

OF JESUS CHRIST

CLXXXII.

The chief lesson and study in divinity is, that we learn well and rightly to know Christ, who is therein very graciously pictured forth unto us. We take pains to conciliate the good will and friendship of men, that so they may show us a favorable countenance; how much the more ought we to conciliate our Lord Jesus, that so he may be gracious unto us. St Peter says: "Grow up in the knowledge of Jesus Christ," of that compassionate Lord and Master, whom all should learn to know him only out of the Scriptures, where he says: "Search the Scriptures, for they do testify of me." St John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," etc. The apostle Thomas also calls Christ, God; where he says: "My Lord and my God." In like manner St Paul, Rom. ix., speaks of Christ, that he is God; where he says: "Who is God over all, blessed forever, Amen." And Coloss. ii., "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that is, substantially. Christ must needs be true God, seeing he, through himself, fulfilled and overcame the law; for most certain it is, that no one else could have vanquished the law, angel or human creature, but Christ only, so that it cannot hurt those that believe in him; therefore, most certainly he is the Son of God, and natural God. Now if we comprehend Christ in this manner, as the Holy Scripture displays him before us, then certain it is, that we can neither err nor be put to confusion; and may then easily judge what is right to be held of all manner of divine qualities, religions, and worship, that are used and practiced in the universal world. Were this picturing of Christ removed out of our sight, or darkened in us, undeniably there must needs follow utter disorder. For human and natural religion, wisdom, and understanding, cannot judge aright or truly the laws of God; therein has been and still is exhausted the art of all philosophers, all the learned and worldly-wise among the children of men. For the law rules and governs mankind; therefore the law judges mankind, and not mankind the law.

If Christ be not God, then neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost is God; for our article of faith speaks thus: "Christ is God, with the Father and the Holy Ghost." Many there are who talk much of the Godhead of Christ, as the pope, and others; but they discourse thereof as a blind man speaks of colors. Therefore, when I hear Christ speak, and say: "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," then do I believe steadfastly that the whole Godhead speaks in an undivided and unseparated substance. Wherefore he that preaches a God to me that died not for me the death on the cross, that God will I not receive.

He that has this article, has the chief and principal article of faith, though to the world it seems unmeaning and ridiculous. Christ says: The Comforter which I will send, shall not depart from you, but will remain with you, and will make you able to endure all manner of tribulations and evil. When Christ says: I will pray to the Father, then he speaks as a human creature, or as very man; but when he says: I will do this, or that, as before he said, I will send the Comforter, then he speaks as very God. In this manner do I learn my article, "That Christ is both God and man."

I, out of my own experience, am able to witness, that Jesus Christ is true God; I know full well and have found what the name of Jesus had done for me. I have often been so near death, that I thought verily now must I die, because I teach his Word to the wicked world, and acknowledge him; but always he mercifully put life into me, refreshed and comforted me. Therefore, let us use diligence only to keep him, and then all is safe, although the devil were ever so wicked and crafty, and the world ever so evil and false. Let whatsoever will or can befall me, I will surely cleave by my sweet Saviour Christ Jesus, for in him am I baptized; I can neither do nor know anything but only what he has taught me.

The Holy Scriptures, especially St Paul, everywhere ascribe unto Christ that which he gives to the Father, namely, the divine almighty power; so that he can give grace, and peace of conscience, forgiveness of sins, life, victory over sin, and death, and the devil. Now, unless St Paul would rob God of his honor, and give it to another that is not God, he dared not ascribe such properties and attributes to Christ, if he were not true God; and God himself says, Isa. xlii., "I will not give my glory to another." And, indeed, no man can give that to another which he has not himself; but, seeing Christ gives grace and peace, the Holy Ghost also, and redeems from the power of the devil, sin and death, so is it most sure that he has an endless, immeasurable, almighty power, equal with the father.

