and malice of the enemy have reached their peak, when His fury is fully provoked, and the appointed time of His glory has come. At this moment, it will be evident that the enemies are defeated not by mere time, chance, human power, or worldly circumstances, but solely by the power of His wrath. Christ is always powerful, but in His wisdom, He determines the times for His Church to endure suffering and bear witness to Him, as well as the times for triumph and deliverance. Thus, the meaning of this clause is that when the day of recompense arrives, when the sins and provocations of the enemies have reached their peak, when the limit of His patience is exhausted, on that fixed and unchanging day He has ordained, despite seemingly poor odds, limited preparations, low expectations, and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, it is through His wrath that He will

completely and incurably defeat His adversaries, both spiritual and temporal, so that they shall never rise again.

He shall judge among the Heathen, signifying both governance and punishment. The Lord shall judge His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their power has been taken away (Deuteronomy 32:36). Here, "to judge" means governance. The Lord stands up to plead and judge His people (Isaiah 3:13). To judge means punishment, as in Genesis 15:14, where it refers to executing condemnation upon the defiant adversaries of the Gospel of Christ among the Gentiles, as seen in the great victory over Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 39). Some interpret "Gentiles" to include all enemies, both spiritual and earthly.

He shall fill the places with dead bodies, indicating both the speed and magnitude of the victory. The victory will be so widespread and swift that the enemy will have either none left, or those who remain will be unable to bury their dead bodies (Ezekiel 39:11).

He shall wound the head over diverse countries, referring to either the principal enemies everywhere, or Satan, who governs as the Head over the Children of Disobedience in all places. It may also symbolize Antichrist, the leader of nations and chief opponent of God, as described in Revelation 13:7-8, 14:8, 17:15-18.

The Lord at your right hand. Based on the earlier discussion, there are two observations I want to briefly touch upon. Firstly, it is fitting and praiseworthy to acknowledge with utmost gratitude and triumph that God the Father deserves all the power, majesty, and judgment He has bestowed upon His Son, our Mediator, for our protection, salvation, and defense. Our Savior Himself praised God for entrusting all things into His hands, even granting Him the power to make believers out of the humblest. (Matthew 11:25-27). S. Paul also

frequently glorified God through Christ. He expressed gratitude to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, acknowledging the deliverance provided by Him (Romans 7:25, 1 Timothy 1:16-17). In Christ, all the promises of God find their fulfillment, to the glory of God through us (2 Corinthians 1:19-20). He gave Himself for our sins, delivering us from the present evil world according to God's will and deserving eternal glory, Amen (Galatians 1:4-5). Every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).

And there is good reason to acknowledge this to the Father because all His Kingdom and power in the Church comes from the Father. Christ declared, "All power is given unto me" and the Father has given Him a name above every name, which the Son revealed to us in order to manifest and glorify the Father (John 17:6, 7). In Christ, God reconciled the world to Himself. Moreover, He has received all this power in our human nature, on our behalf, as our head, so we have every reason to praise God for these gifts. Though it was not given to Him strictly as a benefit but as an office, it was given to Him for us or to us through Him. Therefore, in all victories, deliverances, and experiences of God's power and goodness, we must always remember to praise God through His Son, acknowledging the power of His right hand, which is now directed not against His Church but against the Church's enemies.

In times of distress, conflicts, and temptations, we must look up to God's right hand in faith, reminding Him of the faithfulness, righteousness, atonement, and intercession made on our behalf. There, we will find abundant reasons to fill our mouths and hearts with praises, triumph, and rejoicing in Him. Christ, seated at the right hand of God, assures our safety and triumph. His love for us is unwavering, and His exaltation by God empowers that love to benefit

us. When we face the struggles of our corruptions, which seem too formidable for us to overcome, we can take solace in Paul's thanksgiving and look to Jesus, the finisher of every good work He begins. Seeing Him at God's right hand, we can triumph in the power and office God has given Him—to subdue our iniquities and sanctify us through His Truth and the Holy Spirit reserved for the Church (John 17:17, 19).

This prayer serves as a model and counterpane of Christ's Intercession. He speaks these things in the world, so that we may have His joy fulfilled in us, providing us a glimpse and representation of the Intercession He makes for us with the Father. As we contemplate our sanctification being the focus of Christ's position at God's right hand, we can experience full joy and triumph amidst the discomforts and conflicts of our corruptions. When surrounded by temptations and persecutions for the sake of Christ's name, we can praise God for the power given to His Son. In such moments, we can appeal to God's right hand and envision our Captain standing in our defense. Knowing that the power to strike through kings on the day of His wrath has been entrusted to Christ for our sake, we can rest assured that no matter how strong our enemies may seem, the Lord at His right hand has more than enough power and mercy to sustain us.

Note, secondly, Christ is now present with His people at the right hand of God, ready to defend them against all their enemies. He is present through His Spirit, which strengthens, comforts, and upholds them, enabling them to glory and rejoice in their sufferings, knowing that these trials are temporary and necessary to purify their faith and bear their shame (1 Pet. 1:6, 7; I am 1:2, 3; Isaiah 27:8, 9). Moreover, Christ's power will be revealed to their joy, as He will recompense double mercy to us and severity to our enemies (1 Pet.

4:13; Isaiah 54:7, 8; 61:7). He is present through His mighty power and His angels, rescuing, delivering, and protecting them like a wall of fire, a shield, a buckler, a rock, and a Captain (Zech. 2:5).

This is the foundation of the Church's comfort—more is with them than against them. While enemies may form alliances and confederacies, the Church has Immanuel, God with them (Isaiah 8:9, 10). No one can remove Christ from the right hand of God or from the right hand of His people; none can take away His power or His love for His people. The Church and truth cannot be crushed or overthrown, just as a rock remains unshaken by the raging waves. Being of heavenly origin, they are beyond the reach of corruption from earth or hell. It is futile, like the Giants' attempt to build a tower to heaven. The world was created to have a Church to worship and contemplate its Creator, and thus, it is easier to pull down the world than to ruin the Church. The Church has Christ as her husband, to whom all must bow, confess, and be subjected, assuring her of Love, Power, and Jealousy—all strong allies. To be safe, the Church must keep Christ at her right hand, holding fast to His truth, worship, and obedience, for as long as Immanuel is with her, no adverse power is a true threat.

