The Obedience of a Christian Man

William Tyndale

The Obedience of a Christian Man

William Tyndale

http://www.servantofmessiah.org

CONTENTS

TO THE READER.
THE PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK.
OBEDIENCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR ELDERS.
OBEDIENCE OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS.
OBEDIENCE OF SERVANTS TO THEIR MASTERS.
OBEDIENCE TO KINGS, PRINCES, AND RULERS.
AGAINST THE POPE'S FALSE POWER.
OFFICE OF A FATHER, AND HOW HE SHOULD RULE.
OFFICE OF A HUSBAND, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE.
OFFICE OF A MASTER, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE.
DUTY OF LANDLORDS.
DUTY OF KINGS, JUDGES, AND OFFICERS.
ANTICHRIST.
OF THE SACRAMENTS.
SACRAMENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.
BAPTISM.
OF WEDLOCK.
OF ORDER.
OF PENANCE.
OF CONFESSION.
OF CONTRITION.
SATISFACTION.
ABSOLUTION.
CONFIRMATION.
ANOINTING WITH OIL
OF MIRACLES AND WORSHIPPING SAINTS.
OF PRAYER.
THE FOUR SENSES OF THE SCRIPTURE.
A COMPENDIOUS SUMMARY.

http://servantofmessiah.org/

WILLIAM TYNDALE,

OTHERWISE CALLED HITCHINS,

TO THE READER.

GRACE, peace, and increase of knowledge in our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you, reader, and with all that call on the name of the Lord unfeignedly and with a pure conscience. Amen.

Let it not make you despair, nor yet discourage you, O reader, that it is forbidden you, upon pain of life and goods, or that it is breaking the king's peace, or treason to his highness, to read the word of your soul's health. But much rather, be bold in the Lord, and comfort your soul: forasmuch as you are sure, and have an evident token through such persecution, that it is the true word of God, which is ever hated by the world. Nor was his word ever without persecution, (as you see in all the stories of the Bible, both in the New Testament and also in the Old), nor can it be, no more than the sun can be without light. And contrariwise, you may be just as sure that the pope's doctrine is not of God, which (as you see) is so agreeable to the world, and is so received by the world. Or rather, the pope's doctrine receives the world and the pleasures of the world. It seeks nothing but the possessions of the world, and the authority in the world, and to bear rule in the world. It persecutes the word of God, and with all wiliness, it drives people from it. With false and sophistical reasons, it makes them afraid of it. Indeed, it curses and excommunicates them, and brings them to believe they are damned if they look at it. That is but doctrine to deceive men. It moves the blind powers of the world to slay with fire, water, and sword, all who cleave to God's word. For the world loves what is the pope's, and it hates what is chosen out of the world to serve God in the Spirit. As Christ says to his disciples, John 15.19, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but I have chosen you out of the world, and therefore the world hates you."[1]

Another comfort you have is that, just as the weak powers of the world defend the doctrine of the world, so the mighty power of God defends the doctrine of God. You will evidently perceive it, if you call to mind the wonderful deeds which God has ever wrought for his word in extreme necessity, since the world began, beyond all man's reason. These are written, (as Paul says, Romans 15.4) "for our learning, (and not for our deceiving), that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope." The nature of God's word is to fight against hypocrites. It began at Abel, and it has ever since continued, and shall continue, I do not doubt, until the last day. Hypocrites always have the world on their side, as you see in the time of Christ. They had the elders, that is, the rulers of the Jews on their side. They had Pilate and the emperor's power on their side. They also had Herod on their side. Moreover they brought all their worldly wisdom to bear, and all that they could thin, or imagine to serve their purpose. First, to frighten the people with, they excommunicated all that believed in him, and put them out of the temple, as you see in John 9.34. Secondly, they found the means to have him condemned by the emperor's power, and made it treason to Caesar to believe in him. Thirdly, they sought to have him hanged as a thief or a murderer, which, after their fleshly-wisdom, was a cause above all causes that no man should believe in him. For the Jews take it for a sure token of everlasting damnation, if a man is hanged. For it is written in their law, Deut 21.22-23 (Gal 3.13) "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." Moses also in the same place commands, if any man is hanged, to take him down the same day and bury him, for fear of polluting or defiling the country; that is, lest they bring the wrath and curse of God upon them. Therefore, the wicked Jews themselves, with so venomous a hatred, persecuted the doctrine of Christ.

They did all they could to shame him, though they would have had Christ continue to hang on the cross and rot there, (as he should have done by the emperor's law), yet for fear of defiling their Sabbath, and bringing the wrath and curse of God upon them, they begged Pilate to take him down, John 19, which went against themselves.

Finally, when they had done all they could, and all that they thought was sufficient, and when Christ was in the heart of the earth, and so many bills and poleaxes were around him to keep him down, and when it was past man's help, then God helped. When man could not bring him back again, God's truth fetched him again. The oath that God had sworn to Abraham, to David, and to other holy fathers and prophets, raised him up again, to bless and save all that believe in him. Thus the wisdom of the hypocrites became foolishness. Look, this was written for your learning and comfort.

How awfully were the children of Israel locked in Egypt! In what tribulation, suffering, and adversity they were in! Also the land that was promised to them was far off, and full of great cities, walled with high walls up to the sky, and inhabited with great giants. Yet God's truth brought them out of Egypt, and planted them in the land of the giants. This was also written for our learning. For there is no power against God's, nor any wisdom against God's wisdom. He is stronger and wiser than all his enemies.[2] What did it help Pharaoh to drown the male children? So little (I fear not) shall it at the last help the pope and his bishops, to burn our male children who manfully confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and that there is no other name given to men to be saved by, as Peter testifies in Acts 4.12.

Who dried up the Red sea? Who slew Goliath? Who did all those wonderful deeds which you read about in the Bible? Who delivered the Israelites evermore from thraldom and bondage, as soon as they repented and turned to God? Faith truly, and God's truth, and trust in the promises which he had made. Read the 11th chapter to the Hebrews for your consolation.

When the children of Israel were ready to despair, because of the greatness and the multitude of the giants, Moses ever comforted them, saying, Remember what your Lord God has done for you in Egypt, his awful plagues, his miracles, his wonders, his mighty hand, his stretched out arm, and what he has done for you up to now. He shall destroy them; he shall take their hearts from them, and make them fear and flee before you. He shall storm them, and stir up a tempest among them, and scatter them, and bring them to nothing. He has sworn; he is true; he will fulfill the promises that he has made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[3] This is written for our learning: for truly he is a true God; and he is our God as well as theirs; and his promises are with us, as well as with them; and he is present with us, as well as he was with them. If we ask, we shall obtain; if we knock, he will open; if we seek, we shall find; if we thirst, his truth shall fulfill our desires. Christ is with us until the world's end. Let his little flock be bold therefore. For if God is on our side, what does it matter who is against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes, or whatever names they may have?

Mark this also, if God sends you to the sea, and promises to go with you, and to bring you safe to land, he will raise up a tempest against you, to prove whether you will abide by his word, and so that you may feel your faith, and perceive his goodness.[4] For if it was always fair weather, and you were never brought into such jeopardy, from where his mercy alone could deliver you, then your faith would be but a presumption, and you should be ever unthankful to God, and merciless to your neighbor.

If God promises riches, the way to them is poverty.[5] Whom he loves, he chastens: whom he exalts, he casts down: whom he saves, he first damns. He brings no man to heaven, except he sends him to hell first. If he promises life, he slays first: when he builds, he first tears all down.

He is no patcher; he cannot build on another man's foundation. He will not work until all is past remedy, and brought to such a case, that men may see how his hand, his power, his mercy, his goodness and truth, has wrought it all together. He will let no man partake with him of his praise and glory. His works are wonderful, and contrary to man's works. Who but God delivered his own Son, his only Son, his dear Son, to death, and did that for his enemies' sake, to win his enemy, and to overcome him with love, so that he might see love, and love again, and of love, to do likewise to other men, and overcome them with well doing?

Joseph saw the sun and the moon and the eleven stars worshipping him. Nevertheless, before that came to pass, God laid him where he could neither see sun nor moon, nor any star of the sky, and that was so for many years; and also undeserved. It was done to nurture him, to humble him, to make him meek, and to teach him God's ways, and to make him apt and fit for the place and honor he came to; so that he might perceive and feel that it came from God, and that he might be strong in the spirit to minister it in a godly fashion.

He promised the children of Israel a land with rivers of milk and honey; but he brought them for the space of forty years into a land where not only rivers of milk and honey were absent, but where not so much as a drop of water was to be had. He did it to nurture them, and teach them, as a father does his son, and to do them good at the end; and so that they might be strong in their spirit and souls, to use his gifts and benefits in a godly fashion, and after his will.

He promised David a kingdom, and immediately stirred up King Saul against him to persecute him; to hunt him as men hunt hares with greyhounds, and to ferret him out of every hole, and he did that for the space of many years. He did it to tame him, to make him meek, to kill his lusts; to make him feel other men's diseases; to make him merciful; to make him understand that he was made king to minister to and to win his brothers. He did it so that David would not think that his subjects were made to minister to his own lusts, or that it was lawful for him to take away from them their life and goods at his pleasure.

Oh that our kings were so nurtured now-a-days! Our holy bishops teach in a far different manner, saying, Your grace shall take your pleasure; indeed, take what pleasure you are inclined to; spare nothing; we shall dispense with you; we have the power, we are God's vicars. Leave us alone with the realm; we will make it painful for you, and see that nothing is well with you. Your grace will but defend the faith only.

Let us, therefore, look diligently to what we are called (Christians), so that we do not deceive ourselves. We are not called to dispute, as the pope's disciples do; but to die with Christ, so that we may live with him; and to suffer with him, so that we may reign with him. We are called to a kingdom that must be won with suffering only, just as a sick man wins his health.[6] God is the one that does all things for us, and fights for us; and we do but suffer only. Christ says, "As my Father sent me, so I send you;" John 20.21. And, "If they persecute me, then shall they persecute you." (John 15.20) Christ says, "I send you forth as sheep among wolves." (Mat 10.16) The sheep do not fight; but the shepherd fights for them, and cares for them. "Be harmless as doves, therefore," says Christ, "and wise as serpents." The doves imagine no defense, nor seek to avenge themselves. The serpent's wisdom is to keep his head, and those parts in which his life rests. Christ is our head, and God's word is what our life rests in. Therefore, cleave fast to Christ, and to those promises which God has made us for his sake. This is our wisdom. "Beware of men," he says; "for they shall deliver you up to their councils, and scourge you; and you shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake. The brother shall betray, or deliver, his brother to death, and the father will betray the son; and the children shall rise against father and mother, and put them to death." (Mat 10.17-21)

Hear what Christ further says: “The disciple is not greater than his master; nor is the servant greater, or better, than his lord. If they have called the good man of the house “Beelzebub,” then how much more will they call his household servants so!” Mat 10.25 In Luke 14.28-30, Christ says, “Which of you, disposed to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it? Lest when he has laid the foundation, and then is not able to finish, all that behold it will begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to make an end of it. So likewise none of you, who does not forsake all that he has, can be my disciple.” Whoever, therefore, does not consider this beforehand, ‘I must jeopardize life, goods, honor, worship, and all that there is, for Christ’s sake,’ deceives himself. He makes a mockery of himself to the godless hypocrites and infidels.[7] “No man can serve two masters, God and mammon;” that is to say, wicked riches also, Mat 6.24. You must love Christ above all things, but you do not do that if you are not ready to forsake all for his sake. If you have forsaken all for his sake, then are you sure that you love him. Tribulation is our right baptism; and it is signified by plunging into the water. “We that are baptized in the name of Christ,” says Paul, “are baptized to die with him.” Rom 6.3

The Spirit through tribulation purges us, and kills our fleshly wit, our worldly understanding, and our belly-wisdom; and he fills us full of the wisdom of God. Tribulation is a blessing that comes from God, as witnesses Christ: “Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Mat 5.10 Is this not a comforting word? Who would not rather choose and desire to be blessed with Christ in a little tribulation, than to be cursed perpetually, along with the world, for a little pleasure?

Prosperity is a right curse, and a thing that God gives to his enemies. “Woe to you rich;” says Christ, Luke 6.25-26, “look, you have your consolation: woe to you that are full, for you shall hunger: woe to you that laugh, for you shall weep: woe to you when men praise you, for so did their fathers do to the false prophets.” Indeed, and so have our fathers done to the false hypocrites. The hypocrites, with worldly preaching, have not only gotten the praise, but even the possessions and the dominion and the rule of the whole world.

Tribulation for righteousness is not only a blessing, but also a gift that God gives to none but his special friends. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer rebuke for Christ’s sake. And Paul, in 2Tim 3.12, says to Timothy, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution:” and in Phil 1.29 he says, “To you it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.” Here you see that it is God’s gift to suffer for Christ’s sake. Peter in 1Pet 4.14 says, “Happy are you if you suffer for the name of Christ; for the glorious Spirit of God rests in you.” Is it not a happy thing, to be sure that you are sealed with God’s Spirit to everlasting life? Truly, you are sure of it, if you suffer patiently for his sake. By suffering you are sure; but by persecuting you can never be sure. For Paul, in Rom 5.3, says, “Tribulation makes us joyful;” that is, it makes us feel the goodness of God, and his help, and the working of his Spirit. And, in 2Cor 12.9, the Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect through weakness.” Look, Christ is never strong in us till we are weak.[8] As our strength abates, so grows the strength of Christ in us. When we are completely emptied of our own strength, then we are full of Christ’s strength. Look, however much of our own strength remains in us, so much is lacking of the strength of Christ. “Therefore,” says Paul, in the second epistle to the Corinthians, “very gladly will I rejoice in my weakness, that the strength of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I take pleasure,” says Paul, “in infirmities, in rebukes, in need, in persecutions, and in anguish for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” 2Cor 12.9-10 Meaning, that the weakness of the flesh is the strength of the Spirit. And by flesh understand wit, wisdom, and all that is in a man before the Spirit of God comes; and whatever does not spring from the

Spirit of God, and from God's word. The Scripture is full of similar testimonies.

Behold, God sets before us a blessing and also a curse. It is a blessing, truly, and a glorious and everlasting blessing, if we suffer tribulation and adversity with our Lord and Savior Christ. And it is an everlasting curse if, for a little pleasure's sake, we withdraw ourselves from the chastising and nurture of God, with which he teaches all his sons, and fashions them after his godly will, and makes them perfect (as he did Christ). By chastising, he makes them apt and fit vessels to receive his grace and his Spirit, so that they might perceive and feel the exceeding mercy which we have in Christ, and the innumerable blessings and unspeakable inheritance, to which we are called and chosen, and sealed in our Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be praise forever. Amen.

Finally, those whom God chooses to reign everlastingly with Christ, he seals with his mighty Spirit, and pours strength into his heart, to suffer afflictions with Christ for bearing witness to the truth. This is the difference between the children of God and of salvation, and the children of the devil and of damnation. The children of God have power in their hearts to suffer for God's word; it is their life and salvation, their hope and trust, and whereby they live in the soul and spirit before God. And the children of the devil, in time of adversity, fly from Christ, whom they followed feignedly for their hearts were not sealed with his holy and mighty Spirit; they get themselves to the standard of their father the devil, and take his wages, which are the pleasures of this world. They are the earnest of everlasting damnation. Hebrews 12.5-7 well confirms this, saying, "My son, do not despise not chastising of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by him: for those whom the Lord loves, he chastises; indeed, he scourges every son whom he receives." Look, persecution and adversity for the truth's sake is God's scourge, and God's rod, and it pertains to all his children indifferently. For when he said that he scourges every son, he makes no exceptions. Moreover, says the text: "If you endure chastising, God offers himself to you as to sons. What son is it that the Father does not chastise? If you are not under correction, of which all partake, then you are bastards, and not sons."

We must, then, be baptized in tribulations, and go through the Red sea, and a great and fearful wilderness, and a land of cruel giants, into our natural country. Indeed, it is plain that there is no other way into the kingdom of life than through persecution, suffering pain, and death, following the example of Christ.[9] Therefore, let us arm our souls with the comfort of the Scriptures: how God is ever ready at hand to help us in our time of need; and how such tyrants and persecutors are but God's scourge, and his rod to chastise us. The father has always, in time of correction, held the rod fast in his hand, so that the rod does nothing but as the father moves it. Even so, God has all tyrants in his hand, and he does not let them do whatever they would, but only as much as he appoints them to do, and as far as it is necessary for us. As when a child submits himself to his father's correction and nurture, and altogether humbles himself to the will of his father, then the rod is taken away – even so, when we have come to the knowledge of the right way, and have forsaken our own will, and offer ourselves completely to the will of God, to walk whichever way he will have us, then he turns away the tyrants. Or else, if they try to persecute us any further, he puts them out of the way, according to the comfortable examples we have in the Scripture.

Moreover, let us arm our souls with the promises both of help and assistance, and also of the glorious reward that follows. "Great is your reward in heaven," says Christ, Matthew 5.12; and, "He that acknowledges me before men, him will I knowledge before my Father that is in heaven;"[Mat 10.32] and, "Call on me in time of tribulation, and I will deliver you," Psalm 50.15; and, "Behold the eyes of the Lord are over those that fear him, and over those that trust in his mercy, to deliver their souls from death, and to feed them in time of hunger." [Psalm 33.18-19]. In Psalm

34.15, 18-20 David says: “The Lord is near those that are troubled in their hearts, and the meek in spirit he will save. The tribulations of the righteous are many, and the Lord will deliver them out of them all.[10] The Lord keeps all the bones of them, so that not one of them shall be bruised. The Lord shall redeem the souls of his servants.” The psalms are full of similar consolations. Would to God when you read them, you understood them! And, Mat 10.19-20, “When they deliver you, take no thought what you shall say; it shall be given to you the same hour what you shall say: for it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.” “The very hairs of your head are numbered,” says Christ, Mat 10.30. If God cares for our hairs, he much more cares for our souls, which he has sealed with his Holy Spirit. Therefore says Peter, “Cast all your care upon him; for he cares for you.” (1Peter 5.7) Paul, in 1Cor 10.13, says: “God is true; he will not allow you to be tempted above your might.”And Psalm 55.22, “Cast your care upon the Lord.”

Let your care be to prepare yourself with all your strength, to walk whichever way he will have you; and to believe that he will go with you, and assist you, and strengthen you against all tyrants, and deliver you out of all tribulation. But by which way or means he will do it, commit that to him and to his godly pleasure and wisdom; cast that care upon him. Though it seems unlikely or impossible to natural reason, yet believe steadfastly that he will do it: and then he shall (according to his old use) change the course of the world, even in the twinkling of an eye, and come suddenly upon our giants like a thief in the night, and surround them in their wiles and worldly wisdom. “When they cry, Peace and all is safe, then shall their sorrows begin, as the pangs of a woman that travails with child.” Then he shall destroy them, and deliver you, to the glorious praise of his mercy and truth. Amen.

And pertaining to those who despise God’s word, considering it a fantasy or a dream; and to those also that for fear of a little persecution fall from it, set this before your eyes: God, since the beginning of the world, before a general plague, always sent his true prophets and the preachers of his word, to warn the people; and he gave them time to repent.[11] But the great part of them hardened their hearts, and persecuted the word that was sent to save them. Then God destroyed them utterly, and took them completely from the earth. You see what followed the preaching of Noah in the old world; and what followed the preaching of Lot among the Sodomites; and the preaching of Moses and Aaron among the Egyptians; and all of that happened suddenly, against all possibility of man’s wit. Moreover, as often as the children of Israel fell from God to the worshipping of images, he sent his prophets to them; but they persecuted the prophets and grew hard-hearted. Then he sent them into captivity in all the places of the world. Last of all, he sent his own Son to them; and they waxed more hardhearted than ever before. See what a fearful example of his wrath and cruel vengeance he has made of them to all the world, now almost fifteen hundred years later.

Gildas preached to the old Britons also (who dwelled where our nation does now). He rebuked them for their wickedness, and prophesied both to the spiritual (as they will be called) and to the laymen also, what vengeance would follow unless they repented.[12] But they grew hardhearted; and so God sent his plagues and pestilences among them; and he sent their enemies in upon them on every side; and he destroyed them utterly.

Mark also how Christ threatens those who forsake him, for whatever cause it is – whether for fear or shame, or for the loss of honor, friends, life, or goods. “Whoever denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father that is in heaven. He that loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.” He says all this in Mat 10.33, 37. And in Mark 8.38 he says: “Whoever is ashamed of me, or my words, among this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man shall be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels.” Luke

9.62 also: “None that lays his hand to the plough, and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.”

Nevertheless, if any man has resisted ignorantly, as Paul did, let him look at the truth which Paul wrote after he came to knowledge. Also, if any man, completely against his heart (but overcome with the weakness of the flesh), and for fear of persecution, has denied Christ, as Peter did, or has surrendered his Bible or put it away secretly, then let him (if he repents), come again and take better hold, and not despair, or take it as a sign that God has forsaken him. For God often takes his strength even from his elect, when they either trust in their own strength, or they neglect to call to him for his strength. He does that to teach them, and to make them feel that in that fire of tribulation, for his word’s sake, nothing can endure and abide, except his work and that strength which he promised us. He would have us pray to him night and day for this strength, with all due attention.

The Scripture ought to be in the English tongue.

The following may help you perceive how the Scripture ought to be translated into the native tongue, and why the reasons for the contrary are but sophistry and false wiles to frighten you away from the light, so that you will follow them blindfolded, and be their captive to honor their ceremonies, and to offer to their belly:

First, God gave the children of Israel a law by the hand of Moses in their native tongue; and all the prophets wrote in their native tongue, and all the psalms were in their native tongue. And there Christ was figured, and described in ceremonies, riddles, and parables, and in dark prophecies. Why may we not have the Old Testament along with the new, which is the light of the old, and in which is openly declared before the eyes, what was darkly prophesied in the Old? I can imagine no cause, truly, except that it is to keep us from seeing the work of antichrist and the juggling[13] of hypocrites. What cause should there be that we, who walk in the broad day, should not see as well as those who walked in the night; or that we should not see as well at noon, as they did in twilight? Did Christ come to make the world more blind? By this means Christ is made the darkness of the world, and not the light as he himself says he is.

Moreover Moses says, Deut 6.7-9, “Hear, Israel; let these words which I command you this day stick fast in your heart, and whet[14] them on your children, and talk of them as you sit in your house, and as you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up; and bind them for a token to your hand, and let them be a remembrance between your eyes, and write them on the posts and gates of your house.” This was commanded generally to all men. How does it happen that God’s word pertains less to us than to them? Indeed, how does it happen that our “Moseses” forbid us, and command us to do the contrary; and threaten us if we do; and will not allow us once to speak about God’s word? How can we whet God’s word (that is, put it into practice; use and exercise it) upon our children and household, when we are forcefully kept from it and do not know it? How can we (as Peter commands) give a reason for our hope when we do not know what God has promised, or what to hope? Moses also commands in the same chapter, if the son asks what the testimonies, laws, and observances of the Lord mean, then the father is to teach him. If our children ask what our ceremonies mean (which are more than the Jews’ were), no father can tell his son. In the eleventh chapter, he repeats it all again, for fear of forgetting.

They will say perhaps, that the Scripture requires a pure and quiet mind. Therefore the layman, because he is encumbered with worldly business, cannot understand them. If that is the cause, then it is plain that our prelates do not understand the Scriptures themselves: for no layman is so entangled with worldly business as they are. The great things of the world are ministered by

them; nor do the lay-people do anything great, unless it is assigned to them.

'If the Scripture were in the native tongue,' they might say, 'then the lay-people would understand it, every man in his own way.' What end does the curate serve, but to teach him the right way? Is this not why the holy days were made, so that the people may come and learn? I say, are you not then abominable schoolmasters, in taking such great wages, if you will not teach? If you would teach, how could you do it so well, and with so great a profit, as when the lay-people have the Scripture before them in their native tongue? For then they would see, by the order of the text, whether you juggle them or not. And then they would believe it, because it is the Scripture of God, now matter how abominable your living may be. But now, because your living and your preaching are so contrary, and because they grope out your open and manifest lies in every sermon, and smell your insatiable covetousness, they do not believe you when you preach the truth. But, alas! The curates themselves (for the most part) no more know what the New or Old Testaments mean than the Turks do. Nor do they know any more than what they read at mass, matins, and evensong, which they still do not understand. Nor do they care, except to mumble as much each day as the magpie and popinjay speak – which do not know what to fill their bellies with. They will not let the layman have the word of God in his native tongue, and yet they let the priests have it – when a great part of them do not understand Latin at all. They only sing, say, and patter all day with their lips, what their heart does not understand.

Christ commands us to search the Scriptures, John 5.39. Though miracles bare record to his doctrine, yet he desired no faith be given either to his doctrine, or to his miracles, without the record of the Scripture. When Paul preached, Acts 17.11, the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether they were as he cited them. Why should I not likewise see whether it is the Scripture that you cite? Indeed, why should I not see the Scripture, and the circumstances, and what goes before and after, so that I may know whether your interpretation is the right sense; or whether you juggle and stretch the Scripture forcefully to your carnal and fleshly purpose? Are you about to teach me, or deceive me?

Christ says that false prophets shall come in his name, and say that they themselves are Christ; that is, they shall so preach Christ that men must believe in them, in their holiness, and in the things of their imagination, without God's word. Indeed, that Against-Christ or Antichrist which will come, is nothing but a false prophet, who juggles the Scripture and beguiles the people with false interpretations – just as all the false prophets, scribes, and Pharisees did in the Old Testament. How shall I know whether you are that Against-Christ, or false prophets, seeing that you will not let me see how you cite the Scriptures? Christ says, "By their deeds you shall know them." Now when we look at your deeds, we see that you are all sworn together, and have separated yourselves from the lay-people, and have a separate kingdom among yourselves, and separate laws of your own making. With these you forcefully bind the lay-people, who never consented to their making. A thousand things forbid you, whom Christ made free from the law, to dispense them again for money.[15] Nor is there any exception to this, except for a lack of money. You have a secret council by yourselves. You know all other men's secrets and counsels, and yet no man knows yours. You seek only honor, riches, promotion, authority, and to reign over all, and you will obey no man. If the father gives nothing out of courtesy, you will compel the son to give it forcefully, whether he will or not, by the craft of your own laws. These deeds are against Christ.

When a whole parish of us hire a schoolmaster to teach our children, what reason is there that we should be compelled to pay this schoolmaster his wages, and yet that he should have license to go wherever he will, even to dwell in another country, and to leave our children

untaught? Does not the pope do just that? Have we not given our tithes of courtesy to someone to teach us God's word; and does not the pope come and compel us to forcefully pay those who never teach us? Does he not make one parson who never comes to us? Indeed, one shall have five or six, or as many as he can get, and never knows where one of them stands. Another is made vicar, to whom he gives a dispensation to go wherever he will, and to sit in as a parish priest, who can only minister a sort of silent ceremony. And, because he has the most labor and the least profit, he polls[16] on his part; and he sets here a mass-penny,[17] there a trental,[18] yonder dirige-money,[19] and for his bead-roll,[20] with a confession-penny,[21] and such. Thus we are never taught, yet nevertheless we are compelled to pay for it; indeed, we are compelled to hire many costly schoolmasters. These deeds are truly against Christ. Shall we therefore judge you by your deeds, as Christ commands? So are you false prophets, and the disciples of Antichrist, or Against-Christ.

The sermons which you read in the Acts of the Apostles, and all that the apostles preached, were no doubt preached in the native tongue. Why then might they not be written in the native tongue? Just as, if one of us preaches a good sermon, why may it not be written down? Saint Jerome[22] translated the Bible into his native tongue: why may we not also translate it? They will say it cannot be translated into our tongue, because the tongue is too rude. It is not so rude as them being liars. For the Greek tongue agrees more with the English tongue than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agree a thousand times more with the English tongue than with Latin. The manner of speaking is the same; so that in a thousand places you need only translate it into English, word for word. But you must seek a work-around in the Latin, and yet still have much work to translate it favorably, so that it has the same grace and sweetness, the same sense and pure understanding, as it has in the Hebrew. It may be translated into the English a thousand times better than into the Latin. Indeed, and unless my memory fails me, and I have forgotten what I read when I was a child, you will find in the English chronicle, how King Adelstone had the holy Scripture translated into the tongue that was then used in England, and how the prelates exhorted him to do it.

Moreover, one of you always preaches contrary to another; and when two of you meet, the one disputes and brawls with the other as if they were two scolds.[23] One holds to this doctor, and another to that; one follows Duns, another St. Thomas, another Bonaventure, Alexander de Hales, Raymond, Lyre, Brygot, Dorbel, Holcot, Gorram, Trumbett, Hugo de Sancto Victore, De Monte Regio, De Nova Villa, De Media Villa, and such beyond number. So that if you had but one book from every author, you could not pile them up in any warehouse in London, and every author is contrary to another. There is such a great diversity of spirits, how shall I know who lies, and who says the truth? By what shall I try and judge them? Truly, by God's word, which alone is true. But how shall I do that when you will not let me see the Scripture?

No, they say, the Scripture is so hard, that you could never understand it except by the doctors. That is, I must measure the yardstick by the cloth. Here are twenty cloths of diverse lengths and of various breadths: how shall I be sure of the length of the yardstick by them? I suppose, rather, I must be first sure of the length of the yardstick, and thereby measure and judge the cloths. If I must first believe the doctor, then the doctor is true first, and the truth of the Scripture depends of his truth; and so the truth of God springs from the truth of man. Thus Antichrist turns the roots of the trees upward. What is the cause that we damn some of Origen's works, and allow others? How do we know that some is heresy and some is not? By the Scripture, I believe.[24] How do we know that St. Augustine (which is the best, or one of the best, that ever wrote about the Scripture) wrote many things that are amiss at the beginning, as many other doctors do? Truly, by the Scriptures – as he himself well-perceived afterward, when he looked

more diligently at them, and revoked many things. He wrote of many things which he did not understand when he was newly converted, before he had thoroughly seen the Scriptures; and when he followed the opinions of Plato, and the common persuasions of man's wisdom that were then famous.

They will say yet more shamefully, that no man can understand the Scriptures without philautia, that is to say, philosophy. A man must be first well-versed in Aristotle, before he can understand the Scripture, they say. Aristotle's doctrine is, that the world was without beginning, and it shall be without end; and that the first man never was, and the last shall never be; and that God does everything out of necessity. He does not care what we do, nor will he ask for any accounts of what we do. Without this doctrine, how could we understand the Scripture that says God created the world out of nothing; and God works all things of his free will, and for a secret purpose; and that we shall all rise again; and that God will have an accounting of all that we have done in this life! Aristotle says, Give a man a law, and he has power of himself to do or to fulfill the law, and he becomes righteous by working righteously. But Paul, and all the Scripture says, that the law reveals sin only, and it does not help. Nor does any man have power to fulfill the law, till the Spirit of God is given to him through faith in Christ. Is it not madness, then, to say that we could not understand the Scripture without Aristotle? Aristotle's righteousness, and all his virtues, spring from man's free will. A Turk, and every infidel and idolater, may be righteous and virtuous with that righteousness, and those virtues. Moreover, Aristotle's felicity and blessedness rests in avoiding all tribulations; it rests in riches, health, honor, worship, friends, and authority. This felicity pleases our clergy[25] well. Now, without these, and a thousand similar points, you could not understand Scripture, which says that righteousness comes by Christ, and not of man's will; and virtues are the fruits and the gift of God's Spirit; and Christ blesses us in tribulations, persecution, and adversity! How, I say, you could understand the Scripture without philosophy, is that Paul, in the second chapter to the Colossians, warned them to 'beware lest any man should spoil them' (that is to say, rob them of their faith in Christ) 'through philosophy and deceitful vanities, and through the traditions of men, and the ordinances according to the world, and not according to Christ?' Col 2.8

By this means, then, you would have no man teach another; but every man takes the Scripture, and learns by himself. No, truly, I say not. Nevertheless, seeing that you will not teach, if any man thirsts for the truth, and reads the Scripture by himself, desiring God to open the door of knowledge to him, then God for his truth's sake will and must teach him. My meaning is that, just as a master teaches his apprentice to know all the points of the yardstick; first, how many inches, then how many feet, and the half-yard, the quarter, and the nail; and then he teaches him to measure other things by it – even so I would have you teach the people God's law, and what obedience God requires of us to father and mother, master, lord, king, and all superiors, and with what friendly love he commands one to love another, Teach them to know that natural venom and birth-poison, which moves the very hearts of us to rebel against the ordinances and the will of God. Prove that no man is righteous in the sight of God, but that we are all damned by the law. And then, when you have made them meek, and frightened them with the law, teach them the testament and promises which God has made to us in Christ, and how much he loves us in Christ. Teach them the principles and the ground of the faith, and what the sacraments signify. Then the Spirit will work with your preaching, and make them feel it. So it would come to pass, that as we know by natural wit what follows from a true principle of natural reason, even so, by the principles of the faith, and by the plain Scriptures, and by the circumstances of the text, we should judge all men's exposition, and all men's doctrine, and receive the best, and refuse the worst. I would have you teach them also the properties and manner of speaking of the Scripture, and how to expound proverbs and similitudes. And then, if they go abroad and

walk by the fields and meadows of all kinds of doctors and philosophers, they could catch no harm. They would be able to discern the poison from the honey, and bring home nothing but what is wholesome.

But now you do the complete opposite.[26] You drive them from God's word, and you will let no man come to it until he has been two years a master of arts. First, they nosel [27] them in sophistry, and in bene fundatum.[28] And there they corrupt their judgments with apparent arguments, and with reporting to them texts of logic, of natural philautia, of metaphysic, and moral philosophy, from all kinds of Aristotle's books, and from all manner of doctors they never saw. Moreover, one holds this, another that; one is a Real, another is a Nominal. What wonderful dreams they have of their predicaments, universals, second intentions, quiddities, hoecceities, and relatives; and whether species fundata in chimera are vera species; and whether this proposition is true, Non ens est aliquid; whether ens is oequivocum, or univocum. Ens is a voice only, say some. Ens is univocum, says another, and it descends into ens creatum, and into ens increatum, permodos intrinsecos. When they have in this way brawled eight, ten, twelve or more years, and after that their judgments are utterly corrupt, then they begin their divinity - but not at the Scripture.[29] Rather every man takes a different doctor. The one being contrary to the other, these doctors are as sundry and as diverse, as there are diverse fashions and odd shapes; none like another among our sects of religion. Every religion, every university, and almost every man, has a different divinity.

Now whatever opinions every man finds with his doctor, that is his gospel, and that is only true with him; and that he holds all his life long: and every man, to maintain his doctor, corrupts the Scripture, and fashions it after his own imagination, as a potter does his clay. From what text you prove hell, another will prove purgatory; another limbo patrum; and another the assumption of our lady: and another shall prove from the same text that an ape has a tail. And from what text the gray friar proves that our lady was without original sin, from the same text the black friar will prove that she was conceived in original sin. And they do all this with apparent reasons, with false similitudes and likenesses, and with arguments and persuasions of man's wisdom. Now there is no other division or heresy in the world except man's wisdom, and when man's foolish wisdom interprets the Scripture. Man's wisdom scatters, divides, and makes sects. While the wisdom of one says that a white coat is best to serve God in, another says it is black, another gray, and another blue. And while one says that God will hear your prayer in this place, another says it is in that place. While one says this place is holier, another says that place is holier; and this religion is holier than that; and this saint is greater with God than that; and an hundred thousand things like it. Man's wisdom is plain idolatry. Nor is there any other idolatry than to imagine about God after man's wisdom. God is not man's imagination; but only that which he says of himself. God is nothing but his law and his promises; that is to say, that which he bids you to do, and that which he bids you to believe and hope. God is but his word, as Christ says, John 8.58 "I am, what I say to you;" that is to say, That which I preach I am; my words are spirit and life. Joh 6.63 God is only what he testifies of himself; and to imagine any other thing of God than that, is damnable idolatry. Therefore says Psalm 119.2, "Happy are those who keep the testimonies of the Lord, who seek Him;" that is to say, seek what God testifies and witnesses to us. But how shall I do that, when you will not let me have his testimonies, or witnesses, in a tongue which I understand? Will you resist God? Will you forbid him to give his Spirit to the layman as well as to you? Has he not made the English tongue? Why do you forbid him to speak in the English tongue then, as well as in the Latin?

Finally, it is evident, and clearer than the sun, that threatening and forbidding lay people to read the Scripture is not for the love of your souls (which they care for as the fox cares for the

geese).[30] Consider that they permit you to read Robin Hood, and Bevis of Hampton, Hercules, Hector and Troilus, with a thousand histories and fables of love and wantonness, and of ribaldry, as filthy as the heart can think, to corrupt the minds of youth with, completely contrary to the doctrine of Christ and of his apostles. For Paul says, "See that fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, are not once named among you, as it becomes saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking or jesting, which are not attractive. For this you know: that no whoremonger, or unclean person, or covetous person, which is the worshipper of images, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." And after, he says, "Through such things the wrath of God comes upon the children of unbelief." Eph 5.3-5 Now seeing that they permit you to freely read those things which corrupt your minds and rob you of the kingdom of God and Christ, and bring the wrath of God upon you, how is forbidding Scripture done for the love of your souls?

A thousand reasons more might be made, as you may see in Paraclesis Erasmi,[31] and in his preface to the Paraphrase of Matthew, to which they should be compelled to hold their peace, or to give embarrassing answers. But I hope that these are sufficient for those who thirst after the truth. God for his mercy and truth shall well open them more, indeed, and other secrets of his godly wisdom, if they are diligent to cry to him – may God grant such grace. Amen.

THE PROLOGUE TO THE BOOK.

Because our holy prelates and spiritually religious, who ought to defend God's word, speak evil of it instead, and shame it all they can, and rail on it; and bear their captives in hand, so that it causes insurrection and teaches the people to disobey their heads and governors, and moves them to rise against their princes, and to make everything common, and to make havoc of other men's goods: therefore have I made this little treatise that follows, containing all obedience that is of God. Whoever reads it will easily perceive not only their contrary teachings – that they lie – but also the very cause of such blasphemy, and what stirs them to so furiously rage and to belie the truth.[32]

However, it is nothing new to the word of God to be railed upon. Nor is this the first time that hypocrites have ascribed to God's word the vengeance of which they themselves were ever the cause. For the hypocrites, with their false doctrine and idolatry, have evermore led the wrath and vengeance of God upon the people, so sorely, that God could no longer forbear or defer his punishment. Yet God, who is always merciful, before he would take vengeance, has always sent his true prophets and true preachers to warn the people so that they might repent. But the people for the most part, and namely the heads and rulers, through the comfort and persuading of the hypocrites, have waxed ever more hard-hearted than before; they have persecuted the word of God and his prophets. Then God, who is also righteous, has always poured his plagues upon them without delay. The hypocrites ascribe these plagues to God's word, saying, 'See what mischief has come upon us since this new learning came up, and this new sect, and this new doctrine.' You see this in Jeremiah 44.18, where the people cried to go back to their old idolatry, saying, "Since we left it, we have been in need, and have been consumed with war and hunger." But the prophet answered them that their idolatry went to the heart of God, so that he could no longer allow the maliciousness of their own imaginations or inventions; and that the cause of all such mischiefs was because they would not hear the voice of the Lord, and walk in his law, ordinances, and testimonies. The scribes and the Pharisees also laid to Christ's charge, in Luke 23.2-5, that he moved the people to sedition. They said to Pilate, "We have found this fellow perverting the people, and forbidding them to pay tribute to Caesar, and he says that he is Christ, a king." And again in the same chapter, "He moves the people," they said, "teaching throughout Jewry, and he began at Galilee even to this place." They laid the same thing to the apostles' charge, as you may see in the Acts. St. Cyprian also, and St. Augustine, and many others, wrote works in defense of the word of God against such blasphemies. So you see how it is nothing new, but an old and customary thing with hypocrites, to blame God's word and true preachers for all the mischief which their lying doctrine is the very cause of.

Nevertheless indeed, after the preaching of God's word, because it is not truly received, God sends great trouble into the world. He does this partly to avenge himself of the tyrants and persecutors of his word, and partly to destroy those worldly people who make of God's word nothing but a cloak for their fleshly liberty. They are not all good that follow the gospel. Christ (Mat 13.47) likens the kingdom of heaven to a net cast into the sea, that catches fishes both good and bad. The kingdom of heaven is the preaching of the gospel, to which come both good and bad. But the good are few. Christ therefore calls them a "little flock," Luke 12.32. For they are ever few that come to the gospel from a true intent, seeking nothing in it but the glory and praise of God, and offering themselves freely and willingly to receive adversity with Christ for the gospel's sake, and to bear witness to the truth, so that all men may hear it. The great number come, and ever came, and followed even Christ himself, for a worldly purpose. You may well see this in John 6, where almost five thousand followed Christ, and they would also have made him a king, because he had fed them well. He rebuked them, saying, "You do not

seek me because you saw the miracles, but because you ate the bread and were filled;" he drove them away from him with hard preaching.

Even so, now as ever, most seek liberty. They are glad when they hear that the insatiable covetousness of the clergy is rebuked; when they hear their falsehood and wiles spoken about; when tyranny and oppression are preached against; when they hear how kings and all officers should rule in a Christian and brotherly way, and seek nothing else than to save the wealth of their subjects. But then they hear that the clergy have no authority from God to pill and poll as they do, and to raise taxes and gatherings to maintain their fantasies, and to make war for some unknown reason. Therefore, because the heads will not rule in this way, the people will no longer obey. Instead, they resist and rise up against their evil heads; one wicked man destroys another. Yet, God's word is not the cause of this, nor yet the preachers. For Christ himself taught all obedience, how it is not lawful to resist wrong; it is for the officer appointed to that duty. A man must love his enemy, and pray for those who persecute him, and bless those who curse him. All vengeance must be remitted to God. A man must forgive if he would be forgiven by God; yet the people for the most part did not receive it. They were ever ready to rise and to fight. For whenever the scribes and Pharisees went to take Christ, they were afraid of the people. "Not on the holy day," they said, Matthew 26.5, "lest an uproar arise among the people." Matthew 21.46, "They would have taken him but they feared the people." And Luke 20.40-44, Christ asked the Pharisees a question to which they dared not answer, for the people might stone them. Mat 22.41-46

Last of all, the very disciples and apostles of Christ, after hearing for so long of Christ's doctrine, were still ready to fight for Christ, completely against Christ's teaching.[33] Matthew 26.51-52, Peter drew his sword, but he was rebuked; and Luke 9.54, James and John would have had fire rain down from heaven to consume the Samaritans, and to avenge the injury of Christ, but they were likewise rebuked. If Christ's disciples were carnal for so long, is it any wonder that we are not all perfect the first day? Indeed, this is what we are taught (even babes!): to kill a Turk, to slay a Jew, to burn a heretic, to fight for the liberties and rights of the church (as they call it). Indeed, we are brought to believe that if we shed even the blood of a Christian, or if a son sheds the blood of his father, for the defense not only of the pope's godhead, but also for whatever cause it may be (indeed, even if it is for no cause), just because his holiness commands it – that we deserve as much as Christ deserved for us, when he died on the cross.[34] Or if we are slain in the pope's battle, that our souls go – no, fly – to heaven, and they are there before our blood is cold. Inasmuch, I say, as we have sucked such bloody imaginations into the bottom of our hearts, even with our mother's milk, and have been hardened in it for so long, is it any wonder that if, while we are still young in Christ, we think it would be lawful to fight for the true word of God? Yes, a man might be thoroughly persuaded that it is not lawful to resist his king, even if the king were to wrongfully take away his life and goods; yet might he think that it is lawful to resist the hypocrites, and to rise up, not against his king but with his king, to deliver his king out of the bondage and captivity in which the hypocrites hold him with their wiles and falsehood, so that no man may be allowed to come to his king, to tell him the truth.

