

SERMONS ON THE HISTORY OF

MELCHIZEDEK



JOHN CALVIN

Sermons on the History of Melchizedek

John Calvin

Translated from the French by Thomas Stocker

Including sermons on justification and Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.

Monergism Books

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by John Calvin

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Editorial Note

This edition removes orphaned annotation markers and obsolete formatting, standardizes Scripture references, and makes light, context-sensitive spelling, verb-form, and proofreading corrections while retaining the translation's historical sentence structure and theological vocabulary. Scripture quotations retain the wording of the supplied edition. The EEBO-TCP transcription of the 1592 English edition (A17696) contains two sermons beneath the collective heading "Three Sermons" concerning Abraham's sacrifice. Both are included here, with separate navigation links. No third sermon appears in that transcription; whether the discrepancy originated in the printed edition or reflects an incomplete digitized copy has not been established.

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

Sir Robert Cecil Knight, one of her Majesty's most honorable privy Council.

AS it has been for the most part (right Honorable) a very commendable and orderly course among the learned, as well divine as profane writers, to publish their works to be read and heard of the common people, either in their own vulgar tongue for their benefit, or else in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, for the learned sort: so has been also their manner to dedicate them unto some honorable or worshipful personages, for the patronizing of those their pains and travels: which their doings, have at this present made me presume upon your honorable courtesy, to dedicate this my travail of these Sermons of Master John Calvin, translated by me out of French into English, for the benefit of my countrymen, that understand not the same language. Most humbly beseeching you, Sir, to accept hereof, as a token of my poor goodwill towards you, not in respect of my travail which is but rude and of no worth, but in regard of the worthiness of the matter, and of the grave and reverend handling thereof by mine Author. The Lord of Lords increase all honorable and godly virtues in you (that you may be as excellent a Magistrate in this commonwealth as your honorable and most wise father has of long time been and still is), with prosperity in this life, to his divine pleasure, and after the course of this time ended, perpetual joy and felicity.

Your Honors at commandment, Thomas Stocker.

The Translator to the Christian Reader.

THou shalt receive here (Christian Reader) these few Sermons of Master John Calvin, for thy benefit, if thou wilt diligently read them without a prejudicate mind. Where, in the first three, thou shalt find how Abram delivered his nephew Lot from the hands of those which had taken him prisoner, and wherein also is handled who they are that ought to take war in hand, and how far they ought to proceed therein. In the next four is handled the doctrine of justification and salvation, by Faith only: whereby such as are led away by a false opinion of their good works and free will, may greatly profit themselves, and lay fast hold upon Jesus Christ alone, for their righteousness and sanctification, knowing how greatly these two graces must be distinguished and not confused, and that although they be never so closely tied and linked together, yet whoever he is that will be said to be reputed to be righteous and acceptable before God, by the benefit of his only beloved son, and in the meantime have no care nor conscience, nor yet will show any sign and token of the amendment of his life, and live in a holy conversation, that man I say must needs divide them, and cut in sunder the inseparable bond of them, and as much as in him lies, strive to dismember Jesus Christ, who by his righteousness, having made us good trees, does also sanctify us, to cause us bear and bring forth good fruit. In the last three, there is handled Abraham's obedience in the sacrificing of his son Isaac, which was a wonderful trial, so that in this thou may see that Abraham who is by the Spirit of God named the father of the faithful, was all the course of his life marvelously tried. And therefore as many as will be indeed the children of faithful Abraham, must walk in his steps and abide many hard trials all their life long, except it shall please the Lord in great mercy to forbear them. Let us therefore beseech the Lord of all mercy, in the name of this great mediator, by whom alone we have access unto the throne of grace, daily to purge us more and more, to the end, that by his holy spirit we may bring forth more and better fruit, than we have yet heretofore done, that it may all serve for his glory, and the edification of his whole Church.

Farewell.

THE FIRST SERMON of the History of Melchizedek:

wherein is also handled the deliverance of Lot, done by Abram.

Genesis 14:13–16

13 Then came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew who dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: who were confederate with Abram.

14 When Abram heard that his brother was taken, he brought forth of them that were born and brought up in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

15 Then he and his servants divided themselves against them by night, and smote them and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left side of Damascus.

16 And he recovered all the substance, etc.

WE are to proceed in the history which yesterday we began with all concerning Lot's deliverance. And first we may behold the great goodness & favor of God towards Abram, in giving him the means for the rescuing of him. And mark why Moses especially says (That one which had escaped, came unto Abram the Hebrew) True it is, that this word is not spoken by way of reproach: For the Tribe of Eber was there so called: And Eber, was descended of Sem (as heretofore we have declared) so that now God had separated Abram in such sort, as that he should not be tainted or polluted amongst the Canaanites. Nevertheless however it is, Moses gave him this title, as if he should have said, Thou art but a stranger & a newcomer guest in the land of Canaan. And besides, no marvel though there was no account made of him, since he had neither kinsfolk nor yet friends there. And yet for all that, God granted him such favor and privilege, as that when time and place served, he was advertised of the evil that was betide his Nephew that he might help to rescue him.

Now Moses adds, that he was in league with some of his neighbors. And yet we see that he was not long before driven to wander from place to place, this way and that, by reason he was everywhere discourteously entreated: for wherever he came, he was still driven to the worst. In very deed, God had commanded him to tread over the land far and near, to try him, albeit, he was before that driven of necessity to do it. Now there is no doubt but that his virtues had gotten him such credit and authority, as that he was accepted among them, yea even the chiefest men of that country made account of him as of their friend, and allied with him to join together one with another. And yet this is certain, that all the virtues in the world cannot sometimes afford a man any such good turn: except these two things concur together with them: The one is, that they which behave themselves justly & soundly: will first conform their lives according to the prescript rule of the word of God, and so long as they serve God, they will also show a humane affection unto their neighbors, and thereby redeem unto themselves many times, peace, and stay the malice of those which otherwise would be ready to grieve & vex them. And in very deed, Saint Peter in handling of this argument, when as he exhorts, servants to well-doing, and to serve those whom they are bound to serve, says: That they may thereby obtain such favor as not to be stricken nor hardly dealt withal. Howbeit (says he) however it is, If you endure grief, and suffer wrong for well doing, and yet by the testimony of your own consciences, you take it patiently, then are you worthy of thanks before God. And this is it that we are here in this place to note.

Now the second is, That God blesses all those which so justly walk, and mollifies the hearts of men towards them. When then we hear it here said, That Abram had some to join with him, no doubt of it, it may easily be seen, that they were such as before time no whit liked of him, or else such kind of men as sought to live riotously and upon the spoil: for in very deed such men were inclinable enough to join with him. Howbeit, to say the truth, this alliance of theirs was to continue but only for a time. For it is certain, that Abram would never converse with those whom God had already condemned, although he stayed their execution: and it had been also contrary to

the promise. And therefore Abram stood always upon a sure ground, because he would not lessen the blessing promised unto him. Nevertheless, however it was, yet did he never refuse to ally himself with them, because he might thereby have been peaceably, and not be as it were a prey and spoil amongst them, whereby we are admonished, as I have already said, so to converse with men, yea although they should be as it were sharp pricks to prick us, despitefully to entreat us, and maliciously and hardly to deal with us, yet should we yield unto it, because they might perceive that we desired nothing but peace, & the procuring of their welfare. And although they went about by all means possible to hurt, and injuriously handle us: yet notwithstanding should we still rest in this hope, that God would change their cursed and venomous hearts, or else so bridle them, as that although we were as sheep amongst a sort of ravening wolves, yet that we shall be guarded and warranted by the hand of this heavenly shepherd. Thus we see what we are hereby to learn.

Now the cause of the war is eftsoons set down unto us, in that Abram seeing his kinsman taken prisoner, took arms upon him. They had long before that, given him many occasions to fall out with them: and yet all the damage they had done him, and all the loss that he had received at their hands, could never induce him to make war. He bore all those things patiently: but the only captivity of his Nephew moved him thereto. Here a question might be asked, whether it was lawful for Abram to take Arms upon him yea or no: for although (as we say in common proverb) that blood cannot lie, and that he might have such an affection to recover his Nephew, as that it could not be imputed to him as a fault: yet nevertheless he must hold this for a general rule:

That it is not lawful for any man whatsoever, to take Arms upon him. For it is God alone that must do that. It is he (as S. Paul says) who arms Kings & Princes. And when he says, That it is they that have the right and superiority to punish the wicked, he says, Behold why they carry the sword, It is not because they should usurp it at their pleasure, and do with it as it pleases other men. God then must be the Author thereof. Thus you see why I have said, that no man

may use force and violence, without he receive the same from him to whom it belongs. And therefore there are none but Kings, Princes, and Magistrates, that may take Arms upon them, and with whom men may join themselves. And this is a point upon which we must surely ground ourselves and stand upon:

For, what a thing were it for every man to take the fields when any wrong were done him. Without doubt that were to bring a horrible confusion everywhere. Moreover, Saint Paul, to keep us within compass, and to exhort us unto patience, alleges that saying of Moses in his Canticle, Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. Whereupon he concludes, that we must give place to wrath and anger. God takes this office of revenge unto himself if there be any extremity and wrong committed, because it is his office to punish the same: now then, if every man shall take this upon him, and that every private man shall thrust himself in, to be revenged, no doubt of it that man robs God of his honor and right, as if he would exclude him quite and clean out of all. To the end then that we give place unto ire: that is to say, if we will have God to show himself to be our protector and defender, and be avenged of our enemies, and take our wars in hand, we ought all be quiet and peaceable. For, he that shall arm himself, robs God as I have already said, of the jurisdiction which he gives to himself for the defense of his. To be short, private persons ought not only to abstain from all kind of violence but also to have a quiet and peaceable mind to suffer, whenever it shall please God to humble them. And in the meantime, (as Saint Peter exhorts us) we are to recommend both our souls and lives to him, who is both the protector and owner of them. And yet nevertheless we see here how Abram was approved (for Melchisedech in blessing him says, That the victory which God had given him was guided by him) although he was but a private man, for he was neither king nor prince: but dwelt in the land of Canaan as a stranger. Howbeit, here is one thing first of all to be noted of us, that he had been already constituted and ordained to be Lord and master of this country. And although the possession thereof was not as yet given him, yet for all that, the right and title thereof belonged unto him. For God had pronounced it by his own mouth, saying,

Behold this land is thine and to thy posterity. And therefore Abram is not to be accounted of as of the rest, seeing that God himself had testified unto him that he gave him the possession of this land, although he presently enjoyed it not. Now then we must look into the difference that is between Abram and others. For if any man shall reply and say, that it is not enough that he was the right owner of it in succession of time: yet are we hereupon to note:

That the example which we here read is like unto the example of Moses. For, when as Moses slew the Egyptian, yet was not the time of the redemption of the people as then come. For it was forty years after: & yet notwithstanding Moses forbore not to execute with the sword: neither can it be said that it was rashly and foolishly done because God approved the fact. And S. Stephen namely recites, That Moses thought that his brethren had known that God had ordained him thereunto, and had appointed him that office. And therefore Moses thereby declared that he thrust not in himself into that action as of himself. And in very deed, forty years after when God called him, he disabled himself, & used all the reasons & shifts that possibly he could to avoid himself out of that Commission. Wherein he showed that he had not done that act upon any foolhardiness: And God himself also therein declared, that he had reserved his servant, in making him commit that act alone, to employ him afterward when time should serve, in matters of greater importance. And therefore God might for once give leave and liberty unto his servant Abram, to exercise the force of the sword, although he was not as yet put in possession of the land which he had promised him. And besides, we are also to note, that God gives oftentimes singular motions unto his servants, which we must not draw unto ourselves to follow. Whereof we have a most excellent glass to look into in the book of the Judges: for, whereas that book speaks of certain men whom God had stirred up to aid his people, the same are so many testimonies unto us, to show that we should not think, that there is always an assured & certain election when any one man should be armed with the sword and with authority.

Did Gideon know certainly that he was chosen? No, surely he did not. Neither yet Sampson nor any of the rest. I shall not need to

recite three or four of them: for as I have already said, as many as there are spoken of were chosen of God, and yet they themselves knew it not. We see how Gideon doubted & was in great perplexity: and therefore would have God give him a manifest token of his vocation & calling: and a man would have thought, that when he had obtained the thing which he craved, that it should have redoubled his courage: and yet it fell not so out with him. For we see that he was very timorous. And yet God had so chosen & appointed him for the deliverance of the people, as that with 300 men he discomfited a great number, yea even a great & mighty army. And yet all that which is here recited unto us, is not for us to make a general rule thereof. For it were a mockery and a foolish argument for us thus to reason. See how God has redeemed his Church from the tyranny of the wicked and infidels, by the hands of Jephthah, Sampson, and Gideon, and such like. And therefore when we see the children of God unjustly oppressed, that it shall be lawful for us to take Arms upon us to aid them: Now, this were too too horned an argument.

For it were meet that we should have the spirit of those whom we pretend to have, that is to say, That we should be assured that God has also called us thereto. And why? because as I have already said, they had their particular motions, as if they had been privileged thereunto by a public law. And we are in all things to note, that when God works extraordinarily, being grounded upon his word, that privilege is not for us to be usurped. For it is the Office of a King or Council, to grant a privilege to any, neither is it for me to know the reason why he does so: for if I shall do the like that he does which is privileged: I shall join myself with him that would separate himself from the common order. For we must leave the authority of Kings and Magistrates to do whatsoever they know to be best for the common weal: and it is great reason we should do so. And therefore so often as we shall see God minded to remember the redemption and deliverance of his Church by such as he has ordained to be as it were ministers of his own preparing, we must understand, these to be singular acts past from his own hand, & those men to be chosen by him: and armed also by his authority and power, But to say, that

every man may take upon him to do as much, the same would bring, as I have already said, horrible confusion. Thus we see what we have to learn as concerning that matter which is here recited unto us of Abram. To wit, that God had already given him a token, that he had not in vain constituted him lord & master of the country of Canaan. And besides, he gave him also a little taste that his successors should enter the land: and that whatever forces should come against them, yet that they should no way let them from conquering the whole land. And although the Army of those kings of whom we yesterday spoke, was not passing thirty or forty thousand, yet nevertheless Abram had only but those of his household, which were but 300 and 18 men. Now for any man to say that they were experienced soldiers, were a very mockery: because Abram was never brought up in the wars, he knew not which way to handle either sword or Target. And it is so far off for him to be the more confident & bold by reason of those confederates that came with him, as that it was an occasion to make him the more afraid. For they might have alleged and said thus, Why this same stranger goes about to have all our throats cut. For do we not here see four victorious kings which have spoiled Sodom & Gomorrah, and all their neighbour Cities about them, and shall we think to do any good to set upon them? surely in so doing, we shall as it were cast ourselves wittingly and willingly away. And therefore Abram seeing himself thus distressed, should in the common opinion of man, rather desist and live in peace. Now at the first sight, it should seem to be a great folly for him to take the war upon him with CCC. and xviii. men, and himself being a silly old man, become their Captain: he that never knew what either war or battle meant, as we have already said, & yet would hazard the casting of himself away so fondly. And therefore we are the more earnestly to observe that which I have already touched: to wit, that God would thereby show him, that when he intended to put his successors in possession of the land, that it was an easy matter for him to do it, by reason of that noble victory which he had given him, a thing not to have been believed, if a man would have judged thereof according to humane reason. Here we see in sum, what we are to learn as touching this

point where it is said, That Abram armed his household men. We see by this, with what wisdom God endued him, although he had never been trained in the wars, neither yet acquainted with any stratagems or warlike policies, whatsoever: and yet notwithstanding we see that he surprised his enemies, charging them suddenly in the night, yea even then when they thought themselves most safe and sure being thoroughly fraught with good meats & strong drinks: and solacing themselves with the joy of the spoile of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now we know that after such victories there is much riot and filthiness committed. And yet Abram had so much cunning as to surprise his enemies: although in very deed, the former victories which his enemies had obtained, had been enough greatly to have daunted him. And again, his so sudden and speedy coming must needs bring with it a great to do and tumult: had not God by his holy spirit governed the same. By this we are to understand, that GOD would needs take this matter in hand by him: and not only for Lot's sake, but also because he should know, that the promise of GOD was neither vain nor frivolous, when as he had given him the dominion and superiority over the whole land of Canaan. And this is that in sum which hereby we are to learn.

It follows after (that the King of Sodom came unto him) which is to magnify the great favor and grace that God bears unto Abram. For, we have already alleged the saying of Ezekiel, where it is said, That the Sodomites were extremely proud, which was the very spring head of all the enormities that provoked the vengeance of God, utterly to root them out. Now how proud soever the King of Sodom was, yet was he glad to come and do homage to Abram, because he knew that both his life and all his Country were due to him.

Hereby then we see, that it was God which had the direction in this matter, and blessed his servant Abram. True it is, that it had been much better for him not to have gone out of his Tent to the hazarding of himself so dangerously: But it was GOD that stretched out his hand unto him, because he would have him know by experience, his power and aid in the matter. This consequently, greatly profited Abram: For if he had tarried in his house without

understanding the like defense of GOD, without all doubt he had never been so rightly confirmed as afterward he was. And therefore we see, that when GOD sends us any afflictions, although at the first they be never so hard and grievous, yet for all that, in the end, the issue of them is profitable and beneficial to our good. For, as S. Paul says, Patience engendereth trial. To the end we might effectually know, that it is God which has succored us: and when we once know that, we might more and more be confirmed to trust in him. And hope never makes us ashamed: for, whoever shall have recourse to God, shall never be confounded. And therefore we see, that we can never rest quiet and be peaceable, until such time as God shows us why he has afflicted us, and that in the meantime, he makes us to feel that it is for our good, and so consequently we have occasion to bless him, and call upon him more assuredly. Thus we see what we are here to observe as concerning this point. Now where it is said, that the king of Sodom came unto Abram, he adds anon after, (that Melchizedek king of Salem, offered also bread and wine.) And for as much as he was the high Priest of God, that he blessed Abram: and that Abram gave him the tithe of all the spoil. Here we see as notable a history as any is in all the holy scripture, and not only an history, but such a one also as is a lively image to represent our Lord Jesus Christ, as in the 110th Psalm it is written.

For, it is not without cause there set down, that God had sworn and would not repent him thereof, that he would never break the solemn oath which he had made. That is to say, That Jesus Christ is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. If there were nothing else but the history thereof, we see that Melchizedek is called God his Priest: howbeit however it is, yet is he most like in estate and degree unto Abram, but wants a great piece of it. For, as we shall hear after, Abram is called the father of all the faithful and of the whole Church, and that all such as are the children of God, must be his spiritual children. And therefore Melchizedek in one respect must needs be his inferior. It is far from the meaning of Moses, to prefer him before Abram, as the Apostle very rightly does, as hereafter we shall see. Some have thought this to be Shem: but there is no likelihood of any truth therein. For if it had been so, would

Abram have tarried so long before he had seen the Patriarch Shem, of whom he was descended? No doubt of it he would at the first have gone unto him, & have dwelt with him: for he was king of Salem. And in very deed, Abram might very well have shielded himself under his protection, but he wandered all the country over: and all that while there was no mention made of Melchizedek. Moreover, it was not without good cause noted of the Apostle, that Melchizedek had neither father nor mother without beginning & without end, as if he had been an immortal man immediately descended from heaven, not but that Melchizedek was a man: but the Apostle his meaning is to show, that he is brought in as though he had never been born. For, no man knows who was his father, nor yet who was his mother: no man knows his kindred nor yet how he lived: and besides, no man knows where he died: and yet he is a priest of the living God. Nevertheless, he manifestly showed himself, and eftsoons hid himself, and was buried, but no man knows how nor when. Whereupon the Apostle shows, that he was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, who although he be the everlasting son of God, yet notwithstanding he had no father after the common manner of men, because his divine essence is spiritual and eternal: and was also miraculously conceived by the holy Ghost, beyond the order of nature. And although he be dead, yet he lives forever: yea and has obtained life for us, in that he died for us. And therefore he is without beginning & without end: without beginning, because he is God eternal: and without end, because we live forever in him, as it is said by the Prophet Isaiah, Who shall tell the line that shall come of him? The Church, by the virtue & power of our Lord Jesus Christ is immortal: & therefore by a far stranger reason, must he needs be without end.

But we will hereafter handle this more at large, and at this time briefly run it over, to show that it was not Shem. See then why David also especially counts the redeemer that should come, unto Melchizedek. However, before we go any farther, we are to note, that it was a wonderful grace of God, that Melchizedek could so purely keep himself, considering that all the land at that time, was full of idolatry: for Abraham his father's house was a den of idols, as

heretofore we have said, and as the holy Ghost witnesses unto us by the mouth of Joshua. Seeing then that all was so corrupted in the land of Chaldea, which was very nigh unto the place where Noah dwelt, where he had continually lived, that Shem and such as he was were there also: seeing then that the devil had perverted and so foully defiled the service of God, how is it possible that in the land of Canaan, where the people are wicked, where there is nothing but impiety, contempt of God, and rebellion, where there is nothing but iniquity, deceit, cruelty, and violence, that yet there should dwell a priest of the living God? By this we may see how God oftentimes has his church, as a man would say, raked up in the ashes, and in the judgment of men not to be seen: but it suffices that God knows it. Whereof we have here a testimony in Melchizedek. A man would have thought that there had not been at that time one man that worshipped God sincerely and simply:

For, seeing that the grandfather of Abraham and all his kindred were given to devilish errors, and served Idols, what must we think of the rest? A man would have then judged that the Church of God had been utterly abolished: but we may see, that he had reserved a little seed thereof, when as his will was, that Melchizedek should be a Priest there, yea even in such a land as more exceeded in all iniquity than any of the rest. Let us then apply this to our own use: for, this is a dangerous temptation for us to think that God has no church in the world: for then it must fall out, that his promise is vain and of none effect. And besides, when a man thinks himself to be left alone, he becomes so careless and negligent, as that he falls into despair: as we see how nearly Elijah was drawn into it when as he said, what shall become of this gear? For, they have killed thy Prophets, have set up their Idols in every place, and my self am left alone. He was as it were like a poor dismayed man, being ready to cast himself headlong into the bottomless pit of despair. But what? God comforted him and said unto him, That he had as yet reserved unto himself seven thousand, that is to say, a great number, that had not bowed their knee unto Baal. So then, as I have already said, our faith should be marvelously shaken, yea utterly overthrown; If we should be persuaded of this, that God had so forsaken the world, as

that he had no Church left in it. And therefore let us learn, not to judge by the outward sight of the eye, whether there be a Church, or no: but let us rather renounce our own insight: because we are advertised, that God will many times have a little seed of it lie hidden: as the grains of corn are not seen so long as there lies a great heap of straw upon it, because the grains are small and few which are covered with it. Even so it seems sometimes, that all the faithful servants of God, are here quite and clean rooted out from the face of the earth: however, the Lord has incomprehensible means for the upholding of his: and he must needs be continually worshipped and served, not that he does look for a great, glorious, and pompous multitude in his Church: but it may suffice us that he knows who are his. And so let us depart from all iniquity, that we might call aloud upon his name, and join ourselves with our brethren, although we know them not: For that depends upon God his adoption, when as he witnesses unto us by his holy spirit, that he has a great number of faithful ones, neither is it needful that we know them. Wherefore it is his will and pleasure that they should be dispersed throughout the face of the whole earth, and have no reputation before men: but be contemptible and despised persons, and to be short, to be no more known and esteemed of, than if they lay trodden under men's feet. And thus much for this: and yet we are to gather from this place some exhortation, which is, not to follow the multitude.

For, Melchizedek might have fallen to idolatry as well as the rest, if he had had a regard to that which they did: for, there was nothing all there about, but a very pollution of the service of God, and yet he continued in that which he knew to be good and just, according to that which God had instructed him in. Neither was there any law at that time written: but God had given him so much knowledge, as well by Noah, as by Shem, as was necessary to salvation. Now if so small an instruction as Melchizedek had, constantly established him in pure religion, how shall we be able to excuse ourselves, when as God daily represents himself unto our ears, that he has set down a law which shows us how he will be worshipped and served, has given us prophets to explain it unto us, and has given us also a gospel, which is a trumpet to sound not only into our ears, but also

thoroughly to pierce both our thoughts and affections? when God then has so many means to keep us within compass to serve him purely and sincerely, if we then decline from the same, and be transported away by men, and under a color that we see such a custom bear sway, that such an abuse rules and reigns, and is received and accepted, and that we dwell and live amongst infidels and idolaters: what a condemnation shall that be unto us, seeing that Melchizedek so constantly and firmly persisted and stood soundly in his faith and belief?

Let us therefore lift up our eyes unto God, have our ears fixed as it were unto his word, and all our senses attentive, that we be never carried away, although we should be tossed up and down here below as it were in the sea, and driven to and fro with winds and tempests: and that if there were a people that should hold a religion, and that there should be some great king that would have them, thus and thus to govern themselves, yet let us learn to hold us always unto our God alone, and that it is enough for us, to beware that we never decline from the way which he has showed unto us by his word: and that the bright shining light of the law and the gospel be ever before us, and that we shall never err, so long as we know God to be our guide and leader. Thus we see what we are to learn from the example of Melchizedek.

Let us now come to the text of Moses: It is said that Melchizedek king of Salem, offered bread and wine, and was a priest of the living God, and blessed Abram. It is meet that this text be resolved: That Melchizedek, inasmuch as he was a king, received Abram, and gave unto him bread and wine for the refreshing of his people: and being by quality, a Priest, blessed him, and that Abram also gave him the tithe of all the spoil. Here we see, that Melchizedek is set before us both as a King and a Priest. Now here we are to distinguish, of the diverse acts, by the several offices. For as I have already said, in as much as he was a King, he dealt liberally with Abram: he refreshed him and all his company: and for as much as he was a Priest, he blessed Abram. Now, it was a common thing amongst the ancient Fathers, for every king to be a priest: and the very profane people do show, that that was used in many Countries. For, Kings were not

contented with their kingly estate, but desired also through ambition to be Priests, because they thought it to be a more holy dignity, than the majesty of a King. And thus we see why they would oftentimes be Priests. And in very deed we see, that that was a most ambitious desire, and that they which coveted credit and estimation, would always aspire and climb that way: but however it is, it is certain that Moses recites this as a singular thing in Melchizedek. Nevertheless we see, that God has in his law made a difference between the one and the other, and will not have them both to rest in one person. And Moses was as excellent a man in all perfection of virtues as ever was born in the world: and yet would not God for all that, have him to be a Priest also, but would have his brother Aaron to take upon him the office, because Moses had enough to do with the civil government that was laid upon him. And in very deed we see how Uzziah was punished: for, being a king, he was arrogantly puffed up, to take upon him the usurpation of the priesthood: and for only sensing upon the Altar with frankincense, he was stricken with a leprosy, put to great shame, and made a recluse all the days of his life. And yet for all that, it seemed that his devotion was good, or at least, that he was to be excused. Yea but God did not punish the outward act only: for he knew well enough the pride of king Uzziah's heart. And besides, it is said, That obedience is better than all the sacrifices in the world. And because he thrust himself into an office which God expressly forbade, and troubled the vocation and order which should have been inviolably kept, we see wherefore he is punished. And for so much as he would not content himself with his estate and degree, therefore it was meet that he should be made infamous and detestable, and be quite and clean separated from the company of men. Thus we see that in the law were two things which were not tolerated to be in one man, to wit, kingdom and priesthood. And therefore seeing it is so, we must conclude, that this example which is here set down is absolutely singular, and appertains not unto the law. True it is, that at that time, the law was not as then written, and the Tribe of Levi was not yet in the world, to take upon it the right of the priestly dignity: however this example is here set down unto us for instruction, to the end the law might

remain in her full strength, and the Church thereby might be edified, as appears by the Psalm by me alleged. And therefore we must conclude, that it was not spoken of Solomon, nor yet of any other king descended from the Stem of David: For, if they were kings, they must not have intermeddled themselves with the priesthood, for if they did, they were Apostates. Wherefore, when it is said, that there should be a king a figure of Melchizedek, and according to his order and estate: that shows that it was not spoken of the whole race of David, which was descended of him according to the flesh, saving until such time as we come unto the high priest our Lord Jesus Christ. True it is, that he is the son of David and of his seed. But there is in him an especial yea an only regard to be had: which is, that he made an end of the priesthood of the law, because his kingdom is spiritual: and that is it also, that shall make an end of this earthly kingdom, which was established but for a time, and that until his coming.

Now, when it is called perpetual: the meaning is, that he has continued in the person of the redeemer. And therefore this is it that we are to observe out of these words of Moses, when he says, That Melchizedek was king of Salem, and that he was withal a priest. We see then, that these two offices belong to none but unto our Lord Jesus Christ: according to that rule which God has set down in his law: and therefore we are out of all doubt that it was the priesthood of Jesus Christ which was showed unto Abram: to the end his faith by that means might be sealed and the better confirmed. For, since the body was not seen, it behooved that there should be some shadows at the least thereof. And therefore had the fathers the shadows of it for the upholding of their faith, still looking for the appearing of Jesus Christ. They had (I say) shadows and figures. And although that be not to us common with them: yet is it very profitable for us. For, we are to gather, that Jesus Christ was not sent in haste unto us, neither yet that God determined in a minute of time to send him unto us for our redeemer: for he was already the very true redeemer, although he had not as yet taken upon him our nature, nor yet manifested, neither yet the gospel published. Whereupon we see, that the faith which we have at this day extends

itself far and wide. And the Gospel has been from the beginning: in such sort as that the ancient Fathers were built upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in him was their hope and salvation: to be short, that is an help which is not to be contemned. But when we shall compare the shadows with the body, we shall see that our redemption is more to be wished, than the state of the Fathers. And therefore we see, why it is said, That blessed are the eyes which saw that, that the Disciples had seen: for many kings and prophets had an earnest desire to enjoy such a sight, and yet could never attain unto that which they sought for: but contented themselves with an assured confidence that the promise of God should be accomplished in time convenient: as hereafter we shall see, when as Jacob in passing out of this life said, I shall see thy saving health O Lord, and will put my confidence therein. Now then, when we shall make such comparison, we have wherewithal mightily to be strengthened, and to be angry at whatsoever the devil may thrust in, to withdraw us from the purity of the Gospel: and be so much the more stirred up to embrace our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that he has brought the full and perfect truth of that which was figured in the law. Thus we see how we are to benefit ourselves by this place of scripture.

As touching Melchizedek his dwelling place, it is most likely to be true that it was Jerusalem however, there has been a compounded word Jebusalem, by reason of the Jebusites that occupied that place there. However it is, that was the City wherein Melchizedek had been, and there also where Jesus Christ exercised his office of priesthood, not only when he preached the Gospel, but also when he was crucified for us, and offered up a holy oblation unto God his father, to reconcile us unto him forever, and to cleanse us of all our sins.

Let us now prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses: beseeching him to receive us to his mercy. And seeing that we are condemned as of ourselves, that we might by the means of the redeemer which he has given us, be delivered from the curse, in which we should be plunged, if it were not that he had redeemed us by his infinite goodness: and that as he has stretched out his hand to pull us unto our Lord Jesus Christ, that

he would more and more confirm us in such perseverance of faith, as that we might cleave unto him, and never be withdrawn from him by any temptations of this world. But that we should rather fight against all the alarms wherewith Satan should set upon us, until such time as we do come unto that everlasting kingdom, which was prepared for us before the creation of the world, and which was so dearly purchased for us. That it would please him to show not only unto us this favor, but also unto all people, &c.

THE SECOND SERMON of Melchizedek,

wherein is showed that he was a figure that Jesus Christ should be both an everlasting King and Priest.

Genesis 14:18–20

18 And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was a Priest of the Most High God.

19 Therefore he blessed him, saying: Blessed art thou, Abram, of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

20 And blessed be the Most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.

And Abram gave him a tithe of all the spoil.

WE have already begun to declare that Melchizedek, of whom mention is here made, was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to the end we might the more attentively hearken unto this doctrine, we are to remember that which yesterday was delivered unto us, that is, that God swore by a solemn oath, That he who should be king over the people should also be a Priest. Now it is certain that God is very sparing and careful of his name; and casts it not out at all adventures: for his meaning is that we should have it in all reverend regard, & not take it but upon necessity, & to such a use as is worthy the holiness thereof: and for his part also gives us an example. And therefore we are to conclude that this is a point of great importance and marvelous profitable for us to know, that he who should be the redeemer of the people should also have the title both of a king and a priest. And indeed, if we should separate the one from the other, the faith that we have in our Savior Jesus Christ should be very weak, and should have no certain nor firm foundation.