Note thirdly, Christ, in His appointed time, will utterly overthrow the greatest enemies of His Kingdom and deliver His Church from severe oppression. This argument of Christ's victories is frequently repeated in the Scriptures, foreshadowed in Israel's deliverances from Egypt, the Ark from the waters, and the Jews from Babylon. These victories illustrate that in the direst circumstances and most improbable situations, God will show His zeal for His people. This victory is depicted as treading a wine-press, signifying that in the face of numerous enemies, they will be crushed like grapes, with their blood squeezed out like wine (Isaiah 63:1, 6; Lam. 1:15; Rev. 14:20; Joel

3:12; Mic. 4:13). These adversaries, despite their initial threat, will dissipate like smoke out of a chimney, quickly blown away by a little blast of wind (Hos. 13:3). They will be consumed like thorns and briars (Isaiah 10:17) when they are folded together and drunk with their own pride, their plots and confederacies will be easily devoured like dry stubble (Nahum 1:10; Isaiah 27:4; 31:9).

Therefore, the Scriptures refer to Christ as a Man of war (Exod. 15:3) because He possesses all the Arts of victory, invincible Power like a Lion among shepherds, and unmatched wisdom (Isaiah 31:4; v. 1, 2). No one can thwart His purposes, and with a mere signal, He can gather all the forces of the world against the enemies of His Church (Isaiah 14:27; Isaiah 5:26, 7, 18). He can command help for His people, and if needed, He can create help for them as He did for Israel, working miracles to deliver them (Psalms 44:4; Psalms 71:3; Jeremiah 47:7; Psalms 106:22).

To better understand the truth and comfort of this point, let us examine it in the context of various enemies faced by Christ and His people. First, the primary adversary is the Serpent, the great red Dragon, known by various names that signify enmity, including the Accuser, the Tempter, the Destroyer, the Devourer, and the Envious one. The Serpent is endowed with great strength and assistance from legions of principalities and powers. Additionally, he possesses immense wisdom, described in Scripture as the wiles, tricks, and craftiness of Satan. The Serpent employs two main tactics to destroy people: temptation and accusation. He tempts us to sin and to be disheartened, causing offense towards God and inner turmoil. Christ, our Captain, will overcome the Serpent for us and grant victory by arming us with grace and faith in His triumphs, inspiring compassion and encouragement, and helping us wrestle with temptation. Alternatively, Christ rebukes and chases the Serpent

away, intervening when necessary as our second to fight on our behalf (Zech. 3:1, 2). Thus, He overcomes the Serpent as a Tempter and ensures favorable outcomes from these trials.

He also overcomes the Serpent as an Accuser. Satan accuses the Saints by complaining about their actions (Revelation 12:10), and Christ overcomes this through intercession and enabling believers to self-examine and clear themselves (Romans 8:33; 1 Corinthians 11:31; 2 Corinthians 7:11). Additionally, Satan accuses by suspicion or preconjecture, as seen in the case of Job (Job 1:9, 10, 11). Christ overcomes this by allowing temptations and afflictions to purify His servants, instilling holy suspicion and vigilance to guard against potential evils (Philippians 4:11, 13).

Another formidable enemy of the Kingdom of Christ is the lust of our sinful nature. The carnal mind is at enmity with God, refusing to submit to His law (Romans 8:7; Philippians 3:8). This enmity grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit within us and envies His grace (Isaiah 4:4, 5; James 4:4, 5). Nevertheless, Christ prevails over this enemy through the empowering work of His Spirit, granting us more grace, demolishing the rule of sin, and judging the prince of this world who once reigned in disobedient hearts. Christ's Spirit exercises judgment that outmatches the authority of Satan (John 16:11). The Spirit of Christ is victorious, bringing forth judgment unto victory (Matthew 12:20; Isaiah 4:4). He gradually purifies our nature and services by:

1. Fixing our faith on better promises and hopes than lust can offer (1 John 5:4; Hebrews 11:24, 26).
2. Encouraging watchfulness and countering corruptions with strong principles (Job 31:1; Psalms 39:1).
3. Deepening our knowledge, love, and communion with God, receiving wisdom and strength from Him (Job 22:21; 1 John

- 1:3).
4. Instilling hatred and lamenting over corruptions (Romans 7:23; Mark 9:24; Jeremiah 31:18, 19).
 5. Bringing our actions into the light and setting them before God's eyes to prevent sinning (John 3:20; Psalms 16:8).
 6. Convincing us of the beauty and excellence of grace and the unlikeness of sin to God (Isaiah 26:8; Ezekiel 36:31), thus fueling a righteous opposition to lust (Galatians 5:17).
 7. Acting as a constant monitor and supplying spiritual weapons and reasoning against lust's temptations (Isaiah 30:31; John 14:26).
 8. Providing daily supplies from the residue of the Spirit in Christ, nourishing us as members of His body (Malachi 2:15; Philippians 1:19).

This vital instinct perpetually opposes the workings and life of lust, gradually weakening its influence like fire does to water.

Another powerful instrument used by Satan and lust in their war against Christ is the wicked world. This encompasses evil men and their abilities, including power, malice, wisdom, and learning, all of which contribute to opposing Christ's rule (Isaiah 30:33). The term "kings" in this context not only refers to earthly monarchs and princes who resist Christ but also includes those excelling in worldly abilities that aid their opposition. These are the ones rejecting Christ's yoke and rebelling against His reign. Christ, through the power of His Word and the strength of His arm, smites and confounds these opposing forces. The Lord's Word spreads and is proclaimed by many, causing kings of armies to flee, and His enemies to be defeated (Psalms 68:11, 12). The wicked are destined for judgment, and the rebellious kings and captains will be dealt with (Isaiah 30:33; Revelation 19:17, 18). Christ overthrows His Church's

enemies and protects it from their most formidable power and preparations.

