

44 *Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him.*

Having with reason led them off from their kindred with Abraham and convicted them of having unlikeness to him in their manners, and of being far removed from piety toward God Himself, and yet moreover having explained the reason of their not being able to be obedient to His speech, He again shews who will rather be more fittingly and properly termed their father. Ye therefore, He says, *are of your father the devil*, whom He says was also *a murderer in the beginning* and that he *abides not in the truth and is a liar*; and that his *father* was a liar, whom in what follows He defined clearly who he is : for the mighty force itself in their brevity of the words before us has much obscurity and specially needs accurate scrutiny. For deep is the discourse about this, and not clear I ween to the many. For as to the meaning which can readily be got, it allots to the Jews no other father than Satan who fell from heaven. But that which is put next about the father allotted them, that *he is a liar just as his father also*, troubles us, yea rather compels us to fresh doubt<sup>2</sup> not a little. For whom (if we think reasonably) can we imagine to have been father to the devil, or what other before him fell to whom he that comes after can be compared in likeness and manner ? for no one will shew us such a reading as this in the holy and Divine Scriptures; and in no wise is that to be received as truth which is not told in the Divinely-inspired Scriptures. For every spirit that is reckoned among devils as a child of the devil is called Satan according to what is said by our Saviour Christ, *If then Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself*: yet have we heard of one surpassing the rest and above them, him to whom it is somewhere said by the Prophet Ezekiel, *Thou art the seal of likeness and crown of beauty begotten in the delight of the Paradise of God, every precious stone hast: thou put on*. Whom else then shall we unblamed suppose existed, after whom this one was formed, in likeness I mean as to vice? for some of the elder expositors, citing what is now before us, say that that ancient Satan who is conceived of as being the chief of all the other devils was bound by the Might of God and cast into Tartarus itself there to pay the penalty of what he had done in outrage against God, and that some other appeared after him, coming nothing short of the abominations of his father, and they affirmed that of him it was that the Saviour says that *he was a murderer from the beginning and that he is a liar, as his father*.

But unless we had much considered it in our minds, we should with reason have readily accepted this, but now this one thing above all suffers us not to approve inconsiderately. For at the time of the Saviour's Advent, the tyranny of the devil was receiving the beginning of its fall and the wicked and unclean spirits were being sent forth into the deep. And verily the devils would come and openly beg Him, *that He would not command them to go forth into the deep*. And we remember that they made a great outcry about this, saying, *Let us alone, what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? we know Thee Who Thou art, The Holy One of God, art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?* For that our Lord Jesus Christ having come among us would waste them away and manifoldly vex them, they themselves too knew full well, finding much talk of Him among those in Israel, yet found fault as though He had come not in His season, in this too acting tyrannically and perversely accusing the time of the Advent. But they say *before the time*, as though in no wise tormented in any other time, but looking for one, the time of the Advent, in which they were unquestionably to undergo what they are expecting. And to this we say besides, If, he being bound according to their distinction, some other deceived Adam, and does not yet cease from the madness whereof he is accused, the first one will be wholly blameless as regards us, and this account will free him from all blame, and neither hath he slain any, nor deceived nor lied,

nor yet will it be justly said to him by God, *As raiment stained in blood shall not be clean, so neither shalt thou be clean, because thou destroyedst My land and slewest My people.* If therefore we grant that that he whom they say is the first is wholly without any share in the above enumerated evil deeds, whom shall we decide that the second after him imitated, or after whom was he formed who surpassed in wickedness his leader, and had the deeper impress of that one's villainy?

And it were I suppose not unreasonable that we searching out this matter should go through fuller proofs, but we think it superfluous to put forth too much energy for what needs not: we will therefore go on to another thought and accurately search who it was that Christ allotted to the Jews as their father of like manner and disposition, so that for his father might reasonably be enrolled an evil spirit, that prince of evil, i. e. Satan. He brings them up therefore to Cain who first of all men loved not Him who chastised him by reproofs, but was set forth as the beginning of envy and murder and craft and lying and deceit, next to that Satan whose son he is rightly said to be, inasmuch as he receives in himself the whole impress of that one's wickedness. For as God is the Father of every holy and righteous person, being Himself the beginning of the holiness and righteousness of all:---in the same way I deem will Satan be reasonably styled father of every wicked person, himself being the author of all wickedness. But since we have said that Cain was given to the Jews as their father, to Cain again Satan, come let us following out our own words clearly shew that Satan first of all reared his neck at God's reproofs, then both deceived and lied and lastly through envy committed murder: and having shewn that Cain was of like manner and disposition with him, we in the third place bring down our argument to the Jews who possess complete the image of the wickedness that is in him.

Satan therefore despising *his own principality* and greatly longing after what was above his own nature, and not keeping the limit of his position, was borne down and fell, thereby convicted by God and taught the measure of his nature. But nothing profited thereby by reason of his ill counsel, he sickened of a worse disease, by no means looking to the duty of amending his own disposition, but minded to abide in steadfast perversity. But when the first man was formed by God, according to the book of Moses, and was in Paradise, yet keeping the commandment given him, that I mean about the Tree, Satan was first kindled to envy, and in that his transgression and disobedience were blamed by the first-created, while they were as yet keeping the commandment given them, he was eager by much-intriguing deceits to draw them away unto disobedience. And knowing that they would waste away if they made light of the commands of the Great King, he persuades them to do this, encompassing with the uttermost ills those who had nothing injured him. For that a deed of devilish deceit and envy was the transgression in Adam and the death that through it sprang upon him, the very nature of the thing will itself teach us, and the saying of the all-wise Solomon will make clear to us speaking on this wise, *God made not death, but through envy of the devil came death into the world.*

Herein then is his part, let now Cain come in to us and stand before us. For he was the first-born of Adam, an husbandman by occupation, and next after him came Abel, but he was a shepherd of sheep. But since the law of nature called them to offer sacrifice to God, implanting untaught the knowledge of the Creator (for all good things have been sown and infused in our nature by God): Cain offered *of the fruit of the ground*, as it is written, but Abel, *he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof; and God had respect unto Abel and to his gifts but unto Cain and to his offerings He had not respect. And Cain*

*was very vexed and his countenance fell. And the Lord God said unto Cain, Why wert thou vexed and why did thy countenance fall? If thou offeredst well but dividedst not aright, didst thou not sin? be still.* Then to Abel, *Unto thee shall be his resort and thou shalt rule over him.* Therefore Cain was blamed for dividing not aright his offering, Abel was rightly deemed worthy of praise and honour, which was to Cain food of envy. For he was exasperated at the correcting reproofs, just as Satan was, then swelling with unrighteous envy, as we said, he goes after his brother in guile, already devising the unholy murder. For, it says, *Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go over unto another field better than this,* and inviting as though to enjoyment and tender grass him who was utterly unconscious, he savagely murdered him, and first of all laid him dead on the ground, thinking (it seems) that he would surely win all wonder, having no longer any to surpass him. And having slain him, he told a lie; for when God says, *Where is Abel thy brother?* he says, *I know not,* and out of his exceeding folly added in heat, *Am I my brother's keeper?* For it says that he well-nigh said thus, Thou who crownedst him unjustly what good didst Thou, his Keeper, do him? Thou seest then and that clearly that the whole likeness of the devil's wickedness was accurately finished in him, and the conformation of his manners moulded after an equal and like fashion.

Let our discourse therefore go forward to the impiety of the Jews, and putting around them the likeness of Cain's villainy, let us shew that they essayed those things against Christ, which he did against Abel, that rightly and fitly he may be termed their father. Therefore first-born was Cain, as we have said, first-born again among the children of God by adoption was Israel, as was said to Moses, *Israel is My first-born.* And he hath brought of the produce of the ground an offering unto God, but *to his offerings He had not respect,* as it is written. For more earthly was Israel's worship of the law, as has been said, by bullocks and sheep and fruits of the earth, nor does God accept this. For *to what purpose,* He saith, *cometh there to Me incense from Sheba and cinnamon from a far country?* and by the voice of Isaiah too He openly crieth, *Who required this at your hand?* After Cain cometh the righteous Abel to sacrifice of the sheep. For after the service according to the law, and at the consummation of the Prophets came Christ the verily Righteous, bringing not fruits of the earth for a sacrifice to God the Father, but for the life and salvation of all offering to Him Himself as an immaculate Victim for an odour of a sweet smell. For God the Father dismissing as more earthly the worship after the Law, had respect to the sacrifice of our Saviour Christ. The word, *had respect to* means Delighted in. What followed? Cain was rebuked for not dividing aright, and when blamed was sick of envy, and hastens headstrong unto murder. And God was admonishing in His Son the people of the Jews, was asking of them better things for offering, bidding them transform the worship according to the Law unto spiritual fruit-bearing, and urging them to transfashion the Letter unto truth: but they reprov'd are angry, and are smitten with the paternal envy, and unrighteously plot murder against our Saviour Christ. Cain deceived Abel, and taking him into the field displayed him dead: the Jews likewise as far as in them lay deceived Christ, sending the traitor in the guise of a friend, who coming to Him to betray Him saluted Him deceitfully saying, *Hail Master.* And they too took Him into the plain, i. e., they destroyed Him without the gate. For *without the gate* did Christ suffer because of us and for us. Thou seest then how they are found to be in no way like Abraham or those who were really of him, but bear the image of their own fitly and really belonging father, and madly sick with wickedness conformed and akin to his, they rightly hear, *ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in, him; when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar just as was his father.* And I, because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not. The aim of the discourse looks to the father of the Jews who was

brought forward and exhibited, I mean Cain, but it spreads out more generally. For not at that man's life does He bound the force of what He says, but puts it round about every one who is like him, allotting what is said of one individually to every one who is like him. For when (He says) Cain or other liar like him utters *a lie*, he utters it as of his own kin. For learning what he has from his rulers and him who hath given him the beginning of wickedness, he making the lie his own as some natural acquisition imitates his own father, for he utters a lie. Wherefore (He saith) since he had for his father one who delighted in lies, he is led on as by natural laws to the ignobility of his grandfather and father and shews forth in himself their villainy, and making the depravity of his ancestors the very clearest image of his own manners and ways, surely brags of his own ill.

Since then this is even so and the wickedness of elders engraven on those of like manners with themselves, causes them to be styled their children, what is it that hinders you from believing *Me* even when *I tell you the truth*, that I of a surety am sprung of a True Father, and (as I said before) *I proceeded forth from God and am come*? For if a person tells lies because he has a liar for his father and utters them thence as from his own kindred, how is it not of necessity that I too speaking the truth must be conceived to have been surely begotten of a True Father and not (as YE blasphemously surmised) from one of the earth who was of fornication and unlawful union?

Such words then will the Lord have used to the Jews. But we must know that in respect of men or of rational spirits in manners and habits is seen the kinness which they may have one to another [and] to the father of all wickedness the devil: in regard of the Only-Begotten this is taken only as an image of this which is before us: for by Him it [i. e., the relationship] is full exactly limned, for His Connaturalness with the Father is Natural and Essential. For being of Him in truth, possessing all that is His with Natural Property and the acme of likeness in ail things, He is seen the Form and Image and Impress of Him Who begat Him. Since therefore the Father is True, Truth of a surety is He too That is of Him, i. e., the Christ.

46 *Which of you convinceth Me of sin?*

The question is not that of one who looketh to be convicted, but rather of One Who takes away and utterly denies the possibility of Very God Who beamed forth of God, falling into sin: for Christ did no sin. For all sin takes its rise from the turning aside from the better unto that which is not so, and is produced in those whose nature it is to turn and who are recipient of change unto what they ought not. For how will he be conceived to even sin who knows no turning nor is recipient of change to ought that is not convenient, but rather is steadfast in His own innate Good, and that not from another but from Himself? The Lord then enquires of the Jews if they can at all *convict Him of sin*. And the word used for this will go through every transgression universally: but connecting it fitly with what is before us, we say that He does not at present ask it of every sin and do this as fearing to be convicted, but we consider it in this way, that since He was ever zealous to shame the sin of the Jews, He would not have endured by this question to incite them to again accuse Him of those things of which they before said, *For a good work we stone Thee not but for blasphemy, and because Thou, being a Man, makest Thyself God*: and besides that they should bring forward the breach of the sabbath in regard to which He was judged to have exceedingly transgressed. By *sin* therefore He at present means falsehood. For if (He says) I am never yet convicted of being untrue, why are ye minded to disbelieve *Me* who ever speak the truth, and tell you of a surety that I am sprung of the Very Father and know not falsehood? Give therefore give to faith unhesitatingly

to hold that I am surely True when I say of Myself, I *proceeded forth from God and am come*, of you that your *father is the devil*, for ye lie and desire to kill just as he doth. But He convicts them profitably of desiring to kill Him, cutting short thereby their attempts. For sin exposed often blushes, and after a sort withdraws, finding no way of going forward and persisting: but if it think that it lies hid, it is ever the more lifted up and with unchecked impetus creeps on to basest consummation.

*If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?*

He goes often through the selfsame words, when He sees that they understand nought: for this too is a thing most befitting for teachers, not to shrink from manifoldly revolving the instruction which at the first was not taken in, in order that it may be fixed in the souls of the hearers. When therefore the liar (He says) *speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar just as his father:---why do ye* reasoning and acting not conformably to what I say, *not believe Me*, albeit *I say the truth*, [imagining] that I am therefore speaking apart from the truth, seeing that I am even so True as is the Father also? It is (I suppose) likely that He is convicting the Jews of being therefore infirm in the power of containing the words of the truth, because they are not sons of the truth. To no purpose do they falsely call God their Father, saying, *We have One Father, God*. For God (He says) being wholly Truth, rejoices in the truth and wills them *that worship Him, to worship Him in Spirit and in truth*. And the children of the truth receive willingly what is of kin to them, i. e., the Truth. But YE when I tell you *the truth do* therefore *not believe*, because ye are not children of the truth. Some such thing does the Lord seem to me to be saying to the Jews, as one will easily see if one adapt the speech to another person. For let one for example of sober character say to an unbridled son or servant or neighbour, If I seem to thee to be of sober character shunning fornication and putting the thought thereof as far from me as possible, why disbelievest thou and givest no credence when I say that it is a foul and polluted deed? One would not I suppose say that he said this, looking for an answer to his question, but whereby he shews him unbelieving clearly convicts him that he rejoicing in licentiousness does not admit the speech that would amend him.

Thus then shall we conceive as to the Jews likewise, when Christ says, *If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?* for the form of such questions has an affirmation alongside of them and ever annexed, from the very questions themselves; yea rather (may one say) the question largely convicts them. For *we* convict those who are asked of having the sickness of being without what ourselves possess. But note how He says, not absolutely nor generally, *why believe ye Me not?* but hath added YE, hinting at those who were wont more fiercely to disbelieve, and indicating that there were some there who had haply a nobler mind, and did not preserve in their ways the accurate impress of Cain's stubbornness, but were even now going forward to being even enrolled among the children of God. For I say that we must not think that all the Jews were utterly immersed in untempered folly, but that some having *a zeal of God*, as Paul saith, *yet not according to knowledge*, did therefore delay a little as to the faith. But in those who were thus disposed we shall blame, as much looking unto wrath and intemperately kindled unto bloodthirstiness, the unholy scribes and Pharisees in particular, to whom will more fitly pertain the, *Why do YE not believe Me*, Christ as it were attributing to them as their own, boundless unbelief. For they were they who are the leaders and who persuade their subjects to go along with their profane-nesses. Rightly therefore are they accused as having *taken away the key of knowledge*, and neither entering in themselves, and hindering others. The YE therefore has its more especial application to the rulers.

47 *He that is of God heareth God's words; YE therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

We must here understand that certain are *of God*, not as though begotten of His Essence (for that were foolish), nor yet according to what is said through Paul, *All things are of God* (for since He is Creator and Maker of all things who giveth being to all, the Divine Paul saith that all things are of Him): but it will not harmonize so to understand it here, for all are of God, both bad and good, in so far as He is Creator of all. He says therefore that he is *of God* who by virtue and a right conversation is related to God, and accounted worthy of kinness to Him, in that He deigns to enrol such among His children. *He* therefore, He says, *that is of God* will receive most readily and gladly the Divine words (for that which is of kin and own is always dear) but he that is *not of God*, i. e., he who in no wise prizes relationship with Him, will not most gladly hear the Divine words: for neither will good easily inexist the bad, nor will longing for virtue be to them a thing worth fighting for, since their mind has been filled with the extremest depravity and looks to only its own will.

But when Christ says, *He that is of God heareth God's words*, let no one think that He is bidding us to give the Divine voice entry in merely our bodily ears. For who that is, even though he be a thoroughly bad man, will not surely hear the voice of him who speaketh, if he have not by some disease lost his hearing? But the word *heareth*, He here puts instead of Consents, believes and lays up in his mind, as it is said in the book of Proverbs, *The wise will receive commandments in his heart*. For that of the unwise or despisers the word borne about, like some meaningless sound and like some din that annoys to no purpose, forthwith departs from the recipients: but into the heart of the prudent like some generous soil it sinks in.

Full wisely does now the Lord, convicting the madness of the Jews and shewing that they blaspheme without restraint, say that His words are the words *of God*. For He reinstructs them (He says) to think more becomingly of Him and not to deem that of Joseph or any other of those on the earth did He of a truth spring, but to believe that of the Essence of God the Father He hath appeared God of God. Which they indeed understanding are annoyed and burn with hotter wrath, adding *iniquity to their iniquity*, as it is written, through those things whereby they insult Him yet more.

48 *The Jews answered and said to Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?*

Meet is it again to bewail the madness of the Jews and the exceedingness of their folly. For they are taken by their own voice, like wild beasts when they spring upon the hand of them who are slaying them, themselves against themselves lending impetus to the steel. For when reproved of lying as their habit and custom which had grown up with them, they immediately shew that it is true, and they are cut at hearing from the Saviour that they *are not of God*, yet immediately without an interval do they shew in themselves most exact image of the devil's wickedness. For *a Samaritan* and possessed do they dare to say that He is Who is sprung God of God, themselves rather having in themselves the bitter and God-opposing devil: for no man saith *Anathema Jesus*, save in Beelzebub, as Paul saith. Liars therefore and insulters and railers are they hereby too found, and used to fight against God, they shall pay fit penalty to the Judge That can do all.

We must enquire again here too the reason why they call the Lord both a *Samaritan* and possessed. For the prefacing, *Do not WE well say*, indicates that for some reason they vilify Him both as a *Samaritan*, and the other thing too which their utterance dared. They call Him therefore a Samaritan as being indifferent to the commands of the Law and recking nought of the breach of the Sabbath. For among the Samaritans there is no exact Judaism but their worship is mixed with foreign and Greek habits. Or in another way do they say that He is a *Samaritan*, seeing it was the habit of the Samaritans to falsely testify purity of themselves and to condemn the rest as defiled. On this pretext I suppose, *the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*, as it is written, and refuse also to mingle with some others, loathing after a sort the defilement thence arising, since thus to prate seems to them right. And the Lord condemning the ill-disposition of the Jews, used to call them devil's children, and to Himself He testifies entire blamelessness in regard to sin and utter purity saying, *Who of you is convicting Me of sin?* for this was the language of one who was plainly ascribing to Himself the uttermost purity, by reason that He could not fall into sin, and by calling the Jews Satan's children was condemning them as defiled and having their mind filled with all uncleanness, as is also true. On these accounts therefore do they call Him a *Samaritan*, they say again that He is possessed, because it is the wont of devils to transfer to themselves the honour due to God and recklessly to seize on God's glory. And this very thing they suppose that Christ does, when being man He puts Himself as it were into the place of God saying, *He that is of God heareth God's words*: for He is intimating (they say) of His own words that they are such. Of their railing, their blasphemy rather, against Him such is the Jews' plea and occasion for saying those things which pledged unto them the eternal fire.

And it comes to me to wonder at this also. They angered because they were often called devil's children and liars, shew in act that the charge belongs to them, which they ought rather by inclining themselves to virtue to have rubbed off. For their love of railing and saying that things belong to any which do not belong to them, are most fit not for those who have been enrolled among God's children but among the devil's children. And the wretched ones not only rail, lying against their own head, not to say against Christ, but they also affirm that they are doing so *well*, not so much as condemning their wickedness: and this is the proof of the completest blindness.

49 *Jesus answered, I have not a devil but I honour My Father and YE do dishonour Me.*

Gentle is the word, but nevertheless very pointed. For most emphatically does He say, *I have not a devil*, and putting Himself in contradistinction to them, He shews that He is free from their railing and that it is true of them. For unless themselves had a devil, they would (it is likely) have shuddered at calling Him possessed Who was attested to them by His Deeds as God. Most excellently therefore does He say, *I have not*, transferring the speech to them and allotting it rather to them by reason that so it was in truth. I therefore *have not* (He says) but *YE the devil*, and *I honour My Father*, saying that I am God and have beamed forth of God and affirming that I knew not sin. For it needed, it needed that He Who is of God be God and that He Who is of Him Who knoweth not sin should be beheld such as He of Whom He is. But if (as is necessary the opposite should be) refusing to offend you, I had not used such splendid language (for God would not be honoured if conceived of as having a Son not God) the Father (He says) would not have been honoured if He had been called the Father of one who falls into sin. Hence in witnessing most excellent things to Myself, I in no wise (He says) blaspheme as ye suppose, but rather *honour My Father*. *I honour Him* in another way too (for I say with justice of you that ye are not of God, since neither is it right that they who have come to this

pitch of wickedness and are drenched in all villainy should say that they are of God. For He honours and deems worthy of kin to Him not the liar and railer and blasphemous and haughty and insolent, nor yet one whose wont it is to seek to kill unjustly, but the gentle and meek and pious and godly and good. Hence in this way too do *I honour the Father*, putting forth from kinness with Him those who are condemned for utter wickedness; and YE *again dishonour* Me doing this, and attack the praise that belongs to the Father that ye may be caught, blaspheming not only against the Son, but now against Him too. For if *I* by witnessing of Myself things most excellent, *honour My Father*, he will surely (He says) dishonour Him, who clothes Him That is of Him with the deepest reproaches. On all sides therefore is Christ consistent with His own words, and clearly shews that He is God by Nature, and whereby He says that the Father is honoured when the kinness to Him of the multitude of the unholy is thrust off, by this doth He say that the Jews are in all respects alien to God: for what more unholy than they who say those things?

50 *I seek not Mine own Glory, there is That seeketh and judgeth.*

Herein is that seen to be clearly true which is said through Peter of the Saviour, *Who when He was reviled reviled not again, suffering He threatened not but delivered Himself to Him That judgeth righteously*. For see how He hearing things of all the worst and cruellest from those who are impiously raging against Him (and this full oft) He abides in His own gentleness, and in no wise departs from what beseems Him, for our ensample doing this too, that we zealous to *follow His Footsteps* might not be caught in rendering *railing for railing*, nor ought else of *evil for evil*, but might rather *overcome evil with good*.

I therefore *seek not My glory* (He says) and this not as though He were proffering to those who so willed the insulting of Him as a thing free from peril, nor yet as inciting any to go readily unto this impiety is He seen to say this, but He signifies rather thus: I am come (He says) not to make glory from you My business, nor desiring at all honour or fame: for being in the form of God the Father I have abased Myself and have for your sakes become Man as you. And He Who disdained not to take servant's form, when He might have remained in equality with God the Father and had the full enjoyment of things above mind and speech, how will He be deemed to be seeking glory from any and not rather to be enduring voluntary disgrace for others' good?