For, there are two things requisite to our salvation: the one is that God accepts us as righteous and vows us for his children; the other is that we might be guided by his hand, and maintained and

warranted by his invincible power. If we should take but one of these points, we should understand it but by halves. And mark how: Put the case that God were merciful unto us and would not impute unto us our sins, yet if the devil had power over us, and we left as a prey unto all the assaults wherewith he should assail us: how could it otherwise be but that we must be most miserable castaways. On the other side, if God should display his power for our defense, and yet we not reconciled unto him, and so not reputed and held to be righteous and just: no doubt of it but that we must need still come to reckoning. And then woe unto us when as we should be judged without mercy. But we know that all our righteousness consists in this, that God has mercy upon us and has buried all our offenses. And therefore it behooves that our Lord Jesus Christ should show himself to be both a King and a Priest, that is to say, that he should on the one side make an atonement between God and us, to the end we might boldly come when as we were driven to call upon him for aid, and assure ourselves that he vows us for his children. And all this we have by the benefit of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, in that he shed his blood, it was to wash and cleanse us of all our spots: he was made a sacrifice of satisfaction, so that we thereby are discharged of all our debts, and the obligation that was against our salvation was, as Saint Paul says to the Colossians, broken and canceled. Thus we see what it was that was accomplished in the person of the Son of God, when as he was sent into the world: that is, that in suffering for the remission of our sins, he has made us righteous. Not that we are in truth altogether so: for there wants a great deal of it: but we are so far righteous, as that GOD will not judge us according to our deserts: and contrariwise, he by his infinite goodness supports us, and the obedience which Jesus Christ performed is approved and allowed unto us. As if any man should pay our debts: why then we are discharged. Even so is our Lord Jesus Christ as it were appointed to be the principal debtor for us, and thereby discharges us before God. Neither can the devil have anything wherewith to accuse us when as we shall trust unto the satisfaction which was paid for us by the Son of God. And therefore it is not without cause that he is called a priest.

However, we for our parts are rightly to consider what fruit and benefit we are to receive by this his office of priesthood. For it is not for himself alone but for our profit and welfare that the father by a solemn oath bestowed this estate and dignity upon him. Now, we are here to note that he is called a Priest forever, to the end this honor might be reserved to him and transported to none other. If this point then had been so well considered as it ought, and as the Apostle most notably set it down in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The abomination that has been brought into the world, and which to this day rules and reigns therein, had never been: for the Pope makes his priests with this condition to appease God. For, these are the very words which he uses when he charms them, that is to say, he charms them with these words of authority: WE GIVE THEE POWER TO OFFER SACRIFICE UNTO GOD, TO APPEASE HIM. What an horrible blasphemy is this? For this is as much as to make GOD a liar, and to make void the solemn oath which he has pronounced with his own mouth, and which is spoken of in the hundredth and tenth Psalm that we have alleged, where God says, That Jesus Christ shall be a Priest forever, even he alone: that is, according to the order of Melchizedek, who has not his like or match. And yet notwithstanding, behold how the Popish Priest brags that they offer up Jesus Christ, and that they are God's Priests to make reconciliation for the sins both of the quick and of the dead.

For they are not content to redeem such as by themselves out of their clutches, as out of the hands of the foes: but will have also their priestly witchery extend itself even to the dead. We see here that there is a constraint more than manifest between this decree which is pronounced and spoken by the holy mouth of God, and that which Antichrist has falsely devised, and which even at this day he still upholds and maintains. We are therefore to note: that Jesus Christ did not offer up himself only once for all, to the end to appease the wrath of God his father towards us, and to pay all our debts: but that also the power of this oblation which he made should endure forever, and be permanent. And therefore we may see why the Apostle uses this similitude, That the way is as it were freshly consecrated unto us by the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord: as if he

should have said, that the blood which was once shed for our salvation is never drawn dry but daily overflows our souls by the power of his holy spirit, which bedews us with the same, as St. Peter in the first Chapter of his first canonical Epistle speaks. Mark also why Jesus Christ in his Supper, says, "This is my blood of the new Testament," and so consequently forever: as if he should have said, that we should not think that he had made a reconciliation which should not endure, and as though it had been but for a day or a year only: but that at this day he occupies the place of a priest. Because he is the Mediator unto God his father, in the power of the death and passion which once he suffered: and does make intercession for us, as that we are assured that we are acceptable unto God when we come unto him in the name of our Advocate: and are grounded and settled upon the oblation which he once made, to the end it might serve us at this day, and unto the world's end.

I have already said, that it were not enough that we were thus set at one with God, and our sins forgiven us, without we were also defended and conserved, under his mighty hand and protection. And therefore it was meet that Jesus Christ should be a king. For, all the salvation that we must look for from the hand of God must come from our Lord Jesus Christ. We must not fly in the air to look afar off for that which we want: for he gives and offers himself unto us. And therefore we must, in the person of this Redeemer, find out all fullness of that which is requisite for our salvation. For that cause is our Lord Jesus Christ called a king: the unction which was bestowed on him pertains unto his kingdom, to the end we might be enriched with all his benefits, and defended against all our enemies, and to have him to be an invincible fortress for us. And although we be set upon, yet shall we have always the victory. Thus we see how the riches of the kingdom of heaven are bestowed upon us. And forasmuch as Jesus Christ was replenished with them, in all perfection and fullness: we for our parts are void of them, and want them. And therefore we must come and beg them of him, that he might deal liberally with us in helping us, which he does when he bestows the graces of his holy spirit upon us, that we might be

reformed according to his image: and the devil repulsed and put to flight.

Now I pray you what strength have we of ourselves? For the least temptation in the world will throw us down, yea, and our very shadow will make us as it were vanish away. But it is said, that when Jesus Christ shall take us into his protection, we shall be in such a fortress, as that all the enemies we have shall never be able to have power over us. Now we see a great deal better, that it is not without cause that God used a solemn oath, when he made our Lord Jesus Christ a King and Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Now the Apostle goes further and stands upon the names, for, Melchizedek signifies a king of righteousness. He shows us then hereby, that the kingdom of the Son of God is not common, neither yet to be esteemed like unto other kingdoms: But that the property thereof is to make us righteous. For, earthly Princes may very well be called righteous, whilst they faithfully execute their office, abstain from outrages, tyranny, and cruelty, and render to every man his due: in this sort they may be said to be righteous. However, there is another manner of righteousness in the son of God: and it is it, whereby we are made partakers. A man may be as it were an Angel in all virtues: nevertheless, this serves no further than for his own person. He may give good example unto others, correct them that have done amiss, look that men live honestly and according to the law: but to make others righteous, passes all man's power. And therefore the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is not shut up within himself to have it for himself only: but so to communicate it unto us, that by his means we may be made just before God. And how should that be? We have already showed, that God reputes us for just and innocent, when it pleases him to bury our sins and iniquities. And again, accordingly as he has regenerated us by the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is also to clothe us with his righteousness. However, this is but in part, while we live in this world, our sins are fully forgiven us without exception: and yet notwithstanding we are not so reformed, but that there still remain in us infirmities and sins. And therefore we must embrace this righteousness, that is to say, unto the remission of our sins.

But however it is, we see in what sort our Lord Jesus Christ makes us partakers of his righteousness. Here we see the first point that we are to note. The second is of the place Salem. And Salem is as much to say as peace: And the Apostle shows us that over and besides the righteousness which we receive from our Lord Jesus Christ, we also enjoy a peace, which he only opens, and which by no other means we can obtain. And although the wicked and contemnors of God strive to be at rest and peace, yet does the Lord so awaken them with a spirit of frenzy, as that they are like men half dead. For mark how the wicked strive to be at rest and peace. That is, they forget God as much as in them lies, and so become very brutish. And yet in spite of their teeth, God will put them in mind of him, and when he appears unto them, they tremble as before their Judge. And besides, they have a hundred thousand witnesses: for their own consciences are more than all the actions in the world, yes, they cannot but condemn themselves. And although God seems to hold his peace, yet cannot the wicked be pardoned, but that they must needs be enforced to feel their curse. And therefore as Isaiah witnesses, "There is no peace for the wicked." But as St. Paul says to the Ephesians, Christ is our peace, because he has conjoined and united us unto God his father. Mark also why in the first chapter to the Romans he says, "That being justified by faith, we are at peace with God." He makes a difference of the peace of the wicked, that is to say, between the peace which they seek after, and cannot find it, and the peace of the faithful. The wicked will turn their back upon God and flee from him as far as they possibly can: but the faithful come before him and acknowledge him for their father, because they know that he will not impute their sins unto them, for as much as Jesus Christ has forgiven them. And thus have they peace and rejoice in the infinite mercies which he has bestowed upon them. And therefore it is not without cause that Jesus Christ is called the king of peace. And there is more in it than so, for the faithful are not only assured for the time present but also for the time to come. For they know that God has begun his work in them conditionally that he will perform it. And therefore their trust is that he will never fail them, but that he will more and more guide and govern them until

they come unto his kingdom. Thus we see how we have peace and shall possess it in Jesus Christ, because that without him we cannot be but the enemies of God: and as we make war against him through our sins and rebellions, he cannot choose also but arm himself against us. Here is also to be noted that he was a Priest forever, when as Melchizedek was brought in as yesterday was touched, without beginning, without end, and without any pedigree. And it was to this end that we might know that although our Lord Jesus Christ was in the fullness of time sent, yet that he was the son of the eternal God: and that he was also appointed to be the Redeemer before the creation of the world. For he is the firstborn of all creatures, because that in him and by him all things were made, and also that he, according to the wonderful counsel of God, should restore all things, for as much as all things both in heaven and in earth were dissipated after the fall of Adam, who overthrew all the creatures with him.

However, all things were restored by our Lord Jesus Christ: knowing also, as the Apostle in the last Chapter to the Hebrews says, "That Jesus Christ is yesterday, and today, and the same forever:" that his power does and shall show itself unto the end of the world. Mark then how we must altogether have recourse unto this power (which the fathers themselves felt and proved before such time as he was manifested in the flesh) nothing doubting, that although men may be absent from him, and that there is a great space between heaven and earth: yet notwithstanding that we shall continually be quickened by his life, enriched by his benefits, and upholden and preserved by his power. For seeing the Sun which is but an insensible creature, fructifies the earth, gives heat thereunto, and that God by means thereof nourishes and upholds us: what shall it be in respect of Jesus Christ, who is no insensible creature, no, no creature at all, but very God manifested in the flesh, yea, our Mediator, on whom God has bestowed whatsoever is requisite for our salvation. Thus we see in sum, what we have to learn hereby. Now, where the Papists and all such as bear the name of Christians, ought by this place of Moses to be taught that Jesus Christ is an only King and Priest, that has united us unto God his Father, and who

also is the cause that the Father holds us under his protection, they have turned it clean contrary to that which is here set down.

And this error was not begun by the Papists; let us not lay more upon them than indeed is due to them: for they have blasphemies enough amongst them to condemn themselves a hundred times. But it is great pity that the devil has so ruled and reigned among them, as that he has for these fourteen hundred years so blinded those that name themselves Christians, as that they are gone so far as to devise a bewitching fantasy, that Jesus Christ was figured in the person of Melchizedek, and that his body is the heavenly bread, and his blood the wine to nourish souls, and that he offered both the one and the other. Now at the first sight, this Allegory will please such as have itching ears: how Jesus Christ calls his body, bread, and his blood, wine. And therefore this seems very well to agree, that Melchizedek offered bread and wine, because the body of Jesus Christ ought to have this power in itself to feed us, and his blood also to quicken our souls: however, here is no speaking of any oblation made unto God. But Moses says that Melchizedek, king of Salem, offered bread and wine, that is to say, that he presented it unto Abram. It should here fall out that Abram was God, because the oblation was delivered up unto his own person: and yet it was not to himself alone, but for his whole company also. So here the kingly liberality of Melchizedek, after he had once friendly received him.

Now to refer this unto God were to pervert the whole substance of the matter, as may be seen. And besides, our Lord Jesus Christ offered his body and blood, not that they were before bread and wine: but because they were offered, they are called bread and wine: that is to say, they are of the power and nature of bread and wine unto us. For how is it that our souls are sustained by the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our lives preserved by them? Forsooth it is because the sacrifice that was once offered is the sum and perfection of all goodness. And therefore if Jesus Christ had not been before offered up, his body had not been at this day, meat, neither yet his blood, drink. And mark, why Saint Paul says in the first epistle to the Corinthians, "That Jesus Christ our Passover, was offered up for us: let us therefore now eat." And this is the order that

we must hold: that is, that the oblation be first made, that we afterward, by the power thereof might be nourished and filled with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that now we see every manner of way that these miserable fantastical people who have corrupted this place of Moses, have no understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Papists (as they have been possessed by Satan, and cast up into a reprobate sense, not knowing to judge between white and black, and that by the just judgment of God) have made themselves priests in the room of our Lord Jesus Christ. And thus is their similitude cast to ground. And therefore we shall not need any other replies nor arguments to confute their beastliness, but take the text barely as it lies: and therewithal eftsoons take their confession from their own mouths to cut their own throats.

But be as it may, we see that by this text there is a singular doctrine and instruction, which the devil strains himself to darken, bring in doubt, and falsify: yea and if it were possible, utterly to overthrow it. And therefore we for our parts ought so much the more awaken our dull senses, to imprint in our memories that which is here contained, and the rather incited thereto by reason of the solemn oath that God was willing to pronounce. For, as if we have already said, it was not without cause that he so swore by his name. But it was to the end, infallibly to confirm our faith, that we should not doubt but that, whatever is requisite for our righteousness, peace, and defense, leads us unto the kingdom of heaven, through Jesus Christ his only son. And this is it that we are hereby to learn. He says anon after, **THAT MELCHIZEDEK BLESSED ABRAM**, because he was the Priest of the high God. This blessing imports a superiority, as the Apostle very well advertises us, when as he says, "That the better blesses the less." And therefore in the quality of a priest, Abram must needs be inferior to Melchizedek.

And yet it is said that Abram was the father and head of the church: and therefore we must needs conclude that Melchizedek represented a greater person than any mortal man could be. And this was it that made many of the Fathers imagine him to be an Angel: but those are very foolish and mere toyish inventions. For,

when he is called the Priest of the living God, no doubt of it he was known to be a man in the country, and also King of Salem. And this is as great a mockery: for put the case it had been an Angel, yet should he not have been greater than Abram in this general paternity of the whole church. And therefore we must come back unto this: which is, that although Melchizedek was a mortal man, yet surpassed he in dignity the Angels of heaven, by reason of his priesthood: not as of himself, but by reason of him whose figure he bore: as David was far greater than all the Angels, when it was said of him, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." This was not spoken, says the Apostle, of any Angel: and yet was David a wretched sinner, the son of Adam, even as well as any of the rest. And how then is it here, that he is so highly exalted, as that the Angels are made inferiors unto him? It is because that this figure represented the majesty of the Son of God, and not the person of David alone. We must then come to this point, that Melchizedek could not be above Abram, but in regard to the truth which he figured. And therefore we must conclude that Jesus Christ was even then declared, to the end that the belief of the faithful might be altogether grounded on him: because there was none other salvation given under heaven from the beginning, but the same which is at this day revealed unto us in the Gospel.

Now, it is true that there is a common kind of blessing. For, to bless, is oftentimes taken in the holy scripture, for to pray: as hereafter we shall see, that one common man blesses another saying, "God bless thee": as when we salute one another, these are blessings, this is the common phrase of the holy scriptures. But there is a singular blessing which is reserved for the priests. And therefore mark, why it is so often said in the law, "The priests which bless the people in the name of God," that is to say, which have that authority given them thereto. And the same form has been delivered unto us in the sixth Chapter of Numbers, where it is said: "Thus shall the priests bless my people, The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you. And again, The Lord be favorable unto you: and grant you his peace." Thus we see what a form the Lord has set down in his church. And for this cause also it is said,

when as Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, that he lifted up his hands over his Apostles, as the priests did: to the end to accomplish the figures of the law, in blessing his Disciples. This then is the blessing which is here spoken of. And mark why the Apostle reasons not without cause, that it must needs be that Melchizedek in this quality was far more excellent than Abram, because he blessed him.

And yet is Abram the father of the whole Church. We are therefore to conclude that our Savior Christ has a far greater majesty than any earthly majesty has or can have, and that in the person of the Mediator. Wherefore all power and dignity must be subject unto him and regard him, and both great and small must acknowledge and confess that God his Father has given unto him the chief authority even in this human nature of his, and every knee must bow and kneel unto him. Thus we see how these words of Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians, are to be understood. And this is it which we are to remember. It remains now that we apply these words to our own use and benefit, that is, we must not doubt but that Melchizedek blessed Abram in a figure, even as at this day our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the everlasting Priest, blesses us in the name of God his Father. For this prayer which is here set down is not in vain, but must needs be effectual: because we know that it could not be otherwise chosen but that he must needs be heard. Let us therefore conclude that so long as we put our trust in Jesus Christ, we have him for our Advocate towards God his Father: And although we are cursed in Adam, and do daily bring a new curse upon our heads through our sins and transgressions: yet notwithstanding the same shall hereby be blotted out and repaired, in that our Lord Jesus Christ vouchsafes indeed and in truth, to take upon him the office to bless us. We see also the prayer which he once made in the gospel after Saint John, in this manner. "Holy father I do not only pray here unto thee for these" (to wit, for the eleven apostles and Disciples which he had chosen unto himself) "But I pray also for all those which shall believe in my name through their preaching, that they may all be one in me, as I am one in thee, and that we may be all one." In this sort did our Savior Jesus Christ pronounce these words out of his own mouth: to wit, that he prayed

not for his Disciples alone, which were of his own company, but also for as many as believe in him through their preaching. Let us here then learn that whenever we shall embrace the doctrine of the Gospel in true obedience, that we be surely persuaded that the Son of God is given to us for our sovereign and only good. Thus we see how powerful his prayer will always be: for it is needless for him to begin the same at evening, at morn, and every day. For it is sufficient that he has sealed it with his blood, and by that only and everlasting sacrifice which he offered up once for all. For, we are assured to have our prayers heard, when as we pray unto God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, our prayers should stink, yea and infect the air, if we considered what God is, and afterward considered what we ourselves are. However, our prayers are made holy through the priestly blessing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, unto whom we must look that we might be partakers of all his benefits.

Thus we see in sum, how we are to apply this saying of Moses unto our benefit and the building up of our faith, where it is said, That Abram, the father of the faithful, was blessed. We see herein that Abram, as of himself, was accursed, since he was forced to borrow the priestly blessing. And Melchizedek also right well knew that there is nothing in us but misery and wretchedness, and that it is God who must bless us, and that we must embrace it with all humility if we will enjoy the benefit that is brought unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and which he daily offers unto us by the preaching of the Gospel.

Now hereupon, Moses recites the blessing of Melchizedek, "Blessed art thou Abram," says he, "of God most high, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God that has delivered thine enemies into thy hand." He blessed Abram in the name of God, as we have already alleged out of the law. We must not here understand that when the priests have the office to bless, that it proceeds as from their own authority, and that God has resigned his office over unto them, and his honor and praise to be thereby so much lessened. For when God works by his Ministers, yet loses he thereby no part of his dignity, neither is his power thereby in any

whit obscured, or yet anything of that which he gives taken from him. But it pleases him to use these means with this condition, that men should always come again unto him, and not draw any one drop of good from any other fountain than from that springhead.

Here we see namely why it is said, "Blessed art thou Abram of God most high," as if Melchizedek should have said: that he is nothing of himself, nor can do anything as of himself. But seeing that God had called him to serve him, that he should also call upon him, and testify likewise his name unto Abram. We see then, that it is the office of Jesus Christ to bless, that is to say, to make us agreeable unto God, to blot out all the iniquity that is in us. But this must conduct us to God a great deal higher: that is, unto the inestimable love of God the Father, who spared not his only son, but delivered him to death for us.

When the principal cause of our salvation is showed unto us, the scripture sets before us the love of God: "God then so loved the world, as that he spared not his only son." Thus we see how we are blessed by the priestly power of this Son of God. However, the Father notwithstanding calls us unto him, that we might honor him, and acknowledge so great a benefit that it has pleased him to bestow upon us, even through that springhead.

To be short, we see here, that all the good which we are to desire and hope for comes from God alone, from whom alone we must look to receive and have the same. Every man desires to live easily and pleasantly, and to have whatever he thinks to be fit for him. And this is a wish which is common both with the good and the bad. But few there are that seek for their felicity in God. They desire all to be happy and blessed: and yet they make no account of him from whom all blessedness and felicity proceeds.

And this kind of dealing is like unto a man who were so marvelously thirsty and feeble as that he were ready to give up the ghost withal, and another should come unto him and say, "Behold here is a very fine spring of water," and yet he would not once vouchsafe to drink of it: and should have there also water and wine, and yet would not once come near to taste of the same. Even so fares

it with such as desire and covet to understand whatever comes into their said brains, and which they also know to be meet and requisite for them, and yet notwithstanding do condemn God, and will in no wise come near him.

Let us then learn, that as often as we desire to have either for our souls or our bodies that which is to be wished, to begin at this end, that God is merciful unto us, and does so receive us to his mercy, as that we may approach and have entrance unto him, and may be so satisfied with his benefits as may be profitable for our salvation. Thus then we see what it is that we are to observe by this saying: That Abram is blessed, even of the most high God.

After this, Melchizedek adds a blessing, in that God had given victory unto our father Abram. "And blessed," says he, "be the living God that has delivered thine enemies into thine hand." By this we are admonished always to join praise and thanksgiving unto God, with the petitions and supplications which we make unto him, as S. Paul also shows unto us in his Epistle to the Philippians, when he says: "Let your desires and petitions be manifest to God." That is to say, bite not upon the bit, says he, as the infidels do, when as they see this thing were good and fit for me. They complain. But wherefore? Their hearts are even closed up, and never come unto God to crave at his hands the things which they want.

And therefore the Apostle says in that place, "Pour out your petitions, thoughts, and desires before God": that is to say, when you know yourselves to want this thing and that: seek for the benefit where it is, and there you may find it, to wit, in God: Let your prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings, show that you are before God: and when you have prayed as I have before said: Let your thanksgiving be conjoined with your petitions. For, if we pray murmuringly, and with a grieved and discontented mind, that is to blaspheme his holy name. And therefore, our prayers must be a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor.

For we do him great wrong and injury when we will make him submit himself and be subject to our appetites, and not be contented

with his favor and grace. We see then why we ought to be roundly admonished, as often as we pray unto God, to render unto him also praise and thanks, and yield ourselves wholly to his will, and acknowledge and confess all the benefits which we have received at his hands: as in the Psalm it is said: "Call upon me in the day of thy trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise and glorify me." And after this sort, we see how Melchizedek does here the like as touching Abram. Now, that we may the more familiarly comprehend this matter, we are to note that our prayers are to have regard as well unto the time past as unto the time to come.

For the time past, to confess unto God the benefits which we have already received from him. And for the time to come, to crave of his majesty that it would please him to continue and persevere the same his mercy unto us as he has begun, even unto the end. Now, we are here especially to note this one thing: that although Abram was so mightily advanced as to be made the father of the faithful, to be blessed of God with all virtues, and to have a most excellent spirit of faith, yet Melchizedek nevertheless told him that he was continually to go forward and increase from grace to grace until the end, and daily have recourse unto God to call upon him.

For when he blessed him, he read him a lesson, which he was well to look unto and to practice also all the days of his life. If it behooved then Abram, continually to call upon God, whatever graces soever he had received, and however honorable he was, and yet notwithstanding must always be exercised in prayers and supplications, what then shall become of us that are so far inferior unto him in all these things? Thus then we see why I have said that our prayers should have respect unto the time to come, seeing we have always need of God's help, to have mercy upon us, and heal us, and more and more to increase his graces in us.

And besides, these prayers of ours must have regard unto the times past concerning our giving of thanks and praises unto him for the same: that is, we must protest that whatever good we have comes from him, and be so contented that although we should be never so much vexed and grieved, yet must we still rejoice, for so much as we have known and proved him to be a father unto us, and

has also shown himself to be such a one indeed, by reason of the benefits which he has heretofore bestowed upon us. And this is what we are here to observe.

As concerning the words of Melchizedek, "Blessed be God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand." The same tells us that all victory comes from God, and also that Abram, through his own industry, prowess, and valor, did not discomfit the kings of whom mention is made, but God who conducted him. True it is that Abram surprised his enemies in the night, as we have heard, and he did it because he was no expert man of war: now to what end serves all this, save only to show that it was God who gave him that prosperous success?

We see also that although David had a strong and mighty array, and had valiant and renowned soldiers, and himself likewise an expert man of war, besides that God had made him a king, yet he says: That it was God that had given him the feet of a Hart, that it was he that had advanced him, and so strengthened him, as that he broke in sunder the bars of brass, and that it was he that had overthrown his enemy. David then protests that there was nothing in him as of himself that got him all his victories.

Seeing then that David, who in the judgment of men had the means to discomfit his enemies, and yet confesses without hypocrisy that all was to be attributed unto God, and unto himself, to the end that his name might thereby be glorified: what shall we then say Abram, who never in all his life followed the wars, neither yet ever knew, as a man would say, how to draw a sword?

And yet notwithstanding, that he should vanquish such a multitude of people, who were already puffed up with presumption, by reason they had discomfited their enemies, and pillaged and sacked five cities: and therefore we must needs conclude that it was the Lord who did it. Now, therefore, however it is, we are to gather from this place that if we lift up but one of our fingers, we must confess it to be God that conducts us thereunto, to the end we might not take upon us anything with a presumptuous arrogancy, as if we

could do anything of ourselves, and were men of ability and great power.

Let those then who are to take in hand wars, or governments of commonwealths, or any other matters of importance, put themselves into the hands of God, knowing that it is not without cause that he is called the God of Hosts. And thus much for this point.

Moreover, we are to apply this unto a second use: which is concerning the spiritual power that is given unto us to surmount and overcome Satan, with all, and whatsoever is against our salvation: We fight not (says Paul) against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in high places, and against the devils which have fiery darts flying. Thus we see how we must be exercised. Seeing then that the devil is our principal enemy, and that the darts, swords, and all the means which he has to hurt us, are spiritual, let us learn to call upon our God. For, what power have we? Or what agility? And therefore it is God that must fight for us, and let us be quiet and still, and stand as if we had our hands bound behind us: and yet not so neither, but that we must do our endeavors: because all the faithful must valiantly fight against the lusts of their flesh: and yet must the power come from above, and they adumbrate all opinion of their free-will and strength, which is the drunkenness of Popery, when as they proudly lift themselves up against God.

To be short, we must therefore (I say) acknowledge that we can do nothing as of ourselves, neither as concerning our bodies or yet our souls. But seeing that God has taken the charge upon him to conduct us: let us understand and be fully persuaded that he has strength enough for us, and that we can do nothing without him, and yet are able to do all things by him and through him.

Let us now prostrate ourselves and fall down before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him to touch us daily more and more with such repentance, as that we may groan to obtain forgiveness of all our iniquities which make us indebted unto him: and seek after him by that means which he has

established us in: that is, by the means of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, knowing that since we are reconciled by his death and passion, that God will not leave us, but accept us as his well-beloved children, although we be miserable wretched creatures, full of sin and iniquity. Moreover, that it would please him by his Holy Spirit to strengthen us, as that we may feel that the principal power and dominion was not given in vain unto our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for so much as he has enriched us with spiritual blessings, of which in our own nature we are altogether bare. That he will not only show us this favor, but unto all other people also, etc.

THE THIRD SERMON of Melchizedek,

wherein is treated of the use and right of tithes, and also of an oath.

Genesis 14:20-24

20 And Abram gave a tithe of all unto Melchizedek.

21 Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, give me the persons and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.

23 That I will not take of all that is thine, so much as a thread or shoe latchet, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, let them take their parts.

It was yesterday handled by us at large, that Melchizedek, of whom mention here is made, was a figure and image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because he was in dignity above Abram, who was the Father of the Church: and as it is likewise said in the Psalms, That the Redeemer that was to come, should not only be a king but also a priest after the order of Melchizedek. We have also showed why all this was spoken, to what purpose it serves us, and what benefit we receive thereby. Lastly, the blessing likewise was set forth, that is, that through the power of the office and order which was in Melchizedek, Abram was blessed, thereby to show that all our prayers should be abominable before the majesty of God and be able to obtain nothing at his hands, without Jesus Christ made intercession for us, which office is attributed unto him in the holy scripture.

Now it is here said, That Abram gave a tithe of all unto Melchizedek. This therefore declares a priestly dignity that was in

Melchizedek, as is well remembered by the Apostle. We must not thereupon, certainly collect, whether these words have relation to the spoil or to Abram his own goods. For seeing he received no part of the spoil to benefit himself, it is not likely that he meant to give unto Melchizedek that thing which he took not to be his own. But he had another manner of reason and diversity of his acknowledgment unto God, and to apply the benefit unto his own use, for the enriching of himself. Nevertheless, however it is, it is sufficient that we hold that which is certain, that is to say, that Abram protests that he acknowledged Melchizedek to be God's priest. For if he had served idols or usurped any dignity which belonged not unto him, Abram had done very ill in giving him tithes: because we know, that to offer sacrifice unto idols is to honor them and to forsake God. This oblation then of Abram must needs testify and approve the priesthood of Melchizedek. And therefore we see why the Apostle comparing the ancient priesthood of the law with the priesthood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, says, that Levi, which was yet in Abram's loins, paid tithes: that is to say, was subject to that law.

We might also allege the like of Judah, of whom our Savior Christ came. However, that is easily answered, to wit, that Melchizedek cannot be separated from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because he represents him, and that all the excellency which in him depends hereon, in that he is the figure of Jesus Christ. And therefore the Apostle by great reason shows, that he to whom the right of tithes by the law appertained, was yet notwithstanding under Melchizedek. We must therefore from hence conclude, that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is far more excellent than ever was Aaron or yet all his successors, albeit they were in that respect separated as it were from the company of men.

And when the priest had all his priestly garments upon him, it was but to show that he was as an Angel of God, which might come near unto his majesty: being a Mediator to blot out the iniquities and transgressions of the people. And notwithstanding that all this was so, yet nevertheless, the Apostle shows that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ far excelled him in honor, and must be exalted above all the figures of the law, that men thereby might see him to be the very

truth and substance of them all. And that although men did take all the shadows that ever were for a time, yet should they profit nothing, and should be all of none effect, except they came to the true pattern.

Let us therefore well consider, that when Abram offered all the tithes to Melchizedek, that it was to show, that although God should establish soon after an order of priesthood in his people, yet that it did not at all derogate from the priesthood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which was already figured in the person of Melchizedek, as it was at that time already established. Moreover, as concerning the giving of tithes unto the priests, we see that Abram did it before there was any law written: and therefore it is without all doubt, that it was the spirit of God which induced him and pricked him forward thereunto.

For, Moses does not recite here, this to be a thing done at random and without reason: but rather declares that God ratified the office of Melchizedek, for as much as he meant to make him his priest, and that Abram acknowledged him to be so. However, we must not from hence gather that there was any general law for the same, nor yet that the faithful were bound to pay tithes, except that God also had instituted it in his law: which was done not only because they should honor him with the fruits of the earth, with protestation that they came all of his mere bounteous liberality: neither was it simply for the maintenance of the Ministers of the Altar, that is to say, for the maintenance of those that served in the temple: but because they came of the seed of Abram. So that one part of the land belonged unto them, who were to take possession thereof, as it was said to Abram: "Your seed shall possess the land." Levi should have been a chief man in the house of Abram: and yet he was thrust out of it: and in stead of him, two chief men were made of the house of Joseph: to wit, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Here we see that Levi was deprived of his inheritance, albeit it was before assigned unto him by God himself. And that is the reason why his successors are recompensed with tithes. Now God did this for two reasons: the first is, because they should not be distracted neither from the service which was committed to their charge, nor

yet from doctrine. For God chose not the priests under the law, for performing of the ceremonies only: but for another reason of which the Prophet Malachi speaks: that is, he ordained them to be his Ambassadors, to the end we should demand from their lips the true knowledge and pure interpretation of the law.

Wherefore because the priests might have leisure enough to attend upon the service of the Temple, and to teach the people: the tithes were appointed for them. And for that cause also, were they dispersed all the country over. They had no several and proper partition, to say that they might dwell in any one certain country as the rest did: but were sown here and there: to the end there should be no corner in the world where God would not have his messengers and lawgivers to keep his people in awe.

Here (I say) we see the reason why GOD would have them to have the tithes, and not busy themselves about tilling and sowing of the earth. The second reason is this, that if they had possessed the earth, God had not been known to be Lord and master as he was, when as Levitical priests were become as it were his Receivers, and had sent them in his name to take upon them the superiority, and to demand the homage which was due unto him upon the earth.