See this, that it is the bloody doctrine of the pope which causes disobedience, rebellion and insurrection. For he teaches to fight and to defend his traditions, and whatever he dreams, with fire, water, and sword; and to disobey father, mother, master, lord, king, and emperor. Indeed, he teaches to invade whatever land or nation that will not receive and admit his godhead. Where the peaceable doctrine of Christ teaches to obey and to suffer for the word of God, and to remit the vengeance and the defense of the word to God, who is mighty and able to defend it; and who, as soon as the word is openly preached, and testified, or witnessed to the world, and

when he has given them a season to repent, is ready at once to take vengeance upon his enemies, He shoots arrows with heads dipped in deadly poison at them; and pours his plagues from heaven down upon them; and sends the murrain[35] and pestilence among them; and sinks their cities; and makes the earth swallow them; and encompasses them in their wiles; and takes them in their own traps and snares, and casts them into the pits which they dug for others; and makes them dazed in the head; and utterly destroys them with their own subtle counsel.

Prepare your mind therefore for this little treatise; read it discreetly; and judge it objectively. When I cite any Scripture, look at the text to see whether I interpret it rightly. You will easily perceive it by the circumstance and process of the texts if you make Christ the foundation and the ground, and build it all on him, and refer it all to him. You will also find that the exposition agrees with the common articles of faith and open Scriptures. And may God the Father of mercy, who for his truth's sake raised our Savior Christ up again to justify us, give you his Spirit to judge what is righteous in his eyes; and give you strength to abide by it, and to maintain it with all patience and long-suffering, for the example and edifying of his congregation, and for the glory of his name. Amen.

THE OBEDIENCE OF ALL DEGREES PROVED BY GOD'S WORD:

OBEDIENCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR ELDERS.

GOD, who works all in all things, for a secret judgment and purpose, and for his godly pleasure, provided an hour that your father and mother should come together, to make you through them. He was present with you in your mother's womb, and fashioned you and breathed life into you; and, for the great love he had for you, provided milk in your mother's breasts for you when you were born; he also moved your father and mother, and all others, to love you, pity you, and care for you.

And just as he made you through them, so has he cast you under the power and authority of them, to obey and serve them in his stead, saying, "Honor your father and mother." Exodus 20.12. This is not to be understood only as bowing the knee, and taking off your hat, but that you love them with all your heart; and fear and dread them, and wait on their commandments; and seek their worship, pleasure, will, and profit in all things; and give your life for them, counting them worthy of all honor; remembering that you are their good and possession, and that you owe them yourself, and all you are able to do – indeed, more than you are able.

Understand also, that whatever you do unto them, whether good or bad, you do unto God. When you please them, you please God; when you displease them, you displease God; when they are angry with you, God is angry with you. Nor is it possible for you to come to God's favor again, though all the angels of heaven pray for you, until you have submitted yourself to your father and mother again.

If you obey, though it is but carnally, either for fear, for vain glory, or profit, your blessing will be long life on the earth. For he says, "Honour your father and mother, that you may live long upon the earth." (Exo 20.12) Contrariwise, if you disobey them, your life shall be shortened on the earth. For it follows, Exodus 21.15, "He that strikes his father or mother shall be put to death for it. And he that curses," that is to say, rails or dishonors his father or mother with offensive words, "shall be slain for it." And, "If any man has a stubborn and disobedient son, who does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, though they have disciplined him, and he disregards them – then let his father and mother take him, and bring him to the seniors or elders of the city, and to the gate of that place: and let them say to the seniors of that city, 'Our son is stubborn and disobedient: he will not hearken to our voice: he is a rioter and a drunkard.' Then let all the men of the city stone him to death with stones: so shall you put away wickedness from among you, and all Israel shall hear and shall fear." (Deut 21.18-21)

Though the temporal officers (to their own damnation) are negligent in punishing such disobedience, (as the spiritual officers are to teach it), and wink at it, or look at it through the fingers, yet they shall not escape unpunished.[36] For the vengeance of God shall accompany them (as you may see in Deut 28.15 ff) with all misfortune and evil luck; and shall not depart from them until they are murdered, drowned, or hanged; or until, by one mischance or another, they are utterly brought to nothing. Indeed, the world often hangs many a man for what they never deserved. But God hangs them because they would not obey, or hearken to their elders – as the consciences of many will find when they come to the gallows. There they can preach and teach others what they themselves would not learn in season.

The marriage also of the children pertains to their elders, as you may see in 1Corinthians 7 and throughout the Scripture, from the authority of the commandment, "Child, obey your father and mother." The heathen and gentiles have always kept this, and keep it to this day, to the great shame and rebuke of us Christians.[37] The weddings of our virgins (it is shameful to speak of)

are more like breeding dogs than marrying a reasonable creature. Do we not daily see three or four men seeking matrimony with one woman before the commissary or official, of which not one has the consent of her father and mother? And yet the one with the most money has the best right, and will have her, despite all her friends and in defiance of God's ordinances.

Moreover, when she is given by the judge to the one party, and is married, even then the contrary party often sues before a higher judge, or another that succeeds him. And then for money, he divorces her again. In this way, the covetousness and ambition of our prelates shamefully mocks the laws of God. I will pass over with silence how many years they prolong the sentence with cavils and subtlety, if they are well-monied on both sides. If a damsel promises to marry two men, how shameful is the counsel the prelates will give the second one; and then the religious ones of Satan will separate inseparable matrimony. For after you are lawfully married at the commandment of father and mother, and with the consent of all your friends, yet if you are willing to be disguised like one of them, and swear obedience to their traditions, you may disobey father and mother, break the oath which you swore to God before his holy congregation, and withdraw your love and charity, the highest of God's commandments. You may withdraw that duty and service which you owe your wife, which Christ cannot dispense with. For Christ is not against God, but with God; and he did not come to break God's ordinances, but to fulfill them. That is, he came to overcome you with kindness; and to make you do, out of love, the thing which the law compels you to do. For only love, and serving your neighbor, will fulfill the law in the sight of God. To be a monk or a friar, you may thus forsake your wife before you have lain with her; but not to be a secular priest. And yet, after you are professed, the pope will dispense with your marriage for money, both for your coat and all your obedience; and he will make a secular priest of you. Likewise, it is simony[38] to sell a benefice, as they call it; but to resign on a pension, and then redeem it, is not simony at all. O crafty jugglers and mockers of the word of God!

OBEDIENCE OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS.

AFTER Eve was deceived by the serpent, God said to her, Genesis 3.16, "Your lust or appetite shall pertain to your husband; and he shall rule you, or reign over you." God, who created the woman, knows what is in that weak vessel (as Peter calls her), and has therefore put her under the obedience of her husband, to rule her lusts and wanton appetites. 1Peter 3.1 exhorts wives to "be in subjection to their husbands," following the example of the holy women of old who trusted in God, "just as Sara obeyed Abraham and called him lord." 1Peter 3.6 Sara, before she was married, was Abraham's sister, and equal with him; but, as soon as she was married, she was in subjection, and became (without comparison) inferior – for this is the nature of wedlock, by the ordinance of God. It would be much better if our wives followed the example of the holy women of old in obeying their husbands, rather than to worship them with a Paternoster, an Ave and a Credo, or to set candles before their images.[39] Paul, in Ephesians 5.22-24, says, "Women, submit yourselves to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the wife's head, even as Christ is the head of the congregation. Therefore, as the congregation is in subjection to Christ, likewise let wives be in subjection to their husbands in all things."

"Let the woman, therefore, fear her husband," Eph 5.33 as Paul says in the same place. For her husband is, to her, in the place of God; so she obeys him, and waits on his commandments; and his commandments are God's commandments. If she therefore grudges against him, or resists him, she grudges against God, and resists God.

OBEDIENCE OF SERVANTS TO THEIR MASTERS.

“SERVANTS, obey your carnal masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ; not with service in the eye-sight as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will, as though you served the Lord, and not men.” (Colossians 3.22-23) And, 1Peter 2.18-21, “Servants, obey your masters with all fear, not only if they are good and courteous, but also if they are unjust. For it comes of grace, if a man, for conscience’ sake towards God, endures grief and suffering wrongfully. For what praise is there if you take it patiently when you are beaten for your faults? But if you behave well, and yet you suffer wrong and take it patiently, then there is favor with God. To this, truly, you were called. For Christ also suffered for our sakes, leaving us an example to follow his steps.” [40]

Therefore, whatever kind of servant you are, during the period of your contract, your master is in the place of God to you; and through him God feeds you, clothes you, rules you, and teaches you. His commandments are God’s commandments; and you ought to obey him as to God, and in all things seek his pleasure and profit. For you are his good and possession, as are his ox and horse. Whoever desires to take you from your master, without his love and license, is condemned by God, who says, “See that you do not covet your neighbour’s servants.” (Exodus 20.10)

Paul the apostle sent Onesimus home to his master, as you read in Paul’s epistle to Philemon. Philemon, like his servant, was converted by Paul, and was indebted to Paul, and to the word that Paul preached, not only for his servant but also for himself. Though Paul was in need, and lacked someone to minister to him in the bonds which he suffered for the gospel’s sake, yet Paul would not retain the servant needed to further the gospel, without the consent of the master.[41]

O how sorely the doctrine of Christ and his apostles differs from the doctrine of the pope and his apostles! For if any man will obey neither father nor mother, neither lord nor master, neither king nor prince, that man needs only to take the mark of the beast, that is, to shave himself as a monk, friar, or priest, and then he is immediately free and exempted from all service and obedience due to man. Someone who will obey no man (as they will not) is most acceptable to them. The more disobedient you are to God’s ordinances, the more apt and fit you are for theirs. Professing, vowing, and swearing obedience to their ordinances, is nothing other than defying, denying, and foreswearing obedience to the ordinances of God.

OBEDIENCE TO KINGS, PRINCES, AND RULERS.

“LET every soul submit himself to the authority of the higher powers. There is no power except from God: the powers that be are ordained by God. Whoever therefore resists that power, resists the ordinance of God. Those who resist will receive damnation for themselves. For rulers are not to be feared for good works, but for evil. Do you want to be without fear of that power? Then do well, and so you shall be praised by him; for he is the minister of God for your good. But if you do evil, then fear: for he does not bear a sword for nothing; for he is the minister of God to take vengeance on those who do evil. Therefore you must obey; not for fear of vengeance only, but also because of conscience. It is for this reason that you pay tribute: for they are God’s ministers serving for that purpose. Give to every man therefore his duty: tribute to whom tribute belongs; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear belongs; honour to whom honour pertains. Owe nothing to any man; but to love one another: for he that loves another fulfills the law. For these commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet, and if there are any other commandments, they are all comprehended in this saying, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor: therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Rom 13.1-

10

A father is both lord and judge over his children, forbidding one brother to avenge himself on another; if any cause of strife is between them, he will have it brought to himself or his assigns, to be judged and corrected. So God forbids all men to avenge themselves, and takes the authority and office of avenging to himself; saying, "Vengeance is mine, and I will reward," Deut 32.35. Paul repeats this text in Romans 12.19; for it is impossible for a man to be a righteous, equitable, and indifferent judge in his own cause - lusts and appetites so blind us. Moreover, when you avenge yourself, you do not make peace; rather, you stir up more debate.

God has therefore given laws to all nations, and in all lands he has put kings, governors, and rulers in his place, to rule the world through them. He has commanded that all causes be brought before them, as you read in Exodus 22.9-11, "In all causes (he says) of injury or wrong, whether it be over an ox, ass, sheep, or vesture, or anything lost which another challenges, let the cause of both parties be brought to the gods;[42] the one whom the gods condemn, shall pay double to his neighbor." Note that judges are called gods in the Scriptures, because they are in God's place, and they execute the commandments of God. In another place in the same chapter (22.28), Moses charges them, saying: "See that you do not rail at the gods, nor speak evil of the ruler of your people." Whoever therefore resists them, resists God, for they are in the place of God; and those who resist shall receive damnation.

Such obedience to father and mother, master, husband, emperor, king, lords and rulers, requires a God of all nations, indeed, even of the Turks and infidels. The blessing and reward of those that keep them is the life of this world; as you read, "Keep my ordinances and laws; which if a man keeps them, he shall live by them." (Lev 18.5) Paul repeats this text in Romans 10.5, proving thereby that the righteousness of the law is but worldly, and the reward for it is the life of this world; but the curse of those who break the law is the loss of this life; as you see by the punishment appointed for them.

Whoever keeps the law (whether for fear, vainglory, or profit), though no man rewards him, yet God will bless him abundantly, and send him worldly prosperity; you read in Deuteronomy 28 what good blessings accompany the keeping of the law. We see that the Turks far exceed us Christian men in worldly prosperity, for justly keeping their temporal laws. Likewise, even if no man punishes law-breakers, God will send his curses upon them till they are utterly brought to nothing, as you read most terribly in the same passage.

Nor may the inferior person avenge himself on the superior, or violently resist him, for whatever wrong it may be. If he does, he is condemned in doing the deed; it is as if he took for himself what belongs to God alone, who says, "Vengeance is mine, and I will reward." Deut 32.35. And Christ says, Matthew 26.52, "All that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Do you take a sword to avenge yourself? If so, then you give God no opportunity to avenge you; instead, you rob him of his most high honor, by not letting him be judge over you.

If any man might have avenged himself on his superior, David could most righteously have done so on king Saul, who so wrongly persecuted David, for no other cause than God had anointed him king, and promised him the kingdom. Yet when God delivered Saul into the hands of David, so that he might have done what he would with him, as you see in 1 Sam 24, Saul came into the camp where David was and David came to him secretly, and cut off a piece of his garment. As soon as he did it, his heart struck him, because he had done so much to his lord. When his men encouraged him to slay Saul, David answered, "The Lord forbid that I should lay my hand on him;" [1Sam 24.6] nor did he allow his men to hurt Saul. When Saul left, David followed him, and showed him the piece of his garment, and said, "Why do you believe the words of men

who say David goes about to do you harm? Look and see that there is neither evil nor wickedness in my hand, and that I have not trespassed against you, and yet you lie in wait for my life. May God judge between you and me, and avenge me on you; but my hand is not upon you. As the old proverb says (said David), 'Out of the wicked shall wickedness proceed, but my hand is not upon you,'" meaning that God ever punishes one wicked man by another. Again David said, "May God be judge, and decide between you and me, and behold and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand." 1Sam 24.9-15

In the 26th chapter of the same book, when Saul persecuted David again, David came to Saul by night, as he and all his men slept, and took his spear and a cup of water from his head.[43] Then Abishai, David's servant, said "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day: let me now therefore nail him to the ground with my spear, and give him but one strike and no more." David forbade him, saying, "Do not kill him; for who may lay hands on the Lord's anointed, and not be guilty? The Lord lives," or by the Lord's life, "he does not die unless the Lord strikes him, or his day to die has come, or else he goes into battle and perishes there." 1Sam 26.8-10

Why did David not slay Saul, seeing that he was so wicked, not only in persecuting David, but in disobeying God's commandments, and having wrongfully slain eighty-five of God's priests? Truly, it was not lawful. If he did it, then he must have sinned against God; for God made the king in every realm judge over all, and there is no judge over him. The one who judges the king judges God; and the one that lays hands on the king, lays hand on God; and the one who resists the king, resists God and he damns God's law and ordinance. If the subjects sin, then they must be brought to the king's judgment. If the king sins, then he must be reserved for the judgment, wrath, and vengeance of God. As it is to resist the king, so is it to resist his officer, who is set or sent to execute the king's commandment.

In the first chapter of the second book of Samuel, David commanded the young man to be slain, who brought him the crown and bracelet of Saul, and who, to please David, said that he himself had slain Saul. In the fourth chapter of the same book, David commanded that those two be slain who brought him the head of Ishbosheth, Saul's son; and yet, by their act, the whole kingdom returned to David, according to the promise of God.

In Luke 13.1-3, when they showed Christ the blood of the Galileans, which Pilate mingled with their own sacrifice, Christ answered, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all other Galileans, because they suffered such punishment? I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will likewise perish." This was told to Christ, no doubt, with the same intent they had when they asked him, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" (Matthew 22.17)

They thought it was not a sin to resist a heathen prince; and few of us would think, if we were under the Turk, that it would be a sin to rise up against him, and rid ourselves of his dominion. In thinking so, it is clear that our bishops have sorely robbed us of the true doctrine of Christ. But Christ condemned their deeds, and also the secret thoughts of all others who consented to it, saying: "Unless you repent, you will likewise perish." As Christ would say, I know that you are, within your hearts, like those who were outward in their deeds, and you are under the same damnation. Unless you repent quickly, you will break out at last into like deeds, and likewise perish; as it came to pass afterward.

Hereby you see that the king is in this world without law; and may at his lust do right or wrong, and shall give an account only to God.

Another conclusion is this, that no person, or any degree of person, is exempt from this ordinance of God. Nor can the profession of monks and friars, or anything that the pope or

bishops can lay out for themselves, exempt them from the sword of the emperor or kings, if they break the laws. For it is written, "Let every soul submit himself to the authority of the higher powers." Here no man is excepted; all souls must obey. The higher powers are the temporal kings and princes to whom God has given the sword to punish whoever sins. God has not given them swords to punish one, and let another go free, or let sin go unpunished. Moreover, with what face did the clergy, which ought to be the light and an example of good living to all others, dare to sin unpunished, or to be excepted from tribute, toll, or custom, or not bear the pain of their brothers in the maintenance of kings and others, whom God ordained to punish sin? "There is no power but of God." Rom 13.1 By power, understand the authority of kings and princes. "The powers that be are ordained by God. Whoever therefore resists power, resists God:" indeed, even though he is pope, bishop, monk, or friar. "Those who resist will receive damnation." Why? For God's word is against them, which will have all men under the power of the temporal sword: for "rulers are not to be feared for good works, but for evil." Here you see that those who resist the powers, or seek to be exempt from their authority, have evil consciences. They seek the liberty to sin unpunished, and to be free from bearing pain with their brothers. "Do you want to be without fear of the power? Then do well, and you shall have praise from him," that is to say, from the ruler. The clergy ought to rid themselves from fear of the temporal sword with good living; not with craft, or by blinding the kings, and bringing God's vengeance upon them, or by purchasing a license to sin unpunished.

"For he is the minister of God for your good:" to defend you from a thousand inconveniences, from thieves, murderers, and those who would defile your wife, your daughter, and take from you all that you have, indeed, life and all, if you resisted. Furthermore, though he is the great tyrant in the world, yet to you he is a great benefit of God, and a thing for which you ought to thank God highly. For it is better to have something, than to be completely stripped of all. It is better to pay a tenth than to lose all. It is better to suffer one tyrant than many, and to suffer wrong from one man than from every man. Indeed, it is better to have a tyrant for your king than a shadow: a passive king that does nothing himself, but allows others to do with him what they will, and to lead him wherever they want. For a tyrant, though he does wrong to the good, yet he punishes the evil, and makes all men obey; nor does he allow any man to poll but himself. A king that is soft as silk and effeminate, that is to say, who is turned into the nature of a woman, – with his own lusts, which are like the longing of a woman with child, so that he cannot resist them, and is under the wily tyranny of those who ever rule him – a soft king is much more grievous to the realm than an outright tyrant. Read the chronicles,[44] and you will find it always so.

"But if you do evil, then fear; for he does not bear a sword for nothing: for he is the minister of God, to take vengeance on those who do evil." If the office of princes, given to them by God, are to take vengeance on evil-doers, then by this text and by God's word, every prince is damned who gives liberty or license to the clergy to sin unpunished; and not only to sin unpunished themselves, but to open sanctuaries for sinners, privileged places, churchyards, and even St. John's hold. Indeed, if they come short of all these, they may quote a neck-verse[45] to save all kinds of trespassers from the fear of the sword - the vengeance of God - put in the hands of princes to take vengeance on all such evil-doers.

GOD requires the law to be kept by all men, let them keep it for whatever purpose they will. Will they not keep the law? So vouchsafes he not that they enjoy this temporal life. Now are there three natures of men: one is altogether brutish; in no way do they receive the law in their hearts, but instead they rise against princes and rulers whenever they are able to make their party good. These are signified by those who worshipped the golden calf: for Moses broke the tables

of the law, before he came at them.

The second are not so brutish; they receive the law; and the law comes to them; but they do not look Moses in the face: for his countenance is too bright for them; that is, they do not understand that the law is spiritual, and it requires the heart. They look at the pleasure, profit, and promotion that follow keeping the law, and with regard to the reward, they keep the law outwardly with their works, but not in their heart. For if they could obtain the same honor, glory, promotion and dignity, and avoid all inconveniences if they broke the law, then they would just as readily break the law, and follow their lusts.

The third are spiritual; they look Moses openly in the face. They are, as Paul says, Romans 2.14, "a law to themselves;" they have the law written in their hearts by the Spirit of God. These need neither king nor officers to drive them, nor any man to offer them a reward in order to keep the law; for they do it naturally.

The first work only from the fear of the sword: the second work for the reward: the third work for love, freely. They look at the exceeding mercy, love, and kindness, which God showed them in Christ, and therefore they love in return, and work freely. Heaven they take as the free gift of God, through Christ's deservings; and they hope without any doubt that God, according to his promise, will also defend them in this world, and do all things for them, out of his goodness and for Christ's sake, and not for any goodness that is in them. They consent to the law, that it is holy and just; and that all men ought to do whatever God commands, for no other reason than God commands it. And their great sorrow is that there is no strength in their members to do what their heart desires to do, and is thirsty to do.

This last sort keep the law of their own accord, and they do that in the heart; they have professed perpetual war against the lusts and appetites of the flesh, till they are utterly subdued: yet it is not through their own strength - rather, knowing and acknowledging their weakness, they ever cry to God for strength, who has promised assistance to all that call upon him. These follow God, and they are led by his Spirit. The other two are led by their lusts and appetites.

Lusts and appetites are diverse and many in each man; indeed, one lust is contrary to another, and the greater lust carries a man away with it. We are also changed from one lust to another. We are disposed to one when we are children; to another when we are young men; and to another when we are old. We are disposed to one in the evening, and to another in the morning. Indeed, sometimes it alters six times in an hour. How does all this play out? Because the will of man follows the affection,[46] and it is subject to the affection; as the affection errs, so does the will; as the affection is in captivity, so is the will; nor is it possible for the will to be free, where the affection is in bondage.

So that you may perceive and feel the thing in your heart, and not be a vain sophister, disputing about words without perceiving their meaning, mark this: the root of all evil, the great damnation and most terrible wrath and vengeance of God that we are in, is natural blindness. We are all out of the right way; every man is in his own ways: one judges this to be best, and another that to be best. Now worldly affection is nothing but craft and subtlety, to obtain what we falsely judge to be best. As I err in my affection, so I err in my will. When I judge something to be evil which indeed is good, then I hate what is good. And when I suppose that what is evil indeed, is good, then I love evil. It is as if I am persuaded that my best friend is my enemy; and then I hate my best friend. And if I am brought to believe that my worst enemy is my friend, then I love my worst enemy. Now when we say that every man has free will to do what he lusts after, then I say, truly, men do what they lust after. Notwithstanding, to follow our lusts is not freedom; rather, it is captivity and bondage. If God opens any man's wits, to make him feel in his heart

that lusts and appetites are damnable, and God gives him the power to hate and resist those appetites; then he is free, even with the freedom with which Christ makes us free. And he then has the power to do the will of God.

You may hereby perceive, that all that is done in the world before the Spirit of God comes, and gives us light, is damnable sin; and the more glorious, the more damnable; so that what the world counts most glorious is more damnable in the sight of God, than that which the whore, thief, and murderer do.[47] Using the blind reasons of worldly wisdom you may change the minds of youth, and make them give themselves to what you will, either for fear, for praise, or for profit; and yet it but changes them from one vice to another – just as the persuasions of her friends made Lucretia[48] chaste. Lucrece believed if she was a good housewife and chaste, that she should be most glorious, and that all the world would give her honor, and praise her. She sought her own glory in her chastity, and not God's. When she had lost her chastity, then she counted herself most abominable in the sight of all men. The pain and thought which she had, was not that she had displeased God, but that she had lost her honor; and so she slew herself. Look how great her pain and sorrow was for the loss of her chastity, and how great her glory and rejoicing were in it, and how she so much despised those who were otherwise, and did not pity them. God more abhors this sort of pride than the vice of any whore. The moral virtues of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates are like it, and all the doctrine of the philosophers – the very gods of our school-men.

It is the same way for most of our most holy religions. For with a similar imagination, they do things which those of Bedlam[49] may see are but madness. Look at the miracles which God did by the saints. They were to move the unbelieving to the faith, and to confirm the truth of his promises in Christ, whereby all who believe are made saints – as you see in the last chapter of Mark.[50] "They preached," he says, "everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming their preaching with miracles that followed." Mar 16.20 In Acts chapter four, the disciples prayed that God would stretch forth his hands, to do miracles and wonders in the name of Jesus. Act 4.29-30 And Paul in 1Corinthians 14 says, that the miracle of speaking with diverse tongues is but a sign for unbelievers, and not for those who believe. 1Cor 14.22 But these others turn such miracles to another purpose, saying in their blind hearts, 'See what miracles God showed for this saint; he must be truly great with God!' — and at once they turn themselves from God's word, and put their trust and confidence in the saint and in his merits; they make a god of the saint. From their blind imagination they make a testament, or a bond, between the saint and them – but the testament of Christ's blood has been clean forgotten. They look at the saints' garments and lives, or rather lies which men lay on the saints, and imagine in their hearts, saying, 'This saint, for wearing such a garment, and for such deeds, has become so glorious in heaven, that if I do likewise, then I will also become glorious.' They do not see the faith and trust which the saints had in Christ; nor the word of God which the saints preached; nor the intent of the saints: how the saints did such things to tame their bodies, and to be an example to the world, and to teach that those things which the world most wonders at and magnifies, are to be despised. They do not see that some lands are so hot that a man can neither drink wine nor eat flesh in them; nor do they consider the complexion of the saints; and they do not see a thousand similar things.[51] So when they have brutalized their bodies, and brought them to such a condition that hardly any restorative can regain their health again, yet they would rather die than eat flesh. Why? For they think, 'I have for twenty, thirty, or forty years eaten no flesh; and so I have no doubt that by now I have earned as high a place as the best of them – should I now lose that? No, I would rather die!' They are like Lucretia, who had similar thoughts – she would rather have been slain than to lose her glory (if he had not been too strong for her). They ascribe

heaven to their imaginations and to their mad inventions; they do not receive it from the liberality of God, by the merits and deservings of Christ.

One who is now renewed in Christ, keeps the law without any written law, or any compulsion by a ruler or officer, but only by the leading of the Spirit. However, the natural man is enticed and moved to keep the law carnally, for carnal reasons and worldly persuasions, such as for glory, honor, riches, and dignity. But the last remedy of all, when all others fail, is fear. Beat one, and the rest will abstain for fear – just as Moses continually put Israel in remembrance, saying, 'Kill, stone, burn; so shall you put evil away from you, and all Israel shall hear and fear,' Deut 21.21 and do so no more. If fear does not help, then God will that they are taken out of this life.

Kings were ordained then, as I said before, and the sword was put in their hands, to take vengeance on evil-doers, so that others might fear. Kings were not ordained to fight one against another, or to rise up against the emperor to defend the false authority of the pope,[52] that very antichrist. But it seems only bishops can minister the temporal sword. Their office is the preaching of God's word, laid apart – but they will neither do that, nor allow any other man to do it. Instead, they slay with the temporal sword, which they have gotten out of the hand of all princes, those who would. The preaching of God's word is hateful and contrary to them. Why? For it is impossible to preach Christ, unless you preach against antichrist. That is to say, with their false doctrine and violent sword, they quench the true doctrine of Christ with force. Just as you cannot heal any disease unless you begin at the root; even so you cannot preach against mischief, unless you begin with the bishops. Kings are but shadows – vain names and idle things. They have nothing to do in the world, until our holy father needs their help.

The pope, contrary to all conscience, and against the doctrine of Christ who says, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18.36), has usurped the right of the emperor. By the policy of the bishops of Almany, and by corrupting the electors, or choosers of the emperor, with money, it happens that no one is ever chosen emperor who is not able to make his party good with the pope. To stop the emperor, so that he will not come to Rome, he brings the French king up to Milan; and on the other side he brings the Venetians. If the Venetians come too near, the bishops of France must bring in the French king. And the Socheners [53] are called, sent for to come and succor. And for their labor, he gives a rose to some, and a cap of maintenance to another. One is called Most Christian King; another, Defender of the Faith; another, the Eldest Son of the Most Holy Seat. He emblazons the coat of arms of others; and puts in the holy cross, the crown of thorn, or the nails, and so forth. If the French king goes too far, and creeps up either to Bononia or Naples; then our English bishops must bring in our king. The craft of the bishops is to entitle one king with another's realm. He is called king of Denmark and of England; and this one is the king of England and of France. To blind the lords and the commoners, the king must assert his right. Then the land must be taxed and every man must pay; the treasure is borne out of the realm, and the land is beggared. How many thousands of men's lives it has cost! And how many hundreds of thousands of pounds have been carried out of the realm in our memory! Besides that, how abominable an example of gathering there was! Truly, no tyrant since the world began ever did such a thing. Indeed, it was never before heard of or thought about among the Jews, Saracens, Turks, or heathen, since God created the sun to shine. That a beast should break into the temple of God, that is to say, into the heart and consciences of men, and compel every man to swear what he was worth, and to lend what would never be paid back. How many thousands forswore themselves! How many thousands set themselves above their ability, partly for fear lest they be forsworn, and partly to save their credence! When the pope has his purpose, then peace is made, though no man knows how; and our worst enemy is now our best friend.

Now because the emperor is able to obtain his right, French, English, Venetians and all must be upon him. O great whore of Babylon, how she abuses the princes of the world! How drunk she has made them with her wine! How shameful are the licenses she gives them, to use necromancy, to hold whores, to divorce themselves, to break the faith and break promises that one makes with another; that the confessors shall deliver to the king the confession of whomever he will, and even exempts them from the law of God – which Christ himself cannot do!

AGAINST THE POPE'S FALSE POWER.

CHRIST says to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; for all that lay their hand upon the sword shall perish with the sword." (Mat 26.52) That is, whoever without the commandment of the temporal officer, to whom God has given the sword, lays a hand on the sword to take vengeance, deserves death in doing the deed. God put not only Peter under the temporal sword, but also Christ himself; as it appears in the fourth chapter to the Galatians.[54] And Christ says, Mat 3.15, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," that is to say, all ordinances of God. If the head is then under the temporal sword, how can the members be excepted? If Peter sinned in defending Christ against the temporal sword, (whose authority and ministers the elders abused against Christ then, as ours do now), who can excuse our prelates of sin, who obey neither king nor emperor? Indeed, who can excuse from sin either the kings that give these exemptions, or the bishops that receive them, contrary to God's ordinances and Christ's doctrine?

In Matthew 17.24-27, both Christ and Peter pay tribute. The meaning of Christ's question to Peter is that, 'if princes take tribute only from strangers and not from their children, then truly I ought to be free, who am the Son of God. They are my servants and ministers, and they have their authority from me.' Yet because they did not know that, and because Christ did not come to use that authority, but for our sakes to be our servant, and to bear our burden, and to obey all ordinances both right and wrong, and to teach us – therefore he said to St. Peter, "Pay for you and me, lest we offend them." Moreover, though Christ and Peter (because they were poor) might have escaped payment, yet he would not escape it for fear of offending others and hurting their consciences. For he might well have given occasion to the tribute-gatherers to misjudge both him and his doctrine. Indeed, the Jews might happily have been offended by it, and then have thought it unlawful for them to pay tribute to heathen princes and idolaters, seeing that Christ, so great a prophet, did not pay. Indeed, what other thing causes the commoners to so little regard their princes, as seeing them both despised and disobeyed by the clergy? But our prelates, who care nothing for offending consciences, and care less for God's ordinances, will pay nothing, except when princes must fight in our most holy father's quarrel, and against Christ. Then they are the first. There also are none so poor then, that they do not have something to give.

Mark here, how our school doctors[55] are past all shame, (as Rochester is in his sermon against Martin Luther), who disputes about this text of Matthew saying that, because Peter paid tribute, he is greater than the other apostles, and has more authority and power than they do, and was head of them all. This is contrary to so many clear texts, where Christ rebukes them, saying, that it is a heathenish thing to climb above another, or desire to be greater. To be great in the kingdom of heaven is to be a servant; and he that most humbles himself, and becomes a servant to others, (following the example of Christ, I mean, and his apostles, and not of the pope and his apostles, our cardinals and bishops), that person is great in the kingdom. If Peter became great by paying tribute, then how is it that these clergy pay none at all? But paying

tribute is a sign of subjection, truly. The reason why Christ paid, was because he had a household; and Peter paid for the same reason: he had a house, a ship and nets, as you read in the gospel.

But let us go back to Paul. "Therefore you must obey, not for fear of vengeance only, but also because of conscience." Rom 13.5 That is, you are so wicked (as now for many years our pope and prelates everywhere are), though you need not obey the temporal sword for fear of vengeance, yet you must obey because of conscience. First, because of your own conscience. For though you are able to resist, you will never have a good conscience as long as God's word, law, and ordinance are against you. Secondarily, for your neighbor's conscience. For though, through craft and violence you might escape, and obtain liberty or privilege to be free from all manner of duties, yet you should neither sue for nor seek any such thing. Nor should you admit or accept it if it were proffered, lest your freedom make your weaker brother grudge and rebel. He sees you discharged, and he himself is more laden, and so your portion is laid on his shoulders. Do you not see, that if a man favors one son more than another, or one servant more than another, how all the rest will grudge, and how love, peace, and unity is broken? What Christianly love do you have toward your neighbor, when you can find it in your heart to go up and down by him all day long, discharged, and see him over-charged, indeed, to fall under his burden, and yet you will not once reach out your hand to help him? What good conscience can there be among our clergy, to gather so great a treasure together, and with hypocrisy about their false learning to rob almost every man of house and lands; and yet not be content with it, but with all craft and wiliness to purchase such great liberties and exemptions from all manner of bearing with their brothers, seeking in Christ nothing but lucre? [56]

I pass over with silence how they teach princes in every land to load new exactions and tyranny on their subjects, more and more daily, nor do I say for what purpose they do it. God, I trust, will shortly disclose their juggling, and bring their falsehood to light; and place a medicine on them to make their scabs break out. Nevertheless, I say that they have robbed all realms, not only of God's word, but also of all wealth and prosperity. They have driven peace out of all the lands, and withdrawn themselves from all obedience to princes, and separated themselves from the laymen, counting them viler than dogs; and they have set up that great idol, the whore of Babylon, the antichrist of Rome whom they call pope; and they have conspired against all commonwealths and have made them a several kingdom in which it is lawful to work all kinds of abominations unpunished. They have spies in every parish, and in every great man's house, and in every tavern and ale-house. And through confessions they know all secrets, so that no man may open his mouth to rebuke what they do, without shortly being made a heretic. One of them is in every council; indeed, the majority and the chief rulers of the councils are comprised of them: but no outsider is a member of their council.

"Even for this reason you pay tribute", that is, to your neighbor for conscience' sake, and for the cause that follows: "For they are God's ministers, serving for the same purpose." Rom 13.6 Because God will so have it, we must obey. We do not look (if we have Christ's Spirit in us) to what is good, profitable, glorious and honorable for us; nor on our own will, but on God's will only. "Give to every man therefore his duty; tribute to whom tribute belongs; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear belongs; honour to whom honour pertains." Rom 13.7

So that you might feel the working of the Spirit of God in you, and lest the beauty of the deed deceive you, and make you think that the law of God, which is spiritual, is satisfied and fulfilled by the outward and bodily deed, this follows: "Owe nothing to any man, but to love one another: for he that loves another fulfills the law. For these commandments – you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not

desire, and so forth, and if any other commandments – are all comprehended or contained in this saying, 'Love your neighbor.' Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Rom 13.8-10 Here you have sufficient evidence against all the sophisters, holiness-workers, and justifiers, in the world, who so magnify their deeds. The law is spiritual, and it requires the heart. It is never fulfilled by the deed in the sight of God. With the deed you fulfill the law before the world, and live by it; that is, you enjoy this present life, and avoid the wrath and vengeance, the death and punishment, which the law threatens against those who break it. But before God you keep the law only if you love. Now what will make us love? Truly, faith will do that. If you behold how much God loves you in Christ, and what vengeance he has delivered you from for his sake, and what kingdom he has made you an heir of, then you will see cause enough to love your enemy without respect to any reward, either in this life or in the life to come – but only because God would have it so, and Christ has deserved it. Yet you should feel in your heart that all your deeds to come are already abundantly recompensed in Christ.

You will say perhaps, If love fulfills the law, then it justifies. I say that that what a man fulfills the law with declares him justified; but what gives him that with which to fulfill the law, justifies him. By justifying, understand the forgiveness of sins and the favor of God. Now the text says, Romans 10.4, "The end of the law," or the cause for which the law was made, "is Christ, to justify all that believe." That is, the law is given to identify sin, to kill the conscience, to damn our deeds, to bring us to repentance, and to drive us to Christ. In him, God has promised his favor, and forgiveness of sin, to all who repent and consent to the law, that it is good. If you believe the promises, then God's truth justifies you, that is, it forgives you, and receives you into favor for Christ's sake. In surety of this, and to certify your heart, he seals you with the Spirit, Eph 1.13 and 4.30, and (2Cor 5.5) Paul says, "Who gave us his Spirit in earnest." Now the Spirit is given to us through Christ.[57] Nevertheless the Spirit, and his fruits with which the heart is purified, such as faith, hope, love, patience, long-suffering, and obedience, could never be seen without outward experience. For if you were not brought into affliction sometimes, from which only God could deliver you, you would never see your faith. Indeed, unless you fought sometimes against desperation, hell, death, sin, and the powers of this world, for your faith's sake, you should never know true faith from a dream. Unless your brother now and then offended you, you could not know whether your love was godly. For a Turk is not angry till he is hurt and offended. But if you love those who do you evil, then your love of God is evident. Likewise, if your rulers were always kind, you would not know whether your obedience was pure or not. But and if you can patiently obey evil rulers in everything that is not to the dishonor of God, and when you do not hurt your neighbors, then you are sure that God's Spirit works in you, and that your faith is no dream, nor is it any false imagination.

Therefore Paul counsels, "Recompense evil to no man. And on your part, have peace with all men. Dearly beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but give way to the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will reward, says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing, you shall heap coals of fire on his head," that is, you shall kindle love in him. "Do not be overcome by evil;" (Romans 12) that is, do not let another man's wickedness make you wicked also. "But overcome evil with good;" that is, with softness, kindness, and all patience win him; even as God with kindness won you.

The law was given in thunder, lightning, fire, smoke, and the noise of a trumpet and a terrible sight; so that the people quaked for fear, and stood far off, saying to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will hear: do not let the Lord speak to us, lest we die." No ear, if it is awakened and understands the meaning, is able to abide the voice of the law, unless the promises of mercy are nearby. Thunder, unless the rain of mercy is joined with it, destroys all, and does not build.

The law is a witness against us, and testifies that God abhors the sins that are in us, and abhors us for our sins' sake.

In a similar way, when God gave the people of Israel a king, it thundered and rained, so that the people feared so sorely, that they cried to Samuel to pray for them so that they should not die. As the law is a terrible thing, even so is the king: for he is ordained to take vengeance, and he has a sword in his hand, and not peacocks' feathers. Fear him, therefore, and look at him as you would look at a sharp sword that hung over your head by a hair.

Heads and governors are ordained by God, and are even the gift of God, whether they are good or bad. Whatever is done to us by them, God does, whether good or bad. If they are evil, why are they evil? Truly, for our wickedness' sake they are evil; because if they were good, we would not receive that goodness by the hand of God, and be thankful, submitting ourselves to his laws and ordinances; but we would have abused the goodness of God for our sensual and beastly lusts. Therefore God makes his scourge of them, and turns them into wild beasts, contrary to the nature of their names and offices, even into lions, bears, foxes, and unclean swine, to avenge himself on our unnatural and blind unkindness, and on our rebellious disobedience.

In Psalm 107.33-34 you read, "He destroyed the rivers, and dried up the springs of water, and turned the fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of the inhabitants in it." When the children of Israel had forgotten God in Egypt, God moved the hearts of the Egyptians to hate them, and to subdue them with craft and wiliness, Psalm 105.24-25.[58] In Deuteronomy 3.26, Moses repeats this, saying, "God was angry with me for your sakes." So that the wrath of God fell on Moses for the wickedness of the people. In 2Sam. 24.2-4, 15,[59] God was angry with the people, and moved David to number them; Joab and the other lords wondered why he wanted them numbered, because they feared some evil would follow. They tried to dissuade the king; yet it did not help. God hardened David's heart in his purpose, in order to have an occasion to slay the wicked people.

Evil rulers then are a sign that God is angry; and angry with us. Is it not out of great wrath and vengeance, that a father and mother would hate their children, even their flesh and blood? Or that a husband would be unkind to his wife, or a master to the servant that waits on him for his profit? Or that lords and kings would be tyrants to their subjects and tenants who pay them tribute, toll, custom, and rent, and who labor and toil to ensure their honor, and maintain them in their estate? The prelates and shepherds of our souls, were to feed Christ's flock with Christ's doctrine, and walk before them, living according to that doctrine. They were to give their lives for them as an example and for their edification, to strengthen their weak faiths. Is this not a fearful judgment of God, and a cruel wrath, that they are now so sorely changed, that if they smell that one of their flock (as they now call them, and no longer Christ's) just once longs for or desires the true knowledge of Christ, they will slay him, burning him with fire most cruelly? What is the cause of this, that they also teach false doctrine, and confirm it with lies? Truly, it is the hand of God to avenge the wickedness of those who have no love or passion for the truth of God when it is preached, but rejoice in unrighteousness. You may see this in 2Thess 2.9-11, where Paul speaks of the coming of antichrist, "Whose coming shall be," he says, "by the working of Satan, with all miracles, signs and wonders, which are but lies, and in all deceivable unrighteousness among those who perish, because they did not receive any love towards the truth to have been saved. Therefore God shall send them strong delusion, to believe lies." Mark how God, to avenge his truth, sends false doctrine and false miracles to the unthankful, to confirm them, and to harden their hearts in their false way. Afterward it shall not be possible for them to admit the truth: as you see in Exodus 7 and Exodus 8, how God allowed false miracles to be shown in the

sight of Pharaoh, to harden his heart so that he should not believe the truth; his sorcerers turned their rods into serpents, and turned water into blood, and made frogs by their enchantment: so he thought that Moses did all his miracles by the same craft, and not by the power of God, and therefore he abode in unbelief, and perished in resisting God.

