

## **Martin Luther, *Address To The Nobility of the German Nation* (1520)**

From the Internet History Sourcebooks Project and translated by C. A. Buchheim.

*Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, was born at Eisleben, Prussian Saxony, November 10, 1483. He studied jurisprudence at the University of Erfurt, where he later lectured on physics and ethics. In 1505 he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt; two years later was ordained priest; and in 1508 became professor of philosophy at the University of Wittenberg.*

*The starting-point of Luther's career as a reformer was his posting on the church door of Wittenberg the Ninety-five Theses on October 31, 1517. These formed a passionate statement of the true nature of penitence, and a protest against the sale of indulgences. In issuing the Theses, Luther expected the support of his ecclesiastical superiors; and it was only after three years of controversy, during which he refused a summons to Rome, that he proceeded to publish those works that brought about his expulsion from the Church.*

*The year 1520 saw the publication of the three great documents which laid down the fundamental principles of the Reformation. In the "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," Luther attacked the corruptions of the Church and the abuses of its authority, and asserted the right of the layman to spiritual independence. In "Concerning Christian Liberty," he expounded the doctrine of justification by faith, and gave a complete presentation of his theological position. In the "Babylonish Captivity of the Church," he criticized the sacramental system, and set up the Scriptures as the supreme authority in religion.*

*In the midst of this activity came his formal excommunication, and his renunciation of allegiance to the Pope. He was proscribed by the Emperor Charles V and taken into the protection of prison in the Wartburg by the friendly Elector of Saxony, where he translated the New Testament. The complete translation of the Bible, issued in 1534, marks the establishment of the modern literary language of Germany.*

*The rest of Luther's life was occupied with a vast amount of literary and controversial activity. He died at Eisleben, February 18, 1546.*

### **Luther to Nicholas von Amsdorf**

To the Esteemed and Reverend Master NICHOLAS VON AMSDORF, Licentiate Of holy Scripture and Canon at Wittenberg, my special and kind friend; Doctor Martin Luther.

The grace and peace of God be with thee, esteemed and reverend dear sir and friend.

**T**he time to keep silence has passed and the time to (Eccl 3:7) speak is come, as saith Ecclesiastes. I have followed out intention[1] and brought together some matters touching the reform of the Christian Estate, to be laid before the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, in the hope that may deign to help His Church through the efforts of the laity, since the clergy, to whom this task more properly belongs, have grown quite indifferent. I am sending the whole thing to your Reverence, that you may pass judgment on it and, if necessary, improve it.

### **Luther, *Address to the Christian Nobility***

To his most Serene and Mighty Imperial Majesty and to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation. Dr. Martinus Luther.

**T**he grace and might of God be with you, Most Serene Majesty, most gracious, well-beloved gentlemen!

The distress and misery that oppress all the Christian estates, more especially in Germany, have led not only myself, but every one else, to cry aloud and to ask for help, and have now forced me too to cry out and to ask if God would give His Spirit to any one to reach a hand to His wretched people. . . .

We must renounce all confidence in our natural strength, and take the matter in hand with humble trust in God; we must seek God's help with earnest prayer, and have nothing before our eyes but the misery and wretchedness of Christendom, irrespective of what punishment the wicked may deserve. If we do not act thus, we may begin the game with great pomp; but when we are well in it, the spirits of evil will make such confusion that the whole world will be immersed in blood, and yet nothing be done. . . .

The Romanists have, with great adroitness, drawn three walls round themselves, with which they have hitherto protected themselves, so that no one could reform them, whereby all Christendom has fallen terribly.

Firstly, if pressed by the temporal power, they have affirmed and maintained that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the contrary, that the spiritual power is above the temporal.

Secondly, if it were proposed to admonish them with the Scriptures, they objected that no one may interpret the Scriptures but the Pope.

Thirdly, if they are threatened with a council, they pretend that no one may call a council but the Pope. . . .

**(a) The First Wall**

That the Temporal Power has no Jurisdiction over the Spirituality

Let us, in the first place, attack the first wall.

It has been devised that the Pope, bishops, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate, princes, lords, artificers, and peasants are the temporal estate. This is an artful lie and hypocritical device, but let no one be made afraid by it, and that for this reason: that all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone. As St. Paul says (1 Cor. xii.), we are all one body, though each member does its own work, to serve the others. This is because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, Gospel, and faith, these alone make spiritual and Christian people. . . .

Thus we are all consecrated as priests by baptism, as St. Peter says: "Ye are a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter ii. 9); and in the book of Revelations: "and hast made us unto our God (by Thy blood) kings and priests" (Rev. v. 10). For, if we had not a higher consecration in us than pope or bishop can give, no priest could ever be made by the consecration of pope or bishop, nor could he say the mass, or preach, or absolve. Therefore the bishop's consecration is just as if in the name of the whole congregation he took one person out of the community, each member of which has equal power, and commanded him to exercise this power for the rest; in the same way as if ten brothers, co-heirs as king's sons, were to choose one from among them to rule over their inheritance, they would all of them still remain kings and have equal power, although one is ordered to govern.

And to put the matter even more plainly, if a little company of pious Christian laymen were taken prisoners and carried away to a desert, and had not among them a priest consecrated by a bishop, and were there to agree to elect one of them, born in wedlock or not, and were to order him to baptise, to celebrate the mass, to absolve, and to preach, this man would as truly be a priest, as if all the bishops and all the Popes had consecrated him. That is why in cases of necessity every man can baptise and absolve, which would not be possible if we were not all priests. This great grace and virtue of baptism and of the Christian estate they have quite destroyed and made us forget by their ecclesiastical law. . . .

Since, then, the temporal power is baptised as we are, and has the same faith and Gospel, we must allow it to be priest and bishop, and account its office

an office that is proper and useful to the Christian community. For whatever issues from baptism may boast that it has been consecrated priest, bishop, and pope, although it does not beseem every one to exercise these offices. For, since we are all priests alike, no man may put himself forward or take upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that which we have all alike power to do. For, if a thing is common to all, no man may take it to himself without the wish and command of the community. And if it should happen that a man were appointed to one of these offices and deposed for abuses, he would be just what he was before. Therefore a priest should be nothing in Christendom but a functionary; as long as he holds his office, he has precedence of others; if he is deprived of it, he is a peasant or a citizen like the rest. Therefore a priest is verily no longer a priest after deposition. But now they have invented characteres indelebiles,<sup>1</sup> and pretend that a priest after deprivation still differs from a simple layman. They even imagine that a priest can never be anything but a priest-that is, that he can never become a layman. All this is nothing but mere talk and ordinance of human invention.

[Footnote 1: In accordance with a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, the act of ordination impresses upon the priest an indelible character; so that he immutably retains the sacred dignity of priesthood.]

It follows, then, that between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, or, as they call it, between spiritual and temporal persons, the only real difference is one of office and function, and not of estate; for they are all of the same spiritual estate, true priests, bishops, and popes, though their functions are not the same-just as among priests and monks every man has not the same functions. And this, as I said above, St. Paul says (Rom. xii.; 1 Cor. xii.), and St. Peter (1 Peter ii.): "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another." Christ's body is not double or twofold, one temporal, the other spiritual. He is one Head, and He has one body. . . .

In the same way the temporal authorities hold the sword and the rod in their hands to punish the wicked and to protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a peasant, every man, has the office and function of his calling, and yet all alike are consecrated priests and bishops, and every man should by his office or function be useful and beneficial to the rest, so that various kinds of work may all be united for the furtherance of body and soul, just as the members of the body all serve one another. . . .