Our Lord here is either saying this, or in another way too we will suppose that He *seeketh not His own glory*. For it being in His Power to punish immediately those who insult Him and to demand satisfaction for their blasphemy as behaving ungodly against the Very Lord of all:-- --He bears calmly what is grievous and endures to that extent as not so much as to desire to grieve by a mere word the haughty ones, yet in order that blasphemy against God may not seem a beaten track to any, needs does He, forbidding them to advance thereto, straightway oppose as a barrier, the Father's wrath. For though the Son be longsuffering and do not forthwith take vengeance for His *own glory*, the Father (He says) will not be forbearing, for He will be an Avenger and will rise up against the insulters, not as though taking the part of another nor as though He were pleased to grieve in behalf of one of the saints insulted and deemed it became Him thus to do, but as though the sin reached up unto Him (for there is nought at all intervening between the Father and the Son, as far I mean as identity of Essence, even though either be conceived of as existing separately). For therefore does our Lord Jesus Christ too elsewhere say, *He that honoureth not the Son neither doth he honour the Father*. For the Son hath in Himself Naturally the Father Co-glorified and Co-existing, the

Father again hath in Himself the Son partaker of His Essence, so too of His glory in every thing. The wretched Jews therefore will be punished for their blasphemy against the Lord and Son, impious against the whole Consubstantial and Holy Trinity and grieving in the Son the Nature that is King of all.

Every one therefore who at all practiseth piety must therefore shun in ought offending the good God. For not because He doth not immediately bring His Anger on those who offend against Him, must we therefore be supine. For He is Good, *not bringing on His Anger every day, yet if we turn not, He will whet His sword*, as it is written, and will *bend* against us *His Bow*, wherein are *the instruments of death*, that is to say, every form of shame and intolerable trouble.

51 *Verily verily I say unto you, If a man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever.*

He shews that it is superfluous to array long defences against those who are wont to delight in blaming; for He bends Himself to what was necessary, I mean the calling through faith unto eternal life, and all but bidding farewell to those who had through their unlearning grieved Him, He kneads up His own discourse with a sort of art. For having before said of God, *He that is of God heareth God's words*, He immediately says, *If a man keep My word*, shewing that He is by Nature God and hence teaching that no further reach of impiety yet remains to the Jews when they have said that He hath a devil Who giveth eternal Life to those who will *keep His word*. For will He not be known by this too to be God by Nature? for to what other will pertain the being able to quicken for ever them who hear His words, save to Him Who is God by Nature?

The Divine *word is kept*, when a man does not transgress the Divine Commandment but is instant and does without delay that which is bidden and is in no wise accused of sloth in the Divine laws. But note again how great exactitude the words have, for He does not endure to say, *If a man hear My Word*, but, *If a man keep My Word*. For there receive into their ear the word of God, not men alone holden in sin, but also the unhallowed band itself of the devils: and verily Satan the chieftain of them all, when he daring to tempt in the wilderness our Lord Jesus Christ, kicking against the pricks by reason of his much ferocity of character, did set before Him the Divine word also, saying, *It has been written That He shall command His Angels respecting Thee to guard Thee in all Thy ways*. Therefore not in mere hearing is the word of salvation, nor in only learning is life, but in keeping what was heard, and as a certain rule and guide of life was He setting before [them] the Divine word. He says that the sure keeper of His words *shall not see death for ever*, not surely as taking away death in the flesh, but as God not accounting that death is death, for to Him nought is dead, in that His it is both to bring to the birth that which is not and easily to quicken that which when so wrought has decayed. Or He says that the saints *shall not see death in the age* to come, which *age* will strictly and more truly be conceived of as not having an end like this of ours; and He says that they who have kept His Divine Word, *shall not see death during that age*, not as though any should die after the Resurrection, for the death of all has been undone in the death of Christ and the might of decay brought to an end, but by *death* He means (as is like) being punished for ever. And you may learn this, viewing what Himself has said above: for *Verily* (He says) *I say to you, he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, he that disobeyeth the Son shall not see life*: albeit all shall rise again and shall hasten anew unto life, both faithful and faithless. For by no means is the Resurrection partial, but equally to all, so far at least that all must live again.

How then will *he that believeth not the Son not see life*, albeit all look to rise again? it is then manifest to every body that it is Christ's wont to call *life*, a long living in gladness and glory which refuseth to draw to a close, and this is treasured up in hope for the saints. As therefore He says that *he which disobeyeth the Son* shall have no sight of life albeit all look to live again, meaning here not the life of the body, but calling by this name the hope prepared for the saints: in the same way He says that the brave and intrepid keeper of His Divine *words shall not see death for ever*, not surely signifying hereby the death of the body, but the punishment prepared for the sinners. For as in the former joy is indicated through the word *life*, so here too punishment through saying *death*.

52 *The Jews said to Him, Now we know that Thou hast a devil.*

They again accuse the Truth who when called liars take it ill as though they were insulted: yet do they bear witness even against their will to the Saviour's words and whereby they dishonour Him, by these very same words they shew that He is unlying. But blind are these wretched ones and they have their heart replete with so great unlearning as not even to think that they ought to wipe off those charges about which they were accused, but even to fall into evils worse than the past ones and to be caught in their own toils. For see, see by what things they think to excuse themselves as though not in vain they had railed against Him, through these they are the more convicted of being liars and are the faster *holden* (so to say) *in the bonds of their own sins*. In most utter folly too do they here say, *Now we know*: for they who had full often bayed against Him and declared that He hath a devil, say that *now they know* it, condemning their preceding unbridledness of tongue. For if *now they know* it, formerly they did not know it: how then did they say that He had a devil who was not yet (as themselves deemed) condemned? A liar therefore long before too was the impious people of the Jews and with unbridled tongue did it use to belch out the devil's malice against Christ. They seize hold for the confirmation of their own idle speech on what was spoken by our Saviour Christ, for their much madness thinking (it seems) that the truth would aid a lie. Next by what means it was in their power to learn that they are transgressing impiously, madly insulting the Giver of everlasting life: they see not that by these very means they are advancing unto intensity of the disease. For they count that it is fit not only not to repent of those things, but they even say that they are persuaded that such is the truth.....And the Prophet is true in saying, *That right are the ways of the Lord and the just shall walk in them, but the ungodly shall be impotent in them*.

But one might be astonished at their unparalleled madness in this too. Beholding a not easily numbered multitude of devils and evil spirits crushed by one word of our Saviour and cast forth against their will from those in whom they are, they shudder not at saying that He has a devil, albeit assured by necessary arguments that Satan will not cast out Satan. For *every kingdom* (says Christ) *divided against itself is desolated and every house and city divided against itself is desolated. And if Satan cast out Satan he is divided against himself; how therefore shall his kingdom stand?* Lo therefore (may one say and with good reason) *a people verily foolish and without an heart, they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not*. For neither by word and teaching, nor viewing with the eyes of the understanding the Nature Supreme above all, are they changed so as to will to think better; they aim at It, yea rather each at his own soul, with excess of dishonour, like as with stones.

*Abraham died and the prophets died and THOU sayest, If any keep My saying, he shall not taste death for ever.*

When the all-daring folk of the Jews, lying against their own head, say to the Saviour, *Thou hast a devil*, they want to indicate nothing else than, Thou makest Thyself God, as having put about <sup>4</sup> Him the honour and glory due to the Divine Nature: for such is the practice of devils as we have said before also. And they conceive of nothing beyond what is visible nor acknowledge God the Word in human form, nor yet remove their mind some little from corporeal things, but fastening them only on those of earth, they are conversant only with the inferior part, as subject to touch. Hence the wretched ones are offended and suppose that the Truth, that is, Christ, speaks untruly, yea and imagine that He is lifting Himself up against the glory that befits God, not solely as admitting the being placed in equal rank with Him who rules all things but as even savouring something greater, and fancying He could do, or even promising to do, what God the Father did not. For why it is that they are vexed, saying that *Abraham and the Prophets* are dead, why they are putting forward the death of the Saints in order to overturn the Saviour's words, it is meet to see.

They want therefore to express something of this sort, We have not spoken falsely in saying that *Thou hast a devil*, the proof of our words is not far off; for lo, Thou promisest to overpass God Himself in miracles and that Thou canst easily accomplish what He hath not wrought. For *Abraham and the Prophets*, albeit they kept God's word, have not gainsaid the laws of nature, but swerved and have fallen into this common death of the body, and THOU sayest that he who keeps Thy words shall be utterly untasting of death: how then dost Thou not say that Thine acts are better than His? he who supposeth that he will surpass God, how will he not be clearly distraught? For they of their great unlearning are supposing that the Lord is here pointing to only the death of the body, and promising to those who obey Him that they shall be free from bodily death, even though it be the special business of those who are sober-minded to conceive that nothing dieth to God, being quickened though it die. For if it were brought from not being into being, how will not that which was already so brought, be more readily and easily called unto the future being, even though they conceive that it have been put to sleep some little space for economy's sake? The Jews therefore not witting the glory of the Saviour behave themselves haughtily against His words, and call Him possessed, as promising to do greater things than God has wrought: and in proof of their accusation they put forward the death of Abraham and the holy Prophets, by means whereof they think to convict Christ of boasting with empty words, in promising that He will give endless Life to them that keep His word, and also of doing injury to the glory of God, in that He confesses that He will give them the greater things.

*53 Art THOU greater than our father Abraham who died? and the Prophets died.*

Overshadowed in this too is the speech of the Jews and clearly big with some deep meaning: for what again do they here say, conceiving after the manner of men, yet bitter things according to their inward scope? for lo albeit (say they) they kept the Divine word, both *Abraham and the Prophets* have died, yet we heard Thee just now promise to some greater things. For whereby Thou sayest that they shall not die at all, they are full surely greater and in better case than those mentioned, in this very fact of not dying. Therefore (for tell us, they say, and answer us who ask it) art *thou* thyself *greater than Abraham* and the Prophets, who dost promise to make others greater than they are? though they have died, wilt thou not die, but remain immortal, though a Man and having a body of earth? how then

couldst Thou give to others what Thyself hast not? for Thou wilt surely die, being a Man. But if Thou *art not greater than Abraham* and the Prophets, being to undergo death in common with them, then Thou wilt not give to others a good which belongeth not even to Thyself: some such meaning hath what is indirectly said by them. And marvel not if they have no greater conception of Christ: for as we have oftentimes manifoldly said, they deem that He is a mere Man and one of those like us, wholly ignorant that the Only-Begotten God the Word was united to flesh. *Whom makest Thou Thyself?* Of their unmeasured madness they all but think to set right the Lord transgressing and as though He knew not what is becoming, they advise Him to think more lowly. For (say they) Thou hast not known, sir, Thine own nature, Thou forgottest that Thou wert a Man, Thou wert not contented with the measure given by God: for *whom dost Thou make Thyself*, who dost promise to give better things than those of His bounty and hazardously sayest that Thou wilt accomplish things beyond His Might?

They condemn therefore as having blasphemed, they dart like scorpions upon Him, they suppose it right to blame (thinking it just) Christ as contemning the due measure of the manhood, and springing up and bounding forth to such a degree as to be borne beyond the glory inherent in the Lord of all, yea and trampling on the honour of the holy Patriarchs and Prophets: for now they look to hear Him openly cry out (in reply to those things whereby they think to incite Him, uttering of their perversity *Whom makest Thou Thyself?*) I am greater than Abraham and the Prophets: albeit the Lord in saying this would have been most true, inasmuch as there is no comparison between men and God Who is above all nature visible and spiritual.

54 *Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing,*

The whole aim of the discourse looks in the direction of blessed Abraham and the Prophets, but the Saviour persuasively transforms to Himself what is expressed, not ignorant that prone to anger, even without any plea inviting thereto, is the Pharisee, and that he takes every one of the things uttered by Him, as an additional reason for more fiercely plotting His murder. For envy renders sin-loving those wherein it is, and persuades them more hotly to be vexed even at what they least ought. Something of this sort again does Christ will to signify. The Jews were springing upon and contradicting what was said by Him, perpetually speaking even to satiety, of Abraham and the Prophets and openly crying out, *Art THOU greater than our father Abraham who died? and the Prophets died:* in addition, they were accusing Him of springing upon the glory of the Saints and lifting up Himself exceeding far above them, saying to Him, *Whom dost Thou make Thyself?* It would then have behoved the Lord to answer in plain terms to these things and say clearly, I am superior and greater than Abraham and the prophets. But the mighty-minded Jew would not have tolerated the word, for he would forthwith have been indignant thereat and feigning to be a lover of the Father, and making believe to be advocating the glory of the saints, he would have attacked Christ more hotly and in his vexation would have seemed to be now rightly blood-thirsty: hence the Lord transferring to Himself the word says, *If I honour Myself Mine honour is nothing;* for He is all but saying. Let no one of those upon the earth think great things of himself; for if we would consider with ourselves what the glory of man is, we shall find it nothing at all; for *all flesh is grass and every glory of man as flower of grass.* No marvel is it then (He says) if Abraham has died and after him the prophets; for what is man's glory, when his nature tyrannized over by both death and decay is therefore likened to easily-fading grass? It seems likely that by skilfully transforming to Himself the measure pertaining to Abraham or the Prophets and saying, *My glory is nothing,* He is calling the Jew to the memory of Abraham saying most

clearly of himself, *I am earth and ashes*, and of the blessed prophets crying to God, *Remember that we are earth*. And we do not say that by this He is accusing the glory of the saints, Who glorifies them: but it was necessary and the word of profit was inviting Him to shew how great the difference between His Divine and Ineffable Nature and them which are subject to death and decay.

*My Father is which glorifieth Me.*

For exact elucidation and idea of the things signified I will use the same words and go through the same speech. The Jews ever putting forward as an invincible question and a problem not lightly to be set aside and saying, *Art THOU greater than our father Abraham who died? and the prophets died, whom dost Thou make Thyself?:* and supposing in truth that He Himself too will both die and be subject to death and decay and will not lieerein be greater than Abraham and the holy Prophets, and having no great opinion at all of Him:----at length of necessity does our Lord Jesus Christ Who is of the Eternity of Him That begat Him shew that He is Eternal, therefore He saith, *My Father which glorifieth Me* is, wishing the word is to be here conceived of not simply nor without enquiry, but rather putting it as indicative of His Father's Being: and the Son which is ineffably begotten of the Existing Father, full surely brings with Him the property of His Father, that is, Being. He is therefore superior to both Abraham and the Prophets, for the one have died as being earth-born of mortal fathers, the Other, incomprehensibly going forth from Him Who is, is ever glorified by His own Father, not as lacking glory (for He is *the King of Glory*) but as having His boast in being begotten of an Eternal Father, and being therefore Eternal Himself too, for He carries Essentially the Dignity of Him Who begat Him. Its being said that the Father glorified Him will therefore no ways injure the Son, in regard of God-befitting conception, seeing that the Father Himself too is glorified in like way by the Son, not as though He needed glory, but because the being known to be Father of such an Offspring, God, that is, as He, is esteemed to be and hath glory. Therefore the Son Himself too saith to the Father, *Father, glorify Thy Son that the Son too may glorify Thee*. Hence the glory of man is absolutely nothing, for that which is of earth falleth into death, so far as the body is concerned, even though it rise. The Only-Begotten is glorified by His Father, as having along with all the other goods that of His Essence as His very Own: to what extent He differs from the whole creation, the blessed Psalmist too briefly signifieth, crying aloud, *The Heavens shall perish but THOU shalt abide, and they all shall wax old as a garment and as a cover shalt Thou change them and they shall be changed, but THOU art the same and Thy years shall not fail*. For subject to decay is every thing that is made even though it have not yet decayed, holden by the Divine Counsel that it perish not; but Incorruptible and Eternal by Nature is God, not like the Creation gaining this by Another's will, but ever existing in His own goods, in which is also His special Property.

*55 Of Whom YE say that He is your God and ye have not known Him.*

He refutes them again and that with might as practising the piety of bare words only, but exceeding far removed from truly knowing God: and all but utters against them that which was declared through the Prophet: for *then* He said, *This people draweth nigh to Me, with their lips they do honour Me, but their heart is far from Me*, and now profitably and in conformity with that olden [utterance] does He say, *Ye have not known Him*. And it is true, for not the mere knowing that He is God,----not this surely is having knowledge of God (for that God exists and is, *the devils too believe and tremble*, as it is written) but in addition to knowing that He is, it is meet to have fit and due thoughts of Him; thus----what God really is

by Nature, I suppose that no sober minded person would enquire (for it were impossible to find out) but what things are His Attributes or not His Attributes, one may recognize and that with ease, if one is conversant with the sacred Scriptures. For we know and have believed that He is Mighty, we know that He is not infirm, we know that He is Good, we know that He is not bad, we know that He is Righteous, and again that He is not unjust. We know that He is Eternal, we are agreed and believe that He is not bounded by time, nor yet transitory, as WE are. The Jews therefore as far as in words and voice did say and clearly confess that God is their *God*, being none the less ignorant of Him, but as far as that He is Incorruptible and Eternal, we shall not find that they understood. For had they known, they would not (I suppose) have sunk down to that degree of distraction as to think that the Only-Begotten Son which cometh forth of His Essence would die; nor yet would they putting forward the death of Abraham and the Prophets have senselessly said, *Whom dost Thou make Thyself?* for would not a man with reason say outright that it was necessary that they who know Who the Father is by Nature should believe that such is the Son also who proceedeth forth of Him? for like as of a sweet source goeth forth full surely a sweet stream, and as of trees of a good sort of a good sort full surely is the offspring, so I ween must one needs believe that He who is of God by Nature is True God and He That is begotten of an Eternal Father, is Eternal as He who begat Him. Seasonable then is it to say here too to the Jews, *Either make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt or make the tree goodly and his fruit goodly, for a good tree cannot bear evil fruits nor a corrupt tree bear good fruits.* How then is it possible yea, rather how is it not replete with all folly, to deem that He who was begotten of an Immortal Father is mortal and to make Him who knoweth not corruption connumerate with those who are subject to decay?

*But I know Him and if I say that I know Him not I shall be like you a liar.*

I spake not falsely (He says) in saying to the Jews, *If any keep My word he shall not see death for ever;* for I am able to render undying, seeing I know that He of whom I am is mighty to do this, seeing I know that My Father is by Nature Life. I too am therefore as He is, Life that is by Nature and Lifegiving. But if I denied My power of quickening, I should be ignorant of My Father, the Property of whose Essence I possessing, am able to quicken as He. Hence I confess that I have all things that are in the Father, and affirming that I am as He, and for this reason professing to do His works, I full surely *know Him;* and if I say that I have not the properties of the Father uncounterfeit in Myself, *I shall be a liar,* as you are, as though I knew not the Father. Yea and when I say that the glory of Abraham and the Prophets is nothing, seeing they were of earth and men by nature, to whom death is not foreign, and that My glory is the Eternity of the Father, it is as knowing the Father that I say so: and if I say that I shall fall into decay as they, and that I am not co-eternal with the Father, I shall speak falsely like you, not knowing the Father of whom I am: for it were impossible that He who is of Him That is and ever abideth the same should not full surely both be and abide ever the same, for That which is begotten of Eternal is Eternal.

For one might taking the passage before us more simply, say that it was spoken in another way: *I know* (He says) My own Father; if I said I knew not, *I shall be a liar like you* who know not God, but say that you know Him.

And what is the mode of knowing and what the charges of not knowing, having already clearly said, we will add nothing superfluous.

*But I know Him and keep His Word.*

As far as belongs to the first contact of the words before us, we say this, that Christ is speaking again as man and abasing Himself to our level, not rejecting at its proper time servant-befitting guise. He says therefore that He knows the Father and keeps *His word*. And we do not surely say that He of necessity witnesses these things to Himself nor yet that He is recounting ought of what pertains to Him, but there is much art mixed up herein. For through His saying that He knows the Father and keeps *His word*, He shews that the Jews mind the contrary to the things which He affirms that He has, in that they neither know God, nor yet think that they ought to keep *His word*: for then would they have received with all zeal Him that was foreheralded through Moses and the Prophets. And we shall find among ourselves too some such fashion of speech, goodly and most excellent, having the force of rebuke and gently intimating to some the evils wherein they are, but cutting off their anger at being reproved. For instance let there be a man religious and otherwise good, who reproaching the thief and the drunkard says, *I am a religious person, I have not stolen what is another's, nor yet have I ever been drunk.* And such an one is not surely bearing witness to himself by this, nor shall we suppose that he is thus speaking, but he is putting the reverse of his own acquirements on those whom he is reproaching. Thus therefore our Lord Jesus Christ too says that He knows the Father and keeps *His word*, in reverse wise hereby putting about the unholy Jews, that they neither know God nor yet endure His word, or deem worthy of any observance at all the Law prescribed them from above.

But if we must in another way too apply to what is before us and look more subtilly at what is covertly intimated, we shall say this besides, The Son knows His own Father, not having knowledge of such kind as is in us, but Godbefitting and inexplicable. For as man that is begotten of man, not as though learning from any other but from whence himself is, is not ignorant of the nature of him who begat him; so the Son too from whence He is knows His own Father and preserves *His word*, i. e., has the definition of His Essence preserved whole in Himself, for λόγος means definition. For the λόγος of a man, i. e., the definition of his essence, is, a living creature rational, mortal, recipient of mind and knowledge: the λόγος for example of an angel will be the definition of his being. But of God by Nature we may not receive count or definition, for we know not what He is by Nature, but the Son knoweth His own Father and Begotten of His Essence knoweth what He is by Nature Who begat Him; and taking of our usage and serving Himself of human words, He says that He retains in Himself the Father's *word*, as though the definition of His Essence: for He is the Image of Him That begat Him and the Impress in no wise charged with unlikeness but having in Himself all the God-befitting Excellencies of Him Who begat Him.

*56 Abraham your father exulted to see My Day and saw and rejoiced.*

He here calls *day* nought else save the time of His Advent wherein the Very Light beamed upon us and the Sun of Righteousness arose, the darkness relaxed that held us like a mist while the *prince of this world* yet tyrannized, darkening (so to speak) the whole world with his perversities, thrusting it down unto idolatrous error, diversely darkening the mind of each one. Therefore the Divine Psalmist too knowing as a *day* the thrice-longed-for time of His Advent, fore-uttered it in the Spirit, *This is the Day which the Lord made, let us exult and rejoice in it.* Otherwise, it is the custom of the holy Scripture to call the time for each work, *day*, as, *For the day of the Lord of Hosts is upon every insulter and haughty one and they shall be abased,* and again, *What will ye do in the day of the assembly and in the day of the feast of the Lord?* yea and the Psalmist says that *in that day* shall the *thoughts* of certain *perish*, donning again as *day* the time of the Divine and looked-for Tribunal, wherein

will nought avail to the renowned of the world the deceit of their olden *thoughts* and the empty swelling of the brow at its wealth.

*Your father Abraham* therefore (He says) *exulted to see My Day and saw and rejoiced*. And how or when we shall suppose that blessed Abraham saw the *Day* of our Saviour Christ, i. e., the time of His Advent with flesh? Not open to view is the utterance (for one cannot take it and just speak and explain it) yet considering well what belongs hereto (as we are able) we will say that God revealed His own Mystery just as to one of the holy Prophets. Or we shall grant that he truly saw the day of the Lord's slaughter (on account whereof all things have turned out auspiciously unto us and were made prosperous), when for a type of Him he was enjoined to offer up for a sacrifice his only-begotten and first-born, Isaac: for it is like that as he was executing the priest's office at that time, the exact force of the Mystery was made clear as in a type in that which was wrought.