And Christ accomplishes this in several ways. Sometimes, He diverts the enemies' forces from His Church, redirecting their focus towards their own ambitious designs. For instance, Rabshakah and his troops were called away from Judah (2 Kings 19:7, 8), and the Lord promised to divert the desires of His people's enemies from their land when they appeared before Him thrice a year (Exodus 34:24). An example from history is Julian the Apostate, who failed to carry out his plots against Christians due to his defeat in another campaign.

At other times, He infatuates and confounds the enemies of His Church, making them devoid of counsel and courage. When God punished Babylon, their hearts melted in fear, and they became amazed and disoriented (Isaiah 13:7, 8). Similarly, God threatened to cause a perverse spirit in Egypt, leading to the failure of their wisdom (Isaiah 19:1, 2, 3, 14, 17). In the Persian expedition of Julian, the Lord put a spirit of folly in him, causing him to burn his own ships, leaving his forces without necessary relief.

Furthermore, He orders unforeseen events and emergencies for the deliverance of His Church, as seen in the stories of Joseph and Esther. These events, seemingly unrelated, converge to bring about the deliverance, revealing it as the work of God's hand.

Christ also employs natural causes to defend His Church and astonish the enemy. The stars are said to have fought against Sisera (Judges 5:20). In the battle of Christian armies under Theodosius against Eugenius the Tyrant, winds from heaven snatched away their weapons (Josephus). The Lord used hail to defeat the enemies of

Joshua (Joshua 11:11), and the Moabites were overthrown when the sun reflected upon the water (2 Kings 3:22, 23).

He implants illusions and frightening apprehensions into the minds of the enemy, as in the case of the Midianites (Judges 7:13, 14) and the Assyrians (2 Kings 7:6). Additionally, the Lord caused a voice to be heard in the Temple before the destruction of Jerusalem, warning the faithful to leave the city.

Lastly, Christ stirs up and prospers weak and contemptible means to demonstrate His Glory. The effeminate and luxurious Medes and Persians, led by the relatively obscure Cyrus, overthrew the formidable Babylonians (Isaiah 45:1, 13, 3, 17).

Just as Jeremiah was rescued from the dungeon using old, rotten rags that were discarded as worthless, the Lord can deliver His Church through unexpected instruments that were previously scorned by its enemies. God has a way of confounding those whom He intends to destroy, while guiding with extraordinary wisdom those whom He raises to defend His Kingdom.

For example, the Babylonians, in their arrogance and feasting, considered their fortified city impregnable with its walls and the great river. Yet, God granted them wisdom beyond human comprehension, leading them to attempt the seemingly impossible task of diverting the Euphrates River into smaller channels, providing a pathway for His army to enter the city through unguarded gates while the Babylonians were at their most confident and secure (Isaiah 44:27, 28; 45:1; Jeremiah 51:36).

At times, God turns the hearts of others to show compassion to His Church and to despise its enemies, causing them to refrain from helping the foes and rejoicing in their downfall (Isaiah 14:6, 10, 16;

Nahum 3:7). On other occasions, God intervenes directly, bringing judgment upon the enemies through afflictions or adverse circumstances. We see this when Herod was struck down and devoured by worms (Acts 12:23, 24), and when Maximinus and Julian faced debilitating diseases, acknowledging their defeat by Christ.

The Lord may also tire out the enemies, leading them to abandon their futile attempts, or discourage them before they even start. For instance, Diocletian withdrew from public life because he failed to eradicate Christianity, and Julian refrained from persecuting Christians, fearing that his actions might strengthen their cause. In some instances, God turns the enemies' own devices against them, causing their own counsels to lead to ruin, and perhaps even leading to their demise by their own hands.

Additionally, God may harden the enemies' hearts, allowing them to relentlessly pursue their own destruction, similar to what happened to Pharaoh (Zechariah 12:3; Matthew 21:44). At times, God causes the Church to gain favor with its enemies, as He did with Israel among the Egyptians (Exodus 12:35, 36).

Through these and various other means, the Lord overthrows the enemies of His Kingdom.

Now all of this happens in the day of His wrath, or in His appointed time. Here we should note that Christ possesses both wrath and mercy. While some wicked and secure individuals may misperceive Him as only compassionate, they will face severe judgment if they do not heed His persuasion or allurements. He is merciful, as symbolized by the Lamb, meek and gentle, yet also fearsome, symbolized by the Lion, full of fury. In truth, fury is not in Him for those who recognize His strength and make peace with Him (Isaiah

27:4, 6). However, for those who refuse to love, worship, or obey Him, He can display terrifying wrath (Psalm 2:12). Initially, He comes in peace (Luke 10:5), but it is peace offered mercifully, not out of any necessity on His part, and it comes with conditions, making them tributaries and servants to Him (Deuteronomy 20:10, 11, 12). The Apostle declares that He came to preach peace (Ephesians 2:17), but if we reject it, He follows the example of Joshua, bringing judgment upon His enemies who refuse His reign (Luke 19:27).