**(b) The Second Wall**

That no one may interpret the Scriptures but the Pope

The second wall is even more tottering and weak: that they alone pretend to be considered masters of the Scriptures; although they learn nothing of them all their life. . . .

Therefore it is a wickedly devised fable-and they cannot quote a single letter to confirm it-that it is for the Pope alone to interpret the Scriptures or to confirm the interpretation of them. They have assumed the authority of their own selves. And though they say that this authority was given to St. Peter when the keys were given to him, it is plain enough that the keys were not given to St. Peter alone, but to the whole community. . . .

**(c) The Third Wall**

That no one may call a council but the Pope

Moreover, they can show nothing in the Scriptures giving the Pope sole power to call and confirm councils; they have nothing but their own laws; but these hold good only so long as they are not injurious to Christianity and the laws of God. . . .

Therefore when need requires, and the Pope is a cause of offence to Christendom, in these cases whoever can best do so, as a faithful member of the whole body, must do what he can to procure a true free council. This no one can do so well as the temporal authorities, especially since they are fellow-Christians, fellow-priests, sharing one spirit and one power in all things, and since they should exercise the office that they have received from God without hindrance, whenever it is necessary and useful that it should be exercised. Would it not be most unnatural, if a fire were to break out in a city, and every one were to keep still and let it burn on and on, whatever might be burnt, simply because they had not the mayor's authority, or because the fire perchance broke out at the mayor's house? Is not every citizen bound in this case to rouse and call in the rest? How much more should this be done in the spiritual city of Christ, if a fire of offence breaks out, either at the Pope's government or wherever it may! The like happens if an enemy attacks a town. The first to rouse up the rest earns glory and thanks. Why then should not he earn glory that describes the coming of our enemies from hell and rouses and summons all Christians? . . .

Therefore we learn from the Apostle clearly, that every town should elect a pious learned citizen from the congregation and charge him with the office of minister; the congregation should support him, and he should be left at liberty to marry or not. He should have as assistants several priests and deacons, married or not, as they please, who should help him

to govern the people and the congregation with sermons and the ministration of the sacraments, as is still the case in the Greek Church. . . .

What are the universities, as at present ordered, but, as the book of Maccabees says, "schools of 'Greek fashion' and 'heathenish manners'" (2 Macc. iv. 12, 13), full of dissolute living, where very little is taught of the Holy Scriptures of the Christian faith, and the blind heathen teacher, Aristotle, rules even further than Christ? Now, my advice would be that the books of Aristotle, the Physics, the Metaphysics, Of the Soul, Ethics, which have hitherto been considered the best, be altogether abolished, with all others that profess to treat of nature, though nothing can be learned from them, either of natural or of spiritual things. Besides, no one has been able to understand his meaning, and much time has been wasted and many noble souls vexed with much useless labour, study, and expense. I venture to say that any potter has more knowledge of natural things than is to be found in these books. My heart is grieved to see how many of the best Christians this accursed, proud, knavish heathen has fooled and led astray with his false words. God sent him as a plague for our sins. . . .

I have frequently offered to submit my writings for inquiry and examination, but in vain, though I know, if I am in the right, I must be condemned upon earth and justified by Christ alone in heaven. For all the Scriptures teach us that the affairs of Christians and Christendom must be judged by God alone; they have never yet been justified by men in this world, but the opposition has always been too strong. My greatest care and fear is lest my cause be not condemned by men, by which I should know for certain that it does not please God. Therefore let them go freely to work, pope, bishop, priest, monk, or doctor; they are the true people to persecute the truth, as they have always done. May God grant us all a Christian understanding, and especially to the Christian nobility of the German nation true spiritual courage, to do what is best for our unhappy Church. Amen!

At Wittenberg, in the year 1520.

# Martin Luther, A Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church

Excerpted from Project Wittenberg Online Electronic Study Edition, Trans. Albert T. W. Steinhäuser.

## THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF CHURCH: A PRELUDE

1.18 At the outset I must deny that there are seven sacraments, and hold for the present to but three — baptism, penance and the bread. These three have been subjected to a miserable captivity by the Roman curia, and the Church has been deprived of all her liberty. To be sure, if I desired to use the term in its scriptural sense, I should allow but a single sacrament, with three sacramental signs. But of this I shall treat more fully at the proper time.

## THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

2.1 Now, about the Sacrament of the Bread, the most important of all sacraments . . .

2.23 Years ago, when I was delving into scholastic theology, the Cardinal of Cambrai gave me food for thought, in his comments on the fourth *Book of the Sentences*, where he argues with great acumen that to hold that real bread and real wine, and not their accidents only, are present on the altar, is much more probable and requires fewer unnecessary miracles — if only the Church had not decreed otherwise. When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this — namely, the Church of Thomas, i.e., of Aristotle — I waxed bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, at last found rest for my conscience in the above view — namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and blood are present, not otherwise and not less really than they assume to be the case under their accidents. . . .

2.24 I therefore permit every man to hold either of these views, as he chooses. My one concern at present is to remove all scruples of conscience, so that no one may fear to become guilty of heresy if he should believe in the presence of real bread and real wine on the altar. . . .

2.29 But why could not Christ include His body in the substance of the bread just as well as in the accidents? The two substances of fire and iron are so mingled in the heated iron that every part is both iron and fire. Why could not much rather Christ's body be thus contained in every part of the substance of the bread? . . .

2.37 *The third captivity of this sacrament* is that most wicked abuse of all, in consequence of which there is today no more generally accepted and firmly believed opinion in the Church than this — that the mass is a

good work and a sacrifice. This abuse has brought an endless host of others in its wake, so that the faith of this sacrament has become utterly extinct and the holy sacrament has truly been turned into a fair, tavern, and place of merchandise. . . .

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

3.5 This message should have been persistently impressed upon the people and this promise diligently repeated to them. Their baptism should have been called again and again to their mind, and faith constantly awakened and nourished. Just as the truth of this divine promise, once pronounced over us, continues to death, so our faith in the same ought never to cease, but to be nourished and strengthened until death, by the continual remembrance of this promise made to us in baptism. . . .

3.12 From this we can clearly see the difference, in baptism, between man the minister and God the Doer. For man baptises and does not baptise. He baptises, for he performs the work, immersing the person to be baptised. He does not baptise, for in that act he officiates not by his own authority, but as God's representative. Hence, we ought to receive baptism at the hands of a man just as if Christ Himself, no, God Himself, were baptising us with His own hands. For it is not man's baptism, but Christ's and God's baptism, which we receive by the hand of a man. . . .

3.2 Baptism, then, signifies two things — death and resurrection — that is, full and complete justification. When the minister immerses the child in the water, baptism signifies death. When he draws the child forth again, baptism signifies life.

## THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Similarly, when He [Christ] says here: "Whatsoever you shall bind," etc., (Matthew 16:19) He calls forth the faith of the penitent, so that by this word of promise he may be certain of being truly absolved in heaven, if he be absolved and believe. Here there is no mention at all of power, but of the ministry of him that absolves, it is a wonder these blind and arrogant men missed the opportunity of arrogating a despotic power to themselves from the promise of baptism. But if they do not do this in the case of baptism, why should they have presumed to do it in the case of the promise of penance? For in both there is a like ministry, a similar promise, and the same kind of sacrament. So that, if baptism does not belong to

Peter alone, it is undeniably a wicked usurpation of power to claim the keys for the pope alone. . . .