One may give other occasions also for this to those who are more zealous for learning. For he saw *three men at the oak in Mamre*, yea and received promise from God that he should be a *father of many nations*, which could in no other way be fulfilled, save that the Gentiles were called through the faith Christ-ward, inscribing Abraham their father and about to *sit down with him in the kingdom of heaven* and to co-partake with him in the munificence unto all good things of our Saviour. Blessed *Abraham* therefore (He says) *saw and seeing rejoiced at My Day*. And why Christ proceeds to say these things also, we must needs speak of.

The Jews beholding Him a Man by reason of the veil of flesh, were conceiving of nothing God-befitting about Him, but were supposing that He too is mortal like us, as being brought from not being into being, and they would not of their great ill-counsel believe that He was Eternal, as being of the Eternal Father. In order then that He might clearly shew, that He is not recent nor just-made as are we, but that He was known of their very oldest Fathers also as being Eternal, does He say these things. In the same does He (it seems) profitably reproach them, because acting ill-advisedly and foolishly minded they spurn what was a very gala to the beginner of their race. For he did but *see* and he *rejoiced*, they having Him and it being in their power to enjoy Him insult Him by their unbelief and set themselves in braggart wise against so glorious grace. Or perhaps He covertly intimates this that He is both greater and superior to Abraham seeing it was to him a festal assembly, to only know somewhat of Him: for He could not say it openly and apart from any veil, by reason of their being mighty to wrath, but He indicates it in another way.

And let no one suppose that Jesus in saying *Abraham your father* [died], contradicts Himself, in that He in one place removes them from relation with Abraham, saying, *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham*, but now again calls them Abraham's sons: but we must know that well does He in either case direct His discourse unto the truth. For in the former, defining the quality of spiritual nobility, He depicts a relation in sameness of habits, here He allots them mere bare kindred of the flesh, that both in the former He may be true, and here not false.

57 *The Jews said therefore to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?*

Utterly without understanding is the Jews' speech, and big with much absurdity, and one may wonder (and with much reason) at their proceeding to so great lack of understanding, as to be

utterly unable to conceive as they ought. For though our Saviour Christ had devised full many turns of speech, over and over going through the same words and manifoldly indicating therein His own Eternity, they think no whit more than they see with the eyes of the body, but as though utterly distraught and the whole power of their mind deranged, they reach not forth their heart unto what beseems God, but as if He were some man like us, *then* barely beginning to be and be accounted among things that are, when he was born, they senselessly accuse Him of a lie, not even deeming aright of what they heard Him say. For He said that *Abraham* had seen His *Day*, they turn about to the contrary the force of His word, for (say they) *Thou art not yet fifty years old and how hast Thou beheld Abraham?* miserable therefore is the senseless Jew, ever comrade of much uninstructedness, and making madness his wild foster brother.

58 *Jesus said to them, Verily verily I say to you, before Abraham was I am.*

Again does Christ advance to His wonted and favourite contrivance, for He speaks at times exceeding obscurely and overshadowing His exposition with diverse veils suffers it not to be open to all. But when He sees that the hearers understand nothing at all, then having stripped His discourse of its obscurity, He sets it before them plain and clear. And this He studies to do on the present occasion. For since He found that they understood nought (albeit a long discourse had been gone through) nor yet were able to understand that He is both Eternal as being of an Eternal Father, and that He is incomparably greater than Abraham as being God, He now says openly, adding *Amen* in the rank of an oath for confirmation of the things said, *Before Abraham was I am*. And we shall in no wise think that the Only-Begotten is boasting of being before Abraham only, for He is before all time and hath His Generation most ancient, being without beginning in the Father. But since the comparison with Abraham was before Him at present, He says that He is elder than he; just as if the number 100, for instance, were to say, I am greater than 10: it would not surely be saying this, as having the next place above ten, but because it is exceeding much superior and above ten. He therefore is not rivalling Abraham's times, nor does He affirm that He is some little precedent to his times: but since He is above all time, and o'erpasseth the number of every age, He says that He is before Abraham, uttering a truth.

And exceeding rightly and well does He of Abraham put, Was, of Himself, *I am*, shewing that to him that was made of things which are not, will full surely follow the necessity of decaying, to Him That ever is will never befall the passing into not being.

Greater therefore is He and Superior to Abraham: greater as Eternal, Superior for that He decays not as he does.

59 *They took up therefore stones to cast at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went forth of the temple.*

They see not the truth (in that they are verily both liars themselves, and have a *liar* for their father, as the Saviour saith) but are angry at no vexing thing. Supposing that they ought to contend for the glory of their forefather as though wronged, they were kindled thereby unto no reasonable anger, albeit they ought to have known the force of the things said and who it was Who thus speaks: but turning aside unto most unreasonable and beast-befitting madness, they endeavour to aim at Him with stones, as though they had not sufficiently offended Him by their already much railing, or were drawing upon themselves by their folly some small

wrath. Hot therefore and most foolish is the attempt of the Jews, but it passes not into act out of season, for the time of His Passion was yet to come.

Christ hides Himself, not retreating beneath walls, not interposing ought else before His Body, but by the power of His Godhead rendering Himself invisible to them who seek Him. And it was not enough to escape their notice but He also goeth forth *of the temple*, limning to us a sort of type herein of things spiritual. For to them that love Him He is manifest always (as it is said, *Blessed are the pure in heart, because they shall see God*) but hastens away from those who are prone to fight against God, and is seen of none who behave impiously, nor yet loveth to be with after a sort and to dwell with them that persecute Him, but rather doth He depart from them and removeth, taking away with Him all joy, and leaving bare of graces from Him those by whom He is evil entreated, in regard (I mean) of their wishing to do Him wrong, and of the attempts of the impious ones, even though Christ shews all things to be vain, by His unspeakable might bringing to nought the unholy daring of those who transgress against Him.

Chap. ix. *And passing by He saw a man blind from his birth.*

While the Jews were raging against Him and now essaying to wound Him with stones, forthwith He goes forth of the temple that is among them, and takes Him away from the unholiness of His pursuers. And in passing by, straightway He seeth one *blind from his birth*, and setteth him as a token and that most clear that He will remove from the abominable behaviour of the Jews, and will leave the multitude of the God-opposers, and will rather visit the Gentiles, and to them transfer the abundance of His Clemency. And He likens them to the *blind from his birth* by reason of their having been made in error and that they are from their first age as it were bereft of the true knowledge of God, and that they Have not the light from God, i. e., the illumination through the Spirit.

It is meet to observe again what Christ's visiting the blind man as He was *passing by*, signifies. And it comes to me to think that Christ strictly speaking came not for the Gentiles but for Israel's sake alone (as Himself too somewhere says, *I was not sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*), yet was the recovery of sight given to the Gentiles, Christ transferring His Mercy to them as by the way, because of the disobedience of Israel. And this it was again which was afore-sung through Moses, *I will provoke them to jealousy with not a nation, with a foolish nation will I anger them*. For a foolish nation was it which serveth *the creature more than Creator* and like irrational beasts feeds on just all unlearning, and giveth heed only to things of the earth. But since Israel which was wise by reason of the law and prudent from having Prophets *angered* [God], it in its turn was *angered* by God, they who aforetime were not prudent being taken into the place belonging to these, for to them through faith was Christ *made wisdom and sanctification and redemption*, as it is written, i. e., both light and recovery of sight.

**CHAPTER I. That not from sins of the soul prior to birth do bodily sufferings befall any, nor yet does God bring the sins of their fathers upon any, punishing those who have nothing sinned, but brings righteous doom upon all.**

S. John ix. 2, 3 *And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

Being desirous (and not without good reason) that the mystery should be explained, or rather being Divinely guided, the most wise disciples were urged to ask instruction on the subject. And they are inquisitive with profit, by this means furnishing an advantage not so much for themselves as for us. For we are benefited greatly both by hearing the true explanation of these things from the Omniscient, and in addition also by being warned off from the abomination of effete doctrines. These errors not only used to exist among the Jews, but are also advocated now by some who are insufferably conceited in their knowledge of inspired Scripture and seem to pass for Christians. Such persons of a truth delight too much in their own sophistries, indulging their private fancies, and not fearing to mingle Greek error with the doctrines of the Church. For the Jews, when they were in misery, greatly murmured, as if merely suffering the penalty of their forefathers' impiety, or as if God were most unreasonably laying upon them the sins of their fathers, and scoffed at it as a most unjust punishment; they even said in a proverb: *The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge*. And these again, being afflicted with a like and kindred ignorance to those just mentioned by us, earnestly maintain <sup>9</sup> that the souls of men existed and had their being before the creation of their bodies, and that these souls having turned willingly to sin even before the existence of their bodies, then souls and bodies became united, when in the order of chastisement the souls received birth in the flesh. But in one brief statement the follies of both these parties are exposed by Christ, Who confidently affirms that neither had the blind man sinned nor his parents. He refutes the doctrine of the Jews by saying that the man had not been born blind on account of any sin either of himself or of his ancestors, no, not even of his father or mother; and he also overthrows the silly nonsense of the others, who say that souls sin before their existence in the body.

For some one will say to them and very reasonably: How, tell me, does Christ say that neither had the blind man sinned nor his parents? And yet we could not grant that they were altogether free from sin. For, inasmuch as they were human, it is I suppose in every way likely or rather it of necessity follows that they fell into errors. Pray then, what time does Christ mean to define as that concerning which His word shall appear to us true, that *neither did the man himself sin, nor indeed his parents*? Surely He speaks of that which is previous to birth, when having no existence whatever, they did not sin.

Again, concerning such matters, how truly frivolous and beside the mark it is to think that souls sinned before the existence of their bodies, and on that account were embodied and sent into this world, we have argued at length at the beginning of the present gospel, <sup>10</sup> in interpreting and commenting on the words: *That was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*; and it would be superfluous for us to discuss the subject again. But it is necessary to say whence it occurred to the Jews to fall into this opinion and supposition; also to shew clearly that from inability to understand the Divine Word, they mistook its proper meaning. Israel once dwelt in tents in the wilderness, and God called His hierophant Moses on Mount Sinai; but when he extended his stay there with God to the number of forty days, he seemed to be a loiterer to those who had influence with the people, who both rose up against Aaron then being alone, and falling back in contempt upon the idolatries of Egypt, cried saying: *Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him*. Then what followed thereupon I think it necessary to speak of briefly. *They made a calf*, as it is written, and at this God was justly provoked to anger: then indeed He threatened to destroy the whole congregation at once. Moses fell down before Him and sought for pardon with much entreaty. The Creator of the universe granted forgiveness, and promised to punish

the people no further than that He would not continue to go up with them to the land of promise, but would send with them instead His special Angel as it were in the position of leader. At this Moses was sorely grieved, and as God was not willing to go up with the people, he inferred with some likelihood indeed that the Divine anger was not yet thoroughly appeased. So he prayed again earnestly that God would accompany them, knowing that the mere guidance of an Angel would not suffice some of the Israelites, and perhaps also fearing the weakness of the people and therefore deprecating the holy angels' hatred of evil; and he entreated the Good One, the Lover of men, the Supreme King and Lord over all, to be willing rather to be present with those so prone to transgress. For he knew that God would pardon them not once only but many times, and that He would grant mercy to those who should offend. And God also consented to this. Then Moses sought a sign from Him, even that he might see Him, as a full assurance and testimony that He had forgiven them completely: For, said he, *if I have found grace in Thy sight, manifest Thyself to me; that I may evidently see Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight, and that I may know that this great nation is Thy people.* This also God granted, as far as it was possible, assuring in every way His own servant both that He had forgiven the people their sin and that He would go up with them to the land of promise. Then, giving as it were a sort of finishing touch to the promises, which seemed wanting, He commands Moses to hew out two other tables for Him, the former ones as we know having been broken in pieces, so that He might write down the Law yet again for the people; even in this affording no small evidence of His kindness towards them. And when Moses was ready also for this, *the Lord descended in a cloud, as it is written, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before his face and proclaimed: The Lord God is pitiful and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, and true, and keeping justice, and shewing mercy unto thousands, taking away iniquities and unrighteousnesses and sins; and He will not clear the guilty; visiting the sins of fathers upon children and upon children's children unto the third and fourth generation.*

But now attend carefully, for I am about to take up again the question proposed at first. God declares Himself to shew His kindness and His incomparable love of men in a manner suitable to Deity. For we maintain that these were the words of God, not of any other speaker; not (as some think) the words of the all-wise Moses, offering up laudatory prayers on behalf of the people. For that it is the Lord of all Himself speaking these things of Himself, no other than the blessed Moses himself will bear witness to us, teaching in the Book of Numbers, when the Israelites had again taken offence from unseasonable cowardice, because some, who by Moses at God's command had been sent to spy it out, spake evil of the Land of Promise. For when they returned from the land of the strangers and were come again to their own people, they spat out bitter words concerning it. Affirming the land to be so wild and rugged that it was capable of eating up its inhabitants, they excited so much hatred of it in the minds of their hearers, that bursting into tears they now desired again to be in Egypt with all its hardships. For, *Let us make, said they, captains, and let us journey into Egypt.* And when God threatened to destroy them, Moses again prayed, and all but reminding Him also of the promise He had given, went on to cry: *And now let Thy strength be exalted, O Lord, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy and true, forgiving transgressions and iniquities and sins; and He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the sins of fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generation. Forgive this people their sin according to Thy great mercy, as Thou hast been favourable to them from Egypt even until now.* It appears therefore that He Who is God over all attributes to Himself love of men and the greatest forbearance towards evil. It will be fitting in the next

place to set forth the cause on account of which the Jews, being deceived, could suppose our good God to be mindful of injury and exceeding wrathful.

For my part, I do not think them able to lay hold of the Divine Oracles in any way, or to cavil at them as if they have not expressed what is most excellent or have strayed far from the law of fairness. On the other hand, I think that they only indulge their own ignorance in this matter, to suppose the sins of fathers to be really brought upon children, and the Divine anger to be stretched so far that it may even reach to the third and fourth generation, exacting unjustly from innocent persons the penalties of others' crimes. Would it not at all events be more becoming to them, if they were wise, to hold the opinion that the Source of righteousness and of our moral laws would do nothing so shameful? For even men inflict punishments according to the laws upon habitual transgressors, but by no means visit them on their children, unless perchance they are detected as partners and associates in the misdeeds: and as to Him Who prescribed to us the laws of all justice, how can He be detected in inflicting penalties such as among ourselves are greatly condemned? Then this also in addition is to be considered. By the mouth of Moses He published laws innumerable, and in many cases those living in bad habits were ordered to be punished, but nowhere is a command from Him to be found, that children should share the penalties incurred by their sinning fathers. For penalty is for those who are detected in crime, and it was ordained that it was fitting to punish those only who were obnoxious to the law. To think as the Jews do is therefore surely impious, but it is certainly the part of a wise man to investigate the Divine mind and by every means to observe what things are agreeable to Nature, the queen of all things. Rightly therefore let us hold that the God of the universe, setting as it were before Him His inherent clemency, willing to be admired for His pure love of men and to this end proclaiming: *The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy and true, forgiving transgressions and sins*, would not wish to be known as so mindful of evil that He extends His anger even to the fourth generation inclusive. For how can He still be longsuffering and of great mercy, or how does He forgive transgressions and sins, Who cannot endure to limit the infliction of penalty to the person of the sinner, but extends it beyond the third generation, and like a sort of thunderbolt assaults even the innocent? Surely then it is quite incredible and of almost utter folly, to suppose that God attributes to Himself, together with love of men and gentleness, anger so lasting and so unreasonable.

To these things another may be added by those who support the Jewish opinion, and do not allow that God knows a suitable time for every kind of action. For if He promises longsuffering and is found to yield very easily in laying aside His anger, why is He seen to have added: *Visiting the sins of fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generation?* Of course this was done for no other reason than a wish to frighten those who expect remission of sins from Him, as shewing that the object of their hopes should never be realized, since He Who with reason is grieved with them is so mindful of evil and tenacious in anger.

But further, tell me what the hierophant Moses himself indicates to us. Would he not seem to do a thing most opposite to all reason, if, when Israel had given offence and was about to suffer punishment, he proceeded to pray for them, and, while asking for oblivion of the offence and an exhibition of God's love for men, he should unseasonably say to God: Thou art of such a nature that Thou requitest the sins of fathers upon children's children? For this would be rather the way of one instigating to anger than of one calling for mercy, and of one asking mindfulness of injury rather than longsuffering. But in my opinion by these words he

seemed to importune God and to recall to His memory almost the very words which He Himself uttered, when He publicly proclaimed His inherent goodness. For in what way He is longsuffering and of great mercy, and how He is by nature One Who takes away sins and transgressions, will be most excellently discerned, in the very dealings wherein He seems to be somewhat bitter.

In the next place then I think it is fitting to set forth in what way we may rightly understand the words which were spoken by God. *The Lord*, He says, *is long suffering and of great mercy, taking away transgressions and sins*. Then we will read that which immediately follows as if with a note of interrogation: *And will He not surely clear the guilty?* So that thou mayest understand something of this sort: Will not, says He, the longsuffering and greatly merciful God, Who takes away transgressions and sins, will He not surely clear the guilty? Of course it is not to be doubted: certainly He will thoroughly purge him. For how is He longsuffering and of great mercy and how does He at all take away sins, unless He purges the guilty? At these words He goes off to a demonstration of His inherent longsuffering and forbearance, even that He will visit the sins of the fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generation: not chastising the son for the father; do not think this: nay, not even does He lay upon a descendant the faults of his ancestors like a burden: but meaning something of this sort. There was (we will suppose) a certain man, a transgressor of laws, having his mind full of all wickedness, and who, being taken in this manner of lining, deserved to be punished without any respite; but yet God in forbearance dealt with him patiently, not bringing upon him the wrath he had merited. Then to him was born a son, a rival of his father in impious deeds and outdoing his parent in villainy: God also shewed longsuffering towards this man. But from him is born a third, and from the third a fourth, in no way inferior to their progenitors in wickedness, but practising equal impiety with them. Then God pours out wrath upon them, already even from the beginning deserved by the whole race, after He has tolerated as much as and even more than it behoved Him. A postponement of vengeance even unto the fourth generation, how is it not truly a commendation of Divine gentleness? For that He is wont to chastise neither son for father nor father for son, it is not hard to learn from those words which by the voice of the prophet Ezekiel He clearly spake to the Jews themselves, when over this same thing they murmured and said: *The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge*. *And*, says he, *the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, what mean ye by this proverb in Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord, this proverb shall be said no more in Israel. For all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son; they are mine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of his son: each in his own iniquity in which he hath sinned, in that shall he die*. But I suppose no one is so foolish as to think that God did not at the beginning legislate in the most excellent way, but somehow changed His plans and altered His ideas for the better, and like one of ourselves was with difficulty and after subsequent deliberation able to improve His legislation to what was most fitting. In such a case, if we praise the earlier laws we shall clearly be blaming the later, and if we express an opinion that the later laws are superior we shall condemn the earlier by our lower estimation of them. God too will legislate in opposition to Himself, and will have fallen short, as we may have done, of a perfect standard, by ordaining one thing at one time and a different thing at another time. But I suppose every one will say that the Divine Nature cannot be in any way subject to such inconsistencies as this, and could not even have ever fallen short of absolute perfection.

It is then as a demonstration of His incomparable munificence that He alleges the words quoted above, viz:---Requiting the sins of fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generation. For that the merciful God is wont to punish sinners not immediately, but rather to do it reluctantly and to put off punishments for long seasons, thou wilt understand from His own words: *And I was full of Mine anger and restrained it, and: did not make a full end of them.* And again in another place: *For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* Thou seest that He was indeed full of anger, for some were perpetrating deeds deserving fulness of anger, but as God He forbore patiently and delayed to make a full end of those who offended Him. But in order that we may exhibit to thee as in a picture the proof of what we have said and from actual events demonstrate the praise of God's love for men to be contained in this text, I will bring forward something recorded in the Sacred Books, and will endeavour from the Divine Scripture itself to show the sins of fathers visited on children even to the third and fourth generation; not unjustly, but justly, and in a manner merited by the sufferers themselves. The story shall be summarized, because of the length of the narrative.

Well then, in the First Book of Kings we read that after other kings Ahab reigned over Israel, and burning with a most unrighteous desire for another man's vineyard, he slew the lord of it, even Naboth. For although he did not himself command that deed, yet he expressed no anger at the wickedness of his wife. At this God was of course wroth, and spake to Ahab by Elijah the prophet: *Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast killed and also taken possession, therefore thus saith the Lord, In the place where the swine and the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, there shall the dogs lick thy blood; and the harlots shall wash themselves in thy blood.* And again immediately: *Thus saith the Lord, Behold I bring evil upon thee, and will kindle a fire behind thee, and will utterly destroy from Ahab every male and him that is shut up and left in Israel. And I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahab, for the provocations wherewith thou hast provoked Me to anger and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel he spake, saying, The dogs shall eat her within the outer-wall of Jezreel. And him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat, and him that dieth in the field shall the birds of the air eat.* When the Lord of all unmistakably threatened to do all these things and to inflict them, Ahab rent his garment and entered into his house; as it is written, *He was pricked to the heart, and burst bitterly into tears, and girded his loins with sackcloth.* In which state God pities him, and begins to allay His anger, and putting as it were a bridle to His sudden fury says to the Prophet: *Hast thou seen how Ahab was pricked to the heart before Me? I will not bring these things in his days, but in his son's days I will bring the evil.* Will it not therefore be right to inquire upon whom these things were fulfilled? Well, the son of Ahab was Ahaziah, *Who*, Scripture says, *did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father Ahab, and in the way of Jezebel his mother.* Then the son of Ahaziah was, Scripture says, Joram, of whom again it is written that he walked in *the sins of the house of Jeroboam.* Next to Joram reigned a third Ahaziah, of whom again the language of the narrative says that *he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as did the house of Ahab.* But when the time had now come for punishing the house of Ahab, which had not ceased from impiety towards God even to the fourth generation, there was anointed to be the next king over Israel Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi, who slew Ahaziah, and beside him Jezebel; he slew also seventy other sons of Ahab, carrying out as it were the Divine wrath to the uttermost, so that he obtained both honour and favour on account of it. For what saith God to him? *Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in Mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit upon thy throne.* Thou seest therefore that He reluctantly punished in the fourth generation the wicked descendants of wicked men, whereas to him

from whom He received honour He extends His mercy even to the fourth generation. Cease therefore, O Jew, to accuse the righteousness of God. As a form of encomium certainly we will accept that saying: Requiring the sins of fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generation.