And besides, although the children of Israel received that which was due unto them by succession and inheritance of their father Abram, yet for all that God as it were would seem to show unto them that the earth was his, and kept the propriety thereof unto himself, and that they possessed the same with this condition, that whatever they had, they must hold as of him, and show the same also in deed and in effect to be so. And therewithal also, that there should be oblations bestowed upon the poor, of those tithes: for it is not said that the priests should eat and drink up all, but keep themselves within compass, thereby to show that they were not exempt from the general law, but were beholden to God for the food which they did eat, and that all came from his pure and mere goodness.

We see then how that the tithes which were contained in the law were especially for the people of Israel. And yet notwithstanding the tithes were very common amongst the Heathen, even for kings,

princes, and noble men. We see likewise by profane histories, that they were also exacted, and that in some countries they exacted more than in others, according to the fertility and goodness of the soil: for it was not so great a charge to the husbandmen that had fat soils and plentiful bearing grounds, to pay the eighth part, as it was to those that had but lean and barren ground, to pay the tenth part.

But be as it may, this word Tithe or Tenth, has been a common and ordinary among all nations. And all Princes and great men as I have already said, since the Gospel was received, have bestowed part of the tithes towards the maintenance of the Ministers of the word, as is very great reason, according to the saying of Saint Paul, "That they which ministered at the Altar in the old Testament were maintained, that they which at this day sacrifice unto God after a more excellent manner, that is, which win souls unto him, to make of them sacrifices unto his majesty, that they should also be as well provided for and maintained: and although GOD has not qualified how nor by what manner of revenue they should be maintained, yet is there a law for it.

Now then, since God has been known through the preaching of the Gospel, a Christian order and law have been made, for the giving and bestowing of one part of tithes. And herein we may see the deceit of the Pope and of his followers: for, when they handle the law of tithes in their Canons, they take it as if it were transferred to them after that Jesus Christ had put an end unto the priesthood of Levi. All these are very lies, falsifying the holy scripture, and wickedly corrupting the same. For we see to the contrary, as has been before showed, that it is long ago since, that it was not known what the paying of tithes was by virtue of the law of Moses, and they were always paid either to the Emperor, or to some other particular great men.

But now since the thing has been so ordained (so there be no abuse, and to make men believe contrary to all truth, that it came from the holy scripture: but to be taken for a politic law.) Let us hold that rule which Saint Paul sets down: to wit, That we must not muzzle the mouth of the Ox when he travels to feed us: and therefore it stands with a far greater reason, that they who preach

the doctrine of the Gospel, ordained in so excellent a state, should not be abridged and deprived of their maintenance, but be very well waged.

Now as I have already said, when tithes and such like are bestowed unto a good use: we must not so strictly look into the matter, as to ask the cause why it is so, as many fantastical fellows will, who at this day could be contented to turn the whole world upside down saying, "O, it is no time now to pay tithes, for seeing the thing has been so long abused, it is no reason it should any longer continue." Then must we by their saying scrape out all: for they think that Christianity consists in changing the color of the Sun and the Moon.

But if there be anything that is to be amended, as I have said, as if the Papists have brought in any false opinion, let that be utterly abolished. But in the meantime, let us hold unto all good ordinance: to wit, let the tithes and all such things that are for the maintenance of the poor, and the Ministers: let these things be reduced unto their lawful use, and let not insatiable wide gullets devour all. Let them not consume them upon their superfluities, in pomps, drunkenness, and other dissoluteness: but let them know, that these are holy goods, which ought to be reserved for the use of the Church, as well for the maintenance of the poor as I have already said, as also for the feeding of those who serve God and his people.

Thus we see, that it was fit we should touch by the way, the law concerning tithes: and let us now go on with that which follows. Moses now returns to the king of Sodom, of whom he had before spoken: and ceases to speak of Melchizedek. He says, that the king of Sodom would have nothing else but the persons, and leave all the spoil to Abram: As if he would have said, that he demanded no whit of that which was taken from him by his enemies, for he knew very well that Abram had won it by conquest: he only required but the persons and his dwelling place.

We know not whether he did this hypocritically yea or no, considering that all was in Abram his hands, or whether he thought in truth that he was worthy of all, and that it was enough that he

and his people were rescued from the hands of his enemies. But however it was, it is said that Abram refused that offer, that he would take nothing that was his, no not so much as a thread or a shoelatchet. That is to say, not the worth of a pin as we commonly say: save that, says he, which the young men have eaten: for they came not thither to pay any reckoning, and besides, they could have no less reward for venturing their lives to deliver the Sodomites.

Well sir, as for that which they have eaten, let that, I say, alone: but as for those that came with me Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, they must needs have their portion of the spoil: for I will abridge them of no whit of their benefit, neither is it for me to impose a law or matter of necessity upon them: I am liberal, and therefore I can in no wise straighten nor measure them. Let them then take their shares, as for me, I will have nothing.

And for the better confirming of his speech, he says, "I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord the most high GOD, possessor of heaven and earth," as if he would have said, that he had sworn and would perform it, because it was not lawful for him to call back his word, and so thereby stop his mouth about the matter. We see here, that Abram's meaning was to eschew all offenses, when as he refused to reap any benefit of anything that was his. For if the war which he had taken in hand was lawful, that then he might justly reserve to himself, in the judgment of men, whatever he had taken: but because he would show that he was not carried away with a covetous desire, and that he took not arms upon him for gain, he said, That he would not have no not so much as one thread of his: and that in saying thus, "To the end thou shouldst not say, that thou hast enriched Abram," it is certain that he was not ambitious. As oftentimes, we shall see men of great mind that do willingly desire to enrich themselves with other men's goods: but because they fear the shame and reproaches of the world, they will yet for fashion's sake, show therein a kind of constancy.

Howbeit, Abram did not so: but as I have said, he did it because he would not have the name of God through his occasion be evil spoken of. For it might be said, what I beseech you? This man, for anything

that we can yet see, has hitherto showed himself to be very simple, and that he worshipped God by himself, and is wonderfully devout: he says that he forsook his country at the commandment of God, and yet he makes war, robs and spoils, and therefore any man may see that he is no better than a thief. Here we see that under the name of Abram, the name of God had been hazarded unto many slanders. And this is the cause also why he kept himself within compass.

Now this is written for our learning. For, in the first place, we are to observe this rule, that it is not enough that our consciences be pure before God, but we must also procure (as S. Paul thereof shows us an example) To be reputed and well thought of amongst our neighbors: And why? because they might not condemn us, by reason they should have this opinion of us that we would do no evil thing, but rather stir them up to well doing.

True it is, that we shall never be able to escape the bitings and barkings of many dogs: yea and although we were without all blot and blemish, yet will they never leave slandering and evil speaking of us: for the son of God had his part that way, and all the Prophets and Apostles were also charged with false reports. And therefore (as S. Paul says in another place) we must be always ready to do good, and yet to be evil spoken of, to be wonderfully scoffed at, reproached and injured, for that must be our reward: and yet notwithstanding, we must as much as in us lies, not give any occasion to such as hunt after it, but stop their mouths to the end the name of God, as I have already said, be not evil spoken of through our default.

Here we see then wherein we are to follow Abram, that is, we must understand that we are looked unto on every side: yea and although we were not, yet we owe this duty unto our neighbors, not to give any offense unto those that are weak: who by us might take any evil example. For let us be assured that there will be always wicked men to seek to accuse us, to pick quarrels against us and defame us: but yet for all this, (as I have already said,) let us be clear aboard and guiltless. For it is the will of God that we should be, as it were, set upon a scaffold, to carry his name and badge, as S. Paul

says to the Philippians, and on the other side, shine before the wicked: and although they be froward and perverse people, yet let us walk before them holily and godly: that thereby they may be ashamed, not being able to find anything in us whereby we may be evil spoken of: and that they may by that means be made more inexcusable, when as they shall see us serve God in integrity of life, and themselves addicted to all fraud, villainies, and such like.

Thus we see how we are to put in practice this doctrine. Now, as concerning Abram his act, we see here what a good conscience he had. For if one be once taken in hand, we think then that it is lawful for us to do what we lust, as it is said in an ancient proverb, "That when wars are on foot, then laws cease": although in deed there is policy and law, because it is then more requisite than in the time of peace: and there must be also a kind of superiority, to the end every Captain might be obeyed, that all soldiers might attend upon their Ensign or Colors, that men might not hazard themselves at all adventures, and also be very vigilant to beware of the enemy.

And therefore these things which concern the facts of Arms, ought to have rules, laws, and statutes: and yet notwithstanding it is impossible to have any wars without the committing of many outrages, And this is it also, why all such as think to draw their swords, ought to fear and tremble as often as they think of the tail and sequel that it draws after it. For it is impossible but that in such a mixture there must be a great number of innocents slain, many houses, fatherless children, and widows sacked and spoiled: and that the goods of such as are most impotent, shall be taken from them, according as the soldier shall find himself to want: and over and besides all this, if they shall want munition, and that the belly thinks it shall suffer famine, they will spare nothing.

Thus we see how war itself brings always with it confusion. Moreover, they that go a warfare, although they have never so lawful titles, and can show great reason and cause, to induce them thereunto, yea and be enforced as it were of necessity to follow it: yet notwithstanding they will not stick to take liberty enough and dispense with themselves in whatsoever they do: for thus they will say, "If mine enemy had vanquished me, what would he have done?

Do you think that he would have spared either me or mine? Out of doubt if he had conquered me, he would have put to sack all that I had had, all had gone to havock: and since it is so, why should not I do the like?"

Thus we see how they who make war dispense with themselves and take such liberty, as they think they do no hurt when they spoil and scrape together whatever comes next to hand; and yet we see that Abram dealt not so. True it is, that when the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, they sacked the whole country before them. But why? because the Lord had so commanded them, and therefore they could none otherwise do: yea they were also most rigorously plagued, because they spared the inhabitants of the land. And besides, God threatened them, that if they left any one of them alive, that they should be as goads in their sides, and as thorns or pricks in their eyes. But in this case there is a particular reason: for Abram was not appointed by God to put on arms to purge the City of Sodom & the neighbor Cities, of their inhabitants, nor yet to have rule over them. For he went not only to recover his Nephew Lot: although by that means God had also compassion of the Sodomites & their neighbors, because he would for a little while defer the vengeance which he had prepared for them: Abram therefore knowing the reason why he had taken arms upon him, took not liberty, nor yet sought cunningly to excuse himself, as such as hunt after gain do: but said that he would take nothing. And yet for all that he could not abridge Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, of any portion that was due unto them, because they were men over whom he had no government. For they came thither with him of good will: and being his friends and allies aided him, to the end to bring back his Nephew Lot: and therefore would in no wise take any of their right from them. Here on the one side we see what a temperate man Abram was, and on the other side we see, although he took not the worth of a pin, yet could it not so fare with him, but that he received thereby loss and damage, and that such as were in his company could not choose but be spoiled: which thing more manifestly shows, that whosoever he is that shall begin to make war, yea

although he might be as it were as an Angel of heaven, that cared not either for gold or silver, and had rather die than vouchsafe once to gain the worth of a halfpenny, under pretense that he had adventured his life: yet notwithstanding, that war of itself brings always with it many sins and iniquities, or else wonderful excess: and although it might justly be said to be lawful, yet can it not be chosen but that great outrage will be committed, and many men come home by weeping cross as we say: for, one man shall have his house set on fire, another shall be robbed, another rifled even to his very bedstraw, and another shall be so spoiled of all his wares, as that he shall be left stark bare.

And therefore whenever there are open wars, there must needs be weeping & wailing, and wringing of hands: wherefore, we ought continually to be admonished to be as it were close fisted: and take heed how they enter into such confusions, as that there can be found no remedy against them, albeit they carried such a mind with them in their government, as the very Angels do, as I have already said. To be short, they that justly defend themselves, and are enforced so to do, ought yet so wisely and warily to behave themselves, as that they follow at least the steps of our father Abram. And if it cannot otherwise be avoided, but that there must be great excess, great loss & spoil committed, yet let them at the least resolve thus with themselves, not to take war in hand rashly, of self-will, and for spoil: but that it be done for the just defense of a country, when as it shall be invaded by some wicked & mischievous violence. For, men may defend themselves against any king or prince, if so be they will set upon such as are desirous to live peaceably, and crave their friendship. Let men then have always this regard not to be ambitious & high minded, nor yet desire another man's wealth: or else if any man will take arms upon him, let him look well to that which is here spoken of Abram, and conform himself after his example. For the holy Ghost meant not to commend him only because he was not covetous, & cared not for gold nor silver: but has set him before us as a glass, to the end to learn us what rule to follow to do the like.

For, we may find out fond excuses enough to cover our careless spoiling & robbing: but that will not serve our turns without we conform ourselves unto the example of our father Abram. And this is it that we are to learn from this place.

However, Abram contented not himself simply and plainly to say thus unto the king of Sodom: but he also swore withal, & said that he had bound himself by an oath, to the end to stop all mouths, and cut off all exceptions that the king might not go farther & say, well it were better for thee to take the spoil: no says Abram, I will stand to that I have said. And besides, I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord the most high God.

Now this manner of speech, of lifting up the hand, is because that men which are blockish and earthly, might be put in mind when they swear, by some sign & token, that it is as it were to call God to witness as judge. In very deed the word of itself imports as much, when as we will say I protest before God, or as God is my witness, or God plague me else. Now, when we use this manner of speech, our hairs of our heads should stand upright if we lie, or use any kind of deceit, for God will not forsake himself to agree unto our leasings, for if he should, he must needs adulate his own majesty. For, he is as verily true, as his essence is unchangeable.

The words then are sufficient enough of themselves: however, we are so blockish and dull, as that we had great need to have some helps to put us in mind, and therewithal to make us tremble before his majesty when we swear, & therefore we see why in all ages men were wont to lift up their hands, and that by God his own conduction. And men lifted up their hands in a solemn oath, even as we do when we pray.

For, when we lift up our hands, it is as much as if we besought God to come down from heaven to help us: not that he changes his place, but that he so spreads forth his power as that we may feel him to be present in granting our petitions. Thus we see how by ceremony and our outward gesture, we show that our prayers conjoin us unto God, and that by them we enter heaven through

faith, and that God for his part, descends unto us, to show himself to be at hand.

Even so also it is said of an oath, when as we lift up our hands, that is, as if we should say: I call God to witness, and that I am here before him when as I speak: that if I deal deceitfully, it is as much as if I stained and violated his majesty. Now we see the meaning of these words.

And let us here note, that the oath of the faithful, ought to be rightly weighed, two or three times: for they that use it, in taking the name of God also upon every light occasion of speech, show themselves to be contemners thereof. For, if we reverence the name of God as it deserves, without doubt we would not so vainly toss it up and down, as men use to toss Tennis balls: for when we hear oaths tossed up and down in many men's mouths, by that we may perceive them to be wicked, godless, and profane men, and such as in deed know not God at all.

Now, they will not in any wise confess that they know not God: for, when a man shall hear them both in market place and street swear continually: and thereupon reprove them, this by and by is their answer: O good sir, I promise you for mine own part, I fear God: surely sir, it seems you do so with lie and all. For out of all doubt, if we do fear him indeed, it would be seen by our sober and wise taking of his name in our mouths, & not by profaning of the same.

And in very deed, when as we shall thoroughly consider what is the cause of an oath, assuredly we shall continually provoke God against us, if we abuse and corrupt the same. For, as S. Paul says, Mortal men swear by one greater than themselves, and God swears by himself, because there is none greater than himself. And therefore in all oaths the name of God must be put in.

It is very true, that when a man shall say, By God, it is not expressly said word by word, that God plagues and executes vengeance: men will not so say, but it is enough that his name is there put in as judge. After what sort then soever we speak, God is not to be so fisted withal: and besides, we shall gain nothing at his

hands to use any sophistication with him, for without doubt the shame will still light upon our own heads.

Moreover, if any man at any time would rightly deliver an oath, it is most certain that God shall there be named and called to witness. Now, he cannot be a witness without also he be a judge.

And besides, there is now and then cursing and banning, that is to say, a man will beseech God to plague him as he deserves, whenever he abuses his holy name. We see also why it is so often said in the holy scripture, God do thus and thus unto me, that is to say, God plague me both in body and soul. In other places, this is not expressed, but there is only an if, and is an interrupted kind of speech as in this place, I have lifted up my hands unto the Lord most high God, if so be I take anything thereof.

Now what is the meaning of this? We must thus understand it, Let GOD be judge, and plague me if I lie, and speak not the truth. This broken and interrupted kind of speech shows that when we should swear, we must be held back as it were with a bit: to the end we do not lightly and unadvisedly provoke the wrath of God. For, out of all doubt, they which swear often and at random, are every time forsworn, because they are things that go hand in hand together: so that whenever we hear any man swear at the Table or in the streets, a man may boldly say unto him, My friend, you do not only abuse the name of God, but are also forsworn when as the name of god is thus profaned in your mouth: we are therefore to keep ourselves within the bounds of sobriety when as we must needs take the name of God so in our mouths.

But here by the way may rise a question: whether it was lawful for Abram to swear for so small a matter: for it is said, Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord thy God in vain. And therefore could not Abram have been contented to have said plainly, no: I will not have one jot of anything: but whatsoever has been taken from thee. I will deliver it thee again with mine own hand: for, I will not be the richer by one farthing of that is thine. A man would think that if he had said thus it had been enough: however, we see what the hypocrisy of men is: for, for honesty's sake, men will offer

wonderful much, and yet they which will thus speak, have a clean contrary meaning in their hearts.

Thus we see, that they think that a man is not bound when he makes any such offer in words: for they say, that it is but a superfluous kind of speech because they think not that men which have such a civil courage with them, have either faith or honesty in them, for so much as most men are subject thereunto: and therefore it stood Abram upon, to swear. And besides, it behooved him also to free himself from all kind of temptation, and so hold himself within the compass of his duty, as that although he might lawfully enrich himself with another man his goods, yet that he should then abstain from giving himself any such liberty, and withdraw himself from doing any such thing, by virtue of the oath which he had sworn.

We see now hereby, that it was not without cause that Abram said that he had sworn, to the end the king of Sodom should by no means have cause to reply, and also for that there was a law, which enforced him to abstain from doing of anything that might breed an offence, and whereby God likewise might be nothing esteemed of among the heathen.

Moreover, we have also another thing to consider in that he says, (That he has lifted up his hand unto the Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth) Even as Melchisedech in like sort used the same form when he gave the blessing. For, Abram was not contented to call the name of God to witness, but he would also express what manner of God it was that he worshipped.

We know well enough that the world was at that time full of idolatry and superstition, and yet every man had the name of God in his mouth, even as at this day the heathen will greatly brag that they honor God. For, the Turks, Jews, and Papists, will not stick to abuse this holy name: however, it is but a polluting thereof, for so much as the Turks worship that which they have devised of their own brains, and so blaspheme the living God.

For as Saint John says, He that has not the Son, has not the Father: for, when as the Son is not honored, the Father receives that as a shame done to himself. For, his lively image must not be contemned,

neither must there be any despite done unto his majesty. And therefore the Turks worship nothing else but the devil under the name of God.

And as for the Papists, when we shall tell them that Jesus Christ is our Advocate, they can in no wise abide that, and yet dare they not altogether deny the holy scripture: for that is a heretical and an offensive proposition, because men take occasion from thence to say that the men and women saints do not make intercession for us. For, when we speak of the free remission of our sins: and that we ought not to amuse ourselves about that idolatrous and most abominable hellish Mass of theirs: they are so mad with all, as that to them, it were a far greater offence once to swear by that Idol the Mass, than to blaspheme the name of God a hundred times.

Thus then we see, that the religion of the Papists is most hellish. And as for the Jews, they do utterly renounce our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have now already showed that the son cannot be separated from the father: and having rejected him, they have shut themselves clean out of the doors, and forsaken the principal covenant which God made with them: to wit, because they will not be partakers of the salvation which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ brings with him. Thus we see how they abuse the name of God in every condition. And so has it been even from Abram his time.

We see here then why he calls him the Eternal, and soon after the most high God: because he would discern him from the Idols of the Heathen. For the very Heathen right well knew that there was a most high and excellent heavenly nature: but yet they had ever a desire to have a warren of petty gods after their own will and pleasure. Abram was far from that, and says, that there is none but the eternal, which is the most high God. And withal he adds, Possessor of heaven & earth: to show that God is not in heaven as fantastical heads imagine, as to say that he sits there, only to behold that which is done in the world: and contents himself that he once made all things: and now lets us alone skipping & leaping here below up & down like Frogs.

But Abram shows that he had not so blockish an opinion of his majesty, but attributes unto him an infinite power that spreads itself all over both heaven and earth. And this is done to make us walk in his fear, and to advertise us that we are always before his eyes: and that both our wits and very thoughts shall come in a reckoning before him: for God is not the possessor of heaven and earth to eat and feed, and to do nothing else: he is not possessor of them to make nothing but dumb shows with them: but contents himself also with his alone and infinite majesty, having in himself all blessedness.

And although he had never created anything, yet had he been thereby no whit either lessened nor increased. And therefore when he is thus called, it is to show, that he has all things in subjection, and that we must all answer before him: and that he so rules the world, as that nothing is hid from him: and that his office is so to sound the thoughts, and to examine all our words and deeds, as that being possessor both of heaven and earth, he is also with all, our Lord and Judge.

Thus we see why this title is imposed upon him, because we might walk here as before his majesty. We should have a wise catch of it to hunt after secret corners, seeing that all things shall come to light: and if so be we did think at this day to deceive him with our cunning shifts, yet will it in the end light all upon our own heads.

Again, when as God is named to be possessor of heaven and earth, we are advertised to love him as our nource Father, and to fear him as our Judge. For, he is possessor of heaven and earth, because he is the chief ruler over us, and must appear before his judgment seat, to receive whatever we have done in our bodies, whether it be good or ill. This is the possession which he has in heaven and earth.

Now he possesses not this for himself only: but bountifully of his infinite goodness, bestows upon us whatsoever we want, because he has created all things for our use. And therefore we cannot be but villainous ingrateful people, when as we hear the infinite power and goodness of our God thus spoken of, and do by experience also feel

the same, if we endeavor not ourselves eftsoons to love him, and yield unto him obedience.

And under this word Heaven also, not only the benefits which we receive by the Sun and Stars are set before us, but the angels likewise are here put in amongst, that we might learn to conform ourselves like unto them. If then such noble creatures as they are, have none other regard but to apply themselves unto his service: what shall become of us poor worms of the earth, or rather straying wild beasts, when as we shall do nothing else but rebel against his majesty, in giving ourselves over unto our filthy lusts & appetites.

Is it not too great a shame for us, to see the Angels so humble, as I have already said: and ourselves to be so proud and rebellious? Here we see then in sum what we are to remember, that whenever we shall speak of God, we must always join his power with his essence: and not suffer this word, God, so lightly to pass through our lips as many men do, but we must know, that as he is eternal, and has made all things, that he has also reserved unto himself the dominion and rule over our persons, our goods, and over all the rest of the creatures: and that we must know that we are to render an account unto him, yea and that such an account as that we are yet in the meanwhile exhorted notwithstanding to love him in deed and in truth, and submit ourselves unto his obedience: for he will not only win us by force and violence under the name of his majesty, but also by the graces and benefits which he bestows upon us, to the end we might be allured to come unto him: so that in all our words, thoughts, and deeds, we always have regard to glorify his holy name.

Let us now prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him to touch us with them so deeply that we may be humbled before him, grieved with ourselves, and ashamed, so that we may put our whole trust in his mercy shown to us in his only son, and have all our refuge in him. Besides, let him so dearly redeem us that we endeavor to dedicate ourselves wholly to him in purity, both in body and soul, and pay him such homage that we may show that indeed we desire not to

live for ourselves, but yield ourselves wholly to serve him, since it has pleased him to receive us to himself. That he will not only, etc.

THE FIRST SERMON, of Justification

Genesis 15:4–6

4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying: this man shall not be thine heir, but one that shall come out of thine own bowels, he shall be thine heir.

5 Moreover, he brought him forth and said: Look up now unto Heaven, and tell the Stars if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be.

6 And Abram believed the Lord, and he counted that to him for righteousness.

WE heard yesterday how Abram, in making his moan unto God because he had never a child to be his heir, mistrusted not the promise, as many of us will murmur and grudge if he by and by yields not unto us what we desire and which best likes us. Now Abram would not do so, but contented himself that he felt God to be good and gracious unto him, and that he was his, both in life and in death. For he never went further: but the thing which he only looked unto was which way the promise might be accomplished. Now he had indeed promised the Redeemer: and for that cause was he so earnest to have issue: but not in any worldly respect as we have heretofore said, but because he could not otherwise be persuaded that God loved him. And this is the rather confirmed by the promise which God made him: for he granted him his request even at the very first, and reprov'd him also for his doubting thereof, because God had given him his word before. For he said, "He shall not be thine heir, but one shall come out of thine own bowels, he shall be thine heir." No doubt of it, God many times grants unto men their unadvised requests: but we see here that he avowed his servant Abram's desire. And it was not without cause, forasmuch as he craved nothing else but to have the promise ratified by that means that it was required: but because he was overhasty, God said unto him, no: and repulsed his over-vehement

hot desire, not but that he might lawfully require to see the Redeemer: however, we must always keep a measure, and however it is, rest upon the providence of God: because he knows when it is best to do us good.

And therefore we must patiently abide his leisure, for, as the holy scripture says, it is the very property of faith so to do. To be short, we see here how God shows that Abram's request in desiring to have issue liked him well, considering to what end he desired it. And because he saw his weakness he would needs add thereto some confirmation: and brought him out of his Tent, and said unto him, "Look up now unto Heaven: and tell the Stars if thou be able, so shall thy seed be." But if there be such an infinite number of Stars, as that they shall dazzle thine eyes when thou wouldst look upon them to tell them: even so shall thy seed, after such an unaccustomed sort be multiplied, as that men shall wonder thereat, by reason of the strangeness thereof. Now as we have already handled in the twelfth Chapter, this place cannot otherwise be interpreted but that Jesus Christ is the head, and direct line as it were of the seed of Abram: for we shall hear hereafter that Ismael was begotten, and yet for all that the promise was not accomplished: notwithstanding that he was the natural son of Abram, but not (as Saint Paul says) the natural son of the promise.

And therefore we must not take this here to be a carnal generation: but look higher, to wit, we must discern between the children of Abram as they are in their estate and order, whereby they are known and avowed to be the children of God, and those that be bastards, although they come of his race. For although Isaac begot Esau and Jacob: and Esau was the firstborn and both of one woman: yet for all that, was Esau turned quite and clean out of the doors. Now, no man could perceive the diversity why (of these two children) Jacob should be preferred before the other: considering that they were conceived both at one time, born both at once, and besides, Esau the firstborn. And why then is he accounted as a stranger, and to have neither room nor place in this spiritual inheritance which GOD promised to Abram's posterity? The reason is, because the blessing was taken from him, and given to his

younger brother: but yet he had the right of the firstborn. We see here then in sum, that if we take all those to be the seed of Abram which come of him concerning the flesh, we shall find neither reason nor yet sound ground herein.

Again, although God adopted all the posterity of Jacob, yet was the greatest part of them made strangers unto him. We see also why GOD so oftentimes disavowed them by his Prophets. Wherefore there must needs be a chief and principal one of this seed, or else we shall never be able to have the truth of this promise. No doubt of it they spake not only of Jesus Christ, as some have over rashly done: but this order also must be kept, that is, we must set Jesus Christ before us, and be conjoined together in him: and then this union will cause us to be holden and reputed the children of Abram. Wherefore there could be no such seed as is here spoken of, except Jesus Christ were the head, and we united to him as members of his body, and thereby to be of the house of God, and so consequently of the house of Abram. Now we see that God made this seed to seem small, that he might increase it. And this is a kind of dealing which seems strange unto the world: but we must all be brought to be acquainted with this. For according to the common opinion, when we speak of seed, the firstborn must bring in the second, and so all the rest: one after another.

Now, God deals otherwise, when as he will have seed: yes, such a great number and multitude as that it would make a man abashed to see it, and GOD so cuts off, abridges, and diminishes it, as that in time it comes so to pass, that it seems to be as it were quite and clean consumed and no whit left thereof, as in the tenth Chapter of his Prophet Isaiah he says: but he does it because he would within a while after multiply the same beyond all man's reason and expectation: to the end his wonderful power might be the better known, and all men thereby be forcibly driven to worship him. For although there descended of Abram marvelous many people, as first of all, the twelve Tribes, besides the Ismaelites and the Idumeans: yet was there never so great a multitude in his house, as came by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ. For they which appertained not unto Abram as concerning the flesh, were notwithstanding made his

household men. For as we shall hereafter see, he was the father of all the faithful in general.

Wherefore the posterity of Abram was far greater, when as he lessened that which descended of him concerning the flesh, than if he had let them all to have remained and continued still. We are therefore hereby admonished, not to measure the works of God according to our opinion and fantasy: but give place unto his incomprehensible power, and be contented when he has said the word, that he is of power able to accomplish the same, as hereafter it shall be more at large handled. In that God brought Abram out of his Tent where he dwelt, and made him look up to heaven to behold the Stars thereof, we shall not need to busy ourselves about this childish subtlety, as how God compares the church to the Stars, because we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, dwelling here upon earth as strangers, always traveling further. For this is not the meaning of the place. And also where we have heretofore spoken of dust, some men in a speculative sort have thought the Church to be there set down under the image and figure of dust, and that the world should make no account of it: these are nothing else but more trifling toys, without any sound ground. But we see why God set before his servant Abram the Stars of heaven, to look upon them: even that he might behold his power, and not by his own discourse and reason judge of the truth of this promise, which in the natural concept of man was incredible. For we shall never have faith until such time as this fault be amended and corrected: to wit, to leave our own natural judgment, and cast away all our own wisdom, that we might attribute unto God alone the honor due unto him. Now let us see if this be not a most notable and excellent glass of the infinite power of God, to behold this infinite multitude of Stars of heaven created in a moment.

And we see also in the Psalm why this miracle is magnified where it is said, "That it is he that numbers the multitude of the Stars, and gives them their names": that is to say, it is he that makes them subject unto him and to his government. And therefore when we open our eyes to behold the Stars, we must by and by look unto their creation: for in a minute, as soon as God had spoken the word,

behold the heaven was full of this army royal, as the scripture calls them. Thus we see that the heavenly hosts were created in a minute, and are continually obedient unto his majesty. We see that all the Stars keep their due course and compass, and although their revolution be every way great, and that the Planets may remove the firmament, and may be all mixed together: yet we see that they are all so directed, as that we are enforced to wonder at it. Seeing then it is so, no marvel though this glass was let before the eyes of Abram: for therein he might have thus concluded, since GOD in a moment furnished all heaven with Stars, where before was not one: may he not also furnish not only my house, but a whole Country, yea many Countries, whenever he means to bestow posterity upon me? For his power is no whit lessened: for he did not only create the world at once, but after he had created it, he miraculously preserved the same continually. And therefore, Abram had a sure and certain token, and as it were a pawn given him. And herein we see that God knew some infirmity to be in him: not that he distrusted that which God had promised, but because he was a man, he could not keep himself within such compass, but that he would needs ask the question how it could be possible that in his seed all the nations of the world should be blessed: and therefore because his faith was somewhat weak, as yesterday we heard: we see why God after this manner added unto him this aid and help. And so, we have to note in this place as in all the rest, that God supports us in all our weakness.

Not that we should flatter ourselves: for we are to fight against all our passions, and against all our evil thoughts and affections, to give place unto the truth of God, and to hold it for certain and infallible: however, whatever we do, it cannot be but that it must in some sort be weak: and although we know not our own faults, yet God knows them well enough.

How then should we do, if he of his infinite goodness spared us not? Here then we see what we are to consider from this Text, where it is said, That God confirmed Abram both in his word and in his promise, as we might daily see the like in ourselves, if we were not blinded in our own malice: because we regard not so narrowly and

diligently the works of God as we should. But if we made benefit of all the means which God offers us, that we might assure ourselves of his promises, we should see that where he spared his servant Abram, as he knows us to be a hundred times more weak, that he will not for his part forget anything which may confirm our faith. Now hereupon, Moses adds and says, THAT ABRAM BELIEVED GOD, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Here we see a Text plain enough, and at the first sight not greatly to be stood upon, and yet the Jews are so blockish and blind, as that they know not what it means. And amongst Christians also, hardly shall we find one amongst a hundred, which understands only the meaning of these words. For if these three or four words were truly understood (THAT ABRAM BELIEVED, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness) without doubt it would overthrow the whole state of Popery: all superstitions which at this day bear sway should cease: and all controversies now in dispute be appraised. For this is the key which opens whatever is requisite for our salvation: this is the means to decide all controversies: this is the foundation of all true religion: to be short, this is it that sets open the heavens unto us, if we can comprehend that which Moses here in a word sets down unto us. And so much the more are we to detest these dogs that are so shameless, as to dare to obscure such a marvelous clear light: of which sort are they which say that Abram was taken to be a wise man, and that, that was a virtue in him to believe God: now we should in very deed abhor these dogs. For these are the most wicked blasphemies that Satan is anyway possibly able to spew out.