Let us receive all things from God, whether it is good or bad. Let us humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and submit ourselves to his nurture and chastising, and not withdraw ourselves from his correction. Read Hebrews 12 for your comfort. Let us not take the staff by the end, or seek to avenge ourselves on his rod, which is what the evil rulers do. The child will not be without a rod as long as he seeks to avenge himself on the rod, for he has an evil heart; he does not think that the correction is right, or that he deserved it. Nor does he repent; instead he rejoices in his wickedness. Indeed, as long as he is this way, the rod shall be made sharper and sharper. If he acknowledges his fault and takes the correction meekly, and even kisses the rod, and amends himself with the instruction and nurture of his father and mother, then the rod will be taken away and burnt.

So, if we resist evil rulers, seeking to set ourselves at liberty, we shall, no doubt, bring ourselves into more evil bondage, and wrap ourselves in much more misery and wretchedness. For if the heads overcome, then they lay more weight on their backs, and make their yoke sorer, and tie them shorter. If they overcome their evil rulers, then they make way for a more cruel nation, or for some tyrant of their own nation, which has no right to the crown. If we submit ourselves to the chastising of God, and meekly acknowledge our sins for which we are scourged, and kiss the rod, and amend our living, then will God take the rod away. That is, he will give the rulers a better heart. Or if they continue their malice and persecute you for well-doing, and because you put your trust in God, God will deliver you out of their tyranny for his truth's sake. It is the same God now that was in the old time, who delivered the fathers and the prophets, the apostles and other holy saints. And whatever he swore to them he has sworn to us. As he delivered them out of all temptation, suffering, and adversity, because they consented and submitted themselves to his will, and trusted in his goodness and truth, even so he will do to us, if we do likewise.

Whenever the children of Israel fell from the way which God commanded them to walk in, he gave them up to one tyrant or another. As soon as they came to the knowledge of themselves, and repented, crying for mercy, and leaning toward the truth of his promises, he sent one to deliver them, as the histories of the Bible make mention.

A Christian man, in respect to God, is but a passive thing; a thing that suffers only and can do nothing; just as the sick, in respect to the surgeon or physician, suffers only. The surgeon lances and cuts out the dead flesh, searches the wounds, thrusts in tents, sears, burns, sews or stitches, and applies caustics to draw out the corruption; and last of all, he applies healing plasters, and makes it whole. The physician likewise gives purgations and drinks to drive out the disease, and then with restoratives, he brings health. Now if the sick resist the razor, the searching iron, and so forth, does he not resist his own health, and becomes the cause of his own death? So likewise it is with us if we resist evil rulers, which are the rod and scourge with which God chastises us; they are the instruments with which God searches our wounds; and the bitter drinks that drive out the sin and to make it apparent, and the caustics to draw out by the roots the core of the pocks of the soul that frets inwardly. A Christian man, therefore, receives all things by the hand of God, both good and bad, both sweet and sour, both wealth and woe. If any person does me good, whether it is father, mother, and so forth, I receive that from God, and I give thanks to God: for he gave the means for it, and he gave a commandment, and moved his heart so to do. I also receive adversity from the hand of God as a wholesome medicine, though it is somewhat bitter. Temptation and adversity both kill sin, and also express

it.

For even though a Christian man knows everything necessary to live, yet the flesh is so weak that he can never take up his cross himself, to kill and mortify the flesh. He must have someone else lay his cross on his back. In many, also, sin lies hidden within, and it festers; it rots inwardly and is not seen, so that they think they are good and perfect, and keep the law. As the young man in Matthew 19 said, he observed all the law from childhood; and yet he lied falsely in his heart, as the text following well declares. When all is at peace, and no man troubles us, we think that we are patient and that we love our neighbors as ourselves; but let our neighbor hurt us, in word or deed, and then find we that it is otherwise. We fume, and rage, and set up the bristles, and bend ourselves to take vengeance. If we loved with godly love, for Christ's kindness' sake, we should desire no vengeance; but instead we would pity him, and desire God to forgive and amend him, knowing well that no flesh can do otherwise than sin, unless God preserves him. You will say, What good does such persecution and tyranny have for the righteous? First, it makes them feel God's Spirit working in them, and that their faith is unfeigned. Secondarily, I say that no man is so great a sinner, if he repents and believes, that he cannot be righteous in Christ, and included in the promises. Yet if you look at the flesh, and to the law, there is no man so perfect that he is not found to be a sinner; nor is any man so pure that he does not have something yet to be purged. This shall suffice at this time as concerning obedience.

Because God excludes no rank from his mercy, whoever repents and believes his promises, (of whatever rank he may be), that person shall partake of his grace. Therefore, as I have described the obedience of those who are under power and rule, even so, with God's help, I will (as it is my duty) declare how the rulers, whom God shall graciously call to the knowledge of the truth, ought to rule.

OFFICE OF A FATHER, AND HOW HE SHOULD RULE.

"FATHERS, do not move your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and information of the Lord." (Ephesians 6) and "Fathers, do not berate your children, lest they be of desperate mind;" (Colossians 3)

That is, lest you discourage them. For where the fathers and mothers are wayward, hasty and churlish, ever brawling and chiding, there the children are shortly discouraged and heartless, and apt for nothing; nor can they do anything rightly. "Bring them up in the nurture and information of the Lord." Teach them to know Christ, and set God's ordinance before them, saying, 'Son, or daughter, God has created you and made you, through us your father and mother; and at his commandment we have so long kindly brought you up this way, and kept you from all perils. He has commanded you also to obey us, saying, Child, obey your father and mother. If you meekly obey, so shall you grow both in the favor of God and man, and in the knowledge of our Lord Christ. If you will not obey us at his commandment, then we are charged to correct you; indeed, if you do not repent and amend yourself, God will slay you by his officers, or punish you everlastingly.' Do not nurture them in a worldly way, and with worldly wisdom, saying, 'You will come to honor, dignity, promotion, and riches; you will be better than such and such; you will have three or four benefices, and be a great doctor or a bishop, and have so many men waiting on you, and do nothing but hawk and hunt, and live at your pleasure; you will not need to sweat, labor, or take any pains for your living,' and so forth. This fills them full of pride, disdain, and ambition, and corrupting their minds with worldly persuasions. Let the fathers and mothers mark how they themselves were disposed at all ages; and help their children by the experience of their own infirmities, and keep them from such occasions. Let them teach their children to ask their fathers and mothers for marriages. And let their elders

provide marriages for them in season; teaching them also to know that she is not his wife whom the son takes, nor is he her husband which the daughter takes, if it is without the consent and good-will of their elders, or of those who have authority over them. If their friends will not marry them, then they are to blame if they marry on their own. Do not let the fathers and mothers always take extremes in their authority with their children; but at times suffer with them, and bear their weaknesses, as Christ does ours. Seek Christ in your children, in your wives, servants, and subjects. Father, mother, son, daughter, master, servant, king, and subject, are names in the worldly regiment. In Christ we are all one thing; none is better than another, all are brothers; and all must seek Christ and our brother's profit in Christ. He that has the knowledge of Christ, whether he is the lord or king, is bound to submit himself, and to serve his brothers, and give himself for them, to win them to Christ.

OFFICE OF A HUSBAND, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE.

"HUSBANDS, love your wives as Christ loved the congregation, and gave himself for it, to sanctify it and cleanse it. Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. For this cause a man shall leave father and mother, and shall continue with his wife, and both shall be made one flesh. See that every one of you loves his wife even as his own body." (Ephesians 5) Paul says all this, and he also says, "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter towards them."

Peter says in 1Peter 3.7, "Men, dwell with your wives according to knowledge," (i.e., according to the doctrine of Christ), "giving reverence to the wife, as to the weaker vessel," (i.e., help her to bear her infirmities); "and as to those who are also heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." In many things God has made the men stronger than the women; not to rage against them and be tyrants to them, but only to help them bear their weakness. Be courteous to them, therefore, and win them to Christ; overcome them with kindness, so that from love they may obey the ordinance that God has made between man and wife.

OFFICE OF A MASTER, AND HOW HE OUGHT TO RULE.

PAUL (Eph 6.9) says: "Masters, do the same things to them," (that is, be masters following the example and doctrine of Christ, as Paul taught the servants before to obey their masters as they would Christ), "putting away threatening," that is, give them fair words, and exhort them kindly to do their duty; indeed, nurture them as your own sons with the Lord's nurture, so that they may see in Christ a cause why they ought to lovingly obey. And "also remember (he says) that your master is in heaven; and there is no respect of persons with him." That is, he is unbiased and impartial: a servant is as great in his sight as a master. And in Colossians 4.1 he says: "You masters, do to your servants what is just and equal, remembering that you also have a master in heaven." Give your servants kind words, food, raiment, and learning. Do not be bitter towards them, or rail on them; give them no cruel looks: but deal with them according to the example and doctrine of Christ. And when they labor hard, cherish them in return. When you correct them, let it be by God's word; and do it with such good manner, that they may see how you do it only to amend them, and to bring them into the way which God bids us to walk in, and not to avenge yourselves, or wreak your malice on them. If sometimes through hastiness you exceed proper measure in punishing, then recompense it another way, and pardon them another time.

DUTY OF LANDLORDS.

LET Christian landlords be content with their rent and old charges; not raising the rent or fines, or bringing up new charges to oppress their tenants; nor letting two or three tenantries to one man. [60] Let them not remove their commons, nor make parks nor pastures out of whole

parishes. For God gave the earth to man to inhabit; and not to sheep and wild deer. Be like fathers to your tenants: indeed, be to them as Christ was to us, and show them all love and kindness. Whatever business is among them, do not be partial, favoring one more than another. Consider the complaints, quarrels, and strife that exist among them, as the diseases of sick people; and as a merciful physician, heal them with wisdom and good counsel. Be compassionate and tender-hearted toward them, and do not let one of your tenants tear out another's throat. Rather, judge their causes indifferently, and compel them to make their ditches, hedges, gates, and ways.[61] For you were made landlords for such causes; and for such causes men paid rent at the beginning. For if there were no such order, then one would slay another, and all would go to waste. If your tenant labors and toils all year to pay you your rent, and after he has bestowed all his labor, his neighbors' cattle devour his fruits, then how tedious and bitter his life would be! See therefore that you do your duties again; and allow no man to do them wrong, except the king only. If he does them wrong, then they must abide God's judgment.

DUTY OF KINGS, JUDGES, AND OFFICERS.

If kings would be Christian in deed and not only name, then let them give themselves altogether to the wealth of their realms, following the example of Christ. Let them remember that the people are God's, and not theirs – indeed, they are Christ's inheritance and possession, bought with his blood. The most despised person in his realm is still the king's brother, a fellow-member with him, and equal with him in the kingdom of God and of Christ. Let him therefore not think himself too good to render service to his people, or seek anything other in them than a father seeks in his children, indeed, than Christ sought in us. The king, in the temporal regiment, stands in the place of God, and represents God himself, and is better than his subjects, without compare. Yet let him put that off, and become a brother, doing and leaving undone all things with regard to the commonwealth, so that all men may see that he seeks nothing but the profit of his subjects. When a cause that requires execution is brought before him, let him take the person of God on himself. Like God, let him favor no creature, but hear all indifferently, whether it is a stranger or one of his own realm, the small as well as the great. Let him judge righteously, "for the judgment is the Lord's." [62] In time of judgment he is not a minister in the kingdom of Christ; he preaches no gospel, except the sharp law of vengeance. Let him take the holy judges of the Old Testament for his example, namely Moses, who was merciless in executing the law. Otherwise Moses is more than a mother to them, never avenging his own wrongs, but suffering all things; bearing every man's weakness, teaching, warning, exhorting, and ever caring for them. He so tenderly loved them, that he desired God either to forgive them, or to damn him with them.

Let the judges also privately, when they have put off the person of a judge, exhort with good counsel, and warn the people, and help them so that they do not come under God's judgment. But in the causes that are brought to them, when they sit in God's stead, let them judge and condemn the trespasser under lawful witnesses. Let them not bind the consciences of men, in the manner of antichrist's disciples, and compel them either to disavow themselves by the almighty God and by the holy gospel of his merciful promises, or else testify against themselves. Our prelates learned this abomination from Caiphas, Matthew 26, saying to Christ, "I adjure or charge you in the name of the living God, to tell us whether you are Christ, the Son of God." Let what is known only to God, and of which no proof can be made or lawful witness brought, abide until the coming of the Lord, who will reveal all secrets. If any malice issues from this, let them judge that only. God has given them no further authority.

Moses (Deut 16.18-20) warns judges to keep themselves upright, and to respect no man's

person; that is, that they do not prefer the high before the low, the great before the small, the rich before poor; his acquaintance, friend, kinsman, countryman, or one of his own nation, before a stranger, a friend or an alien – indeed, or one of their own faith before an infidel. Rather, they should look at the cause only, to judge it indifferently. For the position that they are in, and the law that they execute, are God's. Because God has made all, and is God of all, and all are his sons, even so he is judge over all, and he will have all judged by his law indifferently, and all will have the right of his law, and he will avenge the wrong done to the Turk or Saracen. For although they are not under the everlasting testament of God in Christ (as few of us which are called Christian are), and are not greater than those to whom God has sent his promises, and although God has not poured his Spirit into their hearts to believe them, nor through faith has he graven a hunger in their hearts to fulfill the law of love – yet they are under the testament of the Natural Law, which is the law of every land, made for the commonwealth there, made for peace and unity, so that one may live with another. And if the infidels keep these laws, they have promises of worldly things. Whoever, therefore, hinders even an infidel from the right of that law, sins against God, and God will be avenged of him. Moreover, Moses warns the judges that they must receive no gifts, rewards, or bribes. For those two points – favoring of one person more than another, and receiving rewards – pervert all right and equity. They are the unique pestilence[63] of all judges.

He warns (Deut 17.15-20) that their kings not have too many wives, lest their hearts turn away; and that they always read in the law of God, to learn to fear him, lest their hearts be lifted above their brothers. These two points – women and pride, and despising their subjects who are indeed their own brothers – are the common pestilence of all princes. Read the stories, and see.

The sheriffs, bailiffs, constables, and similar officers, may let no man that hurts his neighbor escape, but must bring them before the judges – unless in the meantime they come to agree with their neighbors, and make amends.

Let kings defend their subjects from the wrongs of other nations, but do not pick quarrels for every trifle. Nor let our most holy father any longer make them so drunk with vain names, with caps of maintenance, and similar baubles, as if it were puppetry for children, to beggar their realms, and to murder their people, for defending our holy father's tyranny. If a lawful peace that stands with God's word is made between prince and prince, and the name of God is taken to record, and the body of our Savior is broken between them upon the bond which they have made – then our holy father cannot dispense with that peace or bond, nor loose it with all the keys he has. No, truly, Christ cannot break it. For he did not come to break the law, but to fulfill it.

If any man has broken the law or a good ordinance, and he repents and comes to the right way again, then Christ has power to forgive him. But he cannot give license to break the law; much less can his disciples and vicars, as they call themselves, do it. The keys which they so greatly boast of are not carnal things, but spiritual; and they are nothing else than knowledge of the law, and of the promises or gospel. If any man, for lack of spiritual feeling, desires the authority of men, then let him read the old doctors. If any man desires the authority of Scripture, Christ says, "Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you do not enter in yourselves, and those that would come in, you forbid." (Luke 11.52)

That is, they blinded the Scripture (whose knowledge, like a key, lets us into God) with glosses and traditions. You find likewise in Matthew 23.13. As Peter answered in the name of all, so Christ promised him the keys in the person of all. (Matthew 16.15-19) [64] And in John 20.22-23 he paid them, saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost: whoever's sins you remit, they are remitted" or

forgiven; “and whoever’s sins you retain, they are retained” or held. By preaching the promises, they loose as many as repent and believe. And for that John says, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” Luke, in his last chapter, says, “Then he opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.” Luke 24.46-47 Men repent at the preaching of the law; and they believe at the preaching of the promises, and they are saved. Peter in the second chapter of the Acts practiced his keys; and by preaching the law he brought the people into the knowledge of themselves, and he bound their consciences, so that “they were pricked in their hearts, and said to Peter and to the other apostles, What shall we do?” Then they brought forth the key of the sweet promises, saying, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise was made to you, and to your children, and to all who are afar, even as many as the Lord shall call.” Acts 2.37-39 The Book of Acts is full of similar examples, and Peter’s epistles, and Paul’s epistles, and all the Scripture. Nor does our holy father have any other authority from Christ, or by reason of his predecessor Peter, than to preach God’s word. Just as Christ compares the understanding of Scripture to a key, so he compares it to a net, and to leaven, and to many other things for certain properties they contain. I marvel, therefore, that they do not boast of their net and their leaven, as well as their keys; for they are all one thing. But just as Christ bids us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, so we must beware their counterfeited keys, and their false net – which are their traditions and ceremonies, their hypocrisy and false doctrine, with which they catch, not souls for Christ, but authority and riches for themselves.

Let Christian kings therefore uphold their faith and truth, and all lawful promises and bonds, not only with one another, but even with the Turk, or whatever infidel it is. For so it is right before God, as the Scriptures and examples of the Bible testify. Whoever vows an unlawful vow, or promises an unlawful promise, or swears an unlawful oath, sins against God and therefore ought to break that vow. He does not need to sue Rome for a license, for he has God’s word, and not just a license, but also a commandment to break it. Therefore those who are sworn to be true to their cardinals and bishops, that is to say, who are sworn to be false to God, the king, and the realm, may break their oaths lawfully, without grudge of conscience; and they may do so by the authority of God’s word. In making these vows they sinned; but in repenting and breaking them, they please God highly, and they receive forgiveness in Christ.

Let kings assume their duty for their subjects, and what is necessary to the defense of the realm. Let them rule their realms themselves, with the help of laymen that are sage, wise, learned, and expert. Is it not a shame above all shames, and a monstrous thing, that no man may be found able to govern a worldly kingdom, except bishops and prelates who have forsaken the world, and are taken out of the world, and appointed to preach the kingdom of God? Christ says that his “kingdom is not of this world.” John 18.36. And in Luke 12.14, to the young man who desired him to bid his brother to give him part of the inheritance, Jesus answered, “Who made me a judge or a divider among you?” “No man that lays his hand to the plough, and looks back, is apt for the kingdom of heaven.” (Luke 9.62) “No man can serve two masters, but he must despise the one.” (Matthew 6.24)

To preach God’s word is too much for half a man: and to minister a temporal kingdom is also too much for half a man. Either other requires a whole man. One therefore cannot do both well. The one who avenges himself on every trifle is not fit to preach the patience of Christ, how a man ought to forgive and to suffer all things. The one who is overwhelmed with all manner of riches, and only seeks more daily, is not fit to preach poverty. The one who will obey no man is not fit to preach how we ought to obey all men. Peter says, “It is not fitting that we should leave

the word of God, and serve tables." (Acts 6.2)

Paul says in 1Cor 9.16, "Woe is me if I do not preach." This is truly a terrible saying for popes, cardinals, and bishops! If he had said, 'Woe to me if I do not fight and move princes to war, or if I do not increase St. Peter's patrimony,'[65] as they call it, then it would have been an easier saying for them.

Christ forbids his disciples and often,[66] not only to climb above lords, kings, and emperors in worldly rule, but he also forbids them to exalt themselves one above another in the kingdom of God. But it is in vain, for the pope would not hear it, even though he had commanded it ten thousand times. God's word alone should rule; and not bishops' decrees, or the pope's pleasure. They ought to preach that purely and spiritually, and fashion their lives after it, and set an example for all of godly living and long-suffering in order to draw all to Christ. They should not expound the Scriptures carnally and with worldly wisdom, saying, 'God spoke this to Peter, and I am his successor; therefore this authority is mine alone' – and then bring in the tyranny of their fleshly wisdom, Inproesentia majoris cessat potestas minoris; that is, in the presence of the greater, the lesser has no power. There is no brotherhood where such a philosophy is taught.

To teach such philosophy, and to so abuse the Scriptures, and to mock with God's word, is after the manner of the bishop of Rochester's divinity. For he, in his 'Sermon of the condemnation of Martin Luther,'[67] proves by a shadow of the Old Testament, that is, by Moses and Aaron, that our most holy father the pope (who is Satan and antichrist), is Christ's vicar and head of Christ's congregation. Moses, he says, signifies Christ; and Aaron signifies the pope. And yet the epistle to the Hebrews proves that the high priest of the old law signifies Christ; his single offering and going in once a year into the inner temple, signify the offering with which Christ offered himself, and Christ's going in to the Father, and that he is an everlasting mediator or intercessor for us. Nevertheless, Rochester proves the contrary by a shadow; by a shadow, truly: for they walk in shadows without any shame. They will not come to the light, but enforce to stop and quench it with all craft and falsehood, lest their abominable juggling should be seen. If any man looks in the light of the New Testament, he will clearly see that the shadow may not be understood so.

Understand therefore, that one thing in the Scripture represents diverse things. A serpent figures Christ in one place, and the devil in another; and a lion does likewise. Christ by leaven signifies God's word in one place; and in another signifies the traditions of the Pharisees, which soured and altered God's word for their advantage. Now Moses truly in the same place represents Christ; and Aaron, who was not yet high priest, did not represent only Peter or his successor, as my lord of Rochester would have it, (for Peter was too little to bear Christ's message to all the world), but he signifies every disciple of Christ, and every true preacher of God's word. For Moses put in Aaron's mouth what he should say; and Aaron was Moses' prophet, and did not speak his own message, as the pope and bishops do; rather, he spoke only what Moses received from God and delivered to him (Exo 4.13-16; 7.1-2). So every preacher ought to preach God's word purely, neither adding nor diminishing. A true messenger must be true to his message, and say neither more nor less than he is commanded. Aaron, when he is high priest, and offers and purges the people of their worldly sin which they fell into by touching unclean things, and in eating forbidden meats (just as we sin in handling the chalice and the altar stone, and are purged with the bishop's blessing), represents Christ, who purges us from all sin in the sight of God, as the epistle to the Hebrews mentions. Heb 1.3 When Moses had gone up into the mount, and Aaron was left behind and made the golden calf there, Aaron represents all false preachers, and namely our most holy father the pope; in the same manner

as the golden calf, the pope makes us believe in a bull[68] - the bishop of Rochester full-well cites that passage for support in his sermon.

If the pope is signified by Aaron, and Christ is signified by Moses, then why is the pope not as well content with Christ's law and doctrine, as Aaron was with Moses'? What is the reason that our bishops preach the pope, and not Christ - seeing that the apostles did not preach Peter, but Christ? Paul says of himself and his fellow apostles, "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and we preach ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake:" (2Cor 4.5) and, "Let no man rejoice in men, for all things are yours, whether it is Paul, or Apollos, or Peter; whether it is the world, or life, or death; whether they are present things, or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1Cor 3.21-23 He leaves out, you are Peter's, or you are the pope's. And in the chapter following he says, "Let men thus esteem us, even as ministers of Christ," etc. 1Cor 4.1 And (2Cor 11.2-5) Paul was jealous over his Corinthians, because they fell from Christ to whom he had married them, and they cleaved to the authority of men; for even then false prophets sought authority in the name of the high apostles: "I am (he says) jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I coupled you to one man, to make you a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear lest, just as the serpent deceived Eve through his subtlety, even so your minds should be corrupted from the singleness that is in Christ." And it follows: "If he that comes to you preached another Jesus, or if you receive another Spirit or another gospel, then might you have been well content:" that is, you might have well suffered him to have authority above me: "but I suppose," he says, "that I was not behind the high apostles;" meaning in preaching Jesus and his gospel, and in ministering the Spirit. And so, in 2Corinthians 11 he proves, by the doctrine of Christ, that he is greater than the high apostles,[69] for Christ says, to be great in the kingdom of God is to serve and sacrifice for another. Paul argues this rule for himself, saying, "If they are the ministers of Christ, I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more plenteously, in danger of death often," and so forth. 2Cor 11.23 ff. If Paul preached Christ more than Peter, and suffered more for his congregation, then he is greater than Peter, by the testimony of Christ. And in 2Cor 12.11-13 he says, "In nothing was I inferior to the high apostles: though I am nothing, yet the tokens of an apostle were worked among you with all patience, with signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." So he proved his authority, not with a bull from Peter, sealed with cold lead, nor with shadows of the Old Testament falsely expounded.

Moreover the apostles were sent immediately from Christ; and from Christ they received their authority, as Paul boasts himself everywhere. "Christ," he says, "sent me to preach the gospel." 1Cor 1.17. And, "I received of the Lord that which I delivered to you." 1Cor 11.23. And Galatians 1.11-12, "I certify to you, brothers, that the gospel which was preached by me was not after the manner of men, (that is, carnal or fleshly), nor did I receive it from man, nor was it taught me, but I received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ." And Galatians 2.8, "He that was mighty in Peter in the apostleship over the circumcision, was mighty in me among the gentiles." And in 1Timothy 1.11-12, you read likewise. And in John 20.21-23, Christ sent them forth indifferently, and gave them the same power: "As my Father sent me," he says, "so send I you;" that is, to preach and to suffer as I have done; and not to conquer empires and kingdoms, and to subdue all temporal power under you with disguised hypocrisy. He gave them the Holy Ghost, to bind and loose indifferently, as you see; and afterward he sent forth Paul with the same authority, as you see in the Acts. And in the last of Matthew he says: "All power is given me in heaven and in earth; go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe whatever I commanded you." Mat 28.19-20 The authority that Christ gave them was to preach; yet not what they would imagine, but what

he had commanded. “Lo,” he says, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” He did not say, “I go my way, and lo, here is Peter in my stead;” but he sent every man to a various country, wherever the Spirit carried them, and went with them himself. And as he worked with Peter where he went, so he worked with the others where they went – just as Paul boasts of himself to the Galatians. Seeing now that we have Christ’s doctrine, and Christ’s holy promises, and seeing that Christ is ever present with us himself, how may Christ not reign immediately over us, as well as the pope who never comes to us? Seeing also that the office of an apostle is only to preach, then how can the pope rightly assert any authority, where he does not preach? How is it also that Rochester will not let us be called one congregation by reason of one God, one Christ, one Spirit, one gospel, one faith, one hope, and one baptism, as well as because of one pope?

If any natural beast, striving with his worldly wisdom, claims that one is greater than another, just because in a congregation one is sent by another, as we see in the Acts 17.10, 14 – I answer that Peter sent no man, but was sent himself; and John was sent, and Paul, Silas, and Barnabas were sent. Sending in such a manner is not worldly, as princes send ambassadors; no, nor as friars send their limiters[70] to gather their brotherhoods who must obey, whether they want to or not. Here (in Scripture) all things are done freely and willingly. And the Holy Ghost brings them together, which makes their wills free, and ready to give themselves for their neighbor’s profit. Those who come, offer themselves and all they have, or can do, to serve the Lord and their brothers. Every man, as he is found apt and fit to serve his neighbor, so is he sent or put in office. They are sent by the Holy Ghost, with the consent of their brothers, and with their own consent also. And God’s word rules in that congregation; every man conforms his will to that word; and Christ, who is always present, is the head. But as our bishops do not hear Christ’s voice, so they do not see him present, and therefore they make themselves a god on the earth, of the kind, I suppose, of Aaron’s calf: for the pope brings forth no other fruit except bulls.

Since also Christ is as great as Peter, why is his seat not as great as Peter’s? Had the head of the empire been at Jerusalem, there would have been no mention made of Peter. It is truly, as Paul says in the 11th chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, “The false apostles are deceitful workers, and fashion themselves like the apostles of Christ.” (2Cor 11.13); that is, the shaven nation[71] preaches Christ falsely; indeed, under the name of Christ they preach themselves, and reign in Christ’s stead. They have also taken away the key of knowledge, and wrapped the people in ignorance, and taught them to believe in themselves, in their traditions and false ceremonies – so that Christ is but a vain name. And after they put Christ out of his place, they got to the emperor and kings, and so long ministered their business till they also put them out of their places, and got their authorities from them, and also reigned in their stead – so that the emperor and kings are but vain names and shadows, just as Christ is, having nothing left to do in the world. Thus they reign instead of God and man, and they have all power under them, and do whatever they are inclined to do.

Let us see another point of our great clerk.[72] A little after the beginning of his sermon, he intends to prove what is clearer than the sun, but it serves no more for his purpose than Ite missa est serves to prove that our lady was born without original sin.[73] He alleges that Martin Luther says this, “If we affirm that any one epistle of Paul or any one place in his epistles does not pertain to the universal church, (that is, to the whole congregation of those that believe in Christ), we take away all St. Paul’s authority.” Upon which Rochester says: “If it is thus with the words of St. Paul, then it is much rather true of the gospels of Christ and every place in them.” O malicious blindness! First, note his blindness. He understands by this word “gospel” no more than the four

evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and he does not think that the Acts of apostles, and the epistles of Peter, Paul, and John, and others, are also the gospel. Paul calls his preaching the gospel. [74] The gospel is one, everywhere in Scripture, though it is preached diversely. And it signifies glad tidings. That is, the gospel is an open preaching of Christ, and the holy testament, and the gracious promises that God has made in Christ's blood to all that repent and believe. Now, there is more gospel in one epistle of Paul – that is to say, Christ is more clearly preached and more promises are repeated in one epistle of Paul – than in the three first evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.[75]

Consider also the clerk's maliciousness – how wickedly and how craftily he takes away the authority of Paul! 'It is much rather true of the gospels, and of every place in them, than of Paul.' If what the four evangelists wrote is truer than what Paul wrote, then it is not one gospel that they preached, nor one Spirit that taught them. If it is one gospel and one Spirit, how is one truer than the other? Paul proves his authority to the Galatians and to the Corinthians, (1) because he received his gospel by revelation from Christ, and not from man; and (2) because when he communed with Peter and the high apostles about his gospel and preaching, they could improve nothing, nor teach him anything; Gal 2.2, 7 and also (3) because just as many were converted, and just as great miracles were shown by his preaching as by the preaching of the high apostles – therefore Paul will be of no less authority than Peter and the other high apostles, nor will his gospel be of less reputation than theirs.

Finally, so that you may know Rochester forever, and all the remnant by him, what they are within the skin; mark how he plays bo-peep [76] with the Scripture. He cites for support the beginning of the tenth chapter to the Hebrews, Umbram habens lex futurorum benorum, "the law has but a shadow of things to come;" Heb 10.1 and he immediately expounds the phrase clean contrary to the following chapter, and to the whole epistle. He makes Aaron a figure of the pope, whom the epistle makes a figure of Christ.

He cites half a text of Paul, "In the latter days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and devilish doctrine." (1Tim 4.1) But it follows in the text: "Giving attendance, or heed, to the devilish doctrine of those who speak falsely through hypocrisy, and have their consciences marked with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving." Who ever did these two things, except the pope, Rochester's god? Making sin in the creatures, which God has created for man's use, to be received with thanks. "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink," says Paul, "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For whoever serves Christ in these things, pleases God, and is allowed by men." Rom 14.17-18 If Rochester, therefore, did not have a conscience seared with the hot iron of malice, so that he cannot consent to the will of God and the glory of Christ, he would not have cited the text; which is contrary to none but themselves.

He cites another text of Paul, in the second chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians, Erit discessio primum: that is, Rochester says, before the coming of antichrist there will be a notable departing from the faith. 2Thes 2.1-4 And, Paul says, "The Lord does not come, unless there is a departing first." 1Tim 4.1 Paul's meaning is that the last day does not come so shortly, but that antichrist shall come first and destroy the faith, and sit in the temple of God, and make all men worship him, and believe in him (as the pope does); and then God's word shall come to light again (as it does at this time), and destroy him, and reveal his juggling – then Christ comes for judgment. What do you say about this crafty conveyer? Do you suppose that someone would spare to cite and twist other doctors pestilently,[77] who does not fear to juggle the holy Scripture of God, attributing to antichrist what Paul speaks about Christ? No, you may be sure

of it. But in this very manner they pervert the whole Scripture and all doctors; twisting them to their abominable purpose, clean contrary to the meaning of the text, and to the circumstances that go before and after. This devilish falsehood, lest the laymen be able to perceive it, is the very reason why they will not allow the Scripture to be had in the English tongue; nor will they allow any work to be done that would bring the people to the knowledge of the truth.

For the pope's authority, he cites St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and Origen, none of whom ever knew of any authority that one bishop should have above another. And he cites St. Gregory, who would receive no such authority above his brothers when it was offered to him. Just as it is the way to call Tully chief of orators for his singular eloquence, and Aristotle chief of philosophers, and Virgil chief of poets, for their singular learning, and not for any authority that they had over others – so it was the way to call Peter chief of the apostles for his singular activity and boldness, and not that he should be lord over his brothers, for this was contrary to his own doctrine. Yet compare that chief apostle to Paul, and he is found a great way inferior. This is not to say that I would have any man make a god of Paul, contrary to his own learning. Notwithstanding, this way of speaking is left to us from our elders – that when we say "the apostle says so," we understand it to mean Paul, for his excellence above the other apostles. I would have Rochester tell you how Jerome, Augustine, Bede, Origen, and other doctors expound this text: "Upon this rock I will build my congregation:" and how they interpret the keys also. To that end, Pasce, pasce, pasce, which Rochester leaves without any English, does not signify poll, sheer, and shave. Upon this text, behold the faithful Exposition of Bede.[78]

Note also how craftily he would enfeoff [79] the apostles of Christ with their wicked traditions and false ceremonies, which they themselves have feigned, citing Paul in 2Thes 2. I answer that Paul taught by mouth those thin77gs which he wrote in his epistles. And his traditions were the gospel of Christ, and honest manners and living, and of such a good order as becomes the doctrine of Christ. It included such things as that a woman obey her husband, have her head covered, keep silence, and go womanly and Christianly apparelled; that children and servants be in subjection: and that the young obey their elders; that no man eat unless he labors and works; and that men make an earnest thing of God's word and of his holy sacraments; and to watch, fast, and pray, and such things as the Scripture commands – which if someone were to break them, he would be no Christian man. But we may well complain, and cry to God for help, that it is not lawful for the pope's tyranny to teach the people what prayer is, what fasting is, and how it serves. There were also certain customs always, which were not commanded upon pain of hell, or everlasting damnation – such as to watch all night, and to kiss one another – which, as soon as the people abused these, then they broke them. For this reason, the bishops might break many things now in the same way. Paul also, in many things which God had made free, gave pure and faithful counsel, without tangling any man's conscience, and without all manner of commanding under pain of cursing, pain of excommunication, pain of heresy, pain of burning, pain of deadly sin, pain of hell, and pain of damnation. As you may see in 1Corinthians 7, where he counsels the unmarried, the widows, and virgins, that it is good to remain so, if they have the gift of chastity. This is not to win heaven thereby (for neither circumcision neither uncircumcision is anything at all, but keeping the commandments is everything). But he counsels them so that they might be without trouble, and might also wait better on God's word, and more freely serve their brothers. And he says, as a faithful servant, that he had no authority from the Lord to give them any commandment. But the assertion that the apostles gave us any blind ceremonies, for which we should not know the reason, I deny and defy any such thing. It is clean contrary to the teaching of Paul everywhere.

For Paul commands that no man should speak in the church, that is, in the congregation, except

in a tongue that all men understand, unless there is an interpreter nearby. He commands us to labor for knowledge, understanding, and feeling; and to beware of superstition, and of the persuasions of worldly wisdom, philosophy, and beware of hypocrisy and ceremonies, and of all manner of disguising, and to walk in the plain and open truth. "You were once darkness," he says, "but now are you light in the Lord; walk therefore as the children of light." Ephesians 5.8. How Paul also wishes them an increase of grace in every epistle! How he cries to God to augment their knowledge so that they should no longer be children, wavering with every wind of doctrine; but that God would grant to make them full men in Christ, and in the understanding of the mysteries or secrets of Christ, so that it would not be possible for any man to deceive them with any enticing reasons of worldly wisdom, or to beguile them with blind ceremonies, or to lead them out of the way with superstition of disguised hypocrisy! The spiritual officers are ordained to bring them to such full knowledge (Ephesians 4.11-14). Rochester loves shadows and darkness. What he lays on believers is far from what Christ's apostles should give them: the traditions of blind ceremonies, without significance, and for which no man should know the reason. May God stop his blasphemous mouth!

Consider also, how studiously Rochester cites Origen, both for his pope, and also to establish his blind ceremonies. Yet this same Origen is condemned as the greatest of all heretics. 'He is an ancient doctor,' Rochester says, indeed one 'to whom great faith is to be given in this point.' Indeed, truly, Aristotle and Plato, and even Robin Hood himself, are to be believed in such a point which so greatly maintains our holy father's authority, and all his disguisings.

Last of all: Just as when a crafty thief is spotted and chased, cries out to the other people, 'Stop the thief! Stop the thief!' – and just as someone will be the first throw in another man's teeth what he fears would be laid to his own charge – even so Rochester lays to Martin Luther's charge the slaying and murdering of Christian men. This is because Rochester and his brothers will not believe in his doctrine. They have not ceased from this slaying and murdering for these certain hundred years, and have done it with such malice, that when their opponents are dead, they still rage against them, burning their bodies, which they themselves likely killed beforehand secretly. All the world knows that Martin Luther slays no man, but kills only with the spiritual sword – the word of God – putting to death such cankered consciences as Rochester has. Luther does not persecute, but suffers persecution. Yet Rochester, with a goodly argument, proves that he would slay if he could! And mark, I pray you, what an orator he is, and how vehemently he persuades it! Martin Luther has burned the pope's decretals;[80] a manifest sign, he says, that he would have burned the pope's holiness as well if he had him! I make a similar argument, which I suppose to be rather true: Rochester and his holy brothers have burnt Christ's testament; it is an evident sign, truly, that they would have burnt Christ himself as well, if they had him!

Truly I had almost left out the most important point of all. Rochester, is both abominable and shameless indeed, and stark mad with pure malice, and so addled in the brains with spite that he cannot overcome the truth that he does not see, or rather he does not care what he says. In the end of his first destruction, as I would say, or instruction, as he calls it, intending to prove that we are justified through holy works, cites half a text of Paul, in the fifth chapter to the Galatians, (as it is his manner to juggle and convey craftily), Fides per dilectionem operans. Which he translates into English this way: "Faith, which is wrought by love;" he makes a verbpassive from a verb deponent.[81] Rochester would have love go before, and then faith springs out of love. Thus antichrist turns the roots of the tree upward! I must first love a bitter medicine, (following Rochester's doctrine), and then believe that it is wholesome. When by natural reason, I first hate a bitter medicine, until I am brought to belief by the physician, that the medicine is wholesome, and that the bitterness will heal me. And then afterward I will love it,

from that belief. Does the child love the father first, and then believe that he is his son or heir? Or rather, because he knows that he is his son or heir, and beloved, therefore he loves in return? John says, in the third of his first epistle, "See what love the Father has showed us, that we should be called his sons." 1Joh 3.1Because we are sons, therefore we love. Now, by faith we are sons, as John says in the first chapter of his gospel: "He gave them power to be the sons of God, in that they believed on his name." Joh 1.12 And Paul says, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, "We are all the sons of God by the faith which is in Jesus Christ." Gal 3.26 And John, in the same chapter of his epistle, says, "By this we perceive love, that he gave his life for us." 1Joh 3.16 We could see no love, nor have any cause to love him in return, unless we believed that he died for us, and that we were saved through his death. And in the subsequent chapter, John says, "In this is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to make agreement for our sins." 1Joh 4.10 So God did not send his Son for any love that we had towards him; rather, from the love that he had towards us, he sent his Son, that we might so love, and love in return. Paul likewise, in Romans 8, after he has declared the infinite love of God toward us, in that he did not spare his own Son, but gave him for us, cries out, saying, "Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall persecution, shall a sword? etc." No, he says; "I am sure that no creature shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 8.35-37 It is as if to say, "We see so great a love in God toward us in Christ's death, that though all misfortune should fall on us, we cannot but love in return." Now how do we know that God loves us? Truly, by faith. So therefore, though Rochester is a faithless beast, yet natural reason ought to have taught him that love springs out of faith and knowledge; and not faith and knowledge out of love. But let us see the text. Paul says thus: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision is worth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works through love;" Gal 5.6 or "which through love is strong, or mighty, in working;" and not "which is wrought by love," as this juggler says. Faith that loves God's commandments, justifies a man. If you believe God's promises in Christ, and love his commandments, then you are safe. If you love the commandment, then you are sure that your faith is unfeigned, and that God's Spirit is in you.

How faith justifies us before God in the heart; and how love springs from faith, and compels us to work – and how our works justify us before the world, and testify what we are, and certify that our faith is unfeigned, and that the right Spirit of God is in us – see in my book about the Justifying of Faith; and there you shall see all these things abundantly. Also see there about the controversy between Paul and James. Nevertheless, when Rochester says if faith alone justified us, then both the devils and also sinners that remain in sin would be saved, his argument is not worth a straw. For neither the devils, nor yet sinners, that continue in sin purposely and out of delectation,[82] have any such faith as Paul speaks of. For Paul's faith is to believe God's promises. "Faith," he says, Romans 10, "comes by hearing, and hearing comes by the word of God." "And how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written," he says, "How beautiful are the feet that bring glad tidings of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Rom 10.14-15 Now when God has sent any messengers to the devils, to preach peace to them, or any good thing? The devil has no promise; he is therefore excluded from Paul's faith. The devil believes that Christ died, but not that he died for his sins. Nor does anyone, who consents in their heart to continue in sin, believe that Christ died for him. For to believe that Christ died for us is to see our horrible damnation, and how we were appointed to eternal pains, and to feel, and to be sure, that we are delivered from that through Christ – in this, we have the power to hate our sins, and to love God's commandments. All those who repent and have their hearts loosed from captivity and bondage to sin, and are therefore justified through faith in Christ. Wicked sinners have no faith, but have only imaginations and opinions about Christ – just as our schoolmen have faith in their

principles, about which they so quickly brawl with one another. It is quite another thing to believe that the king is rich, and that he is rich toward me, and that my portion is in this – and that he will not spare a penny of his riches at my need. When I believe that the king is rich, I am not moved. But when I believe that he is rich for me, and that he will never fail me at my need, then I love; and from that love I am ready to work to the utmost of my power.