*3 But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

That which lies before us is hard to explain and capable of causing much perplexity, so that it would be perhaps not unlearned to pass it over in silence, and because of its excessive difficulty to leave it. But when the Jewish doctrines have been refuted, *lest* another thing akin to them, like *any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you*, as Paul says; (for perhaps some will hence suspect that the bodies of men are affected with sufferings, in order that the works of God may be made manifest in them;) I, for my part, think it seasonable to subjoin a few words with reference to this, that thereby we may both keep off any injuries arising from this source, and leave no loophole for deceptive arguments. That God does not bring the sins of parents upon children unless they are partakers of their wickedness, and further, that embodiment is not on account of sins previously committed by the soul, we have shown. For by speaking in opposition to these two errors, Christ in a wonderful manner overturned them, since He unquestionably knows all things, as God; or rather, since He Himself is the over-ruler of our affairs, and the ordainer of those things which befit and are deserved by every man. For in that He says the blind man had not sinned, nor was suffering blindness on that account, He shows that it is foolish to suppose the soul of man to be guilty of sins previous to its birth in the body: moreover, when He openly says that neither had His parents sinned that their son should be born blind, He refutes the silly suspicion of the Jews. Therefore, after He had taught His disciples as much as was necessary for them to know in order to refute the doctrines which we have above stated, and imparted to them as much as it was fitting to exhibit to the understanding of man, He is silent as to the rest, and sets forth no further with clearness the reason why he was born blind who was guilty of no sin previous to birth, attributing to the Divine Nature alone the knowledge of all such things and a management of affairs which is past finding out. But again He very skilfully transfers the language of His answer to something else and says; *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

Does then, some one will say, the Lord declare to us these words here as a certain doctrine, as if for this single reason ailments attack the bodies of men, *that the works of God should be made manifest in them?* It does not seem so at all to me, but rather it is evidently absurd so to imagine or suppose; He certainly is not dogmatizing at all (as some might think) when He says this. For that it happens to some to be smitten on account of their sins, we have often learnt from the Holy Scriptures. Paul indeed plainly writes to those who with feet as it were unwashed dared to approach the holy altar, and with profane and unholy hand to touch the mystical Eucharist: *For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. For if we judged ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* Accordingly, upon the sickly and dead, it is sometimes by Divine wrath that the suffering has been brought. But also our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, after He had loosed the paralytic from a long disease, and had miraculously made him whole, says: *Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.* Surely He says this as though it might happen that unless the man took heed he would suffer something worse for his sin, although he had once escaped and by the Lord's favour been restored to health. But perhaps some may say: we will grant that these things are

rightly said; but as to those who suffer something terrible from the cradle and their earliest years, or even from the very womb are afflicted with diseases, it is not easy to understand what kind of explanation any one can satisfactorily give. For we do not believe that the soul previously existed; nor indeed can we think that it sinned before the body, for how can that sin, which has not yet been called to birth? But if there has been no sin nor fault preceding the suffering, what then shall we allege as the cause of the suffering? Truly, by our minds we cannot comprehend those things which are far above us, and I should advise the prudent, and myself above all, to abstain from wishing to thoroughly scrutinize them. For we should recall to mind what we have been commanded, and not curiously examine things which are too deep, nor pry into those which are too hard, nor rashly attempt to discover those which are hidden in the Divine and ineffable counsel alone; but rather concerning such matters we should piously acknowledge that God alone knows some things, peculiar to Himself and excellent. At the same time we should maintain and believe that since He is the fountain of all righteousness, He will neither do nor determine anything whatever in human affairs, or in those of the rest of creation, which is unbecoming to Himself, or differs at all from the true rectitude of justice.

Since therefore it becomes us to be affected in this way, I say, that the Lord does not speak dogmatically when He says, *that the works of God should be made manifest in him*; but rather He says it to draw off the answer of the questioner in another direction, and to lead us from things too deep for us to more suitable ones; for that is a thing He was in some sort wont to do. And that this assertion is true, hear again how when the holy disciples were earnestly inquiring about the end of the world, and very curiously putting questions concerning His second coming, and going far beyond the limits proper for man, He very evidently draws them away from such interrogations. *It is not for you*, says He, *to know times or seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea.* Thou hearest that He does not permit us at all to seek into those things which no way are fit for us, but rather directs us to come back to what is necessary. So also in this place, having spoken plainly what was meet for us to learn, He reserves the rest in silence, knowing that it behoved Himself alone to understand this. But lest by being altogether silent He should as it were invite them again to ask Him about the same things, in the manner of alleging a reason, and as though courteously fashioning some such answer as the questions seemed to deserve, He says, *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Which is just as if He had said, in different and simpler language: The man was not born blind on account of his own sins or the sins of his parents; but since it has happened that he was so affected, it is possible that in him God may be glorified. For when, by power from above, he shall be found free from the affliction which lies upon him and troubles him, who will not admire the Physician? Who will not recognise the power of the Healer shown forth in Him?

I think this sense is latent in the words before us, but let those who are clever think out the more perfect meaning. And if any think fit to be contentious and say that the man was born blind for the very end that Christ might be glorified in him, we will say to them in reply: Do you suppose, O good people, that this was the only man in Judea who was blind from birth in the time of the coming of our Saviour, and that there was no other whatever? Surely, even though unwilling, they will confess, I think, that in all likelihood very many such were found in all the land. How was it then that Christ only exhibited His kindness and power to one of them, or at all events to but a small number? Concerning these things, however, I deem it superfluous to hold an argument. Wherefore, the other opinion being rejected as foolish, we

will hold it true, that after Christ had revealed to us as much about the questions asked as was meet for us to learn, He passed on to another subject, skilfully turning aside His own disciple from searching into such things.

4 *We must work the works of Him that sent us, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

Lo here again in these words, plainly and reasonably, He rebukes in a similar manner the disciples, as if they had done something they ought not, and having left the high road, well-trodden and firm, had ventured on another which seemed not at all fit for them. For, why do ye ask, says He, things touching which it is good to be silent? Or why, leaving that which suits the time, do ye hasten to learn things beyond the capacity of man? It is not a time for such curiosity, says He, but for work and intense zeal; for I deem it more becoming, passing by such questions, to execute zealously God's commands, and since He has appointed us Apostles, to fulfil the works of the Apostleship. When the Lord numbers Himself with those who are sent, and enrols Himself among those who ought to work, in no way does He make Himself really one of us, or say that He Himself is subject as we are—by a certain servile necessity to the will of a commander: but He uses a common habit of speech, even to ourselves trite and familiar. For, especially when the bare substance of an argument is not calculated to impress our hearers, we are wont to join ourselves to them, and to reckon ourselves with them. For which reason doubtless the most wise Paul addressed the Corinthians as if concerning himself and Apollos, and at last added: *Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos; that in us ye might learn not to be wise beyond the things which are written. While therefore it is day, says He, let us work the works of Him that sent us; for the night will come, when no man can work.* In these words He calls the time of bodily life, day; and the time we are in death, He calls night. For since the day was given for works, but the night for rest and sleep, therefore the time of life in which we ought to work what is good, people call day; and the time of sleeping, in which nothing whatever can be done, they call night. *For he that hath died is justified from sin,* according to the saying of Paul, being found unable to do anything, and therefore unable to sin.

Thus Holy Scripture really does recognise a theory of a metaphorical day, and in no less degree a corresponding theory of night. And if taken into consideration at the right moment each of these metaphorical interpretations exhibits the aspect of the questions under investigation in a manner free from error. But concerning unsuitable subjects, and when it ought not to be done, to attempt violently to drag round to a spiritual interpretation that which ought to be taken historically, is nothing else than unlearnedly to confuse what is profitable if understood simply, and to spoil its usefulness through excess of ignorance.

5 *When I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.*

Shall we then think that Christ is now not at all *in the world*, or do we believe that He, having ascended to heaven after His restoration to life from the dead, no longer dwells among those in this present life? And yet being very God, He fills and tends not only the heavens and what is beyond the firmament, but also the world which we inhabit. And just as while He associated in the flesh with men, He was not absent from heaven, so if we think rightly we shall hold the opinion that even though He is out of the world as regards the flesh, His Divine and ineffable Nature is yet no less present among those who dwell in the world. Yea, it overrules the

universe, being absent from nothing that exists, neither having abandoned anything, but present everywhere in all things; and, filling all the visible universe and whatever may be conceived of as beyond it, is fully contained by Itself alone.

The next thing therefore is to understand what it is that the Lord says in these words. Having cast aside as a stale thing the suspicion of the Jews, and shewn that they were foolishly entangled in unsound doctrines; having given counsel to His own disciples that it was more becoming for them to strive to love the things that please God, and to leave off pursuing a search into what was altogether beyond them; and having in a manner warned them that the time for work will slip away from those who do nothing, unless they devote all their zeal to the wish to do well, while they are in the flesh in the world;---He holds up Himself as an Example in the matter. For behold, He says, I also work at My own proper work, and since I have come to give light to those things that were in want of light, it behoves Me to cause light to dwell even in the eyes of the body, if they are diseased with the terrible lack of light, whensoever any of the sufferers come before Me.

We will accordingly understand what was said as spoken with reference to the occasion, and in a simple sense. For that the Only-Begotten is indeed a real Light, with the knowledge and power to illumine not only the things that are in this world, but also every other supramundane creature, is not to be doubted. And if we accommodate the sense of the words to the matter in hand, I do not think we shall be found guilty of setting forth anything unworthy of credit.

*6, 7 When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and with the clay thereof anointed his eyes, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

Accepting the cure wrought upon this blind man as a type of the calling of the Gentiles, we will again tell the meaning of the mystery, summing it up in few words. First then because it was merely in passing, and after leaving the Jewish temple, that He saw the blind man: and again from this circumstance also, that without in-treaty and no man soliciting Him, but rather of His own accord and from a spontaneous inclination, the Saviour came to a determination to heal the man; hence we shall profitably look upon the miracle as symbolical. It shows that as no intreaty has been made by the multitude of the Gentiles, for they were all in error, God, being indeed in His nature good, of His own will has come forward to shew mercy unto them. For how at all or in what way could the vast number of Greeks and of Gentiles beseech God for mercy, having their mind darkened by gross ignorance, so as to be in no wise able to see the Illuminator? As therefore certainly the man who has been healed, being blind, does not know Jesus, and by an act of mercy and philanthropy receives an unhoped-for benefit; so also has it happened to the Gentiles through Christ. On the sabbath too was the work of healing accomplished, the sabbath being capable thereby completely to exhibit to us a type of the last age of the present world, in which the Saviour has made light to shine on the Gentiles. For the sabbath is the end of the week, and the Only-Begotten took up His abode and was manifested to us all in the last time, and in the concluding ages of the world. But at the manner of the healing it is really fit that we should be astonished and say: *O Lord, how great are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou performed them all.*

For some one perhaps will say: Why, although able to set all things right easily by a word, does He mix up *clay* from *the spittle*, and anoint the eyes of the sufferer, and seem to

prescribe a sort of operation; for He says, *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam?* Surely I deem that some deep meaning is buried beneath these words, for the Saviour accomplishes nothing without a purpose. For by anointing with the clay He makes good that which is (so to speak) lacking or vitiated in the nature of the eye, and thus shews that He is the One Who formed us in the beginning, the Creator and Fashioner of the universe. And the power of the action possesses a sort of mystical significance; for that which we said just now with reference to this, and what we consider may be understood by it, we will mention again. It was not otherwise possible for the Gentiles to thrust off the blindness which affected them, and to behold the Divine and holy light, that is, to receive the knowledge of the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity, except by being made partakers of His Holy Body, and washing away their gloom-producing sin, and renouncing the authority of the devil, namely in Holy Baptism. And when the Saviour stamped on the blind man the typical mark which was anticipative of the mystery, He meanwhile fully exhibited the power of such participation by the anointing with His spittle. And as an image of Holy Baptism He commands the man to run and wash in Siloam, a name whose interpretation, the Evangelist, being very wise and Divinely-inspired, felt it necessary to give. For we conclude that the One Sent is no other than God the Only-Begotten, visiting us and sent from above, even from the Father, to destroy sin and the rapacity of the devil: and recognising Him as floating invisibly on the waters of the sacred pool, we by faith are washed, not for *the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, as it is written, but as it were washing away a sort of defilement and uncleanness of the eyes of the understanding, in order that for the future, being purified, we may be able in pureness to behold the Divine beauty. As therefore we believe the Body of Christ to be life-giving, since it is the temple and abode of the Word of the Living God, possessing all His energy, so we declare it to be also a Patron of light; for it is the Body of Him Who is by nature the True Light. And as, when He raised from death the only son of the widow, He was not satisfied with merely commanding and saying: *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise*; although accustomed to accomplish all things, whatsoever He wished, by a word; but also touched the bier with His hand, showing that even His Body possesses a life-giving power: so in this case He anoints with His spittle, teaching that His Body is also a Patron of light, even by so slight a touch. For it is the Body of the True Light, as we said above. The blind man accordingly departs with what haste he can, and washes, and without delay performs all that was bidden him, shewing as it were in his own person the ready obedience of the Gentiles, concerning whom it is written: *He inclined His ear to the preparation of their hearts*. The wretched Jews then were hard of heart, but they of the Gentiles were altogether docile in obedience and bear witness of it in experience. The man having forthwith, removed his blindness, washing it away together with the clay, now returns, *seeing*. For it was Christ's pleasure that thus it should come to pass. Excellent therefore is faith, which makes God-given grace to be strong in us; and harmful is hesitation. For the *double-minded man is unstable in all his ways*, as it is written, and *shall receive nothing whatever from the Lord*.

8, 9 *The neighbours therefore, and they which saw him aforesaid that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Another said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he.*

Hard indeed to be believed are such surpassing wonders, and that [which exceeds man's experience], from whatever source it comes, finds the intellect to be intolerant of it, and is scarcely treated with honour when convincingly forced upon people's minds. For the attempt to investigate what is beyond the grasp of reason indicates a state of mind akin to insanity. Hence, I think, the unbelief of some who had previously known the blind man haunting the

cross-roads, and who were astonished afterwards when they beheld him unexpectedly able to discern objects with clear vision. And they are divided, from uncertainty regarding the event, and some who consider more carefully the greatness of the deed say that it is not the same man, but one remarkably like him whom they had known. For indeed it really is not strange that this opinion should be expressed by some, who by rejecting the truth were compelled through the greatness of the miracle to adopt an involuntary falsehood. Others again keep their minds free from obvious objections, and in reverence and fear they recognise the wonder, and say that it is the same man. But he who was healed quickly settled the question, by making his own statement, most worthy of credit as concerning himself. For no man can be ignorant of his own identity, even though very ill in delirium. Thus in every way the marvellous deed, discredited on account of the unusual degree of power it displayed, testifies that the Wonder-worker is to be reckoned among the great.

*10 They said therefore unto him, How were thine eyes opened?*

With difficulty they consent to believe that he was the same man whom they had known aforetime, and abandoning their hesitation on this point, they ask how he had got rid of his blindness, and what was the manner of such an unhoped-for event. For it seems usual for those who are astonished to make careful inquiries and to investigate the manner of what has been done; and these persons resolved to do the same, not without the guidance of God, in our opinion, but in order that even unwillingly they might learn the power of Our Saviour from the narration and clear announcement which the blind man made to them. This thou mayest accept as a beautiful type of the converts from among the Gentiles becoming teachers to the people of Israel, after escaping from their former blindness and receiving the illumination which comes from Our Saviour Christ through the Spirit. And that what we have said is true, the events themselves will loudly proclaim.

*11 He answered, A man that is called Jesus made clap, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam and wash. So I went away and washed, and I received sight.*

He appears still to be ignorant that the Saviour is by nature God, for otherwise he would not have spoken of him so unworthily. He probably thought of Him and esteemed Him as a holy Man, forming this opinion perhaps from the somewhat indistinct rumour concerning Him that went about all Jerusalem, and was repeated everywhere in the common talk. Moreover we may observe that those afflicted of body and struggling with abject poverty never feel overmuch zeal in occupying themselves about making acquaintance, their unmitigated poverty exhausting as it were their mental faculties. Therefore he speaks of Him merely as a *Man*, and describes the manner of the healing. He must surely have been compelled by the magnitude of the miracle to attribute a glory beyond the nature of man to the Wonder-worker, but from giving credit to the belief that holy men were enabled by God to work miracles, he was probably drawn to look upon Jesus as one of them.

*12 And they said unto him, Where is He? He saith, I know not.*

Not from devout feelings do they inquire for Jesus, nor are they moved to inquire where and with whom He was uttering discourses, so that they might go and seek some profit from His doings; but being blinded in the eyes of their understanding, even much worse than he had formerly been in those of his body, they are inflamed with most unjust anger, and rage like untamable beasts, thinking that Our Saviour had broken a commandment of the law, that one

namely which forbids any work whatever to be done on the sabbath. And they raved immoderately, because He had dared actually to touch clay, rubbing the dirt round with His finger, and in addition to this had also directed the man to wash it off on the sabbath. Wherefore in anger and desperation they spit out the words, *Where is He?* without making any excuse for speaking so rudely. For in their pettiness they bestow abuse upon Him Who rightly deserved the highest honour, though they must have admired Him if they had been sincere and had known how to honour God's power with befitting praises. But thrusting aside in their extravagant maliciousness that which I think they ought in fairness to have thought and done, they devote themselves to untimely zeal. And falsely supposing that they were performing a duty in supporting the law which had somehow been wronged, they inquire for Jesus as one who had worked on the sabbath and thus wronged the excellent commandment by healing the man. Certainly they may have supposed that God was (so to speak) cruel and not compassionate on the sabbath, and was very angry when he saw a man healed, who was made in His own image and likeness, and on whose account the sabbath was instituted. *For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath*, according to the saying of the Saviour.

13, 14 *They bring to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. Now it was the sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*

They bring the man to the rulers, not that they might learn what had been done to him, and admire it; for it was not likely that men travailing with extreme envy against our Saviour Christ could ever be pleased by any such thing; but that they might publicly convict Jesus, as they thought, of a transgression of the law, and accuse Him of being a wrong-doer in having made clay on the sabbath. For rejecting the idea of the miracle because of its incredibility, they lay hold of the deed as a transgression, and for a proof of what had been done they exhibit the man upon whom He had dared to perform the miracle. At the same time they think to succeed in gaining a reputation for piety according to Jewish customs, and proceed to strain the legal commandment to the utmost. For in Deuteronomy He Who by Nature is Very God, enjoining the minds of the pious not to be drawn aside to another, nor to think there were any gods besides Him, but bidding them to serve Him only in truth, and to hate bitterly those who should dare to counsel them differently, thus speaks: *If thy brother by thy father or mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or thy wife in thy bosom, or friend who is equal to thine own soul entreat thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, thou shalt not consent to him, neither shalt thou hearken to him, and thine eye shall not spare him, and thou shalt feel no regret for him, neither shalt thou at all protect him; thou shalt surely report concerning him.* And so the Jews, looking only at the errors of others, and foolishly treating everything by the regulation laid down concerning one thing, brought before the magistrates those who were detected in, any action contrary to the law, thinking that thereby they were honouring the Lawgiver. For this reason I think they enquired for Jesus, saying, *Where is He?* but being unable to find Him anywhere, they take as it were in the second place him upon whom the wonder had been wrought, that he might seal with his own voice the testimony to the breach of the law which had been committed by the actions of the One Who healed him on the sabbath.

When the blessed Evangelist is making it manifest to us that they were immoderately vexed at the making of clay on the sabbath, he fitly hints at the absurdity of the thing, by adding: *Now it was the sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay.*

15 *Again therefore the Pharisees also asked him, How didst thou receive thy sight?*

They busy themselves about the manner of the healing, stirring up as it were the fire of malice which was in them to a greater heat, and ask unnecessary questions, not failing, as it seems to me, to recognize the miracle. For is it not altogether absurd to suppose that they, who had come bringing to them the man who aforesaid was blind, had not expressed at all the reason for which they had brought him? But as if they were not sufficient to accuse Christ, the magistrates compel him to confess with his own mouth what had been done, believing that by this means the malicious accusation would have greater force. For observe that they do not ask simply and barely if he had been healed, but they seek rather to hear how he received his sight; this was what they were particularly anxious to hear:----"He made clay, and anointed mine eyes." For it was in this that they foolishly conceived all the transgression of the law to lie, and imagining that laws from above were violated, they thought they were righteously vexed, and that punishment ought to be inflicted on Him Who vexed them.

*And he said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes and I washed, and do see.*

They receive eagerly, as if it were a sort of food for their envy, his confession of the marvel, and gladly seize upon the excuse for their rage against Jesus. For the man who had been blind relates everything on this occasion very simply, and speaks very abruptly, in brief expressions praising as it were his Physician: for he is somewhat astounded at the nature of the deed. Probably he may have thought in his mind that Jesus had miraculously enabled him to see by anointing him with clay, an unusual medicament; and it seems to me that it was very significantly and with sharp meaning that he said *He made clay, and anointed mine eyes*. For it was as though one might suppose him to say: I know that I am speaking to a malicious audience, but nevertheless I will not on that account conceal the truth. I will requite my Benefactor with my thanks; I will be above unseasonable silence. I will honour by my confession the Physician, Who did not trouble me by an elaborate process of healing, or perform the operation by the knife and surgery, or effect what was necessary by compound mixtures of drugs, or adopt any ordinary method, but rather exhibited His power by strange devices. *He made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and I washed, and do see*. It is perhaps worthy of notice that the man very rightly added, as the climax to his description of these events, the words: *And do see*. For it is almost as though he said: I will prove to you that the power of the Healer was not exerted in vain; I will not deny the favour I received, for I now possess what I formerly longed for; I, he says, who was blind from birth and afflicted from the womb, having been anointed with clay, am healed, *and do see*. That is, I do not merely shew you my eye opened, concealing the darkness in its depth, but I really see. I am henceforth able to look upon the things which formerly I could only hear about. Lo! the bright light of the sun is shining around me: lo! the beauty of strange sights surrounds my eye. A short time ago I scarcely knew what Jerusalem was like; now I see glittering in her the temple of God, and I behold in its midst the truly venerable altar. And if I stood outside the gate, I could look around on the country of Judea, and should recognise one thing as a hill and another as a tree. And when the time changes to evening, my eye will no longer fail to notice the beauty of the wondrous objects on high, the brilliant company of the stars, and the golden light of the moon. Thereupon I shall be amazed at the skill of Him Who made them; from *the beauty of the creatures* I as well as others shall acknowledge the Great Creator. So that however little breadth of imagination or elegance of argument he uttered, his language is pregnant with all this power when he adds: *and do see*, after saying: *He made clay and anointed mine eyes*. For the preacher's style of argument, which we employ, does not exclude all that is graceful in imagination, or reject it as useless. He therefore who had received mercy from Christ, when

questioned before the priests, speaks as we have said, declaring in a truly innocent manner, and to the best of his ability, the power of the One Who had healed him.

*16 Some therefore of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the sabbath.*

In their folly they say *He is not from God*, Who has the power to work the works of God; and although they see the Son crowned with an equal measure of glory with the Almighty Father, they are not ashamed unreasonably to cast upon him the blame of impiety; and disregarding the report of the miracle, they attack the Wonder-worker with their peculiar envy, and carelessly accuse as an evildoer Him Who knew no sin. They foolishly believe the whole law to have been broken by His daring to move one finger on the sabbath, although they would themselves *loose their ox from the stall and lead it away to water*; moreover, *if a sheep fell into a pit*, as it is written, with much eagerness they would *lift it out*. So *they strain out the gnat*, according to the Saviour's word; for this was their ordinary custom. With much folly and very desperately they do not give credit to Christ for the marvellous deed, nor from the work of healing do they henceforth acknowledge Him to be what He is; but they cavil pettily about the sabbath, and, as if in their opinion all virtue was observed by merely remaining unemployed on the sabbath, they totally deny His relationship to God, saying that He was *not from God*; although they ought rather to have understood that the One before them had authority over His own laws, and that it was pleasing and acceptable to God to do good even on the sabbath, and not to leave without hope one who needed mercy. For whenever will any of you refuse to praise the doer of good deeds, or what set time can exercise a tyranny against virtue? Yet while they admire the ancient hero Joshua, who captured Jericho on the sabbath, and commanded their forefathers to do such things as are customary for conquerors, and himself by no means observed the proper sabbath rest; they persistently attack Christ, and as their personal ill-feeling prompted them, not only strive to take away from Him the glory due to God, but also to rob Him of the honour due to holy men. And being stirred up by their mere malice to speak very inconsiderately, they pour forth a charge of impiety against Him Who justifies the world, and for that very purpose came from the Father to us.