The crucial point to grasp here is that Christ has a specific day, a predetermined and appointed time, in which He will avenge the greatest of His enemies. While He may forbear and allow them to prevail for a time, He still holds the line in His hand and can cut them short when He chooses. It is not a lack of power, wisdom, or love for His Church that delays the immediate avenging of their quarrel, but rather all these are aligned for His greater glory. It may seem as if the Lord neglects or sleeps while His Church faces adversity (as Christ appeared careless to His Disciples, Mark 4:38, 39), prompting the Saints in Scripture to humbly and mournfully question God's inaction (Psalm 44:23; Jeremiah 14:8, 9). However, God also holds a complaint against us for our impatience and haste. He orders times and seasons in His wisdom, ensuring that the end result brings greater glory to Him and more beauty in the things accomplished. Everything, as Solomon says, is beautiful in its time; if gathered prematurely, it loses its beauty and virtue. It would be madness for a man to mow down his corn while it is still in the green blade. Similarly, the Lord waits for the precious fruit of the earth and exhibits long patience (James 5:7). The Prophet assures us that light, representing comfort, refreshment, peace, and deliverance, is sown for the righteous (Psalm 97:11). It was sown for God's people even when they were in captivity, although they appeared to themselves as dead men in their graves. Yet, they were only like seeds in the

furrows, destined to revive (Psalm 126:5, 6). Therefore, the Lord, like a diligent husbandman, is said to wait, showing grace to His people (Isaiah 30:18). Just as a person suffering injustice must wait for the proper time for a trial, so too must the Church trust in God's wisdom and power (Jeremiah 49:19). There is a set time when He will have mercy upon Zion (Psalm 102:13).

Now, this time is governed and defined by certain considerations. Firstly, when the enemy's sin reaches its full maturity, and their heart becomes proud and insolent against God and His people—when they oppress the poor, worship their own achievements, and elevate themselves as if no one can bring them down. It is then the opportune moment for God to manifest Himself and display His glory. As David declared, "It is time for you, O Lord, to act; they have broken your law" (Psalm 119:126). Their outrageous behavior overflows not only towards God's servants but also to His ordinances, even attempting to erase His name and fear from the earth. This reasoning and timing are frequently found in the Scriptures. In the case of the Amorites, God stated, "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:16). The sin had not yet fully matured or extended to the point that God, in His wise, secret, and patient providence, would allow. Another example is when the Lord declared to Babylon, "You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be destroyed" (Jeremiah 51:13). When people have filled up the measure of their sin, their end is near, regardless of their wealth, security, or resources.

Furthermore, what constitutes the fullness of sin? I answer that three main factors indicate the fullness of sin: Universality, Impudence, and Obstinacy. Firstly, when an entire land is filled with sin, where

there is no one to intercede or stand in the gap. Sin permeates from the streets to the palaces, from houses to courts, from schools to churches, and every corner is tainted with wickedness. As the Prophet lamented, "The land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures in the wilderness are dried up" (Jeremiah 23:10, 11). Abominations abound in every place and at every turn (Ezekiel 8:17; Jeremiah 5:1-6). Secondly, when sin becomes impudent, shameless, and outrageous, with no fear, modesty, or restraint. It breaks all boundaries and overflows like a raging sea. As the Prophet declared, "They parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves" (Isaiah 3:9). Sin becomes so full that it manifests itself in their countenance, as hypocrisy fails to conceal it. The Apostle refers to this as "excess of riot," and the Prophet likens it to a charging horse in battle. When God gives a person over to sin, it does not take long to fill up. Lusts overflow, progressing from desire to conception, delight, formation, contrivance, birth, execution, education, custom, maintenance, and defense, to glory and boasting, to insensibility, hardness, and a reprobate sense. At this stage, sin is dangerously close to condemnation, just one step away from hell. Lastly, when sin persists in stubbornness and becomes incorrigible, rejecting remedy, pardon, and peace, it has reached its fullness. The sin of the Amorites never reached its fullness until they rejected the peace, mercy, and subjection offered to them initially. However, when people sin against the means of grace sent to them and leave no remedy for themselves, it is no wonder that the Lord gives them over and allows the enemy to overcome them (2 Chronicles 36:16). Therefore, we must be careful not to finish sin, for it is not sin itself that condemns a person, but the consummation and culmination of sin.

When the sin of the enemy reaches its peak and manifests in pride and insult towards God's people, that's when the Lord's time to reveal Himself comes. As the Lord says to His Church, "I will restore you to health and heal your wounds because they called you an outcast, saying, 'This is Zion, whom no one seeks after'" (Jeremiah 30:17). In such times, when the roads are desolate, and the wayfarer has ceased, and the enemy disregards all, the Lord declares, "Now I will arise; now I will exalt myself, etc." (Isaiah 33:8-11).

Secondly, when God's people are fully humbled and purified, God uses wicked men as instruments or tools for correction and purification. He does not intend to inflict as severe punishment on His people as on their enemies. If the rod is for the child, the fire is for the rod (Isaiah 27:7-9). When people are struck to the point where they return to the Lord and do not rebel further, that is the day of His wrath. When God's time to deliver a people arrives, He stirs up the hearts of His people to pray abundantly for it (Psalm 102:16-17; Daniel 9:2-3). On the contrary, when He intends to destroy a people, He does not permit His saints to pray (Jeremiah 14:11).

Thirdly, when all human hopes and expectations are lost, and a people have no courage, means, or support left, that is when God's time to deliver His Church and punish His enemies arrives. The Lord shall judge His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees their power is gone (Deuteronomy 32:36; Psalm 68:20, 109:31). In short, when all the necessary conditions and circumstances for God's glory are aligned, that is the day of His wrath.

The Church need not be disheartened by the insults of her enemies, for Christ remains the same—yesterday, today, and forever. Just as

He has delivered His Church from the pride of her enemies in the past, His power, truth, watchfulness, and compassion remain unchanged. By placing our faith in Him, we can rebuke Satan, overcome our own weaknesses and fears, and rejoice in the face of those who insult us. Even amidst the raging of our enemies, we can hope that their time is short, likening it to the biting of a wounded beast. The Saints in Scripture armed themselves against present dangers by recalling what God had done for His Church in the past (Psalm 68:7-8, 74:13-18; Isaiah 51:9-11; Habakkuk 3). They expressed confidence in God's truth and power and scorned their enemies (Micah 7:8-10; Isaiah 50:8-9). In the direst situations, we can place our faith solely in God, as He delights in being relied upon when all external help and probabilities fail (Isaiah 41:17-18; Habakkuk 3:17-18). When a massive host of men came against Asa, they relied on God and were delivered into His hand because He has eyes, strength, and wisdom to support those who walk uprightly (2 Chronicles 16:8-9; Revelation 5:6).