Now as for the Jews, we are not to marvel at them because they had no expositor. No doubt of it, God mightily shined in the face of Moses, however, they had a veil before them, as S. Paul says, and therefore they passed over these words without thinking of them what they imported. But they which profess themselves to be Christians, and are able to show the meaning hereof by the authority of Saint Paul, when these I say shall manifestly set themselves against God, and like mastive curs fight so impudently as we see them do: what reason have they for it? I do not now speak of Papists, but I speak of these devilish spirits, which will be called

Christians, and will also with open mouth make profession thereof, and yet notwithstanding are such as are far worse than the Papists, for they never went thus far in Popery, to say that those who were damned and cursed before God, could any way possibly be saved without faith. The very Papists themselves will grant this: and these dogs utterly reject and erase out every whit of this, as if there were nothing else said but this: So Abram, a very wise man, and this was the virtue in him which made him believe God. Here we see a sort of villains that would be accounted to be famous men, and be called Masters and Doctors, and yet are so mad and so possessed with fury, as that they would utterly overthrow all.

Wherefore we are to be so much the more attentive and heedful unto that which is here contained. For on the one side, Moses says, THAT ABRAM BELIEVED GOD, and on the other side he adds, that this belief or faith was imputed to him for righteousness. And first we are here to define what BELIEF is: for otherwise we shall make nothing of it. And here we see how the Papists are entangled in their errors: for although they confess in part that we are justified by faith, yet can they not fully conceive and accept it. And what is the reason? Forsooth, it is because they understand not what this word Faith or Belief means. And for the better understanding hereof, we must join something between faith and the promise. For a man may sing well with one voice alone: however, there will be no perfect melody without there be many tunable voices agreeing together. Even so is it with faith: for if the word of God does not go before, and faith agree therewith, there will never be any good harmony. For the word of God and faith are two things which cannot be separated. For so a man may speak exceedingly much of belief, and yet notwithstanding it should be (as we say) like an high *Almaine*, a barbarous kind of speech, as it is amongst the Papists, until such time as we come unto this point, that God must speak, and we must have our ears open and attentive to obey and give place unto his word.

What then is Belief? It is to receive whatever is spoken unto us from the mouth of God, with such reverence, as that we hold it to be certain and sure. And yet we must do more than all this: for God will

sometimes speak in such sort, as that we shall be no whit the better to hear him. We have seen heretofore that when he spoke unto Cain, and asked him where his brother was yet Cain right well knew that he must answer before his judge in despite of his teeth, nevertheless he grumbled and was angry, saying: who made me my brother's keeper? Adam also heard the like voice, where art thou? however, he was so afraid as that he would have hid himself, and have been glad to have found some bottomless dungeon to have fled from the presence of God. Wherefore it is not enough for us to hear the word of God with that authority that it deserves: but it must also be therewithal qualified: that is to say, it must be such a sure and certain word unto us as may make us approach near unto God, and make us partakers of his bounty and goodness: and not to doubt but that he will be our Father and Savior, and so thereupon may be bold to call upon him, and hold ourselves for his children, and flee unto him for succor and aid.

Thus we see how Abram believed: it was no fantastical opinion which he had conceived in his brain: for Faith (as S. Paul says) comes by hearing, and by hearing of the word of God. Abram then heard and was taught before he believed. Neither was he instructed by any creature or mortal man, but knew right well that it was GOD which called him to be one of his children. Now this had not been enough, as we have already said, but Abram heard these words: I AM THINE EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD. I AM THY DEFENSE: FEAR NOT, FOR I AM THE ALMIGHTY GOD WHICH HATH BROUGHT THEE OUT OF CHALDEA, AND OUT OF THE CHALDEANS, and as we shall see hereafter, and as we have already partly handled it in the twelfth Chapter, That Abram believed not God in hearing I cannot tell what, and which pertained nothing unto him, or to hear some particular speech: but he believed God, when as he verily believed that he was kept and reserved to be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Thus we see what his faith was. But for the better understanding hereof, we are to note that there is a particular faith, and a faith also which comprehends whatsoever is requisite for our salvation. As if God should now threaten us, it might so fall out as that it would

move and touch the hearts of very hypocrites and contemners of his word. Now this is said to be a particular faith. For how many do we see, when as the judgments of God are set before them, to be amazed, and seared as it were within with a hot iron, looking on every side when they should fall upon them: and why so. Forsooth, the reason is, that although they would stomach and brag out the matter never so much, yet shall they be driven to acknowledge and understand that they shall never be able to escape the heavenly judge his hands. These men then, I say, have a certain kind of faith, albeit it is but in part: and it is such a piece of faith as will do them no good: as for example, you shall see some men assure themselves upon a particular promise, when as they are in danger: for if a man shall come and say unto them, that God will have compassion upon them, they can like very well of this speech, albeit it is but only in an expectation. Again, we shall see another man extremely sick or suffering great poverty: and it may be that he will call upon GOD for aid. Another man may be brought unto such an extreme danger, as that he is as it were at his wits' end: yet he has a good hope because he knows that God can help him. Now these are but particular beliefs, and cannot save us, and so consequently, not justify us: but when we shall assure ourselves of our adoption, wherein consists all our felicity: this is it that makes us hope that GOD will be our Father unto the end: because he has promised that his children shall not perish: and that we may call upon him as upon our GOD, for our undoubted salvation. Now then when we shall have this promise by which God unites us unto himself, and so allies himself unto us, as that we never doubt that he will not forget us: this then is such a faith as comprehends within it all the promises. For (as Saint Paul says) The fear of God which proceeds from Faith, has not only the promises of the life now, but of the Life to come. For we may conclude that all things shall go well with us if so be that God favors us and accepts of us.

Here then we see what we are to retain concerning this word Belief. (Abram then believed GOD) that is to say, Abram received the promise, by which GOD certified him that he was his Savior, that he embraced our Lord Jesus Christ that was offered him, by whom he

knew we were reconciled unto God, although we were worthy to be accounted his enemies, and to have mortal wars made upon us, by reason of our sin and corruption. Wherefore Abram is beholden unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and was fully persuaded that that was the very bond, by which we are conjoined and united unto God, as that we are partakers both of his life and also of all his benefits. Here then we see Abram's belief, to the end we take it not so leanly and sparingly as the Papists do. We see now in sum, that we shall never be able to understand what this word Faith and Belief means, except we come to this melody of the Promise, and of the Receipt thereof. And why is it that God so often says by his Prophets, I will call you my people, and you shall say, Thou art our God? Thus we see why God first speaks: and it belongs to him so to do: for, what a rash part were it of me to insinuate myself to come unto God, and to call him my Father, who am no better than a worm crawling upon the earth, no nor so good neither: but rather sin and horrible infection to be condemned forever, whom Satan by nature possesses, and whose bond-slaves we all are: and yet call God my Father? Yea, to see me usurp and take upon me such honor as the very Angels themselves as of themselves, are not worthy? But when he has once pronounced this saying, I am thy Father: now it is no more cursed boldness and presumption to take ourselves to be of the number of his children, but a holy confidence and trust, by which we ratify his truth. And this is the greatest honor that we can do him, when as he has said the word, to content ourselves therewith and rest therein.

Thus I say, we see what true belief is, even that which is here shown to us by the example and instruction in Abram. Now it is said that that was imputed unto him for righteousness: and that it was God that imputed the same unto him. We are now to set down what this word Impute, and this word Righteousness, signifies, in comprehending also therewith the name of God. This word Impute, imports as much as to allow or account of. As when a man owes anything, if he has paid it, he is allowed it. Or if when his debts are set down he shows that he has paid this, and paid that, well, he is so allowed it, as that he is discharged of it, and has his quietus est. Now

in our natural French language, this word Impute, is always taken in ill part. For we never say that any virtue is imputed to a man: for the word Impute imports a matter of reproach, or of a fault done: for we will say, this matter will be imputed unto him as a fault. Now the scripture uses this word in common, as well in good part as in ill, that is, imputes righteousness, and imputes not sins. And therefore when it is said that Faith was imputed unto Abram, it is as much to say, as that it overthrows whatsoever might come as from him. Nevertheless, we shall never be able to understand the value and estimation of this word but by the contrary. For when it is said that sins are imputed unto us, it is as much to say, as our sins are registered in the Records, and we stand in them condemned, so that there remains nothing but judgment and execution. And therefore accursed are we so long as God imputes unto us our trespasses. For it is said, "Blessed are they to whom the Lord imputes not their sins." And so consequently, accursed is the whole world, when as GOD shall proceed as a Judge against it, and impanel a Jury of life and death thereon.

What then is the meaning of these words: That Faith is imputed for righteousness? It is this, that God puts it into an allowance for us, so that thereby our sins are not imputed unto us: for the one cannot be understood without the other: and therefore the imputing of righteousness, is the cause why our sins are no more imputed unto us to judge and condemn us. For the imputing of righteousness, is in sum, mere pardon and absolution. Here now we see the right meaning of this word. And now let us see what this word righteousness imports: For this word is not a virtue, as if a man should say him to be just and righteous which governs without reproach. But the righteousness which is here spoken of, is a favor and grace which God bestows upon us because he would have mercy upon us, and of his mere liberality be reconciled unto us. And therefore this righteousness which Moses here speaks of, is not a quality that we are to look for in men: but a favor which God bears unto us, when as it pleases him to bury our sins in the bottomless sea of his mercy, and not once look after them again: and accept of us as if we had absolutely accomplished the law. And why is that?

Forsooth, because Jesus Christ is righteous, and his perfect righteousness is imputed and allowed unto us. And as he is ours by the gift of God his Father, and daily offers himself also unto us by the Gospel, even so communicates he his righteousness unto us, when as we possess and enjoy him. And God vouchsafes it even as well as if we ourselves had wrought the same in our own persons. And thus we see what the meaning of this word Righteousness is: for now I do but unfold these things by little and little, because we mean hereafter to amplify the true summary of the whole.

We will now come to speak of the name of GOD: For men may impute us to be righteous, by reason of some appearance and outward show of holiness and virtue, which they may think to be in us, and to like well of us, and so we shall have a great number of imputations, that is to say, very Catalogues of righteousness and imputations, we shall be absolved, yea and also exceedingly commended and praised, when as they shall see us to have walked godly and virtuously: and yet all this is nothing. And therefore we must come unto the heavenly judge as it is said of him. And see why Moses namely expresses, That God imputes Abram's belief for righteousness. Now if all the world had so esteemed and liked of Abram's faith, and had canonized him, as a man would say, as if he had been an Angel, it had vanished away all like smoke, but it is God that spoke it, even he who is a competent judge, and to whom belongs the giving of sentence, either of salvation or condemnation. Wherefore when God absolved Abram after that manner, and acknowledged and held him for righteous, this we see was the principal point. And therefore we now see that Abram was justified by Faith. Whereupon S. Paul says, it follows, that he could no way deserve to be righteous by his works, and that he brought nothing with him of his own why God should like of him, but that he freely received him and made him one of his children. And indeed S. Paul when he means to speak of free justification, takes here this way with himself, to show that there is none other hope to be saved, but by the mere mercy and goodness of God, because he pardons our sins, that we might please him. Wherefore when S. Paul enters into this argument, he fetches this Theme from Abram: for he

presupposes that which is true, that there are not sundry ways to be justified before God, and that there is but one only rule.

And therefore if Abram was justified by faith, we all also must so be without exception. Moreover, if there could be found in any mortal man that virtue which might merit: no doubt of it, Abram surpassed all others therein. We have already heard how he forsook the country wherein he was born, how he renounced himself and all his human and natural affections, and how he absolutely obeyed God. We have also heard of his patience, how constantly he abode in all his temptations, how he persisted to the end, in the vocation whereto God had called him: to be short, we have heard that he failed in nothing.

Now, we that are here are far from this perfection. How then dares he whatever he is, be once so bold as to vaunt himself to be able to appear righteous before God through his own merits, considering that Abram was never able to do it? However, let that suffice us which I have already spoken of, to wit, that there is but one only rule that can make us please God: and that is it which is here set down unto us in the person of Abram. And withal, we must thus conclude also, that since Abram was justified by believing God, that our works can no whit avail us to be liked of God, and to make a foundation of the hope which we must have of everlasting salvation: it is God that must give us all in all, and not we once presume to bring anything with us of our own towards it. We will speak hereof more at large hereafter: but in the meantime, we will use the easiest way of proceeding herein we possibly may.

Here now we see as I have already said, our A. B. C. And this is the perfection of all our wisdom. And will not this be enough when as we have learned the principle and ground of our faith? and understood what entrance we should have for our profit in the school of God? which is the principal key of all the Gospel, and which leads us even to the true end, whereby we may know which way we may walk aright, and attain unto the inheritance which God has laid up in store for us. And therefore when as we shall perceive that this place leads us thereunto, no doubt of it we should, either

ought to look unto it, or else we shall be most villainously unthankful.

Now we have hitherto set down these things most familiarly and easily, so that there is not so young a child as cannot but taste thereof. Let us now then come to the point which I have already touched, which is, that Abram brought nothing with him whatever, why God should accept him: but rested wholly upon the mere grace and liberality contained in the promise. Let us now then hereupon consider of what time it is spoken. Certainly, it is that Abram had served God so long, as that a man would have thought he might now have been very well discharged and freed, in the common and ordinary judgment of man. And therefore it must necessarily follow, that Abram was all his life long justified by the only mean of Faith. Now this would seem somewhat obscure and dark if we should not make it more plain and manifest. And it shall be made the plainer and manifest in giving light unto the truth by the leasings of Popery, and by the errors wherewith all those infernal schools are corrupted and infected.

I have already said, that the Papists will easily enough grant, that without faith we can no ways please God, or be in his favor. Wherefore when they have once granted this principle, that we are all accursed in Adam: then may they as well say, that we must receive the first grace from Jesus Christ. That is to say, that seeing we are plunged in the bottomless pit of destruction through original sin, Jesus Christ must needs fetch us out of it. Now, from hence they draw a false and pernicious doctrine, by which they corrupt and falsify Moses conclusion, and S. Paul's also most excellent interpretation. For they say, that the righteousness which they call Initial comes of faith, and of pure and simple Faith: but that afterward, we must be partly justified by our works. Now this is somewhat dark to be understood, howbeit I will so set it down, as that everyone shall be able to understand it. This word then Initial, is as much to say as Beginning, and it is a word that is taken from the Latin: for it is as much to say, as the beginning righteousness in a pure faith. Wherefore the Papists will confess that God takes us to be his enemies, and does accuse us: because we are nothing else but as

it were a most filthy and stinking dunghill: and therefore by reason of our stains and pollutions, he cannot choose but reject us. They will grant all this: and it seems at the first sight to be the way to humble us. And besides, also they show no less but that it is Jesus Christ that must help and remedy whatever wants we have, to hold us by the hand, and reconcile us unto God his Father. Now, when they have brought us to this, then they tell us that we must in part merit to be righteous, and that must forsooth be done, through the merits of our works: so as they set down free righteousness all at once, when as we are received into the Church by Baptism, which is enough: and so we see that Jesus Christ has done his part. And yet in very deed they add and say, that we cannot be absolutely righteous: but they shall in spite of their teeth feel it, and experience also will convince them, that they are many ways beholden to God.

But soon after they come in and say, that they have their satisfactions, and do recompense God otherwise, in doing of things which they are not commanded, as fasting on such a day, abstaining from eating of flesh another day, going on pilgrimage, causing Masses to be sung, and such other like trifling toys, which they make a mountain of to acquit themselves before God. Thus we see how they bestow themselves all their life long, to be made righteous by their works and merits, being once justified by faith, that is to say, being brought into the way. They confess that Jesus Christ opens the door unto them: but they say, that they themselves must enter in at it and perform the voyage. There is in them also another error: for they think that when they do any good deed, although there be much evil amongst, yet that this good deed is accounted of, and this they call partial righteousness. And thus they make a patched and pieced righteousness, taking here and there a piece, roving about and making such a medley, as is nothing worth, but a confused matter or no understanding. They say also that we are first justified by the mere grace of Jesus Christ, and next, by Faith: and then by our works and partly by our satisfactions, which serve to appease the wrath of God against us, and to acquit us of all the sins whereof we are guilty. And this is the opinion of the Papists. Let us now see when it was that Abram was justified, as we have already touched it:

he was a man endued with all virtues, a man that had forsaken himself wholly to please God. And therefore it might seem that he might have had some righteousness in him, if any were to be found in any living creature: and yet for all that, his faith was imputed unto him for righteousness. And therefore S. Paul concludes thereupon, that he had no works in him to justify himself. And when, I pray you, had he none in him? Forsooth even then, when he had so notably traveled and endured such trials, as that he might have been the very pattern as it were of all Angelic virtues, for his chastity, for his patience, for his obedience towards God, for his piety: to be short, he mortified all his affections, that he might frame himself wholly unto the righteousness of God.

And when he had done all this, yet (as Saint Paul says) had he nothing whereof to glory: but must stop his mouth, until such time as he was justified by faith, and therefore we see by the circumstance of the time, that the righteousness of faith whereof we now speak, is not such as the Papists imagine. But it is as much as if the scripture should say, seeing then that we are poor miserable sinners engaged unto God, and under the condemnation of eternal death: it must needs be that he must accept of us by some other mean, that is, he must not examine what we are, nor yet look to find any thing in us which any way might make us acceptable in his sight, but hold us to be righteous, because it is his good pleasure so to do, or else because we rest upon his promises, by which he has prevented us. Here we see the righteousness that endures, which extends itself both in life and death. But we are now to set down these things more largely and plainly. And first we are to remember that which erst I touched, that is: we must seek for our righteousness elsewhere than in ourselves, because there is none in us. And see why S. Paul so greatly insists and stands upon the curse of mankind, when as he would drive us to this point, that God freely justifies us: for there he shows that the Heathen are also condemned, although they have neither law, scripture, nor Prophets, and says, that they are of themselves already damned, and need never go any farther. For God has manifested himself to all in general, in giving us eyes to behold the creation of the world. Now

we see that we smother and suppress the glory which we ought most manifestly to behold. And therefore we must conclude, that we are all yes most unthankful sacrilegers, because we rob God of that honor that is due unto him. As for those that are under the law, there is a double condemnation upon their heads, for they sin wittingly, because they know the will of God plainly manifested unto them. Here then we see all mankind enclosed within the curse. Let therefore, says he, every mouth be stopped, and be still: whereupon he brings in many places of the scripture, to show, that God looked upon the children of men, and found not one good, but all corrupt: that is to say, they were so wrapped up in their iniquities, as that they were to be abhorred. Here then we see what we are to note in the first place, that is, we are hereby to understand what our state and condition is, until such time as God comes unto us to have mercy upon us, and looks after us when as we are plunged in the bottomless pit of hell. Thus then we see at what end we must begin, if we will rightly understand how and wherefore we are justified by Faith. But this cannot now be followed as it should, and therefore we will let it alone until our next exercise.

Let us now then fall down before the majesty of our good God and merciful Father in Jesus Christ, in acknowledging our manifold sins and iniquities, whereby we are most engaged and bound unto him, and for which we ought to be utterly confounded in ourselves. And although we be cast down into such a bottomless depth of despair, yet let us not cease to lift up our heads and hands unto his majesty, seeing he has showed us such favor as to look after us, because he would gather us unto himself, and because also that Jesus Christ descended into hell to bring us out thereof, and lead us unto the kingdom of heaven. And therefore let this be so printed in our hearts, as that we may be truly lifted up by faith to call upon this good God, who has adopted us for his children, and wholly rest upon him. And let us farther beseech him to grant us the grace so to walk, as that his adoption be not vain nor unprofitable in us, but that it may show the fruits thereof, insomuch as we shall be governed by our Lord Jesus Christ, accordingly as he has incorporated us into himself.

Let us not only, etc.

THE SECOND SERMON, of Justification.

Genesis 15:6

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he counted that to him for righteousness.

WE began yesterday to handle which was the right way to learn how to please God by faith, that is, we must begin at our first estate and condition, and see what we were born in Abram. In whom we see ourselves to be all accursed, damned, and lost. And until such time as we know that aright, we shall never feel what it is to obtain the favor and mercy of God. Here then we see the true foundation whereon to build, which is, that after we have rightly examined what we are, and finding nothing in ourselves but utter shame and confusion, we might seek for the remedy elsewhere. And for the making of such a trial, we must of necessity come to the scriptures. Indeed, if every man did consider himself without flattery, we should judge ourselves without any further trial. We should not need to use long circumstances about the finding out of testimonies enough against ourselves: for every one of us has a hot burning scar in himself, to imprint the curse of God upon us.

But because we are subject to hide our sins and bury them, therefore has God set his word before us as a glass, that we might therein behold how to learn to judge ourselves thereby, and not after our own fantasies. And although we perceive not at the first our own misery, yet when we shall see the same laid open by the word of God, that were enough wholly to confound us. For if every one of us should trust to his own opinion, we would then all be righteous. For Solomon says, "That we are all so blinded with self-love, as that there is not one of us all but will make ourselves believe that we are wonderfully virtuous." But it is God (says he) that weighs the hearts. And therefore we must be tried by another balance: for when we think ourselves to be full of merits, they prove

nothing else but false stuff and very dross. And when the world also thinks so of us, it declares that they look no farther but to the outward show. Now, that which men so highly esteem of, is abominable before God. And why so? Because that we must judge of works according to the hidden and secret affection of the heart. And besides, there is no purity therein, for it is impossible that we should be pure and clean, until such time (as it is said in the Acts of the Apostles) that we be purged by faith.

And on the other side, we shall never be able to serve God with a free affection, without we know that he will be good and merciful unto us, as it is said in the Psalm: "With thee O Lord is always mercy and plenteous redemption." Now these miserable faithless people who doubt of the will of God, and are never quiet but in great perplexity, without doubt can never serve God courageously, neither will God at any time accept of what they do, for he will have us sacrifice unto him willingly: and S. Paul also says, "That he loves those which deal liberally with him, and come with a free affection." Here then we see that our works, however glorious they seem to be either in our own eyes or in the eyes of the world, are but dung and filth before God, until such time as he has cleansed us of our spots and uncleanness, and besides has showed us what mark he would have us shoot at, and to what we should direct the whole course of our life, that is to say, he would have us honor him, and being once dedicated unto his service, labor to conform ourselves fully and wholly unto that righteousness which he has set before us. However, we will handle this more at large when we shall speak of the law: but for this present it shall suffice that we understand, that because we are carried with self-love, and that, that is not only as it were a wimple to blindfold our eyes, but does also as it were wholly bewitch us, so as we are become very blockish, and do not once conceive and think of our miseries. And therefore as I have already said, it is meet that God should condemn us by his word.

And for that cause also does Saint Paul bring in so many testimonies, showing by them that we are all damned. Everyone, therefore, as I have already said, should have this feeling in himself without any other judge. But because we are so sinful and so full of

dissimulation, and have so many shops and private closets to withdraw and put us by from the true and sure knowledge of our sins, therefore must the word of God serve us as a looking glass to behold them in.

Now then, seeing that we are by nature perverse and nothing in us but rebellion and malice, and all our affections and thoughts so many enmities against God as Saint Paul says, how can we in any way possibly present and offer unto his majesty anything that he may well like of? In very deed, we may have some foolish, arrogant, proud conceit of ourselves; however, that shall be always but to redouble our woe, for pride is a sin that more displeases God than all the rest.

And therefore we must confess that as we are but natural men, we are such great enemies to God, as that our very thoughts and imaginations are all contrary to his will, neither can we so long as we live, either speak or do anything whatsoever, but it must needs heap upon our heads a most grievous condemnation. Therefore we see why the scripture compares us unto dead men, when as God once forsakes us, and until such time as our Savior Christ has shown himself to be our life, we are no better than dead men. And I pray you, what can a dead man do?

Moreover, we are therefore to learn and take forth this lesson, or else we shall never be able to lay open what the goodness of God is toward us in our Lord Jesus Christ. But should despair in ourselves to put our trust in God. For we are so inclined unto this presumption which is so rooted in us, as that we will always extol ourselves. And therefore, God must altogether cast us down, that we may be redressed by his hand and upheld by his power.

Furthermore, we are soon puffed up with a small blast of wind of vain arrogance. And therefore, before such time as we are to receive any true substance from God, we must first be very empty and as it were hunger-starved. And so, namely, why it is said, "That God fills the hungry and poor afflicted." No doubt of it, his goodness extends itself to none but to those who are worthy of it. But when we speak of gathering his church together, he must then prepare it by this

means, and for that cause it is namely said, "That the Spirit of God must rest upon our Lord Jesus Christ, that he might announce deliverance unto the captives, to make the miserable blind to see, to heal the sick and diseased, and to strengthen and comfort the feeble and weak." Now, he accomplishes that when he says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, and you shall find rest to your souls." Here then, we see that it is humility that leads us unto our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be partakers of the righteousness which he brings us.

Now, humility is not such a manner of thing as many suppose it to be, as to show a godly and humble countenance before God, but we must be so bare and empty of any good thing in us, as that we must cast ourselves down at his feet and acknowledge that we are nothing else but miserable and wretched sinners, and so without all hope of salvation as of ourselves. Thus, we see how we come unto his mercy, which is by the feeling and apprehending of our miseries. And these two things cannot be separated. For why is it that God takes pity upon us and helps us? Forsooth, it is because he beholds our miseries, and that is it which stirs and moves him to mercy. And see also why Saint Paul, treating of our salvation, says, "You are not saved as of yourselves, it is the gift of God through faith: for you are his workmanship, because he has created you in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he has before ordained that you should do them." Here Saint Paul excludes whatever good opinion we can conceive of our own power, when as he says, "Go to now, if ye shall attribute any part of commendation of salvation unto yourselves, and yet think that you have not attained thereunto as of yourselves, but that you have been helped therein: see how this gear may or can stand together? For you were created mortal men, that is to say, Sinners: and therefore all accursed, banished and estranged from the presence of God, in whom is all goodness. And therefore you must conclude that you are all as it were dead."

Wherefore, there must be a new and a second amendment and reparation before you be anything in the sight of God. And when you have been regenerated in Jesus Christ, the same then is called a new creation. And therefore, every one of you is the creature of God

when as he has formed and called you unto himself, without any disposition thereto for your own part, but God has prepared good works by his Holy Spirit.

Seeing then that it is thus, we may very well conclude that our salvation comes no whit of ourselves, not one drop of it, but is the only mere gift of God proceeding of his own liberality. Thus then, we see as touching the first point, that for the obtaining of mercy and grace at God his hands, we must truly acknowledge ourselves what we are, how miserable our estate and condition is, and that we are all but castaways.

Now, when I speak thus, it is not meant that our knowledge must be a roving understanding, swimming in our brain, but our hearts must by it be deadly wounded, that we may feel the judgments of God so to terrify us as that we may be brought almost into utter despair. For how should we know what a benefit meat and drink is, except we were touched with hunger and thirst? For if we were stuffed and full, we would continue so, we would never seek after crumb nor crust (as we say), but it is hunger that drives us to hunt after victuals. For when we are sick, we seek for remedy, but if a man were so senseless as that he felt no kind of grief, he would die a hundred times before he would call for help or yet once desire it.

Therefore, as I have already said, we must be so touched with our miseries as if we were dead indeed, and as if we felt that death, whereof the scripture speaks, that we might attain to that life which our Lord Jesus Christ offers unto us by his Gospel. And this is the cause why the scripture so often reproves, and as it were condemns us for our sins. For God takes no pleasure in dealing with us after this manner, but because he knows the necessity thereof.

So then, look how many threatenings, sentences of condemnation, of reproofs, and such like are in the holy scripture, they are even so many mallets to knock us on the heads, to bring us unto that humility which we are so far from until such time as he has violently in such sort mortified us. And thus much for this strain.

Moreover, we must come to a larger account and reckoning of that which has been already spoken, which is that until such time as we have beheld our miseries in the word of God, we shall be lulled in a dead sleep in our hypocrisy and become very careless. And this security will cause us to condemn the word of God and so by little and little be quite and clean excluded from it.

Now God has set before us our condemnation, namely in the law, and indeed all the scripture is full of them. And when it is said that it is profitable, amongst other things, it lays out the reproofs. And besides, we know what the Gospel teaches, "Repent and amend, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Thus we see how God disposes his elect to receive the free righteousness which he bestows upon them by his Son, which is that we should repent and amend.

And what is the meaning hereof? Forsooth, there must be such a sorrow and grief in us for our sins, as that we must condemn ourselves for our wickedness, and be revenged of ourselves as Saint Paul says, for he does not only set down the word "Sorrow and Fear," but says that we should have such a vehement desire and zeal, as to be as it were avenged of ourselves because we are so great enemies unto God.

Now although this doctrine is met with in all the holy scripture, nevertheless, God has especially ordained his law for that purpose, and therefore it is why Saint Paul says, "That it brings nothing but wrath." When we shall thoroughly weigh and consider that which is spoken, we shall find God to be against us and cannot come near without it be to have him armed and thundering against us and clearly to destroy us. True it is, that the law right well shows us what it is to live righteously and to attain thereto if we were capable thereof, as hereafter shall be more largely handled.

It is written in Leviticus, "That whosoever shall do these things shall live by them." But in the meantime, let us see whether we come anything near unto that which God commands us, yea or no? In very deed, we are so arrogant and proud, as that the law until we well understand it can never be able to convince and conquer all our fond presumption.

For we see how Saint Paul, who from his youth was trained up and instructed in the law, and a Doctor thereof; yet notwithstanding says that he still presumed on his virtues and thought himself to be a very righteous man because he knew the law and rested thereon, and utterly contemned the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what was the reason? Forsooth, because he looked no further but unto the dead letter and outward show thereof. As when it is said, "Thou shalt not kill," indeed he right well knew that he was no murderer. Afterward, it is said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," never any man knew him to be a lecher or whoremonger. Next after, "Thou shalt not steal," neither yet was it ever known that he was a thief. And therefore he thought himself to be clear before God. Thus, we see how in what a sound, drowsy sleep he was in his vain flatteries.

But afterward, God awakened him and drew him further on and made him enter and search into the depth of his thoughts. And where it is said, "Thou shalt not covet," then he saw himself so convicted and condemned, as that there was no more absolution for him. For he felt a great many of vanities in himself that tickled him. His weakness made him think upon many temptations, and he knew that he was not able to discharge himself of the hundredth part of the love of God which ought to be in all the faithful. This did Saint Paul know, and so we see how that he, like a miserable dead man, forgot his life, whereof he was beguiled and deceived, and acknowledged himself to be altogether like a wretched rotten carcass before God. For the law so slew him as that he had nothing in the world to presume upon in himself. And therefore, as I have already said, we may see that there is an especial reason contained in the law of God to show us that there is nothing in us but condemnation. For we must chiefly stand here upon every commandment. We must have but one only God. And what is he? And how must we honor and serve him? Seeing then that we must be wholly bound and tied unto him, let us look after none other good, felicity, nor rejoicing but to glorify him. Let there be never heard from our mouths anything else but praises and thanksgiving unto his majesty, and let it not be perceived any manner of way but

that we forsake the world and wholly desire to come unto him and to magnify his name as he worthily deserves.

Thus then we see the four Commandments of the first table set here before us. Now when we shall have thoroughly searched the contents of them, let us then come to the examining of ourselves, and we shall find that instead of resting upon him, we have become very wild rogues and vagabonds, and such also as that our thoughts and imaginations do lead us and carry us away everywhere.

And first let us come to speak of prayer. For this action should cause us that are here beneath on the earth to have our cogitations in heaven because we are then as it were in the presence of our God. And yet notwithstanding when we do pray, what a number of frivolous imaginations shall we have in our heads, which will hold us their captives? And seeing it is so, what must be the rest of our whole life? Even the like will become of all the Commandments of the law when as we shall compare them with our lives. And therefore, we shall not find one only death but an hundred thousand.

Furthermore, we see also how God in his law means to touch us to the quick. For it is said that the heart must indeed and in good earnest be wounded. For after that this sentence is pronounced, "Cursed be he that shall not do all things which here are written," he is not contented alone to be Judge and to have thus condemned us by his own mouth, but will have the people also to say, "Amen"; that is to say, he will have every man to condemn himself willingly and of his own accord, and so be altogether held as condemned, confessing the sentence which he has given to be just and right.