Christ brings also peace, but not as the apostles brought it, through preaching; he gives it as a Creator, as his own proper creature. The Father creates and gives life, grace, and peace; and even so gives the Son the same gifts. Now, to give grace, peace, everlasting life, forgiveness of sins, to justify, to save, to deliver from death and hell, surely these are not the works of any creature, but of the sole majesty of God, things which the angels themselves can neither create nor give. Therefore, such works pertain to the high majesty, honor, and glory of God, who is the only and true Creator of all things. We must think of no other God than Christ; that God which speaks not out of Christ's mouth, is not God. God, in the Old Testament, bound himself to the throne of grace; there was the place where he would hear, so long as the policy and government of Moses stood and flourished. In like manner, he will still hear no man or human creature, but only through Christ. As number of the Jews ran to and fro burning incense, and offerings here and there, and seeking God in various places, not regarding the tabernacle, so it goes now; we seek God everywhere; but not seeking him in Christ, we find him nowhere.

CLXXXIII.

The feast we call Annunciatio Mariae, when the angel came to Mary, and brought her the message from God, that she should conceive his Son, may be fitly called the "Feast of Christ's Humanity," for then began our deliverance. The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that he sunk himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding.

CLXXXIV.

Christ lived three and thirty years, and went up thrice every year to Jerusalem, making ninety-nine times he went thither. If the pope could show that Christ had been but once at Rome, what a bragging and boasting would he make! yet Jerusalem was destroyed to the ground.

CLXXXV.

St Paul teaches, that Christ was born, to the end he might restore and bring everything to the state in which it was created at the beginning of the world; that is, to bring us to the knowledge of ourselves and our Creator, that we might learn to know who and what we have been, and who and what we now are; namely, that we were created after God's likeness, and afterwards, according to the likeness of man; that we were the devil's wizard through sin, utterly lost and destroyed; and that now we may be delivered from sin again, and become pure, justified, and saved.

CLXXXVI.

On the day of the conception of our Saviour Christ, we that are preachers ought diligently to lay before the people, and thoroughly imprint in their hearts, the history of this feast, which is given by St Luke in plain and simple language. And we should joy and delight in these blessed things, more than in all the treasure on earth, disputing not how it came to pass, that he, who fills heaven and earth, and whom neither heaven nor earth is able to comprehend, was enclosed in the pure body of his mother. Such disputations impede our joys, and give us occasion to doubt.

Bernard occupies a whole sermon upon this feast, in laud of the Virgin Mary, forgetting the great author of comfort, that this day God was made man. True, we cannot but extol and praise Mary, who was so highly favored of the Lord, but when the Creator himself comes, who delivers us from the devil's power, etc., him, neither we nor angels can sufficiently honor, praise, worship, and adore.

The Turk himself, who believes there is only once God, who has created all things, permits Christ to remain a prophet, though he denies that he is the only begotten, true, and natural Son of God.

But I, God be praised, have learned out of the Holy Scripture, and by experience in my trials, temptations, and fierce combats against the devil, that this article of Christ's humanity is most sure and certain; for nothing has more or better helped me in high spiritual temptations, than my comfort in this, that Christ, the true everlasting Son of God, is our flesh and bone, as St Paul says to the Ephesians, chap. v. "We are members of his body, of his flesh and bone; he sitteth at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us." When I take hold on this shield of faith, then I soon drive away that wicked one, with all his fiery darts.

God, from the beginning, has held fast to this article, and powerfully defended the same against all heretics, the pope, and the Turk; and afterwards confirmed it with many miraculous signs, so that all who have opposed the same at last have been brought to confusion.

CLXXXVII.

All the wisdom of the world is childish foolishness in comparison with the acknowledgment of Christ. For what is more wonderful than the unspeakable mystery, that the Son of God, the image of the eternal Father, took upon him the nature of man. Doubtless, he helped his supposed father, Joseph, to build houses; for Joseph was a carpenter. What will they of Nazareth think at the day of judgment, when they shall see Christ sitting in his divine majesty; surely they will be astonished, and say: "Lord, thou helpest build my house, how comest thou now to this high honor?"

When Jesus was born, doubtless, he cried and wept like other children, and his mother tended him as other mothers tend their children. As he grew up, he was submissive to his parents, and waited on them, and carried his supposed father's dinner to him, and when he came back, Mary, no doubt, often said: "My dear little Jesus, where hast thou been?" He that takes not offence at the simple, lowly, and mean course of the life of Christ, is endued with high divine art and wisdom; yea, has a special gift of God in the Holy Ghost. Let us ever bear in mind, that our blessed Saviour thus humbled and abased himself, yielding even to the contumelious death of the cross, for the comfort of us poor, miserable and damned creatures.