We should also learn to rejoice and celebrate with grateful hearts when Christ conquers the enemies of His Kingdom and grants deliverance and relief to His people. When He reveals His power to His servants and His fury to His enemies, all those who love Jerusalem should rejoice (Isaiah 66:10). Just as the Church instituted days of joy and feasting after being delivered from the malice of Haman (Esther 9:22), it is a sign of an evil heart against the peace and prosperity of the Church to envy, belittle, or disregard the instruments and methods Christ uses to deliver it. This is evident in the example of Tobiah and Sanballat (Nehemiah 4:2-3).

Lastly, we should acquire wisdom to seize the times and seasons of God's peace, recognizing that He also has a day of wrath. We should grasp the offers and opportunities of grace. When the Lord speaks to

us through His ordinances and the secret motions of His Holy Spirit, we should not delay or put Him off for some other time, as Felix did with Paul (Acts 24:25). Instead, we should respond promptly and engage in every duty in God's time. There is a suitable time for every work, and its beauty lies in its timely execution. Thus, we must wisely observe the signs and nature of the times (Matthew 16:2) and tailor our devotions for the Church and ourselves accordingly. It is a great loss of time to let the seasons of grace and spiritual wisdom slip away until it may be too late for God's time of mercy has passed over. "If you had known in this day what would bring you peace. But now it is hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42).

"He shall judge among the Heathen."] By "Heathen," we are to understand the same as "Enemies" in verse 1 and "People" in Isaiah 63:6. It refers to all the armies and swarms of Christ's enemies, whether spiritual or secular. The word "Gentiles" was once a term of great contempt and detestation among God's people, similar to how the word "Jew" may have been used derogatorily in some contexts today. It was a proverbial word used to cast reproach and shame upon people. The Apostle mentions the Ephesians as having been "Gentiles in the flesh" in the past (Ephesians 2:11), implying that by becoming Christians, they had ceased to be considered Gentiles in that derogatory sense. The word "Heathen" is added by David to describe the enemies of Christ, aiming to render them more odious and to express their abject and hateful condition. It equates them to Jews and Samaritans, emphasizing their wretchedness and loathsome state. Therefore, God shall judge these most abject and hateful enemies, condemning and punishing them.

Hence, we can observe that Christ's victory over His enemies will be through debate and argumentation. His military actions are also based on just and established laws, making it a judicial proceeding.

Therefore, the day of God's wrath is referred to as a time of vengeance and recompense for the controversies of Zion (Isaiah 34:8), indicating that the Lord seeks vengeance through reasoned debate. When He punishes, He is said to plead with men. As the priest said, "Where is the Lord?" and those who handle the Law knew Him not, and God responded, "I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your Children's Children will I plead" (Jeremiah 2:8-9). Pleading and taking vengeance are thus intertwined (Jeremiah 51:36). The Lord is also said to reprove with equity and smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, signifying that He convinces and argues before administering punishment (Isaiah 11:4). This is exemplified in the case of Sodom (Genesis 18:21-33). It shows that all our misery begins with ourselves and that we perish because we do not heed His counsel or follow His will. We are not sold to any of His creditors; rather, we sell ourselves through our iniquities (Isaiah 50:1).

In human wars, even if they are ordered with righteousness, many individual men may perish without personal guilt. But in Christ's wars, no one shall perish until they are first convinced through a judicial proceeding of their own demerit. Every mouth must be stopped, and the world, through the evidence and acknowledgment of their conscience, becomes guilty before God before His wrath seizes upon them. The Lord sent Noah to preach before He sent the flood to destroy the old world. He argued with Adam before casting him out of Paradise. The voice always precedes the rod (Micah 6:9). Our Savior followed this course with the one who did not have the wedding garment, first convicting him until he was speechless and then casting him into utter darkness (Matthew 22:12-13). The Lord also took this course with His people when He punished them (Isaiah 5:3-4; Amos 2:11; 3:7). He desires the consciences of men to acknowledge the justness of His proceedings and to condemn

themselves by their own witness. When He enters into judgment, it is done meticulously and precisely, in proportion to the means of grace neglected, the patience and forbearance abused, the times of grace overslipped, and the violation and profanation of the Law.

We must, therefore, be cautious of remaining Gentiles, of being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, of living without God in the world. Only those who are the Lord's servants and of His household can say, "Enter not into judgment." We must all be engrafted into the natural Olive and become the seed of Abraham, Jews by covenant, before Christ will be our peace and reconcile us to His Father (Romans 2:29; 11:17-24; Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 2:11-14).

"He shall fill the places with dead bodies." This indicates the magnitude of the victory, leaving none to bury the dead. There will be a universal destruction of wicked people together on the day of God's wrath; they will be bound up in bundles and heaped for damnation (Matthew 13:30; Psalm 37:38; Isaiah 1:28; 66:17). It also highlights the shame and dishonor of the enemy, lying like dung upon the face of the earth, beholden to their conquerors for a base and dishonorable burial, as seen in the great battle with Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 39:11-16).

"He shall wound the head over many countries." This can be understood in three ways: literally, referring to Antichrist (Revelation 17:2, 18), who claims to be the ecumenical Bishop and Monarch, exercising control over crowns and dispensing Kingdoms at his will; spiritually, referring to Satan, the Prince of this World, whose head Christ was to crush and tread underfoot (Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20); or figuratively, referring to the counsel and power of many nations that will ultimately prove to be in vain (Psalm 2:2; 1

Corinthians 1:19). Regardless of the interpretation, the crucial point to note is that Christ will eventually utterly destroy the greatest, highest, and wisest of His enemies. And thus, this shall suffice concerning this verse.