So then, we see how the law drives us so to enter to examine and try our life that we shall find no hope in ourselves but be driven to seek the beginning of our righteousness at our Lord Jesus Christ his hand.

Now we see that these two things are as contrary to one another as fire and water: to be accounted righteous before God by our works and to be accepted by Him through the virtue and power of faith. For as Saint Paul says, if we should bring anything that is ours,

no doubt of it, God should then be beholden unto us, although we were neither wholly nor yet perfectly righteous; yet, however it were, there might be some proportionable reward done unto us. But it is said that faith and works can never agree together, and therefore this must be our conclusion: that when we are justified by faith, works must need to cease and be worth nothing.

Now, this at the first sight may seem to be a hard kind of speech, to wit, that faith and good works can never go together, for it might seem that if faith only justifies, that the reins are slackened and let loose to all iniquity. Now, Saint Paul speaks this according to a certain quality and regard, as he also speaks of the law and faith: the law, says he, can no way agree with faith, for they are two incompatible things. And in what sort? For is not God as well the Author of the law as of the Gospel? Is there any contrariety or repugnance in Him? Without doubt no, for He is unchangeable. Why then finds Saint Paul such a contrariety between the law and the Gospel? Forsooth, it is in respect of our justification. And even so is it between faith and works: and the contrariety is this, because works are made merits. And that which is more, we can do no good work but by faith, as we have already said, and hereafter shall be more largely handled.

For the cause and the effect are not contraries: but when we will establish any merit in our works, that is to say, when as we will go about to make them available to obtain favor at God's hand and to satisfy for our sins; to be short, when as we would bring them in to serve us for our salvation, this is utterly to overthrow faith and by this means make it of no worth. Thus, then, we see that it is not without cause why Saint Paul concludes thus: that seeing we are justified by faith, then are works of no value, but must be quite and clean shut out of the doors for any opinion that we ought to attribute unto merits or virtues whereby to please God withal.

Now, we are here again to note that God of His mere liberality justifies us and searches after our miseries to sustain them, that He might be known to be only righteous and the commendation of our salvation to be absolutely given unto Him accordingly, as Saint Paul right well notes both in his Epistle unto the Ephesians and also unto

the Romans, saying: That God has concluded all under sin that He might be known to be only righteous, and every mouth be stopped, because it is He only that justifies sinners through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and that brings us into the way of His righteousness. As also in the third to the Galatians, when as Saint Paul propounds this question: How is it possible that God gave the law after the promise? For it should seem that God changed His purpose and was misguided, because He freely justified Abram, and a long time after gave the law; and therein he says, That whoever shall do these things shall live by them.

Hereunto Saint Paul answers that the law was not given to annul the free promise but for the use, whereof I have already spoken, that is, that we must be all concluded under sin and condemnation, for else we should never feel of what price the mercy of God was nor ever look after it, and besides we would think that we had no need of it.

And in very deed, there are two sorts of people which make no account of our Lord Jesus Christ, robbing themselves of all the benefits which we have by Him and of the salvation also which we have by His death and resurrection. The one sort are they which persuade themselves to have some worthiness in them and thereupon in the abundance of their pride despise God; and such are your jolly rabble of Monks, Friars, and their like: who have a certain glorious, glittering show of righteousness, counterfeiting a marvelous, and as it were, Angelic holiness. These men, I say, shut up the Gate and have no entrance unto Jesus Christ, for they thrust Him far enough from themselves.

The second sort are they which are negligent and secure and think not themselves to be righteous. And why so? For some of them are whoremongers, some are thieves, some drunkards, some effeminate persons, and some such contemners of God as that little children may judge them to be so. These men are not deceived by pride and arrogancy but are made so drunk by Satan as that they never think of everlasting life but are become altogether brutish.

And see why Solomon says, "That he is happy and blessed who is careful over his own heart and who fears and watches to understand his sins and wretchedness." We see then that the law was not given after the promise for any other reason but to condemn us, to the end we might seek for all our righteousness in God and to give all praise unto Him for our salvation. Let us then here note this final cause, and therefore Saint Paul, in the first chapter to the Ephesians, discusses this matter more at large. For he passes it not over slightly but handles the matter so as if he would thunder it in our ears, to the end, says he, "That the glory of God might be known, He alone to be glorified, He alone to be known righteous, that we might know that from Him we have all." For we must know, says he, "That without His mere favor and grace, we are all damned."

Here we see, I say in sum, what God's pretense is when He takes from us all opinion of our own power and strength; that is, He means that He would have Himself to be known to be only just, and us to be lost and damned souls of ourselves. So that whoever they are who challenge to themselves the least righteousness that may be, as if they were aiders and assisters unto God, as the Papists call themselves Co-operators or workers together with God, do without doubt commit a more detestable fault than all the thieves in the world. For what is it to take away from a mortal man gold and silver and all that he is worth besides, in respect of robbing God of His honor, being the chiefest thing that He desires, to have to be reserved unto Himself? Which is this, that He alone is to be acknowledged righteous. And then when miserable mortal creatures, or rather crawling vermin on the earth, who are no better than a most corrupt and filthy thing, shall stand up in God's stead and say, "You are not the whole worker of our salvation, but we have helped Thee in it." Is not this most cursed blasphemy when as we shall presume to bring with us some portion of righteousness before God?

But here we are to remember that which we yesterday handled, that is to say, that this word Justify, imports not that we are made righteous, that is, that God so renews us as that we are angels, but it

imports that He accepts and allows of us of His mere goodness, albeit we be miserable sinners. And therefore, we may here see how Moses in this place touches this word Impute, as if he should have said, that this hangs upon the free favor of God and is not to be inquired of whether righteousness is in regard of man or whether he is worthy to be accepted. There is none at all of this meant. But let us be contented that God accepts us for righteous, although we are no whit so in deed.

And here also we see why the righteousness of faith excludes works: for look what is wanting in us, we receive from Jesus Christ. I say not in part, as the Papists ensnare themselves, but we borrow the righteousness of Jesus Christ because there is not a drop or yet a mite thereof in us. And therefore works must needs be overthrown when as we seek for righteousness elsewhere. For if there were only one part in Jesus Christ and another in us, He should not be the whole: and then how should this saying be fulfilled, "That the fullness of graces were given to Him by the Holy Ghost, that He might distribute them unto everyone according to measure?" For these two words, "To get" and "to receive," are clean contrary one to the other; and when God justifies us, it is by His adoption, and because we are by nature the children of wrath, therefore He adopts us and takes us for His children.

And what finds He in us? Nothing in the world that can induce us to do well. And therefore the inheritance of our salvation which we hope after, and which is promised us in the Gospel, comes from this adoption of God and from nothing that is in us; for if we could obtain or get anything of ourselves, without doubt we would part stakes with God, even as the Papists do. But because God so deals as that we do nothing, therefore is He alone to be glorified.

We now presently see in sum that the righteousness which is here spoken of imports nothing else but the remission of sins and the credit which we have in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to be made righteous through the merit of His obedience. But when Saint Paul would severely instruct us according to our childishness, he brings in only remission of sins and reasons after this sort, "We cannot," says he, "be justified by our works." And why so? Forsooth,

because it is written, "The man is blessed whose sin the Lord pardons, and whose iniquities are remitted, and whose wickedness is not imputed unto him." Here, says he, we see all our felicity, which is when God receives us to mercy and forgets and buries all our sins whereof we are guilty before Him.

Seeing then it is so, it must needs follow that we are all accursed until such time as God has forgiven us; and if we be wicked, where then shall be found our righteousness? For God cannot hate that which is agreeable unto His nature, for He is the fountain of all righteousness. And therefore if He finds in us never so little goodness, no doubt of it, He will accept of it. Wherefore we must conclude that because we are wicked, we are unrighteous and altogether accursed, and can no way be blessed without God loves us. Now, if He loves us, He must needs eftsoons allow and like of us; and if He allows and likes of us, we must needs be righteous. These are principles which we ought to understand. However, we are yet to know that we cannot be blessed without God loves us; for so long as He is our enemy, alas, in what a woeful estate and condition are we?

Whereupon then depends our felicity? Forsooth, even herein, when God loves us. We are now to consider how it is that He loves us: He must needs allow and like of us, as I have already said, for He cannot deny Himself. For if He rejects and abhors us, how shall we be reconciled unto Him? Now let us see by what means: for God cannot be transfigured, and if (as Saint Paul says) we should pretend any such thing, it were in vain; for He will continue always like Himself and knows well enough to separate us with all our leasings, and erase us out of His Roll. And how shall God then allow and like of us? Well, sir, we must be righteous. Now, what righteousness is it? It is not that righteousness which we suppose to have in our works, nor that we are able to acquire ourselves before Him, or yet satisfy by any duty that we can perform: none of all this will serve our turn. What righteousness then is it? Forsooth, even this, that God must pardon our sins, forget our iniquities, and not impute our offenses unto us.

And therefore David had reason to use these three manner of speeches: for a man would think this to be a superfluous kind of language; but he especially reiterates this because the condition of man wherein he is born and drowned over head and ears is not only a bottomless depth until such time as God draws him out thereof, but the bottomless depth of all depths, that is, it is the bottomless depth of hell. And therefore God must deal herein after a singular manner. And therefore we see why he also soon after speaks, and that in the spirit in whom is no deceit: for it is meet we should understand how necessary the mercy of God is for us, because our sins are so filthy and horrible as that they are able to infect and poison both heaven and earth, and not to provoke God alone against us, but also the angels, the sun and moon, and all the hosts both of heaven and earth.

Wherefore we see why David so highly magnifies the forgiveness of sins. And thereupon Saint Paul himself also concludes and shows us wherein our whole righteousness consists, which is, that our sins are forgiven us. And let us likewise note, as I have already said, that David speaks and sets it down in the spirit, in whom is no guile: for he shows that we cannot have our sins forgiven us, albeit God offers us forgiveness, until such time as we be wholly confounded in ourselves, and be so roused up and awakened as that no hypocrisy nor dissimulation make us believe this or that, nor yet remain in a dead sleep of security, but that we find ourselves to be like most miserable damned and lost souls, and such as the judgments of God do so persecute as that we know not which way to turn us, and to be in such a desperate case as if we saw present death before us and the hand of God armed to execute the sentence of the curse which He pronounces against us.

And this is the definition of the righteousness which we are to note if we will have it rightly defined. We see also why it is said in the fifteenth of the Acts, where Saint Paul, speaking of the ceremonies of the law, says that we must be justified by our Lord Jesus Christ, of all the things whereof the law of Moses could not justify us. This word "the Law" carries here a long tail with it: for we must understand why Saint Paul especially speaks of the

ceremonies of the law when he says that works cannot in any way make us acceptable before God. Now the Papists, and many of the ancient Fathers who knew not the Scriptures but were, as a man would say, half philosophers, were wonderfully troubled about this word "the Law," and though that Saint Paul contended not about moral works as they called them: that is to say, that he went not about to deny that we were not righteous before God if we lived chastely, temperately, soberly, wronging no man, and holding all such other like moral virtues: they thought that Saint Paul touched none of this but meant in very deed that all these works partly deserved salvation: but they thought that the ceremonies of the law could no way be profitable to justification. Now this imagination is too gross folly: for, first, Saint Paul never once spoke of the ceremonies of the law.

Wherefore, see here, I beseech you, how most unadvisedly they are abused; and to prove it to be so, consider that place of the Psalm which I earlier alleged, how David places man's blessedness in the only forgiveness of sins, without naming any work; and this speaking of works comprehends within it all virtues in general, which we can in any way attribute to ourselves and wherein we greatly glory. Now this blessedness (Saint Paul says) shows that we must needs come all naked and empty before God, that we might be filled and enriched of His mere and free goodness.

Moreover, when as he speaks of the works of the law, it is because that if there be any merit in them, it is by reason of the covenant which we have already alleged, "That whosoever shall do these things shall live in them." Put the case that there never had been any law published, yet should we have been no whit the more acceptable unto God. And as for Himself, He owes us no duty, neither is He any whit bound unto us; for it is said, "That when we have done whatsoever is commanded us, yet must we needs confess that we are unprofitable servants." And why so? What? Are we at our own choice and liberty to do what we lust? Is there anything in us that is our own? No, verily, and therefore cannot we plead any merit, albeit we perfectly fulfill the law.

Whereupon then depends the confidence which we take in our works? Forsooth, even upon this promise, "That whosoever shall do these things shall live by them." For God bound Himself hereunto of His own accord, albeit He was not in reason tied unto it. Wherefore when as Saint Paul speaks of the works of the law, he shows that although God has promised to all those to whom He has made promise that how many soever shall accomplish all which He has commanded by the righteousness of the law, shall be reputed and taken to be righteous, and have thereby everlasting life; notwithstanding that the works of the law cannot do it. And why so? Because they still leave us under the curse of the law and condemnation: for we can do nothing else but sin, so long as we remain in this tabernacle of the flesh, and he whoever he is that shall think himself to be most righteous shall never be able to acquit and discharge himself of the hundredth part of his duty therein.

What shall we then do, but even hold down our heads and prostrate ourselves at the feet of our Judge, and so crave pardon and forgiveness? As hereafter shall be more largely set down. Let us now then return unto the place depending upon that which I have already touched, which is that Jesus Christ is set before us to justify us in all things whereof the law of Moses was never able to do. For it should seem that they thought themselves to be helped as well by the ceremonies as also by all the rest of the law, to make them of great account before God, and to be able to please Him; for if they failed, then had they the sacrifices as fit remedies, as the sprinkling of blood to cleanse them, certain washings also to make satisfaction unto God, and many other promises besides.

It should seem then that all this was nothing to make them acceptable before God, but contrariwise, that Jesus Christ must come to justify us of those things whereof the law was never able to do. What is meant by this saying to justify us of things? That is to say, to pardon and forgive us them. We see now by this place which I have already spoken of that the righteousness which Moses here speaks of is not a thing resident in our persons.

But God's free forgiving of us, when as He is merciful and loving unto us, albeit we are no whit worthy thereof: for this which Moses

here sets down shall never be able to be found in any man whatsoever, but in Jesus Christ who must only justify us: and how is that? That is, if the Devil shall accuse us, and God ready to judge and condemn us: then will Jesus Christ answer for us as our surety. Thus we see how the obedience of Jesus Christ serves us as a cloak to cover all our rebellions and iniquities. It is He that has satisfied for us and discharged us of all our debts by the merit of His death and shed His precious blood to wash us withal.

To be short, we find in the person of the Son of God whatsoever is requisite to make us acceptable before Him because our sins are not imputed unto us. Here then we see in sum what we are to remember from this place. We are now to proceed somewhat further, that is to say, that when God has once for all received us thus to mercy, how He continues, holds, and vows us for righteous all the days of our lives, and even in death also: for this is the principal point whereat we must aim and come unto, howbeit we cannot at this time stand to handle it. Let it suffice then, to the end things might be well kept in mind, that we know and understand what the open way is, that we must have to be partakers of the everlasting salvation which comes unto us by Jesus Christ the Son of God, that is, we must know and understand how miserable and wretched our state and condition is, not by confessing the same with our mouths only or having a vain imagination swimming in our brains thereof.

But to be so sorrowfully wounded and grieved, as that we be confounded before the majesty of God, even to the very hating and detesting of our own selves. And when we shall thus rightly judge of ourselves, then shall we be sure that God will forgive us. And when we shall be thus mortified in ourselves, then shall we find life in Jesus Christ. For it is not enough that we know ourselves to be very wretched sick creatures, and poor and needy souls, but we must be dead altogether, to the end we might by the only grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be revived. And that hereupon we may be so humbled as the scripture wills us, which is, to give unto God that honor that is due unto Him.

And it is not without cause that David speaks, when as he says, "That it is an humble and contrite heart which God requires." For we

shall never come unto Him except we be altogether cast down in ourselves. And then we must carry this mind and affection with us, that we are wonderfully grieved and perplexed in our distresses, and then will we indeed confess that we are not righteous. And then also shall our desire and affection be so inflamed, as that we shall not look for our righteousness in our merits, but clean contrary, and having cast away all arrogance, look for all our benefit and salvation in His only Son, and so when we have once known that He has plucked us out of the shadow of death, our mouths shall then be open and disposed to preach His unspeakable praises, according to that saying of Saint Peter, treating of the end of our salvation, in the first Chapter of his first Canonical Epistle.

Let us now prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our sins, beseeching Him to cause us more and more to feel them, and so to govern us by His holy spirit, as that we seek after nothing else but the glorifying and blessing of His holy name, and to acknowledge how many manner of ways we are bound unto Him, even holding of Him all the hope of life we have, and all that while not to be weary in serving of Him, but do the best we can to conform us unto His holy will, until such time as He has so spoiled us of all the corruptions of our flesh, as that we may be wholly clothed with His righteousness. So shall we all say, "O Almighty God and heavenly Father, etc."

THE THIRD SERMON of Justification.

Genesis 15:6

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he counted that unto him for Righteousness.

WE heard yesterday that we must in no case part stakes with God in the matter of our salvation, but all praise must be given to him for it. For when we shall thoroughly look into whatsoever can be found in us, we must conclude, that we are so void of all integrity, as that there is nothing in us but all corruption, and so consequently, nothing but death.

Now it is not enough for us to know that God alone is to be glorified, and we ourselves as it were to be assured to be of no worth, for if we do not so, we have shut up the gate of salvation against ourselves. For where Saint Paul alleged out of the Prophet Habakkuk, "That we live by faith," we are thereby taught, that faith is as it were the key that opens unto us the kingdom of heaven. If it be then our inheritance, we must, being the children, come thither: and we cannot be the children of God, as Saint John in his first Chapter says, but by faith. Now this faith, as we have already said, imports a certainty.

And see also why it is said, "That we may cry with open mouth that God is our Father, and that except he be so, we cannot be reputed to be his children." And from whence comes this cry? Forsooth, as Saint Paul says, as well in the eighth to the Romans, as also in the fifth to the Galatians, even from the spirit of adoption. And therefore the spirit of God does so certify our spirit that we are his children by adoption, as that we may without scruple or doubt call upon him as our Father.

And in another place also it is said, "That he is called the seal of the inheritance of salvation which we wait and look for." Seeing then it is so, that the certainty of faith imports that we are God's adopted children, and that our salvation is grounded thereupon,

there must also be put to a seal, as a sign and token that it is infallible. Here then we see, that it is not enough for us to confess that God is the author of our salvation, and the same to be attributed to him only: but we must also on the other side come unto him, and privately call upon him as our father, and be fully resolved that he will not forsake us.

Now this certainty the Papists could never skill of, but do strongly and constantly repugn it, saying, that we may not in any wise resolve that God allows and likes us, and that we stand in his grace and favor: but only that we may have some probable conjecture thereof. Now to say thus, is utterly to overthrow the whole foundation of Christianity. And in very deed, when Saint Paul speaks of this matter, he drives us unto this reason, which is, that if we depend upon the law and trust unto it, then is Faith but vain, and the promise made of none effect. And why so? Forsooth, it is not because God is not faithful for his part, but because we shall never be able to attain unto the accomplishment of that which is required for our salvation. For God does verily promise us recompense when as we shall have served him, and kept whatsoever he has commanded us, from the one end to the other: God undoubtedly promises us all that.

Now this is an impossible condition. For never man yet has accomplished the law, nor never shall. So then we for our parts are never able to effect and perform this promise. And therefore we shall always be reasoning, wavering, and out of quiet, and in the end fall into despair, when as we shall go about to bring our works with us to keep audit and an account with God, for it is said in the 144th Psalm: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant O Lord: for no man living shall be justified in thy sight." And therefore we must conclude, that we shall be ever vexed and troubled, and our spirits wonderfully perplexed, if we had not salvation elsewhere than from our merits.

And for the better understanding hereof, let us well weigh and consider of that which has been already spoken, that is, we must not think to pay God with trifles. For it is a fearful thing to have him against us. Now he cannot otherwise be, but so long as we shall

presume upon works. For we do even so much derogate from him, and rob him of his right, as has been heretofore showed, that whosoever has not his mouth stopped from attributing unto himself the least glory, and his mouth wide to confess God only to be just: without doubt that man opposes himself unto his majesty. Now we shall never obtain our suit against him: but the condemnation will still light upon our own heads.

And therefore let us not wittingly and indeed provoke his wrath against us, and besides, it cannot be chosen, but that we must needs be out of our wits when we will trust unto our merits. And herein is a twofold abuse, which also brings with it a third.

The one is, when as we think to reckon with God hand over head as the Papists do. And although they fail in many things, yet make they themselves believe that he accepts them. Now God has promised nothing but to such as shall accomplish the whole law. And therefore let us note well these words: "That whosoever shall do all the things written in the law, shall live by them." It is not said one part only. Which also agrees with the saying of Saint James, "That he which forbade to commit adultery, forbade also to steal." For although a man shall have lived all the days of his life chastely, and yet be guilty of some other precept, he is nevertheless but a damned soul. And why so? Forsooth, because that which God has coupled together, we must not separate. The righteousness of the law is coupled and united together: and therefore we must not pretend to cut it in pieces and goblets, nor divide it.

Let us now then consider, whether we be able in part or in whole so to acquit ourselves, as that the whole course of our life may not be amended. Alas, what are we then? And as Solomon says, who can say, "I have cleansed mine heart?" In very deed, there are a great many that think they have, because there are a great many hypocrites in the world. And therefore that man, as I have already said, that is at that point, must needs be more than senseless: for if he considers with what a judge he has to deal withal, however it falls out, when we shall have well bethought us of all the matter, without doubt if we bring with us unto him one ounce or perhaps a half ounce, there will be, as a man would say, five times as much

found to weigh it down: and when we shall think to pay him with half an ounce, he will find matter enough to condemn us in five times as much. And what shall become of us then? Let us therefore learn rightly to know what we are, that we be not in the end found worse than naught. And let us consider as I have already said, that we can never be saved, except we be assured that we may call upon God as upon our Father.

Now besides this first abuse, there is a second, which is, that they that think to be justified by their merits, do never consider that not one of our works is good, when as God will look straitly unto them: for as I have already said, although we should keep the one half of the law or three parts of it, yet were it all nothing: for we should all be condemned if we failed but in one only point: and yet there is another reason, to wit, we never once came near the accomplishing of the law, either in whole or yet in part. And how so? We said yesterday that God judges not of our works as we imagine. For he has his own weights and balances. And how judges he them? Forsooth, he looks whether the heart be pure and clean from all fleshly pollutions. And where shall a man find such a heart? We are ever mashed in a great many of wicked affections, and although they reign not in us, yet can we not be altogether rid of them. Moreover, we shall never find such a zeal in us to glorify God as we should, but that there will be always some infirmity: we may have a good meaning to do well, but yet it shall not be so perfectly done, as that it may stand before his face. Now we do not here speak of this as to say, I think, and I suppose: but we must conclude and say, God has said so, and God allows and likes of it. And therefore we should be very far off from deserving anything before him, nor yet be quiet in conscience: for, over and besides that we fail in many things, and that there is no man but has always some remorse of conscience, and although we thought to do the best that we possibly might, yet were it altogether halting and lame. Yea and there may be also some infirmity that may pollute even very good works indeed.

For was there ever a better work than that of Abram, when he was ready to kill his own son? And yet notwithstanding, his heart was touched with many sorrows and griefs, which showed his

weakness. Thus then we see that this work was polluted before God and could not be reputed to be any merit. What shall we say then to that which we do, considering that none of us all but is soon stayed when as we shall once be spoken unto to go that way? And although we would gladly employ ourselves to serve God faithfully, yet go we not so rightly and soundly on as we should, by the hundredth part. And must we needs be continually vexed and unquiet? Yea verily, and we all know it, without we will be too, too blind.

Now as I have already said, we must assure ourselves that God loves us, receives, and accepts of us, as if we were righteous. And from whom have we this privilege? We must come to that saying of Saint Paul to the Romans: which is, we must look upon our Lord Jesus Christ. For when our salvation is spoken of, and then behold the glorious heaven, we are by and by on the one side, astonished and amazed thereat because we are not worthy once to come near it. And besides, we see on the other side, hell standing wide open before us to swallow us up, because we are horrible wretched sinners. And then will we say, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" For it is impossible that we should come there: for where are our wings to fly up thither? And besides, as I have already said, hell stands gaping wide open ready to receive us: if so be that he will give judgment against us: and then we will say, how know we that we are pardoned and forgiven, but that God may very well throw us down headlong into the bottomless pit of hell? Now hereupon Saint Paul answers and sets down the remedy, which is this, that we must not doubt but that heaven is ours. And how shall we be sure of that? Forsooth, because that in the person of Jesus Christ we know it to be set wide open for us.

And therefore the asking of this question doubtfully, "Who shall ascend into Heaven?" Saint Paul says, is to fetch Jesus Christ down from thence. For we know that the Son of God has said, "That there are many Mansions in his father's house, and that he has not taken them for his own particular benefit, but to the end to receive us together unto himself, as fellow heirs with him." As concerning hell, he descended into it: for he suffered the torments and pains which we should have suffered, he suffered the horrible torments of God's

wrathful curse, which made him cry out and say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Even so then when as we make our salvation certain, then we may see that we are assured. And that also is his meaning where he says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's chosen?" He is angry with Satan and with whatever is against us, as if he would have said, seeing that we have forsaken all our arrogancy, and have no such imagination as once to think that we can bring anything of our own with us unto God to make us acceptable, considering that we know that it is of his own free mercy and goodness that he has chosen us, as also called us unto himself by the Gospel, let the devil with all his supposes accuse us as much as they lust, yet will he justify and pardon us: and how? Forsooth, says he, behold how our Lord Jesus Christ makes intercession for us, and by the power and virtue of this prayer, forasmuch as he is our Advocate for the appeasing of the wrath of God his Father, by this we see how we are pardoned. And this is the certainty whereof he speaks in another place, as we have already said. This also is showed unto us in the person of the poor publican, that is to say, of the tax collector whom the people scorned when he came unto God to pray. He came not unto him after a bragging sort, howbeit, he verily believed that God would have mercy upon him: and therein he was bold as we all also must be, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians it is said.

But when he looked towards him, he humbled himself, and was ashamed, craving nothing but pardon: and Jesus Christ said that he was justified even with that only speech. And we see that the Pharisee was rejected because he so foolishly presumed of his works. And the Publican, who plainly and simply confessed himself to be a miserable sinner and so wretched and damned a soul, departed justified before God. Yet notwithstanding, the Pharisee commended not himself by reason of his merits, for he said not, "I have done this, and I have done that, and therefore God is beholden unto me for them," but said only thus, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, an extortioner, unjust, a thief, nor an adulterer, nor as this Publican."

A man would think this to be a jolly entrance when as he submitted himself wholly unto God, and protested that whatever goodness and virtue was in him proceeded from the mere gift of the Holy Ghost. But what of all this? Yet was he so proudly and arrogantly puffed up, as that he thought himself to be allowed and liked of for his works. And therefore we see why God condemned him: for it could not be chosen but that he was exceeding blockish to think that God was bound unto him for his works. Wherefore we must all fly unto the mere mercy of God, and then, I say, we shall be assured that he will love us, when as we shall look for all our merits in Jesus Christ, never ceasing to pray unto him notwithstanding our great unworthiness, because he has not adopted us, either for our persons or yet for our works, but of his mere and free mercy: thus we see how we shall be assured of our salvation.

True it is that we shall always be full of scruples and doubts, by reason that our faith is not perfect in us: but yet our assurance shall always surmount, so long as we fight stoutly and embrace the promises of God, and make them a buckler and defense against all the temptations and distrusters, which the devil shall set before us. When then we speak of this certainty of faith, we mean not but that it may be shaken, and we many times be greatly perplexed and distressed: but our meaning is that we may in the end conclude however it fall out, that God will have mercy upon us, and so upon this assuredness pray unto him. And this is it which we are now to keep in mind.

We easily see then by this that they who have taken this word "Justify" to be said that God changes us and governs us by his holy spirit to serve God, are too, too much abused: for there are many that will say that we are not justified by our merits, neither yet that there is any one iota in us wherein to glory, and that whatever goodness is in us comes from the free gift of God because that of ourselves we can do nothing else but sin: all this they will confess, and will in sum say that we are justified by mere grace and not by our works, and that there is no goodness in us, but that God gives all: have they confessed all this? Yea, verily: and yet they still go about to overthrow both themselves and others. And how so? Forsooth,

because they think that they have attained unto perfection, when as in very deed, there is nothing else in them but imperfection.

For where shall we find a man that when he shall be thus cast down in himself, as to be nobody as it were, and confess himself to be altogether accursed, and whatever goodness is in him to come of God's own mere liberality, so as God is therefore to be exalted and magnified, and himself to be nothing, to the end he might acknowledge and humble himself unto God and say that all which he has, he receives from his mere goodness? Yea, but we have already said that if we be doubting, then are heaven gates shut up against us. Now we cannot choose but doubt, or else be stark-staring mad when as we regard our own works. Admit that God by his holy spirit has regenerated a man, and does only thank God as the Pharisee did, and say, "Surely all that I have I have from God," and yet notwithstanding when he prays, he must pray confidently and in full assurance. And how shall he do that? For whilst he is yet imperfect and weak, the virtues which God has bestowed upon him shall be mingled with many vices: yea, and these virtues also shall be corrupt, because I say, he shall not be fully cleansed of the spots of the flesh. When a man shall find himself thus, as a man would say, half seas over, and yet be far from the end and mark whether he would go, how can he otherwise do but doubt?

Let us therefore now conclude that it is nothing to confess and say that our salvation proceeded from the mere grace and favor of God because he governs us with his holy spirit, but that we must fly unto the remission of our sins. And so they that play the wrangling sophisters herein, saying that we are not justified by our works because the good works are not ours, but the gifts of the Holy Ghost, forget that point which we erst touched, that is to say, that our faith must be certain, and that it cannot be certain except Jesus Christ be our advocate, and his death a satisfaction for our sins, so as we cannot do it without we confess the debt, as by the example of the publican which we have alleged may be seen. And we see also that this righteousness must not be for a day only but must continue all the days of our lives.

For although we have profited by serving God, yet for all that it has been in imperfection. And therefore it is plain faith that must justify us. And here must be put to the wall and overthrown that foolish and perverse opinion of the Papists, who think themselves to be partly justified by their works, and partly by the forgiveness which they obtain by the grace of God: for God must fully and wholly be merciful unto us, as has been showed. And why so? For part of our works merit nothing: and besides, there is corruption even in the very best work we do if we shall speak of judging of it according to the worthiness thereof. And therefore we see that we are fully and wholly excluded. Wherefore we must grow to this point, that the most righteous, although they seem as righteous as the angels, yet must they be accepted of God freely.

But here may arise an objection in this sort: why, sir? There is a great difference between those whom God has already called and those who are altogether estranged from him, and also there is great diversity between the faithful man when as God has set him in the right way, and when he leaves him unto the corruption of his own nature. For we shall see some man to have lived a long time like a strayed sheep and castaway: and at last, God enlightens him by his Gospel, and so touches and reforms him, as that a man shall see him, as the scripture speaks, to become a new creature. And without doubt, we can never be said to be right Christians without we be after that manner renewed and be made the workmanship of God created in our Lord Jesus Christ: to do the works which God has prepared: all this, I say, must be in it. But herein may seem to be some absurdity.

God justified the thief that was hanged because he acknowledged his salvation to be in Jesus Christ: and when he was justified, had he none other quality in him than he had before? Yes, verily. Why then say we that free righteousness has her course all our life long? In deed, a faithful man will at the least be well affected to hold himself within the compass of God's obedience, he will be displeased with his sins, yea, groan and grieve for them, and his chief desire will be to frame his life according to the law. Now when a faithful man is come to this, we must not say that he is justified as he was at the

first, because he was then a dissolute man and altogether estranged from God. To this we answer, when God at the first justifies us, that is to say, when he has mercy upon us, and plucks us out from that condemnation wherein we were, he uses then a general pardon: and then when he justifies us afterward, he then acknowledges the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, and avows and allows them, for he cannot deny himself: and when he governs us by his holy spirit, although sin dwells in us, yet reigns it not in us, as it is written, "Although we do not the good which we would, yet we strive to do it." And therefore God allows and likes of that because it comes from him: but here we are to note that he justifies us both in our persons and also in our works by faith only. For when he receives us at the first, he cannot justify any works that are in us. And why so? Because they are all wicked. For as we have already said, what fruit can a rotten tree bring forth? And therefore when God draws unto him miserable sinners that are banished and cast out of his kingdom and Church, he does not justify their works: but beholding their miseries and having compassion of their perdition, lo, for that cause he justifies them.