*But others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them.*

Even these still think too meanly, speaking and reckoning as of a mere man; only, being convinced by the marvellous deed, they give the palm to Christ rather than to the law; and, putting the proof afforded by the Divine sign in opposition to the sabbath rest on this occasion, they appear in a better light as just judges. Yet, was it not acting greatly in opposition to the precepts laid down respecting the sabbath, to withdraw altogether the charge of transgression, and to acquit Him of sin, Who had not hesitated, when He thought fit, to do something even on the sabbath? But, coming to this conclusion by reasoning which seems unanswerable and has much common sense in it, they argue thus. For it is manifest and acknowledged beyond question, that to those who neglect the Divine law, and set at nought precepts ratified from on high, God would never give the power to achieve anything wonderful. To Christ, however, in the opinion of the Jews, He gave such power, although He slighted the law respecting the sabbath. Certainly the doing something on the sabbath, does not necessarily involve sin, but neither can any one doubt that the doing of good works is far better than remaining unemployed on that day. At all events, as the Saviour Himself somewhere else says, it is permitted to the Levites to minister on the sabbath, and they

exercise their functions on that day without blame, or rather their remaining unemployed would be blamable. For would any one find fault if they were detected sacrificing oxen on the sabbath, or even attending to other kinds of offerings? He would on the other hand more probably accuse them if they were not doing their duty and fulfilling the regulations of Divine service. When therefore things dedicated according to the law for the good of certain persons are brought to the Divine altar even on the sabbath without prohibition, is it not more fitting still that a kind action should be performed unto a man, for whose sake the marvellous deed might be acceptable even on the sabbath? By just reasoning therefore, some of the Jews are inclined to an excellent judgment, and putting off by an effort from the eyes of their understanding the mist of ignorance that characterises their nation, they admire the glory of the Saviour, (although as yet not very ardently, for they speak of Him less worthily than they ought;) and they separate themselves from those who are actually condemning Him. For the one part unholily allowed themselves to be swayed by envy more than by just reasoning, and treat as a transgression that which in its nature could not in any wise be blamed; whereas the others, rightly considering the nature of the action, condemn such a foolish accusation.

It is of course possible that it was with reference to some other matter that they chose to say: *How can a man that is a sinner do such signs?* Perhaps, to put it briefly, they are eager to defend the general practice of holy men. For, say they, if we allow that it is quite possible for habitual transgressors to make themselves glorious by extraordinary actions and to be seen working marvellous deeds, what is there any longer to hinder those fond of making accusations from bringing charges against most of the prophets, or indeed by and bye attacking the blessed Moses himself, and lightly esteeming one so venerable, even though he was borne witness to by the most mighty actions of all? These men therefore may be contending for the reputation of the fathers as at stake in Christ, treating the circumstances respecting Him as a sort of pretext for shewing their love towards them.

*17 They say therefore unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him, in that He opened thine eyes?*

They imagine those who are disposed to judge fairly to be wandering in their wits, and they seem to me to have forgotten altogether Him Who says: *Judge righteous judgment;* and having been taken captive as it were in the bonds of envy, they cannot endure to listen at all to any word that honours Christ. Turning away from any one wishing to speak of His miracles as from some one most hostile to themselves, and mistrusting their own powers of explanation, they haughtily address their words to the man that had been healed. Again they ask what had been many times told them, having already proclaimed their belief that He Who had performed an action contrary to the sabbath was both worthless and wicked. They think that in this way the blind man will join them in condemning Him, and take his cue from their words; that he will suppress all outward signs of gratitude, out of fear and trembling before their anger, and readily charge Jesus with contempt of the law, because of its being the sabbath. Evil therefore was the design of the Pharisees, and it cannot be doubted that it was foolish also. For how could the voice of one thankless man weaken the force of the miracle? And would not Christ's Divine glory appear, if it so happened that the blind man, overcome by fear, should deny the kindness he had received, in order to avoid suffering anything from those wont to inflict pain? But envy is powerful to persuade those who are bursting with it to eagerly do any thing in their passion, even though it involves conduct very fairly open to ridicule. The mind which is free from such thoughts, however, is not entangled by foolish arguments; but, ever preserving its natural excellence untarnished, is borne directly towards a

right conclusion, and does not go beyond the limits of truth. Mean therefore and insolent are the Pharisees, thinking that those who choose to think and speak rightly are wandering in their wits, and endeavouring to compel the man to speak evil words concerning Him Who had miraculously bestowed on him an unhopèd-for blessing. But he was disposed to express gratitude and had been brought nigh to a clear knowledge by means of the miracle.

*And he said, He is a prophet.*

They receive a sharp arrow into their hearts, who do not admit fair and just reasoning, and are eager to seek that only which gratifies their malice. *For*, as it is written, *the crafty man shall not meet with prey*. For their zealous design is upset, contrary to their expectation; and they are greatly disappointed of their hope when to their surprise they receive the reply: *He is a prophet*. For the man who had been healed, judging very rightly, agrees with the opinion of the other party. For they, not unwisely considering the nature of the action, maintain that a man who was a sinner could not perform such a deed: and he upon whom the marvel has been wrought, all but pursuing the same track of argument, declares Jesus to be a prophet, not yet having accurately learned Who He is in truth, but adopting a notion current among the Jews. For it was customary with them to call wonder-workers prophets, deeming that their holiness was thereby borne witness to by God. Accordingly, just as they wisely determine not to dishonour the majesty of the Divine sign oaf of reverence for the sabbath, but argue from it that He Who wrought it was altogether guiltless of sin; so also I suppose this man, thrusting aside the petty cavil respecting the sabbath, with worthier thoughts gives glory to Him Who had freely given him sight, and, having allotted him a place amongst holy men, calls him *a prophet*. He seems to me, moreover, not to have thought too highly of the regulations of the law; for [otherwise] he would not have admired Jesus so much, or raised his Physician to the rank of a prophet in spite of his apparent transgression of the sabbatical law. Having certainly derived benefit from the marvellous deed, and having arrived at a better state of mind than that of the Jews, he is therefore obliged to admit a superiority to legal observances in the Wonder-worker, Who, in doing good works, deemed an infringement of the law altogether blameless.

18, 19 *The Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight, and asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?*

The envy against the Healer which is hot within them does not allow them to believe what is acknowledged by all; and, swayed by the frenzy of madness, they of course care little for the discovery of truth, and speak falsely against Christ. First they applied pressure to the man himself, and now they are seen to be no less rashly distressing his parents, but with the very opposite result to that which they intended. They propose a most superfluous question to the man's parents, and they seem to me, in their unbounded folly, to dishonour the very law which they so venerated and so extravagantly upheld. For the neighbours, as it is written, brought *him that aforesaid was blind*, and setting him face to face with those who were asking these questions, they reported most clearly that he had been born blind, and bore witness that now he had received sight. Thus, whereas the law distinctly says that *every matter is established by the mouth of two or three witnesses*, they set aside the testimony not merely of two or three but probably of many more, and go for further evidence to the parents of him who was healed, thus acting contrary to the law as well as to good manners. But the law is nothing to them when they are eager to accomplish something agreeable to their private

pleasures. For when the testimony borne to the miracle, by the voices both of the neighbours and of the man who was healed, put them out of countenance sorely against their will; they expected to be able to persuade those now being questioned, to make light of truth, and rather to speak as they wished them to speak. For see in how overbearing a manner they put their question, saying: *Is this your son, who ye say was born blind?* For they all but avow their certain intention to treat them very dreadfully, and they frighten them with unbounded fear, calling as it were by compulsion and violence for that which they wished to hear, namely the answer: "He was not born blind." For they had but one object and that an impious one, namely, to loosen the hold which Christ had on the multitudes, and to turn away the simple faith of such as were now overcome with admiration. And just as men who strive to take some well-fortified city environ it on every side and besiege it in all manner of ways; at one time they are eager to undermine the foundations, at another they strike blows with battering-rams against the towers: so the shameless Pharisees lay siege to the miracle with all their evil devices and leave no method of impiety untried. But it was not possible to disparage as unworthy of credit what was well known to all, or to distort that at which many had marvelled into a less certain conviction.

*20, 21 His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but how he now seeth, we know not; or who opened his eyes, we know not: ask him; he is of age to speak for himself.*

They acknowledge as true that which was in no wise doubtful and for which it was hardly likely they would suffer anything disagreeable; for they say that they recognise their own offspring, and do not deny what really was the case at his birth, but distinctly affirm that he was born with the affliction. Nevertheless they shrink from relating the miracle, leaving the nature of the deed to speak for itself, and maintaining that it would be much more suitable to put the question as to how he had been healed to their son himself. Fear of danger is certainly a powerful motive to turn men aside from what it befits them to do. Being greatly alarmed by the harshness of the Pharisees, they do not observe that which is somewhere well said: *Strive for the truth unto death*. It is likely that they did suffer something of another sort; for the poor man is always timid, and, losing through, his poverty the power to offer bold resistance, often takes refuge in an unwilling silence, and a forced acquiescence: as if already completely crushed in spirit by the vexation of poverty, he seems insensible to being burdened with other misfortunes. We suspect that the parents of the blind man suffered something of this sort, even though their answer on the whole is composed with great plausibility. For every one would agree that the recognition of the man as their son was a matter as to which it was far more reasonable to interrogate them than the man himself, whereas the question as to the Physician was one not so much, for the parents to answer as for him who had experienced the benefit of the wonderful operation. Thus they distinctly acknowledge what they know, inasmuch as they are fairly called upon for this; but what he could tell more truly, since he had the more accurate knowledge, about that they call upon him to give information. And it is not without Divine guidance. I think, that they added to their speech the words: *He is of age*. For this too seems to indicate the impiety of the Pharisees. Because, if he that received sight was qualified by his time of life to form a sound opinion; when he relates the miracle and how he was treated, he will not speak with the mind of a boy, but with an understanding now well matured, and probably able to support by argument those speakers with whom he agrees. This then will of necessity tend to shew the utterly shameless incredulity of the Pharisees. For behold! they will believe neither the neighbours nor the blind man himself, although it is not with an immature intellect that he gives evidence, nor on account of a boyish understanding

does he easily glide into falsehood; but *he is of age*, a fact which prevents his being ignorant of the nature of affairs.

*22 These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

Well and fitly does our Lord Jesus the Christ utter this woe at the heads of the Pharisees: *Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.* For again let the devout person consider if the beauty of truth will not correspond to these words; for Christ could never be deceived. For behold! besides the unwillingness of any one of them to teach the doctrine of the presence of the Christ among them, they both terrify with cruel fear those who could perceive Him by the brilliance of His actions, and, by imposing a severe compulsion in their savageness, hinder any member of their company who seemed disposed to do so from acknowledging His miracles. For by putting out of the synagogue him who was right-minded and therefore disposed to believe, the wretches do not blush of their own authority to alienate in a manner from God him who cleaves to God; and to persuade him that the Lord of all is a partaker of the madness against all which they themselves possess. The admirable Evangelist however defends such, and says that the persons questioned were overcome by fear and therefore unwilling to say that the Christ had healed their son: so that by exposing the magnitude of the fury of the Jews, he might make it evident to those that come after. For what could be more inhuman than the conduct of these men, who deem right-minded persons worthy of punishment, and bring under the necessity of being punished, such as at all understand Him Who was proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets? And we shall find from the sacred Scriptures that the unholy design of the Jews was not unknown to the holy Prophets. For He Who searcheth the hearts and reins, *piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart*, to Whom *all things are naked and laid open*, saith by Isaiah: *Woe to the rebellious children: thus saith the Lord, Ye took counsel, but not of Me; ye made covenants, but not by My Spirit; to add sin to sin.* For he who saith that *Jesus is Lord* most certainly will speak *in the Holy Spirit*, according to the words of Paul; but any one who professes the contrary will not speak in the Holy Spirit, (how could it be possible?) but rather in Beelzebub. Surely then the *covenants* of the Jews were *not made by the Holy Spirit*, for they *added sins to sins*. They first of all draw down the doom of disobedience upon their own heads, and then they communicate it to others by forbidding them to confess the Christ. Surely the design is full of the grossest impiety, albeit the Psalmist laughs at those who to their disappointment engage in a fruitless undertaking, saying: *Thou O Lord shalt confound them in Thy wrath, and the fire shall devour them; their fruit shalt Thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men: for they intended evil against Thee; they imagined a device which they are not able to perform.* For they were quite unable to carry out a design which fought against God, although often and in ten thousand ways they attempted to obscure the glory of Christ. Therefore *they were turned back*, that is, were driven from the face and presence of the Lord of all, justly being addressed with the words: *Walk in the light of your fire, and in the flame which ye kindled.*

24 *So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner.*

Being unable to stop the man from speaking well of Christ, they attempt to attain a similar end by another method, and proceed to entice him in a sort of coaxing way to fulfil their private aim. Trying by many arguments to make him forget Christ altogether, and not even mention Him as a Physician, they say most craftily that he ought to ascribe *glory to God* on account of the marvellous deed, thus pretending piety. Nevertheless they bid him agree with and believe themselves, even when they maintain the highest impiety possible by saying that *He is a sinner*, Who came to destroy sin. They bring forward no proof whatever of this slanderous assertion, but being boasters and thinking something great and extraordinary of themselves, merely because they were leaders of the people, they command implicit confidence to be put in their discernment of character, and lay it down as a matter of duty. For the words, *We know*, will be found pregnant with surpassing arrogance by those who closely examine what they imply. But thou mayest in no small degree wonder at the foolish mind of the Jews from this also, that whereas they decree that *glory* should be ascribed *to God* on account of the miracle, since He alone is the doer of such deeds, they condemn One Who works the works of God by His own might; and not only do the miserable people act thus themselves, but they compel others to agree with them. Yet when they aver that by their own unaided knowledge they are sure that Christ *is a sinner*, they are ignorant that they assert something most harmful to themselves. For, being wont to boast greatly of their learning in the Law, and exhibiting intolerable conceit about the Sacred Scriptures, they will suffer a greater penalty; because, it being in their power to know the mystery of Christ, which by the Law and the Prophets in many ways is typified and proclaimed, they with much heedlessness cling to their self-imposed ignorance; or, if they possess accurate knowledge, are always most pertinaciously unwilling to do what they ought. For they ought rather to instruct the mind of the common people to comprehend the mysteries of Christ, and to try to lead others to the knowledge of what it behoved them to know. But they, profuse in arguments and mighty in boasts, and crying out with far too high an opinion of themselves: *We know*, set aside the words of the Law, account the voice of Moses as nothing, and think the declarations of prophets to be as vain as those of the thoughtless mob; for they quite fail to take notice of what the voice of the prophet foretels will happen at the time of Our Saviour Christ's coming, for he says: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be distinct.* For the paralytic was healed at the pool of Bethesda, and after passing through *thirty and eight years in his infirmity*, as it is written, by one word of the Saviour he took up his bed and leaped away like a hart: yet when they ought to have admired Jesus for that, they lamented the breach of the sabbath, and, holding that the law had been transgressed, disparaged the excellence of the miracle. At another time, when an evil spirit had been cast out of him, the dumb man spake; but they fell into such terrible folly as not to gain even a little profit from it. The blind man received sight, the prophetic announcement was fulfilled, the word of the Spirit was brought to pass to the uttermost, and what? Again at this they go mad, they condemn the Wonder-worker, they attribute sin to Him Who is able to shine forth with Divine brightness, and Who displays as actually now present that which had been expected long ages before.

25 *He therefore answered, Whether He be a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

The benefit which the man formerly blind had received from Christ appears to have been twofold: his understanding was in some way enlightened at the same time as his bodily eyes, and as he possesses the, light of the physical sun in his fleshly eyes, so the intellectual beam, I mean the illumination by the Spirit, takes up its abode within him, and he receives it into his heart. For hear how he resists the abominable conduct of the magistrates out of his great love towards Christ, and how cleverly he reproaches them as being well-nigh intoxicated and beside themselves. But he frames his speech with proper respectfulness, and giving them their due honour as the ruling order, courteously says: *Whether He be a sinner, I know not.* We do not argue from this that the man was unaware that Jesus was not a sinner, but shall rather suppose that he so addressed those men with the following design. For he may be imagined to speak thus. Though compelled against my will to acquiesce in what is wrong, I will not endure to slander my Benefactor: I will not join myself to those who wish to dishonour Him Who deserves all honour: I will not say that such a Wonderworker is a sinner: I will not give an unjust vote against One Who is mighty to work the works of God. The miracle wrought in me does not permit me to consent to your words: I was blind and I see. It is not another man's account of His doings that I have believed: I am not carried away by the reports of mere strangers: it is not cures effected upon others that I am led to admire. I myself, he says, am a proof of His power: I stand here seeing, having been formerly blind, as a sort of monument, exhibiting the excellence of His love for men, and flashing forth the greatness of His Divine power. Something like this I conceive to be the real significance of the words used by him who had received his sight. For to say: *Whether he be a sinner I know not;* and immediately to add: *One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see,* is not in the style of a simple statement, but shews a deeper meaning of very wise reasoning.

*26 They said therefore unto him again, What did He do to thee? how opened He thine eyes?*

They again resort to questioning, and inquire about the manner of the Divine sign; not doing this out of good feeling or a laudable curiosity, but placing and reckoning the speaking well of Christ by any living being as baser than any villainy and worse than any wickedness, they stir up all these matters afresh; thinking perhaps that the man would no more repeat the same words, but would vary his account of the event, and say something inconsistent with his former answers, so that they might lay hold of the contradiction and denounce him as an impostor and a liar. For, supercilious in their excessive cleverness, they imagined the force of the miracle to depend on the mere words of the man, as though it were not evident from the fact of what had been done. And moreover, I think that they may have experienced something of this sort: such as are not backward in hating others unjustly, when they are making inquiries about anything done by them which does not seem to have been rightly done, wish to hear it from the witnesses not once only but over and over again, whetting as it were into keener action the anger which seems too feeble. For, conscience, ever testing our motives, makes us uncomfortable, and ceases not to accuse us of injustice, even though from passionate prejudice we may feel a certain pleasure in the unjust action. The man who had been healed is accordingly provoked and urged against his will to go over the story again and to answer the same questions, while they almost make signs to one another to observe closely whether something illegal might not have been done in the working of this Divine sign on the sabbath. For conscience checks the savage design that rages within them, and (so to speak) puts a bridle on them, though they are unwilling to admit its interference.

*27 He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again?*

It seems superfluous now, he says, to tell the story over again to an incredulous audience, and it is useless for you to inquire so often concerning these things, when you do not gain anything whatever, although you learn and have conclusive evidence. But you bid me now again reiterate the same words for no good purpose, as experience proclaims. For hereby the man who had been healed thoroughly convicts the Pharisees of unreasonableness, of *turning away their ears from the truth*, as it is written, not being laudably angry at the law being broken, but by these questions bidding him who wished to speak well of the Wonder-worker to appear in the character of an accuser, rather than accepting him as an admirer. For this was in truth their aim, since the transgression of the law was altogether a matter of indifference to them, and passed over as quite unimportant. On this account they set aside just judgment and were only bent on gratifying their prejudice; forgetting God, Who says: *The priest's lips shall guard judgment and they shall seek the law at his mouth.*

*Would ye also become His disciples?*

He has now confessed distinctly, and without any evasion, that he has been made a disciple, if not by argument yet in consequence of the marvellous deed; and has become a believer, accepting his miraculous sight in the place of instruction. For when he said to them: *Would ye also become His disciples?* he as it were revealed his own condition of mind, that he was not only willing to become, but actually had already become, a disciple. And in some degree even before he had fulness of faith, acting upon the precept: *Freely ye received, freely give*, he was prepared at once and very unselfishly to communicate his advantages to them. He affirms unhesitatingly and often his account of the marvellous deed, if they had only considered his narrative really as instruction. He certainly therefore observed in an excellent way that in the Book of Proverbs: *He speaketh in the ears of them that hear.*

It seems probable that some deep and hidden meaning is obscurely intimated in these words of his, and I will briefly state what it is. There were some of the magistrates who recognised that the Wonder-worker was in truth Christ, but keeping their knowledge of Him buried (so to speak) within their hearts, they as yet were unsuspected by the majority of their companions. And our witness will be the wise Evangelist himself, where he says that the rulers knew that He was the Christ, *hut because of the Pharisees they did not confess it*. The proofs of this will be strengthened also to some extent by Nicodemus, boldly exclaiming and saying to Our Lord Jesus Christ: *Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, and that no man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with Him*. Certainly therefore some of the rulers knew, and the report of this was spread abroad throughout all Jerusalem. The majority of the Jews suspected that the rulers knew, but were determined not to confess it through malice and envy; and that this also is true, we will shew from the evangelical writings themselves. For the blessed John himself somewhere says that Jesus stood teaching in the very temple and explaining things which, at least to the understanding of His hearers, seemed to be breaking the law. And when the magistrates of the Jews did not proceed at all against Him, nay, did not venture so much as to say: "O fellow, cease teaching what does not harmonize with our ancient laws," they brought suspicion on themselves among the multitudes as we have just observed. Thus for instance it is written: *Some of them of Jerusalem said, Is not this He Whom they seek to kill? And lo, He speaketh openly and they say nothing unto Him. Can it be that the rulers know that this is the Christ?* Surely he all but says, "Those whose lot it is to be leaders know that He is indeed the Christ; see, although they are generally considered to be desirous of killing Him, He is speaking with very great boldness and they do not rebuke Him even so much as by words." Accordingly, this suspicion being

spread abroad through all Jerusalem, the blind man had at some time heard it, and had this report about these men ringing in his ears. Gracefully therefore reproving them, as we may suppose, he says: "Surely it is to no purpose that ye bid me again utter the same words and again speak the praise of the marvellous deed: or do ye indeed consider the narrative a pleasure, thirsting even now for instruction from Him, although, overcome by fear of others, ye allow ungrateful cowardice to stand in the way of such excellent knowledge?"

*28 And they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple; but we are disciples of Moses.*

We almost see the Evangelist smile as he says this. For he beholds those whose lot it was to hold sacred offices degraded in mental stupor so far as to make an object of reviling that which was so excellent, namely discipleship under Christ; smitten with a worthy love of which, some of the saints say: *How sweet are Thy words unto my throat, sweeter than honey and honeycomb unto my mouth.* And again another, as if speaking to Our Lord Jesus the Christ concerning those that disobey Him, says: *Consume them, and Thy word shall be to me a pleasure and delight, yea the joy of my heart.* But they attach no value to His sacred words, and think that one who is being instructed by Him is worthy of blame even on that account alone; and holding so far true opinions even against themselves, they speak of the Christ as the blind man's teacher, and Moses as their own. For in very truth the Gentiles were illuminated by Christ through the Evangelical teaching, and Israel died in the types given by Moses and was buried in the shadow of the letter. Wherefore also Paul somewhere says of them: *Unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart.* And there is no doubt that it was as a type of the Gentiles that we were as in a picture delineating the history of the blind man, fashioning, as in a type, the incidents connected with him to express the truth concerning them.