But let us return at last to our purpose. What is the cause that laymen cannot now rule as well as they did in times past, and as the Turks still do? Truly, because that antichrist with the mist of his juggling has beguiled our eyes, and has cast a superstitious fear upon the world of Christian men. He has taught them to dread not God and his word, but himself and his word; not God's law and the ordinances, princes and officers which God has set to rule the world, but his own law and the ordinances, traditions and ceremonies, and disguised disciples, which he has set everywhere to deceive the world – and to expel the light of God's word, so that his darkness may have room. For we see by daily experience, of certain a hundred years long, that the one who fears neither God nor his word, nor regards father, mother, master, or Christ himself – the one who might rebel against God's ordinances, and rises against the king's, and resists the king's officers, dare not once lay hands on one of the pope's anointed. No, not even if he were to slay his father before his face, or do violence to his brother, or defile his sister, wife, or mother. We give the same honor to his traditions and ceremonies. What devotion do we have when we are blessed (as they call it) with the chalice, or when the bishop lifts up his holy hand over us? Who dares to handle the chalice, touch the altar-stone, or put his hand in the font, or his finger into the holy oil? What reverence we give to holy water, holy fire, holy bread, holy salt, hallowed bells, holy wax, holy boughs, holy candles, and holy ashes! And last of all, we commit our souls to the holy candle at our last departing. Indeed, what lay-person would dare be so bold as to unloose the knot of the cloth which the bishop, or his chaplain standing by, knits about children's necks at confirmation? You may ask, 'Do not such things bring the Holy Ghost, and put away sin, and drive away spirits?' I say that a steadfast faith, or belief in Christ and in the promises that God has sworn to give us for his sake, brings the Holy Ghost, as all the Scriptures mention, and as Paul says, "Have you received the Holy Ghost through faith, or believing?" [Act 19.2] Faith is the rock upon which Christ builds his congregation, against which, says Christ, the gates of hell shall not prevail. [Mat 16.18] As soon as you believe in Christ, the Holy Ghost comes, sin falls away, and devils fly. When we throw holy water at the devil, or ring the bells, he flees as men do from young children, and mocks us, to bring us away from the true faith that is in God's word, and bring us to a superstitious and a false belief of our own imagination. If you had faith and threw an unhallowed stone at his head, he would earnestly flee, and without mocking; indeed, though you threw nothing at all, he would not still abide.

If at the beginning, miracles were shown through such ceremonies, it was to move the infidels to believe the word of God. You read how the apostles anointed the sick with oil, and healed them; and Paul sent his handkerchief or apron to the sick, and healed them too. Yet it was not the ceremony that did the miracle, but the faith of the preacher and the truth of God, which had promised to confirm and establish his gospel with such miracles. Therefore, as soon as the gift of miracles ceased, the ceremony ought to have ceased also; or else if they need to have a ceremony to signify some promise or benefit of God (which I do not praise, but would have God's word preached every Sunday; this is the intent for which Sundays and holy days were ordained), then let them tell the people what it means; and not set up a bald and a naked ceremony without signification, to make the people believe in it, and to quench the faith that ought to be given to the word of God.

Also, what does it help that the priest, when he goes to mass, disguises himself with a great

part of the passion of Christ, and plays out the rest in silence, with signs and proffers, with nodding, becking and mowing,[83] jackanapes as it were,[84] when neither he nor any other man knows what he means? Not at all, truly. Rather, it hurts, and exceedingly so, in that it not only destroys the faith, and quenches the love that should be given for the commandments, but it also makes the people unthankful. It leads them into such superstition that they think that they have done more than enough for God. Indeed, they think it is deserving above measure if they are present once a day at such mumming.[85] And it makes the infidels mock and abhor us, in that they see nothing but such apes' play[86] among us, for which no man can give a reason.

All this comes to pass to fulfill the prophecy which Christ prophesied: that there shall come in his name, those who will say that they themselves are Christ. This is what the pope and our holy orders of religion truly do. For under the name of Christ, they preach themselves – their own word and their own traditions – and teach the people to believe in them. The pope gives pardons of his full power, of the treasure of the church, and of the merits of saints. The friars likewise make their benefactors (which they only call their brothers and sisters) partakers of their masses, fasting, watchings, prayings, and woolward goings. Indeed, when a novice of the Observants [87] is professed, the father asks him, 'Will you keep the rules of holy St. Francis?' And he says, yes. 'Will you so indeed?' the father asks. The other answers, 'Indeed, truly, father.' Then the father says, 'and I promise you everlasting life in return.' O blasphemy! If eternal life is due to the pilled traditions of lousy friars, what has become of the testament that God made to us in Christ's blood? Christ says, 'That there shall come pseudo-Christi;' For a consideration, I have translated this "false Christs," keeping the Greek word. Yet it signifies in English 'false anointed,' and it ought to be translated so. "There shall come," says Christ, "false anointed, and false prophets, and they shall do miracles and wonders so greatly that, if it were possible, the very elect, or chosen, should be brought out of the way." Compare the pope's doctrine to the word of God, and you will find that there has been, and still is, a great departure from the way; and that evil men and deceivers (as Paul prophesied in 2Timothy 3) have prevailed, and waxed worse and worse, beguiling others, just as they are beguiled themselves. You tremble and quake, saying, 'Shall God let us go so badly out of the right way?' I answer, it is Christ who warns us. He knew all that would follow, so he prophesied beforehand; and he is a true prophet and his prophecies must be fulfilled.

GOD anointed his son Jesus with the Holy Ghost, and therefore he called him Christ; which is to say, anointed. Outwardly he did not disguise him, but made him like other men. He sent him into the world to bless us, and to offer himself for us as a sacrifice of a sweet savor, to kill the stench of our sins, so that God would smell them no more, nor think about them anymore. He sent him to make full and sufficient satisfaction, or amends, for all those who repent, believing the truth of God, and submitting themselves to his ordinances for their sins that they do, have done, and will do. For through fragility we sin ever so often. Yet as soon as we repent and come into the right way again, and to the testament which God has made in Christ's blood, our sins vanish away as smoke in the wind, and as darkness at the coming of light – or as you throw a little blood, or milk into the sea. Whoever tries to make satisfaction for his sins toward God, saying in his heart, 'This much have I sinned, this much I will do in repayment; or I will live this way to make amends with God; or I will do this to get to heaven – that person is an infidel – faithless and damned in his deed-doing. He has lost his part in Christ's blood, because he is disobedient to God's testament. He sets up another testament from his own imagination, which he would compel God to obey. If we love God, we have a commandment to love our neighbor also, as John says in his epistle. And if we have offended him, we are to make amends with him; or if we have no way to do that, then we are to ask forgiveness from him, and to do and suffer all things

for his sake to win him to God, and to nourish peace and unity. But toward God, Christ is an everlasting satisfaction, and he is ever sufficient.

When he had fulfilled his course, Christ anointed his apostles and disciples with the same Spirit, and sent them forth, without any disguise, like other men, to preach the atonement and peace which Christ had made between God and man. The apostles likewise disguised no man, but chose men anointed with the same Spirit: one to preach the word of God, whom we call a bishop or a priest, after the Greek tongue; in English, it is an overseer or elder. You may read how he was anointed, "A bishop or an overseer must be faultless, the husband of one wife." (1Tim 3.2)

Many Jews, and also Gentiles, that were converted to the faith, had diverse wives at that time, yet they were not compelled to put any of them away. But Paul, to set an example, would not have them as preachers, because in Christ we return again to the first ordinance of God, that one man and one woman should go together. "He must be sober, of honest behavior, honestly apparelled, harborous," that is, ready to lodge strangers; "apt to teach, not a drunkard, not a fighter, not given to filthy lucre; but gentle, abhorring fighting, abhorring covetousness, and one who rules his own household honestly, having children under obedience with all honesty. For if a man cannot rule his own house, how can he care for the congregation of God? He may not be young in the faith," or, as we would say, a novice, "lest he swell and fall into the judgment of the evil speaker;" [1Tim 3.2-6] that is, he may not be unlearned in the secrets of the faith, for such men are at once stubborn and headstrong, and do not set a little by themselves.[88] But, alas! We have over twenty thousand who know no more Scripture than is written in their portesses;[89] and among them, one is considered exceedingly well-learned if he can turn that to his service. "He must be well reported by outsiders, lest he fall into rebuke, and into the snare of the evil speaker;" [1Tim 3.7] that is, lest the infidels, who do not yet believe, should be hurt by him, and driven from the faith, if a man that was defamed were made head or overseer of the congregation.

He must have a wife for two causes: one, so it may be known by it, who is fit for the position. One is not apt for so chargeable an office, if he never had a household to rule. Another cause is that chastity is so rare a gift; and unchastity is exceedingly perilous for that degree. This is because the people look as much at the living as the preaching, and they are hurt at once if his living disagrees with his preaching, or if he falls from the faith and does not believe the word.

This overseer, because he was taken from his own business and labor, to preach God's word to the parish, has the right, by the authority of his office, to challenge the parish to give him an honest living, as you may see in the evangelists, and also in Paul. For who has a servant, and will not give him meat, drink, and raiment, and the all things necessary? How they would pay him, whether it would be in money, or assign him so much rent, or in tithes, as the guise now is in many countries, was at their liberty.

Likewise, in every congregation they chose another following the same example, and anointed him, as it is in the same chapter of Paul (1Tim 3), and in Acts 6. Following the Greek word, we call him a deacon; that is to say in English, a servant or a minister. His office was to help and assist the priest, and to gather up his duty, and to gather for the poor of the parish, who were destitute of friends and could not work. Common beggars were not then allowed to run from door to door. On the saints' days, namely those who suffered death for the word's sake, men came together into the church and the priest preached to them, and exhorted them to cleave fast to the word, and to be strong in the faith, and to fight against the powers of the world, with suffering for their faith's sake, after the example of the saints. And he taught them not to believe

in the saints, and to trust in their merits, and to make gods of them; but he took the saints for an example only, and prayed God to give them like faith and trust in his word, and like strength and power to suffer therefore, and to give them so sure a hope of the life to come as you may see in the collects [90] of St. Lawrence and of St. Stephen in our lady matins.[91] And in such days, as we now offer, so they gave every man his portion according to his ability, and as God put it in his heart, to maintain the priest, deacon, and other common ministers, and the poor, and to find learned men to teach, and so forth. And all this was put in the hands of the deacon; as you may see in the life of St. Lawrence, and in the histories. And for such purposes, men gave their lands afterwards, to ease the parishes; and made hospitals, and also places to teach their children and to bring them up, and to nurture them in God's word. These lands our monks now devour.

ANTICHRIST.

ANTICHRIST in another manner has sent forth his disciples, those "false anointed," of which Christ warned us beforehand, so they would come and show miracles and wonders, even to bring the very elect out of the way, if it were possible. He anoints them in the manner of the Jews; and shaves them and shears them in the way of the heathen priests who serve idols. He sends them forth not only with false oil, but with false names also. For compare their names to their deeds, and you will find them false. He sends them forth, as Paul prophesied of them, with lying signs and wonders. What sign is the anointing? That they are full of the Holy Ghost. Compare them to the signs of the Holy Ghost which Paul reckons, and you will find it a false sign.

"A bishop must be faultless, the husband of one wife." No, says the pope, the husband of no wife, but the holder of as many whores as he desires. God commands all degrees to marry, if they burn with lust and cannot live chaste. The pope says, if you burn, take a dispensation for a concubine, and put her away when you are old; or else, as our lawyers say, Si non caste, tamen caute; that is, If you do not live chaste, then see that you carry on cleanly, and play the knave secretly.

"Harborous" indeed: harborous to whores and bawds. For a poor man would as soon break his neck as to break his fast with them, but he will break it from the scraps and with the dogs, when dinner is done.

"Apt to teach," and, as Peter says, "always ready to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that you have, and do that with meekness." Which thing is signified by the boots which the doctors of divinity are created in, because they should always be ready to go through thick and thin to preach God's word; and by the bishop's two-horned mitre,[92] which represents the absolute and perfect knowledge that they ought to have in the New Testament and the Old. Are these not false signs? For they only beat the air, [1Cor 9.26] and do not teach. 'Indeed,' says the pope, 'If they will not be ruled, then cite them to appear; and ask them sharply, what they hold about the pope's power, his pardons, his bulls, purgatory, ceremonies, confession, and similar creations of our most holy father's. If they miss in any point, they make heretics of them, and burn them. If they are of my anointed, and bear my mark, disgrace them (I would say, disgraduate them), and following the example of noble Antiochus (2Maccabees 7.24) they pare their crowns and fingers, and torment them craftily; pain will make them deny the truth.' 'But now,' say our bishops, 'because the truth has come too far abroad, and the lay-people begin to smell our wiles, it is best to oppress them with craft secretly, and tame them in prison. Indeed, let us find the means to put them in the king's prison, and make treason of such doctrine. Indeed, we must stir up some war, one way or another, to bring the people into another way of thinking. If they are gentlemen, abjure [93] them secretly.'

Curse them four times a year. Make them afraid of everything; namely, to touch my anointed. Make them fear the sentence of the church, suspensions, excommunications, and curses. Whether they are right or wrong, bear them in hand, for my anointed are still to be feared. Preach me and my authority, and how terrible a thing my curse is, and how black it makes their souls. On the holidays, which were ordained to preach God's word, set up long ceremonies, long matins, long masses, and long evensongs, and all in Latin, so that they do not understand; and roll them in darkness, so that you may lead them where you will. And lest such things be too tedious, sing some, say some, pipe some, ring the bells, and lull them and rock them asleep.' And yet Paul (1Cor 14) forbids speaking in the church or congregation, except in the tongue that all can understand. For the layman is not edified or taught by it. How shall the layman say Amen (says Paul) to your blessing or thanksgiving, when he does not know what you say? He does not know whether you bless or curse.

What then does the pope say? 'What do I care for Paul? I command as a virtue of obedience, that the gospel be read in Latin. Do not let them pray except in Latin, no, not even their Paternoster.[94] If any are sick, go and speak a gospel to them, all in Latin. Indeed, preach the gospel in Latin to the corn and fruits of the field during procession week; make the people believe the crop will grow all the better.' Truly, you may as well preach it to swine as to men, if you preach it in a tongue they do not understand. How will I prepare myself for God's commandments? How will I be thankful to Christ for his kindness? How will I believe the truth and promises which God has sworn, while you tell them to me in a tongue I do not understand? What then does my lord of Canterbury[95] say to a priest that would have had the New Testament distributed in English? "What," he says, "would you have lay-people come to know what we do?"

"No fighter;" I suppose this is signified by the cross that is borne before the high prelates, and borne before those in processions. Is that also not a false sign? What realm can be in peace with such turmoilers? What little parish is it, that they will not pick one quarrel or another with them, either for some surplice,[96] chrisom,[97] or mortuary,[98] either for one trifle or other, and cite them to the Arches? [99] They are traitors to all creatures, and have a secret conspiracy between themselves. The craft they have is to make many small kingdoms, and to nourish old titles or quarrels, so that they may move them to war at their pleasure, at any time. And if many lands by any chance fall to one man, they are ever ready to throw a bone in the way, so that he will never be able to obtain it, as we now see with the emperor. Why? For as long as the kings are small, if God would open the eyes of any to set a reformation in his realm, then the pope would interdict[100] his land, and send in other princes to conquer it.

"Not given to filthy lucre, but abhorring covetousness;" and, as Peter says, "Taking oversight of them, not as though you were compelled to it, but willingly; not out of a desire for filthy lucre, but of a good mind; not as though you were lords over the parishes." 'Over the parishes,' he quotes! O Peter, Peter, you were too long a fisherman; you were never brought up at the Arches, nor were you Master of the Rolls,[101] nor yet Chancellor of England.[102] They are not content to reign over king and emperor, and the whole earth; but they also challenge authority in heaven and in hell! It is not enough for them to reign over all that are alive, but have created a purgatory to also reign over the dead, and to have one more kingdom than God himself has. "But that you be an example to the flock," says Peter; "and when the chief Shepherd appears, you shall receive an incorruptible crown of glory." This "abhorring of covetousness" is signified, I suppose, by them shaving and shearing their hair, to show they have no superfluity.[103] But is not this also a false sign? Truly, to them it serves as a remembrance to shear and shave, and to heap benefice [104] upon benefice, promotion upon promotion, dignity upon dignity, bishopric upon bishopric,

with pluralities, unions, and tot quots.[105]

First, by the authority of the gospel, those who preach the word of God in every parish, and other necessary ministers, have the right to ask for an honest living like one of the brothers; and they ought to be content with that. Bishops and priests who do not preach, or who preach anything other than God's word, are none of Christ's, Rom 8.9 nor are they of his anointing.1Joh 2.27 Rather, they are servants of the beast whose mark they bear, and whose word they preach, and whose law they maintain clean against God's law. And with their false sophistry, they give the beast greater power than God ever gave to his Son Christ.

But as insatiable beasts, they are not unmindful of why they were shaven and shorn, because they will stand at no man's grace, nor be in any man's danger. They have gotten into their own hands, first the tithe or tenth of all the realm, and then I suppose within a little while, altogether a third of all the temporal lands.

Mark well how many parsonages or vicarages there are in the realm, which have at least a plowland [106] apiece. Then note the lands of the bishops, abbots, priors,[107] nuns, and knights of St. John's,[108] of cathedral churches, colleges, chauntries,[109] and free-chapels.[110] For though the house falls into decay, and the ordinance of the founder has been lost, yet they will not lose the lands. What comes in once, may never go out again. They make a free-chapel of it, so that the one who enjoys it will do nothing for it. Besides all this, how many chaplains do gentlemen fund at their own cost, in their houses? How many sing for souls, by testaments? Then there is the proving of testaments,[111] and the apprizing of goods, which is the bishop of Canterbury's prerogative - is there not much of this throughout the realm in a year? Four offering days and privy tithes.[112] There is no servant who does not pay something from his wages. None will receive the body of Christ at Easter, no matter how poor a beggar, or however young a lad or maid may be, unless they pay something for it; then mortuaries for forgotten tithes (as they say). And yet what parson or vicar will forget to have a pigeon-house to peck up something both at sowing-time and harvest, when corn is ripe? They will forget nothing. No man wants to die in debt; or if any man does, he will pay it when he is dead. They will lose nothing. Why do they do it? It is God's, not theirs. 'It is St. Hubert's rents, St. Alban's lands, St. Edmond's right, St. Peter's patrimony,' they say, 'and none of ours.'[113] Item: if a man dies in another man's parish, besides having to pay at home a mortuary for forgotten tithes, he must pay the best that he has there also; whether it is a horse of twenty pounds, or however goods he has; either a chain of gold of an hundred marks, or five hundred pounds, if it so happens. It is much, truly, for so little painstaking in confession, and in ministering the sacraments. Then bead-rolls. Item: chrysome,[114] churchings,[115] banns,[116] weddings, an offering at weddings, an offering at burials, offering to images, offering of wax and lights, which come to their advantage; besides the superstitious waste of wax in torches and tapers throughout the land. Then brotherhoods [117] and pardoners.[118]

What? Do they also gain by confessions? Indeed, and many enjoin penance to give a certain [sum] for so many masses said, and they desire to provide a chaplain themselves; soul-masses, dirges, month-minds,[119] year-minds, All-souls-day,[120] and trentals.[121] The mother church, and the high altar, must have something in every testament.[122] Offerings at priests' first masses. Item: no man is professed, however religious it may be, unless he brings something. The hallowing (or rather conjuring) of churches, chapels, altars, super-altars,[123] chalice, vestments, and bells. Then book, bell, candlestick,[124] organs, chalice, vestments, copes, altar-cloths, surplices,

towels, basins, ewers,[125] ship, censer,[126] and all manner of ornament, must be found for them freely; they will not give a mite for it. Last of all, what swarms of begging friars there are! The parson shears, the vicar shaves, the parish priest polls, the friar scrapes, and the pardoner pares; all we lack is a butcher to pull off the skin.

What do they gain by their spiritual law (as they call it) in a year, at the Arches and in every diocese? What do the commissaries[127] and officials gain in a year with their summoners and apparitors,[128] by pandering? Will you not find enough curates who, to flatter the commissaries and officials with something to acquit themselves, will reveal to them the confessions of the richest of their parishes, whom they cite privately, and lay charges against secretly? If their parishioner desire to know their accusers, 'No,' they say, 'the matter is known well enough, and to more than you are aware of. Come, lay your hand on the book; if you deny it, we will bring proofs; we will handle you and make an example of you.' Oh, how terrible they are! 'Come,' they say, 'and swear that you will be obedient to our injunctions.' And by that craft they wring others' purses, and make them drop, as long as there is a penny left in them. In three or four years in those offices, they will get enough to pay for a bishop's bull.[129] What else are these, but horse-leeches, maggots, cankers, and caterpillars? They devour all that is green. They are the wolves which Paul prophesied would come, and would not spare the flock; Christ said they would come in lamb's skins, and urged us to beware of them, and judge them by their works.

As I sufficiently proved before, a Christian man must suffer all things, however great a wrong, as long as it is not against God's commandment. Nor is it lawful for him to take any burden off his back by his own authority, till God pulls it off – who laid it on us for our deserts. Yet if they were Christians, kings everywhere ought to defend their realms from such oppression. But this is seldom seen and truly, it is a hard thing, though not impossible. For, alas! They are captives before they are ever kings, indeed, almost before they are born. No man is allowed around them except flatterers, and those who are sworn to be true to our most holy fathers first, the bishops; that is to say, false to God and man.

If any of the nobles of the realm are true to the king, and so bold as to dare counsel him what would be to his honor and for the wealth of the realm, they would wait a season for him,[130] as men say; they would provide a spiritual father for him.[131] God bring their [132] wickedness to light! There is no mischief of which they are not the root, nor bloodshed that is not through their cause, either by their counsel, or because they do not preach true obedience, and do not teach the people to fear God. If any faithful servant is in the court, he will have twenty spies waiting for him; he will be thrown out of the court, or, as the saying goes, he will be 'conveyed to Calais,'[133] and made a captain or an ambassador; he will be kept far enough from the king's presence.

I say, the kings ought to remember that they stand in God's stead, and they are ordained by God, not for themselves, but for the wealth of their subjects. Let them remember that their subjects are their brothers, their flesh and blood, members of their own body, and of themselves in Christ. Therefore they ought to pity them, and rid them of such vile tyranny which increases more and more daily. And though the kings, by the falsehood of the bishops and abbots, are sworn to defend church liberties,[134] they should not keep their oaths, but break them. That is because they are wrong and clean against God's ordinance. They are nothing but cruel oppression, contrary to brotherly love and charity. Moreover, the spiritual officer ought not to punish any sin. Rather, if any sin breaks out, the king is ordained to punish it, Rom 13.4 and they are not. They are ordained only to preach, and to exhort others to fear God and not to sin.

Let the kings put down such tyranny, and turn some of the proceeds towards the

commonwealth. If a tenth of such tyranny were given to the king yearly, and laid up in the shire-towns for the needs of the realm, what would it grow to in a few years? Moreover, one king and one law is God's ordinance in every realm. Therefore the king ought not to allow them to have a separate law for themselves, nor to bind his subjects to it. 'It is not fitting,' they will say, 'that a spiritual man should be judged by a worldly or temporal man.' O abomination! See how they divide and separate themselves: if a layman is of the world, somehow he is not of God! If he believes in Christ, then he is a member of Christ, Christ's brother, Christ's flesh, Christ's blood, Christ's spouse, co-heir with Christ, and he has Christ's Spirit in earnest, and he is also spiritual. If they would rob us of the Spirit of God, why should they fear to rob us of worldly goods? Because you are put in office to preach God's word, are you therefore no longer one of the brothers? Is the mayor of London no longer one of the city, because he is the chief officer? Is the king no longer of the realm, because he is head of it? The king is in the place of God, and his law is God's law, which is nothing but the law of nature and natural equity which God engraved in the hearts of men. Yet antichrist is too good to be judged by the law of God. He must have a new law, of his own making. It would be fitting, truly, if they went to no law at all. No longer would they need the law, if they would study to preach God's word truly, and be content with what is sufficient, and be like one of their brothers.

If any question arose about the faith of the Scripture, let them judge that by the manifest and open Scriptures; and do not exclude the laymen. For there are many laymen who are as wise as the officers. Or else, when the officer dies, how could we put another in his place? Will you teach for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years in such a way that no man will have knowledge or judgment in God's word except you? Is it not a shame that we Christians come so often to church in vain: when someone eighty years of age knows no more than someone born yesterday?

Moreover, when the spiritual officers have excommunicated a man, or condemned an opinion as heresy, do not let the king or temporal officers punish and slay them by the commandment of these men. But let them look at God's word, and compare their judgment to the Scripture, and see whether it is right or not. Do not believe at the first chop, whatever these clergy say, especially in things that pertain to their own authorities and power; for no man is a right judge in his own cause. Why does Christ command the Scripture to be preached to all creatures, unless it requires all men to know them? Christ himself refers to the Scriptures in John 5.38-39.[135] And in Matthew 11.5, to the question from John the Baptist's disciples, he answered, "The blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the dead arise again," etc. meaning that 'If I do the works which were prophesied that Christ would do when he comes, then why do you doubt whether I am him or not?' It is as if to say, "Ask the Scripture, whether I am Christ or not, and not myself." How does it happen, then, that our prelates will not come to the light as well, so that we may see whether their works are wrought in God, or not? Why do they fear to let the laymen see what they do? Why do they hold all their examinations in darkness? Why do they not examine their causes of heresy openly, as laymen do with their felons and murderers? Is this not why Christ and his apostles warned us so diligently of Antichrist, and of false prophets that would come? Was it that we should slumber or carelessly sleep? Or was it rather that we should look in the light of the Scripture with all diligence, to spy these men when they come, and not allow ourselves to be deceived and led out of the way by them? John bids us to judge the spirits. How shall we judge them except by the Scriptures? How will you know whether the prophet is true or false, or whether he speaks God's word, or from his own head, if you will not see the Scriptures? Why did David say, in the second psalm, "Be instructed, you that judge the earth, lest the Lord be angry with you, and you perish from the right way?" Psa 2.10-12 This is a terrible warning, truly. Indeed, look at the stories well, and you will find very few kings, since the beginning of the

world, that have not perished from the right way, because they would not be instructed.

The emperor and kings now-a-days are nothing but hangmen to the pope and bishops, to kill whomever they condemn, without any fuss – as Pilate was to the scribes, Pharisees, and high bishops: to hang Christ. For just as those prelates answered Pilate (when he asked what he had done), "If he were not an evil-doer, we would not have brought him to you;" Joh 18.30 as if to say, 'We are too holy to do anything amiss, and so you may believe us well enough.' Yes, and "his blood be on our heads," Mat 27.25 they said; kill him cruelly, and we will bear the charge, our souls for yours. "We also have a law by which he ought to die, for he calls himself God's son:" Joh 19.7 – in the same way, our prelates say, 'He ought to die by our laws, for he speaks against the church.' And, 'Your grace is sworn to defend the liberties and ordinances of the church, and to maintain our most holy father's authority; our souls for yours, you shall do a meritorious deed in this.' Nevertheless, as Pilate did not escape the judgment of God, even so is it to be feared lest our temporal powers will not escape it. "Therefore, be instructed, you that judge the earth, lest the Lord be angry with you, and you perish from the right way."

Who slew the prophets? Who slew Christ? Who slew his apostles? Who slew the martyrs, and all the righteous that ever were slain? The kings and the temporal sword slew them at the request of false prophets. They deserved to murder, and to have their portion with the hypocrites, because they would not be instructed, and see the truth themselves. Why did the prophets suffer? Because they rebuked the hypocrites who beguiled the world, specifically princes and rulers, and taught them to put their trust in things of vanity, and not in God's word. And they taught them to do deeds of mercy which were profitable to no man, but only to the false prophets themselves. They made merchandise of God's word. Why did they slay Christ? For rebuking the hypocrites, because he said, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven before men," (Mat 23.13) that is, as it is written, "You have taken away the key of knowledge." (Luk 11.52)

The law of God, which is the key with which men bind, and the promises, which are the keys with which men loose, our hypocrites have also taken away. They will allow no man to know God's word, but burn it instead, and make it heresy. Indeed, and because the people begin to smell their falsehood, they make it treason to the king, and the breaking of the king's peace, to have so much as their Paternoster[136] in English. Instead of God's law, they bind with their own law; and instead of God's promises, they loose and justify with pardons and ceremonies, which they themselves have imagined for their own profit. They preach, 'It would be better for you to eat flesh on Good Friday, than to hate your neighbor.' But let any man eat flesh except on a Saturday, or break any other tradition of theirs, and he will be bound and not loosed till he has paid the uttermost farthing,[Mat 5.26] either with the most vile shame, or the most cruel death. But hate your neighbor as much as you will, and you will receive no rebuke from them. Indeed, rob him, murder him, and then come to them and be welcomed. They have a sanctuary for you, to save you – yes, and they will provide a neck-verse, if you can just read a little Latin, however badly, so that you are ready to receive the beast's mark. They do not care for understanding. It is enough if you can roll up a pair of matins,[137] or an even-song, and mumble a few ceremonies. And because they are rebuked in this way, they rage. "Be instructed, therefore, you that judge the world, lest God be angry with you, and you perish from the right way."

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" says Christ, Mat 23.14: "for you devour widows' houses under a pretense of long prayer." Our hypocrites not only rob the widows, but knight, squire, lord, duke, king, and emperor, and even the whole world, under the same pretense. They teach the people to trust in their prayers, and not in Christ, for whose sake God

has forgiven all the sin of the whole world to as many as repent and believe. They frighten them with purgatory, and they promise to pray perpetually, lest the lands should ever be returned to the rightful heirs. What have you bought by robbing your heirs, or by giving the hypocrites what you rob from other men? Perpetual prayer? Indeed, perpetual pain – for they have appointed no time of deliverance for you, their prayers are so 'mighty.' The pope, for money, can empty purgatory whenever he wants. And it is truly purgatory, for it purges and makes a clean riddance of things. Yes, it is hell; for it devours all things. His 'Fatherhood' [138] sends them to heaven with Scala coeli; [139] that is, with a ladder to scale the walls. For they will not let them come in by the door, who is Christ. They have stopped up that door, so you must buy ladders from them. For some they pray daily, those who gave them perpetuities, and even make saints of them, receiving offerings in their names, and teaching others to pray to them. None of those who take it upon themselves to save others with their prayers, trust to be saved by it themselves; instead, they hire others to pray for them.

Moses testified before God, that he did not take so much as an ass from any of the people; nor did he trouble any of them. Samuel, in 1Kings 12, asked all Israel whether he had taken any man's ox or ass, or had troubled any man, or had taken a gift or reward from any man? And all the people testified, 'No.' Yet these two men taught the people, and also prayed for them, as much as our prelates do. Peter, in 1Peter 5.2, exhorts the elders to take oversight of Christ's flock, not for filthy lucre, but from a good will, even for love. Paul, in Acts 20.17-35, calls for the priests (or elders) to witness, that he had taught repentance and faith, and all the counsel of God; and yet he had desired no man's gold, silver, or clothing, but fed himself with the labor of his hands. And yet these two men taught and prayed for the people as much as our prelates do, with whom the common saying goes, 'No penny, no Paternoster:' As these prelates do not teach, but only beat the air, so they do not know what prayer means.

Moreover, the law of love, which Christ left among us, is to give and not to receive. What prayer is it then, that robs the whole world in this way, contrary to that great commandment, which is the end of all commandments, and in which all others are contained? If men continue to buy prayer four or five hundred years more, as they have done, there will not be a foot of ground left in Christendom, nor any worldly thing, which those who would be called 'spiritual' only, would not possess. And thus everything would be called 'spiritual.'

"Woe to you lawyers! For you load men down with burdens which they are not able to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the packs with one of your fingers," says Christ, Luke 11.46, Our lawyers, truly, have loaded us down a thousand times more. What spiritual kindred they have made in baptism, to let matrimony be possible! Besides that, they have added certain degrees[140] to the natural law for the same purpose. What an unbearable burden of chastity they violently thrust on other men's backs, and how easily they bear it themselves! How sore a burden, how cruel a hangman, how grievous a torment, indeed, and how painful a hell, this ear-confession is to men's consciences! For the people are brought to believe that without it, they cannot be saved – to such an extent that some will fast certain days in the year, and pray certain superstitious prayers all their lives, so that they may not die without confession. When in peril of death, if the priest is not nearby, shipmen confess themselves to the mast. If any priests are present, then every man ran to his ear. But they do not fly to God's promises, for they do not know them. If any man has a deadly wound, he cries immediately for a priest. If a man dies without confession, many take it as a sign of damnation. Many, by reason of that false belief, die in desperation. Many, for shame, keep back of their confession twenty or thirty years, and think all the while that they are damned. I knew a poor woman with child, who so longed for flesh, and being overcome by her passion, ate flesh on a Friday. She dared not confess this for eighteen

years; she thought all that while that she had been damned; and yet she did not sin at all. Is this not a sore burden, that so weighs down the soul to the bottom of hell? What should I say? A large book would not be sufficient to repeat the snares which they have laid to rob men both of their goods, and also of the trust which they should have in God's word.

"The scribes and Pharisees do all their works to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad, and make long borders on their garments, and love to sit uppermost at feasts, and to have the best seats in the synagogues;" that is, in the congregations or councils, "and to be called Rabbi;" that is to say, masters, says Christ, Matthew 23.5-7. Behold the deeds of our clergy, and how many thousand fashions there are to be known by among them. Just as none is like another, so none loves another, for every one of them supposes that all the others poll too fast, and make too many captives. Yet they are all agreed to resist Christ, lest they all be compelled to deliver up their prisoners to him. Behold the monsters, how they are disguised with mitres, crosiers,[141] and hats, with crosses, pillars, and pole-axes, and with three crowns!

What names do they have? My lord prior, my lord abbot, my lord bishop, my lord archbishop, cardinal, and legate; if it please your fatherhood; if it please your lordship; if it please your grace; if it please your holiness; and innumerable titles like these. Behold how esteemed they are, and how high they have crept above all – not only into worldly seats, but into the seat of God, and into the hearts of men, where they sit above God himself. For they, and whatever they make up out of their own heads, is more to be feared and dreaded than God and his commandments. We put more trust in them and in their deservings than in Christ and his merits. We give more faith to their promises than to the promises which God has sworn in Christ's blood.

The hypocrites say to the kings and lords, 'These heretics would have us put down first, and then you, to make us all common.' No, you hypocrites and right heretics, approved by open Scripture, the kings and lords are already down; and down so low, that they cannot go lower. You tread them under your feet, and lead them captive. You have made them your bond-servants to wait on your filthy lusts, and to avenge your malice on every man, contrary to the right of God's word. You have not only robbed them of their land, authority, honor, and the due obedience which you owe them, but you have robbed them of their wits also. Not only are they without understanding in God's word, but even in worldly matters that pertain to their offices, they are no more than children. You bear them in hand to have them do what you will. You have made them like those who dance naked in nets, believing they are invisible.[142] We would have them raised up again, and restored to the place and authority which God has given them, and of which you robbed them. We only speak about your inward falsehood with the light of God's word, so that your hypocrisy might be seen. "Be instructed, therefore, you that judge the world, lest God be angry with you, and you perish from the right way."

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of bribery and excess," says Christ, Mat 23.25. Are what our hypocrites eat and drink, and all their riotous excess, anything other than robbery, or what they falsely obtained with their lying doctrine? "Be instructed, therefore, you that judge the world," and compel them to make restitution again.

"You blind guides," says Christ, "You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." Mat 23.24. Do not our blind guides also stumble at a straw, and leap over a block – restricting consciences at trifles, and at matters of no weight at all? If anyone happens to swallow his spittle; or swallows any of the water he washes his mouth with before he goes to mass; or if he touches the sacrament with his nose; or if the ass forgets to breathe on him, or happens to handle the sacrament with any of his fingers that are not anointed; or if he says 'Alleluia' instead of 'Laus

tibi, Domine;' or 'Ite, missa est' instead of 'Benedicamus Domino;' or if he pours too much wine in the chalice; or if he reads the gospel without light; or does not make his crosses correctly - then how he trembles! How he fears! What a horrible sin has been committed! 'I cry to God for mercy,' he says, 'and to you, my spiritual father.' But to hold a whore, or another man's wife, or to buy a benefice, or to set one realm at variance with another, and to cause twenty thousand men to die on a single day, is only a trifle and a pastime with them!

The Jews boasted about Abraham; and Christ said to them, John 8.39,"If you were Abraham's children, you would do the deeds of Abraham." Our hypocrites boast of the authority of Peter, and Paul, and the other apostles, and yet they do clean contrary to the deeds and doctrine of Peter, and Paul, and the other apostles. Those men obeyed all worldly authority and power, usurping none for themselves; and they taught all others to fear kings and rulers, and to obey them in all things that are not contrary to the commandment of God; Act 4.19 and not to resist them, even if they took away life and goods wrongfully; but to patiently wait for God's vengeance. Our clergy never did this, or taught it. They did not teach to fear God in his commandments, but to fear them in their traditions, and to such an extent that even evil people, who do not fear to resist a good king and to rise up against him, dare not lay hands on any of them, not even for defiling a wife, daughter, or mother. When all other men lose life and lands, these men always remain secure and in safety, and always win something. For whoever conquers other men's lands unrightfully, always gives them a portion. To these men, all things are lawful. In all councils and parliaments, they are the chief. Without them, no king may be crowned, and not until he is sworn to uphold their liberties. They know all secrets, even the thoughts of men's hearts. All things are ministered by them. No king or realm may, through their falsehood, live in peace. They do not teach to believe in Christ, but in themselves, and their disguised hypocrisy. And they compel all men to buy redemption and forgiveness of sins from them. They eat the people's sin, and they grow fat from it. The more wicked the people are, the more prosperous their commonwealth. If kings and great men do something amiss, they must build abbeys and colleges; men of means build chantreys;[143] the poor find trentals,[144] and brotherhoods, and begging friars. Men disinherit their own heirs, to endow these clergy. All kings are compelled to submit themselves to them. Read the story of King John, and of other kings. The clergy will have their causes avenged, though whole realms should perish for it. Take their disguises from them, so they are not spiritual. Compare what they have taught us to the Scripture; so much are we without faith.

Christ says, "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another?" (John 5.45) If those who seek to be glorious can have no faith, then our prelates are faithless, truly. And in John 7.18, Jesus says: "He that speaks of himself, seeks his own glory." If to seek glory and honor is a sure sign that a man speaks about himself, and gives his own message and not his master's, then the doctrine of our prelates is from themselves, and not from God. "Be instructed, therefore, you that judge the earth, lest God be angry with you, and you perish from the right way."

Be instructed, lest the hypocrites bring the wrath of God upon your heads, and compel you to shed innocent blood; as they have compelled your predecessors to slay the prophets, to kill Christ and his apostles, and all the righteous that have been slain since. God's word pertains to all men; just as it pertains to all servants to know their master's will and pleasure; and to all subjects to know the laws of their prince. Do not let the hypocrites do all things secretly. What reason is it that my enemy should put me in prison at his pleasure, and there starve me, and handle me as he desires; and judge me himself, and do that secretly; and condemn me by a law of his own making, and then deliver me to Pilate to murder me? Let God's word try every man's

doctrine, and whomever God's word proves unclean, let him be taken for a leper. One Scripture will help to declare another. And the circumstances, that is to say, the passages that go before and after, will give light to the text in the middle. And the open and plain Scriptures will ever improve the false and wrong exposition of the darker sentences. Let the temporal power, to whom God has given the sword to take vengeance, look before they leap, and see what they do. Let the causes be disputed before them, and let him that is accused have opportunity to answer for himself. The powers to whom God has committed the sword, will give accounts for every drop of blood that is shed on the earth. Their ignorance will not excuse them then, nor will the sayings of the hypocrites help them. 'My soul for yours, your grace will do a meritorious deed;' 'your grace ought not to hear them;' 'it is an old heresy condemned by the church.' If he would punish it, then the king ought to look in the Scripture, and see whether it was truly condemned or not. If the king, or his officer for him, would slay me, then the king or his officer ought to judge me. The king cannot, except to his own damnation, lend his sword to kill those whom he does not judge by his own laws. Let the accused stand on one side, and the accuser on the other; and let the king's judge sit and judge the cause, if the king would kill, and not be a murderer before God.

From this you may see, not only that our persecution is for the same cause that Christ's was, and that we say nothing that Christ did not say, but also that all our persecution is only for rebuking hypocrisy. That is to say, for rebuking man's self-righteousness, and holy deeds, by which man has imagined to please God, and to be saved by them, without God's word, and apart from the testament that God has made in Christ. Christ rebuked the Pharisees because they taught the people to believe in their traditions and holiness, and believe in offerings that were to their own advantage. They taught the widows and those with dead friends, to believe in their prayers; and that through their prayers the dead would be saved. By that means, they robbed them both of their goods, and of the testament and promises that God made, to all who repented in the Christ to come. If Christ had not rebuked them, he might have been uncrucified to this day.

If St. Paul also had not preached against circumcision, that it did not justify; and that vows, offerings, and ceremonies did not justify; and that righteousness and forgiveness of sins did not come by any deserving of our deeds, but by faith, or believing the promises of God, and by the deserving and merits of Christ only – then he might have lived to this hour. Likewise, if we did not preach against pride, covetousness, lechery, extortion, usury, simony, and against the evil living of both the spiritual and temporal rulers, and against enclosing parks, raising rents and fines, and carrying wool out of the realm – then we too might endure long enough. But if you touch the scab of hypocrisy, or pope-holiness, and go around speaking about their false doctrine by which they reign as gods in the hearts and consciences of men, and by which they rob men not only of their lands, goods, and authority, but also the testament of God, and the salvation that is in Christ – then you will not be helped by God's word, and not even if you could do miracles. For this offense, you are not only a heretic, and have the devil within you, but you are also a breaker of the king's peace, and a traitor. But let us return to our lying signs again.

What signifies that the prelates are so bloody, and clothed in red? It is that they are ready every hour to permit martyrdom for the testimony of God's word. Is that not also a false sign? [145]It is when no man dares, because of them, to open his mouth even once to ask a question about God's word, because the prelates are ready to burn him for it.

What do the pole-axes signify that are carried before high legatesa latere? [146] Whatever false sign they make of them, I do not care. But of this I am sure: that just as the old hypocrites, when they had slain Christ, set pole-axes to keep him in his sepulcher so he would not rise again,

even so our hypocrites have buried the testament that God made for us in Christ's blood; and all they study is how to keep it down so it will not rise again; these poleaxes are the sign of it.

Is that shepherd's hook, the bishop's cross, not a false sign? Is that white rochet[147] that the bishops and canons wear, so like a nun's and so effeminate, not a false sign? What else are their sandals, gloves, mitres, and the whole pomp of their disguise, than the false signs in which Paul prophesied they would come? And just as Christ warned us to beware of wolves in lamb's skins, and told us to look at their fruits and deeds rather than wonder at their disguises, if you run throughout all our holy religions, you will find that likewise, they are all clothed in falsehood.

OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Since we have come to signs, we will speak a word or two about the signs which God has ordained; that is to say, the sacraments which Christ left among us for our comfort, so that we may walk in light and in truth, and feel the power of God. For "he that walks in the day does not stumble;" by contrast, he that walks in the night stumbles, John 11.9-10. And "they that walk in darkness do not know where they go." Joh 12.35 This word sacrament means a holy sign, and it always represents some promise of God. In the Old Testament, God ordained that the rainbow would represent and signify to all men an oath that God swore to Noah and to all men after him, that he would no more drown the world through water.

SACRAMENT OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

So the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ has a promise annexed to it, which the priest should declare in the English tongue. "This is my body, that is broken for you." "This is my blood, that is shed for many, for the forgiveness of sins." "This do in remembrance of me," says Christ, Luke 22.19 and 1Cor 11.24. If when you see the sacrament, or eat his body, or drink his blood, you have this promise fast in your heart, that his body was slain and his blood shed for your sins, and you believe it, so you are saved and justified thereby. If not, it will not help you, though you hear a thousand masses a day, or though you do nothing else all your life than eat his body or drink his blood. It will help you no more than, being dead thirsty, you behold a bush at a tavern door, not knowing that the bush is a sign that there is wine within to be sold.

BAPTISM.