He Shall Lift Up His Head

"He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head." - Psalm 110:7

Some interpret these words in a similar manner to the previous verses, as a figurative expression of Christ's victories, but with a twofold meaning. Firstly, they suggest that the "brook" symbolizes the blood of the adversary, which will flow like a stream in his way, and by "drinking" of it, Christ will find satisfaction, refreshment, and delight in the defeat of his enemies. For the Lord finds relief when his enemies are subdued (Isaiah 1:24). Secondly, it implies that Christ will pursue his victory with such zeal and persistence that he will not take the usual times of rest but will be content with the refreshment that presents itself along the way. He will immediately lift up his head again to continue pursuing the enemy relentlessly. However, in this interpretation, there is no new matter that has not been previously discussed.

Others understand that the means by which Christ will lift up his head and triumph over all the enemies of his Kingdom is through his Passion and sufferings. His death will destroy death itself, and the one who had the power of death, which is the Devil (Hebrews 2:14). I will not attempt to determine which interpretation is more fitting for this passage, as it is quite challenging. Nevertheless, in light of the

latter interpretation (which is more widely accepted), I shall discuss the means and foundation of Christ's victories over his enemies and his governance in his Church, namely his sufferings and resurrection.

"He shall drink of the brook in the way." By "brook" or "torrent," we may understand the wrath of God and the rage of men— the afflictions and sufferings that befell Christ. This metaphor of understanding afflictions as water is very common in the holy Scriptures (Psalms 18:4, 5; 42:7; 69:1; 124:4, 5). The wrath of the Lord is also referred to as a stream and a lake (Isaiah 30:33; Revelation 19:20), signifying its intense and overwhelming nature, as well as its turbidity and foulness, for God's wrath is full of bitterness (Isaiah 51:17; Psalms 75:8).

In the history of Christ's passion, it is mentioned that he passed over the brook Cedron when he was going to wrestle with the agonizing ordeal in the garden (John 18:1). Similarly, in the history of the Kings, good kings like Hezekiah, Asa, and Josiah purged the City and the Temple of idolatry by burning the cursed things at the brook Kidron (2 Chronicles 15:16; 29:16; 30:14; 2 Kings 23:6). The brook Kidron served as a symbolic sink where all the impurities and uncleanness of God's house were cast, signifying how the sufferings of Christ might have been foretold prophetically by King David, as he drank from that cursed brook, representing the laying and pouring out of the sins of the faithful on him, as he was made sin and a curse for us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13), just as the people used to lay their sins upon the sacrificial animal by laying their hands on its head.

Now, as waters signify afflictions, there are two words relating to suffering afflictions, both applied to Christ (Matthew 20:22). The first word is "drink," representing the act of suffering the curses,

signifying the universality of the wrath that Christ endured, which was both within him (as his soul was heavy unto death) and all around him (from his betrayal, accusation, mockery, condemnation, and physical torment to even being forsaken by his Father). The second word is "baptized," indicating that Christ was completely immersed and encompassed by the torrent of curses. These words are frequently used in the context of suffering curses and afflictions in the Scriptures (Jeremiah 25:27; 49:12; Ezekiel 23:32, 34; Habakkuk 2:16; Revelation 14:9, 10).

By "the way," we can interpret it as either the life of Christ on earth—his journey between voluntary humility and exaltation—or as the way between mankind and heaven, which was made utterly impassable by the torrent of curses until Christ, through his sufferings, opened a path for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over (Colossians 2:14).

Therefore, he shall lift up his head. This phrase signifies victory, triumph, and breaking through the obstacles that previously burdened and oppressed a person (Psalms 27:6). It also conveys boldness, confidence, and security for the entire body (Luke 21:28). Furthermore, it is not a passive lifting up; rather, he himself shall accomplish it. He possesses the power of life and is the source of life within himself (John 5:26; 10:18). Hence, in line with this interpretation, it means that he will endure and remove all the curses that stood in the way between mankind and heaven. Then, in the Resurrection, he will raise his head high, breaking through all suffering into glory. This sense is clearly and explicitly revealed in parallel passages such as Luke 24:26, 46; Philippians 2:8, 9; and 1 Peter 1:11.

He shall drink of the brook in the way. From this, we can note, firstly, that there is a torrent of wrath and curses separating mankind from

heaven— an impassable and fixed gulf, which no one can cross or remove. Initially, the Law seemed like an easy and smooth path to righteousness and salvation, but now every step leads to the depths of hell. It is filled with curses, and no matter which way a person turns, they face only death. One's path may appear smoother and more appealing due to upbringing, disposition, or other circumstances, but by nature, all humanity heads toward damnation, just as all rivers, no matter how different in other aspects, flow into the sea. It is impossible for a natural person to escape damnation on their own, just as it is impossible to undo their lineage from the old Adam or not to have been born of fleshly parents. The Gulf of sin in our nature cannot be cleansed, and therefore, the Guilt of sin cannot be removed. The Image we have lost is irreparable, the Law we have violated is unyielding, the Justice we have offended is insatiable, and the concupiscence of our nature is unquenchable. Sin is an aversion from an infinite good and a turning toward the finite creature; thus, the Guilt of sin is infinite and cannot be removed.

We should frequently meditate on this point, finding ourselves in dire straits and impossibilities, where we cannot see a way out or help ourselves. This realization is the only way to draw us to Christ. Naturally, everyone prefers to rely on themselves first; in any difficulty, they look no further if their own intellect, resources, plans, or efforts can solve the problem. But when all their self-sufficiency fails, they seek help from external sources.

This is especially true concerning salvation; no one begins with Christ but turns to Him out of sheer necessity when they experience the futility of all their other aids and dependencies. By nature, we all reject Him and refuse to let Him rule over us until we are compelled by the evidence of the infinite and unavoidable misery that awaits us without Him—eternal sinking. This is the most compelling reason for

people to consider Christ at the outset—that there is a torrent of curses, a sea of death, a reign of condemnation, a hell of sin within, and a hell of torment without separating them from their salvation. Every drop of that sea, every tiniest curse, every aspect of that Law must either be fulfilled or endured.