Yet this also is signified, that to suffer reproach for Christ's sake is a thing delightful and most honourable; for the very means by which those who do not shrink from becoming persecutors think to vex those who love Him, become (though the persecutors know it not) sources of joy to them. Yea, those who persecute Christians cause their excellence to shine more conspicuously, and do not so easily succeed in causing them injury. The abandoned Pharisees then, disparaging as seems probable themselves more than Christ, say of the blind man: *Thou art His disciple;* and being elated and puffed up with pride, foolishly say of themselves: *But we are disciples of Moses.*

*29 We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this Man, we know not whence He is.*

Boldly do they speak again, armed with that folly which is so familiar and dear to them; and in undiminished shamelessness they once more boastfully exclaim: *We know.* And when they add: *that God hath spoken unto Moses,* thereby recognising that he deserved great honour, they in another way again insult him, seeing that they take no account of his precepts. For they ignorantly condemn One Whom as yet they know not, or rather they dishonour Him in spite of what they have learnt concerning Him, although the Law forbids them to act unjustly and quarrelsomely towards any or to judge at all in this way. Something of this sort they say again now: "confessedly God hath spoken unto Moses; there is no sufficient reason for any to be in doubt on this point; He enacted laws by him, and laid down regulations how every thing is to be done. Certainly therefore, he says, he is a transgressor of the sacred Scriptures, who has contrary opinions to those expressed by Moses: and manifestly the law concerning the

sabbath has been broken, for thou wast healed on the sabbath: it is righteous not to acknowledge one who is detected in this matter and therefore condemned. Now we have good reason to say that He has not observed the Divine law." Then, when they say of Christ: *We know not whence He is*, they surely do not say so as being ignorant Who or whence He was, for they are elsewhere found publicly confessing that they know all about Him. *Is not this the carpenter's Son, Whose father and mother we know? How then doth He say, I am come down out of heaven?* Certainly therefore we can not accept this statement: *We know not whence He is*, as indicative of ignorance, but we shall look upon it as the expression of the arrogance which was in them. For, throwing contempt on their own previous judgment, and setting it altogether at naught, they make this statement concerning Him. Perhaps indeed their words indicate that they argued as follows; for it is only fair to their arguments that we should scrutinise them more carefully. "*We know*," say they, "*that God has spoken unto Moses*: certainly therefore we must believe without hesitation what was spoken by him, and observe the commandments given him from God. *But this Man we know not*, for God hath not spoken unto Him, nor have we recognised any such thing with regard to Him." But the Pharisees, wont to be wise in their own conceit, and boasting much of their knowledge of the Divine word, ought to have considered that God the Father thus speaks, when by the all-wise Moses He proclaims the future advent of Jesus: *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak unto them as I shall command Him. And whatever man shall not hearken to whatsoever that Prophet shall speak in My Name, I will take vengeance on him*. Surely any one might have rebuked the Jews with good reason, and said: O ye who only know how to disbelieve, if ye are so readily persuaded by the words of Moses, because *God hath spoken unto him*, ought ye not to believe Christ in the same way, when ye hear Him publicly declaring: *The words that I say unto you are not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me*; and again: *I speak not from Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He hath given Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*. Certainly therefore the words of the Pharisees are a mere excuse, a fiction of vain reasoning. For if they say they ought rather to follow Moses, on this account, that God spake to him; why do they not think similarly with regard to Christ, when He distinctly says what we have just mentioned? But while in part they honour the law, and pretend to hold God's will in high esteem, in another way they violate it and dishonour it greatly by refusing to accept its proclamation concerning their time, that namely which was announced by it concerning Christ, that by His Incarnation He should appear in the character of a Prophet.

30 *The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence He is, and yet He opened mine eyes.*

I am astonished, he says, and very justly, that you say you do not know One Who is borne witness to by such holiness and by the Divine power shewn in His actions; yet you are thought to incessantly give attention to God's teaching, you administer the law, you make the verbal study of the sacred Words your great delight, you possess the chief power among the people and especially may be expected to know who are good teachers. For who ought to rightly know those who by God's power work wonders, if they do not who are appointed to minister in holy things and who have been put in charge of the venerable mysteries? And by saying that he is astonished that they are altogether ignorant respecting the Divine sign, so wonderful and strange, which had been wrought upon him, the man covertly and by implication rebukes them, hinting that they were so far removed from sanctification and fitness for piety, that they shamelessly confessed themselves utterly ignorant of Him Who is truly holy, that is, Christ.

For let us lay bare what we believe to have been the concealed thought. If that is true which is somewhere well said: *Every beast loveth his like, and a man will cleave to his like*, how then if they were holy and good did they turn away and refuse to cleave to Him Who was holy and good? Certainly therefore that which was spoken was pregnant with a rebuke of the accursed policy and behaviour of the Pharisees. And I think another thing also will help to make this manifest. For I think that the diligent student who devotes his attention to such expressions will perceive more distinctly that which seems to be hidden in each. What then is this? Many rumours went about through all Judaea concerning our Saviour Christ, but they spoke of Him only as a Prophet. For thus the Law prophesied that He would come, saying: *The Lord our God will raise up a Prophet from among your brethren*; yet they hoped that when He was revealed in His proper time He would instruct them in things above the Law, and by unfolding the truer intent of the Lawgiver would educate them in worthier wise. And thou needest not wonder that there was among the Jews such a hope and opinion, when even among the other nations the same opinion was spread abroad. For instance even that Samaritan woman said: *We know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when He is come, He will declare unto us all things*. Most clearly therefore the Jews knew that Christ would come, (for this is what Messiah meaneth), and would interpret to them the higher counsel of God; and moreover that He would also open the eyes of the blind was declared by Isaiah, who says distinctly: *Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened*. But there was also another opinion prevalent in Jerusalem, forasmuch as the prophet Isaiah speaks of the Ineffable Son of God the Father as quite unrecognised, saying: *Who shall declare His generation?* The Jews, here also distorting the force of the words in accordance with their own notions, imagined that the Christ would be altogether unrecognised, no one whatever knowing whence He was: although the Divine Scriptures establishes for us very evidently His birth in the flesh, and therefore exclaims: *Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son*. And that the mind of the Jews in this again was uneducated as regards the comprehension of essential truths, when they supposed that the Christ would be unrecognised, it is easy to see, from what the blessed Evangelist John declared to be evident concerning Him, when speaking to them of Jerusalem. *For some of them of Jerusalem said, Is not this He Whom they seek to kill? And lo, He speaketh openly, and they say nothing unto Him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ? Howbeit we know this Man whence He is: but when the Christ cometh, no one knoweth whence He is*.

While the Jews therefore are thus absurdly laying down these opinions concerning Christ, the man who had been blind already forms [right] ideas about Him, quickly drawing inferences from the marvellous deed, and all but seizes on the words of the Pharisees in confirmation of his own reasoning. For he says: *Why, herein is the miracle, that ye know not whence He is, and yet He opened mine eyes*. Two signs, he says, I have, and very clear ones, of His being the Christ. For *ye know not whence He is*, but yet *He opened mine eyes*. Certainly therefore this is evidently He Who was foretold by the Law, and borne witness to by the voice of Prophets.

31 *We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do His will, him He heareth.*

Having already in some measure shewn his delight in the proclamations made by the Prophets and the Law as now fulfilled, both in its being unknown whence Christ was, and in the eyes of the blind being opened, he collects for himself aids to faith from every quarter, and thus discovers something else also. Starting from necessary and acknowledged principles, he makes a show of going on to the inquiry as to what is profitable and fitting, and constructs

what may be termed a piece of reasoning well-pleasing to God. For he maintains, and surely there are good grounds for so thinking, that the God Who loves justice and virtue never hears those who love sin; and laying this down as indisputable and universally acknowledged, he introduces as a contrast the opposite statement as true, and as gainsaid in no quarter, I mean of course that everywhere and always the Lord of all listens to such as are habitually pious. And although the conclusion to be drawn was designed to refer to the Christ alone, it was so constructed as if it had reference to a general and universal principle. For as I have already pointed out by anticipation, the man who had been blind has an unworthy conception of Christ and has not yet learnt accurately that He is by nature God; so that he thinks and speaks of Him as a Prophet, to Whom he might without blame ascribe piety: but this does not rightly apply to Christ at all, because He is by nature God, receiving the worship of the pious as it were a spiritual sacrifice.

*32 Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind.*

Pained as it seems very keenly, and grieving as we may say over their revilings against Christ, so as to be vexed beyond endurance because they contemptuously said; *Thou art His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses*, he is eager to speak on behalf of his Master; hence he draws a sort of comparison between the achievements of Moses and the brilliant deeds of Our Saviour, showing that as the latter is greater in wonder-working, so far He is the better. For indeed, is it not a matter of course that he who accomplishes the greater work should be in every way superior in glory? Surely it is not to be doubted. And at the same time he probably signifies something of this sort. Whereas a very ancient prophecy foretells and declares thus concerning the coming of Christ: *Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened*, and no one ever before caused astonishment by having done any such deed; now it has been fulfilled by Him and Him only, Whom you (I know not why, he says) do not scruple to call a sinner. Moreover, a great company of holy prophets are spoken of, and a number not easily computed of just men are mentioned throughout the Sacred Scriptures, but *since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind*. Is it not therefore certain that this is the Christ, Who accomplishes the declarations of the Prophets, Who thoroughly and completely fulfils the things proclaimed of old? For if no other besides Him opens the eyes of the blind, what henceforth shall stand in the way of faith? What shall turn us aside from accepting Him? Or how can we fail, every doubt being cast aside, to attain by the very easiest way the mystery of knowing Him?

Thus in these words also the man who was healed speaks on behalf of the Saviour Christ. And see how cleverly he puts together the argument of his plea. For it would really have been altogether outspoken and frank to say that Christ was better and more illustrious than Moses and the Prophets, but it was not unreasonable to suppose that the Pharisees, frantic at that, would have pretended that they were contending for the saints thus insulted, and with a good excuse would have attempted to punish the man, that he might not live and be looked upon as a monument of Christ's glory and a sort of representative of the Divine power which Christ possessed: wherefore, craftily avoiding the passion that might arise, and depriving their murderous thoughts of this pretext for development, he diverts the application of the argument to what is universal and indefinite, saying: *Since the world began* that which Christ had wrought upon him had never been done by any one. This was nothing else than shewing that Christ was certainly greater and more glorious than all, since He manifested by His actions such power and authority to be possessed by Him, as none of the saints had ever

possessed. Thus he crowns his Physician with excellent honour in every thing, taking for justification the marvellous deed never before accomplished or attempted, namely, the removal of blindness.

*33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.*

He who had just received sight and been miraculously freed from his old blindness, was quicker to perceive truth than they who had been instructed by the law, for see, see how by very many and wise arguments he demonstrates the utter baseness of the Pharisees' opinion. For when they absurdly said of Christ: *As for this Man we know not whence He is*, he in reply severely rebukes them for their unfairness of thought, when they deny all knowledge of One Who worked such wonders; it being evident to all that one who was *not from God* would be unable to do any of those deeds which are only accomplished by Divine energy. For God works such deeds through the saints only, and would never bestow upon a stranger who had not yet entered on the way of godliness the ability to boast of such glories. Else let the dumbfounded Pharisee come forward and say what is henceforth the distinction with God between the holy and the profane, the just and the sinner, the impious and the devout. For if He enables each equally to become glorious by the same means, there is no longer any distinction, but at once all things are brought into confusion, and we will say with good reason that which is written: *How shall we fitly serve Him, and what will be the profit if we appear before Him?* For if, as one of the Greek poets said:

Ἰση μοῖρα μένοντι, καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζοι, ("The same share is allotted to him who remains at home as to him who fights bravely." Homer, Iliad, ix. 318.)

and the evil and the good are held in equal honour, will it not be useless to experience bitter hardships on account of virtue? But we will not consider that these things are so, and wherefore? Because: *Them that honour Me*, saith God, *I will honour; and he that despiseth Me shall be despised.*

For *my* part, I would ask the self-conceited Pharisees, if God indifferently works such deeds even by the hands of sinners, why the magicians of Egypt did not achieve the same things as the great Moses? Wherefore could they not do equally wonderful works and carry off the same glory as he did? But thou wilt say that Moses' rod when it fell on the ground became a serpent, and those of the magicians became so in like manner. We answer that their rods were not transmuted into serpents, but a deceit was practised, and something which appeared to men like the form of serpents deluded them into error; a certain magical art made their rods look like serpents: whereas Moses' rod was truly changed into a serpent and suddenly received the nature of that beast. And from the distinction which is laid down in the Sacred Scriptures thou wilt see that what I have said is true. For Moses' rod swallowed up their rods: for since the latter were merely in the outward form of serpents, but the former was truly and in nature that which it appeared to be, it was provoked to anger that they should look no longer like rods but like living beings, and devoured them with unheard of power beyond the power of an [ordinary serpent], God rendering such a difficult thing easy to it. And again, let the Pharisee tell me why these magicians, who caused their own rods to take the outward form of serpents, did not exhibit a leprous hand made clean, but in despair openly confessed: *This is the finger of God?* And tell me why the priests of Baal did not bring down fire from heaven, and yet Elijah brought it down? Are therefore God's ways certainly characterised by respect of persons? God forbid! But because He is just and a lover of just men He works His gracious

miracles through the agency of the saints, but by no means through the agency of the sinful. With excellent reason therefore the man who had been blind rebukes the impudent pratings of the Pharisees and convicts them of an erroneous opinion, when they say He is not *from God* Who is proved to have a Divine Nature by His power of working miracles.

34 *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.*

Hard of acceptance to most people are the wounds of refutation, and the consequent correction of error. They are certainly welcome and sweet to the wise, since they convey much profit, and have an improving tendency, although they may carry with them a painful sting. But to those who love sin they are bitter, and wherefore? Because, having fixed their mind on debasing pleasures, they turn away from any warning that draws them thence as vexatious, and deem it a loss to be diverted from their pleasures, setting no value on what is truly profitable.

For just as they who fall overboard from a ship, and, being caught by the current of a river, are not strong enough to resist it, and, thinking it dangerous to swim in opposition to the waves, are simply borne on by the current; so I think these men, of whom we were just speaking, overcome by the tyranny of their own pleasures allow those pleasures to rush on unbridled, and decline to offer any resistance whatever. Hence the wretched Pharisees are displeased, and crying out like wild beasts against him who brought forward excellent arguments, they welcome the beginnings of anger, and spouting forth the extreme rage of madness, unlawfully revile him; and somehow recurring to the haughtiness so natural to them, say that the blind man *was born in sins*, thus maintaining the Jewish errors, and ignorantly supporting a doctrine that will not hold together. For that no living person, either on his own account or on account of his parents, is born either blind or with any other bodily infirmity; moreover, that God does not visit the sins of their fathers upon children, not unskilfully, in my opinion at least, we have shown at some length, when we had to explain the words: *Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?* Since therefore the man who had been born blind knew how to refute the Pharisees, he was on that account not only reviled, but cast out by them. And here again learn that what was done is typical of a true event: for that the people of Israel were going to utterly loathe the Gentiles as nurtured in sins from erroneous prejudice, any one can recognise from what the Pharisees said to that man. And they expel him, exactly as they who plead the doctrine of Christ are expelled and cast out by the Jews.

35 *Jesus heard that they had cast him out.*

The inspired Evangelist says that our Lord Jesus Christ *heard*, not implying certainly or of necessity that any one reported the fact to Him, but because, as one of the wise somewhere says: *The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world, and the ear of hearing heareth all things.* Surely He hears, as the Psalmist says: *He that planted, the ear, doth He not hear? and He that formed the eye, doth He not perceive?* When therefore we suffer insult on His account, or endure any grievous thing from those who are wont to fight against God, we are bound to believe that most assuredly God is a looker-on, and listens as it were to the trial that comes upon us: for the very nature of the occurrence, and the sincerity of those who are dishonoured on His account, cry aloud in His Divine Ears.

*And finding him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*

The man who had been blind has been cast out by the Pharisees, but after no long interval of time Christ seeks him, and finding him, initiates him. in mysteries. Therefore this also shall be a sign to us that God keeps in mind those who are willing to speak on His behalf and who do not shrink from peril through faith in Him. For thou hearest how, making Himself manifest as though to give a good recompense, He hastens to implant in him the highest perfection of the doctrines of the faith. And He proposes the question in order that He may receive the assent. For this is the way of shewing faith. Wherefore also those who are going to Divine Baptism are previously as a preparation asked questions concerning their belief, and when they have assented and confessed, then at once we admit them as fit for the grace. Hence therefore arises the significance of the event to us, and we have learnt from Our Saviour Christ Himself how right it is that this profession of faith should be made. Wherefore also the inspired Paul asserted that [Timothy] *confessed* the *confession* of these things with *many witnesses*, meaning the holy angels: and if it is an awful thing to falsify what is spoken before angels, how much more so before Christ Himself? So then He asks the man who had been blind not simply if he was willing to believe, but also mentions on Whom. For the faith [must be] *on the Son of God*, and not as on a man like ourselves, but as on God Incarnate. Surely this is the fulness of the mystery concerning Christ. And in saying: *Dost thou believe?* He all but says "Wilt thou shew thyself superior to the madness of those men? Wilt thou bid farewell to their incredulousness and accept the faith?" For the emphatic *Thou* implies such a contradistinction from other persons in some way.

*36 And Who is He, Lord, saith he, that I may believe on Him?*

The soul furnished with sound reason, diligently seeking the word of truth with the eyes of the understanding free, without embarrassment makes straight for it like a ship going into port, and obtains its advantages by a chase without fatigue. And again the man who had been blind will be a proof of what has been said. For when he had already by many arguments and reasonings admired the mystery concerning Christ, and moreover had been struck with astonishment at His unspeakable might, which had been experienced not by any other but by himself in himself, he is found thus ready to believe and without delay proceeds to do so. For see, see, he earnestly asks upon whom he should fasten that faith which had been already built up within him. For this alone was lacking to him, and he was previously prepared for it, as we have said.

*37 And Jesus said, Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that speaketh with thee.*

Being asked upon whom it was proper to believe, Jesus points to Himself, and not simply by saying "It is I," but by saying that the Person Whom the other was looking at and by Whom he was being addressed, was the Son of God; in every way consulting beforehand our advantage, and in divers manners constructing aids towards a faith both free from error and unperverted, lest while thinking ourselves pious we might fall into the meshes of the net of the devil, by foolishly turning aside from the truth of the mystery. For even now some of those who think themselves Christians, not accurately understanding the scope of the Incarnation, have dared to separate from God. the Word that Temple which was for our sakes taken from woman, and have divided Him Who is truly and indeed One Son into two sons, even because He was made Man. For with great folly they disdain to acknowledge as probable that which the Only-Begotten disdained not even to do for our sakes. For He, *being in the form of*

God, according to that which is written, *counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant*, that He might become a Man like us, of course without sin: but they in their strange opinions find fault in a sort of way with His Divine and philanthropic design, and thrusting away the Temple taken from woman from the true Sonship as far as they can in their thoughts, they do not accept His humiliation: and conceiving an opinion far removed from the truth, they say that the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father, that is, the Word Begotten of His Essence, is One; and that the son born of woman is another again. Still, when the inspired Scripture proclaims the Son and Christ to be One, are they not full of all impiety who sever into two Him Who is truly and indeed One Son? For inasmuch as He is God the Word, He is thought of as distinct from the flesh; and inasmuch as He is flesh, He is thought of as distinct from the Word: but inasmuch as the Word of God the Father was made flesh, the two will cease to be distinct through their ineffable union and conjunction. For the Son is One and only One, both before His conjunction with flesh, and when He came with flesh; and by flesh we denote man in his integrity, I mean as consisting of soul and body. Certainly therefore on account of this pretence, with the greatest foresight, the Lord here again when asked, "Who is the Son of God?" did not say, "It is I," for it would then perhaps have been possible for some ignorantly to suppose that the Word alone Who shone forth from God the Father was thereby signified; but shewed Himself forth in the very manner which to some seems so doubtful, by saying: *Thou hast seen Him*, and also indicated that the Word Himself was dwelling in the flesh by speaking again and adding: *And He it is that speaketh with thee*. Thou seest therefore what a unity the Word possesses; for He makes no distinction but says that Himself is both that which presents itself to bodily eyes, and that which is known by speech. Certainly therefore it is altogether ignorant and impious to say as some inconsiderately do say: "O Christ's man," for being God He was made man without being severed from His Divinity, and is the Son also with flesh: for in these things is the most perfect confession and knowledge of faith in Him.

38 *And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.*

Quick to make a confession, I mean as regards his faith, and warm in shewing piety, is the man who had been blind. For when he knew that the One present with him and visible to his eyes was truly the Only-Begotten Son, *he worshipped Him* as God, although beholding Him in the flesh without the glory which is really God-befitting. But having had his heart illumined by Christ's indwelling power and authority, he advances to wise and good thoughts by fair reasoning, and beholds the beauty of His Divine and Ineffable Nature; for he would not have *worshipped Him* as God unless he believed Him to be God, having been prepared and led thus to think by what had happened unto himself, even the miraculously accomplished marvellous deed. And since we transferred all the circumstances connected with the blind man to the history of the Gentiles, let us now speak again concerning this. For see, I pray you, how he fulfils by the prefiguring of the worship in spirit the type to which the Gentiles were conducted by their faith. For it was the custom for Israel to serve the Lord of all according to the bidding of the Law, with sacrifices of oxen and incense and with offerings of other animals; but the faithful among the Gentiles know not this manner of service but were turned to the other, that is, the spiritual, which God says is truly and especially dear and sweet to Him. For He says: *I will not eat the flesh of hells, neither will I drink the blood of goats*. And in preference He bids us *offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving*, that is, worship with song, to celebrate which the Psalmist through faith in the Holy Spirit sees that all the Gentiles would go up, and says as if to our Lord and Saviour: *All the earth shall worship Thee, and shall sing unto Thee; yea they shall sing to Thy name*. Moreover, Our Lord Jesus Christ

Himself shows the spiritual to be better than the legal service, when He says to the woman of Samaria: *Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.* And if we rightly think, we shall conclude that the holy angels also are distinguished by this kind [of service], presenting unto God such worship as a sort of spiritual offering. For instance when the Spirit gave command to those above to bring God-befitting honour to the Firstborn and Only-Begotten, He says: *And let all the angels of God worship Him.* Moreover the Divine Psalmist called us to do this, saying: *O come let us worship and fall down before Him.* And it would not be difficult to treat of this matter at great length; but putting a convenient limit to our words, we will abstain from bringing forward any more arguments for the present. Except that we will once more repeat that the man who had been blind admirably carries out the type of the service of the Gentiles, making his worship the close companion of his confession of faith.

39 *And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not may see; and that they which see may become blind.*

Christ, when explaining to us by the voice of Isaiah the cause of His manifestation, I mean in this world, says: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me: He hath sent Me to preach good tidings unto the poor to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.* Moreover he saith somewhere in another place: *Hear, ye deaf; and receive your sight O blind, that ye may see.* When therefore He saith that for this cause He was chosen by God the Father, that He might proclaim recovery of sight to the blind, how is it that here He saith: *For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not may see; and that they which see may become blind? Is then, some one will say, Christ a minister of sin,* according to the language of Paul? *God forbid.* For He came to accomplish the predetermined intention of His goodness towards us, namely, to illuminate all men by the torch of the Spirit. But the Jews, being obstinate in unbelief did not accept the grace shining upon them, imprecating as it were on themselves a self-chosen darkness. For instance, it is written concerning them in the prophetic records: *While they waited for light darkness came upon them: waiting for brightness they walked in obscurity.* For inasmuch as He was to come according to the declaration of the Law, the Jews waited for brightness and the Light, that is, Christ. For they accepted the fact that He would come, and expected Him, but they who thought themselves pious in this matter were walking in obscurity, that is, in profound darkness, when there was no other cause why they suffered the gloom that came upon them, except that by their own unbelief they drew the affliction upon themselves. I came therefore, He says, to give sight to the blind through their faith; but the unyielding obstinacy of the stubborn and refractory, which tended greatly to unbelief, caused the coming of the Illuminator to be unto them a coming *for judgment.* For since they believe not, they are condemned. And this the Saviour has said more clearly to thee in other words also: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on the Son is not judged: but he that believeth not on the Son hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the Son of God.* With beautiful fitness therefore He mentions this in connection with the event now under our consideration, making the deed miraculously wrought upon the blind man the basis as it were of his discourse: for He declares that man to have received sight not only as regards the body, but also as regards the mind, because he had accepted the faith; but that the

Pharisees suffered just the contrary, because they did not behold His glory, although it was shining most clearly, even in that marvellous deed that was so great and so novel.