BAPTISM also has God's word and promise, which the priest ought to teach the people, and christen them in the English tongue; and not play the popinjay[148] – with Credo you say Volo you say Baptismum – for there ought to be no mumming[149] in such a matter. Rather, before he baptizes, the priest should ask, 'Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, and that the congregation of Christ is holy?' And they say, 'Yes.' Then the priest, upon this profession of faith, baptizes the child in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, for the forgiveness of sins, as Peter says in Acts 2.38.

Washing without the word does not help: but through the word, washing purifies and cleanses us. You read in Ephesians 5.26 how Christ cleanses the congregation in the fountain of water through the word; the word is the promise that God has made. Now, just as a preacher, in preaching the word of God, saves the hearers who believe, so does the washing – it "preaches" and represents to us the promise that God has made to us in Christ. The washing preaches to us that we are cleansed with Christ's blood-shedding – it was an offering and satisfaction for the sin of all who repent and believe, consenting and submitting themselves to the will of God. Plunging into the water signifies that we die and are buried with Christ, concerning the old life of

sin which is in Adam. And pulling out again signifies that we rise again with Christ in a new life, full of the Holy Ghost, who will teach and guide us, and work the will of God in us, as you see in Romans 6.

OF WEDLOCK.

MATRIMONY, or wedlock, is a state or degree ordained by God, and an office in which the husband serves the wife, and the wife serves the husband. It was ordained for a remedy, and to increase the world; and for the man to help the woman, and the woman to help the man, with all love and kindness – and not to signify any promise that ever I heard or read of in the Scripture. Therefore it ought not to be called a sacrament. It has a promise that we do not sin in that state, if a man receive his wife as a gift given to him from God, and the wife receives her husband likewise. In the same way, all kinds of meats and drinks have a promise that we do not sin, if we use them measurably and with thanksgiving. If they call matrimony a sacrament because the Scripture uses the similitude of matrimony to express the marriage, or wedlock, that exists between us and Christ,[150] then I will call mustard-seed, leaven, a net, keys, bread, water, and a thousand other things sacraments, because Christ and the prophets and all the Scripture use them to express the kingdom of heaven and God's word. They praise wedlock with their mouth, and say, 'It is a holy thing,' as it is truly – but they would rather be sanctified with a whore, than to come within the sanctuary [of marriage].[151]

OF ORDER.

SUBDEACON, deacon, priest, bishop, cardinal, patriarch, and pope, are names of offices and service, or should be, and not sacraments. There is no promise coupled with them. If they minister their offices truly, it is a sign that Christ's Spirit is in them; if not, it is a sign that the devil is in them. Are these all sacraments, or which one of them? Or what thing in them is that holy sign or sacrament? The shaving, or the anointing? Also, what is the promise that is signified by it? Which word imprints in them that character, or that spiritual seal [of a sacrament]? O dreamers and natural beasts who are without the seal of the Spirit of God; but instead are sealed with the mark of the beast, and with cankered consciences!

There is a word called in Latin sacerdos, in Greek hiereus, in Hebrew cohan, that is, a minister, an officer, a sacrificer or priest – as Aaron was a priest, and sacrificed for the people, and was a mediator between God and them. In English it should have had some other name than priest. But Antichrist has deceived us with unknown and strange terms to bring us into confusion and superstitious blindness. Christ is a priest of that kind forever; and all we are priests through him, and no longer need any such priest on earth to be a mediator for us to God. For Christ has brought us all into the inner temple, within the veil or forehanging, and to the mercy-seat of God. He has coupled us to God, where we offer, every man for himself, the desires and petitions of his heart; and we sacrifice and kill the lusts and appetites of our flesh with prayer, fasting, and all manner of godly living.

There is another word in Greek, called presbyter, in Latin senior, in English an elder; and this is nothing but an officer to teach, and not to be a mediator between God and us. This needs no anointing of man. Those in the Old Testament were anointed with oil, to signify the anointing of Christ, and our anointing with the Holy Ghost through Christ. No man is made a priest in this way, but only one that is chosen; just as in a time of necessity, every person may christen, so every man may teach his wife and household, and the wife her children. So in time of need, if I see my brother sin, I may rebuke him, between him and me, and damn his deed by the law of God; and I may also comfort those who are in despair, with the promises of God; and save them

if they believe.

By "priest" then, in the New Testament, we understand simply that an elder is to teach the younger, to bring them to the full knowledge and understanding of Christ; and to minister the sacraments which Christ ordained (which is simply to preach Christ's promises). And we understand that those who give all their study to quench the light of truth, and to hold the people in darkness, are the disciples of Satan and messengers of antichrist, whatever names they may have, or whatever they may call themselves. And as concerning our clergy (as they will be called) who make themselves holier than the lay-people, and take such great lands and goods, and ask for them, and who promise pardons and forgiveness of sins, or absolution, without preaching of Christ's promises – this is falsehood, and the working of antichrist. As I have said, they are the ravenous wolves which Paul prophesied would come after his departing, Act 20.29 not sparing the flock. Their doctrine is that merchandise of which Peter speaks, saying: "Through covetousness, with feigned words, they will make merchandise of you." (2Pet 2.3)

And the reasons with which they prove their doctrine are, as Paul says, "Superfluous disputings, arguings or brawlings of men with corrupt minds, and destitute of truth, who think that lucre is godliness." (1Tim 6.5) But Christ says (Mat 7.16), "By their fruits you will know them;" that is, by their filthy covetousness, and shameless ambition, and drunken desire for honor, contrary to the example and doctrine of Christ and his apostles. Christ said to Peter in John 21.16, "Feed my sheep:" and not, 'Shear your flock.' And Peter says (1Pet 5.3), "Not being lords over the flock." But these clergy shear, and they have become lords. Paul says (2Cor 1.24), "Not that we are lords over your faith:" but these will be lords; and they would compel us to believe whatever they lust for, without any witness of Scripture; indeed, clean contrary to the Scripture where the clear text rebukes it. Paul says, "It is better to give, than to receive," (Acts 20.35) But these clergy do nothing but lay snares to catch and receive whatever comes by, like the gaping mouth of hell. And 2Cor 12.14, "I do not seek yours, but you." Yet these me do not seek you for Christ, but yours for themselves; and therefore, lest their deeds be rebuked, they will not come to the light.

Nevertheless the truth is that we are all equally beloved in Christ, and God has sworn to all indifferently. Therefore, according to how every man believes God's promises, longs for them, and is diligent to pray to God to fulfill them, so his prayer is heard. And the prayer of a cobbler is as good as the prayer of a cardinal, and that of a butcher as good as that of a bishop; and the blessing of a baker who knows the truth is as good as the blessing of our most holy father the pope. And by blessing, do not understand the wagging of the pope's or bishop's hand over your head, but prayer; as when we say, 'God make you a good man,' 'May Christ put his Spirit in you,' or 'May God give you grace and power to walk in the truth, and to follow his commandments,' etc. This is how Rebecca's friends blessed her when she departed (Gen 24.60) saying, "You are our sister: grow to a thousand thousands, and your seed possess the gates of their enemies." And this is how Isaac blessed Jacob, (Gen 27.28) saying, "God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn, wine and oil," etc. And again, (Gen 28.3-4) "Almighty God bless you, and make you grow, and multiply you, that you may be a great multitude of people, and give to you and to your seed after you the blessings of Abraham; that you may possess the land in which you are a stranger, which he promised to your grandfather," and such blessings as those.

Last of all, they have one singular doubt. They do not know what makes the priest: the anointing, or the laying on of hands, or a particular ceremony, or specific words? They brawl and scold about this, ready to tear out another's throat. One says this, and another that – but they cannot agree. Neither can any of them give so strong a reason that another cannot improve. For they are all out of the right way, and without the Spirit of God, to judge such

spiritual things. Even so, to this I answer that when Christ called twelve up into the mountain, and chose them, then immediately, without any anointing or ceremony, they were his apostles. That is, they were ministers chosen to be sent to preach his testament to the whole world. And after the resurrection, when he opened their minds, and gave them wits to understand the secrets of his testament, and how to bind and loose, and what he would have them to do in all things – then he sent them forth with a commandment to preach, and to bind the unbelieving that continue in sin, and to loose the believing that repent. And that commandment, or charge, made them bishops, priests, popes, and everything else. If they say that Christ made them priests at his Maundy (or last supper), when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," Luk 22.19 I answer that, the apostles did not then know what he meant – yet I will not strive nor say anything against it. Nevertheless the commandment and the charge which he gave them, made them priests.

And (Acts 1.26), when Matthias was chosen by lot, it is not to be doubted that the apostles, in their usual manner, prayed for him, that God would give him grace to minister his office truly; and that they put their hands on him, and exhorted him, and gave him charge to be diligent and faithful; and then he was as great as the best of them. And (Acts 6.3-6), when the disciples that believed had chosen seven[152] deacons to minister to the widows, the apostles prayed and put their hands on them, and admitted them without more ado. Laying on hands did not follow the manner of the silent blessing of our holy bishops, with two fingers. Rather, they spoke to them, and told them their duty, and gave them a charge, and warned them to be faithful in the Lord's business – just as we choose temporal officers, and read their duty to them, and they promise to be faithful ministers, and then they are admitted. Nor is there any other manner or ceremony at all required in making our spiritual officers than to choose an able person, and then to repeat to him his duty, and give him his charge, and so put him in his position. As for that other solemn doubt (as they call it), whether Judas[153] was a priest or not, I do not care what he was then. But I am sure of this, that now he is not only priest, but also bishop, cardinal, and pope!

OF PENANCE.

PENANCE is a word of the clergy's own forging, to deceive us with, as with many other things. In the [Latin] Scripture we find poenitentia, "repentance:" agite poenitentiam, "do repent;" poeniteat vos, "let it repent you." In Greek, it is metanoyte,[154] "repent,"[155] or "let it repent you." But they have made penance out of repentance to blind the people, and to make them think that they must take pains, and do some holy deeds, in order to make satisfaction for their sins – namely those things which the clergy enjoin them to do.

As you may see in the chronicles,[156] when great kings and tyrants, by the violence of the sword, conquered other kings' lands, and slew all before them – when these kings came to their senses, and their conscience was struck by their wicked deeds, then these bishops coupled them, not to Christ, but to the pope. They preached the pope to them, and made these kings submit themselves and their realms to the holy father the pope. And they made these kings do penance, as they call it. That is, they made them obey such injunctions as the pope and bishops would command them to do: to build abbeys; to endow the clergy with a livelihood; to pray for the clergy forever; and to give the clergy exemptions, privilege, and license to do whatever they lusted after, unpunished.

Emperor Henry IV submits to pope Gregory VII

Repentance goes before faith, and it prepares the way to Christ, and to the promises. For Christ only comes to those who see their sins in the law, and repent. Repentance, that is to say, this mourning and sorrow of the heart, lasts all our lives, for we find ourselves, all our lives, too weak

for God's law; and therefore we sorrow and mourn, longing for strength. Repentance is not a sacrament, just as faith, hope, love, and knowledge of a man's sins, are not to be called sacraments. For they are spiritual and invisible. Now a sacrament must be an outward sign that may be seen, to signify, represent, and put a man in remembrance of some spiritual promise which cannot be seen except by faith alone. Repentance, and all the good deeds which accompany it to slay the lusts of the flesh, are signified by baptism. For Paul says, Rom 6.3, as it is repeated above: "Do you not remember," he says, "that all we who are baptized in the name of Christ Jesus, are baptized to die with him?" We are buried with him in baptism to die; that is, to kill the lusts and rebellion which remain in the flesh. And after that he says, "You are dead, as concerning sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord." If you look at the profession of our hearts, and the Spirit and forgiveness which we have received through Christ's merits, we are fully dead. But if you look at the rebellion of the flesh, we only begin to die, and to be baptized, that is, to drown and quench the lusts; and we are fully baptized at the last minute of death. As concerning the working of the Spirit, we begin to live, and grow every day more and more, both in knowledge and also in godly living, according to how our lusts abate – just as a child receives its entire soul on the first day of life, and yet grows daily in the operations and workings of it.

OF CONFESSION.

CONFESSION is diverse, and inseparably follows true faith. It is confessing and acknowledging with the mouth, what we put our trust and confidence in. As when we say our Credo, we confess that we trust in God the Father Almighty, and in his truth and promises; and in his Son Jesus, our Lord, and in his merits and deservings; and in the Holy Ghost, and in his power, assistance and guiding. This confession is necessary for all men that will be saved. For Christ says, Mat 10.33, "Whoever denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father that is in heaven."

And of this confession, says the holy apostle Paul, Rom 10.10, "the belief of the heart justifies; and to acknowledge with the mouth makes a man safe." This is a wonderful text for our philosophers, or rather sophisters, our worldly-wise enemies of the wisdom of God, our deep and profound wells without water, our clouds without moisture of rain – that is to say, natural souls without the Spirit of God and without feeling of godly things. To justify, and to make safe, are both one thing. And to confess with the mouth is a good work, and the fruit of a true faith, as all other works are.

If you repent and believe the promises, then God's truth justifies you; that is, God forgives you your sins, and seals you with his holy Spirit, and makes you heir of everlasting life through Christ's deservings. Now if you have true faith, so that you see the exceeding and infinite love and mercy which God has showed you freely in Christ, then you must love in return. And love cannot but compel you to work, and to boldly confess and acknowledge your Lord Christ, and the trust which you have in his word. And this knowledge makes you safe; that is, it declares that you are safe already. It certifies your heart, and makes you feel that your faith is right, and that God's Spirit is in you, as all other good works will do. For if, when it comes to the point, you had no desire to work, nor power to confess, then how could you presume to think that God's Spirit was in you?

There is another confession which goes before faith, and accompanies repentance. For whoever repents, acknowledges his sins in his heart. And whoever acknowledge his sins, receives forgiveness, as John says (1Joh 1.9), "If we knowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" that is, because he has promised, he must do it for his truth's sake. This confession is necessary all our lives, as is repentance. And what you understand of repentance, so understand of this confession; for it is likewise included in the sacrament of baptism. For we always repent, and always acknowledge or confess our sins to God, and yet we do not despair; for we remember that we are washed in Christ's blood, which our baptism represents and signifies to us.

Confession in the ear is truly a work of Satan – the falsest ever wrought; and which has most devoured the faith. It began among the Greeks, but it was not then used (as it is now) to account for all of a man's sins in the priest's ear. Rather, it was to ask counsel about doubts men had, as you may see in St. Jerome, and other authors. Nor did they go to priests only, which were very few at that time – only to those who preached the word of God; for this advantage in having so many priests saying masses was not yet found; but they went indifferently to where they saw a good and a learned man. And because of a little knavery,[157] which a deacon at Constantinople played through confession with one of the chief wives of the city, it was abandoned. But we, antichrist's possession, the more knavery that we see growing by this practice daily, the more we establish it. A Christian man is a spiritual thing; and he has God's word in his heart, and God's Spirit to certify all things to him. He is not bound to come to any man's ear. And as for the reasons for this practice, which the clergy make up, these are all

but persuasions of man's wisdom. First, as pertaining to the keys and manner of binding and loosing, it was repeated enough above and in other places. You may also see how the apostles used them in the Acts; and, in Paul's epistles, how the Spirit came at the preaching of faith, and certified to their hearts that they were justified through believing the promises.

When a man feels that his heart consents to the law of God, and feels meek, patient, courteous, and, merciful to his neighbor, altered and fashioned like Christ; why should he doubt that God has forgiven him, and chosen him, and put his Spirit in him, though he never crooned his sin into the priest's ear?

They give one blind reason for it, saying, 'How will the priest unbind, loose, and forgive the sin which he does not know?' How did the apostles? These men forsake the Scripture, and run to their blind reasons, stretching Scripture for a carnal purpose. When I have said in your ear all that I have done my life, in order, with all the circumstances in the most shameful manner, what more can you do than preach the promises to me, saying, 'If you repent and believe, God's truth will save you for Christ's sake?' You do not see my heart; you do not know whether I repent or not; nor whether I consent to the law that it is holy, righteous, and good. Moreover, whether I believe the promises or not is also unknown to you. If you preach the law and the promises (as the apostles did), those whom God has chosen should repent, and believe, and be saved, now as well as then. Yet antichrist must know all secrets – to establish his kingdom, and work his mysteries.

They also bring up the story of the ten lepers, Luke 17.12-19. Here mark their falsehood, and learn to recognize them forever. The fourteenth Sunday after the feast of the Trinity, [158] the beginning of the seventh lesson, is this gospel; and the eighth and the ninth lessons, along with the rest of the seventh, is the exposition of Bede on this passage. Bede says, "Of all that Christ healed, of whatever disease, he sent none to the priest but the lepers;" and he interprets "lepers" as followers of false doctrine. Spiritual officers and the learned men of the congregation, Bede says, ought to examine and correct their learning with God's word, and warn the congregation to beware those who follow false doctrine. If such wayward men are afterward healed by the grace of Christ, then they ought to come before the congregation, and there openly confess their true faith. But all other vices (Bede says), God heals within, in the conscience. Though clergy read this at their matins, [159] yet at high mass, if they have any sermon at all, they lie – saying things clean contrary to this open truth. Nor are they ashamed of it at all. Why? Because they walk in complete darkness.

OF CONTRITION.

CONTRITION and repentance are both one thing; they are simply a sorrowful and mourning heart. And because God has promised mercy to a contrite heart, that is, to a sorrowful and repenting heart, the clergy have twisted God's word in order to establish their wicked tradition, and have feigned that new word, attrition. [160] They say, 'You cannot know whether your sorrow or repentance is contrition or attrition, unless you are confessed. When you are confessed, then it is true contrition.' O foxy Pharisee! That is your leaven of which Christ so diligently warned us to beware, Mat 16.6. And it is the prophecy of Peter, "Through covetousness, with feigned words, they will make merchandise of you." 2Pet 2.3. With such glosses they corrupt God's word, to sit over the consciences of the people, to lead them captive, and to make a prey of them – buying and selling sins to satisfy their insatiable covetousness. Nevertheless, the truth is that, when any man has trespassed against God, if he repents and acknowledges his trespass, God promises him forgiveness without ear-confession.

If someone has offended his neighbor, and he repents and acknowledges his fault, asking forgiveness, and his neighbor forgives him, then God also forgives him by his holy promise, (Mat 18.35). Likewise, someone who sins publicly, if he repents and turns when he is openly rebuked, then if the congregation forgives him, God forgives him. And so whoever repents when he is rebuked, if he acknowledges his fault, he is forgiven.

Also, the one who doubts, or has his conscience tangled, ought to share his mind with a faithful brother who is learned, and that brother will give him faithful counsel to help him with it.

I ought to confess to someone I trespass against. But I am not bound to confess myself to you, O antichrist, whom I have not offended.

Those under the old law had no confession in the ear. Nor did the apostles and those who followed hundreds of years after, know of any such whispering. How then was their attrition turned into contrition? Indeed, why are we, whom Christ came to loose, more bound than the Jews? Indeed, why are we more bound without Scripture? For Christ did not come to make us more bound; but to loose us, and to make a thousand things not sin which were sin before – and yet have now become sin again. He left no other law with us than the law of love. He did not loose us from Moses to bind us to antichrist's ear. God has not tied Christ to antichrist's car, nor has he poured all his mercy in there. For there is no record in the Old Testament that antichrist's ear should be Propitiatorium, that is, God's mercy-stool; or that God should creep into so narrow a hole so that he could be found nowhere else. Nor did God write his laws, or yet his holy promises, in antichrist's ear. Rather, he has engraved them with his holy Spirit in the hearts of those who believe, so that they might have them always ready at hand to be saved by them.

SATISFACTION.

As pertaining to satisfaction, understand this, that the one who loves God has a commandment to "love his neighbor also." (1Joh 4.20) If you have offended your neighbor, you must make amends or satisfaction, or at least, if you are notable, ask his forgiveness. And if he would have the mercy of God, he is bound to forgive you. If he will not, yet God forgives you, if you thus submit yourself. But to God, Christ is a perpetual and an everlasting satisfaction, forevermore.

As often as you fall through frailty, repent and come back, and you are safe and welcome – as you may see by the example of the riotous son, Luke 15.[161] If you have leaped out of sanctuary, come in again. If you have fallen from the way of truth, come back to it, and you are safe: if you have gone astray, come to the fold again, and the shepherd, Christ, shall save you. Indeed, the angels of heaven will rejoice at your coming, so far is it that any man would beat you or chide you for it. If any Pharisee envies you, resents you, or rails against you, your Father will answer for you, as you see in the fore-mentioned example or parable. Whoever therefore has gone out of the way, by whatever chance it may happen, let him come to his baptism again, and to its profession, and he shall be safe.

For though the washing of baptism is past, yet its power, that is to say, the word of God which baptism preaches, lasts and speaks forever. Just as Paul is past and gone, nevertheless the word that Paul preached is everlasting, and it ever saves as many as come to it with a repenting heart and a steadfast faith.

By this you can see that when the clergy make penance out of repentance, and call it a sacrament, and divide it into contrition, confession, and satisfaction, they speak from their own heads, and lie falsely.

ABSOLUTION.

THEIR absolution also justifies no man from sin. "For with the heart men believe, to be justified with it," Paul says (Rom 10.9). That is, through faith and believing the promises are we justified, as I have sufficiently proved in other places with the Scripture. "Faith" (says Paul in the same place) "comes by hearing," Rom 10.17 that is to say, by hearing the preacher who is sent from God, and who preaches God's promises. Now, when you absolve in Latin, the unlearned does not hear, or, "How," says Paul, 1Cor 14.16, "when you bless in an unknown tongue, will the unlearned say Amen to your thanksgiving? For he does not know what you say." So likewise the lay-person does not know whether you loose or bind, or whether you bless or curse. It is the same way if the lay-person understands Latin, or even if the priest absolves in English. For in his absolution, the priest does not repeat any promise of God; instead, he speaks his own words, saying, 'By the authority of Peter and Paul, I absolve or loose you from all your sins.' You say this, and you are only a lying man; and never more truly than now.

You say, 'I forgive you your sins;' yet the Scripture, Joh 1.29, says that only Christ forgives, and "takes away the sins of the world." And Paul and Peter, and all the apostles, preach that all is forgiven in Christ, and for Christ's sake. Only God's word looses, and you in preaching that word also loose, or else sins are not loosed.

Whoever has ears, let him hear, and let him that has eyes, see. If any man loves to be blind, his blindness is on his own head, and not on mine.

They allege for themselves the words of Christ to Peter, Mat 16.19, "Whatever you bind on earth, it will be bound; and whatever you loose," and so forth. 'Look, they say, whatever we bind, and whatever we loose – nothing is excepted here.' And they use another text of Christ, in the last chapter of Matthew: "All power is given to me," says Christ, "in heaven and in earth: go therefore and preach," etc. Mat 28.18-19. Preaching leaves the pope out; it says, 'Look, all power is given to me in heaven and in earth;' and thereupon the pope takes upon himself temporal power above king and emperor, and he makes laws and binds them to it. And he takes similar power over God's laws, and dispenses with them at his pleasure, making no sin of what God makes sin, and makes sin where God makes none. Indeed, he clean wipes out God's laws, and makes laws at his pleasure. And whatever he lusts after is lawful for him. He binds where God looses, and looses where God binds. He blesses where God curses, and curses where God blesses. He takes authority also to bind and loose in purgatory. I allow that he may do that, for it is a creature of his own making. He also binds the angels: for we read of popes that have commanded the angels to fetch various persons out of purgatory. Be that as it may, I am not yet certified to say whether they obeyed or not.

Understand, therefore, that to bind and to loose is to preach the law of God and the gospel, or the promises. As you may see in the third chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul calls the preaching of the law, the ministration of death and damnation, and the preaching of the promises the ministering of the Spirit and of righteousness. 2Cor 3.7-9 For when the law is preached, all men are found sinners, and therefore they are damned. And when the gospel and glad tidings are preached, then all who repent and believe, are found righteous in Christ, And this is how all the old doctors expound it. Saint Jerome says of this phrase 'whatever you bind,' that the bishops and priests, for lack of understanding, take a little presumption of the Pharisees upon themselves, and think that they have authority to bind innocents, and to loose the wicked; which is what our pope and bishops do. For they say the curse is to be feared, whether right or wrong. Though you have not deserved it, yet if the pope curses you, then you are said to be in peril of your soul – as they lie about it. Indeed, no matter how wrongfully cursed a man may be, they say he must be willing to buy absolution. But Saint Jerome says, 'As the priest of the old law made the lepers clean or unclean, so the priest of the new law binds and unbinds.' But in

fact the priest of the old law made no man a leper, nor did he cleanse any man, but only God; Exo 4.6; Num 12.10 and the priest judged only by Moses' law, as to who was clean and unclean, when they were brought to him. Lev 13.43-44

So here we have the law of God to judge what sin is and what it is not, and who is bound and who is not. Moreover, if any man has sinned, if he repents and believes the promise, we are sure by God's word that he is loosed and forgiven in Christ. The priests do not have any other authority to preach than this. Christ's apostles had no other authority themselves, as it appears throughout the New Testament. Therefore it is manifest that these clergy have none.

St. Paul says, 1Cor 15.27 "When we say all things are under Christ, he is to be excepted that put all things under him." God the Father is not under Christ, but above Christ, and Christ's head. Christ says, John 12.49-50, "I have not spoken of my own head, but my Father, who sent me, commanded what I should say and what I should speak. Whatever I speak therefore, even as my Father told me, so I speak."

If Christ had a law for what he should do, then how can it happen that the pope runs at large, lawless? Though all power was given to Christ in heaven and in earth, he still had no power over his Father, nor to reign temporally over temporal princes. Instead, he had a commandment to obey them. How then does the pope have such temporal authority over king and emperor? How does he have authority above God's laws, and to command the angels, the saints, and even God himself?

Christ's authority, which he gave to his disciples, was to preach the law, and to bring sinners to repentance, and then to preach the promises to them which the Father had made to all men for Christ's sake. And he sent his apostles to preach only the same. When a king sends out his judges and gives them his authority, saying, 'What you do, that will I do; I give you my full power,' he does not mean, by that full power, that they should destroy any town or city they please, or oppress any man, or do whatever they are inclined, or that they should reign over the lords and dukes of his realm, and even over himself. Rather, he gives them a law, and the authority to bind and loose as far as that law stretches and mentions – that is, to punish the evil ones who do wrong, and to avenge the poor who suffer wrong. As far as the law stretches, the king will defend his judges against all men. And just as temporal judges bind and loose temporally, so the priests bind and loose spiritually, and in no other ways. Even so, by falsehood and subtlety, the pope reigns under Christ, just as his cardinals and bishops reign under kings: lawless.

The pope (they say) absolves or looses a poena et culpa; that is, from the fault or trespass, and from the pain due to the trespass. They say that if a man repents, God forgives the offense only, and not the pain as well. He turns the everlasting pain into a temporal pain, and he appoints seven years in purgatory for every deadly sin. But the pope, for money, will forgive both, and thus he has more power than God, and he is more merciful than God. 'I do this,' says the pope, 'of my full power, and of the treasure of the church; of the deservings of martyrs and confessors, and of the merits of Christ.'

First, the merits of the saints did not save them, but they were saved by Christ's merits only.

Secondarily, God has promised Christ's merits to all who repent; so that whoever repents, is immediately heir of all Christ's merits, and beloved of God just as Christ is. How then did this foul monster come to be lord over Christ's merits, so that he has power to sell what God gives freely? O dreamers! Indeed, O devils, and O venomous scorpions, what poison you have in your tails! O pestilent leaven, that so turns the sweet bread of Christ's doctrine into the bitterness of gall!

The friars run in the same spirit, and teach, saying, 'Do good deeds, and redeem the pains that await you in purgatory; indeed, give us something to do good works for you.' And thus sin has become the most profitable merchandise in the world. O the cruel wrath of God upon us, because we do not love the truth!

For this is the damnation and judgment of God, to send a false prophet to one who will not hear the truth. "I know you," says Christ, (John 5.42-43) "that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, you will you receive him." Thus God avenges himself on the malicious hearts which have no love for his truth.

They have either wiped out all the promises of God, or they have thus leavened them with open lies to establish their confession. And to keep us from the knowledge of the truth, they do all things in Latin. They pray in Latin, they christen in Latin, they bless in Latin, they give absolution in Latin; they only curse in the English tongue. In this they take greater authority upon themselves than ever God gave them. For in their curses (as they call them) with book, bell, and candle, they command God and Christ, and the angels, and all the saints, to curse them: 'Curse them God (they say), Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; curse them Virgin Mary,' etc. O you abominable! Who gave you authority to command God to curse? God commands you to bless, and you command him to curse! "Bless them that persecute you: bless, but do not curse," says St. Paul, Rom 12.14. What tyranny will these clergy not use over men, these men who presume and take upon themselves to be lords over God, and to command him? If God curses any man, who will bless and make him better? No man can amend himself unless God pours his Spirit into him. Do we not have a commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves? How can I love him, and curse him also? James says, "It is not possible for blessing and cursing to both come out of one mouth." Jas 3.10 Christ commands, Mat 5.44, "Love your enemies. Bless those that curse you. Do good to those that hate you. Pray for those that do you wrong and persecute you; so that you may be the children of your heavenly Father."

In the marches of Wales,[162] it is the custom that if any man has an ox or a cow stolen, he comes to the curate, and desires him to curse the thief; and he commands every man in the parish to give him God's curse and his own: 'He has God's curse and mine,' says every man in the parish. O merciful God! What is blasphemy if not this, and the shaming of the doctrine of Christ?

Understand therefore, that the power of excommunication is this: if any man sins openly, and does not amend when he is warned, then he ought to be openly rebuked before the whole parish. And the priest ought to prove by the Scripture, that all such persons have no part with Christ. For Christ serves only for those who love the law of God, and consent that it is good, holy, and righteous; and who repent, sorrowing and mourning for the power and strength to fulfill his law. And the whole parish ought to be warned to avoid the company of all such persons, and consider them heathen. Mat 18.17 This is not done so that he should perish; but to save him, to make him ashamed, and to kill the lusts of the flesh, so that the spirit might come to the knowledge of truth. We ought to pity him, and to have compassion on him, and with all diligence to pray to God for him, to give him grace to repent and to come to the right way again; and not use such tyranny over God and man, commanding God to curse him. And if he repents, then with all mercy we ought to receive him again. This you may see in Mat 18, 1Cor 5, and 2Cor 2.5-11.

CONFIRMATION.

IF Confirmation has a promise, then it justifies as far as the promise extends. If it has no promise, then it is not from God, as the bishops are not. The apostles and ministers of God

preach God's word; and God's signs or sacraments signify God's word, and they put us in remembrance of the promises which God has made to us in Christ. By contrast, antichrist's bishops do not preach; and their sacraments do not speak; but like the disguised bishop's mum,[163] so their superstitious sacraments are silent. After the bishops abandoned preaching, they feigned this silent ceremony of confirmation, to have something, at least, by which they might reign over their dioceses. They also reserved to themselves the christening of bells, and the conjuring or "hallowing" of churches and churchyards, and of altars and super-altars, and the hallowing of chalices, and so forth – whatever is of honor or profit to them. This confirmation, and the other conjurations also, they have now committed to their suffragans;[164] because they themselves have no leisure to minister such things, because of their lusts and pleasures, and the abundance of all things, and because of the burden they have involving the king's matters and the business of the realm. One keeps the privy seal; another the great seal; the third is confessor, (that is to say, a privy traitor and a secret Judas); this one is president of the prince's council; that one is an ambassador; another a member of the king's secret council. Woe to the realms where they belong to the council. Truly, they are as profitable to the realms with their counsel, as wolves are to the sheep, or as foxes are to the geese.

They will say that the Holy Ghost is given through such ceremonies. If God had promised it, so it would be; but Paul says, (Gal 3.2) that the Spirit is received through the preaching of the faith. And (Acts 10.44) while Peter preached the faith, the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and on his household. What then shall we say to what they will lay against us, in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the apostles, where Peter and John put their hands on the Samaritans, and the Holy Ghost came? I say, that "by putting," or "with putting, "or "as they put their hands on them," the Holy Ghost came. Nevertheless, putting on hands neither helped nor hindered. For the text says, "They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost." Act 8.15-17

God had made the apostles a promise, that with such miracles he would confirm their preaching, and move others to the faith. (Mark 16.17-20) The apostles, therefore, believed and prayed that God would fulfill his promise; and God, for his truth's sake, did so. So was it the prayer of faith that brought the Holy Ghost? You may see this in the last chapter of James. "If any man is sick," says James, "call the elders of the congregation, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall heal the sick." Jas 5.14 Where a promise is made, there is bold faith to pray, and God is true to give her her petition. Putting on hands is an indifferent thing. For the Holy Ghost came by the preaching of the faith, and miracles were done at the prayer of faith as well, without putting on hands, as you see in many places. Putting on hands was the way of that nation, just as it was to rend their clothes, and to put on sackcloth, and to sprinkle themselves with ashes and earth when they heard of or saw anything sorrowful. It was Paul's way to stretch out his hand when he preached; and it is our manner to hold up our hands when we pray. Some kiss their thumbnail, and put it to their eyes, and we put our hands on children's heads when we bless them, saying, 'Christ bless you, my son, and God make you a good man.' These gestures neither help nor hinder. You may well see this in Acts 13.2-3, where the Holy Ghost commanded the church to separate Paul and Barnabas to go and preach. Then the others fasted and prayed, and put their hands on their heads, and sent them out. So they did not receive the Holy Ghost by putting on hands. But the others, as they put their hands on Paul and Barnabas' heads, prayed for them: that God would go with them, and strengthen them; and encouraged them also, bidding them to be strong in God; and they warned them to be faithful and diligent in the work of God, and so forth.

ANOINTING WITH OIL

LAST of all comes anointing with oil. It is without a promise, and therefore it is without the Spirit, and without profit; rather, it is altogether unfruitful and superstitious. The sacraments, as the clergy have conceived them, are all without a promise, and therefore they do not help. For "whatever is not of faith is sin." (Rom 14.23). Now without a promise there can be no faith. The sacraments which Christ himself ordained, did have promises, and so they would save us if we knew them, and believed them, and they were not ministered in the Latin tongue. So they have become as unfruitful as their other rituals. Indeed, the clergy make us believe that the work itself, without the promise, saves us – this is a doctrine they learned from Aristotle. And thus we have become a hundred times worse than the wicked Jews who believed that it was the work of the sacrifice that justified them. Paul fights against this in every epistle, proving that nothing helps except the promises which God has sworn in Christ. Ask the people what they understand by their baptism or washing? You will see that they believe the mere plunging into water is what saves them. They know nothing of the promises, nor what is signified by baptism. Baptism is called volowing in many places of England, because the priest says, 'Volo [I wish it] say you.' 'The child was well-volowed' (they say); 'yes, and our vicar is as fair a volower as any a priest within twenty miles.'

Behold how narrowly the people look at the ceremony. If anything is left out, or if the child is not entirely dipped in the water, or if, because the child is sick, the priest dares not plunge him into the water, but pours water on his head, how they tremble! How they quake! 'What do you say, sir John, (the priest asks) is this child christened enough? Does it have its full christendom?' They truly believe that the child is not christened. Indeed, I have known priests that have gone to the orders again, supposing that they were not priests, just because the bishop left one of his ceremonies undone. What they call confirmation, the people call bishoping. They think that if the bishop butters the child on the forehead, that it is safe. They think that the work is what makes safe, and likewise they suppose about anointing with oil. Now this is false doctrine, truly. For James says, in the first chapter of his epistle: "Of his good will he birthed us with the word of life;" Jas 1.18 that is, with the word of promise in which we are made God's sons, and heirs of the goodness of God, before any good works. For we cannot work God's will until we are his sons, and know his will, and have his Spirit to teach us. And St. Paul says, in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians: "Christ cleansed the congregation in the fountain of water through the word." Eph 5.26 And Peter says, in the first of his first epistle: "You are born anew, not of mortal seed, but of immortal seed, by the word of God, which lives and lasts forever." 1Pet 1.23 Paul in every epistle warns us that we should put no trust in works, and to beware of persuasions or arguments of man's wisdom, of superstition, of ceremonies, of pope-holiness, and of all kinds of disguising. He exhorts us to cleave fast to the naked and pure word of God. The promise of God is the anchor that saves us in all temptations. If all the world is against us, God's word is stronger than the world. If the world kills us, that will make us alive again. If it is possible for the world to throw us into hell, from there God's word shall yet bring us back.

By this you see that it is not the work, but the promise that justifies us through faith. Now where there is no promise, there can be no faith, and therefore no justifying, no matter how glorious the works may be. They preach the sacrament of Christ's body in this way: you must believe that it is no longer bread, but the very body of Christ, flesh, blood and bone, even as he went about here on earth, except for his coat. For that is still here; I do not know in how many places.[165] I pray you, what does all this help? There is no promise here. The devils know that Christ died on a Friday, and the Jews also. How are they helped by it? We have a promise that Christ, and his body, and his blood, and all that he did, and suffered, is a sacrifice, a ransom, and a full satisfaction for our sins; and that God for his sake will think no more about them, if we have the power to repent and believe it.

Holy-work men think that God rejoices in the deed itself, without any further respect. They also think that God, as a cruel tyrant, rejoices and takes pleasure in our pain, without any further respect. And therefore many of them martyr themselves without cause, following the example of Baal's priests who cut themselves to please their god,[166] and just as the old heathen pagans sacrificed their children in the fire to their gods.[Lev 18.21] The monks of the Charterhouse think that eating fish in itself pleases God, and they do not relate the eating to the chastening of the body. For when they have slain their bodies with cold phlegm, from fish-eating, they will still eat no flesh, and slay themselves before their time. We too, when we offer our sons or daughters, and compel or persuade them to vow and profess chastity, think that the pain, and the rage and burning which they suffer in abstaining from marriage,[1Cor 7.9] pleases God; and so we do not relate our chastity to our neighbor's profit. For we see thousands fall to innumerable diseases by it, and die before their days. Indeed, though we see them break the commandments of God daily, and also being impatient, they work abominations against nature, too shameful to be spoken of – yet we will we not let them marry, but compel them to continue in it, by force. This is what our divines teach, as it appears by their arguments. The one who endures the most pain, they say, is the greatest; and so forth.

The people are thoroughly brought to believe that the deed in itself, without any further respect, saves them: if they are so long at church; or say so many paternosters; and read so much in a tongue they do not understand; or go so long on a pilgrimage; and endure so much pain; or fast such a superstitious fast; or observe such a superstitious observance, neither profitable to themselves nor to their neighbors. But these things must be done with good intentions, the clergy say, to please God with. Indeed, they think that the kiss of peace[167] is a meritorious deed, when loving their neighbor, and forgiving him, (which is the thing signified by it), they do not study to do, nor do they have the power to do it, nor do they think they are bound to do it if they are offended by their neighbor. So sorely have our false prophets led the people out of their wits, and wrapped them in darkness, and rocked them asleep in blindness and ignorance. Now all such doctrine is false doctrine, and all such faith is false faith. For the deed does not please, but only as far as it is applied to our neighbor's profit, or to the taming of our bodies in order to keep the commandment.

Now the body must be tamed only, and not killed. And that should be done with the remedies God has ordained. You must not reject the natural remedy which God has ordained, and bring yourself into such a state that you break God's commandment, or kill yourself, or burn night and day without rest, so that you cannot once think a godly thought. Nor is it lawful to abandon your neighbor, and withdraw yourself from serving him, just to get yourself into a den and live idly, profitable to no man, but robbing all men first of your faith, and then of your goods and land and all you have – along with making men believe in the hypocrisy of these superstitious prayers and pope-holy deeds. The prayer of faith, and the deeds of faith that spring from love, are accepted before God. The prayer is good according to the proportion of faith; and the deed is good according to the measure of love.

Now he that bids[168] in the world, as monks call it, has more faith than the cloisterer; for he depends on God in all things. He must trust God to send him good speed, good luck, favor, help, a good master, a good neighbor, a good servant, a good wife, a good chapman[169]-merchant to send his merchandise safely to land, and a thousand similar provisions. He also loves more; this is apparent in that he always does service to his neighbor. We are equally bound to pray for one another, and to pray is a thing that we may always do, whatever we have in hand; and no man may hire another to do that. Christ's blood has hired us already. Thus God

delights in the deed as far as we do it, either to serve our neighbor (as I have said), or to tame the flesh, so that we may fulfill the commandment from the bottom of the heart.

And as for enduring our pain, God does not rejoice in it like a tyrant; but he pities us, and as it were, he mourns with us, and is always ready and at hand to help us if we call, just as a merciful father and a kind mother would be. Nevertheless, God allows us to fall into many temptations and much adversity: indeed, he himself lays the cross of tribulation on our backs – not that he rejoices in our sorrow, but he does it to drive sin out of the flesh, for none can be cured otherwise. The physician and surgeon do many things which are painful to the sick, not that they rejoice in the pains of these poor wretches, but they do it to persecute and drive out the diseases which cannot otherwise be healed.

The Cloisters at Norwich Cathedral in England

When people believe therefore, that if they do so much work, or suffer so much pain, or go so far on a pilgrimage, that they are safe, that is a false faith. For a Christian man is not saved by works, but by faith in the promises before all good works. Although the works (when we work God's commandment with a good will, and not works of our own imagination) declare that we are safe, and they declare that the Spirit of him that has made us safe is in us. Indeed, just as God purges and justifies the heart through the preaching of faith, even so he purges and justifies the members through the working of deeds, making us perfect both in body and soul, after the likeness of Christ.