### **CONFIRMATION**

5.1 I wonder what could have possessed them to make a sacrament of confirmation out of the laying on of hands, (Mark 16:18; Acts 6:6, Acts 8:17, Acts 19:6) which Christ employed when He blessed young children, (Mark 10:16) and the apostles when they imparted the Holy Spirit, ordained elders and cured the sick, as the Apostle writes to Timothy, "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Timothy 5:22). . . .

5.2 I do not say this because I condemn the seven sacraments, but because I deny that they can be proved from the Scriptures. . . .

### **MARRIAGE**

6.1 Not only is marriage regarded as a sacrament without the least warrant of Scripture, but the very traditions which extol it as a sacrament have turned it into a farce. . . .

### **ORDINATION**

7.1 Of this sacrament the Church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the pope's church. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not the least mention of it in the whole New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God that which cannot be proved to have been instituted by God. I do not hold that this rite, which has been observed for so many centuries, should be condemned; but in sacred things I am opposed to the invention of human fictions, nor is it right to give out as divinely instituted what was not divinely instituted, lest we become a laughing-stock to our opponents. . . .

7.15 Let every one, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian be assured of this, and apply it to himself, —that we are all priests, and there is no difference between, us; that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and all the sacraments . . . . However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community . . . .

## Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*

From the Internet History Sourcebooks Project and  
Henry Wace and C. A. Buchheim, *First Principles of the Reformation* (London, 1883)

### Concerning Christian Liberty

Christian faith has appeared to many an easy thing; nay, not a few even reckon it among the social virtues, as it were; and this they do, because they have not made proof of it experimentally, and have never tasted of what efficacy it is. For it is not possible for any man to write well about it, or to understand well what is rightly written, who has not at some time tasted of its spirit, under the pressure of tribulation. While he who has tasted of it, even to a very small extent, can never write, speak, think, or hear about it sufficiently. For it is a living fountain, springing up unto eternal life, as Christ calls it in the 4th chapter of St. John.

Now, though I cannot boast of my abundance, and though I know how poorly I am furnished, yet I hope that, after having been vexed by various temptations, I have attained some little drop of faith, and that I can speak of this matter, if not with more elegance, certainly with more solidity than those literal and too subtle disputants who have hitherto discoursed upon it, without understanding their own words. That I may open, then, an easier way for the ignorant--for these alone I am trying to serve--I first lay down these two propositions, concerning spiritual liberty and servitude.

*A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none;  
a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one.*

Although these statements appear contradictory, yet, when they are found to agree together, they will be highly serviceable to my purpose. They are both the statements of Paul himself, who says: "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all" (1 Cor. ix. 19), and: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." (Rom. xiii. 8.) Now love is by its own nature dutiful and obedient to the beloved object. Thus even Christ, though Lord of all things, was yet made of a woman; made under the law [Gal. 4:4]; at once free and a [105] servant; at once in the form of God and in the form of a servant [Phil. 2:6-7].

Let us examine the subject on a deeper and less simple principle. Man is composed of a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily. As regards the spiritual nature, which they name the soul, he is

called the spiritual, inward, new man; as regards the bodily nature, which they name the flesh, he is called the fleshly, outward, old man. The Apostle speaks of this: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is relieved day by day." (2 Cor. iv. 16.) The result of this diversity is, that in the Scriptures opposing statements are made concerning the same man; the fact being that in the same man these two men are opposed to one another; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. (Gal. v. 17.)

We first approach the subject of the inward man, that we may see by what means a man becomes justified, free, and a true Christian; that is, a spiritual, new, and inward man. It is certain that absolutely none among outward things, under whatever name they may be reckoned, has any weight in producing a state of justification and Christian liberty, nor, on the other hand an unjustified state and one of slavery. This can be shown by an easy course of argument.

What can it profit the soul, that the body should be in good condition, free, and full of life; that it should eat, drink, and act according to its pleasure; when even the most impious slaves of every kind of vice are prosperous in these matters? Again, what harm can ill-health, bondage, hunger, thirst, or any other outward evil, do to the soul, when even the most pious of men, and the freest in the purity of their conscience are harassed by these things? Neither of these states of things has to do with the liberty or the slavery of the soul.

And so it will profit nothing that the body should be adorned with sacred vestments, or dwell in holy places, or be occupied in sacred offices, or pray, fast, and abstain from certain meats, or do whatever works can be done through the body and in the body. Something widely different will be necessary for the justification and liberty of the soul, since the things I have spoken of can be done by any impious person, and only hypocrites are produced by devotion to these things. On the other hand, it will not at all injure the soul that the [106] body should be clothed in profane raiment, should dwell in profane places, should eat and drink in the ordinary fashion, should not pray aloud, and should leave undone all the things abovementioned, which may be done by hypocrites.

And, to cast everything aside, even speculations, meditations and whatever things can be performed by the exertions of the soul itself, are of no profit. One thing, and one alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty; and that is the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ, as He says: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall not die eternally" (John xi. 25); and also (John viii. 36) "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" and (Matt. iv. 4), "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Let us therefore hold it for certain and firmly established, that the soul can do without everything, except the word of God, without which none at all of its wants are provided for. But, having the word, it is rich and want for nothing; since that is the word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of justification, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of virtue, of grace, of glory, and of every good thing. It is on this account that the prophet in a whole psalm (Ps. cxix.), and in many other places, sighs for and calls upon the word of God with so many groanings and words.

Again, there is no more cruel stroke of the wrath of God than when He sends a famine of hearing His words (Amos viii. 11); just as there is no greater favour from Him than the sending forth of His word, as it is said: "He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." (Ps. cvii. 20.) Christ was sent for no other office than that of the word, and the order of apostles, that of bishops, and that of the whole body of the clergy, have been called and instituted for no object but the ministry of the word.

But you will ask:--"What is this word, and by what means is it to be used, since there are so many words of God?" I answer, the Apostle Paul (Rom. i.) explains what it is, namely, the Gospel of God, concerning His Son, incarnate, suffering, risen, and glorified through the Spirit, the sanctifier. To preach Christ is to feed the soul, to justify it, to set it free, and to save it, if it believes the preaching. For faith alone, [107] and the efficacious use of the word of God, bring salvation. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9.) And again: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4); and "The just shall live by faith." (Rom. i. 17.) For the word of God cannot be received and honoured by any works, but by faith alone. Hence it is clear that, as the soul needs the word alone for life and justification, so it is justified by faith alone and

not by any works. For if it could be justified by any other means, it would have no need of the word, nor consequently of faith. . . .

But you ask how it can be the fact that faith alone justifies, and affords without works so great a treasure of good things, when so many works, ceremonies, and laws are prescribed to us in the Scriptures. I answer: before all things bear in mind what I have said, that faith alone without works justifies, sets free, and saves, as I shall show more clearly below.

Meanwhile it is to be noted, that the whole Scripture of God is divided into two parts, precepts and promises. The precepts certainly teach us what is good, but what they teach is not forthwith done. For they show us what we ought to do, but do not give us the power to do it. They were ordained, however, for the purpose of showing man to himself; that through them he may learn his own impotence for good, and may despair of his own strength. For this reason they are called the Old Testament, and are so.

For example: "thou shalt not covet" [Exod. 20:17], is a precept by which we are all convicted of sin; since no man can help coveting, whatever efforts to the contrary he may make. In order therefore that he may fulfil the precept, and not covet, he is [109] constrained to despair of himself and to seek elsewhere and through another the help which he cannot find in himself; as it is said: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." (Hosea xiii. 9.) Now what is done by this one precept, is done by all; for all are equally impossible of fulfilment by us. . . .