CLXXXVIII.

If the emperor should wash a begger's feet, as the French king used to do on Maunday, Thursday, and the emperor Charles yearly, how would such humility be extolled and praised! But though the Son of God, Lord of all emperors, kings, princes, in the deepest measure humbled himself, even to the death of the cross, yet no man wonders thereat, except only the small heap of the faithful who acknowledge and worship self, indeed, enough, when he was held to be the man most despised, plagued, and smitten of God, (Isaiah liii.) and for our sakes underwent and suffered shame.

CLXXXIX.

We cannot vex the devil more than by teaching, preaching, singing and talking of Jesus. Therefore I like it well, when with sounding voice we sing in the church: *Et homo factus est; et verbum caro factum est.* The devil cannot endure these words, and flies away, for he well feels what is contained therein. Oh, how happy a thing were it, did we find as much joy in these words as the devil is affrighted at them. But the world condemns God's words and works, because they are delivered to them in a plain and simple manner. Well, the good and godly are not offended therewith, for they have regard to the everlasting celestial treasure and wealth which therein lies hid, and which is so precious and glorious, that the angels delight in beholding it. Some there are who take offence, that now, and then in the pulpits we say: Christ was a carpenter's son, and as a blasphemer and rebel, he was put on the cross, and hanged between two malefactors.

But seeing we preach continually of this article, and in our children's creed, say: That our Saviour Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, etc., for our sins, why, then, should we not say Christ was a carpenter's son? especially seeing that he is clearly so named in the gospel, when the people wondered at his doctrine and wisdom, and said: "How cometh this to pass? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (Mark, vi.)

CXC.

Christ, our High-priest, is ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father, where, without ceasing, he makes intercession for us, (see Romans viii.), where St Paul, with very excellent, glorious words, pictures Christ to us; as in his death, he is a sacrifice offered up for sins; in his resurrection, a conqueror; in his ascension, a king; in making mediation and intercession, a high-priest. For, in the law of Moses, the high-priest only went into the Most Holiest to pray for the people.

Christ will remain a priest and king, though he was never consecrated by any papist bishop or greased by any of those shavelings; but he was ordained, and consecrated by God himself, and by him anointed, where he says: "Thou art a priest forever." Here the word Thou is bigger than the stone in the Revelations of John, which was longer than three hundred leagues. And the second psalm says: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Therefore he will sure remain sitting, and all that believe in him."

God says: "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." Therefore let us depend on this priest, for he is faithful and true, given unto us of God, and loving us more than his own life, as he showed by his bitter passion and death. Ah! how happy and blessed were the man that could believe this from his heart.

"The Lord swears and will not repent, thou art a priest." This is the most glorious sentence in the whole psalms, where God declares unto us, that this Christ shall be our bishop and high-priest, who, without ceasing, shall make intercession for those that are his, and none other besides him. It shall be neither Caiaphas, nor Annas, Peter, Paul, nor the pope, but Christ, only Christ; therefore let us take our refuge in him. The epistle to the Hebrews makes good use of this verse.

It is, indeed, a great and a glorious comfort (which every good and godly Christian would not miss, or be without, for all the honor and wealth in the world) that we know and believe that Christ, our high-priest, sits on the right hand of God, praying and mediating for us without ceasing - the true pastor and bishop of our souls, which the devil cannot tear out of his hands.

But then what a crafty and mighty spirit the devil must be, who can affright, and with his fiery darts draw the hearts of good and godly people from this excelling comfort, and make them entertain other cogitations of Christ; that he is not their high-priest, but complains of them to God; that he is not the bishop of their souls, but a stern and an angry judge. The Lord said to Christ: "Rule in the midst of thine enemies." On the other hand, the devil claims to be prince and God of the world. He is, therefore, the sworn enemy of Jesus Christ and of his Word, and of those who follow that Word, sincerely and without guile. `Tis impossible for Jesus Christ and the devil ever to remain under the same roof. The one must yield to the other - the devil to Christ. The Jews and the Apostles were for awhile under the same roof, and the Jews plagued and persecuted the Apostles and their followers, but after awhile were themselves thrust out by the Romans. As little can the Lutherans and the papists hold together. One party must yield, and by the blessing and aid of God, this will be the papists.

CXCI.