Nor does a Christian man need to run here or there to Rome, Jerusalem, St. James, or any other pilgrimage far or near, to be saved by it, or to purchase forgiveness of his sins. For a Christian man's health and salvation is within him, even in his mouth. Romans 10.8, "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach," says Paul. If we believe the promises with our hearts, and confess them with our mouths, we are safe. This is our health within us. "But how shall they believe what they do not hear? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" says Paul (Romans 10.14). For looking at the promises of God, all our preachers are silent; or if they preach them, they so sauce and leaven them, that no stomach can stand them, or find any savor in them. For they paint us such a picture of ear-confession that it is impossible to keep it, and more impossible to have it stand with the promises and testament of God. They enjoin the people to do penance, as they call it – to fast, go on pilgrimages, and give so much to make satisfaction for sins. They preach their masses, their merits, their pardons, their ceremonies, and thus put the promise clean out of men's possession. The word of health and salvation "is near you, in your mouth and your heart," says Paul. No, they say, your salvation is in our faithful ear. This is their hold on men: by ear-confession they know all secrets; thereby they mock all men and all men's wives; they beguile knight and squire, lord and king, and betray all realms. The bishops, along with the pope, have a certain conspiring and secret treason against the whole world; by confession, they know what kings and emperors think. If anything is against the clergy, they do ever so much evil, then they move their captives to war and to fight, and give them pardons to slay whomever they would have taken out of their way. By falsehood, they have taken from all kings and emperors their rights and duties, which the clergy now claim as their freedoms, liberties, and privileges. They have perverted the ordinances that God left in the world, and have made every king swear to defend the clergy's falsehood against them. So that now, if any man preaches God's word in truth, and shows the freedom and liberty of the soul which we have in Christ, or if he intends to restore kings to their duties and rights again, and to the position and authority which they have from God, and from shadows to make them into kings in deed, and to put the world in his order again – then the kings will offer their swords and authority to these hypocrites, to slay such a

person, so drunk are they with the wine of the whore. Joel 5.3

The text that follows in Paul they will happily lay to my charge, and others. "How will they preach unless they are sent?" asks Paul (Rom 10.15). These men will say, 'We are the pope, cardinals, and bishops: all authority is ours. The Scripture pertains to us, and it is our possession. And we have a law that whoever presumes to preach without the authority of the bishops, is excommunicated in doing so.' They will ask, 'Therefore, from where do you have your authority?' The old Pharisees likewise had the Scripture in captivity; and they asked Christ, "By what authority do you do these things?" It was as if to say, 'We are Pharisees, and you are not of our order, nor do you have authority from us.' Christ asked them another question – and I will ask it of our hypocrites. 'Who sent you? God? No, he that is sent from God speaks God's word.' Joh 3.34 Now you do not speak God's word, or anything except your own laws, which are made clean contrary to God's word. Christ's apostles preached Christ, and not themselves. He that is of the truth, preaches the truth. Now you preach nothing but lies, and therefore you are of the devil, the father of all lies, and you are sent by him. Joh 8.44 As for my authority, or who sent me, my works report me to be the Christ. Joh 5.36; 10.25 If God's word bears record that I speak the truth, then why should any man doubt that God, the Father of truth and of light, has sent me – just as the father of lies and of darkness has sent you; and that the Spirit of truth and of light is with me, just as the spirit of lies and of darkness is with you?' They will respond, 'By this means you would have every man be a preacher.' No, truly. For God will not have that, and therefore I will not have it – no more than I would have every man of London be the mayor, or every man of the realm be its king. God is not the author of dissension and strife, but of unity and peace, and of good order. I would have it, therefore, that where a congregation is gathered together in Christ, one be chosen following the rule of Paul, that only he preach and no one else openly; but every man should teach his household following the same doctrine. If the preacher preaches falsely, and God moves someone's heart to rebuke and reprove the false teacher with the clear and manifest Scripture, then it will be lawful for him to do so; he is no doubt a true prophet sent by God. For the Scripture is God's, and theirs who believe it – not false prophets.

A sacrament then, is the same as a holy sign. And the sacraments which Christ ordained, preach God's word to us. Therefore they justify and minister the Spirit to those who believe. Paul, through preaching the gospel, was a minister of righteousness, and of the Spirit, to all who believed his preaching. Silent ceremonies are not sacraments, but superstition. Christ's sacraments preach the faith of Christ, just as his apostles did, and thereby they justify. Antichrist's silent ceremonies do not preach the faith that is in Christ, just as antichrist's apostles (our bishops and cardinals) do not. But as antichrist's bishops are ordained to kill whoever preaches the true faith of Christ, so are his ceremonies ordained to quench the faith which Christ's sacraments preach. By this you may know the difference between Christ's signs or sacraments, and antichrist's signs or ceremonies: Christ's signs speak, and antichrist's are silent.

By this you see what is to be thought about all other ceremonies, such as hallowed water, bread, salt, boughs, bells, wax, ashes, and so forth; and all the other disguisings and apes'-play; and all kinds of conjurations, such as conjuring churches and church-yards, altar-stones, and the like. Where there is no promise of God, there can be no faith, nor justifying, nor forgiveness of sins. For it is more than madness to look for anything from God beyond what he has promised. However far he has promised, that is how far he is bound to those who believe, and no farther. Therefore, it is plain idolatry to have faith or trust in anything where God has not promised; it is worshipping your own imagination instead of God.

Let us see the pith of a ceremony or two, to judge the rest by. In conjuring holy water, they pray

that whoever is sprinkled with it may receive health in body and soul. They do likewise in making holy bread and so forth in the conjurations of other ceremonies. Now we see by daily experience that half their prayer is unheard, for no man receives bodily health by it. It is no more likely that they receive soul-health by it, and indeed, we confirm that by experience. For no man, by sprinkling himself with holy water, or by eating holy bread, is more merciful than before, or forgives wrong more readily, or becomes one with his enemy, or is more patient, and less covetous, and so forth; all of which are sure tokens of soul-health.

They also preach that wagging the bishop's hand over us blesses us, and puts away our sins. Are these works not against Christ? How can they do more shame to Christ's blood? For if the wagging of the bishop's hand over me is so precious a thing in the sight of God that I am thereby blessed, how then am I fully "blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ?" as Paul says, Eph 1.3. Or if my sins are fully taken away in Christ,[170] how do any remain to be taken away by such fantasies? The apostles knew no ways to put away sin, or to bless us, except by preaching Christ. Paul says, Gal 2.21, "If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died in vain." So I make this argument: If blessing comes by the wagging of the bishop's hand, then Christ died in vain, and his death does not bless us. And a little before (Gal 2.17) Paul says, "If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we are yet found sinners," (so that we must be justified by the law or ceremonies), "is Christ not then a minister of sin?" So I make this argument: If while we seek to be blessed in Christ we are yet unblessed, and must be blessed by the wagging of the bishop's hand, then what do we have from Christ but curse? You may say: When we come first to the faith, then Christ forgives us and blesses us; but the sins which we commit afterward are forgiven through such things. I answer that, if any man truly repents and comes to the faith, and puts his trust in Christ, then as often as he sins from frailty, at the sigh of the heart his sin is put away in Christ's blood. For Christ's blood ever purges and ever blesses. For John says, "I write this to you, so that you will not sin. And if any man sins" (meaning from frailty, and so repents) "yet we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ who is righteous, and he is the one who obtains grace for our sins." (1Joh 2.1) And it is written (Heb 7.24-25), "But this man" (meaning Christ), "because he lasts or abides forever, has an everlasting priesthood. Therefore he is also able to ever save those who come to God through him, seeing that he ever lives to make intercession for us." The bishops therefore ought to bless us by preaching Christ, and not deceive us and bring the curse of God upon us by wagging their hands over us. To preach is their only duty, and not to offer their feet to be kissed. We also sense, by experience, that after the blessing of the pope, bishop, or cardinal, our souls are not otherwise disposed than before.

Let this be sufficient concerning the sacraments and ceremonies, with this protestation: that if anyone can say it better, or improve this with God's word, then no man will be more content with it than I. For I seek nothing but the truth, and to walk in the light. I therefore submit this work, and all other that I have made or will make (if God wills that I make more) to the judgments, not of those who furiously burn all truth, but of those who are ready to correct with God's word if anything is said amiss, and to further God's word.

I will speak a word or two with them, following worldly wisdom, and make an end of this matter. If the sacraments justify, as they say (and I understand justifying as the forgiveness of sins), then they do wrong to the sacraments through confession – robbing them greatly of their effect and of the cause for which they were ordained. For no man may receive the body of Christ, no man may marry, no man may be oiled or anointed with oil as they call it, no man may receive orders, unless he is first confessed. Now, when sins are forgiven by confession beforehand, there is nothing left for the sacraments to do. They will answer that, at a minimum, they increase grace. And not only do the sacraments do this, but also hearing mass, matins and even-song, and receiving holy water, holy bread, and of the bishop's blessing, and so forth – grace

increases by all these ceremonies, they say. By grace I understand the favor of God, and also the gifts and working of his Spirit in us – such as love, kindness, patience, obedience, mercifulness, despising worldly things, peace, harmony, and such things.

After you have heard so many masses, matins, and evensongs; and after you have received holy bread, holy water, and the blessing of the bishop, cardinal, or pope – then, if you are kinder to your neighbor; if you love your neighbor better than before; if you are more obedient to your superiors; if you are more merciful; if you are readier to forgive wrongs done to you; if you despise the world more; if you thirst after spiritual things more; or if after taking his orders, a priest is less covetous than before; or if after a wife's many and frequent pilgrimages, she is more chaste and obedient to her husband; and if she is kinder to her maids and other servants – then such ceremonies increase grace; and if not, they are a lie.

And gentlemen, knights, lords, kings, and emperors, after they have said the daily service so often with their chaplains, if they know more of Christ than before; if they have more skill to Christianly rule their tenants, subjects, and realms than before; if they can be content with their duties – then such ceremonies increase grace; and if not, they are a lie.

Whether it is so or not, I refer to my experience. If they have any other interpretations of justifying or grace, then I ask them to teach them to me, for I would gladly learn them. Now let us return to our purpose again.

OF MIRACLES AND WORSHIPPING SAINTS.

ANTICHRIST will not only come with lying signs, and disguised with falsehood, but also with lying miracles and wonders, says Paul (2Thes 2.9). All true miracles of God, (as I showed above) will move us to hear God's word, and establish our faith in it, and confirm the truth of God's promises, so that we might believe them without all doubting. For God's word through faith brings the Spirit into our hearts and also life, as Christ says (John 6.63), "The words which I speak are spirit and life." The word also purges and cleanses us, as Christ says (John 15.3), "You are clean by means of the word." Paul says (1Tim 2.5-6), "There is one God, one Mediator" (that is, one advocate, intercessor, or at-one-maker) "between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all men." Peter says of Christ (Acts 4.12), "Nor is there health in any other – nor any other name given to men by which we must be saved." So now Christ is our peace, our redemption (or ransom) for our sins, our righteousness, satisfaction – and "all the promises of God are yes and Amen in him," 2Cor 1.20. And we, because of the great and infinite love which God has towards us in Christ, love him in return, and also love his laws, and love one another. And the deeds we do from then on, we do not do to make satisfaction, or to obtain heaven – but to succor our neighbor, to tame the flesh so that we may grow perfect and strong men in Christ, to be thankful to God in return for his mercy, and to glorify his name.

By contrast, the miracles of antichrist are done to pull you away from the word of God, and from believing his promises, and from Christ; they are intended to make you put your trust in a man, or in a ceremony not found in God's word. As soon as God's word is believed, and the faith is spread abroad, then the miracles of God cease. But the miracles of antichrist, because they are wrought by the devil to quench the faith, grow more and more daily. They will not cease until the world's end; and so they remain among those who do not believe God's word and promises. Do you see how God has loosed and sent forth all the devils in the old world among the heathen (or gentiles)? And how the devils wrought miracles, and spoke to the heathen in every image? Even so, the devil using one craft or another will work falsehood among those who do not believe God's word, until the world's end. For the judgment and damnation of someone who has

no desire to hear the truth, is to hear lies instead, and to be established and grounded in them through false miracles. He that will not see is worthy to be blind; and he that bids the Spirit of God to leave him, is worthy to be without him.

Paul, Peter, and all true apostles preached Christ alone. The miracles only confirmed and established their preaching, and those everlasting promises and eternal testament that God had made between man and him in Christ's blood – and the miracles testified also that they were true servants of Christ. Paul did not preach himself;[2Cor 4.5] he did not teach any man to trust in him or in his holiness, or in Peter or in any ceremony, but only in the promises which God has sworn: indeed, he mightily resists all such false doctrine, to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and everywhere. If this is true (as it is true and nothing is more true), that if Paul had preached himself, or taught any man to believe in his holiness or prayer, or in anything except the promises that God has made and sworn to give us for Christ's sake, then he would have been a false prophet. Would I not also be a false prophet if I taught you to trust in Paul, or in his holiness or prayer, or in anything except in God's word, as Paul did?

If Paul were here and loved me, (as he loved those of his time to whom he was sent, and to whom he was a servant to preach Christ), what good could he do for me or wish me, except to preach Christ, and to pray to God for me, to open my heart, to give me his Spirit, and to bring me to the full knowledge of Christ? Once I have come into port or haven, I am as safe as Paul, and a fellow with Paul, a joint heir with Paul of all the promises of God – and God's truth hears my prayer as well as Paul's. I also now could not help but love Paul, and wish him good, and pray for him, that God would strengthen him in all his temptations, and give him victory, just as he would do for me. Nevertheless, there are many weak and young consciences always in the congregation, whom those that have the office preaching ought to teach, and not deceive them.

What prayers do our clergy pray for us, which stop us and exclude us from Christ, and seek all the means possible to keep us from a knowledge of Christ? They compel us to hire friars, monks, nuns, canons, and priests, and to buy their abominable merits, and to hire the saints that are dead to pray for us. They have turned the saints into hirelings also, because the saints' offerings are to their profit. What do all those papists pray? That we might come to the knowledge of Christ, as the apostles did? No, truly. For it is plain that all those who use force to keep us from Christ, do not pray that we might come to the knowledge of Christ. And as for past saints (whose prayer was, when they were alive, that we might be grounded, established and strengthened in Christ alone), if it were from God that we should worship them in this way, contrary to their own doctrine, then I dare be bold to affirm that, by means of their prayers, we would have been brought long ago to the knowledge of God and Christ again – even though these beasts had done their worst to oppose it. Let us therefore set our hearts at rest in Christ and in God's promises, for so I think it best; and let us take past saints only as an example, and let us do as they both taught and did.

Let us set God's promises before our eyes, and desire him for his mercy, and to have him fulfill them for Christ's sake. And he is as true as ever he was, and will do it as well as he ever did; for the promises are made to us as well as to them.

Moreover, the end of God's miracles is good; but the end of these miracles is evil. For the offerings,[171] which are the reason for the miracles, only minister and maintain vice, sin, and all abomination, and they are given to those who have too much; so that it is for this abundance that they foam out their own shame, and corrupt the whole world with the stench of their filthiness.

To that end, "whatever is not of faith is sin." [Rom 14.23] And "Faith comes by hearing God's word."

Rom 10.17 When now you fast or do anything in the worship of any saint, believing you come to the favor of God or to be saved by it – if you have God's word, then it is true faith, and it shall save you. But if you do not have God's word, then it is a false faith, superstition, and idolatry, and damnable sin.

Also in the collects of the saints,[172] we ask God to save us through the merits or deservings of the saints. Yet these saints were not themselves saved by their own deservings. We say, per Christum Dominum nostrum; that is, 'for Christ our Lord's sake.' We say, 'Save us, good Lord, through the saints' merits for Christ's sake.' How can he save us through the saints' merits for Christ's sake, and yet still have it be for his deserving merits and love? Take an example. A gentleman says to me, 'I will do for you to the utmost of my power, because of the love which I owe to your father. Though you have never done me any pleasure, yet I love your father well. Your father is my friend, and deserves that I do all I can for you, etc.' Here is a testament and a promise made to me in the love of my father only. But if I come to this same gentleman in the name of one of his own servants, whom I never saw, and never spoke with, and never had any acquaintance with at all, and say, 'Sir, I ask you to be a good master to me in such a cause. I do not deserve that you should do so; nevertheless I ask that you do it for that servant's sake. Indeed, I ask you, because of the love you owe my father, to do it for me, for that servant's sake:' If I this was the way I made my petition, would men not think that I had lately come out of St. Patrick's purgatory, and left my wits behind? Yet this is what we do! For the testament and promises are all made to us in Christ. And yet we desire God to fulfill his promises for the saints' sake – indeed, that for Christ's sake, he will do it for the saints' sake.

The papists also have martyrs who never preached God's word, or died for it; rather, they died for privileges and liberties which they falsely purchased, contrary to God's ordinances. Indeed, such saints, even though they are dead, now rob us as fast as they ever did; nor are they any less covetous now than when they were alive.[173] I do not doubt that they will make a saint of my lord cardinal after our death, we who know his juggling and crafty conveyance. They will enshrine him gloriously for mightily defending the right of the holy church, unless we are diligent to leave a commemoration of that Nimrod behind us. Gen 10.8

The reasons with which they prove their doctrine are but fleshly, and as Paul calls them, "enticing words of man's wisdom ;" that is, they are sophistry, and brawling arguments of men with corrupt minds and who are destitute of the truth, whose God is their belly. Whoever does not offer to this idol is a heretic, and worthy to be burnt.

They say, 'The saint was great with God when he was alive, as it appears from the miracles which God showed for him; he must therefore be great now.' This reason appears wise; but it is foolishness with God. For the miracle was not shown so that you would put your trust in the saint, but in the word which the saint preached. This word, if you believe, would save you, as God has promised and sworn, and it would also make you as great with God, as it did the saint.

'If a man has a matter to discuss with a great man, or a king, he must first go to one of his lowly servants, and then higher and higher till he comes to the king.' This enticing argument is but a blind reason of man's wit. It is not alike in the kingdom of the world, and in the kingdom of God and Christ. With kings, for the most part, we have no acquaintance or promise. They are also most commonly merciless. Moreover, if they promise, they are still men, as inconstant as other people, and as untrue. But with God, if we have belief, we are accounted, and have an open way to him by the door Christ, which is never shut, except through unbelief. Nor is there a porter to keep any man out. "By him," says Paul, Eph 2.18-19, that is to say, by Christ, "we have an open way to the Father. So now you are no longer strangers and foreigners," he says, "but

citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." God has also made us promises, and he has sworn – indeed, he has made a testament or a covenant – and bound himself, and sealed his obligation with Christ's blood, and confirmed it with miracles. He is also merciful and kind, and complains that we will not come to him. He is mighty and able to perform what he promises. He is true, and can only be true, just as he can only be God. Therefore is it not alike with the king and God.

'We are sinners,' the papists say, 'God will not hear us.' Behold how they flee from God as from a merciless tyrant. A man flees soonest to the one he considers most merciful to him. But these teachers dare not come to God. Why? For they are the children of Cain. If the saints love whom God hates, then God and his saints are divided. When you pray to the saints, how would they know it, unless God – the one whom you consider merciless – tells them? If God is so cruel, and so hates you, then it is not likely he will tell the saints that you are praying to them.

When they say, 'We are sinners.' I answer that Christ is no sinner, except as a satisfaction and an offering for sin. Take Christ from the saints, and what are they? What is Paul without Christ? Is he anything but a blasphemer, a persecutor, a murderer, and a shedder of Christian blood? But as soon as he came to Christ, he was no longer a sinner, but a minister of righteousness: he did not go to Rome to take penance upon himself, but he went and preached to his brothers the same mercy which he had received freely, without doing penance, or hiring saints, monks or friars. Moreover, if it is God's word that says you should put your trust in the saints' merits or prayers, then be bold, for God's word shall defend you, and save you. But if it is just your own reason, then fear. For God commands by Moses, Deut 12.32, saying, "What I command you, observe and do it, and add nothing to it, nor take anything from it;" yes, and Moses warns us in a hundred places to be circumspect, that we do only what God commands, and what seems good and righteous in his sight, and not in our own sight. For nothing brings the wrath of God so soon and so sorely on a man, as the idolatry of his own imagination.

Last of all, these arguments are contrary to the arguments of Christ and of his apostles. Christ argues in Luke 11.11-13, saying: "If the son asks the father for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks him for a fish, will he give him a serpent?" and so forth. "If you then," he says, "who are evil, can give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give a good Spirit to those who ask him!" And a little before, in the same chapter, he says: "If a man came however inconveniently[174] to his neighbor to borrow bread, even when his neighbor is in his bed-chamber, with the door shut, and all his servants with him; nevertheless, if he continues knocking and praying, his neighbor will rise and give him as much as he needs, though not out of love, but to be rid of him, so that he may have rest." As if to say, 'What would God do if a man prays him, seeing that prayer overcomes an evil man?' "Ask," therefore, Jesus says, "and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." And in Luke 18, he puts forth the parable, or similitude, of the wicked judge who was overcome with the importunate prayer of the widow. He concludes, saying: "Hear what the wicked judge did. And will God not avenge his elect who cry out to him night and day?" Luke 18.7 Whether, therefore, we complain of the intolerable oppression and persecution that we suffer, or of the flesh that encumbers and resists the Spirit, God is merciful to hear us and to help us. Do you not also see how Christ cures many, and casts devils out of many, though not spoken to? How will he not help if he is desired and spoken to?

When the old Pharisees (whose nature it was to drive sinners from Christ) asked Christ why he ate with publicans and sinners? Christ answered that, "the healthy do not need the physician, but the sick;" that is, he came to have conversation with sinners to heal them. He was a gift given to sinners, and a treasure to pay their debts. And Christ sent the complaining and

disdaining Pharisees to the text of the prophet Hosea saying: "Go and learn what this means, I desire (or require) mercy, and not sacrifice." [Hos 6.6] As if to say, 'You Pharisees love sacrifice and offering to feed the god of your bellies with; but God commands you to be merciful.' Sinners are ever captives, and a prey to the Pharisees and hypocrites, to offer them to their bellies, and have them buy merits, pardons, and forgiveness of sins from them. Therefore these papists frighten them away from Christ with arguments from their belly-wisdom; for those who receive forgiveness freely from Christ, will buy no forgiveness from them. "I came," says Christ, "to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Pharisees are righteous, and therefore they have no part with Christ, nor do they need it; for they are gods themselves, and saviors. But sinners who repent, pertain to Christ. If we repent, Christ has made satisfaction for us already. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that none who believe on him should perish, but should have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through him. He that believes on him shall not be damned; but he that does not believe is damned already." (John 3.16-18)

Paul, Rom 5.1, says, "Because we are justified through faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" that is, because God, who cannot lie, has promised and sworn to be merciful to us, and to forgive us for Christ's sake, we believe, and are at peace in our consciences. We do not run here and there for pardon; we do not trust in this friar or that monk, nor in anything except the word of God. It is like a child whose father threatens him for his fault; the child will never rest till he hears the word of mercy and forgiveness from his father's mouth again. But as soon as he hears his father say, 'Go your way; do me no more wrong; I forgive you this fault,' – then his heart is at rest; then he is at peace; then he runs to no man to make intercession for him. If a false merchant came to him, saying, 'What will you give me if I obtain the pardon of your father for you?' – he will not allow himself to be beguiled. No, he will not buy from a wily fox, what his father has already given him freely.

It follows then that, "God sets out his love that he has for us;" (that is, he makes it apparent, so that men may perceive his love if they are not stock blind) "considering," says Paul, "that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more now," (he says), "seeing that we are justified by his blood, shall we be preserved from wrath through him: for if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, seeing that we are reconciled, we shall be preserved by his life." [Rom 5.8-10] It is as if saying, 'If God loved us when we did not know him, then he loves us much more now that we do know him. If he were merciful to us while we hated his law, then how much more merciful will he be now that we love his law, and desire the strength to fulfill it!' And in Rom 5.8 he argues: "If God did not spare his own Son, but gave him for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things also?"

Christ prayed, John 17.20, not for the apostles only, but also for as many as would believe through their preaching, and he was heard. Whatever we ask in his name, the Father gives us. Christ is also as merciful as the saints. Why do we not go straight to him? Truly, because we do not feel the mercy of God, nor believe his truth. 'God will, at least,' they say, 'hear us sooner for the saints' sake.' Then he must love the saints better than Christ and his own truth. He hears us for the saints' sake?? If so, then he does not hear us for his mercy: for merits and mercy cannot stand together.

Finally: If you put any trust in your own deeds, or in the deeds of any other man, even of a saint, then you diminish the truth, mercy, and goodness of God. For if God looks to your works, or to the works of any other man, or to the goodness of the saint, then he does not do all things of pure mercy and of his goodness, and for the truth's sake which he has sworn in Christ. Now Paul says, it is "not for the righteous deeds we did, but by his mercy he saved us." (Titus 3.5)

Our blind disputers will say, 'If our good deeds do not justify us; if God does not look at our good deeds or regard them, and does not love us better for them, then why do we need to do good deeds?' I answer that, God does look at our good deeds and does loves them; yet he does not love us for their sakes. God loves us first in Christ, out of his goodness and mercy, and he pours his Spirit into us, and gives us power to do good deeds. And because he loves us, he forgives us our evil deeds, which we do from frailty, not purposefully, or on occasion. Our good deeds testify only that we are justified and beloved. For unless we were beloved, and had God's Spirit, we could neither do or yet consent to any good deed. Antichrist turns the roots of the trees upward. He makes the goodness of God the branches, and our goodness the roots. We must be first good, according to antichrist's doctrine, and move God, and compel him to be good in return for our goodness' sake. Thus God's goodness must spring out of our goodness. No, truly, God's goodness is the root of all goodness; and our goodness, if we have any, springs out of his goodness.

OF PRAYER.

In my book, the Justifying of Faith, I have written abundantly about prayer and good deeds, and of the order of love, or charity. Nevertheless, so that you may see the worth of the prayers and good works of our monks and friars, and of other spiritual people, I will say a word or two, and make an end of it. Paul says, "All of you are the sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ; for all you that are baptized have put Christ on you;" (Gal 3.27-28) that is, you have become Christ himself. "There is no Jew," he says, "no Greek, no bond or free, no man or woman, but you are all one thing in Christ Jesus." In Christ there is neither French nor English; but the Frenchman is the Englishman's own self, and the Englishman is the Frenchman's own self. In Christ there is neither father nor son, neither master nor servant, neither husband nor wife, neither king nor subject: but the father is the son's self, and the son the father's own self; and the king is the subject's own self, and the subject is the king's own self; and so forth. I am you yourself, and you are me myself, and there can be no nearer of kin. We are all the sons of God, all Christ's servants bought with his blood; and every man is Christ's own self to others. And Col 3.10-11, "You have put on the new man, which is renewed in the knowledge of God, after the image of him that made him (that is to say, Christ) "where there is" (he says) "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarous or Scythian, bond or free; but Christ is all in all things." I do not love you now because you are my father, and have done so much for me; or my mother, and you have borne me and suckled me (for so do Jews and Saracens), but because of the great love that Christ has showed me. I serve you, not because you are my master, or my king, or for hope of reward, or from fear of pain, but for the love of Christ. For the children of faith are under no law (as you see in the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and 1Timothy), but are free. The Spirit of Christ has written the lively law of love in their hearts which drives them to work of their own accord, freely and willingly, only for the sake of the great love which they see in Christ; and therefore need they no law to compel them. Christ is all in all things to those who believe, and he is the cause of all love. Paul says, "Servants, obey your carnal or fleshly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as if to Christ – not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, as though you served the Lord, and not men. And remember, that whatever good thing any man does, he shall receive it back from the Lord, whether he is bond or free." (Eph 6.8)

Thus Christ is all in all things, and the cause of all, to a Christian man. And Christ says, "As you have done it unto the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me. And as you have not done it unto one of the least of these, you have not done it to me." (Mat 25.40, 45) Here you see that we are Christ's brothers, and even Christ himself; and whatever we do one to another, we

do it to Christ. If we are in Christ, we work for no worldly purpose, but from love. As Paul says, 2Cor 5.14, "The love of Christ compels us:" (as if to say, 'We do not work for a fleshly purpose') "for we know no man according to the flesh anymore; [175] no, though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, now we do so no more." We are other-minded than when Peter drew his sword to fight for Christ. We are now ready to suffer with Christ, and to lose life and all for our enemies, to bring them to Christ. If we are in Christ, we are like-minded with Christ who knew nothing according to the flesh, or following the will of the flesh. In Mat 12.46-50, when someone said to Jesus, "Look, your mother and your brothers stand outside, desiring to speak with you." He answered, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And he stretched his hand over his disciples saying, "See, my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother." He did not know his mother in that she bore him, but in that she did the will of his Father in heaven. So now, just as God the Father's will and commandment is all to Christ, even so, Christ is all to a Christian man.

Christ is the cause why I love you, why I am ready to do the utmost of my power for you, and why I pray for you. And as long as the cause abides, so long will the effect last - just as it is always day so long as the sun shines. Therefore do the worst you can to me: take away my goods; take away my good name; yet as long as Christ remains in my heart, that is how long I will love you, and not a whit less; and for so long you will be as dear to me as my own soul, and for so long I am ready to do you good for your evil; and so long I will pray for you with all my heart. For Christ desires it of me, and he has deserved it of me. Your un-kindness compared to his kindness is nothing at all. Indeed, it is swallowed up as a little smoke by a mighty wind, and it is no more seen or thought about. Moreover, that evil which you did to me, I did not receive from your hand, but from the hand of God, as God's scourge to teach me patience, and to nurture me. And therefore I have no cause to be angry with you, no more than the child has cause to be angry with his father's rod; or a sick man has with a sour or bitter medicine that heals him; or a prisoner has with his fetters, or the one lawfully punished has with the officer that punishes him.

Thus Christ is all, and the whole cause why I love you. And to "all," nothing can be added. Therefore a little money cannot make me love you better, or make me more bound to pray for you, or make God's commandment greater. Last of all, if I am in Christ, then "the love of Christ compels me." And therefore I am ready to give you mine, and not take yours from you. If I am able, I will serve you freely. If not, then if you minister to me in return, I receive it from the hand of God who ministers it to me by you. For God cares for his own, and he ministers all things to them, and moves Turks and Saracens, and all manner of infidels, to do them good. You see this in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how God went with Joseph into Egypt, and got him favor in the prison, and in every other place. Joseph received this favor from the hand of God, and he gave thanks to God. Thus God and Christ are all in all; I receive good and bad from God. I love those who are good, because they are in Christ; and I love those who are evil, to bring them to Christ. When any man does good, I rejoice that God is honored; and when any man does evil, I sorrow because God is dishonored. Finally, because God has created all, and Christ has bought all with his blood, therefore all ought to seek God and Christ in all, or else nothing.

But to the contrary, to monks, friars, and others of our holy clergy, the belly is all in all, and it is the cause of all love. As you make an offering to their belly, so you are father, mother, sister, and brother to them. Do you not offer? So they do not know you; you are not father, mother, sister, brother, nor any kin at all to them. 'She is a sister of ours, he is a brother of ours,' they say; 'he is truly a good man, for he does so much for our religion. She is a mother to our convent; we are greatly bound to pray for them. And as for such and such,' they say, 'we do not

know whether they are good or bad, or whether they are fish or flesh, for they do nothing for us. We are more bound to pray for our benefactors,' they say, 'and for those who give to us, than for those who give us nothing.' For to those who give little, the clergy are bound little, and love them little. And for those who give much, they are bound much, and they love them much. And for those who give nothing, they are bound by nothing, and they do not love them at all. And just as they love you when you give, so they hate you when you take away from them; they all run under a stool, and curse you as black as pitch. So cloister-love is belly-love; cloister-prayer is belly-prayer; and cloister-brotherhood is belly-brotherhood.

Moreover, love that springs from Christ does not seek herself, but forgets herself (1Cor 13.5), and gives herself for her neighbor's profit, just as Christ sought our profit and not his own. He did not seek the favor of God for himself, but for us. Indeed, he took the wrath and vengeance of God from us to himself, and bore it on his own back to bring us into favor. A Christian man likewise gives to his brothers, and does not rob them as the friars and monks do. Rather, as Paul commands, Eph 4.28, he labors with his hands at some good work to have something with which to help the needy. The clergy do not give, but only receive. They do not labor, but live idly from the sweat of the poor. There is none who is so poor a widow, who has nothing for herself and her children, nor any money to give, that the friar will not snatch a cheese or something from her. 'They preach,' you papists say, 'and labor in the word.' First, I say they are not called to do that, and therefore they ought not to labor in the word. For that is the curate's office. 'The curate cannot do it,' you say. Then what does this thief do there?? Secondarily, a true preacher preaches Christ's testament only; and he makes Christ the cause and reward of all our deeds; and he teaches every man to bear his cross willingly for Christ's sake. But these papists are enemies to the cross of Christ, and they preach their belly, which is their god (Phil. 3.19). They think that lucre is the serving of God, 1Tim 6.5. That is, they think that only those who make offerings to the papists' bellies are Christian; and when you have filled their bellies, then they will spew out prayers for you, to be your reward, and yet they do not know what "prayer" means. Prayer is the longing for God's promises – as they do not preach these promises, so they do not long for them, nor do they wish them for any man. Their longing is to fill their paunch, whom they serve, and not Christ; and so through sweet preaching and flattering words, they deceive the hearts of the simple and unlearned.

Finally, as Christ is the whole cause why we do all things for our neighbor, even so he is the cause why God does all things for us, why he receives us into his holy testament, and makes us heirs of all his promises, and pours his Spirit into us, and makes us his sons, and fashions us like Christ, and makes us such as he would have us be. The assurance that we are beloved sons and heirs with Christ, and have God's Spirit in us, is the consent of our hearts to the law of God. This law is all perfection, and the mark at which we all ought to shoot. He that hits the mark, so that he fulfills the law with all his heart, soul, and might, and with full love and desire, without any hindrance or resistance, is pure gold. He does not need to be put in the fire any longer: he is straight and right, and no longer needs to be shaven. He is full-fashioned like Christ, and he can have no more added to him.

Nevertheless there is none so perfect in this life, that does not find hindrance and resistance by reason of original sin, or birth-poison, that remains in him, as you may see in the lives of all the saints throughout all the Scripture. As Paul describes, Rom 7.18-23, "The will is present, but I find no means to perform what is good. I do not do that good thing which I would: but I do that evil which I would not. I find by the law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law, as concerning the inner man; but I find another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and subduing me to the law of sin." This law of sin is nothing but a corrupt and poisoned nature, which breaks out into evil lusts, and from evil lusts into wicked

deeds; it must be purged with the true purgatory of the cross of Christ. That is, you must hate it with all your heart, and desire God to take it from you. And then, whatever cross God puts on your back, bear it patiently, whether it is poverty, sickness, or persecution, or whatever it may be, and take it as the right purgatory, and think that God has nailed you fast to it, to purge you by it. For he that does not love the law and hate his sin, and has not professed in his heart to fight against it, and does not mourn to God to take it away and to purge him of it, that person has no part with Christ.

If you love the law, and find that you still have sin hanging on you, of which you sorrow to be delivered and purged – as for example, you have a covetous mind, and mistrust God, and therefore are moved to beguile your neighbor, and are merciless to him, not caring whether he sinks or swims, just so you may gain by him, or get from him what he has – then get to the Observant,[176] who is so purged from that sin,[177] that he would not touch a penny. And with that wile, the subtle fox makes the goose come flying into his hole, ready prepared for his mouth, without his labor or sweat. Buy his merits, which he has in store. Do not give your money into his holy hands, but offer it to someone he has hired, either with part of his prayers or part of his prey, to take sin on himself and to handle his money for him. In the same way, if any person that is under obedience to God's ordinance (whether it be son, daughter, servant, wife or subject) consents to the ordinance, and yet finds he has contrary inclinations, then let him go to those who have professed an obedience to ordinances of their own making, and buy part of their merits. If your wife gives you nine words for three, go to the Charterhouse,[178] and buy some of their silence for her. And so, if abstaining from handling money on the part of the Observant heals your heart from desiring money; and if the obedience of those who obey nothing but their own ordinances heals your disobedience to God's ordinance; and if the silence of the Charterhouse monk tames your wife's tongue; then you may believe that their prayers will deliver your soul from the pains of that terrible and fearful purgatory which they have feigned in order to empty your purse.

The clergy increases daily. More prelates, more priests, more monks, friars, canons, nuns, and more heretics (I would say heremites[179]), with similar speed. Set before you the increase of the disciples of St. Francis in so few years. Reckon how many thousands, indeed, how many twenty thousands – not only disciples, but whole cloisters of them – have sprung out of hell in so little time. The pattering of prayers increases daily. Their "service," as they call it, waxes longer and longer, and the labor of their lips grows greater – new saints, new service, new feasts, and new holidays. What do all these take away? Sin? No; for we see the contrary by experience, that sin grows as they grow. But they take away first God's word, with faith, hope, peace, unity, love and concord; then they take house and land, rent and fee, tower and town, goods and cattle, and the very meat out of men's mouths. All these clergy live by purgatory. When others weep for their friends, they sing merrily; when others lose their friends, they get friends. The pope, with all his pardons, is grounded on purgatory. Priests, monks, canons, friars, along with all other swarms of hypocrites, only empty purgatory to fill hell. Every mass, they claim, delivers one soul out of purgatory. If that were true, indeed, if ten masses were enough for one soul, then just the parish priests and curates of every parish would be sufficient to scour purgatory, and all the other costly workmen might well be let go.

THE FOUR SENSES OF THE SCRIPTURE.

THEY divide the Scripture into four senses, the literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense has become nothing at all: for the pope has taken it clean away, and has made it his possession. He has partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his

traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies; and he partly drives men from it with the violence of the sword: for no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, except under protest: 'If it shall please the pope.' The tropological sense pertains to good manners (they say), and teaches what we ought to do. The allegory is appropriate to faith; and the anagogical to hope, and to things above. Tropological and anagogical are terms of their own feigning, and they are altogether unnecessary. For they are both but allegories; and this word allegory comprehends them both, and is sufficient. For tropological is but an allegory of manners; anagogical is an allegory of hope. And allegory is the same as saying strange speaking, or borrowed speech – as when we say of a wanton child, 'This sheep has maggots in his tail, and he must be anointed with birchen salve;' I borrow this speech from the shepherds.

You shall understand, therefore, that the Scripture has but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, the anchor that never fails, which if you cling to it, you can never err or go out of the way. And if you leave the literal sense, you cannot but go out of the way. Nevertheless, the Scripture uses proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but what the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifies, is always the literal sense, which you must seek out diligently. In English we borrow words and sentences from one thing, and apply them to another, and give them new meanings. We say, 'Let the sea swell and rise as high as he will, yet God has appointed how far he shall go' – meaning that the tyrants shall not do what they would, but only what God has appointed them to do. 'Look before you leap:' whose literal sense is, 'Do nothing suddenly, or without advisement.' 'Do not cut the bough that you stand on:' whose literal sense is, 'Do not oppress the commoners;' and is borrowed from hewers.[180] When a thing does not go quickly, we borrow speech, and say, 'The bishop has blessed it;' because nothing goes quickly that they meddle with. If the porridge is burned, or the meat is over-roasted, we say, 'The bishop has put his foot in the pot,' or, 'The bishop has played the cook;' because the bishops burn whomever they desire, and whoever displeases them. 'He is a pontifical fellow;' that is, he is proud and stately. 'He is popish;' that is, he is superstitious and faithless. 'It is a pastime for a prelate.' 'It is a pleasure for a pope.' 'He would be free, and yet will not have his head shaven.' 'He would have no man strike him, and yet he does not have the pope's mark.' And of someone who is betrayed, and does not know how, we say, 'He has been at confession.' 'She is master parson's sister's daughter;' 'He is the bishop's sister's son;' 'He has a cardinal to his uncle;' 'She is a spiritual whore;' 'It is the gentlewoman of the parsonage;' 'He gave me a Kyrie eleyson. And of a wife who answers her husband six words for one, we say, 'She is a sister of the Charterhouse:' as if to say, 'She thinks that she is not bound to keep silence; their silence shall be a satisfaction for her.' And of someone who will not be saved by Christ's merits, but only by the works of his own imagination, we say, 'It is a holy-workman.' Thus we borrow and feign new speech in every tongue. All fables, prophecies, and riddles, are allegories; such as Aesop's Fables, and Merlin's Prophecies; and yet the interpretations of them are the literal sense.

So in like manner, the Scripture borrows words and sentences from all manner of things, and makes proverbs and similitudes, or allegories. As Christ says, Luke 4.23, "Physician, heal yourself;" whose interpretation is, 'Do at home, what you do in strange places;' and that is the literal sense. So when I say, 'Christ is a lamb;' I do not mean a lamb that bears wool, but a meek and a patient lamb, which is beaten for other men's faults. When I say, 'Christ is a vine,' it is not that he bears grapes, but out of his root the branches that believe suck the Spirit of life, and mercy, and grace, and power to be the sons of God, and to do his will. The similitudes of the gospel are allegories, borrowed from worldly matters, to express spiritual things. The Apocalypse or Revelations of John, are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places.

Beyond all this, when we have found the literal sense of the Scripture by the process of the text, or by a like text in another place, then we go, and just as the Scripture borrows similitudes from worldly things, even so we borrow similitudes or allegories from the Scripture, and apply them to our purposes. These allegories are not the sense of the Scripture, but free things beside the Scripture, and altogether in the liberty of the Spirit to use. I may not at all turn these allegories into wild adventures; but I must keep myself within the compass of the faith, and ever apply my allegory to Christ, and to the faith.

Take an example: you have the story of Peter – how he struck off Malchus' ear and how Christ healed it again.[Joh 18.10; Luk 22.49] There in the plain text you have great learning, great fruit, and great edifying, which I will pass over because of tediousness. Then, when I preach about the law and the gospel, and I borrow this example, I express the nature of the law and of the gospel. I paint it for you before your eyes and make of Peter and his sword, the law; and of Christ, the gospel, saying,

> 'Just as Peter's sword cuts off the ear, so does the law: the law damns, the law kills, and it mangles the conscience. There is no ear so righteous that it can abide hearing the law. There is no deed so good that the law does not damn it. But Christ, that is to say, the gospel, which is the promises and testament that God has made in Christ, heals the ear and conscience which the law has hurt. The gospel is life, mercy, and forgiveness freely given, and it is altogether a healing plaster. Just as Peter only hurts and wounds where was no wound before, even so that's what the law does. For when we think that we are holy and righteous, and full of good deeds, then if the law is preached rightly, our righteousness and good deeds vanish away, like smoke in the wind, and we are left damnable sinners only. And just as you see that Christ did not heal till Peter had wounded, and just as a healing plaster does not help till the corrosive has irritated the wound; even so the gospel does not help, except when the law has wounded the conscience, and brought the sinner into the knowledge of his sin.'

This allegory proves nothing, nor can it do anything. For it is not the Scripture, but an example or likeness borrowed from the Scripture to declare a text, or to declare a conclusion of the Scripture more expressly, and to root it and engrave it in the heart. For a similitude or example, imprints a thing much deeper in the wits of a man than plain speaking does; and it leaves behind him, as it were, a sting to prick him forward, and to awake him with. Moreover, if I could not prove with a clear text what the allegory expresses, then the allegory would be a thing to jest at, and of no greater value than a tale of Robin Hood. The first part of this allegory is proved by Paul in Romans 4.15, where he says, "The law causes wrath;" and in Romans 7.9, "When the law or commandment came, sin revived, and I became dead;" and in 2Corinthians 3.6-7, the law is called "the minister of death and damnation," etc. Concerning the second part of the allegory, Paul says to the Romans in 5.1, "Since we are justified by faith, we are at peace with God." And in 2Corinthians 3.8-9, the gospel is called "the ministration of justifying and of the Spirit." And, Gal 3.2, 5, "The Spirit comes by the preaching of the faith," etc. Thus the literal sense proves the allegory, and bears it as the foundation bears the house. And because allegories prove nothing, therefore they are to be used soberly and seldom, and only where the text offers you an allegory.

And in this manner (as I did above) Paul borrows a similitude, figure, or allegory from Genesis, to express the nature of the law and of the gospel. By Agar and her son, he declares the property of the law, and of her bond-children who will be justified by deeds;[181] by Sarah and her son, he declares the property of the gospel, and of her free children who are justified by faith. He shows how the children of the law, who believe in their works, persecute the children of the

gospel, who believe in the mercy and truth of God and in the testament of his Son Jesus our Lord.