Now after that he has received them, he justifies them in their persons, that is to say, he accepts them as his children, and after that, he justifies their works: and how does he do that? Forsooth, not by calling them to an account, nor judging them rigorously: for there will be always, as I have said, some corruption amongst, or else some slips and by slidings and such like things which will mar all. For if a man puts the best wine in the world into an unsavory hogshead, or into a fusty bottle, the wine will be all marred. Even so fares it with all our works: for so long as God guides and governs us by his holy spirit, they are good, holy, and commendable: but mark what vessels we are, surely very filthy and corrupt. Even so are our works, and therefore God must purge and cleanse them. And how is that? Verily even by his grace in pardoning the faults and imperfections which are in them.

Wherefore even as there is diversity between a faithful man, and whom God calls at the beginning unto the Gospel, so also is there some diversity in justification. But it alters not in this behalf, that is,

that God always justifies his freely, that is to say, that he accepts them, not for any virtues that are in themselves, for there is none at all in them, neither yet for those which he has bestowed upon them: for they are to be condemned by reason of the infirmity that is in them. But because as Saint Paul says, "That those whom he has chosen he has justified." Here then we see in sum, what we are to retain as touching the motion of this question.

Now we are to note, that over and besides the thing which the Papists imagine, that we may partly obtain to be righteous, they are too grossly deceived, basically deceived in their satisfactions, and blind also, I say, in this they are, to think themselves to have certain virtues, which God ought to allow and like of. But in very deed they are ashamed to say that their works do merit, but that they carry some likelihood with them: for, say they, although they do not perfectly merit, yet is it meet that God who is just, should accept of that good which they do. Yea but they are so far blinded in their righteousness, as that they understand not their sins, as we have already said: Again, they are secondly deceived, because they think themselves able to acquit themselves by their satisfactions. I will here forbear to speak what their satisfactions are, because they are most foolish, whereby they do nothing else but provoke the heavy wrath of God against them, thinking to pay him with filthy toys and trifles, to wit, with superstitions devised of their own brain: for what satisfactions can we make, to deliver us from the judgment of God? And what is the committing of one sin worth of? Truly we think that when we have violated the righteousness of God, and have paid some small portion for it, that we have done enough. Must we not think that Satan wholly possesses us, when as we become thus arrogant?

Now this is the greatest part of Popish doctrine, to be pardoned when as we have deserved rather to be punished. And this proceeds hence, because they think they should be justified by their works: and therefore they say, that this is but conjectural, for they cannot choose but see, that if we examine ourselves, we shall come short in the end, neither can we have that which is requisite for the making up of our accounts before God, to say that we are discharged. But

over and besides this conjecture, they have another foolish toy in their heads, which is this: why say they, if it were true that God favored us today, it may be that he would not do so tomorrow. Now they never think that faith is always accompanied with hope, and that hope extends itself both in life and death. And we see also besides, that there is a far greater fault, and that is, they never look unto the last article of death, whereof we will speak (God willing) hereafter. And therefore we will at this time go on with what we have begun, which is, they think to satisfy and appease God, when as they bring with them some recompense for the sins and iniquities which they have committed. Wherein they rob God of his honor: for, if it were so, then he alone were not sufficient to reconcile us unto God his father. Now it is not without cause that he is called our ransom: for he made himself our surety upon this condition, that he took upon him to pay our debts fully and wholly. And therefore whoever will now take upon him to pay God, usurps the office of Jesus Christ, which is a most abominable abuse. And yet the Papists build their salvation hereon. But for all this they cavil and say, that although our Lord Jesus Christ has obtained pardon as well for the sin as for the punishment thereof, yet notwithstanding that this is reserved: although they manifestly gainsay themselves. For on the other side they say, that our Lord Jesus Christ has not merited for us, but is the occasion of merit. Now as I have already said, they will say that we are by nature so ill and so exceedingly wicked, as that we can do nothing which God will accept: but say that when Jesus Christ goes before, he gives us the occasion of merit, and this they call the first merit, so that they give unto him some little goblet or small portion, and to ourselves the chief. Now if it be so that Jesus Christ has only merited the occasion of merit, that is to say, that we must by him come to heaven, it must needs follow that we shall be always bound unto God as well for the punishment as for the sin. And this is an enormous abomination, when as the Papists will presume thus to discharge themselves before God with their satisfactions.

And besides, as one mischief draws on another, even so thrust they themselves into a most wearisome labyrinth: for they know well enough that if we strained ourselves to do a hundred times

more than we are able, yet could we in no wise content and satisfy God for our sins. And why so? Because we come so short in doing that we should, as is most fearful. And David says, "What man is he that knows his sins." And therefore although we should take never so much pain to make satisfaction, yet shall the Papists be enforced to say that we are never able to come to the end of them. Yet is there also a third error amongst them, to wit, their indulgences and pardons of full remission, for the pardoning of their sins, that will buy them. And yet they think it not enough that they have these indulgences, but must also have their purgatory to make up their mouth withal for altogether, so as they are so mashed in errors as that they cannot tell how to wind themselves out of them. For seeing they have all at once strayed from the pure simplicity of the holy scripture, the devil has so possessed and entrapped them within such nets and snares, as that they can never get out of them. Wherefore we must so much the more diligently hearken unto this doctrine which excludes all satisfactions, and sends us to our Lord Jesus Christ, to find that in him which is wanting in us.

Moreover, we are to note for the better understanding of this point, what it is to be saved by the mere grace of God, and for faith to be imputed unto us for righteousness, and that cannot be understood until we lie at the point of death: for when as the Papists speak of their merits, satisfactions, and indulgences, they may prattle and jangle as it pleases them: but when hypocrites shall be so drunken and hard-hearted against God, as to be made to believe marvels and wonders all their life long, the devil soon after removes them with a witness, when as they must in good earnest come before the judge. For we see how blockish we are, and so long as it pleases God to grant us life, we imagine him to be such a one as pleases ourselves, and transfigure him as we lust: but when we must depart this life, and come before his judgment seat, at whom the Angels themselves are afraid and tremble, Alas, how shall we, most miserable mortal creatures, do in this case. And therefore when we speak of this certainty of faith, the question is not of our entrance into the Church of God only, but our hope must be invincible, to fight against all the temptations of Satan, but especially when we

must come to answer before God, we must then stand firm and sure against all the fears wherewith we may be stirred and driven unto. And this is no speculative doctrine, but a doctrine of practice. True it is, that the holy scripture must instruct us, but no longer than until such time as God has in very deed assigned us a day, and our consciences bound to appear to hear the sentence of the heavenly judge. No doubt of it, we will make but a sport in reasoning of this matter. But the practice thereof, as I have already said, will teach us another manner of lesson, what it is, that is to say, we must wholly flee unto the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and understanding that he is our Advocate, we may assure ourselves that God will not enter into judgment with us. And why so? Because we are pardoned not according to the draught of our indictment, but by putting away all our sins and iniquities. And this is it which we are to remember concerning this point.

It should seem now that we cannot be wholly righteous, if our righteousness consists only of faith: for our faith, as we have already said, will always be weak so long as we live here. And therefore how is it possible that we should be fully righteous before God? For the effect cannot be above the cause. For if we had but half a Sun, we should not have so much light as we have; and therefore we must have a whole Sun, that the beams thereof might spread itself all the world over. Wherefore when faith is thus weak in us, it should seem that we were but partly acceptable unto God, and so contrariwise, that he liked us not: howbeit we are here to note, that we are not justified by the power and virtue of faith; neither must we think it to be so perfect, as to say that our salvation is perfect thereby. For, to speak properly, it is God alone that justifies us, as out of the eighth of the Romans we have heard. And this is that justification whereof Saint John speaks in his third Chapter, to wit, "That God so loved the world, as that he spared not his only begotten Son, to the end that so many as should believe in him should not perish, but should pass from death to life." Thus we see to speak properly, that it is GOD alone which justifies us: agreeing with that saying of Saint Paul in the fifth Chapter of the second to the Corinthians, saying, "That God appeared in Jesus Christ, in reconciling the world unto himself, not

imputing their sins unto them, because that Jesus Christ who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we should be made the righteousness of God in him." Here we see that Saint Paul in the first place shows, how God justifies us, that is, that he imputes not unto us our sins.

And thus much touching the definition of the word. And yet we are taught that it is the proper office of God to justify us. For he says that he was in Jesus Christ in reconciling the world unto himself, and besides, he is our righteousness, that is to say, he allows and likes us: why then is it said that faith justifies? Forsooth, even this way: for if we did look unto the principal cause, and sought out who is the Author of our salvation, we would still say that GOD of his mere goodness justifies us because he has mercy upon us, imputes not our sins, but pardons us. Now it is Jesus Christ also that for his part justifies us because he is the very true matter of our justification. Where then must we seek after it? In the washing of his blood which he shed for us, in the sacrifice which he offered for the recompense of our sins, in that he rendered full obedience, in such sort, as that all our offenses are buried and blotted out, because he was sanctified for us, as in the seventeenth of Saint John it is said. Thus then we see, after what manner and degree Jesus Christ justifies us. Now in that it is said, that faith justifies us, it is not by reason of the power and virtue that is in it, or for any worthiness that it has.

And herein it is that the Papists are deceived: for they make a comparison between faith and works and say, how is it that faith justifies more than love? For Saint Paul says, "That Love is greater than Faith." True it is, that they mistake this place: but admit that love were more worthy than faith. For we do not now speak about such trifling toys, as to say that he were worthy to be the greatest king in the world, that could manure and dress the ground as well as any husbandman or vine-dresser. And even so fares it with faith, for, it justifies us not as I have already said, for any excellency that is in itself, but because it borrows that of Jesus Christ which is wanting in us. And therefore is it that Saint Paul says, "That the righteousness of faith overthrows and makes void all the righteousness of works,

and whatsoever worldly glory else." And therefore the Papists are herein too blockish, and we for our parts are so much the rather to rest upon this point which we have already spoken of, that is to say, that we are justified by faith, to wit, that the way to make us to be acceptable unto God is, to have us lay open a ready way unto our Lord Jesus Christ, that thereby he may apply his righteousness unto ourselves.

Here we see then, that faith is the only means and instrument: but that God is the cause and author, and that all praise belongs unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the right and true matter and substance thereof. And this is it that we are here to remember. And consequently, we see also that the Papists do too foolishly cavil to say that faith itself is a work, and that if we be justified by faith, that then works are not excluded. And to prove their matter withal, they allege that which is written in the sixth of Saint John, "This is the work that God requires of you, that you believe in his only Son." Now Jesus in this place calls faith a work, as if he should have said, you see whereat you must aim and apply your whole study: for the question is not that the work should merit. And besides, if we did confess that faith were a work, which indeed it is not, yet justifies it not as a work done by us: for if I give alms and pretend thereby to merit before God, see how I should be justified by my works: if I help my neighbor and travel to do good unto this man or unto that, as they shall have need: See how I should be justified by my works. Now the reason is clean contrary in faith: for in confessing that we are all accursed, and that by faith we receive that which God offers unto us, we bring nothing with us on our behalf, but come empty-fisted unto him. Faith then justifies, not by bringing any worthiness or merit with it unto God, but because God receives from Jesus Christ that which he presents unto him in our name.

And this confession must go before, that there is nothing in them which keep such a course, that is to say, to demand righteousness at God's hands, whereof they are utterly void. And therefore we see that the Papists herein deal very foolishly, to say that we are justified by a work, if so be we be justified by faith. Now faith is a sacrifice wherewith God is pleased because he is thereby honored,

and praise and thanks rendered unto him, who is only just and good: and yet are we not justified by the power and virtue thereof. To be short, when God justifies us by faith, there is in this justifying enclosed the grace which he bestows upon us, because he will not see and behold the infirmity which is in our faith.

Faith then justifies, but yet as it is defective and imperfect, and yet therein it justifies. How can that be, being defective and imperfect? Yes, well enough: for as I have already said, it is not required at the hand of faith to do any such thing, as having power of itself to justify, but receives simply that which is given it to do it, from God. And therefore if we have but the least spark of faith as a man would say, with this conclusion, that there is no life in us but that which we have in Jesus Christ: and that all fullness is in him, from whom we draw that which we have, and wherewith we are filled, without all doubt, we have then enough. Wherefore let us learn so to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, as that whenever we shall stand in doubt, we yet never cease to submit ourselves unto his mercy which can never fail, and continually fly unto him, knowing right well that all perfection of righteousness is in him, and is such also as that we shall be made partakers thereof, and that although we had but the least drop of faith as Saint Paul says, and were environed and laden with this huge heap of corruption and sin that is in us, which brings nothing else with it but death, yet if Jesus Christ be in us, there is life: that is to say, the rest of the infirmities and corruption of our flesh, and whatever else that may hinder our salvation, shall all be abolished by the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ; if we have never so little a portion, we shall be sure to live forever.

Let us now prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, acknowledging our sins, beseeching him to make us feel the power and virtue which he has given unto his only Son, that we might thereby be drawn and wholly cleave unto him. And that we may learn to be gathered together under the confidence which he has given us in him, fighting against all our infirmities, and in the meanwhile, that all presumption and pride be cast down in us, and that there remain nothing else in us, but to confess that as he is just,

so also that it belongs to him to pour out his righteousness upon us, to the end we may enjoy the fruit which proceeds thereof, to wit, the inheritance of the heavenly life. And that he will not only, etc.

THE FOURTH Sermon of Justification.

Genesis 15:6–7

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he counted that unto him for righteousness.

7 Again he said unto him, "I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it."

WE said yesterday that when God had once received the faithful into his grace and favor, that he acknowledged and makes known also that which he bestows upon them. For by faith we receive the Holy Spirit, because Jesus Christ cannot be separated from it. And therefore we must needs be renewed when we believe God, because we apprehend his power, which he offers unto us to communicate with us in his Son. Now God cannot set light by and reject his own gifts: wherefore he must accept these works which he gives us, not that they are worthy as we have already said: because there is always some infirmity to corrupt them, as that they are unworthy either to be accounted of or received. And although God should find fault and reject whatever good that we are able to think or do, yet could we in no wise accuse him of cruelty. And why so? Forsooth, because they may be always amended: and yet does he accept of that which is not worthy of acceptance, all because he acknowledges us as his children, and also upholds us as by his Prophet is said. If then we ask why God allows of our weak affection in serving him? It is because he bears with us and would not have us marked as mercenary and hired men, but content himself to see us serve him frankly and freely, none otherwise than as a natural father requires at the hands of his child. For although a child shall mar that which his father sets him to do, yet is the father glad when he has seen that indeed his meaning was to do it well. Even so fares it with our good God, who bearing a fatherly love unto us, forgets whatever defect is in our works and will not call them to account.

Here (I say) we see in sum how that over and besides our persons we are justified also by what we do, that is to say, that God accepts both of ourselves and of our works also as righteous. And let us also see from whence this word "Reward" whereof the Scripture so often speaks proceeds: For God shows not only in the law but also in the Gospel, that they who serve him faithfully shall not lose their labor, nor be frustrated of their hope. And why so? Verily because their Reward is surely laid up in heaven. But how can this agree with that which we have already said? That is, that if our works justify us, then must faith and the promises (as Saint Paul says) be of none effect. Now we shall see them agree right well together when one of them shall depend upon another: But if we shall on the one side put our works in one balance, and the grace of God in another, without doubt we shall find great contrariety. Nevertheless, when we say that God has mercy upon us because we are sinners, and that when he has regenerated us by his Holy Spirit, that he allows and likes the good which he has put in us, albeit it be nothing in respect of the ill that remains. When we shall speak after this manner, it is as much as if we should say that first God is merciful unto us and does not impute unto us our sins and iniquities but adopts us who were lost and damned souls, to be his children. And in the second place, it is said that he justifies us also by our works, and that because he is merciful and will not judge us rigorously, neither regards them what they are, to esteem of them as worthy or meritorious: But deals in this behalf as a natural loving father does. And herein I say, is no repugnance.

And so although our Savior Jesus Christ says that he came to call sinners and not the righteous, and although Saint Paul also says that he came to call sinners to salvation, and that it is not for any works that we have done that the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven is prepared for us, but because he is loving and kind unto us, and is disposed to bestow his infinite goodness upon us: and yet for all this, we receive reward; that is to say, that when we have served God, we shall be rewarded, as oftentimes it is said in the holy Scripture. Thus we see that after this sort these two places which seem to be repugnant one to another agree very well together, that is, that by

Faith we are imputed righteous, and that the zeal which Phinehas had in maintaining the honor of God and purging the Sanctuary which was polluted, was imputed unto him for righteousness. Here we see when Phinehas the Priest saw so infamous and detestable an act to be committed by an Adulterer and an Adulteress in the Sanctuary as could not be greater, and such a villainy as the like was never heard of in Israel, that the Lord so armed him as that he slew them both: and it is said that it was imputed unto him for righteousness. Now this was a virtuous work: and therefore should seem that he was not justified by faith; but yet as I have already said, this may very well hang together. For Phinehas was the son of Abraham, and therefore God must be merciful unto him as well as unto the rest. But because that God helped him, and was reconciled unto him by that grace which he bestows upon all his chosen, even under the old Testament, we see that God reputed it as a righteous work. And how so? Verily that forasmuch as there was some imperfection and weakness in him, therefore must God as I have already said, support him.

Let us also hear what Saint Paul says, which is this, that we must labor powerfully to serve God, for the hope's sake which is laid up for us in heaven, of which hope we have heard before in the word of truth of the Gospel, where Saint Paul shows that the faithful more courageously and vehemently go on to serve and honor God, and give themselves to be charitable; because they right well know that they shall not lose their labor, as it is written. Yea, but how know they that? Forsooth by the testimony of the Gospel. Now what are the words of the Gospel? Verily, that God will be merciful unto us, if so we believe in his only Son: For the righteousness which is there offered us, as Saint Paul says, has borne witness of the law: But is not helped by the law: that is to say, by whatever works we are able to do. But because we are grounded on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: This Text then shows us that the faithful may be a great deal better and more earnestly disposed to serve God, because they know that their pains shall be accepted: And yet notwithstanding they rest themselves upon this free goodness which is promised them, because they fly unto our Savior Jesus Christ. Here we see how

grossly the Papists are deceived. For from this word "Reward," they draw the word "Merit," as if they would play the Alchemists. Now there is a great difference between the one and the other: For what imports this word Merit. To Merit, is to make God bound unto us, that we might say, I have well deserved this thing or that; I am worthy of it: And he who does not acknowledge the Merit, is unthankful, if he discharge his duty unto him, unto whom he is bound and beholden. If we could then deserve anything at God's hands, it must needs follow, that he for his part should be beholden unto us, and do us wrong if he paid us not that which he ought us. True it is that he is our debtor; but a voluntary debtor: For he shall never find anything in us why he should be beholden unto us; but binds himself by his promises. Now in very deed he has promised us Reward, but it is of his own free gift, and of no desert of ours: for that were to come from a post to a pudding-prick, to go so from one to another, and to conclude that these two words are all one, where there is so great diversity.

Wherefore let us not marvel though the Papists still conclude their Arguments thus, and storm when we say, That works cannot justify us. For their supposal is false, that is to say, that if GOD rewards those that are his, that therefore he is bound to do it, and that they are also worthy of it, and that their works import some Merit; Now all this is not worth a straw. The reason I have already showed, to wit, that when God promises us Reward it is not because that we are worthy thereof, but because it pleases him to add grace unto grace, and all of his mere mercy, goodness and liberality. Now we are always to keep this in mind: and in very deed what should we look for at his hands, if we had nothing but that that we deserve? Assuredly, we should be driven to that inquietness whereof we erst spoke, that we should always be in doubt and perplexed. And therefore our faith must be certain. And this is that in sum which here we are to remember.

Let us now come unto the words of Saint James, who seems to be contrary unto Saint Paul and all the rest of the holy Scriptures, as we have already spoken: For Saint James says, That we are not justified by faith, but by works. A man would think that there could not be

found two places more contrary one to the other, as to say, That we are justified by faith only, without works, and that we are justified by works, and not by faith, and yet notwithstanding it is most certain that Saint James, who spoke by the spirit of God, gainsaid not the doctrine which was preached and published from the beginning in the Church, ratified by the Prophets, and which has been lastly more notably confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by his Apostles. Howbeit the solution is very easy, when as we shall look into the drift and meaning of Saint James: For he reasons not there what true faith may do, neither does he speak at all of true faith, but of a counterfeit faith, and such as is but like unto an image and an illusion. For he reasons there against such as under the color of Christianity will take liberty to do all wickedness, as at this day there are too many. And besides, the devil does so bestir himself to blind us, as he would make us believe that all our sins are forgiven us, and so under the name of Christianity would make us become very brutish, and thereby pervert all. And to bring also the doctrine of the Gospel and professors into a slander, to the end also it might be thought, that the doctrine of the Gospel did overthrow good works, and would not have us worship and serve God, as the Papists at this day despitefully reproach us therewithal. Wherefore Saint James, seeing many dissolute and profane people thus falsely abuse the name of the Gospel, and pretended the name Faith: He says, well, Let me see thy faith without works, and I will show thee my faith by my works: whereby he sufficiently shows that his meaning was not to speak of such a faith as we have defined: that is; that we should be certain and sure of the goodness of God by his word, and know him to be our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now Saint James speaks not of such a faith as this is; and that which is not such a one, cannot bring forth works. We have already said; that by faith we receive the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he and his spirit cannot be separated. And we know that it is said, That it is not given unto us only for righteousness, but for sanctification also: that is to say; that we might be purged of all the filthy lusts of our flesh, That we might be made like unto the righteousness of God. So then if Saint James had spoken of this true faith, it had been great folly for

him to have said, Show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee my faith by my works: as if he would have said; that true faith is so conjoined with good works, as without them it is dead, to wit; it is no faith, as afterward he says. And therefore Saint James right well shows that he spoke not of a faith which embraces the promises of God, and by which we are certified of our salvation.

And herein the Papists do grossly abuse themselves, to forge unto themselves a faith, which they call unformed; that is to say, without figure or shape, and say; that faith of itself is as it were but like a piece of earth or clay which a man should take to daub withal. Here you see (say they) what faith is. And besides, they say, that when Charity is conjoined thereto, then it is like a pot that is made of the same piece or lump of earth, which before had no form or fashion. Thus we see what a jolly imagination the Papists have, whereby they declare that they know not what faith is: For it is an absolute and singular gift of God. And after it is said. That we receive the spirit of adoption, by which he so renews and also incorporates us into our Lord Jesus Christ, as that we are made members of his body, and withal new creatures. We see then that the Papists know not these things, neither yet understand the principles and rudiments of Christianity no more than brute beasts without sense. And what a fearful thing is this that they do nothing else but brag of these things: And yet they think themselves to be the greatest divines in the world, when as they have made a distinction forsooth; between unformed and formed faith: which is as much as if they had said; a God in whom is no power nor virtue, & then a God who shows himself powerful and just. And thus have they forged unto themselves a double faith.

And why then does Saint James use here this word? And why do we use this word, Church? This word Bishop? this saying God's service? Devotion, & Zeal? But when we speak of the Papists, we never yield unto them in truth that they have any church which is to be obeyed: For indeed they have nothing but some ruins of a Church, and a certain canvassing and tossing of service of their own devising, and (as they thought) to serve God withal. But that is the Church where God dwells by his word. Afterward, when we speak of

them, we use honorable words, and yet our meaning is none other, but that they usurp these titles with jolly shows & marks. Howbeit we do not altogether stand upon words. And after this manner deals Saint James: for he stands not upon the word, but takes upon him to speak of the frivolous vaunting which was in the mouth of these scoffers that would be taken for good Christians, & says, your faith; that is to say: that faith which you talk of is nothing: As if we should ask the question at this day: what is the Catholic Church which the Papists so brag of? Surely it is a very harlot. For we know that the true Church is the spouse of our Savior Jesus Christ, which ought to be purged and washed with his blood, that she might be as Saint Paul says without spot or wrinkle, and after that to be the pillar of truth: And in stead hereof; behold a den of the eves, and an harlot which has corrupted all the service of God, and begot nothing but Bastards. Thus should we say, and then we see that we should not think Saint James his phrase of reasoning to be strange, because it is an ordinary and common thing amongst us. We now then first see, that when it is said that Faith justifies us, we speak not of Faith but after the accustomed manner.

But when Saint James says that faith without works is dead, it is to bar such as abuse this name and have a jollity to brag and glory thereof: but indeed have it not. Let us come now to the second part, when Saint James says that we are justified by our works, it should by this seem that he is contrary unto Saint Paul. Now works must not be joined with faith to part half stakes with it, as we have already said: For if that were so, then we should never be certain and sure. And therefore all consideration of our works must needs be excluded, or the calling upon God with true confidence, to be taken for his children, to hope for the inheritance of the heavenly life which is promised us, works must needs be laid aside; for what were it if works justified. Now this word Justify is not taken in Saint James to be approved before God, to reconcile us unto him, and to make him receive us as his children. How is it then taken? Even as himself declares it without any other exposition. For he adds that Abram was justified when he went about to offer up in sacrifice his son Isaac. Now we never yet read that he sacrificed him, to wit, that

he meant to make a sacrifice of his son unto God: what meant he then? Forsooth this, obedience, whereof we shall hereafter speak, was it that justified Abram. If we did speak of the approving of that which he had at that time done, and was yet not indeed done.

We must therefore conclude that Saint James speaks not in that place, how we are acceptable unto God; but how we are made righteous. For what a blockish speech were this to say that the son had begotten the Father. Now we right well know that faith is the mother of righteousness, that is to say, that it is the means and instrument by which we are reconciled unto God, and allowed for his children. And therefore faith must go before righteousness: for it is the means cause, the instrumental or formal cause as we call it.

Let us now come unto the obedience of Abram when he was ready to sacrifice his son: for if that be the cause of Abram his righteousness, it must needs be that it went before: For what a doltish speech were this, to say, that the corn that shall grow a year hence shall feed me from this day until this time twelve months. Now there is not the least child in the world which sees not this. Now, there was a long time part before God commanded Abram to sacrifice his son, and yet was he justified before. We see then, in sum, that we need not to look for any gloss out of Saint James his words; he says, that he was justified, that is to say, that he was showed to be justified: For these Scoffers against whom he contends said, we are justified by faith, and therefore what need we to take any great care to serve God, seeing our works are of no worth, neither any reckoning be made of them in time to come. Now first and foremost they pervert all in saying, that there shall be no reckoning made of works: For they shall come in account with the grace of God. But when they shall scoffingly say, that it is to no purpose to do good works, is as much as if they would tear Jesus Christ in pieces. For by faith we receive him, and are united unto him with this condition, that he reconciles us unto his father, puts away our sins, and regenerates and governs us by his holy spirit. And these are inseparable things as we have alleged out of Saint Paul. Seeing then it is so, Saint James had good cause to say, how can you be justified without works? For Faith (says he) without works is

dead. And besides, if you be the faithful children of God, you can be none otherwise justified than your father Abram was. Now Abram was so justified as that good works were joined with Faith; And therefore you must show yourselves like unto him, or else you mock God, in profaning so holy and sacred a thing as the name of faith and righteousness is. Here we see Saint James his meaning out of this Text: But these Popish mastiff Curs can no whit skill of this, and what is the reason? Verily because they condemn God: howbeit you shall hear them with open mouth talk of good works, and a man would think, to hear them debate thereof, that they were Angels, and yet you may see what they are. And I would to God that the whole state of their life were not altogether dissolute; for a man shall find neither Monk nor Friar, Doctor, nor yet any of that shorn Rabble, but they are either reprobates, scornors of God, whoremongers, drunkards, blasphemers: To be short, it should seem that they had conspired with the Devil to bring the whole world unto confusion. And yet for all this they will pretend good works, and speak of nothing else.

And therefore it is no marvel although they be so blind. But to speak but a word of that which we have explained out of Saint James we are to note, that we are justified but not without works, & yet we are justified without works: when we say that we are justified, but not without works, we separate not this. And how so? verily, because that he who is justified before God by faith, is as much to say; that God forgives him his sins; believes in the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and knows that by his resurrection, he receives life from him. So then, whoever believes after this sort, is not justified without works. And why? Because that God bestows his holy spirit upon him, which so reforms him, as that good works cannot be chosen but be joined together with faith. And yet is the other saying also true, to wit, that we are justified without works; that is to say, without any help of good works, so as we always remain bound unto God. Here we see two places without altering the words: wherein it should seem they were altogether diverse and sundry, as to say, that we are justified without works, & that we are not justified without works, howbeit the meaning is, that

works are not for all this the cause of our salvation, as to make them merit any whit before God, so as to accept us according to our worthiness.

But it is because that as I have already said, our Savior Jesus Christ bears us not only a simple grace and favor, but a double, that is to say: that on the one side he covers all our iniquities and offenses through his pure obedience, and appeases the wrath of God his father by that Sacrifice which he offered up once for all, to make satisfaction for our sins: And yet he so rules and governs us in the meantime by his holy spirit whom he has received in all fullness and rests upon him, that if so be we do not abuse his grace bestowed upon us, we are freed from the bands of Satan, that we might take good heed as (S. Peter says) not to follow the lusts and desires of the flesh. This then we see may suffice for the exposition of this place.

Now Moses adds immediately following, that God spoke again to Abram, and said: "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this Land to inherit it." Here we see that God reiterates his promises for the confirming, nourishing, and increasing of Abram his faith until such time as it was grown unto a full perfection. Whereupon we are to conclude, that although Abram was the mirror and pattern of all the faithful, and the very image of righteousness, yet was his faith imperfect: For else the promise that is here set down were superfluous. For if the faith of Abram was so thoroughly confirmed as that it could not be amended; God needed not to have spoken any more.

And why so? The promises have this use and benefit that they draw us unto faith, and when we have gotten it, they are to lead us to the right way, to encourage and stir us up to go on valiantly, to refresh us when we are almost weary, to augment our virtue when it begins to fail and to be weak. Here (I say) we see why our Savior Jesus Christ testifies & declares unto us of his mere goodness that he is our God: that is, to begin faith in us; or else to bring it to perfection. And therefore we must conclude that it was needful for Abram to go somewhat further. And hereby we see that although our faith be imperfect, yet that God ceases not to justify us. And what is the reason? Because he imputes not the infirmity that is in it

unto us: but however it is, we are here admonished by this place not to be prevented by any foolish opinion of our own, as a great many of men are, who think themselves to be such great Clerks, as that they will not once vouchsafe to come any more unto the school of God.

Let us therefore understand and know: that although our faith were greater and more powerful than now it is; yet must we be scholars all our life long to have the word of God sounding in our ears, and to have our memories rubbed over & refreshed, that we might not forget that which we have learned; that that which has not taken deep root in our hearts, may receive a better and deeper impression: and that God when he has cast his seed into us (according to Saint Paul his comparison) we may daily water it in us: For, it were not enough to have the seed cast into the ground without God should send down rain from heaven and bedew it: for when the husbandman shall have done his duty in tilling the land, it is to no purpose without GOD should give increase thereof from heaven. Even so must it be with us when as we shall have received the seed of the incorruptible life, GOD must rain down from heaven; that is to say, he must continually benefit and strengthen our faith: which cannot be except we be daily instructed from his mouth.

Let us now come to the contents of this sentence,

"I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldeans."

These words here are inserted for Abram to cause him to eschew all Idolatry and superstition wherein he had been heretofore brought up. For as it is often showed unto us out of the holy Scripture, that we must not worship God confusedly, nor imagine him to be such a one as we think: But we must know what God that is which we must flee unto, and must be separated & distinguished from all the imaginations & devices of man's brain, whereby we so greatly deceive ourselves, and are also deceived by Satan. And that is the reason which S. Paul makes in his Epistle to the Hebrews, the eleventh Chapter and the sixth verse: saying, "When we will come unto God, we must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of

them that diligently seek him." We cannot come then unto God, except we believe that God is, that is to say: we must not be wavering nor doubtful; but we must be firmly and constantly assured, that that God which created heaven and earth is he who shows himself unto us, and whose will we know both by the law and Gospel: and not to reason what God is, as the poor heathen have done, who have been so marvelously tormented about it, and have run themselves so far into such a Labyrinth and Maze, as that they could never wind themselves out of it again. But we know that God is manifested unto us in that he is beneficial unto us for our salvation. And thus much for the first point. The second is, that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Now this word Rewarder, imports not that God renders that unto us which he owes us, but that we shall not be frustrated in putting our trust in him. And therefore we must look after what manner we ask him: For if we will bring our works with us; that is even to kick against God: so far off is it for us to be united unto him by that means. And Saint Paul says, that when the Jews thought to trust in their works and put their hope of salvation in them, that they hurt and undid themselves: and that was the cause of their break neck instead of going forward. Wherefore if we will seek God aright, we must without all doubt cast from us all vain presumption of our own strength: For seeing he has adopted us of his mere favor and grace, it is most certain, we shall never be accepted of him, except it be because he forgives us our sins. And thus says the Apostle, shall we be assured; that if we seek God after this sort, we shall never be frustrated.