*40 Those of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these things, and said unto Him, Are we also blind?*

The Pharisees keep close to the Saviour Christ and are eager to associate with Him, although they have a sharp arrow shot into their heart, and pine with vexation and envy at His glory; they associate with Him, however, gathering nourishment for their hatred, and devising various slanders against His marvellous deeds, and by these means perverting the guileless mind of such as are more ready to believe. And when they heard Christ say these words, they were cut to the heart again, for it was not likely they would fail to know that the aim of the discourse was directed against them. But when He said at first, vaguely and indefinitely: *That they which see may become blind*, not yet having an occasion to find fault with good reason as being insulted, they maliciously question Him, applying the force of what had been said to their own persons, and demanding as it were that He should say more clearly whether He meant that they were *blind also*, so that they might now condemn Him again as offending against the commandment of the Law. For being constantly familiar with every part of the writings of Moses, they knew that it was written: *Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people*. Either therefore expecting to be insulted they say such words, so that they might seem with good reason to attack Him, and to be angry, and now without blame to take counsel against Christ; or because they really felt such excess of bitterness in their mind, and were bursting to show the malice which was in them. For when Christ said: *For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not may see*, and by these words indicated the restoration of sight to the blind man, they were unable to endure being reminded of the miracle, and being goaded by envy they once more rise up against Him, and endeavour to oppose Him. In His presence they do not shrink from saying what almost amounts to this: "O fellow, thou boastest strange things, having accomplished none of those deeds which Thou thinkest Thyself to have wrought. Dost Thou indeed wish, say they, to impose even upon us with Thy wonderworking? Wilt Thou be capable of saying that Thou hast healed us, for that *we are blind also*? Dost Thou wish that we should ascribe to Thee the glory of a physician and wonder-worker, telling lies after the manner of this man, of whom Thou sayest that he has received his sight, having been born blind? Wilt Thou dare to deal falsely with us by similar statements?" Certainly therefore the language of the Pharisees as they mock at the events relating to the blind man is evil and very bitter, and they deem the whole thing an imposture rather than a truth; for nothing convinces the obstinate.

*41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sins will remain.*

The Saviour once more confounds them, tempering His reproof with skill. For He holds aloof from all reviling and puts them out of countenance by setting before them the force of the truth: He shows them that they derive no advantage from possessing sight, or rather that they fell into a worse condition than one who could not see at all. For the blind man, saith He, by not beholding any of the deeds miraculously wrought, escaped without sin, and is so far blameless; but they who have been watchers and beholders of the marvellous deed, and through great folly and evilness of disposition have not accepted the faith in consequence of them, make their sin difficult of removal, and it is really hard to escape from the condemnation which such conduct incurs. Therefore it is not hard to understand the meaning

of this as regards bodily blindness and restoration to sight: and when we pass to that which is to be understood by analogy, receiving our impressions from the argument itself, we shall again repeat the same signification: that the man who does not understand may claim his pardon with excellent reason from the judge, but he who is keen of intellect and understands his duty, and then, having indulged his debasing inclination in the baser principles of his mind, and given himself to the sway of pleasures and not of duty, shall shamelessly claim compassion,----the request for which he ought to be punished shall in no wise be granted, and he will very justly perish for having kept in himself a sin without excuse. For instance Our Lord Jesus Christ signifies exactly the same thing in the Gospels, saying: *He that knew Ms lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* For the charge against him that knew not is merely that of ignorance; but against him that understood and yet inconsiderately refused to act, the charge is that of overweening presumption. Observe again how guardedly accurate was the language of the Saviour on this occasion also; for He does not say plainly, "Ye see," but He says: *Ye say, We see.* For it would of course have been very much beside the mark, to ascribe understanding to those who possessed a mind so blind and emptied of light as to dare to say concerning Him: *We know that this Man is a sinner.* Self-condemned therefore are the Jews, who affirm of themselves that they see, but do not act at all as they ought; aye, most emphatically self-condemned, for they know the will of the Lord, but are so self-conceited that they thus resist even His mightiest miracles.

Chap. x. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Very probably it may seem to those who listen carelessly that the language of the parable before us is not introduced very appositely: because after a discussion on blindness and recovery of sight, we straightway come upon statements about sheep, and a fold, and a door. But he in whom dwells a wise mind, which hastens more diligently to compare the ideas, will perceive here also that the argument proceeds so to speak straight forward, and swerves not at all from what is right and fitting. And here I will once more repeat what I have said many times before. It was the custom of the Saviour Christ, when any came unto Him, to reply not merely to the words which they expressed through their voice, but to speak with reference to their inward thoughts also, since He sees both heart and reins; for *to Him all things are naked and laid open, and there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight.* Wherefore also He saith to one of the saints: *Who is this that hideth counsel from Me, and hath words in his heart, and thinketh to conceal them from Me?* When therefore the unholy company of Pharisees craftily asked, as we said just now, if they were *blind also*, in order that if he said truly what they were, namely blind, he might again be accused as one who reviled the magistrates and spoke evil of those whose lot it was to rule the people, (for they prided themselves inordinately upon this); Our Lord Jesus Christ, fighting in this case again with their inward thought, necessarily and profitably introduces the parable, implying (somewhat obscurely and as it were in riddles) that on account of their arrogant selfishness they would not be firmly maintained in the leadership, and that the dignity would not be confirmed to such as insulted in their pride God the Giver of it; and teaching that this dignity would only belong to those who should be called by Him to the leadership of the people. Therefore He

says that Himself is *the Door* introducing of His own will to the leadership of His rational flocks the man who is prudent and God-loving. But him who thinks himself able to take by violence and tyranny the honour that is not given to him, He calls *a thief and a robber, climbing up some other way*. Such were some concerning whom He speaks perhaps by one of the Prophets; *They reigned as kings, and not by Me; they ruled, and not by My Spirit*. And He intimates by the words before us, that if they would take pleasure in being rulers of the people they must believe and must receive through Him the Divine call to undertake this dignity, in order that they might have their rule unshaken and well established; which of course was the case with the holy Apostles, and with the Teachers of the holy Churches after them; to whom also *the porter openeth*. That is, either the Angel who is appointed to preside over the churches and to assist those whose lot is to minister in holy things for the good of the people, or else the Saviour Himself, Who is at the same time both the Door and the Lord of the Door. At all events, He very well asserts that the flock of sheep rightly obey and yield to the voice of the shepherd, but very quickly turn away from the voice of strangers; so that thou mayest understand a true matter by extending the application of the argument to something more general. For in the churches we teach by bringing forward our doctrines from the inspired Scripture, and setting forth the Evangelic and Apostolic Word as a sort of spiritual nourishment. And they who believe in Christ and are conspicuous for unperverted faith, are obedient listeners to such teaching; but they turn away from the voices of falsifiers, and avoid them as a deadly evil. But then, some one will say, what is herein intimated to the Pharisees? Gathering it up into a short and summary explanation I will tell thee this again. He shows Himself therefore as Lord of the fold, and *Door and Porter*, that they may accurately learn that they will not have their position of leadership confirmed to them, unless they come to it through Him and thus possess the God-given honour. And by adding that the sheep obey their own shepherds, but run away from strangers, He again skilfully hints that the Pharisees would never be leaders of those that should become believers in Him, but that His sheep would refuse their instruction and attach themselves to the shepherds appointed by Him.

*6 This parable [or proverb] spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them.*

Simple is the language of the saints, and far removed from the elaborateness of the Greeks: for *God chose the foolish things of the world*, according to the word of Paul, *that He might put to shame them that are wise*. He used therefore the name of *proverb*, for thus he designates the parable, perhaps because the distinction of the two words was always somewhat confused, and the signification is understood equally well whether both or either be used. Yet this we do say, that the inspired Evangelist marvels much at the Jews' want of understanding. For as the experience of events itself bears witness, they have a mind like to rocks or to iron, persistently refusing to accept any profitable instruction of any sort. Wherefore it was said to them by the voice of Joel the Prophet: *Rend your hearts and not your garments*.

And again, the writer of the Book seems to me not inconsiderately to have said: *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not, he says, what things they were which He spake unto them*; and he utters this with no little emphasis. For it is just the same as if he said plainly: So far are the Pharisees from being able to understand any necessary matter, although absurdly wise in their own conceits, that *they understood not this parable*, so clear to see, and so transparent, in which there is nothing hard to lay hold of, or tortuous to follow, or difficult to comprehend. And with propriety he mocks at the ill counsel of the Jews, since

Christ appeared of no account to them, although He taught what was higher than the Law, and exhibited a system of instruction much more pleasing than that of Moses.

*7 Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, I am the Door of the sheep.*

He most thoroughly knew, being by nature God, and beholding that which lies in the depth, that the Pharisees understood none of His sayings, although accustomed to pride themselves greatly on their learning in the Law, and excessively supercilious in thinking themselves wise. Therefore He gives them a very clear explanation, and winding up as it were the long thread of the argument, He tells them in few words the main scope of the parable. For being naturally good, He leads on towards a clear comprehension those even who do not deserve it, that perhaps by some method the light may reach them. And He distinctly says that Himself is *the Door of the sheep*, teaching something which is generally acknowledged; for only through faith in Him are we admitted into relationship with God, and He Himself is a witness to this, saying: *No one cometh unto the Father, but by Me*. Either therefore He wishes to signify something of this sort, or, as is more suitable to the questions we are considering He once more makes it clear that we come to the rule and leadership of rational flocks through Him, according to what is said by Paul: *For no man taketh the honour unto himself, but he that is called of God*. For instance, no one of the holy Prophets consecrated himself; no, nor even will the great and shining company of the Apostles be found to have been self-called to this office. For they were consecrated through the will of Christ, called them to the apostleship by name, and individually, as He says in the parable before us. For we know how in the Gospel according to Matthew the names of the Apostles are set down in order, and immediately following is the manner of their public proclamation: for *These twelve*, he says, the Saviour consecrated; *whom also He named Apostles*. Seeing therefore that the foolish Pharisees wished to be rulers, and were immoderately boastful of the name and character of leadership, He profitably teaches that Himself is the bestower of leadership upon men and mighty to conduct them to it without difficulty. For being *the Door* of the sacred and Divine fold, He both will admit him who is fit, and also will block the entrance against him who is not.

*8 All that came are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

Practising all kinds of enchantment upon the obstinate mind of the Pharisees, and trying to turn them to sound reason, He attempts to show them that it is a bootless and perilous thing to dare to act as leaders, without the election from above or the Divine counsel, but thinking that rule may be obtained by human folly, although the Bestower of it may be unwilling. Wherefore, having plainly said that Himself is *the Door*, which signifies the only means of admitting such as are fit to the leadership, He straightway brings forward the attempts of those who lived in earlier times, so that, beholding delineated as in a picture the result to which such action leads, they might then clearly understand that the ability to govern and lead flocks of people comes only through grace given from above, and not from ambitious endeavours. Therefore here also his speech is profitable, bringing to mind the history of those who lived in earlier times: *All that came are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them*. For certain men came forward publicly, pretending to have the office of good shepherds; but since there was none who committed the leadership unto them, and who could persuade those whom they ought to have ruled to obey them, the multitude of the sheep ran away from them.

But by no means must we suspect, because He said: *All*, that the apostleship of the holy Prophets is set at naught by Our Saviour Christ; for the saying is not against them, but against others. For since His object was to speak about false shepherds and such as climbed up some other way into the fold of the sheep, of necessity the language was used with respect to those who had been clearly signified beforehand: He says: *All*, but we will in no wise think that the persons of the holy Prophets are hereby renounced; for how could they be renounced by Him Who established the truth of their plain declarations regarding His own coming; "Who saith: *I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets*; Who consecrated Moses, and said unto Jeremiah: *Say not, I am too young: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak*; and to the blessed Ezekiel: *Son of man, I will send thee to the house of Israel, who are provoking Me bitterly?* The scope of the language therefore is not directed against the company of the holy Prophets, but looks rather to such as at any time pretended to prophesy in Judaea, stating falsely that they came from God, and persuading the people not to obey those who were in truth God's prophets, but to join in undertakings and opinions devised by themselves; concerning whom the Lord God, the Sovereign of all, Himself somewhere says again: *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied*. And unto the blessed Jeremiah: *The prophets prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither did I speak unto them, neither did I command them: for they prophesy unto you visions and divinations and prophecies out of their own hearts. If they be prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them come before Me. What hath the chaff to do with the wheat?* For the word that truly is from God has the power of nourishing greatly, and *strengthens man's heart*, as it is written, but that of the unholy false prophets and false teachers, being thoroughly clean-threshed and chaff-like, conveys no profit to the hearers. When therefore He names those who preceded His coming *thieves and robbers*, He signifies either the lying and deceiving multitude of whom we have just spoken, or thou mayest apply the force of the words to those also who are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. For the rulers of the Jews having on one occasion gathered the holy Apostles together, and brought them into their own most lawless council-chamber, were taking counsel to banish them from Jerusalem, and to force them to be continually facing extreme dangers; but Gamaliel reminded them of certain false teachers in the following words:---*Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men, what ye are about to do. For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be some great one; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to naught. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away some of the people after him: he also perished; and all who obeyed him were scattered abroad*. From these considerations then thou seest clearly and indisputably that Christ's words do not refer to the holy Prophets, but to those of the opposite description, in order that even against their will He might persuade the Pharisees not to seek in their own foolish notions a pretext for rashly making themselves guides, when God was not willing for them to be at the head of the people, but in all things to subject their authority to the Divine approbation; and to hasten to enter by the real Door rather than to endeavour to climb up by some other way into the sheepfold after the manner of plunderers.

*9 I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.*

After His usual manner, He moulds the form of His speech to a spiritual application as though it arose naturally from the course of His story, and seems to treat things which are simple to

look at and contain nothing difficult of comprehension, as images of things more obscure. For the thieves, He saith, and robbers, violently breaking into the enclosures of the sheep, do not enter by the door, but leap in by some other way, and by getting over the wall of the fold put themselves in danger. For perhaps, or rather very probably, one who is robbing in this way and rashly practising villainy may be detected and caught; but they who enter by the door itself, effect an entrance without risk, being manifestly not mean in conduct, nor yet unknown to the lord of the sheep. For he who standeth at the doors openeth to them and they run in: moreover, saith He, such as these shall be together with the sheep in great security, having effected an entrance very lawfully as it were and without guile, and without incurring any suspicion of being robbers. This therefore is the part of the story which is typical; and passing over to what is thereby intimated for our spiritual profit, we say this, that they who without the Divine sanction and will proceed to take the leadership of the people, as though altogether refusing the entrance by the Door, will perhaps also perish, doing violence to the Divine decree, at least by the motive of their endeavours. But they who are allotted a God-given leadership, and come to it by Christ, with great security and grace they will govern the most sacred fold, escaping so entirely from the anger which falls on the others that they even receive honour for their work: they will obtain crowns from above such as they do not yet dare to hope for; because their aim is not at all in any way to grieve their flocks, but rather to benefit them: they will do things well-pleasing to the Lord of the flock, and love by all means to keep safe those who belong to Him. By these words also the Lord greatly troubles the obstinate Pharisees, saying that they will certainly not be kept safe, but will utterly fall from the leadership in which they now are; and very justly, since they suppose they will possess it firmly, not by God's approval, but by their own folly. But herein I cannot help admiring the incomparable love for men shown by the Saviour. For *the Lord is really compassionate and merciful*, offering to all a way of salvation, and in divers manners inviting to it even the very obstinate and hardened. And I will take the proof of my assertion once more from the thing itself. For when He fails, either by marvellous deeds or by the longing which yearns and hopes for the glory which shall be hereafter, to persuade the Pharisees to receive His teaching; He sternly proceeds to that, by which it was likely they would be especially troubled, so that henceforth they might look upon obedience as an inevitable necessity. For knowing them to be attached to the glory of being leaders, and to eagerly reckon upon no ordinary gain from thence, He says they will be deprived of it, and will be utterly despoiled of that which was so highly valued, and which was then in their possession; unless they will yield themselves to willingly listen to Him, and seek pardon at His hands.

10 *The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.*

While Our Saviour Christ was saying He Himself was the Door, and teaching that it was His both to admit those whom He would and to keep outside him who is unfit and quite useless for shepherd's work; and moreover, in addition to this, had denounced as thieves and robbers those who were self-appointed to an honour not given them from above; the wretched Pharisees again were taking counsel, deliberating Who this Man was that shewed so much boldness, and considering whether He ought not Himself perhaps to be numbered among those whose coming He reproved: for they thought that He too was a false shepherd and a false teacher, as merely self-consecrated by His own determination; not that being God He had been made Man, according to the ancient declaration of the inspired Scripture. And it is indeed probable that even when they had gathered a true knowledge of Him, they rejected it as something which was intolerable to their unbelief, and refused to consider anything which

was not in harmony with their own pleasure and their own dear delight; and this was to be leaders of the people and to be spoken of accordingly. When therefore He knew that such were their thoughts and that they so whispered one to another, He did not wait for them to express these ideas more openly, but answered them as was fitting, and declares that the question ought to be decided by testing their actions, as to who was the shepherd, and who was the thief; saying that it would be by no means difficult to thus discriminate, if any one would consider the object and behaviour of each. For *the thief cometh*, He says, for the destruction of the sheep, since the desire of taking plunder undoubtedly leads to this issue; but the really good shepherd will come without bringing any harm into the sheepfold, but rather will work for their advantage, and whatever he may understand to be for their greatest good, that he will zealously labour for.

Therefore let us now pass as from another image to the truer matter to which the force of the words applies, and let us again consider the Pharisees, how they at that time were acting like false shepherds and false teachers towards such as were, cheated by them; and then let us consider what Christ came to give, and what happiness He came to bring us. They certainly never scrupled to speak falsely, and feigning themselves to be sent from God, they prophesied (according to that which is written) *out of their own hearts, and not out of the mouth of the Lord*; and besides these, that Theudas also, and Judas of Galilee, drawing away people after them, were destroyed together with those who had been led to join them: but Our Lord Jesus Christ came to bestow upon us eternal *life*, out of the love which He had towards us. And their aims being so opposite, and the manner of their coming so different, how can it be explained except that their dispositions and offices were of opposite character? Therefore by the test of their behaviour in office we ought to discern. He says, on the one hand what they were, and on the other what He was. For thus it was possible perhaps to persuade the rulers not to think unreasonably of Him any longer by supposing Him to be one of the false shepherds, or one of those who climb up some other way into the sheepfold: but that rather Christ, the Door and the Porter and the Shepherd, had come, not only *that the sheep may have life*, saith He, but also something *more*; for besides the restoration to life of those who believe in Him, there is also the certain hope of being blessed with all good things. And probably the word *more* refers also to this life, meaning what is more abundant or more honourable, and implying the most perfect participation of the Spirit, although very secretly. For the restoration to life is common to both saints and sinners, to both Greeks and Jews, as well as ourselves, for: *The dead shall arise, and they that are in the tombs shall awake, and they that are in the earth shall rejoice*, according to the sure promise of the Saviour. But the participation of the Holy Spirit is not thus common to all, being the *more than life*, as it were something beyond that which is common to all; and will be bestowed only upon those who are justified by faith in Christ: and the Divine Paul also will prove this to us, saying: *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*. For indeed all shall rise from the dead, because this is granted to all nature, through the grace of the Resurrection; and in One, that is, Christ, Who was the first and foremost to break down the dominion of death and attain eternal life, the common lot of humanity was changed and made incorruptible, even as also in one, that is, the first Adam, it was condemned to death and corruption. But there will be at that time an important difference among those who are raised, and very widely distinct will be their destiny. For those who have gone to their rest with faith in Christ, and who have received the earnest of the Spirit in the appointed time of their bodily life, will obtain the most perfect grace, and will be changed to the glory which shall be given from God. But those who have not believed the

Son, and have deemed such an excellent reward of no account, shall be once more condemned by His voice, and, sharing with the rest in nothing save in the restoration to life, shall pay the penalty of such prolonged unbelief. For they shall depart down into Hades to be punished, and shall feel unavailing remorse. For, saith He, *there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

11 *I am the Good Shepherd.*

Having previously well and clearly shown how grievously those who lived in earlier times suffered from the hypocrisy of the false prophets and false shepherds, and having made manifest the advantages to be brought about by His own coming; having now also shewn His own superiority by comparing the future destinies of the sheep, and being crowned as Conqueror by the votes of truth; He appropriately utters the words, *I am the Good Shepherd.* 'Certainly therefore,' He says, 'your plans against Me will be vain, since without being able to complain that I wish in any thing to damage the interests of the sheep, ye hesitate not to number Me with those who are wont to do this, and Him Who is truly good ye call evil, losing through your self-regard the ability to judge each matter fairly according to the injunction of the lawgiver.' Therefore He rebukes the rulers as unjust, as quite regardless of the words of Moses, as ignorant of the object of His coming, so that henceforth the prophet Isaiah may be acknowledged to speak truly concerning them, for he says: *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.* For indeed will they not be found to do this, who treat the True Light, that is, Our Lord Jesus Christ, as darkness, by scrupling not to reckon our Good Shepherd as one of the falsely-named shepherds, or perhaps daring to esteem Him even less honourable than they? For such as professed themselves utterers of the Divine Word, and exercised themselves under the guise of prophecy in robbing the understanding of the common people and in cunningly stealing them from the way of truth, and led their followers astray to do their own pleasure instead of God's,----such as these were held in high esteem by those who seemed to be in power at that time. Certainly Shemaiah the Salamite opposed his own falsehood to God's words, and made himself bold against the reputation of Jeremiah; for the latter was in bonds, and the former had honour from Zedekiah as a reward for his lies. And now the wretched Pharisees going far beyond similar impiety, and characterised by more daring insolence, do not assign to Christ even the position allowed to false teachers. For indeed what did they actually say to some who were listening with great pleasure to His discourse? *He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?* Wherefore Himself also says concerning them, by the prophet Isaiah: *Woe unto them! for they have fled from Me; wretched are they, for they have been impious towards Me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me.* And again: *Their rulers shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue.* For are they not worthy of every punishment, who foolishly whet their tongue to such a sharpness as to dare to say against Christ such things as are not becoming in any way for us, but only for those who hold similar opinions, either to receive within the ears or heedlessly to repeat?