Likewise we borrow likenesses or allegories from the Scripture, as of Pharaoh and Herod, and of the scribes and Pharisees, to express our miserable captivity and persecution under antichrist the pope. The great cause of this captivity, and the decay of the faith, and this blindness in which we now find ourselves, sprang first from allegories, for Origen and the doctors of his time drew all of the Scripture into allegories. Those who came after followed his example for so long, that at last they forgot the order and process of the text, supposing that the Scripture served only to feign their allegories upon - and did so to such an extent that twenty doctors expound one text twenty ways, like children who descant on a plain song. Then our sophisters came with their anagogical and chopological sense,[182] and with an anti-theme half an inch thick, out of which some of them draw a thread nine days long. Indeed, you find enough who preach Christ, and prove whatever point of the faith you want, but do it as well from a fable of Ovid or any other poet, as they will from St. John's gospel or Paul's epistles.[183] Indeed, they have come to such blindness, that they not only say that the literal sense does not profit, but that it is hurtful, noisome,[184] and kills the soul. They prove this damnable doctrine by a text from Paul, 2Cor 3.6, where he says, "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life." 'Look,' they say, 'the literal sense kills, and the spiritual sense gives life. We must therefore seek out some chopological sense.'

Here learn what sophistry is, and how blind they are, so that you may abhor them and spew them out of your stomach for ever. Paul by 'the letter' means Moses' law, which the process of the text which follows declares brighter than the sun. But it is not their guise to look at the order of any text, but as they find it in their doctors, so they allege it, and so they understand it. Paul makes a comparison between the law and the gospel. He calls the law the letter, because the law was graven in two tables of cold stone with letters. For the law does nothing but kill, and damns the consciences, as long as there is no desire in the heart to do what the law commands. By contrast, he calls the gospel the administration of the Spirit, and of righteousness or justifying. For when Christ is preached, and the promises which God has made in Christ are believed, the Spirit enters the heart, and looses the heart, and gives the desire to do the law, and so it makes the law a lively thing in the heart. Now as soon as the heart desires to do the law, then we are righteous before God, and our sins are forgiven. Nevertheless, the law of the letter engraved in stone, and not in their hearts, was so glorious, and Moses' face shone so bright, that the children of Israel could not behold his face for its brightness. The law was also given in thunder and lightning and terrible signs; so that they came to Moses out of fear, and desired him to speak to them, and let God speak no more: "Lest we die (they said) if we hear him anymore," as you may see in Exodus 20.19. For this reason, Paul makes his comparison, saying: "If the ministration of death through the letters figured in stones was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, then why would the administration of the Spirit not be glorious?" 2Cor 3.7-8

And again: "If the administration of damnation is glorious, much more shall the administration of righteousness exceed it in glory." 2Cor 3.9 That is, if the law which kills sinners, and does not help them, is glorious, then the gospel which pardons sinners, and gives them the power to be the sons of God, and to overcome sin, is much more glorious.

And the text that precedes this passage is just as clear. For the holy apostle Paul says: "You Corinthians are our epistle, which is understood and read by all men, in that you are known as

the epistle of Christ ministered by us, and written, not with ink," (as Moses' law was), "but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone," (as the ten commandments were), "but in the fleshy tables of the heart:" 2Cor 3.2-3 as if to say, 'We do not write a dead law with ink and on parchment, nor do we engrave what damned you in tables of stone; but we preach to you what brings the Spirit of life into your breasts; this Spirit writes and engraves the law of love in your hearts, and gives you the desire to do the will of God.' And furthermore, he says, "Our ability comes from God, who has made us able to minister the New Testament, not of the letter," (that is to say, not of the law), "but of the Spirit. For the letter" (that is to say, the law) "kills; but the Spirit gives life." 2Cor 3.6 That is to say, the Spirit of God, which enters your hearts when you believe the glad tidings that are preached to you in Christ, quickens your hearts, and gives you life and desire, and makes you do from love and your own accord, without compulsion, what the law compelled you to do, and damned you because you could not do it with love and desire, and naturally. Thus you see that the letter does not signify the literal sense, and the spirit does not signify the spiritual sense. And in Romans 2.27, Paul uses this term Litera for the law;[185] and in Romans 7, he makes it so plain, that if the great wrath of God had not blinded these papists, they would never have stumbled at it.

God is a Spirit, and all his words are spiritual, His literal sense is spiritual, and all his words are spiritual. When you read (Mat 1.21) "She shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins:" this literal sense is spiritual, and everlasting life to as many as believe it. And the literal sense of these words, (Mat 5.7) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy;" these words are spiritual and life, by which those who are merciful may rightfully, by the truth and promise of God, challenge for mercy. It is like these words, Mat 6.15, "If you forgive other men their sins, your heavenly Father shall forgive you yours." And so it is with all the promises of God.

Finally, all God's words are spiritual, if you have the eyes of God to see the right meaning of the text, and what the Scripture pertains to, and the final end and cause of it. All Scripture contains the promises and testament of God in Christ, and the stories pertaining to that testament are to strengthen your faith; or else the law and the stories pertaining to it are to frighten you from doing evil. There is no story or tale in Scripture, however simple or vile to the world, that you will not find spirit and life in it, and edification in the literal sense. For it is God's Scripture, written for your learning and comfort. There is no cloth or rag there that does not have precious relics wrapped in it of faith, hope, patience and long suffering, and of the truth of God, and also of his righteousness.

Set the story of Reuben before you, who defiled his father's bed. Gen 35.22 Mark what a cross God allowed to fall on the neck of his elect Jacob. Consider first his shame among the heathen, when he and his household were the only portion of the world within the testament of God. I refer to our prelates, who swear by their honor, whether it was a cross or not.[186] Do you not see how our wicked builders rage, because they see their buildings burn, now that they are tried by the fire of God's word? [187] And how they stir up the whole world to quench the word of God for fear of losing their honor? Then do you see what a chore Jacob had to pacify his children? Look what turmoil he had at the defiling of his daughter Dinah. And you may be sure that the brothers there were no more furious for the defiling of their sister, than the sons were here for the defiling of their mother.[188] Mark what followed Reuben, recorded to frighten others, so that they do not shame their fathers and mothers.[189] Reuben was cursed, and lost the kingdom, and also the priestdom. His tribe or generation was evermore few in number, as it appears in the stories of the Bible.

The adultery of David with Bathsheba is an example, not to move us to evil – but if while we follow the way of righteousness, any chance should drive us aside, that we would not despair. For if we did not see such infirmities in God's elect, then we who are so weak and fall so often, would utterly despair, and think that God had clean forsaken us. It is therefore a sure and an undoubted conclusion, whether we are holy or unholy, we are all sinners. But the difference is that God's sinners do not consent to their sin. They consent to the law that is both holy and righteous, and mourn to have their sin taken away. But the devil's sinners consent to their sin, and would have the law and hell taken away, and are enemies to the righteousness of God.

Likewise in the simple tale of Noah, when he was drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent, Gen 9.21-23 you have great edifying in the literal sense. You see what became of the cursed children of wicked Ham, who saw his father's nakedness, and jested about it to his brothers. You also see what blessing fell on Shem and Japhet, who went backward and covered their father's nakedness, and did not see him. And thirdly, you see what infirmity accompanies God's elect, however holy they may be, whose infirmity is yet not imputed to them, for the faith and trust they have in God covers all their sins.

Notwithstanding, this text offers us an apt and attractive allegory or similitude to describe our wicked Ham, antichrist the pope, who for many hundreds of years has done all the shame that the heart can think of to the word of promise, or to the word of faith, as Paul calls it, Romans 10.8; and to the gospel and testament of Christ, with which we are begotten; as you see in 1Peter 1.3, and James 1.18. The cursed children of Ham grew into giants so mighty and great that the children of Israel seemed but grasshoppers in respect to them; Num 13.33 In the same way, the cursed sons of our Ham – the pope, his cardinals, bishops, abbots, monks, and friars – have become mighty giants, above all power and authority, so that the children of faith, in respect to them, are much less than grasshoppers. They heap mountain upon mountain, and will themselves to heaven by their own strength, by a way of their own making, and not by the way Christ. Nevertheless, God utterly destroyed those giants of old, for the wickedness and abominations which they had wrought – part of them by the children of Lot, and part of them by the children of Esau, and seven nations of them by the children of Israel. So no doubt God shall destroy these "giants" for similar abominations, and he will do that shortly. For their kingdom is but the kingdom of lies and falsehood which must perish at the coming of the truth of God's word, just as the night vanishes away at the presence of day. The children of Israel did not slay those giants, but the power of God did – God's truth and promises – as you may see in Deuteronomy. So it is not we who shall destroy these giants, as you may see by Paul, speaking of our Ham, the antichrist, "Whom the Lord shall destroy," he says, "with the spirit of his mouth," that is, by the words of truth, "and by the brightness of his coming," that is, by the preaching of his gospel. (2Thes 2.8)

And as I have said about allegories, so it is true of worldly similitudes, which we make either when we preach, or when we expound the Scripture. The similitudes prove nothing, but are made to express more plainly what is contained in the Scripture, and to lead you into the spiritual understanding of the text. The similitude of matrimony is taken to express the marriage between Christ and our souls, and the exceeding mercy we have there, which all the Scriptures mention. And there is the similitude of the members of the body, how every one of them cares for others, is taken to make you feel what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. Therefore the preacher who uses a bare similitude to prove what is contained in no text of Scripture, nor follows a text, you should count as a deceiver, a leader who is out of the way, and a false prophet.[190] Beware his philosophy and the persuasions of man's wisdom. As Paul says: "My words and my preaching were not with enticing words and persuasions of man's wisdom, but in

showing the Spirit and power." 1Cor 2.4 That is, he did not preach dreams, confirming them with similitudes, but he preached God's word, confirming it with miracles and with the working of the Spirit, which made them feel everything in their hearts. He did it, "that your faith," he said, "would not stand in the wisdom of man; but in the power of God." 1Cor 2.5 For the reasons and similitudes of man's wisdom do not make faith, but only wavering and uncertain opinions. One draws me this way with his argument, and another that way; and by the principle with which you prove black, another proves white. And so I am ever uncertain, as when you tell me of something done in a far land, and another tells me the contrary; I do not know what to believe. But faith is wrought by the power of God. That is, when God's word is preached, the Spirit enters your heart and makes your soul feel it. He makes you so sure of it, that neither adversity, nor persecution, nor death, neither hell, nor the powers of hell, nor yet all the pains of hell could prevail against you, or move you from the sure rock of God's word, so you would not believe what God has sworn.

And Peter says, "We did not follow deceivable fables[191] when we opened to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but with our own eyes we saw his majesty." 2Pet 1.16 And again, "We have" (he says) "a more sure word of prophecy to which, if you take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place, you do well." 2Pet 1.19 The word of prophecy was the Old Testament, which bears record to Christ in every place. Outside this record, the apostles made neither similitudes nor arguments by worldly wit. From this you see that all the allegories, similitudes, persuasions and arguments which the papists bring, outside Scripture, to prove praying to saints, purgatory, and ear-confession; and that God will hear your prayer more in one place than in another; and that it is more meritorious to eat fish than flesh; and that to disguise yourself, and put on this or that kind of coat, is more acceptable than to go as God has made you; and that widowhood is better than matrimony, and virginity than widowhood; and to prove the assumption of our lady, and that she was born without original sin (indeed with a kiss, say some) – are but false doctrines.

Take an example, how they prove that widowhood and virginity exceed matrimony. They bring this worldly similitude: 'the one who takes the most pain for a man deserves the most, and a man is most bound to him; so likewise it must be with God,' and so forth. 'Now the widow and virgin take more pain in resisting their lusts than the married wife; therefore their state is holier.' First, I say that in their own sophistry, a similitude is the worst and feeblest argument that can be made, and it proves the least, and it deceives the soonest. Though one son does more service for his father than another, yet the father is free to and may rightly reward them all alike. For if I had a thousand brothers, and did more than all of them, yet I am not doing my duty. The fathers and mothers also care the most for the least and weakest, and for those who can do the least. Indeed, they care most for the worst, and would spend not only their goods, but their blood, to bring them to the right way. So it is with the kingdom of Christ, as you may well see in the similitude of the riotous son (Luke 15.11 ff). Moreover Paul says, (1Cor 7.9) "It is better to marry than to burn." For the person that burns cannot quietly serve God, since his mind is drawn away, and the thoughts of his heart are occupied with awful and monstrous imaginations. He cannot see, hear, or read, for his wits are rapt, and he is clean out of himself.

And again, he says, "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping the commandments" is all.1Cor 7.19 See where you can best keep the commandments; get yourself there, and abide there – whether you are a widow, wife, or maid – and then you have all with God. If we have infirmities that draw us away from the laws of God, let us cure them with the remedies that God has made. If you burn, then marry: for God has promised you no chastity, as long as you may use the remedy that he has ordained; no more than he has promised to slake

your hunger without meat. Now, to ask from God more than he has promised, comes from a false faith, and it is plain idolatry. And to desire a miracle where there is natural remedy, is tempting God. As for taking pains, understand it this way: he that takes pains to keep the commandments of God, is sure thereby that he loves God, and that he has God's Spirit in him. And the more pain a man takes (I mean patiently and without grudging), the more he loves God, and the more perfect he is, and nearer to that health which the souls of all Christian men long for; and he is more purged from the infirmity and sin that remain in the flesh. But to look for any other reward or promotion in heaven, or in the life to come, than what God has promised for Christ's sake, and which Christ has deserved for us with his own pains-taking, is abominable in the sight of God. For only Christ has purchased the reward, and our pains-taking to keep the commandments only purges the sin that remains in the flesh. It certifies to us that we are chosen and sealed with God's Spirit to the reward that Christ has purchased for us.

Once I was at the creating of doctors of divinity, where the opponent brought the same reason to prove that the widow had more merit than the virgin – she had greater pain because she had once proved the pleasures of matrimony. Ego nego, domine doctor, said the respondent: 'for though the virgin has not yet proved it, she imagines that the pleasure is greater than it is indeed, and therefore it is she who is more moved, and has greater temptation and greater pain.' Are they not the disputers that Paul speaks of in the first epistle to Timothy? "They are not content with the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of godliness; and therefore they know nothing, but waste their brains about questions and strife over words, from which spring envy, strife, and the railing of men with corrupt minds, destitute of the truth." 1Tim 6.3-5

As pertaining to our lady's body,[192] where it is, or where the body of Elijah, or John the evangelist, and many others are, is not for us to know. Of one thing we are sure, that they are where God has laid them. If they are in heaven, we gain no more in Christ by it; if they are not there, we gain no less. Our duty is to prepare ourselves for the commandments, and to be thankful for what is opened to us, and not to search the unsearchable secrets of God. We can know nothing more of God's secrets than he opens to us. If God shuts, who shall open? Rev 3.7 How then can natural reason come by the knowledge of that which God has hidden for himself?

Yet let us see one of their reasons with which they prove it. The chief reason is this: Every man does more for his mother, they say, than for others. In the same way, Christ must do more for his mother. Therefore she has this preeminence, so that her body is in heaven. And yet Christ, in the 12th chapter of Matthew, does not know her as his mother, but only as far as she has kept his Father's commandments. Mat 12.46-50 And Paul, in 2Cor 5.16, does not know Christ himself in fleshly form, or for a worldly purpose. Last of all, God is free, and is no further bound than he binds himself. If he has made her any promise, he is bound; if not, then is he not. Finally, if you set the mentioned Matthew chapter before you, where Christ would not know his mother, and the 2nd of John where he rebuked her, and the 2nd of Luke where she lost him, and how negligent she was to leave him behind her at Jerusalem unawares, and to go a day's journey before she sought him, then you might resolve many of the reasons which the papists give in this matter, and for the claim that she was without original sin. Read also Erasmus' Annotations for those passages.

As for me, I commit all such matters to those idle bellies, who have nothing else to do than push such questions. I give them free liberty to hold to whatever they are inclined, as long as it does not hurt the faith, whether it is so or not. Yet, with Paul, I exhort all who want to please God, and obtain the salvation that is in Christ, to give no heed to unnecessary and quarrelsome disputes; and to labor for the knowledge of those things without which they cannot be saved. Remember

that the sun was given to us to guide us in our way, and it works physically. Now if you ignore the natural use of the sun, and look directly at it to see how bright it is, then with such curiosity, the sun will blind you. So too the Scripture was given to us to guide us in our way, and it works spiritually. The way is Christ; and the promises in him are our salvation, if we long for them. Now if we ignore that right use of Scripture, and turn ourselves to vain questions, to search out the unsearchable secrets of God, then no doubt the Scripture will blind us, as it has blinded our schoolmen and our subtle disputers.

Those who prove with allegories, similitudes, and worldly reasons, what is nowhere mentioned in the Scripture, are false prophets. Likewise, count them false prophets who expound the Scriptures, stretching them for a worldly purpose, contrary to the example, living, and practice of Christ and his apostles, and of all the holy prophets. For Peter says (2Peter 1.20), "No prophecy in the Scripture has any private interpretation. For the Scripture did not come by the will of man; but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." No place of the Scripture may have a private exposition – that is, it may not be expounded following the will of man, or the will of the flesh, or stretched for a worldly purpose contrary to its clear texts, and to the general articles of the faith, and the whole course of the Scripture, and contrary to the life and practice of Christ and the apostles and holy prophets. For just as prophecies did not come by the will of man, so they may not be stretched or expounded according to the will of man. But as they came by the Holy Ghost, so must they be expounded and understood by the Holy Ghost. The Scripture is what God uses to draw us to himself, and not what leads us away from him. The Scriptures spring out of God, and flow into Christ, and were given to lead us to Christ. You must therefore go along by the Scripture as by a line, until you come to Christ, who is the way's end and resting-place. If any man, therefore, uses the Scripture to draw you away from Christ, and to nosel[193] you in anything except in Christ, that person is a false prophet. And so that you may perceive what Peter means, it follows in the text mentioned, "There were false prophets among the people" (whose prophecies were belly-wisdom), "as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in damnable sects," (as you see we are now divided into monstrous sects or orders of religion), "even denying the Lord who bought them." 2Pet 2.1 For every one of them takes it on himself to sell you for money what God in Christ promises you freely. "And many shall follow their damnable ways, by whom the way of truth shall be spoken evil of:" 2Pet 2.2 as you see how the way of truth has become heresy, seditious, or the cause of insurrection, and the breaking of the king's peace, and treason to his highness. "And through covetousness, with feigned words, they shall make merchandise of you." 2Pet 2.3 Covetousness is the conclusion of it. For covetousness and ambition, that is to say, lucre and the desire for honor, is the final end for all false prophets and all false teachers.[194] Look at the pope's false doctrine. What is its end, and what do they seek by it? What purpose does purgatory serve, but to purge your purse, and to poll you, and rob both you and your heirs of house and lands, and of all you have, so that they may live in honor? Do not pardons serve the same purpose? What does praying to the saints pertain to, except to offer to their bellies? What does confession serve, except to sit over your conscience and make you fear and tremble at whatever they dream up, so that you worship them as gods? In all their traditions, ceremonies, and conjurations, they do not serve the Lord, but their bellies.

As for their false expounding of the Scripture, stretching it to suit their damnable covetousness and filthy ambition, contrary to the example of Christ and the apostles and the holy prophets, take an example: When Peter says to Christ, (Mat 16.16-18) "You are the Son of the living God;" and Christ answered, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my congregation;" they interpret the "rock" as Peter. Then comes the pope, and he would be Peter's successor,

whether Peter wills it or not; indeed, whether God wills it or not; and even though all of the Scripture says, 'No,' to any such succession. And yet the pope says, 'Look, I am the rock, the foundation, and the head of Christ's church.' Now, all the Scripture says that the rock is Christ, the faith, and God's word. As Christ says, (Mat 7.24) "He that hears my words, and does them, is like a man that builds on a rock." For the house that is built on God's word will stand, though heaven should fall. And John 15.5: "Christ is the vine, and we are the branches:" so Christ is the rock, the stock, and the foundation on which we are built. And Paul (1Cor 3.10-11) calls Christ our foundation; and all others, whether Peter or Paul, he calls our servants to preach Christ, and to build us on Christ. If therefore the pope is Peter's successor, then his duty is to preach Christ only; he has no other authority. And (2Cor 11.2) Paul marries us to Christ, and drives us from all trust and confidence in man. And (Eph 2.19-21) Paul says, "You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets;" that is, on the word which they preached; "Christ being," he says, "the head corner-stone, in whom every building coupled together grows up into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom also you are built together and made a habitation for God in the Spirit." And Peter (1Pet 2.5), builds us on Christ; contrary to the pope, who builds us on himself. Hell-gates shall not prevail against it; that is to say, against the congregation that is built upon Christ's faith, and upon God's word. Now if the pope were the rock, then hell-gates could not prevail against him – for the house could not stand if the rock and foundation on which it is built perished. But we see the contrary in our popes. For hell-gates have prevailed against them many hundreds of years, and have swallowed them up – if God's word is true, and the stories that are written about them; indeed, if what we see with our eyes is true. "I will give you the keys of heaven," says Christ, and not, "I give." And John 20.17, 21-23, after the resurrection he paid it, and gave the keys to them all, indifferently.

"Whatever you bind on earth, it shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven." The pope makes what he will of this text; and he expounds it contrary to all the Scripture, contrary to Christ's practice and that of the apostles and all the prophets. Now the Scripture gives testimony of Christ, and it always expounds itself by another clear text. If the pope then cannot bring for his exposition the practice of Christ, or of the apostles and prophets, or a clear text, then his exposition is false doctrine. Christ expounds himself, saying: "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him between him and you alone. If he hears you, you have won your brother: but if he does not hear you, then take one or two with you," and so forth (Mat 18.15-18), as it stands in the text. He concludes, saying to them all: "Whatever you bind in earth, it shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven," where binding is but to rebuke those who sin; and loosing is to forgive those who repent. And, "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you hold, they are held." And Paul binds (1Cor 5.11-13); and looses (2Cor 2.10), in the same manner.

Also, this binding and loosing is one power: as he binds, so he looses; indeed, he binds first before he can loose. For who can loose what is not bound? Now whatever Peter binds, or his successor (as he wants to be called but is not; indeed, he is the very successor of Satan), is not to be understood in such a way that Peter, or the pope, has power to command a man to be in deadly sin, or to be damned, or to go to hell, saying, 'Be in deadly sin; be damned; go to hell; go to purgatory.' For that exposition of the text is contrary to the everlasting testament that God has made to us in Christ. He sent his Son Christ to loose us from sin, and damnation, and hell; and he sent his disciples to testify of that to the world, (Acts 1.8). Paul also has no power to destroy, but to edify. 2Cor 10:13. How can Christ give his disciples power against himself, and against his everlasting testament? Can he send them to preach salvation, and give them power to damn whom they please? What mercy and profit do we have in Christ's death, and in his gospel, if the

pope, who surpasses all men in wickedness, has power to send whomever he will to hell, and to damn whom he pleases? We would have no cause to call him Jesus, that is to say, Savior; but might rightly call him destroyer. Therefore, then, this binding is to be understood as Christ interprets it in the places mentioned above, and as the apostles practiced it; and it means only to rebuke men of their sins by preaching the law. A man must first sin against God's law, before the pope can bind him. Indeed, a man must first sin against God's law, before he needs to fear the pope's curse. For cursing and binding are both one; and nothing more than rebuking a man for his sins by God's law. It follows also, then, that loosing is a similar thing; and it is nothing but forgiving those who repent of sin, through preaching the promises which God has made in Christ. In him alone we have complete forgiveness of sins, as Christ interprets it, and as the apostles and prophets practiced it. So it is a false power that the pope takes on himself to loose God's laws – such as giving a man license to put away his wife to whom God has bound him, and to bind them to chastity, whom God commands to marry – that is, those who burn and cannot live chastely. It is also a false power to bind what God's word makes free, making sin of the creations that God has made for man's use.

The pope, who so quickly looses and purges in purgatory, cannot, with all the loosings and purgations that he has, either loose or purge the appetites, lust, and rebellion that are in us against the law of God. And yet purging them is rightly "purgatory." If he cannot purge those who are alive, how can he purge those who are dead? The apostles know no other way to purge except through preaching God's word, which only is the only word that purges the heart, as you may see in John 15.3. "You are pure," says Christ, "through the word." Now the pope does not preach to those whom they pretend to lie in purgatory, any more than he preaches to us who are alive. How then does he purge them? The pope is kin to Robin Goodfellow,[195] who sweeps the house, washes the dishes, and purges all by night; but when day comes, there is nothing found clean.

Some man will say, the pope does not bind them; they bind themselves. I answer that the one who binds himself to the pope is a fool, who would rather have his life and soul ruled by the pope's will than by the will of God, and by the pope's word than by the word of God. And he that would rather be bond than free is not wise. And he that will not abide in the freedom in which Christ has set us, is also mad. And he that makes deadly sin where none exists, and seeks causes for hatred between him and God, is not in his right wits. Furthermore, no man can bind himself further than he has power over himself. He that is under the power of another man cannot bind himself without permission, such as a son, daughter, wife, servant, and subject. Nor can you give God what is not in your power to give.[196] You cannot give chastity further than God lends it to you. If you cannot live chastely, then you are bound to marry or be damned. Last of all, the purpose for which you bind yourself must be seen. If you do it to obtain what Christ has purchased for you freely, you are an infidel and have no part with Christ. If you would see more about this matter, look in Deuteronomy, and there you will find it treated at large.

Take another example of their false expounding of the Scripture. Christ says, "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: whatever they bid you to observe, observe and do it; but do not follow their works." Mat 23.2-3 'Look,' say our sophisters or hypocrites, 'however abominably we live, yet our authority is never less. Do as we teach therefore,' they say, 'and not as we do.' And yet Christ says they sit on Moses' seat; that is, as long they teach Moses, do as they teach. For the Law of Moses is the law of God. But Christ rebuked them for their own traditions and false doctrine, and he disobeyed them, and taught others to beware of their leaven. Mat 16.6 So if our Pharisees sit on Christ's seat and preach him, we ought to hear them;[197] but when they sit on their own seat, we ought to beware of their pestilent doctrine as well as their abominable living.

Likewise where they find mention made of a sword, they turn it into the pope's power. The disciples said to Christ, Luke 22.38, "Look, here are two swords." And Christ answered, "Two is enough." Look, the papists say, the pope has two swords, the spiritual sword and the temporal sword. And therefore is it lawful for him to fight and make war.

Christ, a little before he went to his passion, asked his disciples (Luk 22.35-38), "When I sent you out without any provision, did you lack anything? And they said, no. And he answered, But now let him that has a wallet take it with him, and one that has a scrip[198] do likewise; and let him that never had a sword, sell his coat and buy one:" as if to say, 'It shall go differently now than before. Then you went out in faith at my word, and my Father's promises; and it fed you and made provision for you, and it was your sword, shield, and defender; but now it shall go as you read in Zechariah 13.7:"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." Now my Father shall leave me in the hands of the wicked; and you also shall be forsaken and destitute of faith, and shall trust in yourselves, and in your own provision, and in your own defense.' Christ gave no commandment; but only prophesied what would happen: and because they did not understand him, they answered, "Here are two swords." And Christ (to make an end of such babbling) answered, "Two is enough." For if he had commanded every man to buy a sword, how would two have been enough? Also, if two were enough, and pertained only to the pope, then why are they each commanded to buy a sword? By the "sword," therefore, Christ prophesied that they would be left to their own defense. And two swords were enough; indeed, one would have been enough: for if every one of them had ten swords, they still would have fled before midnight.

In the same chapter of Luke, not twelve lines from the foresaid text, the disciples, even at the last supper, asked who would be the greatest. And Christ rebuked them,[199] and said it was a heathenish thing to ask; there should be no such thing among them, but the greatest would be the least, and to be great was to do service as Christ did. But this text, because it is brighter than the sun, they can make no sophistry out of it, and therefore they will not hear it or let others know it.

You now partly see the falsehood of our prelates, and how all their study is to deceive us and keep us in darkness, to sit as gods in our consciences, and handle us at their pleasure, and to lead us where they desire. Therefore I say to you, get to God's word, and test all doctrine by it, and receive nothing against it: not any exposition that is contrary to the clear texts, nor any that are contrary to the general articles of the faith, nor contrary to the life and practice of Christ and his apostles. And when they cry, 'Fathers, fathers,'[200] remember that it was the fathers that blinded and robbed the whole world, and brought us into this captivity, in which these papists forcefully keep us still. Furthermore, as those of olden times are fathers to us, so shall these foul monsters be fathers to those who come after us; and the hypocrites that follow us will cry about these men and their doings, 'Fathers, fathers,' just as these papists cry 'Fathers, fathers,' about those who are past. And just as we feel about our fathers, so did those who are past feel about their fathers. [They would have us think] there were no other fathers in the world than the ones we have both seen and felt these many hundreds of years, the ones their own decrees bear record of, and their stories and chronicles well testify to. If God's word appeared anywhere, they all agreed against it. When they had put that to sleep, then they strove with one another about their own traditions. One pope condemned another's decrees, and sometimes there were two, indeed, three popes at once. One bishop went to court against another, and one cursed another for their own fantasies, and about things they had falsely gotten. Their great saints are those who most defended the "liberties" of the church (as they call it), which they falsely obtained by blinding kings. Nor did the world have any rest for many hundreds of years, to reform friars and

monks, and to cease the schisms among our clergy. And as for the holy doctors, such as Augustine, Jerome, Cyprian, Chrysostomus, and Bede, these papists will not hear them. If the early fathers wrote anything negligently (because they were mere men), then these papists draw out something clean contrary to their meaning, and they triumph over it. Those doctors knew of no authority that one bishop should have above another, nor did they once think or dream that any such thing would ever be, nor any such whispering, pardons, or the scouring of purgatory as these papists have invented.

And when they cry, 'Miracles, miracles,' remember that God has made an everlasting testament with us in Christ's blood, against which we may receive no miracles – no, not the preaching of Paul himself if he came again (by his own teaching to the Galatians), not even the preaching of the angels of heaven.[201] Therefore either these are not miracles and they have feigned them (such as the miracle that St. Peter hallowed Westminster);[202] or else if there are miracles that confirm doctrine contrary to God's word, then they are done by the devil (such as the maid of Ipswich and of Kent[203]). They prove us, whether we will cleave fast to God's word, and they deceive those who have no love for the truth of God's word, nor any desire to walk in his laws.

They seek to deceive with, and arm themselves against [God's word and laws] with arguments and persuasions of fleshly wisdom, with worldly similitudes, with shadows, with false allegories, with false expositions of the Scripture, contrary to the life and practice of Christ and the apostles, with lies and false miracles, with false names, silent ceremonies, with the disguise of hypocrisy, with the authorities of the fathers, and last of all with the violence of the temporal sword. Therefore, you do the contrary: arm yourself in defense against these, as Paul teaches in the last chapter of the Ephesians: "Gird yourself with the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word, and take up the shield of faith," which is not to believe a tale of Robin Hood, or Gesta Romanorum,[204] or the Chronicles, but to believe God's word that lasts ever.

And when the pope with his falsehood challenges temporal authority above king and emperor, set before you the 26th chapter[205] of St. Matthew, where Christ commands Peter to put up his sword. Mat 26.48 And set before you Paul, 2Cor 10.4, where he says, "The weapons of our war are not carnal things, but mighty in God to bring all understanding in captivity under the obedience of Christ;" that is, the weapons are God's word and doctrine, not swords of iron and steel. And set before you the doctrine of Christ and of his apostles, and their practice.

And when the pope asserts authority over his fellow bishops and over all the congregation of Christ by succession of Peter, set before you the first chapter of the Acts where Peter, for all his authority, would himself put no man in place of Judas. Rather, all the apostles chose two men indifferently and cast lots,Act 1.26 desiring God to temper them, that the lot might fall on the ablest. In Acts 8.14, the apostles sent Peter [to see what had happened in Samaria]; and in the 11th chapter they called him to give an account of what he did [with regard to the Gentiles]. Act 11.1-18

And when the pope's law commands that, although the pope lives ever so wickedly, and draws with him, through his evil example, innumerable thousands into hell, yet see to it that no man presumes to rebuke him – for he is head over all, and no man is head over him – then set before you where Paul rebukes Peter openly. Gal 2.11 See how both to the Corinthians and the Galatians, he would have no superior but God's word,[206] and whoever could teach better by God's word. And when he reported his preaching and his doings to the high apostles, they could improve nothing; therefore he was equal with the best of them. Gal 2.1-9

And when the friars say they do more than their duty when they preach, and more than they are

bound to do ('We are bound to our service,' they say, 'and that is our duty; but to preach is more than we are bound to') set before you how Christ's blood-shedding has bound us to love one another with all our might, and to do the utmost of our power for one another. Paul says, "Woe to me, if I do not preach." (1Cor 9.16) Indeed, woe to him that has the means to help his neighbor, and to make him better, and does not. If they think it is more than their duty to preach Christ to you, then they think it is more than their duty to pray that you would come to the knowledge of Christ. And therefore it is no marvel that they take such great labors – yes, and so many wages as well – to keep you still in darkness.

And when they cry furiously, 'Hold the heretics to the wall, and if they will not recant, burn them without any more ado; do not reason with them, it is an article condemned by the fathers;' then set before you this saying of Peter, 1Pet 3.15: "To all that ask you, be ready to give an answer of the hope that is in you, and do that with meekness." The fathers of the Jews and the bishops, who had as great authority over them as ours have over us, condemned Christ and his doctrine. If it is enough to say the fathers have condemned it, then the Jews are to be excused; indeed, they are still in the right way, and we are in the false. But if the Jews are bound to look in the Scripture, and to see whether their fathers have done right or wrong, then we are likewise bound to look in the Scripture, whether our fathers have done right or wrong, and we ought to believe nothing without a reason from the Scripture, and authority from God's word.

And in this way defend yourself against all manner of wickedness from our sprites; always be armed with God's word, and with a strong and a steadfast faithfulness to it. Without God's word, do nothing. And to his word, add nothing; nor remove anything from it, as Moses everywhere teaches. Serve God in the spirit, and serve your neighbor with all outward service. Serve God as he has appointed you, and not just with your good intentions and good zeal. Remember, Saul was cast away from God forever for his good intentions. God requires obedience to his word; and he abhors all good intentions and good zeal which are outside God's word – for they are nothing but plain idolatry, and the worshipping of false gods.

And remember that Christ is the end of all things. He alone is our resting-place, and he is our peace. For just as there is no salvation in any other name, so is there no peace in any other name. You shall never have rest in your soul, nor shall the worm of conscience ever cease to gnaw your heart, till you come to Christ; till you hear the glad tidings, how God for his sake has forgiven you all freely. If you trust in your works, there is no rest. You will think, 'I have not done enough. Have I done it with as great a love as I should have? Was I as glad in doing, as I would have been to receive help in my need? Have I left this or that undone?' and such things. If you trust in confession, then you will think, 'Have I told all? Have I told all the circumstances? Did I repent enough? Did I have as great a sorrow in my repentance for my sins, as I had pleasure in doing them?' Likewise in our holy pardons and pilgrimages you get no rest. For you see that the very "gods" themselves, who sell their pardons so good and cheap, or sometimes freely for glory's sake, do not trust in them themselves. They build colleges and make perpetuities to be prayed for forever; and they fill the lips of their beadmen, or chaplains, with so many masses and dirges, and give so long a service, that I have known of some who asked the devil to take their founders' souls, for the impatience and weariness of so painful a labor.

As pertaining to good deeds, therefore, do the best you can, and desire God to give you the strength to do better daily; but put your trust in Christ, and in the pardon and promises that God has made you for his sake; and on that rock build your house, and dwell there. For only there will you be safe from all storms and tempests, and from all the wily assaults of our wicked spirits, who study with all falsehood to undermine us. And the God of all mercy give you grace to do so, to whom be glory forever! Amen.

A COMPENDIOUS SUMMARY.

I have described to you the obedience of children, servants, wives, and subjects. These four orders are of God's making, and the rules for them are God's word. He that keeps them shall be blessed, indeed, is blessed already; and he that breaks them shall be cursed. If any person of impatience, or of a stubborn and rebellious mind, withdraws himself from any of these, and gets himself to any other order, do not let him think that by doing so he will avoid the vengeance of God for obeying the rules and traditions of man's imagination. If you trim your hair[207] in the worship of your father, and yet break his commandments, should you escape? Or if you paint your master's image on a wall, and stick a candle in front of it, should that make satisfaction for breaking his commandments? Or if you wear a blue coat in the worship of the king, and yet break his laws, should you be acquitted? Let a man's wife make herself a sister of the Charterhouse, and answer her husband when he asks her to hold her peace, saying, 'My brothers keep silence for me' – see if she will escape with that. You may be sure that God is more jealous over his commandments than man is over his own, or than any man is over his wife.

Because we are blind, God has appointed in the Scripture how we should serve and please him. As pertaining to his own person, he is abundantly pleased when we believe his promises and his holy testament, which he has made to us in Christ; and for the mercy which he showed us there, love his commandments. All bodily service must be done to man in God's stead. We must give obedience, honor, toll, tribute, custom, and rent to whom they belong. Then if you have anything more to bestow, give to the poor, who are left here in Christ's stead, so that we may show mercy to them. If we keep the commandments of love, then we are sure that we fulfill the law in the sight of God, and that our blessing shall be everlasting life. Now when we obey evil princes who oppress and persecute us, and do so patiently and without grudging, and are kind and merciful to those who are merciless to us and do the worst they can to us – and thus take all fortune patiently, and kiss whatever cross God lays on our backs – then we are sure that we keep the commandments of love.

I declared that God has taken all vengeance into his own hands, and he will avenge all unrighteousness himself – either by the powers or officers which are appointed for that purpose, or else, if they are negligent in their duties, he will send his curses upon the transgressors, and destroy them with his secret judgments. I showed also, that whoever avenges himself is damned in doing the deed, and he falls into the hands of the temporal sword. This is because he takes the office of God upon himself, and robs God of his most high honor, in that he will not patiently await God's judgment. I showed you about the authority of princes, how they are in God's stead, and how they may not be resisted; however much evil they do, they must be reserved to the wrath of God. Nevertheless, if they command us to do evil, then we must then disobey, and say, 'We are otherwise commanded by God;' but do not rise against them. 'They will kill us then,' you say. To this I say that a Christian is called to suffer even bitter death for his hope's sake, and because he will do no evil. I showed also that the kings and rulers (however evil they may be) are still a great gift of the goodness of God; they defend us from a thousand things we do not see.

I proved also that all men without exception are under the temporal sword, whatever names they may give themselves. Because the priest is chosen out of the laymen to teach this obedience, is that a lawful cause for him to disobey? Because he preaches that the layman should not steal, is it therefore lawful for him to steal unpunished? Because you teach me that I may not kill, or if I do, the king must kill me in return, is it therefore lawful for you to kill, and yet go free? Is it not rather fitting that you, who are my guide to teach me the right way, should walk

in the right way before me? The priests of the old law, along with their high bishop Aaron, and all his successors, even though they were anointed by God's commandment, and appointed to serve God in his temple, and were exempt from all offices and from ministering in worldly matters, they were nevertheless under the temporal sword if they broke the laws. Christ says to Peter, "All who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." Here there is no exception. Paul says, "All souls must obey." Here there is no exception. Paul himself is not exempt here. God says, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed again." Here there is no exception.

Moreover, Christ became poor to make other men rich; and he was bound to make others free. He also left the law of love with his disciples. Now love does not seek her own profit, but her neighbor's; love does not seek her own freedom, but becomes a surety and bond to make her neighbor free. Therefore, the clergy are damned by all the laws of God, from which, through falsehood and disguised hypocrisy, they have sought so great a profit, so great riches, so great authority, and so great liberties. They have so beggared the lay-people, and so brought them into subjection and bondage, and so despised them, that they have set up franchises in all the towns and villages for whoever robs, murders, or slays them, even for traitors to the king's person.

I proved also that no king has power to grant these papists such liberty; but they are as well damned for giving it, as these papists are for falsely purchasing it. For just as God gives the father power over his children, even so he gives him a commandment to execute it, and not to allow his children to do wickedly and go unpunished; otherwise it is to his own damnation, as you may see by Eli, the high priest, etc. And just as the master has authority over his servants, even so he has a commandment to govern them. And just as the husband is head over his wife, even so he has a commandment to rule her appetites; and he is damned if he allows her to be a whore and a mis-liver, or submits himself to her, and makes her his head. And in the same way that God makes the king head over his realm, he gives the king a commandment to execute the laws upon all men indifferently. For the law is God's, and not the king's. The king is only a servant to execute the law of God, and not to rule according to his own imagination.

I showed also that the law and the king are to be feared, as things that were given in fire, thunder, lightning, and terrible signs. I showed the cause why rulers are evil, and by what means we might obtain better rulers. I showed also how wholesome those bitter medicines, evil princes, are to righteous Christian men.

I declared how those whom God has made governors in the world, ought to rule, if they are Christians. They ought to remember that they are heads and arms to defend the body, to minister peace, health, and wealth, and even to save the body – and that they have received their offices from God, to minister and to do service to their brothers. King, subject, master, servant, are names in the world, but not in Christ. In Christ we are all one, and even brothers. No man is his own; but we are all Christ's servants, bought with Christ's blood. Therefore no man ought to seek himself, or his own profit, but Christ and his will. In Christ no man rules as a king to his subjects, or as a master to his servants; but he serves as one hand serves another, and as the hands serve the feet, and the feet serve the hands, as you see 1Corinthians 12. We also serve, not as servants to masters, but as those who are bought with Christ's blood serve Christ himself. Here we are all servants to Christ. For whatever we do one to another in Christ's name, we do as to Christ, and we shall receive the reward of that from Christ. The king considers his commoners as Christ himself; and therefore he serves them willingly, seeking no more from them than is sufficient to maintain peace and unity, and to defend the realm. And they obey in return willingly and lovingly, as unto Christ. And every man seeks his reward from

Christ.

I warned the judges that they should not take an example of how to minister their offices from our clergy, who are bought and sold to do the will of Satan; but from the Scripture, from where they have their authority. Let what is secret remain secret till God opens it, who is the judge of secrets. For it is more than a cruel thing to break apart a man's heart, and compel him to put either soul or body in jeopardy, or else to shame himself. If Peter, that great pillar, abandoned his master for fear of death, ought we not to spare weak consciences?

I declared how the king ought to rid his realm of the wily tyranny of the hypocrites, and to bring the hypocrites under his laws – indeed, how he ought to be instructed, and to hear, and to look at the causes himself for which he will punish; and not to believe the hypocrites, nor to give them his sword to kill whomever they will.

The king ought to count what he has spent in the pope's quarrels since he was king. The first voyage cost over fourteen hundred thousand pounds. Reckon since what has been spent by sea and land between us and the Frenchmen and the Scots, and then in triumphs, and in embassies, and what has been sent out of the realm secretly, and all to maintain our holy father. I have no doubt that it will surmount the sum of forty or fifty hundred thousand pounds – for we had no cause to spend one penny, except for our holy father. The king therefore ought to make them pay this money, every farthing, and fetch it out of their mitres, crosses, shrines, and all manner of church treasures, and pay it back to his commoners. And not only what the cardinal and his bishops compelled the commoners to lend, and made them swear with such an example of tyranny as was never thought of before – but also all that he has gathered from them: or else by the consent of the commoners to keep it in store for the defense of the realm. Indeed, the king ought to look in the Chronicles, at what the popes have done to kings in times past, and make them restore that also. And he ought to take away from these papists their lands which they have gotten with their false prayers, and restore it to the rightful heirs again – or with advice and consent, turn these lands toward maintaining the poor, and bringing up youth virtuously, and maintaining necessary officers and ministers to defend the commonwealth.