Sheb Linini; that is, "Sit thou on my right hand." This Sheb limini has many and great enemies, whom we poor, small heap must endure; but `tis no matter; many of us must suffer and be slain by their fury and rage, yet let us not be dismayed, but, with a divine resolution and courage, wage and venture ourselves, our bodies and souls, upon this his word and promise: "I live, and ye shall also live; and where I am, there shall ye be also."

Christ bears himself as though he took not the part of us his poor, troubled, persecuted members. For the world rewards God's best and truest servants very ill; persecuting, condemning, and killing them as heretics and malefactors, while Christ holds his peace and suffers it to be done, so that sometimes I have this thought: I know not where I am; whether I preach right or no. This was also the temptation and trial of St Paul, touching which he, however, spake not much, neither could, as I think; for who can tell what those words import: "I die daily."

The Scripture, in many places, calls Christ our priest, bridegroom, love's delight, etc., and us who believe in him, his bride, virgin, daughter, etc.; this is a fair, sweet, loving picture, which we always should have before our eyes. For, first, he has manifested his office of priesthood in this, that he has preached, made know, and revealed his Father's will unto us. Secondly, he has also prayed, and will pray for us true Christians so long as the world endures. Thirdly, he has offered up his body for our sins upon the cross. He is our bridegroom, and we are his bride. What he, the loving Saviour Christ has - yea himself, is ours; for we are members of his body, of his flesh and bone, as St Paul says. And again, what we have, the same is also his; but the exchange is exceeding unequal; for he has everlasting innocence, righteousness, life, and salvation, which he gives to be our own, while what we have is sin, death, damnation, and hell; these we give unto him, for he has taken our sins upon him, has delivered us from the power of the devil, and crushed his head, taken him prisoner, and cast him down to hell; so that now we may, with St Paul, undauntedly say: "Death, where is thy sting?" Yet, though our loving Saviour has solemnized this spiritual wedding with us, and endued us with his eternal, celestial treasure, and sworn to be our everlasting priest, ye the majority, in the devil's name, run away from him, and worship strange idols, as the Jews did, and as they in popedom do.

CXCII.

"There is but one God," says St Paul, "and one mediator between God and man; namely, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for all." Therefore, let no man think to draw near unto God, or obtain grace of him, without this mediator, high-priest, and advocate.

It follows that we cannot through our good works, honestly of life, virtues, deserts, sanctity, or through the works of the law, appease God's wrath, or obtain forgiveness of sins; and that all deserts of saints are quite rejected and condemned, so that through them no human creature can be justified before God. Moreover, we see how fierce God's anger is against sins, seeing that by none other sacrifice or offering could they be appeased and stilled, but by the precious blood of the Son of God.

CXCIII.

All heretics have set themselves against Christ. Manicheus opposed Christ's humanity, for he alleged, Christ was a spirit; "Even," says he, "as the sun shines through a painted glass, and the sunbeams go through on the other side, and yet the sun takes nothing away from the substance of the glass, even so Christ took nothing from the substance and nature of Mary." Arius assaulted the Godhead of Christ. Nestorius held there were two persons. Eutychius taught there was but one person; "for," said he, "the person of the Deity was swallowed up." Helvidius affirmed, the mother of Christ was not a virgin, so that, according to his wicked allegation, Christ was born in original sin. Macedonius opposed only the article of the Holy Ghost, but he soon fell, and was confounded. If this article of Christ remain, then all blasphemous spirits must vanish and be overthrown. The Turks and Jews acknowledge God the Father; it is the Son they shoot at. About this article much blood has been shed. I verily believe that at Rome more than twenty hundred thousands of martyrs have been put to death. It began with the beginning of the world - with Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, and I am persuaded that `twis about it the devil was cast from heaven down to hell; he was a fair creature of God, and, doubtless, strove to be the Son.

Next, after the Holy Scripture, we have no stronger argument for the confirmation of that article, than the sweet and loving cross. For all kingdoms, all the powerful, have striven against Christ and this article, but they could not prevail.

CXCIV.

At Rome was a Church called Pantheon, where were collected effigies of all the gods they were able to bring together out of the whole world. All these could well accord one with another, for the devil therewith jeered the world, laughing in his fist; but when Christ came, him they could not endure, but all the devils, idols, and heretics grew stark mad and full of rage; for he, the right and true God and man, threw them altogether on a heap. The pope also sets himself powerfully against Christ, but he must likewise be put to confusion and destroyed.