From all this it is easy to understand why faith has such great power, and why no good works, nor even all good works put together, can compare with it; since no work can cleave to the word of God, or be in the soul. Faith alone and the word reign in it; and such as is the word, such is the soul made by it; just as iron exposed to fire glows like fire, on account of its union with the fire. It is clear then that to a Christian man his faith suffices for everything, and that he has no need of works for justification. But if he has no need of works, neither has he need of the law; and, if he has no need of the law, he is certainly free from the law, and the saying is true: "The law is not made for a righteous man." (1 Tim. i. 9.) This is that Christian liberty, our faith, the effect of which is, not that we should be careless or lead a bad life, but that no one should need the law or works for justification and salvation.

Let us consider this as the first virtue of faith; and let us look also to the second. This also is an office of faith, that it honours with the utmost veneration and the highest reputation him in whom it believes, inasmuch as it holds him to be truthful and worthy of belief. For there is no honour like that reputation of truth and righteousness, with which we honour him, in whom we believe. What higher credit can we attribute to any one than truth and righteousness, and absolute goodness? On the other hand, it is the greatest insult to brand any one with the reputation of falsehood and unrighteousness, or to suspect him of these, as we do when we disbelieve him.

Thus the soul, in firmly believing the promises of God, holds Him to be true and righteous; and it can attribute to God no higher glory than the credit of being so. The highest worship of God is to ascribe to Him truth, righteousness, and whatever qualities we must ascribe to one in whom we believe. In doing this the soul shows itself prepared to do His whole will; in doing this it hallows His name, and gives itself up to be dealt with as it may please God. For it cleaves to His [111] promises, and never doubts that He is true, just, and wise, and will do, dispose, and provide for all things in the best way. . . .

The third incomparable grace of faith is this, that it unites the soul to Christ, as the wife to the husband; by which mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul are made one flesh [Eph. 5:31-32]. Now if they are one flesh, and if a true marriage-- [112] nay, by far the most perfect of all marriages--is accomplished between them (for human marriages are but feeble types of this one great marriage), then it follows that all they have becomes theirs in common, as well good things as evil things; so that whatsoever Christ possesses, that the believing soul may take to itself and boast of as its own, and whatever belongs to the soul, that Christ claims as his.

If we compare these possessions, we shall see how inestimable is the gain. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation; the soul is full of sin, death, and condemnation. Let faith step in, and then sin, death, and hell will belong to Christ, and grace, life, and salvation to the soul. For, if he is a husband, he must needs take to himself that which is his wife's, and, at the same time, impart to his wife that which is his. For, in giving her his own body and himself, how can he but give her all that is his? And, in taking to himself the body of his wife, how can he but take to himself all that is hers? . . .

Nor are we only kings and the freest of all men, but also priests for ever, a dignity far higher than kinship, because by that priesthood we are worthy to appear before God, to pray for others, and to teach one another mutually the things which are of God. For these are the duties of priests, and they cannot possibly be permitted to any unbeliever. Christ has obtained for us this favour, if we believe in Him, that, just as we are His brethren, and co-heirs and fellow kings with Him, so we should be also fellow priests with Him, and venture with confidence, through the spirit of faith [Heb. 10:19, 22], to come into the presence of God, [116] and cry "Abba, Father!" and to pray for one another, and to do all things which we see done and figured in the visible and corporeal office of priesthood. But to an unbelieving person nothing renders service or works for good. He himself is in servitude to all things, and all things turn out for evil to him, because he uses all things in an impious way for his own advantage. and not for the glory of God. And thus he is not a priest, but a profane person, whose prayers are turned into sin; nor does he ever appear in the presence of God, because God does not hear sinners [John 9:31].

Who then can comprehend the loftiness of that Christian dignity which, by its royal power, rules over all things, even over death, life, and sin, and, by its priestly glory, is all powerful with God; since God does what He Himself seeks and wishes; as it is written: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them"? (Ps. cxlv. 19.) [cf. Phil. 4:13]. This glory certainly cannot be attained by any works, but by faith only.

From these considerations any one may clearly see how a Christian man is free from all things; so that he needs no works in order to be justified and saved, but receives these gifts in abundance from faith alone. Nay, were he so foolish as to pretend to be justified, set free, saved, and made a Christian, by means of any good work, he would immediately lose faith with all its benefits. Such folly is prettily represented in the fable, where a dog, running along in the water, and carrying in his mouth a real piece of meat, is deceived by the reflection of the meat in the water, and, in trying with open mouth to seize it, loses the meat and its image at the same time. . . .

Returning to the subject which we had begun, I think it is made clear by these considerations that it is not sufficient, nor a Christian course, to preach the works, life, and words of Christ in a historic manner, as facts which it suffices to know as an example how to frame our life; as do those who are now held the best preachers: and much less so, to keep silence

altogether on these and to teach in their stead the laws of men and the decrees of the Fathers. There are now not a few persons who preach and read about Christ with the object of moving the human affections to sympathise with Christ, to indignation against the Jews, and other childish and womanish absurdities of that kind.

Now preaching ought to have the object of promoting, faith in Him, so that He may not only be Christ, but a Christ for you and for me, and that what is said of Him, and what He is called, may work in us. And this faith is produced and is maintained by preaching why Christ came, what He has brought us and given to us, and to what profit and advantage He is to be received. This is done, when the Christian liberty which we have from Christ Himself is rightly taught, and we are shown in what manner all we Christians are kings and priests, and how we are lords of all things, and may be confident that whatever we do in the presence of God is pleasing and acceptable to Him. Whose heart would not rejoice in its inmost core at hearing [118] these things? Whose heart, on receiving so great a consolation, would not become sweet with the love of Christ, a love to which it can never attain by any laws or works? Who can injure such a heart, or make it afraid? If the consciousness of sin, or the horror of death, rush in upon it, it is prepared to hope in the Lord, and is fearless of such evils, and undisturbed, until it shall look down upon its enemies. For it believes that the righteousness of Christ is its own, and that its sin is no longer its own, but that of Christ, for, on account of its faith in Christ, all its sin must needs be swallowed up from before the face of the righteousness of Christ, as I have said above. It learns too, with the Apostle, to scoff at death and sin, and to say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 55-57.) For death is swallowed up in victory; not only the victory of Christ, but ours also; since by faith it becomes ours, and in it we too conquer.

Let it suffice to say this concerning the inner man and its liberty, and concerning that righteousness of faith, which needs neither laws nor good works; nay, they are even hurtful to it, if any one pretends to be justified by them.

And now let us turn to the other part, to the outward man. Here we shall give an answer to all those who, taking offence at the word of faith and at what I have asserted, say: "If faith does everything, and by itself suffices for justification, why then are good works

commanded? Are we then to take our ease and do no works, content with faith?" Not so, impious man, I reply; not so. That would indeed really be the case, if we were thoroughly and completely inner and spiritual persons; but that will not happen until the last day, when the dead shall be raised. As long as we live in the flesh, we are but beginning and making advances in that which shall be completed in a future life. On this account the Apostle calls that which we have in this life, the first-fruits of the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 23.) In future we shall have the tenths, and the fulness of the Spirit. To this part belongs the fact I have stated before, that the Christian is the servant of all and subject to all. For in that part in which he is free, he does no works, but in that in [119] which he is a servant, he does all works. Let us see on what principle this is so.