Imagine God summoning your guilty soul to a sudden appearance before His tribunal of Justice, and there, He begins to deal with you even from your mother's womb. You would feel utterly lost; even then, a seed of evil-doers, the offspring of viperous and serpentine parents, a cursed child, a child of wrath, an exact image of the old Adam and the blood of Satan. But then, a catalogue and history of sins stretching over forty, fifty, or sixty years is presented—every unruly motion of the will, every secret working of inward lust, every idle word, every unclean aspect, every inconsistency and irregularity of life, all recorded against your poor soul, each to be brought forth at the end and either answered for or avenged. Where will the ungodly and sinners appear if they have no right in Christ? And how earnestly should one labor to secure that right? Who would let so many millions of obligations and indictments lie between them and God, uncanceled, without striving to have them removed?

Now, the only way to achieve this is by denying ourselves and everything we do—doing no good thing to rest in or rely upon when we have done it, but always judging ourselves as unprofitable servants. We must see hell between heaven and our prayers, sermons, and acts of devotion. We must recognize that if God were to scrutinize our actions and judge us, we would be condemned. In short, we must see hell between heaven and everything else in the world, except Christ and heaven. Until one is qualified for mercy in this manner, they will have no desire for it, and God will not bestow it. Christ must be considered worthy of all acceptance before God will

grant Him, and the way to perceive His worthiness is by feeling ourselves to be the greatest of all sinners. When the soul is humbled with the taste and remembrance of the bitterness and pain in sin, there is an immediate transition to hope and mercy (Lamentations 3:19-22), and that hope is this.

Christ has drunk up and dried the torrent of curses that stood between us and heaven, creating a passage for us to His Father's Kingdom. He was made sin and a curse for us, so that He could swallow up sin and death, and be the destruction of hell (Hosea 13:14). I will briefly touch upon two points: what Christ suffered and why He suffered.

To understand the first point, we must note that Christ's human nature was exalted through the hypostatic union to many dignities that are utterly unattainable by any other creatures in the world. These include the communication of properties, the adoration of angels, the primogeniture of the creatures, cooperation with the deity in mighty works, and the satisfaction of infinite justice through finite passion. Additionally, His human nature was anointed with an immeasurable fullness of grace that surpasses all the united perfections of the angels in heaven. Christ received all these things for the purpose of man's redemption, and thus He possessed them in a manner most suitable for executing that work.

Now, Christ was to fulfill the work of redemption through suffering and obedience. His death would destroy the one who held the power of death, just as David slew Goliath with his sword. Christ's sufferings would create a passage for us to God, just as a mighty tempestuous wind opened the way for Israel to leave Egypt and enter Canaan through the Red Sea.

Two general rules should be observed regarding Christ's sufferings. First, the economy or dispensation of His mediatorship is the measure of all that He suffered. He suffered exactly what was required for His role as a mediator, and no more. His suffering was not because He was a man, but because He was a mediator. Second, as a mediator between God and sinners, Christ needed to be holy and separate from sinners. Therefore, any sufferings that would be repugnant to His holiness and detrimental to the administration of His office could not belong to Him. He only suffered those things that did not prejudice the fullness of His grace, the union of His natures, the quality of His mediation, and were suitable for His person and necessary for our pardon. These sufferings served as the punishments for our sins.

Now, punishments come in various forms: some are the result of sins, while others are solely due to sins. Certain things can be considered both sins and punishments from different perspectives. When measured against the Law, they are sins, but in the context of God's providence and order, they become punishments. For instance, hardness of heart and a reprobate sense can be both sins and punishments.

Other punishments stem from sin, and in this regard, sin can be viewed in two ways: as inherent or as imputed. Remorse or torment, along with the worm of conscience, arise from the consciousness of sin within oneself (sin as inherent). On the other hand, sin as imputed can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it is imputed due to a natural connection, where the persons to whom it is imputed are inherently linked to the one who originally committed it, and it descends and is derived upon them. This is the case with Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit, which is imputed to us, resulting in the privation of God's image and the corruption of our nature.

Secondly, sin can be imputed upon the ground of voluntary agreement or acceptance. In this case, the guilt is not inherited but willingly assumed. It does not bring personal desert or worthiness to suffer, but only an obligation and liability to it. To illustrate, if an upright and honest person becomes a surety for a prodigal and extravagant man who has squandered his wealth on reckless indulgence, rendering him unable to pay his debts, both are subject to punishment. The upright person assumes the guilt without personal deserving, akin to the prodigal's condition.

The punishments Christ suffered align with sin in this imputed sense, as He bore all our sins. Additionally, when considering punishments, we must distinguish between those inflicted from external sources and those generated internally and immediately due to the sufferer's condition. Punishments inflicted refer to the pains and distress imposed directly by God or through instruments He chooses to employ. Punishments ingenerated, on the other hand, arise from the weakness and wickedness of the person suffering under the weight of the inflicted pain. This includes blasphemy, despair, and the torment of conscience.

In summary, some forms of punishment are inherently vicious, either in themselves or fundamentally, referring to the source in the suffering person. Others are merely painful and miserable, affecting one's nature without defiling or indicating any pollution or impotency in the sufferer. It is this latter category that applies solely to the punishments endured by Christ.

Now, the punishments which Christ endured can be classified as either inchoate or consummate. The inchoate punishments refer to those penal deficiencies of our nature that were neither sins nor rooted in sins (as Christ did not take on our personal defects but only

our natural ones). These can be categorized as either corporeal, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, and similar experiences, or spiritual, including fear, grief, sorrow, and temptations.

On the other hand, the consummate punishments were those Christ suffered in the end. These can also be classified as corporeal, encompassing shame, mockings, buffets, trials, scourgings, condemnation, and an ignominious and accursed death. Additionally, there were spiritual punishments, with two principal ones. Firstly, there was a punishment of Dereliction, as expressed by the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). During his sufferings for sin, there was a certain form of separation between God and Christ in that cursed manner. It is important to note that Christ had four types of Union with God:

Firstly, in his human nature, which was so closely united in his person to the divine that even death could not separate it from the person or deity. He, the Lord, lay in the grave. Secondly, there was a union in love, so there was never any separation. Even as he hung on the Cross, he remained the beloved Son of his Father, in whom his Father was well pleased. Thirdly, there was a union in the communion of his spirit and holiness. In this regard too, there was no disunion, for he was offered up as a lamb without spot or blemish. Lastly, there was a union in the enjoyment of the light of God's countenance, his glory, and favor. However, during the time of his sufferings, there was a dereliction. This separation was by the withdrawal of God's countenance, not by the dissolution of his union. God looked upon Christ as a God armed against the sins of the world that were upon him.