CXCV.

The history of the resurrection of Christ, teaching that which human wit and wisdom of itself cannot believe, that "Christ is risen from the dead," was declared to the weaker and sillier creatures, women, and such as were perplexed and troubled.

Silly, indeed, before God, and before the world: first, before God, in that they "sought the living among the dead;" second, before the world, for they forgot the "great stone which lay at the mouth of the sepulchre," and prepared spices to anoint Christ, which was all in vain. But spiritually is hereby signified this: if the "great stone," namely, the law and human traditions, whereby the consciences are bound and snared, be not rolled away from the heart, then we cannot find Christ, or believe that he is risen from the dead. For through him we are delivered from the power of sin and death, Rom. viii., so that the hand-writing of the conscience can hurt us no more.

CXCVI.

Is it not a wonder beyond all wonders, that the Son of God, whom all angels and the heavenly hosts worship, and at whose presence the whole earth quakes and trembles, should have stood among those wicked wretches, and suffered himself to be so lamentably tormented, scorned, derided, and condemned? They spat in his face, struck him in the mouth with a reed, and said: O, he is a king, he must have a crown and a sceptre. The sweet blessed Saviour complains not in vain in the Psalm, *Diminuerunt omnia ossa mea*: now, if he suffered so much from the rage of men, what must he have felt when God's wrath was poured out upon him without measure? as St Mark says: "He began to be sore amazed, and very heavy, and saith unto his disciples, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death:" and St Luke says: "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Ah! our suffering is not worthy the name of suffering. When I consider my crosses, tribulations, and temptations, I shame myself almost to death, thinking what are they in comparison of the sufferings of my blessed Saviour Christ Jesus. And yet we must be conformable to the express image of the Son of God. And what if we were conformable to the same, yet were it nothing. He is the Son of God, we are poor creatures; though we should suffer everlasting death, yet were they of no value.

CXCVII.

The wrath is fierce and devouring which the devil has against the Son of God, and against mankind. I beheld once a wolf tearing sheep. When the wolf comes into a sheep-fold, he eats not any until he has killed all, and then he begins to eat, thinking to devour all. Even so it is also with the devil; I have now, thinks he, taken hold on Christ, and in time I will also snap his disciples. But the devil's folly is that he sees not he has to do with the Son of God; he knows not that in the end it will be his bane. It will come to that pass, that the devil must be afraid of a child in the cradle; for when he but hears the name Jesus, uttered in true faith, then he cannot stay. The devil would rather run through the fire, than stay where Christ is; therefore, it is justly said: The seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head, that he can neither abide to hear or see Christ Jesus. I often delight myself with that similitude in Job, of an angel-hook a little worm; then comes the fish and snatches at the worm, and gets therewith the hook in his jaws, and the fisher pulls him out of the water. Even so has our Lord God dealt with the devil; God has cast into the world his only Son, as the angle, and upon the hook has put Christ's humanity, as the worm; then comes the devil and snaps at the (man) Christ, and devours him, and therewith he bites the iron hook, that is, the godhead of Christ, which chokes him, and all his power thereby is thrown to the ground. This is called *sapientia divina*, divine wisdom.

CXCVIII.

The conversation of Christ with his disciples, when he took his leave of them at his last supper, was most sweet, loving, and friendly, talking with them lovingly, as a father with his children, when he must depart from them. He took their weakness in good part, and bore with them, though now and then their discourse was very full of simplicity; as when Philip said: "Show us the Father," etc. And Thomas: "We know not the way," etc. And Peter: "I will go with thee into death." Each freely showing the thoughts of his heart. Never, since the world began, was a more precious, sweet, and amiable conversation.

CXCIX.

Christ had neither money, nor riches, nor earthly kingdom, for he gave the same to kings and princes. But he reserved one thing peculiarly to himself, which no human creature or angel could do - namely, to conquer sin and death, the devil and hell, and in the midst of death to deliver and save those that through his Word believe in him.

CC.

The sweating of blood and other high spiritual sufferings that Christ endured in the garden, no human creature can know or imagine; if one of us should but begin to feel the least of those sufferings, he must die instantly. There are many who die of grief of mind; for sorrow of heart is death itself. If a man should feel such anguish and pain as Christ had, it were impossible for the soul to remain in the body and endure it - body and soul must part asunder. In Christ only it was possible, and from him issued bloody sweat.