Although, as I have said, inwardly, and according to the spirit, a man is amply enough justified by faith, having all that he requires to have, except that this very faith and abundance ought to increase from day to day, even till the future life; still he remains in this mortal life upon earth, in which it is necessary that he should rule his own body, and have intercourse with men. Here then works begin; here he must not take his ease; here he must give heed to exercise his body by fastings, watchings, labour, and other moderate discipline, so that it may be subdued to the spirit, and obey and conform itself to the inner man and faith, and not rebel against them nor hinder them, as is its nature to do if it is not kept under. For the inner man, being conformed to God, and created after the image of God through faith, rejoices and delights itself in Christ, in whom such blessings have been conferred on it; and hence has only this task before it, to serve God with joy and for nought in free love.

In doing this he offends that contrary will in his own flesh, which is striving to serve the world, and to seek its own gratification. This the spirit of faith cannot and will not bear; but applies itself with cheerfulness and zeal to keep it down and restrain it; as Paul says: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." (Rom. vii. 22, 23.) And again: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 27.) And: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. v. 24.)

These works, however, must not be done with any notion that by them a man can be justified before God--for faith, which alone is righteousness before

God, will not bear with this false notion--but solely with this purpose, that the body may be brought into subjection, and be purified from its evil lusts, so that our eyes may be turned only to purging away those lusts. For when the soul has been cleansed by faith and made to love God, it would have all things to be cleansed in like manner; and especially in its own body, so that all things might unite with it in the love and praise of God. Thus it comes that from the

requirements of his own body a man cannot take his ease, but is compelled on its account to do many good works, that he may bring it into subjection. Yet these works are not the means of his justification before God, he does them out of disinterested love to the service of God; looking to no other end than to do what is well-pleasing to Him whom he desires to obey dutifully in all things. . . .

## Sebastian Lotzer, "The Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants"

From <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~history/courses/archive/fall01/Docs-PeasantWar.html>

*The document which more than any other embodied the principle of the Word of God as a norm for political negotiation was the Twelve Articles of the peasants of Swabia. They have been seen as a moderate, reformist program because of their repeated assertion that they did not wish to challenge existing authority. This could, however, also be regarded as potentially revolutionary inasmuch as they asserted that the justice or injustice of peasant grievances should be tested on biblical norms alone. The articles therefore could be seen as a blueprint for a reform of agrarian society which could not have been implemented without undermining the foundations of the existing feudal political and social structures. Moreover, the Twelve Articles established a link between evangelical principles and a form of rule based on the participation and assent of the organized community. They can, therefore be interpreted as favoring a form of anti-feudal, non-hierarchical communalism as the basis for social organization. The Twelve Articles were composed in Memmingen between 27 February and 1 March 1525 by the journeyman furrier and lay preacher Sebastian Lotzer, who produced them as a summary and condensation of over three hundred articles produced by the Baltringen peasants for presentation to the Swabian League. The Memmingen preacher Christoph Schappeler added the preamble and supplied some of the biblical references in the margin, which were intended to show the conformity of the peasants' case with the Word of God. The Twelve Articles acquired their importance by being printed within three weeks of their composition and were widely disseminated throughout the areas of revolt. They were taken over as a programme in parts of Germany where some of the complaints did not apply, and were used as the basis for formulation of local grievance lists and proposals for negotiated settlements. -T. A. Brady SOURCE: Franz, *Quellen*, pp. 174 -79, no. 43.*

**T**he just and fundamental chief articles of all peasants and subjects of ecclesiastical and secular authorities in which they consider themselves aggrieved

To the Christian reader, peace and the grace of God through the Christ. There are many Antichrists who have recently used the assemblies of peasants as a reason for pouring scorn on the Gospel, saying: "These are the fruits of the new Gospel: to be to no one, to rebel and rise in revolt everywhere, rally and band together with great force, to reform and overthrow ecclesiastical and secular authorities, indeed, perhaps even to slay them." The following articles are a reply to all these godless and malicious critics. First, they will refute this calumny on the Word of God, and secondly provide a Christian justification for the disobedience, indeed, the rebellion, of all the peasants. . . . Therefore, Christian reader, read the following articles with care, and then decide.

Here follow the articles.

*The First Article.* First, it is our humble plea and request, as it is also the will and intention of all of us, that we should henceforth have the power and authority for the whole community to choose and elect its own pastor, and also to have the power to depose him should he conduct himself improperly. The same elected pastor shall preach the holy Gospel to us purely and clearly, without any human additions to doctrines and commandments. For constant preaching of the true faith impels us to ask God for his grace that he may instill in us the same true faith and confirm it. For if his grace is not instilled in us, we remain always mere flesh and blood, which is worth nothing. As Scripture clearly says, we can only come to God through true faith, and can be saved only through his mercy. That is why we need such a guide and pastor; and thus our demand is grounded in Scripture.

*The Second Article.* Secondly, although the true tithe is ordained in the Old Testament and discharged in

the New, nonetheless we will gladly pay the true grain tithe, only in just measure. Since it should be given to God and distributed to his servants, it belongs to a pastor who proclaims the Word of God clearly. We wish this tithe in future to be collected and received by our churchwarden, elected by the community. From it he will give the pastor who is elected by the entire community his adequate and sufficient sustenance for himself and his dependants, according to the judgement of the whole community. The remainder shall be distributed to the needy poor present in the same village, according to circumstances and the judgement of the community.

*The Third Article.* It has hitherto been the custom for the lords to treat us as their serfs, which is pitiable since Christ has redeemed and bought us all by the shedding of his precious blood, the shepherd just as the highest, no one excepted. Therefore it is demonstrated by Scripture that we are free and wish to be free. Not that we wish to be completely free and to have no authority, for God does not teach us that. We should live according to his commandments, not the free license of the flesh; but we are to love God, recognize him as our Lord in our neighbor, and do all that God commanded us at the Last Supper, as we would gladly do. . . .

*The Fourth Article.* It has hitherto been the custom that no poor man has been empowered or permitted to catch game, wildfowl, or fish in flowing water, which we consider quite improper and unbrotherly, indeed selfish and contrary to the Word of God. . . . Therefore it is our request that whoever has waters for which he has adequate documents to prove that they have been unwittingly bought by him, should not have them taken from him by force, but rather that Christian consideration be shown for the sake of brotherly love; but whoever cannot provide adequate proof, should surrender them to the community in a reasonable manner.

*The Fifth Article.* We are also aggrieved about woodcutting. For our lords have appropriated the woods to themselves alone, and when the poor man has need of timber he must buy it at twice the price. It is our opinion that all woods held by ecclesiastical or secular lords who have not bought them, should revert to the entire community. The community should be free to allow everyone in an orderly manner to take home without charge whatever he needs for firewood, and also to take timber for building free of charge, but only with the knowledge of the official elected by the community for that purpose. . . .

*The Sixth Article.* The sixth concerns our grievous burden of labor services, which are increased from day to day in amount and variety. We request that a proper investigation be made in order that we be not so heavily burdened, but to have consideration for us with regard to how our forefathers performed services, but only according to the Word of God.

*The Seventh Article.* Seventh, in future we will not allow a lord to oppress us further. Rather, as the lord has conferred a holding on a peasant I on proper terms, so shall the latter possess it according to the agreement between lord and peasant. . . .

*The Eighth Article.* Eighth, we are aggrieved, especially the many of us who have farms, that these cannot bear the rents, whereby the peasants lose their property and are ruined. The lords should have honorable men inspect these properties and fix a fair rent, so that the peasant does not work for nothing, for every laborer is worthy of his hire.