And for the same purpose is it said, "I am the Lord which brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this Land to inherit it."

This is as much as if God had bound himself anew unto his servant Abram, declaring unto him that he should not need to fear but that which he heard before should be accomplished: and that although the effect thereof was deferred and prolonged a great while, yet must he walk patiently, knowing that God speaks not in vain: and besides that he has his times and seasons for the accomplishing of his will. And that it lies in him and in his secret

counsel, and is not to be brought to follow our appetites and humours. But yet we are to note, that God confirmed the faith of Abram by his ancient benefits: For he says I brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees. And this made Abram to trust a great deal more unto God, when as he had already found by experience that God was his father and Savior. For by how much that we have heretofore felt by the goodness, aid, and help of God, by so much more should we assure ourselves of him for the time to come. Thus we see how the experience of the time past should still more and more assure us afterward. And this was the pretense of God in saying, "I have brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees": As if he should have said: it is not now only that I have showed myself to be thy God, but thou hast felt that I have upheld thee with a mighty & outstretched arm: thou wert utterly cast away, and a poor damned soul; and yet did I take thee unto myself, to the end to save thee. And therefore since I have plucked thee out of the bottomless pit of hell, let my grace which thou hast now felt, be an invincible fortress unto thee: and I for my part also will so continue. No now it is certain that we have this general rule also from God, which is, that one grace which he bestows on us draws another with it; For he is never weary: and this is a spring that can never be drawn dry, & therefore let us boldly draw out of it, and we shall be sure to find always more and more to fill us withal. Thus then we see what this saying importeth, "I am the Lord which brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees." After that God has set before us his majesty, and showed himself to be the maker both of heaven and earth, he brings in this as an especial matter, which is, that Abram had felt and known him to be such a one, when as he had plucked him out of the bottomless depth wherein he was, and he adds "To give thee this land to inherit it." Here (as I have already said) God renews all the promises which he had made to his servant Abram, because he should make a collection of them. For faith ought to have this privilege, to heap up together whatsoever may defend it against all the temptations and assaults of Satan.

Here we see what the cause is of the ruin of a great many of men: that is, their negligence and security. For, as I have already said, they think themselves to be great Doctors, when as they have

learned but one sentence out of the holy Scripture: yea, they suppose that they have even enough of it. But when they shall come to the trial they will show themselves then to be but empty vessels: For if the Devil finds but the least hole to enter into them, he will poison them with his deadly poison: much like unto a broken tile upon a house, for the rain that shall run in at the brokenness thereof will in process of time, rot the whole house, Even so fares it with such as think themselves too well learned, and yet are in very deed most blockish dunces: whom the Devil after finding a hole in, so enters in thereat, as that the house falls quite and clean unto the ground.

Now we must not be weary in profiting, but make a good big collection of all the promises of God, and always have a feeling of the fruit of them: and not only so, but we must also labor continually to increase our faith as it is very needful: because it will ever be weak. And to be short we must still go on from faith to faith. It is said that God gave the land of Canaan to Abram: It was in very deed already given him, as we have heard in the twelfth Chapter.

And this was reiterated unto him many times: his ears were now well beaten with it. It should seem then that this was an unprofitable and superfluous kind of speech. But as I have already said; this was an inestimable benefit unto Abram, when as he was thus refreshed and comforted, that he might not fail, but still follow the holy calling of God. Moreover, we are to note, that God entertains him only with words: And herein we see what honor we are to bear him, and not distrust him, although we see not before our eyes the effect of that which he promises us; but hold ourselves still in suspense.

He saith, "I have brought thee into this land which I gave thee." Well, my God, thou hast promised to give it me in deed: But behold I am old and dry; when will that time come?

O, care thou not for that: for I will be merciful unto thee. Well, be it so. But where is the demonstration of that which I have looked for all this while. For I am at death's door, and am here a stranger, &

have no seed (as has been heretofore said) and how shall I do then O Lord ? Well, take my word for it.

This then is the nature of faith: To have all our senses subject unto the will of God, and believe his truth. Our ears also must be open and attentive to receive whatsoever he speaks unto us: and that when he has once said the word; conclude, that it shall be so. But which way can that be? O, we are not to reason that; neither is it in our disposition: But we must leave it unto the counsel and will of God, as we have already said.

This then is the honor which we must do unto GOD; even to believe his holy word. Moreover, we are still to observe that which has heretofore been spoken, that is to say: That God simply gave the land of Canaan unto his servant Abraham for a pawn, to the end he should not muse to himself, nor trouble his head about it: For then had Abraham had but a cold pull, if he had had nothing else but that land. But without doubt he was led by another spirit, which is: He saw the very day of our Savior Jesus Christ; as in the Gospel according to John it is written. And besides, he confessed himself to be but a Pilgrim here in this world: and therefore looked for his inheritance elsewhere. And where it is said: that this land was given him for to inherit; that was not the mark which he shot at: his mind was not set thereon; but had a further reach. For, by reason (as we have already said) that he forsook his native country, and left it, to live in a strange and an unknown place: it must needs be, that his mind was altogether occupied about the heavenly inheritance.

So then we are here to note: that although the land of Canaan is here called his inheritance, as also God's house and resting place: yet is it but as a pawn; or to speak more properly, but as an earnest penny: For a pawn imports as much at the least as the full worth of the thing which we are to be assured of. But an earnest penny is, as a man would say, nothing. And to give a penny, as we call it, unto God, for a bargain worth an hundred thousand crowns and more is nothing. For of what worth is that piece which we give? forsooth of no value. Now, can a pot or gallon of wine be worth a great possession or land that is able to enrich three or four men? And yet, be as it may, this earnest penny is destined unto such a use. And

therefore this land of Canaan was the inheritance of all the children of Abraham, and of as many as have descended of his line: but yet so, as that it was but an earnest penny for heaven: Insomuch, that the very faithful looked not so much unto that, neither yet set so their minds on it; But settled their cogitations and thoughts a great deal higher.

We see then, whether God meant to call Abram, as if he had said; that he did him no wrong in leaving him to languish: Because he was sure that the promises should be performed: and therefore not to stand upon his own wit. And why so?

Because he was to look unto him that spoke the word, who was the unchangeable God. Now by reason that we ourselves are so changeable as that our minds alter every minute; We therefore grieve and vex, when we see that God performs not that at the very first, which he has promised us. And because we see our lives to be so short; and the time we have to live, to be but as a shadow which fleets suddenly away; we think that GOD will never come time enough: wherefore we must learn to correct this fault, by these words that we hear here to be spoken to Abram: "I am the Lord who changes not." And besides, we hear what is said in other places: "That a thousand years are but as one day with him." And Saint Peter also says: "That in the last days there shall come mockers who shall say: where is the promise of his coming?" as though the threats and promises of God were of none effect. No, no, (says he) deceive not yourselves: he will accomplish whatever he has spoken, though it be late: For a thousand years with him, are as but one day: And therefore we must look a great deal higher, and know, that since it is the Lord that has said it, and never changes; that he will do that which he has spoken, but not when it pleases us; but when he knows it to be best: first

Furthermore, let us acknowledge his goodness in supporting and bearing with our weakness herein, because he speaks not only once, but puts us still in remembrance of his promises: meaning thereby to have us profit and be confirmed by them all the days of our life; and not believe him only for a day or two, but forever. And let us be guided and governed by his power, not only all our life long, but even in death also, until such time as we are come unto his kingdom, where we shall never need to be more spoken unto; neither have need either of Faith or yet any other such like things: For then shall we enjoy the full brightness of that, which we do now but see in the dark; and see him face to face, as it were in a glass.

Let us now prostrate ourselves before the Majesty of our good God, and acknowledge our sins; beseeching him to cause us so to feel them, as that they may humble us before him, and make us continually groan under the burden of our iniquities, until such time as he has freed us from this bondage of sin, wherein we are, and have a singular desire to conform ourselves unto his holy will, and not live unto ourselves, but unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who has so dearly redeemed us, gave himself to death for our sins, and rose again for our justification. That it would please him not to grant unto us only this grace; but unto all people and Nations of the earth, etc.

FINIS.

Two Sermons

*beginning at the latter end of the 21st Chapter of Genesis, concerning
Abraham's sacrificing of his son Isaac.*

By John Calvin.

Genesis 21:33–34; 22:1–2

33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

34 And Abraham was a stranger in the Philistines' land a long season.

1 And after these things God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. Who answered, Here am I.

2 And he said, Take now thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee unto the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will show thee.

WE saw yesterday how Abraham, in discharge of his duty unto the king of Gerar, paid him tribute. Now Moses thereupon adds that as soon as he was thoroughly settled, he solemnly called upon the name of God. We have here then, in effect, to learn that Abraham willingly submitted himself to the chief Governor of the Country, not waiting until he was forced to do the duty of a good and faithful subject, but doing it without being required thereunto. And yet, for all this, we see, contrariwise, that it no way prevented him from serving God truly. And although (as we have heretofore said) it was an odious matter to be of a religion clean contrary to the religion of that nation amongst whom he dwelt, yet he was not such a milksop as not to make confession of the same faith which the Lord his God had commanded him. By this, we see that he so behaved himself, both towards God and man, that he may be an excellent example unto us of true humility, thereby to show us how we ought to submit

ourselves unto those to whom we are bound, yet always giving unto God the chief and most sovereign government. And though men be in great authority, yet we are to learn that the same is far inferior unto the heavenly Majesty, which darkens and blemishes all whatsoever excellency is in man.

And this is very certain, that if Abraham had meant to gratify his neighbors, he would have conformed himself also unto their fashions and never once have said that he had a God by himself, whom he would worship; forsaking the idolatries that then were used, and the superstitions wherewith the land was fully polluted. But come of it whatsoever might, he fully protested that he would worship and serve God sincerely and purely; wherefore he had, as we have heard, an altar of his own, upon which he solemnly sacrificed unto God, by means whereof he renounced all the sins and corruptions of his neighbors, as condemning and despising them all, as if he would have said, there is but one only true service that pleases God, and but one only living God; and whatever else is beside, are but mere false and deceitful imaginations.

And although he before had no certain abiding and resting place, but wandered up and down too and fro, yet never ceased he to call upon God in every place wherever he came, showing thereby that he no whit liked of the sins and corruptions that then bore sway in the world. But yet there is here one special reason which afresh moved him to call upon the name of God in this place; and it is this: because he now received greater rest and felt more benefit and commodity coming to himself than ever at any time heretofore. For before that time, he never durst take upon him to plant any tree; but there he planted many because he had leave to dwell quietly there. And as he honored and worshipped an earthly Prince who was King of that country, even so likewise showed he therewith that he had not forgotten his good God; neither yet that his zeal waxed cold; and yet notwithstanding, he held him not always as his chief Lord, although he subjected himself unto him and was contented to remain under his protection.

Thus here we see, namely, why Moses makes mention that Abraham called upon the name of the Lord. The law for the

consecrating of houses was not as yet written, and yet he then observed it: to wit, he effectually showed that his house was the Temple of God. And so must also all the faithful surely purpose to keep their dwelling place pure and clean without pollution.

True it is that the ceremony which God commanded the Jews to use ceases at this day: to wit, that they should consecrate their houses before they occupied them. But the truth and end thereof whereunto God had respect is left unto us: to wit, that when we are placed and settled, not to use them like closets to shut out the presence of God, neither yet to take liberty to walk after our own appetites and lusts.

But seeing God has vouchsafed us this favor to grant us houses to dwell in, although they stand in never so base an outcorner of a backside, yet let us there honor him and wholly dedicate them unto his service and worship.

Now it is not meant that we should dedicate the walls and roofs unto him, but the whole household: to wit, we should be wholly his and make our souls and bodies an oblation and sacrifice, and labor also to make the rest likewise and agreeable therein. Now, to say truly, a householder should first of all begin with himself, and yet he must not forget to have his wife also well instructed. And besides, if God has bestowed children and servants upon him, he is to look that they be all held within the obedience of God, as here it is said that Abraham held his household.

But to say truly, this is a thing seldom used. For we see that every man will serve God as best likes himself, making in the meantime (as it were) little or no account of his majesty. For if masters and mistresses may hold their servants to their work which may benefit them, they think all is well. But if God be ever so much blasphemed and contemned, and the house so profaned, as that there is neither zeal nor yet religion in it, there are no words made of it, but all is well. But let them assure themselves hereof that God will not slightly lose his right.

Let us therefore learn so to use our dwelling houses, as that God may there dwell with us as our chief governor, and let both great

and small dedicate themselves unto him, and therewithal not only offer up unto him their souls but their bodies also.

Neither let them think which cannot honor God without it be to the hazarding of their lives, that they are therefore to be excused if they honor him not. For that is the most excellent honor that we owe or can do unto him. Neither must we allege and say that we have not any such warrant or liberty to hazard our lives. But say what we say will, that which is here spoken of Abraham must serve us for an instruction; because we know him to be the pattern of all the faithful, inasmuch as he is their father. And therefore, seeing it is so, let us know that although we dwell even in the midst of the enemies of God and of his truth, and were presently to be persecuted, yet ought we to make a confession of our faith; for we must prefer the principal before the accessories.

Thus, we see what we have to learn from this place. Now it is namely said that he called upon the eternal God, the God that governs all the world; to wit, of the God that lives forever.

Here Moses makes, as it were, a comparison between the alterations and changes which ran in Abraham his mind, and between the staidness of his Faith, which was so constant and firm, as that he would not change whatever came of it. Here then we see how Abraham was carried too and fro. First, he altered his dwelling place; yea, and was driven like chaff before the wind. And yet the case notwithstanding was such that he knew he must needs still continue firm and constant in God; and his faith to be so foundedly and strongly laid, as that nothing should be able to shake it, nor yet once alter his person. Thus we see how Abraham still followed that course which God directed him in. And so he worshipped the eternal God, although it seemed that God played with him as with a Tennis Ball, tossing him this way and that.

Now it is said that he dwelt in the Philistines' country a long while together. But the words which Moses uses signify, to dwell as a stranger. And this is a thing well to be noted: For although he was suffered peacefully to dwell there, and was no whit wronged nor violently dealt with as before time he had been, yet for all that, he

knew that he was not yet possessor and owner of this land: and yet it is true that God had given it to him even before he came into it, and had ratified the same benefit many times. For so it is, that it was said unto him, "Thy seed for four hundred years shall be a stranger in another land." And therefore Abraham must put this doctrine continually in practice: to wit, to be quiet and at rest, notwithstanding that he be there as a stranger by way of borrowing leave, and must always have one foot lifted up to be going. To be short, he must be like a bird on a bough, as we say. Thus we see why he did homage unto the king of Gerar. For he forsook not the grant which God had made him: but because the time was not yet come for him to enjoy it, and to take possession thereof, he was therefore contented to live there as a stranger. And we shall see also hereafter why he would buy a burying place for his wife: It was because he was not yet the owner of one foot of ground, and yet by faith he received that which was given him. Thus we see that his hope extended itself farther than this present life. And yet notwithstanding, we see that it is not without cause said, which is written in the 119th Psalm: That God is a pavilion from generation to generation, to all such as trust in him. For Abraham was thrust out unto wind and rain, and to all storms, when as he dwelt amongst a barbarous and very cruel people; and yet God overshadowed him: but it was because he rather liked to leave the earth, and to lift his heart up to heaven, than to beat his head about the getting of lands and possessions. He therefore so passed over this world, as that he never set his mind upon it. And so God in the end showed the effect and performance of this promise; not but that he had seen somewhat thereof whilst he lived. But his hope, as we have already said, stretched itself a great deal farther: and so consequently we may say with the Apostle, that he built not his nest here in this world: neither was it the mark whereat he aimed: For he might have returned unto the country from whence he came, even unto the country where he was born; to wit, into Chaldea: but he held himself there, where he had neither possession, kindred, nor friends. Thus then we see that he looked higher than unto the world.

Now, if this then was in him at those days when the doctrine appeared nothing so clear by far as at this day it does unto us, what excuse shall we make, forasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ has once appeared, and was conversant here in the world, and ascended into heaven, and has set open the gate for us, and does by his Gospel incessantly solicit us to aspire upward? If we (I say) be continually wrapped and swaddled up in these corruptible things, must not this be a most villainous unthankfulness?

And therefore, let us learn so to dwell in this world, as that we may enjoy and take pleasure in the benefits which the Lord bestows here upon us: but yet in such a way as to say with Saint Paul: "That our conversation is in Heaven," and we are already citizens thereof, although it be as yet but in hope. And indeed, we are also to remember what is said in another place: "That so long as we dwell in these mortal bodies, we are as it were absent from God." We see also that we have not the fruition of his presence: Because our spiritual life is hid. For if it were not so, we should effectively enjoy it, and then shall faith cease: For, as Saint Paul says, "That which a man hopes to have is not seen." And therefore let us learn, that since God draws us unto himself, not to be so base-minded as to drench ourselves here on earth over head and ears, as it were, in filthy mire and dirt, but continually go on, knowing that this is the very beaten path and highway for us to aspire a great deal higher.

Now, it is very much that is here spoken of Abraham. Lo here very great and commendable virtues, as when God grants him rest and peace, he does not securely sleep therein: for although the king gave him leave to dwell patiently in his Tent, yet he acknowledged himself to be but a stranger: and although every man became his friend, and were ready to be at unity with him, yet he could in no wise keep company with them, but had rather been at utter defiance with them, than he would at any hand have conformed and framed himself to their superstitions and idolatries, and still held his course in truly worshipping the living God. In all this (as I have already said) he showed very excellent virtues. But Moses adds another sacrifice which is far greater, and much more exquisite: that is, Abraham was enforced to kill his son, yea even his own only son.

Now this was an obedience unto God beyond all measure surpassing any man's power to perform, although in very deed we ought to be his, both in life and death: But that which is here commanded Abraham to do is far beyond all the rest. For the matter in question is not only of Abraham's full obedience towards God, in forsaking himself, and in having his son to be taken from him which was given him, and so to be quite and clean rid of him when as it should please God to take him from him, and to suffer all this patiently. This, I say, is not the question, but the matter is, that he must kill him with his own hands. Now this is such a hard and strange thing, as that the very hearing of it once spoken of is able to astonish and kill the very heart of any man. It is not then without cause that Moses, from the nineteenth chapter after he had heretofore spoken of the life of Abraham, sets down this act, and says that after these things God again tempted him. Now it was a very great temptation when as God took him from his father's house: for so the words import, when he said, "Get thee out of thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk, and from the place where thou wert born," and I pray you where could he find a better place to dwell in?

This is the country which I mean to bring thee unto, a country forsooth which he never knew: and therefore he must be there like a feather cast into the wind, not knowing which way to wind himself. This, I say, was a grievous temptation to Abraham, when as he must needs go whither God called him, not knowing whither, and yet nevertheless this was as it were his ABC. Thus we see how God begins when as he means to teach in his school. And he was no sooner come into the land, but that he was eftsoones driven out thereof as it were with famine, and his wife also taken from him. And the next time also, we see that he was vexed in every place and could have no rest anywhere, for there was not anyone within all the country who did not set himself against him, and yet he patiently endured and suffered all these things. And yet notwithstanding he did not once murmur against God, but endured all the troubles and afflictions that were laid upon him without discouragement: being far unlike unto those that are so delicate and

effeminate, as that if God deal not with them to their own good liking they will clout it up together, and quite and clean forget their obedience towards his Majesty. And although Abraham was thus roughly handled, yet continued he the course he began. But how long suffered he all these trials? He was not only thus dealt with all three or four years together, but was so tumbled and tossed as that when he had passed twenty, thirty, and forty years in that land, he was to begin again to abide worse storms than he had at any time before bidden; as to be enforced to forsake the love of his eldest son, and to be utterly spoiled of him, which was to him more grief and sorrow than a very kind of death itself.

After he had sustained these great and most grievous temptations, that God had promised to give him the land, yet was he so baited, as if he had not been worthy once to have set his foot in any place of the land.

God had also promised him seed, but that came not until such time as he was fourscore years old, and his wife barren, so as it seemed unto them, that this promise was but a very mockery. And when he was a hundred years old he had Isaac. But Ishmael must be thrust out of the doors, and be banished as heretofore we have heard. If we could well savor and taste these temptations, without doubt we should be wonderfully amazed to see Abraham have such a powerful and constant faith, to fight against such assaults and to overcome them. Now then, when it is said, "After these things," it is to show that God means to set before us in the person of Abraham such a spectacle, as that whenever we shall come to the fight, it shall not be hurtful unto us to follow his steps, neither yet think it strange or any new thing to conform and fashion ourselves like unto him who is father of the whole Church. But yet this is most certain that although every man would thoroughly look unto the temptations which he is to suffer, yet shall he not be able to see the hundredth part of that which we see in Abraham. And therefore this is to be noted; that as God had bountifully bestowed the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit upon him, so also meant he to make a thorough trial of his faith: for God will not have his gifts lie rusting and be unprofitable in us; But will deal with every man according to that

measure of his graces which he has vouchsafed us. For he prepares us to endure them, or else we were never able to undergo them: nor once move one finger to do well, except the Lord does so dispose the same and gives us the power to do it. And therefore whenever he puts us to the combat, he bestows the graces of his Holy Spirit upon us. Now forasmuch as Abraham had great perfection in comparison of us, according as we are men, see how God also proved him with such strange sorts of trials as we are never able to come near unto. Howbeit so much the less excuse have we for our idleness, coldness, and wantonness, if we follow not at least in some measure our father Abraham. And although the constancy of our faith be not equal unto his, yet if we endeavor not ourselves to follow him somewhat aloof (as we say) according to our ability and infirmity, without doubt we shall be without all excuse. So then we have from hence to gather: That Abraham was all his life long tormented both in soul and body: and yet when it was come even to the upcast (as we say) God would needs prove him without all comparison more lively than ever at any time before he had done, so that it had been able to have made him a hundred thousand times to have despaired, had he not in most wonderful manner confirmed him therein by his Holy Spirit.

To what end is this matter of Abraham's recited to us? It is not because we should wonder at his virtue and magnify and commend his so great power and strength: But to the end to learn, not to be over effeminate. And that when it shall please the Lord to exercise us in what sect soever, to be tractable to be led to Him, and to have our affection so tamed as that God only be Master over them to rule them, and to covenant with us as pleases Himself. Thus we see what it is that we are here to learn from this place. And so whenever we have endured any temptation, or have sustained any combat, and that God soon after tries us, let us not think it any whit strange. For we serve Him not with this condition, that after He has roughly handled us for a day or a year we may by and by be discharged and so crave a passport: But contrariwise to harden us, because God ceases not continually to send such proofs to try our faith withal: But the same should be I say, as a habit unto us: because we see that

an old beaten soldier can abide a great deal more pain than a young fresh-water soldier (as we say). For a young Novice knows not what it means he will be weary with one night's watch, he is not able to abide either cold or heat, not able to away with skirmishing, nor to be always in watch and ward: but he that is long used hereunto, shall be far better able to endure these things. Even so must it fare with us, that when the Lord shall have exercised us every manner of way, we shall be so much the more able and ready the better and longer to continue. And although it should seem to us that God dealt very severely with us in laying too great a load upon us, yet let not us think our case to be strange. And why so? Because we see here a pattern thereof in our father Abraham unto whom we must be configured. Now as concerning this word "tempt," we know what is meant by it when it is attributed unto God: It is not meant that He tempts us to lead us to do ill, for we are of our own selves thereunto overmuch inclined: And as S. James says, "Every man is tempted of his own concupiscence." And therefore we must not seek after the cause of these faults anywhere else but in ourselves: wherefore God tempts us not so as to say that the fault is in Him, and that we may impute the evil which we commit unto Him, as if He were Author thereof; but God tempts those that are His to sound them. And therefore this word imports, To examine, to prove; not that He needed to inquire what is in us, for we know that nothing is unknown to Him.

The books are not as yet open: but yet so as that God knows and judges that which He will make manifest at the last day. And therefore He has no need to sound and try us, for He does that, that is in us: But this is referred to the probation of our faith. For as we have already said, God will not have His gifts to be unprofitable, but will apply them to some use, to the end He may thereby be glorified: and we thereby also so much the better be confirmed, considering how wonderfully He regards us: and would have us with patience fight against all the assaults of Satan & of the world: that we thereby might find by experience, that God is with us, and loves us; Wherefore we have good cause the more confidently to call upon Him, to run unto Him, and stay ourselves upon His goodness, and

not to doubt of His help even unto the end. Thus we see then in sum why God tries us, to wit, that He will have the gifts which He bestows on us to be applied to serve Him: to the end all men might know His power, goodness, and wisdom: that thereby He might be glorified as He deserves: But it is chiefly to this end, that we might know His fatherly goodness towards us, and be so much the more stirred up to honor Him, and fully and wholly dedicate ourselves unto Him: and withal to trust altogether in Him. Thus we see how Abraham was tempted, and so are also all the faithful servants of God at this day. For, if we should live at ease, and the serving of God cost us nothing, what proof should there be of our faith?

Moreover, which way should the true children of God, and such as serve him in simplicity of heart, be discerned from hypocrites? And therefore we must be tried by temptations, even as gold and silver are tried in the furnace. See also, why Saint Peter says: That it is good reason, that our faith should be tried. Now because Gold & silver are precious things, therefore it is very meet they should be tried by the fire. And yet are but these corruptible metals: & shall our faith which is far more excellent be buried in the earth, and so rust, and God his glory not be seen therein? No, no, it must not be so; and therefore it is meet that it should be tried. Wherefore, let not us think it strange, that if the Lord should so deal with us, as to lose the reins to the devil, to lead us to do evil: to have the wicked also vex and torment us: and besides, to have other inward temptations laid upon us. To be short, if we should be exercised every manner of way; yet let us know that we had need to have the Lord for His part to set down unto us that which before was hidden, and to us unknown. We see then why temptations should not seem bitter, but rather sweet unto us, because the Lord our God applies them unto our salvation, and so serves His turn with them, as that His name is thereby glorified, and ourselves also by that means more and more benefited, if so be we look unto the issue.

Now, in this temptation which is here touched, Abraham is deadly wounded, as if God would have cast him into the deepest bottomless pit of despair that could be imagined. And yet notwithstanding he abode by it: For Abraham, as a weak man, failed

a thousand times when as God commanded him to kill his son: Howbeit, this is not all: To have Abraham to take his own sword and kill his own son: but there was a far more grievous temptation imposed upon him worthy the noting, whereof we will hereafter speak more at large. But for this time it shall suffice that we give you a little taste thereof. For, the question is not, that the best beloved and only child of a father must be put to death, and to die a violent death before the father's own eyes, and with the father's own hands: This is not all and the chief matter: but the question is; which way that salvation should come that Abraham looked for by his dead son Isaac, according to the Lord's promise. For, for men to kill their children is nothing in comparison of this. For, there is no man that will acknowledge his child to be his savior. But although Isaac was not Abraham his savior: yet he knew that the savior of the world should come of him. From whence then is it, that Abraham was to look for his righteousness, welfare, and salvation, without it were in the person of Isaac, that is to say, in him which should proceed from him? Is Isaac then dead? Why, then is all the world utterly lost and damned, and the devil reigning and ruling everywhere. Behold then God an enemy to all mankind and to all the creatures: and there remaineth now nothing else, but the wrath and vengeance of God enflamed and set on fire to devour and consume all: for this son of his, Isaac, must be killed by Abraham his own hand: yea, even by Abraham, who received this promise from God his own mouth, as thus: I will give thee a son, who shall be so blessed, as that all men shall be saved through the grace which I shall bestow upon him: and yet must this son be put to death?

Here then we see (as I have already said) Hell standing wide open, and the devil so ruling, as that all is quite and clean destroyed: For there is no more looking for the promises of salvation, seeing that he that should give life to all creatures, is himself put to death.

Now, whither then must we go? The question then is not here, according to man's judgment, to wound the heart of Abraham with afflictions and sorrows only? but the question is to kill his very faith, and all the hope conceived of his own salvation. It should seem that God meant to tread underfoot whatsoever hope of his grace and

goodness he had promised him. To be short, it should seem that he did but mock Abraham: As if he should have said: Go thy way; thou art but a beast to wait and follow me, and to take such pain to obey me. I promised thee a Tribe, from which the salvation of the whole world should come: and I have performed my promise in giving thee thy son Isaac: But thou must by and by go and cut his throat, thereby to let thee understand, that thou art but a simple and foolish fellow, to trust unto that which I have promised thee; and to think to have a Tribe, & such a precious Tribe also as should be more worth than all the whole world besides: yea, than an hundred thousand worlds. For this is a matter which concerns the everlasting salvation of thine own soul, & of the souls of all men else: and yet thou art now going about to deface all this. Now (as I have already said) it is impossible for us ever to be able sufficiently to comprehend these things, and so to be touched sufficiently to the quick with them: and yet notwithstanding when we meditate upon them, because they were written in vain. Here then we see the preface of this history. Let us now set down particular that which Moses hath here touched: Take thine only son, thy son Isaac, thy son whom thou only lovest. Thus we see that God contents not himself with the piercing of Abraham his heart; as if he should stab him in with a dagger, but sets him upon the rack, and stretches him up to divers pins, as though after he had so racked him, he meant to give him also the strappado, & after that another kind of more grievous torture. For when he had commanded him to kill his son; was it not enough that he said unto him: Go thy way and sacrifice thy son? But he said unto him: Take thy son, yea thine only son, thy son Isaac, him whom thou only lovest: thereby to show that he had cut away all hope from Abraham.

Now, where he saith, Thy son whom thou only lovest; this was not a fatherly love only, as natural fathers naturally love their children: But Abraham loved Isaac accordingly as he respected the salvation of his soul, and of the whole world, by which means they might be companions with the Angels, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, here we see what this speech one son, and best beloved son means. And besides, the word Isaac which is here named, is set down as a word of reproach. For God named him Isaac, and not men. Here we see that God gave the child the name: and what was that? Laughter, & Joy, Now it should seem that all this was but in mockery, as if he would have said: This is very well for thee; for here is nothing but joyfulness. Thou greatly joyest in Isaac, and thinkest all this to be matter of joy. But there will come, ere it belong, such a qualm over thy stomach as will pierce thee at the very heart: For thou thyself must be the hangman to this child whom thou so dearly lovest: and must draw out thy knife, and lift up thine hand to cut his throat, Must not Abraham (now think you) be thought to be a very hangman; and by this means stir up all his neighbors about him in a rage: to say, what a villain is this, that is gone out to kill his own son? Behold a mad man; a man possessed with a devil; must not this be a very devilish fury?

Thus we see him confounded, as it were, before God, and abhorred of the world. But yet this is not all: for he saith, "Take thy son"; and what shall I do with him? Take him, I say, and sacrifice him. And whither shall I lead him? Carry him unto such a mountain As I shall name unto thee. Now, must Abraham needs be very sore vexed and grieved: and besides; must he needs kill his only son? Must he needs also travel such a long and tedious journey without any guide he could not tell whether? And must God likewise hold his nose not only to the grindstone; but also so rack and torment him, as it is impossible for any tongue to speak, or heart to imagine? Are not these such things as far surpass all man's reason, and (as it were impossible) to suffer and abide?

For, as it was before said unto him, when he departed from the place where he was; that he knew not whither GOD would lead him: even so is it here; for there is no place at this time assigned him, otherwise than thus: "Thou shalt go from hence into the land of Moria." He must needs go forsooth, from the place where he had lived the most part of his aged years; yea, until he was very old, as we have already heard: "Go thy way" (saith he) "and when thou art there, then will I show thee where thou shalt sacrifice thy son."

Here then we see, how many ways the Lord so sounded the heart of his servant, as that all the temptations which we were able to pile up together would never be like: and if we should compare them with those that should be laid upon us to abide, they would seem nothing in respect of that which we here see. And therefore we see that God wonderfully spares our weakness, in not bringing us thus far. For if any of us should be visited with any sickness that should last long, we would so sorrow and grieve, as that we would be very angry with God.

Again, if any man should die, his wife would grow so melancholy, as that she would be altogether impatient and murmuring. If God should take away any of our children: yea, although we had many, we would be angry with ourselves, and weep and mourn extremely: and therefore, what would we do if we should be brought to this pass, as here it is said, even to kill with our own hands our own children, and not leave one alive, but dispatch our house of them all? yet would not all this be any whit comparable unto Abraham his trial. For, the children which God bestows upon us now at this day, are not the groundwork of our salvation: Neither ought we to leave the having of our Lord Jesus Christ, although all human knowledge should perish and decay: Wherefore let us acknowledge that God supports us, and pities our weakness when as he brings not us unto so hard a trial, as this which Moses here makes mention of. Let this then be a good advertisement unto us that when God shall prove us, that we yield our necks to the yoke, & suffer him to make trial of us. And this is the most principal point of all our life, so to yield ourselves as that God may dispose of us as pleases him: and not grudgingly reply and say, that he deals thus and thus hardly with us. This (I say) is the chiefest point of our whole life. In very deed (I must needs say) that this were a very excellent great good gift in us, as to be able to walk in integrity of life amongst our neighbours, to do no man wrong, to live chastly, and soberly all the days of our life, eschewing all drunkenness, intemperance, blasphemy, and such like.