Secondly, there was a punishment of malediction. Christ underwent the curse of the Law, grappling with God's wrath and the powers of

darkness. He felt the scourges due to our sins in his human nature, which elicited strong cries, deep and woeful complaints, and a bloody and bitter sweat, evoking compassion even from the rocks. It is not a diminishment of Christ's person but rather an affirmation of God's justice against sin, Christ's power against the Law, and their mercy towards sinners to declare that the sufferings of Christ, in their weight and intensity, were equally grievous to what we would have suffered. Being fully human and experiencing vulnerability to the curse of the Law (except where it indicated inherent sin or weakness in the suffering person), there is no reason to believe that he would not be susceptible to the same degree of pain. For one known as "A man of sorrows," no degree of anguish and pain is unfitting. In fact, suffering a violent bodily death at the hands of base men was far more demeaning to him than enduring, with patience, obedience, and victory, even more severe stripes from the hand of God the Father, who chose to lay upon him the iniquity of us all.

Now, for the second aspect of why Christ suffered these things, the Scripture gives primarily five reasons: Firstly, to execute the decrees of his Father (Acts 4:27-28). Secondly, to fulfill the prophecies, prefigurations, and predictions of the Holy Scriptures (Luke 24:46). Thirdly, to magnify his mercy and free love towards sinners and even their most implacable enemies (Romans 5:8). Fourthly, to declare the righteousness and truth of God against sin, showing that reconciliation with sinners required a legal expiation (Romans 3:25). While we must not restrict the unfathomable wisdom and ways of God, acknowledging that he could have saved man in other ways, we are obliged to reverence this chosen means, as it vividly manifests his profound hatred of sin, his unyielding justice and severity against it, his immeasurable riches of love and mercy towards sinners, and in all things, it paves the way for the manifestation of his glory. Lastly, it serves to demonstrate his own power, as he endured all the

punishment of sin, ultimately triumphing over it, and revealing himself as the Son of God through the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). Though Christ indeed felt great fear and seemingly sought to avoid these sufferings in his passion, his fears did not arise from any doubt about overcoming them. He feared them as inevitable pains he was destined to suffer, and as heavy and grievous pains that he would not overcome without much bitterness and intense conflict. Now, turning to the final clause.

"Therefore shall he lift up the Head." From this, we observe that Christ conquered all his sufferings by his own power. Just as in his passion, he voluntarily bowed down his head and gave up the ghost with a loud voice, signifying the voluntary nature of his sufferings (John 19:30), so in his resurrection, it is stated that he himself lifted up his head, signifying his possession of life within himself as the Prince of Life, making it impossible for death to hold him (in the same way that the Law held us, Romans 7:6). Moreover, his exaltation was also voluntary and from his own power, for he did not require any assistance in the work of our redemption; he accomplished it alone (John 2:19, 5:26, 10:17; Acts 3:15).

If it is objected that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of his Father, and that the Father raised him up (Romans 6:4; Acts 13:33), I respond that this was not to compensate for any lack of power in Christ, but rather as an acknowledgment of Christ's own power and action. It served the purpose of joint honouring the Son and the Father (John 5:19-26). Alternatively, by the "Glory of the Father," we may understand the glorious power that the Father bestowed upon his Son in the flesh, giving him life within himself and commanding him to exercise that same power (John 5:26; John 10:18). Additionally, Christ is said to be raised by both himself and the Father because the Holy Spirit, which immediately quickened

him, belonged to both the Son and the Father. It was not any personal distinction between the Son and the Father that raised Jesus from the dead but rather the Spirit, which they both shared (Romans 1:4, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 3:18).

To conclude, let us consider the great benefits and excellent purposes served by Christ's resurrection for us. Firstly, it assures us of the fulfillment of his earthly mediatory works and that he now carries out the remaining tasks in heaven to apply his Sacrifice to us. By justifying himself in the resurrection, he also rose for our justification (Romans 4:25). If the debt had not been completely paid by the surety, it would still be owed. Thus, the Apostle proves the resurrection by God's certain mercies (Acts 13:34). Without Christ's resurrection, we would still be in our sins, and David's mercies would have failed us (1 Corinthians 15:17-18). The Angel sent to remove the stone from the sepulcher symbolized that God's Justice was fully satisfied with the price paid by his Son, akin to a Judge sending an officer to open prison doors for a satisfied debtor.

Secondly, it assures us of our own resurrection, as the members follow the Head. While the wicked will rise by his judicial power, the faithful, known as Children of the Resurrection, will rise through the virtue and fellowship of his Resurrection (Luke 20:36, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Thirdly, Christ's resurrection renews and sanctifies our Nature through its secret and spiritual virtue (Romans 6:4). The acts of Christ's mediation in his sufferings and victories have spiritually applicable and effective outcomes in us. His death leads to the mortification of sin, while his resurrection quickens us in holiness (Hebrews 9:14, 1 John 1:7, Ephesians 2:5, Colossians 2:12).

Fourthly, Christ's resurrection brings comfort in all other calamities we may face. He who raised himself from the dead has both compassion and the power to deliver us from all evil and to keep us from falling (Job 19:27).

Lastly, Christ's resurrection draws our thoughts and affections from earth to heaven, for things of a similar nature are drawn to one another. As the Apostle says, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Savior, even the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile Body, and make it like unto his glorious Body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

In conclusion, let us offer all honor, glory, majesty, and thanksgiving forever to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God. Amen.

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