*The Ninth Article.* Ninth, we are aggrieved about cases of felony, where new laws are constantly being passed, for punishments are not imposed according to the facts of the case, but sometimes out of ill-will, sometimes out of partiality. In our opinion, punishment should be imposed according to the old written penalties, according to the circumstances, and not with partiality.

*The Tenth Article.* Tenth, we are aggrieved that some have appropriated meadows or arable that once belonged to the community. We wish to restore these to common ownership, unless they have been properly purchased. If they have been improperly purchased, an amicable and brotherly agreement should be reached by the parties according to the facts of the case.

*The Eleventh Article.* Eleventh, we wish to have the custom called heriot totally abolished, for we shall never tolerate or permit widows and orphans to be shamefully deprived and robbed of their property, contrary to God. . . .

*Conclusion.* Twelfth, it is our conclusion and final opinion that if one or more of the articles presented here be not in accordance with the Word of God (which we would doubt), and such articles be demonstrated to us to be incompatible with the Word of God, then we will abandon them, when it is explained to us on the basis of Scripture. If any articles be conceded to us which are later found to be unjust, they shall be null and void from that moment, and no longer valid. Similarly, if further articles are

found in Scripture to be in truth contrary to God and a burden to our neighbor, we shall reserve the right to have them included. We will exercise and apply Christian doctrine in all its aspects, for which we

shall pray to the Lord God, who alone (and no one else) can give it to us.

## **John Calvin, *Ordinances for The Regulation of the Churches Dependent Upon the Seignior of Geneva (1547, Excerpts)***

From the Internet History Sourcebooks Project and George L. Burns, ed., *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, 1898-1912)

*John Calvin (1509-64) grew up entrenched in the intellectual climate of French humanism, studying at the University of Paris and the laws schools in Bourges and Orleans. Possessing a command of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Classical rhetoric, Calvin took up study of the Church Fathers and the Bible in the original languages. Based upon these studies, he called for church renewal. Calvin spent many years of his life living in Geneva (1536-38; 1541-64). After returning to Geneva in 1541, he endeavored to regulate every aspect of life in accordance to his understanding of God's law. Laws were passed that reorganized the Genevan church and established legal sanctions for people who violated the dictates of Christian behavior. Below are a few examples of how Calvin tried to regulate behavior.*

*—J. Tanaka, Jan. 2007*

**C**oncerning the Times of Assembling at Church  
That the temples be closed for the rest of the time, in order that no one shall enter therein out of hours, impelled thereto by superstition; and if anyone be found engaged in any special act of devotion therein or near by he shall be admonished for it: if it be found to be of a superstitious nature for which simple correction is inadequate then he shall be chastised.

### **Blasphemy**

Whoever shall have blasphemed, swearing by the body or by the blood of our Lord, or in similar manner, he shall be made to kiss the earth for the first offence; for the second to pay 5 sous, and for the third 6 sous, and for the last offence be put in the pillory for one hour.

### **Drunkenness**

1. That no one shall invite another to drink under penalty of 3 sous. 2. That taverns shall be closed during the sermon, under penalty that the tavern - keeper shall pay 3 sous, and whoever may be found therein shall pay the same amount. 3. If anyone be found intoxicated he shall pay for the first offence 3 sous and shall be remanded to the consistory; for the second offence he shall be held to pay the sum of 6 sous, and for the third 10 sous and be put in prison. 4. That no one shall make roiaumes under penalty of 10 sous.

### **Songs and Dances**

If anyone sings immoral, dissolute or outrageous songs, or dance the virollet or other dance, he shall be

put in prison for three days and then sent to the consistory.

### **Usury**

That no one shall take upon interest or profit more than five per cent., upon penalty of confiscation of the principal and of being con-demned to make restitution as the case may demand.

### **Games**

That no one shall play at any dissolute game or at any game whatsoever it may be, neither for gold nor silver nor for any excessive stake, upon penalty of 5 sous and forfeiture of stake played for.

## John Calvin: On Predestination

From the Internet History Sourcebooks Project and

Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee, 1907), Vol. V: 9th to 16th Centuries

*John Calvin's great theological work, the Institutes of the Christian Religion was published, and expanded, in a number of Latin and French editions. (In fact it was among the first serious texts to be published in French). The text below is from the chapter on predestination. The emphasis on this doctrine (which was also held by Luther) became one of the distinctive marks of Calvinism.*

The covenant of life not being equally preached to all, and among those to whom it is preached not always finding the same reception, this diversity discovers the wonderful depth of the Divine judgment. Nor is it to be doubted that this variety also follows, subject to the decision of God's eternal election. If it be evidently the result of the Divine will, that salvation is freely offered to some, and others are prevented from attaining it--this immediately gives rise to important and difficult questions, which are incapable of any other explication, than by the establishment of pious minds in what ought to be received concerning election and predestination---a question, in the opinion of many, full of perplexity; for they consider nothing more unreasonable, than that, of the common mass of mankind, some should be predestinated to salvation, and others to destruction. But how unreasonably they perplex themselves will afterwards appear from the sequel of our discourse. Besides, the very obscurity which excites such dread, not only displays the utility of this doctrine, but shows it to be productive of the most delightful benefit. We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with His eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this comparison, that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what He refuses to others.

Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the Divine glory, and diminishes real humility. But according to Paul, what is so necessary to be known, never can be known, unless God, without any regard to works, chooses those whom He has decreed. "At this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise, work is no more work." If we need to be recalled to the origin of election, to prove that we obtain salvation from no other source than the mere goodness of God, they who desire to extinguish this principle, do all they can to obscure what ought to be magnificently and loudly celebrated, and to pluck up humility by the roots. In ascribing the salvation of the

remnant of the people to the election of grace, Paul clearly testifies, that it is then only known that God saves whom upon which there can be no claim. They who shut the gates to prevent anyone from presuming to approach and taste this doctrine, do no less injury to man than to God; for nothing else will be sufficient to produce in us suitable humility, or to impress us with a due sense of our great obligations to God. Nor is there any other basis for solid confidence, even according to the authority of Christ, who, to deliver us from all fear, and render us invincible amidst so many dangers, snares, and deadly conflicts, promises to preserve in safety all whom the Father has committed to His care.

Whence we infer, that they who know not themselves to be God's peculiar people will be tortured with continual anxiety; and therefore, that the interest of all believers, as well as their own, is very badly consulted by those who, blind to the three advantages we have remarked, would wholly remove the foundation of our salvation. And hence the Church rises to our view, which otherwise, as Bernard justly observes, could neither be discovered nor recognized among creatures, being in two respects wonderfully concealed in the bosom of a blessed predestination, and in the mass of a miserable damnation. But before I enter on the subject itself, I must address some preliminary observations to two sorts of persons. The discussion of predestination---a subject of itself rather intricate---is made very perplexed, and therefore dangerous, by human curiosity, which no barriers can restrain from wandering into forbidden labyrinths, and soaring beyond its sphere, as if determined to leave none of the Divine secrets unscrutinized or unexplored. As we see multitudes everywhere guilty of this arrogance and presumption, and among them some who are not censurable in other respects, it is proper to admonish them of the bounds of their duty on this subject. First, then, let them remember that when they inquire into predestination, they penetrate the inmost recesses of Divine wisdom, where the careless and confident intruder will obtain no satisfaction to his curiosity, but will enter a labyrinth from which he will find no way to depart. For it is unreasonable that man should

scrutinize with impunity those things which the Lord has determined to be hidden in himself; and investigate, even from eternity, that sublimity of wisdom which God would have us to adore and not comprehend, to promote our admiration of His glory. The secrets of His will which He determined to reveal to us, He discovers in His word; and these are all that He foresaw would concern us or conduce to our advantage.