If he will not do it, then the commoners ought to take it patiently, and take it as God's scourge; and think that God has blinded the king for their own sins' sake; and commit their cause to God. And then God shall make a scourge for them, and drive them out of his temple, after his awful judgment.

On the other side, I have also uttered the wickedness of the clergy, the falsehood of the bishops, and the juggling of the pope, and how they have disguised themselves, borrowing some of their pomp from the Jews, and some from the gentiles; and with subtle wiles they have turned the obedience that should be given to God's ordinance, to themselves. I uttered how they have set aside God's testament and God's truth, and set up their own traditions and lies in their place; and they have taught the people to believe in these; and thereby they sit in their consciences as God. By that means, they have robbed the world of lands and goods, of peace and unity, and of all temporal authority, and they have brought the people into the ignorance of God, and have heaped the wrath of God upon all the realms, and namely upon the kings – whom they have robbed not only of worldly things, but even of their natural wits. They make others believe that they are the most Christian, when they live the most abominably, and will allow no man in their realms who believes in Christ. And they make others believe that they are "defenders of the faith," when they burn the gospel and the promises of God, out of which all faith springs.

I showed how they ministered Christ, king, and emperor out of their rightful places; and how

they have made them a several kingdom, which they got at first by deceiving princes; and now they pervert the whole Scripture to prove that they have such authority from God. And the greatest cause of this present persecution, is to keep the laymen from seeing how falsely they cite the passages of the Scripture.

They have feigned confession for the same purpose, to establish their kingdom with. They know all secrets thereby. The bishop knows the confession of those he desires throughout his diocese. Indeed, his chancellor commands the spiritual father to deliver it in writing. The pope, his cardinals and bishops, know the confessions of the emperor, kings, and all lords – and by this confession they know all their captives. If any believe in Christ, by confession they know him. Confess yourself wherever you will, whether at Sion, Charterhouse, or at the Observants, your confession is known well enough. And if you believe in Christ, you are waited for. Awful are the things that are wrought thereby. The wife is feared and compelled to utter not only her own secrets, but also the secrets of her husband; and the servant is compelled to utter the secrets of his master. Besides that, through confession they quench faith in all the promises of God, and they take away the effect and virtue of all the sacraments of Christ.

They have also corrupted the saints' lives with lies and feigned miracles, and they have put many things outside the sentence or great curse, such as raising rents and fines, and hiring men out of their houses, and whatever wickedness they do themselves. And they have put a great part of the stories and Chronicles out of the way, lest their falsehood should be seen. For there is no mischief or disorder, whether in the temporal regiment, or in the spiritual, of which they are not the chief causes, and even the very fountain and springs of it, or as we say, the well-head. So that it is impossible to preach against any mischief, unless you begin preaching to them; or to begin any reformation in the world, unless you reform them first. Now they are as hardened and tough as Pharaoh, and will not bow to any right way or order. And therefore they persecute God's word and the preachers of it. And on the other side, they lie in wait for all princes, and stir up all the mischief in the world, and send them to war, and occupy their minds with it, or with other lavish living, lest they have leisure to hear the word of God, and to set their realms in order.

All things are ministered by these papists, and all kings are ruled by them. Indeed, they sit in every king's conscience before he is king, and they persuade every king of whatever they desire. They make them believe what they will, and do what they will. Nor can any king or realm have rest for their own business. Behold King Henry V, whom they sent out for the same purpose they sent out our current king. See how the realm is inhabited. Ask where the goodly towns and their walls are, and what has become of the people who used to be in them; and what has become of the royal blood of the realm? Turn your eyes wherever you will, and you shall see nothing prosperous except their subtle polling. With that, it is like flowing water; and indeed I expect it will shortly be a full sea.

In all their doings, though they pretend outwardly the honor of God or of a commonwealth, their intent and secret counsel is only to bring everything under their own power,[208] and to remove whoever lets them, or is too mighty for them.[209] As when they send the princes to Jerusalem to conquer the holy land, and to fight against the Turks. Whatever they pretend outwardly, their secret intent is that, while the princes there conquer more bishoprics for them, they will conquer the princes' lands with their false hypocrisy, and bring everything under themselves. You may easily perceive this by the fact that they will not let us know the faith of Christ. And once they are on high, then they become tyrants above all tyrants, whether they are Turks or Saracens. How do they minister the proving of wills? What are the causes for wedlock? Or what happens if any man dies intestate? If a poor man dies, and leaves his wife and half a dozen young

children, and they have but one cow between them, the papists will mercilessly take it for a mortuary fee, whatever may become of the wife and children. Indeed, let anything be done against their pleasure, and these papists will interdict the whole realm, sparing no one.

Read the Chronicles of England, (from which they excluded a great part of their wickedness), and you will find that they have always been both rebellious and disobedient to the kings, and also churlish and unthankful; so that when the entire realm gave the king something to maintain him in his right, these papists would not give a mite. Consider the story of King John, where I have no doubt they put the best and fairest description for themselves, and the worst for King John – for I suppose they wrote the chronicles themselves. Compare the doings of their "holy church" (as they always call it) to the learning of Christ and of his apostles. Did not the legate of Rome[210] relieve all the lords of the realm from their due obedience which they owed to the king by the ordinance of God? Would the legate not have cursed the king with his solemn pomp, because the king would have done what God commands every king to do, and for which God has put the sword in every king's hand? Namely, King John would have punished a wicked clerk who had coined false money. Laymen who had not done half so great a fault must die, but the clerk must escape free by the legate's order! Did the pope not also send to the king of France, remission of his sins, to go and conquer King John's realm? So now remission of sins does not come by faith in the testament that God has made in Christ's blood, but by fighting and murdering for the pope's pleasure. Last of all, was not king John willing to deliver his crown to the legate, and to yield up his realm to the pope, for which we pay Peter-pence? They might also be called the "polling-pence of false prophets" well enough. They do not care by what mischief they attain their purpose. War and conquering of lands is their harvest. The more wicked the people are, the more they hold the hypocrites in reverence, the more they fear them, and the more they believe in them. And those who conquer other men's lands, when they die, make these papists their heirs, to pray for them forever. Let there come one more conquest in the realm, and you shall see them get yet as much more as they now have (if they can suppress God's word so that their juggling does not come to light). Indeed, you will see them take the realm entirely into their hands, and crown one of themselves its king. Truly, I see no other likelihood, but that the land will shortly be conquered. The stars of the Scripture promise us no other fortune, since with the wicked Jews, we deny Christ and will not have him reign over us; but we will still be children of darkness under antichrist, and antichrist's possession – burning the gospel of Christ, and defending a faith that may not stand with his holy testament.

If any man sheds blood in the church, it shall be interdicted till he has paid for the hallowing. If he is not able, the parish must pay, or else it will always stand interdicted. The papists will be avenged on those who never offended them. Paul full well prophesied of them, in the 2nd epistle to Timothy; chapter 3. Someone will say, 'Would you have men fight in the church unpunished?' No, but let the king ordain a punishment for them, as he does for those who fight in his palace; and do not let all the parish be troubled for one man's fault. And as for their hallowing, it is the juggling of antichrist. A Christian man is the temple of God and of the Holy Ghost, and he is hallowed in Christ's blood. A Christian man is holy in himself, by reason of the Spirit who dwells in him; and the place where he is, is holy because of him, whether he is in the field or town. A Christian husband sanctifies an unchristian wife, and a Christian wife sanctifies an unchristian husband, says Paul to the Corinthians (concerning matrimony). If now, while we seek to be hallowed in Christ, we are found to be unholy, and must be hallowed by the ground, place, or walls about us, then Christ died in vain. Nevertheless, antichrist must have the means to sit in men's consciences, and to make them fear where is no fear, and to rob them of their faith, and to make them trust in what cannot help them, and to seek holiness from what is not holy in itself.

After the old king of France was brought down out of Italy, mark what pageants have been played, and are still playing, to separate us from the emperor, lest by our help or aid he might be able to recover his right from the pope, and to couple us to the Frenchmen, whose might the pope continually abuses to keep the emperor from Italy. What does it prevail any king to marry his daughter or his son to another, or to make any peace or good ordinance for the wealth of his realm? For it will last no longer than it is profitable to the papists. Their treason is so secret that the world cannot perceive it. They dissimulate those things for which they are only cause, and they simulate discord among themselves when they are most agreed. One will hold this view, and another will argue the contrary, but the outcome will be what best maintains their falsehood, no matter how God's word contradicts it. What have they wrought in our days, indeed, and what do they still work to the perpetual dishonor of the king, and to the rebuke of the realm, and to the shame of the nation, in whatever realms they go!

I uttered to you partly the malicious blindness of the bishop of Rochester, his juggling, his conveying, his foxy wiliness, his bo-peep,[211] his wresting, renting, and shameful abusing of the Scripture; his oratory and alleging of heretics, and how he would make the apostles authors of blind ceremonies without significance, contrary to their own doctrine; and I have set him as an example to judge all others by. Whatever you are that read this, I exhort you in Christ to compare his sermon, and what I have written, and the Scripture, and then judge. There you will find out about our holy father's authority, and what it is to be great, and how to know the great.

Then follows the cause why laymen cannot rule over temporal offices, which is the falsehood of the bishops. There you will find out about miracles and ceremonies without significance; of false anointing, and lying signs, and false names; and how the clergy are disguised in falsehood; and how they roll the people in darkness, and do all things in the Latin tongue; and of their petty pillage. Their polling is like a soaking consumption, in which a man complains of feebleness and faintness, and does not know where his disease comes from. It is like a pock that corrodes inwardly, and consumes the very marrow of the bones.

There you see the cause why it is impossible for kings to come to the knowledge of the truth. For the sprites lay in wait for them, and serve their appetites at all points; and through confession they buy and sell and betray both the kings and all their true friends, and lay baits for them, and never leave them till they have blinded them with their sophistry, and have brought them into their nets. And then, when the king is captive, they compel all the rest by the violence of his sword. For if any man will not obey them, whether right or wrong, they cite him, suspend him, and curse or excommunicate him. If then he does not obey, they deliver him to Pilate, that is, to the temporal officers, to destroy him. Last of all, there you find the very cause of all persecution, which is preaching against hypocrisy.

Then we come to the sacraments, where you see that the work of the sacrament is nothing; but it is only faithin the promise, which the sacrament signifies, that justifies us. There a priest is but a servant, to teach only; and whatever he takes upon himself more than to preach and to minister the sacraments of Christ (which is also preaching) is falsehood.

Then comes how they juggle through silent ceremonies, and how they make merchandise with feigned words – penance, a poena eta culpa,[212] satisfaction, attrition, character, purgatory-pick-purse – and how through confession they make the sacraments and all the promises of no effect or value. There see you that absolving is merely preaching the promises; and cursing or excommunicating, is preaching the law. And there you see about their power, and their keys, false miracles, and praying to saints. There see you that ceremonies did no miracles, but only faith – even as Moses' rod did no miracles, but it was Moses' faith in the promises of God. You

see also that to have faith, where God has made no promise, is idolatry. And there you may also see how the pope exalts himself above God, and commands God to obey his tyranny. Last of all, you have there that no man ought to preach unless he is called.

Then follows the belly-brotherhood of monks and friars. For Christ has deserved nothing with them: for his sake you get no favor. You must offer to their bellies, and then they will pray bitterly for you. There see you that Christ is the only cause, indeed, all the cause, why God does anything for us, and hears our complaint. And there you have doctrine for how to know, and to be sure, that you are elect and have God's Spirit in you. And there you have learning to test the doctrine of our spirits.

Then follow the four senses of the Scripture, of which three are no senses at all; and the fourth, that is the literal sense, is the very sense that the pope has taken to himself. It may have no other meaning than as it pleases his fatherhood, and we must abide his interpretation, we are told. And as his bellies think, so we must think – even though it is impossible to gather any such meaning from the Scripture. Then you have the use of allegories, and how they are nothing but examples borrowed from the Scripture to express a text, or an open conclusion of the Scripture, and then, as it were, to paint it before your eyes, so that you may feel the meaning and the power of the Scripture in your heart. Then comes the use of worldly similitudes, and how those who bring a worldly similitude for any other purpose than to express more plainly what is contained in an clear text, are false prophets. And so are those who stretch the Scripture in a way that is contrary to the clear verses, and contrary to the example, life, and practices of Christ, the apostles, and of the holy prophets. And then, finally, you have been shown something of our holy father's power, and of his keys, and of his binding and excommunicating, and of his cursing and blessing, with examples of everything.

THE END OF THE OBEDIENCE OF A CHRISTIAN MAN.

Notes

[← 1]

Love of the world is hatred of God and his holy gospel.

[←2]

If God is for us, who can be against us? Rom 8.31

[←3]

God's truth fights for us.

[←4]

God tests the faith of his children.

[←5]

God works backward.

[←6]

Our fighting is to suffer, while God fights for us.

[←7]

How the Pope is sure, who takes all for Christ's sake, but forsakes nothing.

[←8]

How then are the Pope and his bishops sure?

[←9]

Which way then do the bishops go to heaven?

[← 10]

The promises of God are comfortable; indeed, they are all comfort.

[← 11]

The despisers, persecutors, and those who fall from the word are threatened.

[← 12]

Those who are devilish are spiritual, for the devil is a spirit.

[← 13]

Juggling means to influence or manipulate by slyness and deceit.

[← 14]

That is, put it into practice; Tyndale defines it later in the same paragraph. - WHG

[← 15]

What Christ looses freely, the Pope binds to loose it again for money.

[← 16]

That is, he takes an offering for his pay.

[←17]

A money offering, as distinguished from an offering-in-kind made during the mass in the medieval church.

[← 18]

A set of 30 Requiem Masses, whether said on a single or on successive days, and for which a collection was taken.

[← 19]

A psalm was called a dirige, and dirige-money was the payment made for singing the psalm.

[←20]

The bead-roll (based on Rosary beads), was a list or catalog of people to be specially prayed for, for a price.

[←21]

A confession was heard for the price of a penny, in order to be forgiven by the parish priest.

[←22]

Tyndale variously used Jerome and Hierome. Jerome is used exclusively in this modernization.

[←23]

Someone who annoys people by constantly finding fault.

[←24]

The Scripture is the tester of all doctrine, and the right touchstone.

[←25]

The original word used here was “spiritualty” (sic); it refers to all those of religious orders and spiritual authority.

[←26]

Here is the disorder or overthrown order of our schoolmen. The school doctrine, as they call it, corrupts the judgments of our youth.

[←27]

To nurse; to lead or teach; to foster; to nuzzle.

[←28]

Sound foundations (of philosophical thinking).

[←29]

Yet in this they all agree, that no man is saved by Christ but by holy works, and that Christ has given his Godhead to the pope and all his power; and that the pope may give Christ's merits to whom he will, and take them from whom he will.

[←30]

The pope licensed the people to read and say whatever they wanted, except the truth.

[←31]

Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466-1536). Eramus' Paraclesis, or Exhortation, was the preface to his 1516 edition of the New Testament in Greek, with an accompanying Latin translation. It was made famous by his call to make the Scriptures available and accessible to the unlearned.

[←32]

Prelates are not professors, but profaners of God's word. The obedience of monks and friars is not addressed here. For they are not of God, but of their own feigning.

[←33]

Christ's disciples were long weak and worldly-minded.

[←34]

This is what the pope's doctrine causes: he commands murder.

[←35]

Any disease of domestic animals that resembles a plague.

[←36]

God avenges disobedience himself though the officer will not.

[←37]

Covetousness makes our clergy such, that they cannot see what even a Turk would be ashamed of.

[←38]

Traffic in ecclesiastical offices or preferments.

[←39]

Wives are not to worship their husbands, but God alone. The Lord's Prayer (Paternoster), Ave (salutation), and Credo (recitation of beliefs), are addressed to God alone, not men. Yet wives are to submit to a husband's rule. This is easier to do when the husband is ruling as he should. Tyndale addresses the husband's rule on p. 35. – WHG

[←40]

In suffering wrongs patiently, we follow the steps of Christ.

[←41]

Our clergy retain men's servants not to honor God, but only to honor their traditions and ceremonies.

[←42]

In Hebrew, elohim, literally “gods” - but it refers here to judges.

[←43]

God provides a means to take the evil out of the way when they have fulfilled their wickedness.

[←44]

That is, ‘read history.’ He is not referring to the Chroniclesof Scripture, but the Chronicles of England, which was a history of the nation, published in July 1493.

[←45]

Any person who had memorized an appropriate Psalm could claim the benefit of clergy. And so Psalm 51 became known as the “neck-verse,” because knowing it could save one's neck by transferring one's case from a secular court, where hanging was a likely sentence, to an ecclesiastical court, where both the methods of trial and the sentences given were more lenient. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benefit_of_clergy

[←46]

The original wording for affection is “wit,” meaning drive or inclination. It seemed appropriate to use “affection” in the sense that Jonathan Edwards used it in his treatise, Religious Affections. Tyndale defines it nicely in the next paragraph as the desire to obtain what we falsely judge to be best for us. – WHG

[←47]

All is sin that does not spring from the Spirit of God, and all that is not done in the light of God's word.

[←48]

Lucretia (or Shakespeare's Lucrece) is a legendary figure in the Roman Republic. According to the story, told mainly by the Roman historian Livy and the Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, her rape by the king's son and consequent suicide caused the revolution that overthrew the monarchy and established the Roman Republic.

[←49]
An insane asylum.

[←50]

True miracles are wrought to confirm the preaching, and not the Godhead of the preacher [though Christ's miracles testified of who he was, John 10.25, 38 – Tyndale is speaking of attributing divinity to clergy by miracles].

[←51]

That is, to account for their fasting from meat and wine in such countries. It isn't to earn grace with God.

[←52]

The “emperor” refers to the Holy Roman Emperor an elected medieval ruler who, as German King, also received the title of "Emperor of the Romans" from the Pope. Therefore, the “emperor” and the “pope” are distinct persons and offices. The Electoral council was set at seven princes (three archbishops and four secular princes) by the Golden Bull of 1356. It remained so until 1648, when the settlement of the Thirty Years’ War required the addition of a new elector to maintain the precarious balance between Protestant and Catholic factions in the Empire.

[←53]

The Socheners were Swiss mercenaries. They had been engaged to protect Lombardy. When Louis sent his best general Tremoille in the spring of 1513 to retake Milan from the Son of Ludovico Sforza, they totally defeated, and almost entirely destroyed the French army. Cardinal Bambridge from Rome wrote, “The pope has this night shot a solemn peal of guns in triumph of the premises.” - See Turner's Hist. Henry VIII. vol. i. p. 112-4.

[←54]

Gal 4:1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

[←55]

The school doctors are church theologians and spokesmen.

[←56]

Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money [filthy lucre]; 1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain [filthy lucre] but eagerly. ["Lucre" can refer to money, but it can also refer to any gain that is "lucrative" or advantageous to your position or situation.]

[←57]

Read the 8th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, Galatians 3 and 2Corinthians 3.

[←58]

Original citation was Psalm 104.

[←59]

The original citation was 2Kings 2. Tyndale used the naming conventions in Jerome's Vulgate (Latin) Bible. In that Bible, 1st and 2nd Samuel were named 1st and 2nd Kings; and our 1st and 2nd Kings were named 3rd and 4th Kings. Thus when Tyndale refers to 2nd Kings, it corresponds to our 2nd Samuel (which is the Hebrew naming convention).

[←60]

This refers to serfdom and feudalism, which persisted in England until Elizabeth I freed the last remaining serfs in 1574. Landlords, here, are land owners who lease their land to others, allowing them to grow crops on the land (see Mat 21.33-41). A tenantry refers to the tenants of a feudal estate, considered as a group, who have been allotted a portion of land. For one man to own two or three tenantries, while others have no tenantry at all, is to allow the one to profit at the expense of others. If the land is turned into a park or pasture, it looks very pretty for the lord of the manor, but it removes the means for some to grow food to live on. And so Tyndale condemns it.

[←61]

That is, make clear divisions between the parcels of land, separating them by ditches, hedges, gates, and ways. Disputes would then be less likely between tenants concerning the boundary lines of their respective leases.

[←62]

2Chr 19:6 "Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment;" Rom 13:4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

[←63]

Pestilence here means a pernicious and malign influence that is hard to get rid of.

[←64]

The “you” in verse 15 is plural, and therefore Peter answers on behalf of them all. The “you” in verse 19 is singular, but that doesn’t mean only Peter received the keys; rather, all who answer as Peter answered receive them.

[←65]

Patrimony of St. Peter. The estates belonging to the Church of Rome. Once an edict of Constantine in 321 had enabled the Church to hold permanent property, the patrimony came to include vast estates in Italy and lands in other countries. As the further patrimonies were conquered, Popes concentrated on defending the region round Rome. In 753 Stephen II appealed for protection to Pepin, King of the Franks. By the Donations of 754 and 756 Pepin gave the Papacy territory in the exarchate of Ravenna, the Duchy of Rome, and elsewhere, and, renouncing the Byzantine authority, founded the Papal States independent of any temporal power. – Oxford Concise Dictionary.

[←66]

As you may see in Mat 18.4; 20.16, Mark 9.35; 10.15, 31, 43-45; Luke 9.23-25, and Luke 22.24-27, which was at his last supper.

[←67]

John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, (1469? – 1535); his sermon against Luther was published in 1521, on the occasion of King Henry VIII ordering the burning of Luther's books. It was commissioned by Sir Thomas More, an opponent of the Protestant Reformation, Luther, and Tyndale. Cardinal Wolsey presided over the book-burning.

[←68]

The papal bull - A formal proclamation issued by the pope and sealed with a bulla, a round lead seal of authority.

[←69]

The Corinthian passage may not refer to the true apostles, Peter, John, et al. Rather it seems to refute the false apostles who were visiting the Corinthians with their false doctrine, and who were exalting themselves. Tyndale's point is nonetheless well-taken with regard to the self-exaltation of the pope and his cardinals without such service and sacrifice on behalf of others as the evidence of their authority.

[←70]

In the Dominican order, each priory's territory was called its praedicatio, and there it carried out its preaching, administered penances, sought alms, and recruited new members. As in other mendicant orders, these territories were further divided into smaller districts for the easier organization of these activities. Each district was entrusted by the conventual prior to the charge of a particular friar. The 1421 general chapter ruled that 'limiters', as these friars were called, were to be of good reputation and good preachers, and required that they work their districts personally with their assistants. Limiters were not allowed to undertake parochial ministries or hold chantry incumbencies without permission. When they did this with permission, half of the stipend went to their priory. (Paul Lee, Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality in Later Medieval English Society, York Medieval Press, 2001) p. 84.

[←71]

Tyndale's sarcastic label for the Roman Catholic clergy, who shaved their heads to set themselves apart.

[←72]

A sarcastic title for John Fisher, bishop of Rochester.

[←73]

Literally it is "Go, it is sent," said at the end of the Roman mass. Obviously it has nothing to do with Mary's immaculate conception.

[←74]

Rom 2.16; 1Cor 4.17; 15.1; Gal 1.8; 1Thes 1.5; 1Tim 1.11.

[←75]

In other words, although the Four Gospels present the one true gospel, Paul's explanation of the basis and reasons for the truth of those four Gospels, is necessarily fuller, but it is all one gospel, which is a gospel of grace.

[←76]

The act of looking out suddenly, as from behind a screen, so as to startle someone (as by children in play), or of looking out and drawing suddenly back, as if frightened.

[←77]

That is, like a pestilence or disease that spreads into an epidemic.

[←78]

Bede was not only the first historian of England, but he was also a theologian, and made a saint. He prepared the earliest known written English translation of any part of the Bible (ca. 673-735). It was reported that, just before he died, he translated the Gospel of John, or a portion of it, into Anglo-Saxon. No copies have survived.

[←79]

To put in possession of land in exchange for a pledge of service (in feudal society).

[←80]

An authoritative order or decree; especially a letter of the pope determining some point or question in ecclesiastical law. The decretals form the second part of the canon law.

[←81]

Tyndale is referring to Latin grammar. Deponent verbs are passive in form and active in meaning, depending on whether they are perfect or imperfect (and other complexities). An active verb means the subject acts on an object. ‘He hit the ball.’ With a passive verb, an object receives the action. ‘The ball was hit by him.’ Here Tyndale challenges, of love and faith, which one causes the other? And so he presents some concrete examples.

[←82]

That is, who intentionally sin because sin is “delectable” to them; they desire and delight in it.

[←83]

To make a sad face and push out the lower lip in a pout.

[←84]

Someone who is unimportant but cheeky and presumptuous.

[←85]

Meaningless ceremonies.

[←86]

Or monkey-business: mischievous or deceitful behavior.

[←87]

An “observant” is someone who observes (practices) the strict rules of a monastic order.

[←88]

That is, they place great store in themselves, and little in anyone else; they are self-important.

[←89]

Portess: a Latin primer (an introductory textbook for the Latin language).

[←90]

A short prayer generally preceding the lesson in the Church of Rome or the Church of England.

[←91]

Matins refers to the first canonical hour; at daybreak.

[←92]

A liturgical headdress worn by bishops on formal occasions.

[←93]

Formally reject or disavow a formerly held belief, usually under torture.

[←94]

Paternoster: the Lord's Prayer. But if in Latin, it sounds like a sequence of words spoken as magic formula.

[←95]

That is, William Warham, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1503 to 1532.

[←96]

A loose-fitting white ecclesiastical vestment with wide sleeves.

[←97]

A consecrated ointment consisting of a mixture of oil and balsam.

[←98]

A death-tax paid to a priest by the relatives or estate of those dying within the boundaries of his parish.

[←99]

The Dean of Arches is the judge who sits at the ecclesiastical court of the Archbishop of Canterbury in England. This appeal court is commonly called the Arches Court, or here, “Arches.”

[←100]

An ecclesiastical censure by the Roman Catholic Church withdrawing certain sacraments and Christian burial from a person or all persons in a particular district. Here it would prohibit the king from exercising his authority.

[←101]

The Master of the Rolls of the Chancery Court of England (Equity Court), is the second most senior judge in England, after the Lord Chief Justice. The office dates from 1286.

[←102]

The Lord Chancellor of England at this time was Sir Thomas More.

[← 103]

Superfluity means an excess of something.

[← 104]

An endowed church office giving income to its holder.

[←105]

Tot quot: a general dispensation (an exemption from a rule or obligation).

[←106]

Plowland: under Old English law it was the quantity of land allotted for the work of one plow; a hide.

[←107]

The head of a religious order; the prior is the one next below the abbot who heads the abbey.

[←108]

Also known as the Knights or Order of Hospitaller, , were a group of men attached to a hospital in Jerusalem that was founded by Gerard around 1023 to provide care for poor, sick, or injured pilgrims to the Holy Land.

[←109]

Or ‘chantry’ – a chapel endowed for singing Masses for the soul of the donor. Chantries were endowed with lands given by donors. The income from the chantry maintained the chantry priest. A chantry chapel is a building on private land or a dedicated area within a greater church. It was set aside or built especially for and dedicated to the performance of the chantry duties by the priest. It was generally dedicated to the donor's favorite saint. Many altars were richly endowed, often with gold furnishings and valuable vestments.

[←110]

A chapel not subject to the jurisdiction of any parent church or abbey, having been founded by the king or by a specially authorized subject.

[←111]

Something akin to probate; the wills were overseen by clergy who stood to benefit from the valuation, taxing, and distribution of the testator's estate.

[←112]

"Mr. Somner says, in his time, … almost every testator, as well of this city, as the country round about it, gave some satisfaction more or less by his will, to the parish priest for his tithes forgotten, or negligently paid, which it was conceived could not easily happen in this certain kind of payment. Yet it was rather than otherwise supposed, these privy personal tithes were seldom or never drawn from the parishioner by any legal compulsory way, or from any course taken for their recovery, in fore exteriori, as it is called, but by other means as prevalent in those times. That is, one me thod, by the calling the parishioner to account for them, in foro conscientiæ, in the court of conscience, at the time of confession, or thrist (perhaps the reason of their being called privy tithe); another by the terrifying danger of incurring the greater curse of excommunication, (which confirmed him much in his persuasion of the usual payment of them) declared in every parish church in town and country, until the reformation, four times in the year, against all such as withheld these tithes; the cause, perhaps, why every man was so careful not to die in his priest's debt for them. – Battely's Somner (biography of William Somner), p. 171.

[←113]

They deny any personal responsibility for collecting such amounts, because they are only the middle-man.

[←114]

In the Office of Public Baptism in the first prayer-book of Edward VI, printed in 1549, there is a reference to the custom of dressing the baby in a white vestment or chrysome (or chrismale) for its baptism, and donating this same vestment to the priest at the mother's purification.

[←115]

A ceremony in which women after childbirth are received in the church with prayers, blessings, and thanksgiving.

[←116]

Public announcement in church of a proposed marriage.

[←117]

Monastic brotherhoods supplied the manpower for all the paid services that Tyndale condemns here.

[←118]

The pardoner in the Medieval Church sold indulgences, which granted the buyer pardon for their sins.

[←119]

A Month's Mind is a requiem mass celebrated about one month after a person's death, in memory of the deceased.

[←120]

"In medieval England, on the 2nd of November (All Soul's Day), children and the poor went "a-souling," going from door to door to beg for a special little cake, marked with a Cross, called a soul cake. Each cake eaten would free a soul from Purgatory... Turnips were also carved into lanterns as a way of remembering the dead. Soul cakes were left in graveyards to feed the dead and prevent any mischief they might be contemplating." - Historical novelist Stephanie Cowell

[←121]

An office and mass for the dead on the thirtieth day after death or burial; hence, a dirge; an elegy.

[←122]

Refers to the last will and testament of a church member.

[← 123]

A consecrated portable stone slab for use on an unconsecrated altar

[←124]

“Book, Bell And Candle” were used in a medieval excommunication ceremony in Shakespeare’s King John.

[←125]

For baptisms, a special silver vessel called a ewer was used to fill the font.

[←126]

A container for burning incense, swung on a chain as part of the Catholic Mass. As the elements of the Eucharist were received, the priest uttered the Latin phrase "hoc est corpus meum" meaning "this is my body.”

[←127]

Someone delegated by a superior to execute a duty or an office, such as commissary of education for a diocese.

[←128]

The official name given to an officer in ecclesiastical courts designated to serve the summons, to arrest a person accused, and in an ecclesiastical procedure, to take possession, physically or formally, of the property in dispute. He thus acts as constable and sheriff.

[←129]

The term "bull" describes any elaborate papal document issued in the form of a decree or privilege.

[← 130]

They would not gain access to the king ‘till hell freezes over’ or ‘the cows come home,’ as we might say today.

[←131]

A spiritual father, or guide, would be assigned to instruct and admonish him in proper church etiquette.

[←132]

That is, those who are sworn to be true to the bishops first, and to the king second.

[←133]

Calais was an English trade port on the coast of France, occupied by English citizens, and defended by an English garrison. To be 'conveyed to Calais' meant being shipped to this frontier town to defend it against the French army. On January 1, 1558 (thirty years after Tyndale's treatise), the French army under Francis, Duke of Guise, took advantage of a weakened English garrison and decayed fortifications, to retake Calais, to the dismay of Mary I.

[← 134]

By ‘liberties’ Tyndale means their license to defraud the populace, as he has been describing.

[← 135]

Joh 5:38-39 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

[←136]

The Lord's Prayer in Latin; translates as 'our father.'

[←137]
Morning prayers.

[←138]

Another sarcastic reference to the pope.

[←139]

In the Medieval Church, Scala Coeli was bound up with indulgences that were paid to lessen the time of purgatory through prayers, masses, penances and good works offered for the dead. It was one of the rising devotions of the late-medieval Church in England, and a favorite with Henry VII. The reformer, Hugh Latimer would later tell young Edward's court [Edward VI], to adhere to "doings and traditions" in preference to the teachings of Scripture was but "going down the ladder," making a pun of the Scala Coeli. The Mass was but a "false ladder," Latimer said. "Christ bought souls with his blood." Was it not wrong to "sell them for gold or silver?" The "true ladder that brings a man to heaven" had been set out in the tenth chapter of Romans. The top rung was "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The second was the next verse: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" all the way to the "nether end of the ladder": "How shall they preach unless they are sent?" "Faith comes by hearing the Word." Latimer, Sermons, 97, 123, 178-9, 200, 418-19, 470-1.

[← 140]

That is, degrees of consanguinity – which blood relations may or may not marry.

[←141]

A staff mounted on top by a crook or cross; carried by bishops as a symbol of their pastoral office.

[←142]

This probably refers to the Morris dances introduced in the time of Edward III. The name Morris or Moorish refers to the Spanish origin of these dances. Performers danced around a maypole on May Day. Some were dressed in nets, or tights, like ballet dancers, and played the roles of Robin Hood and his merry band. Maypole celebrations were pagan fertility rites; any children born of “Robin” were surnamed Robinson (Robin’s son).

[←143]

A church or chapel which was endowed with lands or other revenue for the maintenance of one or more priests to sing or say mass daily for the soul of the donor or for the souls of persons named by him.

[←144]

They cannot build a memorial chapel, so instead they pay a priest, monk or friar to say a memorial mass.

[← 145]

That is, a sign of their falseness, that they are false apostles or false prophets.

[←146]

Legate a latere - a confidential papal legate of the highest degree, appointed for a particular mission and not as a permanent representative abroad – it is distinguished from nuncio.

[←147]

A rochet is a white vestment generally worn by a Roman Catholic or Anglican Bishop in choir dress. It is unknown in the Eastern Churches. The rochet is similar to a surplice, except that the sleeves are narrower. In the Roman Catholic tradition, the rochet comes below the knee, and its sleeves and hem are sometimes made of lace; in the Anglican tradition, the rochet comes down almost to the hem of the cassock, and its sleeves are gathered at the wrist.

[←148]

A popinjay is a parrot that repeats sounds without understanding them.

[←149]

Meaningless ceremonies.

[← 150]

For a woman, however poor she may be, yet when she is married, she is as rich as her husband. Even so we, when we repent and believe the promises of God in Christ, however poor sinners we may be, yet we are as rich as Christ; all his merits are ours, with all that he has.

[←151]

If wedlock is holy, why would they rather have whores than wives? [Tyndale is speaking of 'celibate' priests who are allowed to find their satisfaction with a harlot because the church will not allow them to marry].

[← 152]

Tyndale's original text had "six deacons."

[←153]

Meaning Judas Iscariot, betrayer of Christ.

[← 154]

Strong's 3340 - to change one's mind, or to heartily amend with abhorrence for past sins.

[← 155]

To regret; to be sorry for; cause regret. Tyndale used the term “forthink.”

[←156]

That is, in history books. This does not refer to the Chronicles of Scripture but to the political abuses of the clergy with regard to kings. In 1075 A.D., the head of the Western European Church was Pope Gregory VII. He decreed that no church official could be invested in office by any non-church official. A series of papal decrees defined the things and persons over which the Pope and his successors claimed sole and exclusive authority. Secular rulers in Europe were angered by his unilateral claim of authority. The Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV (a German prince), challenged the pope. In January 1076, Henry summoned a synod of bishops and princes to declare Gregory deposed as pope. In February, Gregory (Hildebrand) excommunicated the king and all the bishops named by him. In the end, the Emperor went into Rome on his knees to have the pope lift his excommunication. This papal victory governed king-pope relations for hundreds of years. Tyndale laments it here, because the church should never carry both the sword of state and the cross of Christ; that abuse began with the first Holy Roman Emperor, Charlemagne, in 800.

[←157]

Lack of honesty; acts of lying, cheating or stealing.

[←158]

Refers to masses and lessons scheduled according to a liturgical calendar, which was developed during the fourth century. Trinity Sunday (feast of the Trinity) is the first Sunday after Pentecost.

[← 159]
Morning prayers.

[←160]

Sorrow for sin arising from fear of damnation.

[← 161]

The parable of the prodigal son.

[← 162]

A district consisting of the area on either side of a border or boundary of a country or an area.

[← 163]

His silence; religious ceremonies often contained more gestures than speech, as Tyndale mentioned earlier, p. 36.

[← 164]

An assistant or subordinate bishop of a diocese.

[← 165]

In other words, everyone claimed to have Christ's robe, or burial cloth, or head-covering - as a relic. Tyndale mocks and decries such superstitious dependencies here, used in place of a faith entirely dependent on Christ.

[← 166]

1Kgs 18.28. The original reference was 3Reg.18. See footnote on page 18 concerning book-naming conventions in the Vulgate Bible. Here, 'Reg." stands for "Regis" or "Kings;" 3rd Kings in the Vulgate is 1st Kings today.

[←167]

Or ‘kissing the pax’ - a small metal or ivory plate, often with a representation of the Crucifixion, formerly used to convey the kiss of peace from the celebrant at Mass to those attending it, who kissed the plate in turn. It was based on greeting with a holy kiss (Rom 16.16, 1Cor 16.20, etc.), but it became superstitious and ritualized.

[← 168]

That is, begs, or solicits donations - a mendicant monk.

[← 169]

An itinerant peddler.

[←170]
Act 22.16; Rom 11.27; 1Joh 3.5

[←171]

That is, the tithes and offerings of the saints.

[←172]

A short prayer to the saints, usually given before the day's lesson.

[←173]

All such martyrs are the pope's martyrs, and not God's. For *martyr* signifies a witness bearer: Now, how can he be God's witness if he does not testify to God’s word?

[←174]

The phrase “however inconveniently” was originally translated by Tyndale, “never so out of season...”

[←175]

Tyndale translated it, “we know henceforth no man fleshly...”

[←176]

The Observant reform movement emerged among the mendicant friars in Gaelic areas between 1390 and 1433. It stressed strict observance of the rules and constitutions of the various orders, and it was part of a wider reaction to the laxity of discipline known as Conventualism, a form of monastic pragmatism.

[←177]

Understand that what follows is said sarcastically, highlighting the silliness of hiring someone to do for you what Christ himself has already done.

[←178]

A Carthusian monastery – an austere contemplative Roman Catholic order founded by St. Bruno in 1084.

[←179]

Likely ‘eremites,’ who are religious recluses.

[←180]

“Hewers” are wood-cutters, or lumber-jacks.

[←181]

Those who justify themselves by their works are the bond children of the law.

[←182]

Sophistic or overly complicated argumentation; reasoning that is subtle and often specious. Tyndale coined this word to parody the tropological sense of Scripture used by the papists.

[← 183]

Poetry is as good divinity as the Scripture to our schoolmen.

[←184]

Noisome - offensively malodorous; causing revulsion.

[←185]

The Latin in the Vulgate for Rom 2.27 is litteram.

[← 186]

If they swear by their honor, then they are not ready to suffer shame for Christ's sake.

[←187]

1Co 3:10-15 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. [11] For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, [13] each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. [14] If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

[←188]

Tyndale's reference is obscure; he may be referring to the rage of the prelates over his own attacks on their "Mother Church," in a sense "defiling" her by exposing her unscriptural practices.

[←189]

1Co 10:6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

[←190]

A similitude without Scripture, is a sure sign token of a false prophet.

[←191]

Peter did not preach fables and false similitudes, but the plain Scripture.

[←192]

Presumably Mary, mother of Jesus.

[← 193]

To nurse; to lead or teach; to foster; to nuzzle.

[← 194]

Covetousness and desire for honor is the end of all false doctrine, and what false prophets seek.

[← 195]

A mischievous sprite of English folklore; the character Puck in Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream.

[← 196]

Of ourselves we can perform nothing further than God will give us power.

[←197]

To sit on Christ's seat is to preach and confess Christ.

[← 198]

A certificate whose value is recognized by the payer and payee; scrip is not currency but it may be converted into currency. The term in Scripture refers to a money-belt or purse (Greek ballantion).

[← 199]

Christ rebukes the desire for preeminence in his disciples, but the pope asserts it above all men as his inheritance.

[←200]

This section following is a little obscure. Tyndale argues against traditionalism – that crying “fathers, fathers” (tradition) is no justification for such abuses. The fact that these abuses have continued generation after generation is no reason to perpetuate or tolerate them. For these papists at some point in the past did not cry “fathers, fathers,” but departed from the truth and practices entrusted to them. And so this reformation is not a departure from our forbears, our true fathers, but a return to our origins – to the truth and rule of God's Scripture, and not of men.

[←201]

Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

[←202]

Westminster Abbey was built by the first Christian king, Lucius, and restored by St. Edward the Confessor “in honor of God and St. Peter. He was admonished in his sleep by a vision of angels to forbear hallowing the church, because it was already hallowed by St. Peter himself in person, accompanied by angels.” Historical memorials of Westminster Abbey by Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (London, 1869), p. 646

[←203]

In Answer to Thomas More's Dialogue, Book I, Tyndale wrote that the maid of Ipswich was "possessed by the devil, and the mail of Kent with the Holy Ghost. And yet the tragedies are so alike… in all points, that you could not know the Holy Ghost to be in the one, and the devil in the other, by any difference of works; but you might with as good reason say that the devil was in both, or the Holy Ghost in both..."

[←204]

Deeds of the Romans; this was a manual for preachers, written in Latin, probably around the 13th or 14th century, assembled by some church cleric. It was a collection of titles from Greek and Latin history and legend, and then added to over time with other works, such as those of the 15th c., like Geoffrey Chaucer (Canterbury Tales).

[←205]

Original citation was “xxvth. chap. of St. Matt.”

[←206]

For example, 1Cor 1.12-13,17,26-29; Gal 1.10-12; 2.6

[←207]

Ezek 44.20 “They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long; but they shall keep their hair well trimmed.”
(“they shall only poll their heads”, KJV – which is the phrase Tyndale used here)

[←208]

Under an outward pretence of God's honor, the pope's clergy procured their own dignity.

[←209]

Not too mighty to overthrow, but becoming a threat to the clergy's own power. And so they removed such men.

[←210]

Referring to Pandulph, Legate a latere. In 1211, Pope Innocent III sent him to England to induce King John to receive Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury, and thus relieve England from a prior interdict. The king, in response, ordered the sheriffs and bailiffs to bring out all the prisoners at Northampton who deserved to be put to death, with the intent, some thought, to make Pandulph afraid. Among the prisoners was a clerk condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, for counterfeiting the king's coin. Pandulph, hearing of it, went to the church to set out book, bell, and candle, charging that no man, under pain of being accursed, should lay hands upon the clerk. Whereupon the king and the cardinal departed, and Pandulph reported to Rome. The pope summoned all the bishops, abbots, and clerks of England, to come to Rome to consult. It was decreed, by the pope and his assembly, that John, king of England, should be accursed, with all who held with him. Pope Innocent gave sentence, by the council of his cardinals, that King John should be put from his throne and deposed, and another put in his place. To execute this, he appointed the French king, Philip, promising to give him full remission of all his sins, and clear possession of all the realm of England, to him and his heirs, if he either killed John or expelled him. Pandulph returned to England with this news in 1213. On May 15th, at Dover Castle, King John surrendered his crown into Pandulph's hands and received it back as a fief of the Holy See. The king also paid Pandulph the sum of £8000 as an installment of the compensation due for damage done to the Church during the interdict. Pandulph now stopped the threatened French invasion. Source: Catholic Encyclopedia and Fox's Book of Martyrs, Vol. II (London, 1837), p. 160.

[←211]

A game played with young children; you hide your face and suddenly reveal it as you say boo!

[←212]

Pardons from penalty and from guilt.