12, 13 *The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep. He that is a hireling-, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

Having made a skilful comparison between the prating speeches and lawless daring of some and the splendour of His own works, and having characterised and described the former as

thieves and robbers and climbers into the sheepfold by some other way, and Himself as the really Good Shepherd; He now passes on to speak of the rulers of the Jews themselves, and shews His own leadership to be better than that of the Pharisees. And the demonstration of this again He makes most evident to them by means of a comparison. For He sets in contrast as it were with their heedlessness and indifference His own watchfulness and love; and again accuses them of caring nothing for the flock, whereas He says His care for it was so intense that He despised even life, which to all is so dear. And He explains the proper method of testing a good shepherd, for He teaches that in a struggle for the salvation of the flock such a one ought not to hesitate to give up even life itself freely, a condition which was of course fulfilled by Christ. For man, having yielded to an inclination for sin, at once wandered away from love to God. On this account he was banished from the sacred and Divine fold, I mean the precincts of Paradise; and having been weakened by this calamity, he became the prey of really bitter and implacable wolves, the devil who had beguiled him to sin, and death which had been germinated from sin. But when Christ was announced as the Good Shepherd over all, in the struggle with this pair of wild and terrible beasts, He laid down His life for us. He endured the cross for our sakes that by death He might destroy death, and was condemned for our sakes that He might deliver all men from condemnation for sin, abolishing the tyranny of sin by means of faith, and *nailing to His cross the bond that was against us*, as it is written. Accordingly, the father of sin used to put us *in Hades like sheep*, delivering us over to death as *our shepherd*, according to what is said in the Psalms: but the really Good Shepherd died for our sakes, that He might take us out of the dark pit of death and prepare to enfold us among the companies of heaven, and give unto us mansions above, even with the Father, instead of dens situate in the depths of the abyss or the recesses of the sea. Wherefore also He somewhere says to us: *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*. These words apply to the sheep tended by Christ: but let us now consider the state of the flocks of those others. Surely, by him who looks carefully and fairly into their condition, those others will be detected as nothing else than hirelings and false shepherds and wretches and betrayers and cowards, who have never taken any thought for the benefit of the sheep, but eagerly grasp on every side at whatever seems pleasing in any way to themselves individually. For they were *hirelings*, according to the Saviour's words, *whose own the sheep were not*. No: the sheep were Christ's, Who hired those men from the beginning, and appointed the priests to the highest honours and headships over the people of the Jews: but they, [dishonouring] so dignified [a position], and altogether neglecting the sheepfold, betrayed the sheep to the wolf, and we will briefly explain how they did it. In earlier times the numerous people of the Jews acknowledged God only for their king: to Him they paid *the half-shekel*, to Him they offered sacrifices and brought the observance of the Law as a sort of tribute. But there came upon them like some savage *wolf* a man of foreign race, imposing on them the name and the reality of slavery, and laying on them the yoke of a human sovereignty, compelling them somehow to adopt a strange and unwonted manner of life, demanding tribute, plundering the kingdom of God. For it was of course necessary for them when reduced to such distress to submit to the enactments of their conqueror. The foreigner came, overthrowing the rule which is from God, that is, the tribe ordained to minister in holy things, to whom judgment and the magistracy were committed by God; changing everything and exercising oppression; causing his own image to be struck on the coins, and practising all manner of arrogance. Against such intolerable insolence the shepherds did not show vigilance. They *saw the wolf coming*, and abandoned the flock, and fled, for *the sheep were not their own*; they did not call upon Him Who was able to help, Who delivered them out of the hands of the people of Babylon, and turned away the Assyrians,

Who slew by the hand of an angel *a hundred and eighty five thousand* of the foreigners. And that the people of Israel were in no small degree injured and demoralised by the acceptance of the rule of the aliens, I mean under those of foreign race, thou mayest learn from the actual result. For at one time Pilate rebuked the unlawful boldness of the Jews, because they bade him crucify the Lord, and when he publicly said: *Shall I crucify your King?* they then actually at once threw aside their servitude under God, and burst asunder the bonds of their old allegiance, and proceeded to subject themselves as it were to a new yoke, exclaiming without more ado: *We have no king but Caesar.* And these things, both what the people did and what they cried out, appeared to their leaders to be right and proper; certainly therefore we must ascribe to them the authorship of all the people's misfortunes. So they are condemned, and very reasonably, as betrayers of the sheep, as wretches and cowards and most certainly fond of fighting, even refusing altogether to protect and defend the sheep placed in their charge. Wherefore also God reproves them, saying: *For the shepherds became brutish, and did not seek the Lord; therefore none of the flock had understanding, and they were scattered.* From the events themselves therefore it is made manifest that Christ is a really Good Shepherd of sheep, but that the others are corrupters rather than good [shepherds] and are altogether to be excluded from any praise for sincerity.

14 *I am the Good Shepherd.*

Again He exults in having gained the victory and obtained the suffrages [of His hearers to the effect] that He ought to be acknowledged as ruler of the Jews, suffrages not expressed by the open testimony of any, but arising from the investigation of facts which has just been undertaken. For just as after He contrasted His own works with the villainies brought about by the false-prophets, and shewed the result of His doings to be better than that of their falsehood: for He says that they came, unbidden, merely to steal and to kill and to destroy, to tell lies and to say things unlawful; but that He Himself was come that the sheep might have not life merely, but also something more; beautifully and rightly He exclaimed: *I am the Good Shepherd:* so also here, after characterising the really good shepherd as one who is ready to die on behalf of the sheep, and willing to lay down his life for them, whereas the hireling, even the foreign ruler, is a wretch and a coward and worthy of all such names previously given him; since He knows that He Himself is going to lay down His life for the sheep, with good reason He again cries aloud: *I am the Good Shepherd.* For He Who in all things hath the pre-eminence must of course be superior to all, so that the Psalmist once more may appear truthful, when he says somewhere unto Him: *That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words and victorious when Thou art judged.*

And besides what has been said, this other matter also deserves consideration. For my own part I think that teaching intended to be of great benefit to the people of the Jews was urged upon them by the Lord, not merely by His own words, but also the utterances of the Prophets, to persuade them to a willingness to think according to right reason, and to know of a certainty that He is the Good Shepherd and the others are not so. And whence? Surely it would not be unreasonable to suppose that even if they were not persuaded by words of His, yet at any rate they would not be unwilling to yield to those of their own Prophets. He accordingly says: *I am the Good Shepherd,* bringing to their remembrance as it were the words spoken by the voice of Ezekiel and recalling them to the minds of the Jews. For thus speaks the Prophet concerning Christ and those whose lot it was to rule the flock of the Jews: *Thus saith the Lord God: O shepherds of Israel, do shepherds feed themselves? do not shepherds feed their flocks? Behold, ye consume the milk, and clothe yourselves with the*

wool, and ye slay them that are fat; but ye feed not My sheep. The diseased ye have not strengthened, neither have ye refreshed the side, neither have ye bound up the broken, neither have ye turned back the strayed, neither have ye sought the lost; but ye have killed even the strong with hardships. And My sheep were scattered because there were no shepherds, and they became meat to all the beasts of the field: and My sheep were scattered on every mountain, and upon every high hill, and over the face of all the earth; and there was none who sought them or turned them back. For the one aim of the rulers of the Jews was to look only for their own gain, and to make money out of the offerings of their subjects, and to collect tributes, and to impose burdens over and above the law, but certainly not to take any account of anything which was likely to benefit or able to keep in safety the people in their charge. Wherefore again the really excellent Shepherd speaks concerning them in these words: *Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My sheep at their hands, and I will cause them to cease from feeding My sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more: and I will deliver My sheep out of their mouth, and they shall no longer be unto them for meat.* And again, after other words: *And I will set up One Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My Servant David; and He shall be their Shepherd, and I the Lord will be their God, and David shall be a Prince among them: I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with David a covenant of peace, and I will cause the evil beasts to disappear out of the land; and they shall dwell in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will set them round about My hill, and I will give you rain, even the rain of blessing, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase.* Surely in these words God very well and distinctly declares that the unholy multitude of the Pharisees shall be removed from the leadership of the Jews, and manifestly announces that after them shall be set over the rational flocks of believers He Who is *of the seed of David according to the flesh*, even Christ. For by Him God hath concluded *a covenant of peace*, namely, the Evangelic and Divine proclamation, which leads us to reconciliation with God, and wins the kingdom of heaven. Likewise also through Him comes *the rain of blessing*, that is, the first-fruits of the Spirit, making as it were a fruitful land of the soul in which it dwells. And since the Pharisees caused no small grief to their sheep, in no wise feeding them, but rather suffering them to be in many ways tormented, whereas Christ saved His sheep and was shown to be a giver and promoter of blessings from above, He appears to be right in this which He says of Himself: *I am the Good Shepherd.*

And let no one find it a stumbling-block, I pray you, that God the Father called Him Who was made Man of the seed of David a *servant*, although He is by Nature God and Very Son; but let it rather be understood, that He has *humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant*. He is therefore called by God the Father by a name suitable to His assumed form.

15 *And I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father.*

Without sufficient thought any one might say that by these words the Lord wished to signify nothing more than this:---that He would be well-known to His own people, and would freely bestow knowledge concerning Himself upon those who believe on Him; and also that He would recognize His own people, manifestly implying that the recognition would not be without profit to those whose lot it might be to experience it. For what shall we say is better than being known by God? But since what is here expressed somehow claims for itself a keener scrutiny, especially because He added: *As the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father*; come and let us proceed towards such an understanding of the words before us. For I

do not think that any living being who has a sound mind will say that he has power to be able to attain to such knowledge concerning Christ as that which we may suppose God the Father has concerning Him. For the Father alone knows His own Offspring, and is known by His own Offspring alone. For *no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; nor again doth any know what the Father is, save the Son*, according to the saying of the Saviour Himself. For that the Father is God and the Son likewise is Very God, we both know and have believed: but what their ineffable Nature is in its Essence is utterly incomprehensible to us and to all other rational creatures. How then shall we know the Son in like measure as the Father doth? For we must consider in what sense He declares that He will recognize us and be recognized by us, as He knoweth the Father and the Father Him.

Therefore we must also investigate what meaning we shall consistently attach to the words so as not to be out of harmony with the context; this we must seek for. For my part, I will not conceal that which comes into my mind; nevertheless let it be accepted [only] by such as are willing. For I think that in these words He means by "knowledge" not simply "acquaintance," but rather employs this word to signify "friendly relationship," either by kinship and nature, or as it were in the participation of grace and honour. In this way it is customary for the children of the Greeks to say they "know" not only those who are of more distant family relationship, but also, even their actual brothers. And that the Divine Scripture too speaks of friendly relationship as knowledge, we shall perceive from what follows. For Christ somewhere says concerning those who were not at all in friendly relationship with Him: *Many will say to Me in that day, namely, in the Day of judgment, Lord, Lord, did we not by Thy Name do many mighty works, and cast out devils? Then will I profess unto them, Verily, I say unto you, I never knew you.* Again if "knowledge" means simply "acquaintance," how can He Who has *all things naked and laid open before His eyes*, as it is written. Who even *knows all things before they be*,---how can He be without knowledge of any living beings? It is therefore quite unintelligible, or rather it is positively impious, to suspect that the Lord is without knowledge of any; and we will rather think that He means to speak of them as brought into no friendly relationship or communion with Him. As though He says: "I do not know you to have been lovers of virtue, or to have honoured My word, or to have joined yourselves unto Me by good works." Conformably with this thou wilt also understand what is spoken with regard to the all-wise Moses, when God says to him: *I know thee above all* [other men], *and thou hast found grace in My sight*; which signifies: "Thou, more than any other man, hast been brought into friendly relationship with Me, and hast obtained much grace." And when we say this, we do not take away the signification of "acquaintance" from the word "knowledge," but simply attach a more suitable meaning in harmony with our ideas on the subject. Accordingly, when He says: *I know Mine, and am known by Mine, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father*; it is equivalent to saying: "I shall enter into friendly relationship with My sheep, and My sheep shall be brought into friendly relationship with Me, according to the manner in which the Father is intimate with Me, and again I also am intimate with the Father." For just as God the Father knows His own Son and the Fruit of His Substance, by reason of being really His Parent; and again, the Son knows the Father, holding Him as God in truth, inasmuch as He is Begotten of Him: in the same way, we also, being brought into friendly relationship with Him, are called His kindred and are spoken of as children, according to that which was said by Him: *Behold, I and the children whom God hath given Me.* And we both are and are called the kindred in truth of the Son, and through Him of the Father; because the Only-Begotten, being God of God, was made Man, assuming the same nature as ours, although separate from all sin. Else how *are we the offspring of God*, and in what way *partakers of the Divine Nature*? For not in the mere will of Christ to

receive us into friendly relationship have we our full measure of boasting, but the power of the thing itself is realised as true by all of us. For the Word of God is a Divine Nature even when in the flesh, and we are His kindred, notwithstanding that He is by Nature God, because of His taking the same flesh as ours. Therefore the manner of the friendly relationship is similar. For as He is closely related to the Father, and through the sameness of their Nature the Father is closely related to Him; so also are we to Him and He to us, in so far as He was made Man. And through Him as through a Mediator are we joined with the Father. For Christ is a sort of link connecting the Supreme Godhead with manhood, being both in the same Person, and as it were combining in Himself these natures which are so different: and on the one hand, as He is by Nature God, He is joined with God the Father; whereas on the other hand, as He is in truth a Man, He is joined with men.

But perhaps some one will say, "Dost thou not see, O fellow, to what a perilous hazard thy argument is leading thee? For if in so far as He became Man we shall think that He knows His own, that is, comes into friendly relationship with His sheep; who remains outside the fold? For they will be all together in friendly relationship, because they are men just as He is Man. Why then does He any longer use the superfluous word '*Mine*?' And what is the peculiar mark of those that are really His? For if all are in friendly relationship from the above-mentioned cause, what greater advantage will those who know Him intimately have?"

We say in reply, that the manner of the friendly relationship is common to all, both to those who have known Him and to those who have not known Him; for He became Man, not showing favour to some and not to others, out of partiality, but pitying our fallen nature in its entirety. Yet the manner of the friendly relationship will avail nothing for those who are insolent through unbelief, but rather will be allotted as a distinguishing reward to those who love Him. For just as the doctrine of the resurrection extends to all men, through the Resurrection of the Saviour, Who causes to rise with Himself the nature of man in its entirety, yet it will profit nothing those who love sin, (for they will go down into Hades, receiving restoration to life only that they may be punished as they deserve); nevertheless it will be of great profit to those who have practised the more excellent way of life, (for they will receive the resurrection to the participation of the good things which pass understanding): in just the same way I think the doctrine of the friendly relationship applies to all men, both bad and good, yet is not the same thing to all; but while to those who believe on Him it is the means of true kinship and of the blessings consequent upon that, to those who are not such it is an aggravation of their ingratitude and un-holiness. Such is our opinion on this subject, but let any one who can do so think out the more perfect meaning.

Now however we must notice at the same time how true and carefully accurate the language is, for Christ is not found to treat subjects in inconsistent and varying ways, but to put every separate thing in its own and most suitable place. For He did not say: "Mine know Me and I know Mine," but He introduces in the first place Himself as knowing His own sheep, then afterwards He says that He shall be known by them. And if knowledge be taken in the sense of acquaintance, as we were saying at the beginning it might be, thou wilt understand something like this: "We did not first know Him, but He first knew us." For instance, Paul when writing to some of the Gentiles says something of this sort, as follows:---*Wherefore remember, ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are*

*made nigh in the blood of Christ.* For out of His unbounded kindness Christ introduced Himself to the Gentiles, and knew them before that He was known by them. And if knowledge be understood as friendship and relationship, again we say likewise: "It was not we who began this state of things, but the Only-Begotten Son of God." For we did not lay hold of the Godhead which is above our nature, but He Who is in His Nature God *took hold of the seed of Abraham*, as Paul says, and became Man, so that being *made like unto His brethren in all things*, except sin, He might receive into friendly relationship him who of himself had not this privilege, that is, man. Therefore, as a matter of course, He says that He first knew us, then afterwards that we knew Him.

*And I lay down My life for the sheep.*

Thus He was prepared on behalf of those who were now His friends and relations to afford protection in every way, and He promises even willingly to incur peril, giving a proof in fact by taking this upon Himself that He really is the Good Shepherd. For some, abandoning the sheep to the wolves, were well designated on that account as wretches and hirelings; but since He knew that He must strive on their behalf so vigorously as not even to shrink from death, He might with good reason be deemed a Good Shepherd. And by saying: *I lay down My life for the sheep*, because *I am the Good Shepherd*, He covertly rebukes the Pharisees, and gives them perhaps to understand that one day they would act thus frantically, and reach such a pitch of madness against Him, as to compass the death of One Who by no means deserved this, but rather was worthy of all praise and admiration, both because of the deeds which He wrought and on account of His excellent skill in the duties of a shepherd.

Nevertheless we must remark that Christ did not unwillingly endure death on our behalf and for our sakes, but is seen to go towards it voluntarily, although very easily able to escape the suffering, if He willed not to suffer. Therefore we shall see, in His willingness even to suffer for us, the excellency of His love towards us and the immensity of His kindness.

*16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring; and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.*

In divers manners He rattles His blows around the lawless Pharisees; for that they would almost immediately be thrust out from the charge of the sheep and that in their stead He Himself would govern and lead them, He intimates by many sayings. And He throws out hints that, having joined the flocks of the Gentiles to the better disposed of Israel, He will rule not merely the flock of the Jews, but will at once extend the light of His own glory over the whole earth, and call the nations in every quarter to the knowledge of God; not suffering Himself to be known in Judaea only, as was the case in early times, but rather in every country under heaven giving the information which leads to the enjoyment of the true knowledge of God. And that Christ was appointed to be a Guide of the Gentiles unto piety, any one may learn, and very easily; for the inspired Scripture is full of testimonies to this, and perhaps it would not be wrong to pass it over altogether, leaving it to the more studious to seek out such passages; but nevertheless I will adduce two or three sentences from the Prophets concerning this, before I pass on to what follows, Well then, God the Father somewhere says with regard to Christ: *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the Gentiles, a leader and commander to the Gentiles.* For Christ bore witness to the Gentiles, giving them instruction unto salvation, and frankly telling them the things whereby they must be saved. And the Divine Psalmist, as if calling those in all quarters into one joyous company, and bidding all under the sun to gather

themselves together to a heavenly feast says: *O clap your hands, all ye Gentiles; shout unto God with the voice of exultation.* But if it may seem good to any one to inquire into the cause of such a glorious and noble act of praise, he will find it clearly expressed: *For God is the king of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding: God reigneth over all the Gentiles.* And somewhere also he has introduced the Lord Himself announcing in His own words the Evangelic Proclamation to all the Gentiles together; for in the eight and fortieth Psalm He says: *Sear this, all ye Gentiles; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world, both the low-born and the nobles, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.* For how shall any one mention any thing wiser than the Gospel precepts, or what shall we find so full of hidden understanding as the instruction which comes through Christ? Therefore, for our explanation must revert to what we began with, He clearly foretells that the multitude of the Gentiles shall be united into one flock with the obedient of Israel. But "For what reason," some one who is more keenly searching into the signification of this passage may say, "does the Saviour, when addressing the rulers of the Jews, and speaking to men whose hearts burned with hatred and envy, reveal mysteries? For tell me why such men should be informed that He would rule the Gentiles, and that He would gather into His own folds the sheep from beyond the limits of Judaea? "What then shall we say to this, and how shall we explain it? Not as to friends does He impart mysteries [to these men], but neither does He deem the explanation of these matters useless to them: on the other hand, He thus speaks because He knew it would profit them as much as anything He could do; for this was His object, although the mind of His hearers, being quite obstinate and not yielding to obedience, remained inflexible. And because He was aware that they knew the writings of Moses and the announcements of the Holy Prophets, and in the Prophets the statements are frequent and abundant that Christ was to convert the Gentiles also to the knowledge of God: on this account He set this matter before them as a most manifest sign that He was clearly the One fore-announced. He publicly" declared that He would call even those sheep who were not of the Jewish fold, in order (as we said just now) that they might believe Him to be really the One Whom the company of the holy men had foretold.

*17 Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again.*

He replies oftentimes not only to the words uttered at the time with the tongue, but to the reasonings in the depth [of the heart]; for being Very God, He has a clear knowledge of all things. Accordingly, when the unholy Jews mocked at His words, especially because He promised that He would struggle on behalf of His own sheep to such a degree and so very earnestly that He was actually ready even to die for them, thinking that He now talked foolishly and deeming Him mad; forcibly now at length He shows those who were mockers, because of the ignorance and at the same time the unbounded impiety that was in them, that they are guilty both in words and in deeds of dishonouring that which God the Father recognises as worthy of great honour. For *the Father loveth Me*, He says, for this very thing that you through your great lack of understanding so utterly despise. Are ye not therefore arrogant and chargeable with gross impiety, when ye say that is a fit object for mockery which to God is most acceptable and well-pleasing? And somehow also He gives them to understand from these words, that they were greatly hated by God. For if God *loves* the One Who *lays down His life* for the sheep of the fold entrusted to His care, it is of course necessary to suppose that He holds in detestation the one who *beholdeth the wolf coming and leaveth the herd* [a prey] to the prowling and ravenous beast, and turneth to flight; just what Christ had convicted those, whose lot it was then to rule the people or flock of the Jews, of doing. At the same time therefore He reproves them both as hated by God and as being ungodly, because

they did not shrink from laughing at what God honoured most highly. Moreover, Christ declares that He was loved by God the Father, not merely because He lays down His life, but *because He lays it down that He may also take it again*: for of course it is in this point especially that the greatness of the benefits He wrought for us appears conspicuous. For if He had only died, and had not risen again, what would have been the advantage? And how would He appear to have benefitted our nature, if He had remained amongst us, dead, under the bonds of death, and subjected to consequent corruption in the same way as others? But since *He laid it down that He might also take it again*, He in this way saved our nature perfectly, bringing to naught the power of death; and He will display us as a new creation.

Accordingly, the Son is beloved by God the Father; not as though He would have remained without that love, had not His work for us been done; for He was always and at all times beloved. And we will proceed towards the comprehension of what is here said. The qualities which naturally are inherent in any thing, or which happen to be possessed by it, are most strikingly manifested at any particular time when they are exhibited with special intensity. For example, fire naturally has in itself its own heat, but when it displays it upon pieces of wood, then especially we recognise what force and what power there is in it. Similarly, the man who has acquired a knowledge perhaps of grammar or of some other such science, would not be admired for it, I suppose, if he remained silent, but rather when he has exhibited to the appreciation of others the excellence of the knowledge he possesses. In like manner therefore the Divine and ineffable Nature, when it strongly exhibits any of Its own inherent qualities, or any of the attributes naturally belonging to It; at such a time It also is by Itself most strikingly manifested, and so is seen by us. For instance, Wisdom saith in the Book of Proverbs: *I it was in Whom He rejoiced, and daily I was delighted, [being] always in His presence; when He was delighted at having finished the world, and was taking delight in the sons of men*: although joy always belongs to God, and His gladness is without end. Surely nothing whatever grieves Him Who possesses authority over all; yet He rejoices in His own Wisdom at having finished the world. For when He beholds the energy of His own Wisdom exhibited in His work, then most especially He thought that He must more abundantly rejoice. In this way therefore we will understand what is said in this place. For God the Father being love, according to the language of John, and not simply good but rather goodness itself, when He saw His own Son laying down His life for us through His love towards us, and His surpassing goodness keeping unaltered the exact characteristics of His own Nature, reasonably loved Him; not bestowing His love upon Him as a sort of reward for the things that had been done for us, but, as we have said, beholding in His Son that which was true to His own Essence, and being drawn to love Him as if by certain necessary and irresistible impulses of nature. Therefore, just as even among ourselves, if any one beholds perchance in his own child the image of his own form exactly represented, he is drawn to an intensity of love whensoever he looks at him: after this manner I think God the Father is said to love His own Son, Who for us lays down His own life, and takes it again. For it is a work of love to have chosen even to suffer, and to suffer ignominiously, for the salvation of some; and not to die only, but also to take again the life that was laid down, in order to destroy death and to take away sorrow from [the thought of] corruption. Therefore, being always beloved by reason of His Nature, He will be understood to have been beloved also on account of His love towards us, causing thereby gladness of heart to His Father: since He in that very thing was enabled to see the Image of His own Nature shining forth quite unclouded and unadulterated.