II. "We are come into the way of faith," says Augustine; "let us constantly pursue it. It conducts into the king's palace, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For the Lord Christ Himself envied not His great and most select disciples when He said, 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' We must talk, we must improve, we must grow, that our hearts may be able to understand those things of which we are at present incapable. If the last day finds us improving, we shall then learn what we never could learn in the present state." If we only consider that the word of the Lord is the only way to lead us to an investigation of all that ought to be believed concerning Him, and the only light to enlighten us to behold all that ought to be seen of Him, this consideration will easily restrain and preserve us from all presumption. For we shall know that when we have exceeded the limits of the word, we shall get into a devious and darksome course, in which errors, slips, and falls, will often be inevitable. Let us, then, in the first place, bear in mind, that to desire any other knowledge of predestination than what is unfolded in the word of God, indicates as great folly, as a wish to walk through unpassable roads, or to see in the dark. Nor let us be ashamed to be ignorant of some things relative to a subject in which there is a kind of learned ignorance. Rather let us abstain with cheerfulness from the pursuit of that knowledge, the affectation of which is foolish, dangerous, and even fatal. But if we are stimulated by the wantonness of intellect, we must oppose it with a reflection calculated to repress it, that as "it is not good to eat much honey, so for men to search their own glory, is not glory." For there is sufficient to deter us from that presumption, which can only precipitate us into ruin.

III. Others, desirous of remedying this evil, will have all mention of predestination to be as it were buried; they teach men to avoid every question concerning it as they would a precipice. Though their moderation is to be commended, in judging that mysteries ought to be handled with such great sobriety, yet, as they descend too low, they have little influence on the mind of man, which refuses to submit to

unreasonable restraints. To observe, therefore, the legitimate boundary on this side also, we must recur to the word of the Lord, which affords a certain rule for the understanding. For the Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing necessary and useful to be known is omitted, so nothing is taught which is not beneficial to know. Whatever, therefore, is declared in the Scripture concerning predestination, we must be cautious not to withhold from believers, lest we appear either to defraud them of the favor of their God, or to reprove and censure the Holy Spirit for publishing what it would be useful by any means to suppress. Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his heart and his ears to all the discourses addressed to him by God, only with this moderation, that as soon as the Lord closes his sacred mouth, he shall also desist from further inquiry. This will be the best barrier of sobriety, if in learning we not only follow the leadings of God, but as soon as he ceases to teach, we give up our desire of learning. Nor is the danger they dread, sufficient to divert our attention from the oracles of God. It is a celebrated observation of Solomon, that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing." But, as both piety and common sense suggest that this is not to be understood generally of every thing, we must seek for the proper distinction, lest we content ourselves with brutish ignorance under the pretext of modesty and sobriety. Now, this distinction is clearly expressed in a few words by Moses "The secret things," he says, "belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." For we see how he enforces on the people attention to the doctrine of the law only by the celestial decree, because it pleased God to promulgate it; and restrains the same people within those limits with this single reason, that it is not lawful for mortals to intrude into the secrets of God.

IV. Profane persons, I confess, suddenly lay hold of something relating to the subject of predestination, to furnish occasion for objections, cavils, reproaches, and ridicule. But if we are frightened from it by their impudence, all the principal articles of the faith must be concealed, for there is scarcely one of them which such persons as these leave unviolated by blasphemy. The refractory mind will discover as much insolence, on hearing that there are three persons in the Divine essence, as on being told, that when God created man, He foresaw what would happen concerning him. Nor will they refrain from derision on being informed that little more than five thousand years have elapsed since the creation of the world. They will ask why the power of God was so long idle and asleep. Nothing can be advanced which they will not

endeavor to ridicule. Must we, in order to check these sacrileges, say nothing of the Divinity of the Son and Spirit, or pass over in silence the creation of the world? In this instance, and every other, the truth of God is too powerful to dread the detraction of impious men; as is strenuously maintained by Augustine, in his treatise on the Perseverance of the Faithful. We see the false apostles, with all their defamation and accusation of the true doctrine of Paul, could never succeed to make him ashamed of it. Their assertion, that all this discussion is dangerous to pious minds, because it is inconsistent with exhortations, shakes their faith, and disturbs and discourages the heart itself, is without any foundation. Augustine admits, that he was frequently blamed, on these accounts, for preaching predestination too freely; but he readily and amply refutes them.

But as many and various absurdities are crowded upon us here, we prefer reserving every one to be refuted in its proper place. I only desire this general admission, that we should neither scrutinize those things which the Lord has left concealed, nor neglect those which He has openly exhibited, lest we be condemned for excessive curiosity on the one hand, or for ingratitude on the other. For it is judiciously remarked by Augustine, that we may safely follow the Scripture, which proceeds as with the pace of a mother stooping to the weakness of a child. that it may not leave our weak capacities behind. But persons who are so cautious or timid, as to wish predestination to be buried in silence, lest feeble minds should be disturbed,-with what pretext, I ask, will they gloss over their arrogance, which indirectly charges God with foolish inadvertency, as though He foresaw not the danger which they suppose they have had the penetration to discover. Whoever, therefore, endeavors to raise prejudices against the doctrine of predestination, openly reproaches God, as though something had inconsiderately escaped from Him that is pernicious to the Church.

V. Predestination, by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and adjudges others to eternal death, no one, desirous of the credit of piety, dares absolutely to deny. But it is involved in many cavils, especially by those who make foreknowledge the cause of it. We maintain, that both belong to God; but it is preposterous to represent one as dependent on the other. When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things have ever been, and perpetually remain, before His eyes, so that to His knowledge nothing in future or past, but all things are present; and present in such a manner, that He does not

merely conceive of them from ideas formed in His mind, as things remembered by us appear present to our minds, but really beholds and sees them as if actually placed before Him. And this foreknowledge extends to the whole world, and to all the creatures. Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself what would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is fore-ordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death. This God has not only testified in particular persons, but has given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, which should evidently show the future condition of every nation to depend upon His decision. "When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, the Lord's portion was His people; Jacob was the lot of His inheritance."