Well sir, I must needs in truth say, that these are great virtues, but yet they are not always found in us; and yet for all that, this is

not the chieftest point. For the principallest point, (as I have already said) is this, that when we serve God, although many sorrows and griefs torment us, although the Devil soundeth us alarms, and lieth in ambush for us, although men grow so perverse and wicked, as that one spurreth us here; another striketh us there, and another seeketh our utter destruction: And on the other side, although we hang our wings (as we say), although we be hungerbit, and altogether blamed & contemned, although all these things fall out for our shares and portion, yet must we so bless the name of God, as that we must mitigate and ease all our anguishes and sufferings, and be ready always to say, "O Lord, thy will be done, deal with us as it pleaseth thee," and although this gear should fall out far worse than thus, yet must we receive all things patiently.

Now when as we shall grow unto this patience, that (no doubt) is the most principal mark that we must shoot at. And above all things, this history ought a great deal the more be respected and meditated of us, considering that the Lord would show that unto us which we are to comprehend from our father Abraham, to the end we might follow his example. And when as God, (as I have already said) shall have thus framed us, and brought us to this pass, let us dedicate ourselves and all that we have unto his Majesty. For if Abraham had not had this ground and principle, without doubt he had never stepped one foot forward, but had rather fled away from God than have come near him: however, he had not this principle as from himself, but because it was the gift of God, he was not therefore to use it and keep it back as it pleased him: But must make a reckoning of it to him that gave it him, saying, "Here am I," as afterward he showed it. For when God called him and said, "Abraham": "Here am I Lord," (quoth he), This answer showed that Abraham was as it were ready at hand to receive the commandments which God would give him, even as a diligent servant should do. For if his Master goes forth, he is by and by at his heels, to say, "Will it please you to have anything with me?" And if his Master tarries within doors, he will settle himself to harken what his Master will command him; as to bid him do this, or go to such a place. So then Abraham showed that he served not himself nor his own affections, but so dedicated

himself unto God, as that whatsoever he had was his also. Neither did he this hypocritically, as a great many of men may say unto God with their mouths, "Here am I": and yet notwithstanding be far enough from him. But when Abraham said, "Here am I," he protested thereby that he was even before God: for afterward, he protested, that his feet, hands, eyes, ears, all his senses, and all the parts both of his body and soul were ready to serve God, and to put his neck under his yoke, and to go whithersoever he would have him.

Thus we see what we are to retain from our father Abraham: and so let us understand and know that without this scope and end we shall altogether err (as I have already said) we may have all the commendable virtues of the world, and be esteemed of also like Angels, and yet all not worth a button, without we know that God sees us, and would have us continually to bend ourselves in all obedience unto him. And although he should at any time make us turn this way and that, and make us travail and toil to the uttermost; yet let not us at any hand give over obeying and fearing him, but say: "Lord, here am I, whatsoever come of me," and be angry with all the obstacles which may hinder and pull us back; & be at defiance with all the difficulties, vexations, and combats that may be raised against us: Let us (I say) be angry with all this gear, that we may continually go on our course, until such time as we be come unto that scope and mark, whereto God calls us: that is to say, until we be delivered from all our miseries and afflictions, and enjoy the rest of his heavenly kingdom.

Let us now prostrate ourselves before the Majesty of our good God in acknowledging our sins, beseeching him that he will make us so to feel them as that we may be displeased with them, and more and more to be dispossessed of them, and so to be clad with his righteousness, as that he may wholly rule and reign in us, so that by that means we may declare ourselves to be his, as he has most dearly bought us: and that Jesus Christ being dead, and risen again, has also bought us unto himself, to make us partakers of his glory, and continually to conduct us both in life and death.

FINIS.

The Second Sermon of Abraham: Sacrificing his Son Isaac.

Genesis 22:3–8

3 Then Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and took two of his servants with him, and Isaac his son, and split wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went to the place which God told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar off.

5 And said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey; for I and the child will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you."

6 Then Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son, and he took the fire in his hand, and the knife, and they went both together.

7 Then Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, "My father." And he answered, "Here am I, my son." And he said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

8 Then Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." So they went both together.

WE have heard that this was the chiefest and hardest conflict that ever Abraham sustained in all the days of his life, the going with his son Isaac into a mountain and there to offer him for a burnt offering: because in the first place he was to kill him with his own hands. Now it has been showed us here before, that God would declare unto us in our father Abraham, that we must so overcome all our natural affections, as that his honor be preferred above all the rest. For although a husband loves his wife never so dearly, a father his children never so tenderly, yet all this must be trodden underfoot when the matter for the serving of God comes in question: For that is the most precious of all other precious things.

We have also declared, that Abraham was not tempted only in that God commanded him to kill his son, but in that it seemed that all the promises which God before had made unto him were all as a man would say, quite and clean frustrate and void: For they all depended upon that which we have already heard, That the blessed seed should be raised in Isaac. And therefore it seemed that God meant to frustrate his promise made to Abraham. Now although it might seem in any natural man's reason, that God herein was contrary to himself, and that that commandment of his was to annihilate that which before he had heard from God's own mouth, yet he constantly obeyed His Majesty, without further questioning.

Now it might stand at the first sight, that that which he did, had no good foundation of a true and lively faith, because faith has respect to the promises. And yet (as I have already said) Abraham could look for nothing but by Isaac his means: Because it is said, That in Christ Jesus all the promises of God are most sure, and yea, and Amen. For our Savior Jesus Christ must come of the stock of Isaac, and that was in very deed the seed which was promised him. How then could Abraham be contented to have his son to die, and yet to have the promises of God to stand in full strength, power, and virtue? Now the Apostle says, That by faith, Abraham offered his son Isaac. So that by this we are led to understand that Abraham (fall out as it would) rested wholly upon the word and promise of God: and as for the contrariety which may seem to be between the commandment and the promise: The Apostle answers, That he believed that God was as able to raise seed out of the ashes of Isaac, as he was able to perform his former promises. Now this is a profitable point for us, if we understand it aright: For we are hereby admonished so to believe in God, as that we look further than unto the world, and whatsoever else we are able to perceive and comprehend by our natural reason and understanding. For if faith stayed itself upon that which we see, it Were nothing. And then were the power of God marvelously diminished. Moreover, we are to consider of the words of the Apostle, saying in this manner, Faith is the ground of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen: Agreeing with the words of the Apostle in his Epistle to the

Romans, saying, We hope not for the things which we see, but for the things we see not: yea, even for things that seem to be impossible. Since then it is so that the promises of God do not set before our eyes that which is contained in them: we must (as I have already said) when we speak of faith look further than unto the world. And how is that? To wit, we must not measure the infinite power of God with the means which are set before us, and as we comprehend them. But when as we shall have these toys in our heads, as to think that this or that can never come to pass, and that there seem to be a very contradiction in the case, yet let us thus conclude, without all doubt God will perform whatsoever he has spoken.

But we will say, how can it possibly be? Oh, let not us judge of it, we must here bring under our own senses and wits, and do God this honor, to say, that he is faithful: But we know not what will be the issue thereof, or else think that all is shut up and closed.

Here then we see what we are to learn out of these words of the Apostle. Now if Abraham had reasoned like natural man, he might have said, that God was not contrary unto himself: For he told me that I should have seed by Isaac, and that from thence, the Savior of the world should come: and I must not forget this. And yet at this present he has commanded me to kill Isaac; Here is no order in this, for I will take him at his first word, and that must stand.

Thus we see that Abraham might after this manner have excused himself, and yet have been a Rebel unto God under the color of obedience. But what does he? he considered with himself that God was almighty, and therefore able to accomplish whatsoever promise he had made concerning Isaac.

You say well, sir, but what if he had died, how then? And what of that? As though God were not Lord over death: Here we see the right conflict of Abraham's faith, which is, death is set before his eyes which was enough to confound him; but he extolled the power of God far beyond all this and said, yet will GOD overcome and be a mighty Conqueror herein.

And how can that be? Oh, this is not a matter for any man to judge or determine of, nor to give scope to his opinion to measure the power of GOD, but hoodwink himself and say thus: God will so bring this matter to pass, as that I shall be astonished to see it. But it is not for me to ask how and which way he will do it: for I must keep me within compass, until such time as God shows me that, which I before knew not. And this may the more clearly appear, by the answer of Abraham unto his son, when he says, My Son, GOD will provide one.

Now then when see how we are to honor God, that is, when as we speak of the acceptation of his promises, we hold us to them, and resolve to go whithersoever he commands us: To wit, let us know, That the issues of death are in his hand, as in the three score and eight Psalm it is said: and although we see nothing else but bottomless depths before us, making show to swallow us quite and clean up: yet let us go on whithersoever GOD calls us. Now it is namely said, That Abraham saddled his Ass, and laid the wood upon him with the rest of the provision, and went on with two of his Servants and his Son.

Here Moses more especially expresses that, which has been heretofore touched: To wit, that God tried the faith of Abraham to the full, in holding him in suspense.

It was sufficient, if Abraham had but cut the wood, and had gone but an arrow shot only to have killed his son: But he must take a good long journey in hand, he could not tell whither, nor yet how fair; and withal, night also approaches, which always brings with it more sorrow, grief, and care: for whenever any man is full of pensiveness and care, no doubt of it, his pain and grief are far more intolerable in the night than in the day: and yet must Abraham abide all this, and be vexed every way. Well, sir, he rises again next morning betimes, and then begins his grief afresh. All that day he beholds his son, whom he must after a short while kill: and besides, these fantasies are still tumbling in his mind. What? must I murder mine own flesh and blood? and must I commit the most detestable act that is possibly to be imagined, both before God and men? Why? this is such a monstrous piece of work, as is able to make the hairs of

all the whole world stand upright? And yet (notwithstanding) fall out as it will, Abraham must be driven still to do it, and continue the second night until the third day before such time as God showed him the mountain Moriah, which is the place whereon Jerusalem was afterward built.

Here then we see what we are hereby to learn: to wit, that if we will stoutly fight against all temptations, we must not have a sudden kind of heat of faith only: But such a perseverance therein as that we never give over, although God continues us still in combats and fights, and delivers us not out of them at the first encounter. And this is a very necessary point for us to consider of, for you shall have many men show great and singular affection in their obedience towards God, and yet many times it will show itself to be but like a puff of wind which soon vanishes away, as we have seen too much experience thereof. Wherefore let us not think it strange if God delivers not us instantly when as we shall be assailed to fight, and to have our faith proved, albeit we conquer not the first day: But we must fight continually and not think that God exceeds measure, but rather let us choose to follow the example of our father Abraham in this behalf.

Now it is soon after said, That he commanded his servants to abide there, and laid the wood upon his son Isaac which was for the sacrifice. For the question was not only to kill Isaac, but to burn him also to ashes: Wherefore he laid the wood upon Isaac, and commanded his servants to abide there: For he right well knew that his servants would never have suffered him to commit such an Act, But would rather have thought thus with themselves: Did you ever see such a doting old man? Surely he is mad, he says that God commanded him so to do: But is it possible that GOD would command such a cruel thing to be done? And therefore they would never have imagined this obedience to be any part of the service of God; but would rather have taken it to be the part of a furious and mad man.

Now Abraham knew this well enough, and this is a circumstance which we are to note, to wit, that seeing he understood the infamy and reproach that would light upon him, and that every man would

think it was done rather like a frantic man, than a service which could anyway please GOD: since, (I say) he understood this, and yet cared not how ignominiously men would judge of him in committing a fault clean against nature, and such an enormous and detestable cruelty as could not be greater, and yet would not desist from the pursuing thereof: Let us learn after his example, that although all the world should find fault with us, and spit in our faces, and be condemned, where we should be commended for our true serving of God, yet let not us at any hand cease to obey and do whatever he commands. For, if this constancy be not in us, without doubt, we serve our own ambition; and so shall have our reward as our Savior Christ says: That when we shall look after the praises of men, in saying that all that we do is well done, and we are well pleased to be here so commended: Let us look to have no part in heaven, because we have had overmuch regard unto the world. But if we shall have this patience in us; as that although men turn to the worst whatever we do in the obeying of God, and yet we go on that good course which we began without pulling our heads out of the collar; Then shall we be sure to find our reward in heaven. Thus we see how we should show ourselves in truth, that it is God unto whom we go about to approve ourselves.

To be short, if we set not at naught all the judgments of men, and patiently bear all the opprobries, ignominies, and blames that can possibly be laid upon us, it is most sure that our faith does not show itself such as it ought to be. We see also why saint Paul exhorts us by his example, to walk through shame and infamy, instead of good report: and for well-doing, to be evil spoken of: that is to say, when as we shall have had a just and good meaning, and that we shall have God for witness that we have desired to conform and frame ourselves to do his will: and yet men charge us and lay false crimes unto us. Let us content ourselves that God accepts and approves us. Now we had as great need of this doctrine at this day as ever we had: For generally, if we make profession of Christianity: We must look to be esteemed as heretics, and dogs: and to have the world judge us to seek nothing else but innovations and troubles: and to be

very Rebels: and that we have forsaken God: and to be short, that we are far worse than Apostates.

Thus we see how the Papists speak daily of us. Now if we be so effeminate, and have such itching ears, as we see a great many that would fain keep themselves in their good reputation; without doubt we shall cunningly daub and smooth over everything, and so in the end forsake God. Wherefore we are so much the rather rightly to meditate upon this doctrine. To wit, we must not care what reputation we have with men, so that we be approved before God. We may also come to particulars, as if any man shall walk in the simplicity of his heart godly and honestly, yea, you shall have some fall a scoffing at him, you shall have others call him hypocrite, and another sort will say that he does it for gain.

Thus we see how the Devil by these subtle practices goes about to make us become dissolute. Wherefore we are to learn, so to apply all our senses unto God, as that although men never so unjustly blame us, yet let not us be moved once to bend or yield, but have an eye always unto the way that is set before us. We see also what collection we are to make hereof, what a strong faith Abraham had when he was thus qualified, for he premeditated these things, as if he had been at his ease: For if we be any whit passionate, and then have a purpose to do good, yet shall our minds many times be carried away, and shall become so blockish, as that we cannot tell at which end to begin, nor what order to take. We see it in those that are of the greatest magnanimity, that when they are perplexed, they will not go so directly to a matter as otherwise they could. Now Abraham must needs have a troubled mind amongst all the fantasies which were in his head, as to think, surely my Servants will keep me from doing this Act, because they will think me to be mad: and instead of binding my son, they will bind me and carry me back in spite of my teeth into some house, and there keep me like a mad and savage beast, as if God had utterly condemned me. Now Abraham foresaw all these things. Hereby we may judge, that in the midst of these darkneses he was so enlightened by the spirit of God, as that he had always counsel & discretion accordingly as he had need thereof. We are therefore by his example let to understand,

that when we have such great passions as may astonish us, so as we know not which way to turn us; Let us beseech the Lord to direct us. And although our natural senses be confounded: yet that the brightness of the faith which we have may so overcome, as that we may know which way to hold. Now Moses has here before recited, that God sent yet a far more sharp torture unto his servant Abraham than to any of the rest. For as he was going on the way with his son Isaac, he said unto his father, My father: we must not think that this speech came from Isaac at all a very venture, (as we say:) But God had determined so to rack the faith of Abraham, as if he would have rent his heart in pieces. For, there was nothing in the world that would have so grieved Abraham as these kind and loving words, My father. Now this was a sword to wound Abraham even to death: and yet (as I have already said) all this came from the counsel of God who means here to set before us a pattern and glass of this his great constancy; that whenever we shall be put to fight against all the temptations of the world, we might understand Page 263 that hardly shall we be able to abide the hundredth part of that he abode, and yet he overcame it. Then Abraham said unto him, Here am I my son. And soon after Isaac said unto him, Lo, here is wood & fire, we are going to do sacrifice; & to what purpose? for here is never a beast to offer in sacrifice? Isaac right well knew that they went to offer a burnt offering unto God; but he knew not what it was that should be offered, & therefore he asked. Was it possible for Abraham to be thus racked, & be able to bear it? Yea forsooth: for God would not abate him an inch of it, because we might learn to have so much the greater courage. Thus we see what we have here to retain. True it is, that Moses recites this simply & plainly. Now, if we should read these things without thinking why they were written: without doubt we should have but a cold pull of it: neither should we be greatly moved with it. But when as we shall have thoroughly considered, in what estate Abraham was, and how mightily his heart was distressed, & thereupon shall come to judge when this strange temptation was put upon him: and into what anguish he might be driven, when as his son said unto him, My father: First, to see Abraham mark the simplicity of his son; & then after, to think with

himself, Alas poor boy, thou knowest not for what purpose thou art prepared.

As, for example: If a poor man should be led to his death, not knowing anything thereof; although he were nothing to us, and we not present when he should be thus dealt with, but did only think upon it, and say in ourselves: what a strange thing is this, to hear of a poor man led to the shambles as a lamb to be slain, no whit doubting of any such thing. Surely, the very thinking of it would make us shed tears.

Now, behold Abraham, he sees his own son, and besides, he sees him as a lamb led by himself to the shambles, and himself also to be the man that must cut his throat, and afterward burn him to ashes: and to hear his son which was with him speak so simply, "Where is the beast for the burnt offering?" To be short; we see, that although God at this day should send us all the afflictions that could be devised, yet should they be nothing in respect of that which Abraham here did bear. And if we would allege our infirmities, and say, that our human passions would so carry us away, as that we should never be able to do it. Why? Let us think that Abraham was no more made either of Iron or Steel than we are. But fall out as it would, he was fully resolved to give the whole mastery & superiority unto God, and so subject himself, as to renounce and forsake himself. Thus we see whither we must bend ourselves to come, although we have many lets by the way: and although we think we are not able to march one foot forward; yet must we enforce ourselves beyond all force. For the question is not here; that we should go unto it as in our own strength, as though we were very able people of ourselves: But we must attend & look to have God to furnish us with that which is impossible for us to do, and far above our power and ability. This then is it which we are here to retain.

Moreover, let us not doubt, that although there come never so many things thwarting us. but that it is God that has to do in it: and not think anything to come by Fortune, when as we are vexed this way, and assailed that way; but let us think that God guides and governs all: and that he does it, to the end we might learn the better to obey him, and not to have our head and arms only armed, but all

the whole body: and to be so furnished as Saint Paul also exhorts us, as that we may be armed to be able to fight stoutly: for there he bids us Take the sword, the shield, and Helmet, and all the whole furniture, even from top to toe. And besides he bids us to put on the whole complete armor of God. And why does he so? because although we think ourselves to be well armed in one place, yet will the devil by his craft & subtlety, find the mean to assail in another place, and continually lie in ambush for us. Thus we see then, that we must learn wisely so to furnish ourselves, as that the devil shall not be able to find any breach about us, neither yet find any open place to enter into us; but that we shall be able to repulse both on the right and on the left side. And the answer which Abraham makes unto his son shows the same a great deal better when as he says, "My son, God will provide a Sacrifice." In these words we see that which has heretofore been declared; to wit, that our faith must look further than unto this world. Neither can we believe in God, without we give place unto his providence to rule over all things whatsoever that we are able to judge of or apprehend. And in very deed, we should very well incline ourselves thereunto, if we did consider even of those works of God which we see before our eyes. If we do think of the course of nature, we shall see the clouds pass to and fro, and yet we know not what God will do with them. We see how the rain falls: we see also a whirlwind arise with great and sudden rain. We see likewise the heaven in short time wax dark: and where before it was fair and clear, there is now nothing else but obscurity over all. All these things we see, and we shall have Philosophers set us down natural causes hereof, and yet without all doubt we shall be confounded of these things. Now, what if God should presently deal after a strange manner, not keeping his common and accustomed order? This then should be our instruction, to be wonderfully astonished when as we speak of the incomprehensible power of God. And so we should frame ourselves to acknowledge his providence, and worship him when as he declares unto us that he will surmount all our reason and understanding. But what? It is great pity that we cannot exalt God, and say that he can do no more than all our senses are able, at the

first, to promise us. And this is the reason why there is so little faith in the world. And they also which are reasonably well affected, and think themselves disposed to believe GOD; yet is their faith so lean and weak, as that a man shall not need to have anything at all to rebate the edge thereof. Now, all the mischief that comes hereof is this, that we are not persuaded of the providence of God. When Saint Paul speaks of Abraham, he says, That he gave glory unto God, because he believed that he was almighty.

And this is a part of that whereof he speaks: That we must refer all things whatsoever which may in any way trouble us, and whereof we can find no reason for it, unto the providence of God. And therefore we are a great deal the more to meditate upon this doctrine. For whenever, and how often so ever there shall arise fantasies in our heads to pull us back and cool us, not to do that which God commands us, let this always be our shield and defense: God will provide. But as how? It seems many times that that which God commands us, brings therewith great inconveniences. And this is the cursed wisdom of man that is the greatest enemy unto faith, and which has always borne the mightiest sway.

For, we see that God commands Kings, Princes, and Magistrates to ensure that He be honored, and His service purely and sincerely maintained. Now, upon this, we shall have men consider thus and thus with themselves, and say, why? The world is now grown to be so wicked and perverse, as there is no dealing with it: and if we should go on this course, all the world would rail and cry out on us. And besides, if this straight dealing should be used, it will never come to good. For we see that it is not so easy a matter to manage and govern men: There will come troubles of it. And again, if they perceive things somewhat hard to be brought to pass; then must there be some qualification, or else there will be no good done in it.

Thus we see (I say) with what temptations they shall be solicited which go about to oppose themselves unto any wickedness. Now, what comes hereof in the end? Surely, most commonly, that they which seem to be most circumspect and wise, and think to see farthest into this gear; will so speak and deal, as that they will prove neither fish nor flesh, as we say: And so by this means, God is quite

and clean shut out of the doors. For, first this mischief comes of it; we obey Him not soundly and roundly as we should: And besides, we rob Him of that honor that belongs unto Him. For, if any man shall say: O such a matter may fall out if you so deal. What? Is God dead? Has not He foreseen for all the inconveniences that might come to pass? And if any man shall say; this gear must not go on this sort: for then such a mischief will follow thereon. Is this not to accuse God of folly? And to rob Him of His power? As if He could not restrain any man from going whither he would? And yet notwithstanding, the issue thereof to be both good and prosperous?

Even so it stands with the ministers of the word of God: for, there are very few of them that can discharge their duties. True it is, that they have many vices which hinder them: but this cursed and devilish wisdom reigns in many, which will not stick to stir up sundry contentions and troubles, and thereupon be carried with every wind, where they may anyway corrupt and falsify the doctrine of the Gospel, as at this day are many such. For how are they bewitched, that will deal between Popery and Christianity, but that they think thus and thus with themselves: O, my masters; to change and alter things after this manner, were even to make a new world. O, we may not thus do: for, if we make such an alteration as you speak of? It is twenty to one, that all will come to naught. Thus we see how we are contented to do all things by halves, and swim between two rivers.

By this we see how the doctrine of the word of God is corrupted: and yet notwithstanding (as we have already showed) when there shall any mischief begin to arise, things will go continually worse and worse, in such sort, as they shall not be able to help it when they would. Now we need not to go so far as to public persons: but to come nearer unto a householder that would set his house in good order; he shall have these imaginations always with him: O, if I do that which God has ordained me, such a thing may fall out thus and thus. Or if a man shall travail for the maintenance of his life, he will consider thus with himself: O, if I deal thus simply and plainly, I shall be like a sheep in the jaws of wolves: for there are such subtle and cunning devices in the world, that the wolves will beguile me:

every man will seek to circumvent and entrap me; and if I do not the like what shall become of me? Now, if I make myself either an Ewe or a Wether, out of doubt they will eat the very wool off from my back.

Thus we see what every man thinks, as if there were no providence of God at all. Moreover, if the matter should come in question for the giving of our lives, although it be not at this day said to every one of us, Take thy son, yea, thine only son Isaac, and kill him; yet God commands us in general to obey Him, in confessing that He is our Father and Savior. Our Savior Jesus Christ would have us to bear witness of Him, even before the most perverse and cruel tyrants of the world: For He would not have us confess Him only before such as desire to have His kingdom come; but even before His very enemies, and before the greatest persecutors.

Thus we see what confession He requires at our hands. Nay, but good sir; what will be the end of it? For thus you shall have some say: what good will my death do?

And if I shall put myself in danger to be slain, I shall be quite and clean forgotten within three days after, and so thereby breed offense to a great many others: For many will say; he might have escaped this well enough if he had listed: for we were quiet and all was well: we were not brought in question about anything: and now (forsooth) there must be a needless persecution set abroad, and what good shall any man get by thrusting himself in this manner so forward? Now surely these are very frivolous allegations. For I pray you tell me, had not God some meaning when as He both would and also commanded us to give ourselves in sacrifice unto His majesty for the confession of our faith; and make no reckoning of our lives in regard of honoring of His most holy name? Did not He right well know what would come of it? And shall we think ourselves wiser and circumspecter than he? Wherefore it is not without cause (as I have already said) for us to retain this doctrine among the rest, where it is said, "My son, God will provide a Sacrifice": For this is as much, as if the Holy Ghost should exhort us, not to be otherwise (as we say) in our own conceits, and to be over-provident to dispute and say; which way, I pray you, is it possible that this matter should

come to pass? But let us be contented, that since God has spoken the word, that he knows well enough how to compass it. And then let it go as it will: for this is most sure; that all shall go well, so long as He is our guide. And in the meanwhile, our wisdom and reason must herein give place; and we must be willfully blind: to wit, we must not be so sharp-sighted as these jolly wise worldlings are, which will know all and judge all; even to the controlling of whatever God shall do. Neither let us take from Him that which is His: But let it suffice us, that we discharge ourselves of our duties.

Thus we see that we can have no faith except we set forth the providence of God: and the means to advance and set it forth, is, to put over unto Him all whatsoever that breeds nothing else but doubts, and snarls us in many perplexities. And to be short, that we may say: I beseech thee O Lord, to guide me whither it shall please thee: For, as for me, I am but a poor blind wretch, neither is it fit for me to look into this; for that will be, as it were, a bottomless depth, to cast myself down headlong into, when as I shall take in hand to direct myself, and to be mine own guide.

Here we see what the true wisdom is, which all the children of God ought to have: that is, not to be over-wise, but to be contented with their measure: and when they see the way that is pointed out for them, to walk therein: and if they cannot come to the end thereof at the first; yet let them not cease to go on. And although they see, as it were, mountains to stay them, and the Sea to swallow them up in: yet let them overcome all this, and know that it was not written in vain by the Psalmist, where it is said, That God has commanded his Angels to guide and direct us, when as we shall walk in our ways: that is to say; that we decline not from that which he has taught us. But let us know that he will always find out issues for those things that shall grieve and trouble us, when as in our judgment we shall see nothing else but confusion and shame of face.

Moreover, here might, notwithstanding, be found some infirmity in Abraham amidst all his so excellent virtues, because it seems that he dissembled in saying, That he and his son would come back again after they had worshipped and sacrificed in the Mountain: For he did assure himself that his son Isaac must be slain. Now it is not

lawful for us in any wise to lie: And therefore it seems that Abraham in this point did amiss. Wherefore some men do judge that he spoke it by the spirit of Prophecy. But if it should be so, then his faith was nothing; because he must needs then be ignorant of that which should come to pass. For if God had revealed unto him that his son should escape; then could there be neither zeal nor yet constancy in him. But when as he imagined that there was no way with him, but to kill his son; this showed a testimony of his obedience.

Why then said he, That he and his son would come back again? Let us not think this to be any strange manner of speech: for when any of us all is surprised and overtaken with any vehement and grievous passions, many vain and foolish speeches may so pass our lips, as that we may speak we cannot tell what. And therefore Abraham might speak like a man, as it were beside himself: and yet not so, as if he knew not what he had to do? for, if he had obstinately done it, then had he not pleased God. But Abraham no doubt of it, had such a stayed affection to do that which God commanded him, as that he was (as a man would say) ravished therewith. And this we see to be in all those whom God has strengthened: As when a man goes to execution, he makes no reckoning of it: neither would he have any man to divert him from it: For he had thus made his account; I must now present myself before God, and therefore I must forget whatever else shall come in my mind.

Thus then it fell out with our father Abraham, as that he did not distinctly think of every thing that he was to answer unto as concerning the sacrifice: but said only, we will go and sacrifice unto God, and when we have made our oblation, we will come back again. And thus much concerning this point.

Now it is said; That Abraham and his son went farther together. It is not without cause that Moses sets down these words twice, They went together: and after, They went on farther together. When it is said, That they went together, it is to let us understand, in what a wonderful passion Abraham was, when as he saw himself alone with his son: For company many times withdraws us from being so troubled and grieved as otherwise we should be. For, when we are alone by ourselves, we are then more pensive and melancholy. Now

Abraham saw himself to go with his son, and to conduct him: and also after he had so answered him, yet to go on with his son: this does a great deal the more amplify the strength he had; so that nothing could so withdraw him, as that he did not continually pursue his purpose, because God guided him. Wherefore we see that he was strengthened from above. For it was impossible for him, as he was a man, to be able to overcome these sharp temptations. And therefore God strengthened him with a mighty and an outstretched arm. But that which is here set down of him is written for our instruction, to the end we might know, that although Abraham was even as weak a man as we are, yet he still strove and overcame whatever was contrary unto his faith, and that through the only assistance of God.

And although at this day we know our own weakness, yet let us not as a great many do, flatter and deceive ourselves therein: But it is the thing that should the rather stir us up and prick us forward to call upon God, and look for that at his hands, which is wanting in us, and so persevere and continue, as that although the Devil shall devise every manner of way to make us grow dissolute and go backward, yet let us continually go on still more and more a direct course. For, that which is here said of Three days' journey, is to show unto us that we must continue so long as it pleases God. True it is, that we may for a while endure temptations; yea, perhaps a whole year; yea, ten, perhaps all the days of our lives, and all this must be abided. But here we are to note that Abraham was after another manner of sort tempted, even all his life long: For, after he had recovered his son Isaac, yet was he not at rest and quiet, but we see what terrible conflicts he had in one only kind of temptation. And therefore let us be stirred up continually to pray to God from day to day, and never cease.

Moreover, we are to note a thing which is most manifestly seen, to wit, the obedience of Isaac: For it must needs be that he would in very truth willingly and of his own accord be sacrificed, or at the least had such a love to his father, as that he would frame himself to his will to be made a burnt offering unto God. Here we see why it is namely said, That they went together, and that Isaac carried the

wood. Wherefore let us learn so to submit ourselves unto the will of God, as that although we must violently suppress our passions and bring ourselves under (as we have already said) yet let us freely and of our own accord yield ourselves unto him; For, all the faithful must thus strive and fight: to wit, that although they suffer never so much sorrow and grief, and although God so lively exercises them as they be touched with some doubts and remorse of conscience, and be sometimes as it were tired with their perverse and wicked dealing with God: yet must they in the end conclude thus, even to submit and subject themselves unto his will, and not suffer their contrary affections so to hinder them from submitting themselves unto him, but that they willingly and of their own accord submit themselves unto him both in life and death. An example hereof we have in our Savior Jesus Christ, speaking unto Peter in this sort: "When thou shalt be old," saith he, "another shall carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Now it is certain that St. Peter suffered for the Gospel, he went not to it as enforced and grudgingly, but willingly and voluntarily offered himself a sacrifice unto God. And yet our Savior Jesus Christ says, that he should be carried whither he would not. Thus we see that there must be a double will in the faithful: and yet such as are not incompatible neither. For, of our own nature we are continually moved, stubbornly to withstand God. And that is a wicked will. Wherefore it must be tamed and kept under, and there must be another within us that must correct that, and must choose rather to die and do God's will, than to live and withal cast off his yoke. This then we are to retain from these words, That Isaac and his father went together, and that they went on further together.

Let us now fall down before the Majesty of our good God in acknowledging our sins, and beseech him so to touch us, as that we may hate them, be rid of them, and forsake them. And yet so to support us in our weakness, as that he will not but have our service to please him although it be imperfect, and that there are many things in us which he may find fault withal.

Moreover let us learn so to be led by him, as that we open not our eyes wider than is lawful for us: But assure ourselves that he will always grant a good issue unto our ways, so that we look no further but to go whithersoever he shall command us, and still aim at that mark which he has set before us.

That it would please him not only, etc.

FINIS.