CCI.

Nothing is more sure than this: he that does not take hold on Christ by faith, and comfort himself herein, that Christ is made a curse for him, remains under the curse. The more we labor by works to obtain grace, the less we know how to take hold on Christ; for where he is not known and comprehended by faith, there is not to be expected either advice, help, or comfort, though we torment ourselves to death.

CCII.

All the prophets well foresaw in the Spirit, that Christ, by imputation, would become the greatest sinner upon the face of the earth, and a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; would be no more considered an innocent person and without sin, or the Son of God in glory, but a notorious sinner, and so be for awhile forsaken (Psal. viii.), and have lying upon his neck the sins of all mankind; the sins of St Paul who was a blasphemer of God, and a persecutor of his church; St Peter's sins that denied Christ; David's sins, who was an adulterer and a murderer, through whom the name of the Lord among the heathen was blasphemed.

Therefore the law, which Moses gave to be executed upon all malefactors and murderers in general, took hold on Christ, finding him with and among sinners and murderers, though in his own person innocent.

This manner of picturing Christ to us, the sophists, robbers of God, obscure and falsify; for they will not that Christ was made a curse for us, to the end he might deliver us from the curse of the law, nor that he has anything to do with sin and poor sinners; though for their sakes alone was he made man and died, but they set before us merely Christ's examples, which they say we ought to imitate and follow; and thus they not only steal from Christ his proper name and title, but also make of him a severe and angry judge, a fearful and horrible tyrant, full of wrath against poor sinners, and bent on condemning them.

CCIII.

The riding of our blessed Saviour into Jerusalem was a poor, mean kind of procession enough, where was seen Christ, king of heaven and earth, sitting upon a strange ass, his saddle being the clothes of his disciples. This mean equipage, for so powerful a potentate, was, as the prophecy of the prophet Zechariah showed, to the end the Scripture might be fulfilled. Yet 'twis an exceeding stately and glorious thing as extolled through the prophecies, though outwardly to the world it seemed poor and mean.

I hold that Christ himself did not mention this prophecy, but that rather the apostles and evangelists used it for a witness. Christ, meantime, preached and wept, but the people honored him with olive branches and palms, which are signs of peace and victory. Such ceremonies did the heathen receive of the Jews, and not the Jews of the heathen, as some pretend, for the nation of the Jews and Jerusalem was much older than the Greeks and Romans. The Greeks had their beginning about the time of the Babylonish captivity, but Jerusalem was long before the time of the Persians and Assyrians, and therefore much before the Greeks and Romans, so that the heathen receive many ceremonies from the Jews, as the elder nation.

CCIV.

The Jews crucified Christ with words, but the Gentiles have crucified him with works and deeds. His sufferings were prophetic of our wickedness, for Christ suffers still to this day in our church much more than in the synagoge of the Jews; far greater blaspheming of God, contempt, and tyranny, is now among us than heretofore among the Jews. In Italy, when mention is made of the article of faith and of the last day of judgment, then says the pope with his greases crew: O! dost thou believe that? Pluck thou up a good heart, and be merry; let such cogitations alone. These and the like blasphemies are so common in all Italy, that, without fear of punishment, they openly proclaim them everywhere.

CCVI.

My opinion is, that Christ descended into hell, to the end he might lay the devil in chains, in order to bring him to the judgment of the great day, as in the 16th Psalm, and Acts ii. Disputatious spirits allege, that the word Infernus, Hell, must be taken and understood to be the grave, as in the first book of Moses, but yet here is written not only the Hebrew word Nabot - that is pit, but Scola - that is, Gehenna, Hell; for the ancients made four different hells.

CCVII.

The resurrection of our Saviour Christ, in the preaching of the gospel, raises earthquakes in the world now, as when Christ arose out of the sepulchre bodily. To this day the world is moved, and great tumults arise, when we preach and confess the righteousness and holiness of Christ, and that through it only are we justified and saved. But such earthquakes and tumults are wholesome for us, yea, comfortable, pleasant, and delightful to such as live in God's fear, and are true Christians; more to be desired than peace, rest, and quietness, with an evil conscience through sinning against God.