The separation is before the eyes of all: in the person of Abraham, as in the dry trunk of a tree, one people is peculiarly chosen to the rejection of others: no reason for this appears, except that Moses, to deprive their posterity of all occasion of glorying, teaches them that their exaltation is wholly from God's gratuitous love. He assigns this reason for their deliverance, that "He loved their fathers, and chose their seed after them." More fully in another chapter: "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; but because the Lord loved you." He frequently repeats the same admonition: "Behold, the heaven is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them." In another place, sanctification is enjoined upon them, because they were chosen to be a peculiar people. And again, elsewhere, love is asserted to be the cause of their protection. It is declared by the united voice of the faithful, "He hath chosen our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom He loved." For the gifts conferred on them by God, they all ascribe to gratuitous love, not only from a consciousness that these were not obtained by any merit of theirs, but from a conviction, that the holy patriarch himself was not endued with such excellence as to acquire the privilege of so great an honor for himself and his posterity. And the more effectually to demolish all pride, he reproaches them with having deserved no favor, being "a stiff-necked and rebellious people." The prophets also frequently reproach the Jews with the unwelcome mention of

this election, because they had shamefully departed from it. Let them, however, now come forward, who wish to restrict the election of God to the desert of men, or the merit of works. When they see one nation preferred to all others---when they hear that God had no inducement to be more favorable to a few, and ignoble, and even disobedient and obstinate people---will they quarrel with him because he has chosen to give such an example of mercy? But their obstreperous clamors will not impede this work, nor will the reproaches they hurl against Heaven, injure or affect his justice; they will rather recoil upon their own heads. Lo, this principle of the gracious covenant, the Israelites are also recalled whenever thanks are to be rendered to God, or their hopes are to be raised for futurity. "He hath made us, and not we ourselves," says the Psalmist: "we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." It is not without reason that the negation is added, "not we ourselves," that they may know that of all the benefits they enjoy, God is not only the Author, but derived the cause from Himself, there being nothing in them deserving of such great honor. He also enjoins them to be content with the mere good pleasure of God, in these words: "O ye seed of Abraham His servant, ye children of Jacob His chosen." And after having recounted the continual benefits bestowed by God as fruits of election, he at length concludes that He had acted with such liberality, "because He remembered His covenant."

Consistent with this doctrine is the song of the whole Church: "Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, gave our fathers the land, because Thou hadst a favor unto them." It must be observed that where mention is made of the land, it is a visible symbol of the secret separation, which comprehends adoption. David, in another place, exhorts the people to the same gratitude: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance." Samuel animates to a good hope: "The Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people." David, when his faith is assailed, thus arms himself for the conflict: "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee; he shall dwell in Thy courts." But since the election hidden in God has been confirmed by the first deliverance, as well as by the second and other intermediate blessings, the word choose is transferred to it in Isaiah: "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel;" because, contemplating a future period, He declares that the collection of the residue of the people, whom He had appeared to have

forsaken; would be a sign of the stable and sure election, which had likewise seemed to fail. When He says also, in another place, "I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away," He commends the continual course of His signal liberality and paternal benevolence. The angel, in Zachariah, speaks more plainly: "The Lord shall choose Jerusalem again;" as though His severe chastisement had been a rejection, or their exile had been an interruption of election; which, nevertheless, remains inviolable, though the tokens of it are not always visible.

VI. We must now proceed to a second degree of election, still more restricted, or that in which the Divine grace was displayed in a more special manner, when of the same race of Abraham God rejected some, and by nourishing others in the Church, proved that He retained them among His children. Israel at first obtained the same station as his brother Isaac, for the spiritual covenant was equally sealed in him by the symbol of circumcision. He is cut off; afterwards Esau; lastly, an innumerable multitude, and almost all Israel. In Isaac the seed was called; the same calling continued in Jacob. God exhibited a similar example in the rejection of Saul, which is magnificently celebrated by the Psalmist: "He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah ;" and this the sacred history frequently repeats, that the wonderful secret of Divine grace may be more manifest in that change. I grant, it was by their own crime and guilt that Ishmael, Esau, and persons of similar characters, fell from the adoption; because the condition annexed was, that they should faithfully keep the covenant of God, which they perfidiously violated. Yet it was a peculiar favor of God, that He deigned to prefer them to other nations; as it is said in the Psalms: "He hath not dealt so with any nation; and so for His judgments, they have not known them." But I have justly said that here are two degrees to be remarked; for in the election of the whole nation, God has already shown that in His mere goodness He is bound by no laws, but is perfectly free, so that none can require of Him an equal distribution of grace, the inequality of which demonstrates it to be truly gratuitous. Therefore Malachi aggravates the ingratitude of Israel, because, though not only elected out of the whole race of mankind, but also separated from a sacred family to be a peculiar people, they perfidiously and impiously despised God their most beneficent Father. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." For God takes it for granted, since both were sons of a holy father, successors of the covenant, and branches from a sacred root, that the children of

Jacob were already laid under more than common obligations by their admission to that honor; but Esau, the first-born, having been rejected, and their father, though inferior by birth, having been made the heir, He proves them guilty of double ingratitude, and complains of their violating this two-fold claim.

VII. Though it is sufficiently clear, that God, in his secret counsel, freely chooses whom He will, and rejects others, His gratuitous election is but half displayed till we come to particular individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner, that the certainty of the effect is liable to no suspense or doubt. These are included in that one seed mentioned by Paul; for though the adoption was deposited in the hand of Abraham, yet many of his posterity being cut off as putrid members, in order to maintain the efficacy and stability of election, it is necessary to ascend to the head, in whom their heavenly Father has bound His elect to each other, and united them to Himself by an indissoluble bond. Thus the adoption of the family of Abraham displayed the favor of God, which He denied to others; but in the members of Christ there is a conspicuous exhibition of the superior efficacy of grace; because, being united to their head, they never fail of salvation. Paul, therefore, justly reasons from the passage of Malachi which I have just quoted, that where God, introducing the covenant of eternal life, invites any people to Himself, there is a peculiar kind of election as to part of them, so that he does not efficaciously choose all with indiscriminate grace. The declaration, "Jacob have I loved," respects the whole posterity of the patriarch, whom the prophet there opposes to the descendants of Esau.

Yet this is no objection to our having in the person of one individual a specimen of the election, which can never fail of attaining its full effect. These, who truly belong to Christ, Paul correctly observes, are called "a remnant;" for experience proves, that of a great multitude the most part fall away and disappear, so that often only a small portion remains. That the general election of a people is not always effectual and permanent, a reason readily presents itself, because, when God covenants with them, He does not also give the spirit of regeneration to enable them to preserve in the covenant to the end; but the eternal call, without the internal efficacy of grace, which would be sufficient for their preservation, is a kind of medium between the rejection of all mankind and the election of the small number of believers. The whole nation of Israel was called "God's inheritance," though many of them were strangers; but God, having firmly covenanted to their Father and

Redeemer, regards that gratuitous favor rather than the defection of multitudes; by whom His truth was not violated, because His preservation of a certain remnant to Himself, made it evident that His calling was without repentance. For God's collection of a Church for himself, from time to time, from the children of Abraham, rather than from the profane nations, was in consideration of his covenant, which, being violated by the multitude, He restricted to a few, to prevent a total failure. Lastly, the general adoption of the seed of Abraham was a visible representation of a greater blessing, which God conferred on the few out of the multitude.

This is the reason that Paul so carefully distinguishes the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, from His spiritual children called after the example of Isaac. Not that the mere descent from Abraham was a vain and unprofitable thing, which could not be asserted without depreciating the covenant; but because to the latter alone the immutable counsel of God, in which He predestinated whom He would, was of itself effectual to salvation. But I advise my readers to adopt no prejudice on either side, till it shall appear from adduced passages of Scripture what sentiments ought to be entertained. In conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of the Scripture, we assert, that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined, both whom He would admit to salvation, and whom He would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on His gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit; but that to those whom He devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment. In the elect, we consider calling as an evidence of election, and justification as another token of its manifestation, till they arrive in glory, which constitutes its completion. As God seals His elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of His name and the sanctification of His Spirit, He affords an indication of the judgment that awaits them. Here I shall pass over many fictions fabricated by foolish men to overthrow predestination. It is unnecessary to refute things which, as soon as they are advanced, sufficiently prove their own falsehood. I shall dwell only on these things which are subjects of controversy among the learned, or which may occasion difficulty to simple minds, or which impiety speciously pleads in order to stigmatize the Divine justice.