The Jews flattered themselves that the kingdom of Christ would have been a temporal kingdom, and the apostles themselves were of this opinion, as is noted, John xiv.: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?" As much as to say: We thought the whole world should behold thy glorious state; that thou shouldest be emperor, we twelve kings, among whom the kingdoms should be divided, and to each of us, for disciples, six princes, or dukes, etc., making the number of them seventy-two. In this manner had the loving apostles shared and divided the kingdoms among themselves, according to the Platonic meaning - that is, according to the wit and wisdom of human understanding. But Christ describes his kingdom far otherwise: "He that loveth me, will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," etc.

CCVIII.

The communion or fellowship of our blessed Saviour Christ, was doubtless most loving and familiar; for he who thought it no dishonor, being equal with God, to be made man like unto us, yet without sin, served and waited upon his disciples as they sat at table, as my servant waits on me; the good disciples, plain, simple people, were at length so accustomed to it, that they were even content to let him wait. In such wise did Christ fulfill his office; as is written: "He is come to minister, and not to be ministered unto." Ah, 'tis a high example, that he so deeply humbled himself and suffered, who created the whole world, heaven and earth, and all that is therein, and who, with one finger, could have turned it upside down and destroyed it.

CCIX.

How wonderfully does Christ rule and govern his kingdom, so concealing himself that his presence is not seen, yet putting to shame emperors, kings, popes, and all such as think themselves wise, just, and powerful. But hereunto belongs a Plerophoria - that is, we are sure and certain of it.

Jesus Christ is the only beginning and end of all my divine cogitations, day and night, yet I find and freely confess that I have attained but only a small and weak beginning of the height, depth, and breadth of this immeasurable, incomprehensible, and endless wisdom, and have scarce got and brought to light a few fragments out of this most deep and precious profundity.

CCX.

Christ's own proper work and office is to combat the law, sin and death, for the whole world; taking them all upon himself, and bearing them, and after he has laden himself therewith, then only to get the victory, and utterly overcome and destroy them, and so release the desolate from the law and all evil. That Christ expounds the law, and works miracles, these are but small benefits, in comparison of the true good, for which he chiefly came. For the prophets, and especially the apostles, wrought and did as great miracles as Christ himself.

CCXI.

That our Saviour, Christ, is come, nothing avails hypocrites, who live confident, not fearing God, nor condemners nor reprobates, who think there is no grace or comfort to be expected, and who by the law are affrighted. But he comes to the profit and comfort of those whom for a time the law has plagued and affrighted; these despair not in their trials and affrights, but with comfortable confidence step to Christ, the throne of grace, who delivers them.

CCXII.

Is it not a shame that we are always afraid of Christ, whereas there was never in heaven or earth a more loving, familiar, or milder man, in words, works, and demeanor, especially towards poor, sorrowful, and tormented consciences? Hence the prophet Jeremiah prays, saying: "O Lord, grant that we be not afraid of thee."

CCXIII.

It is written in Psalm li.: "Behold, thou requirest truth in the inward parts, and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly." This is that mystery which is hidden from the world, and will remain hidden; it is the truth that lies in the inward parts, and the secret wisdom; not the wisdom of the lawyers, of the physicians, philosophers, and of the crafty ones of the world; no; but thy wisdom. O Lord! which thou hast made me to understand. This is that golden art which Sadoleto had not, though he wrote much of this Psalm.

CCXIV.

The preaching of the apostles went forth, and powerfully sounded through the whole world, after Christ's resurrection, when he had sent the Holy Ghost. This master, the Holy Ghost, worked through the apostles, and showed the doctrine of Christ clearly, so that their preaching produced more fruit than when Christ preached, as he himself before had declared, saying: "He that believeth in me, shall do also the works that I do, and shall do greater than these."

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CCXV.

Christ preached without wages, yet the godly women, whom he had cleansed and made whole, and delivered from wicked spirits and diseases, ministered unto him of that which they had, (Luke viii.) They gave him supply, and he also took and received that which others freely and willingly gave him, (John xix.)

When he sent the apostles forth to preach, he said: Freely ye have received, therefore freely give, etc., wherein he forbids them not to take something for their pains and work, but that they should not take care and sorrow for food and raiment, etc., for whithersoever they went, they should find some people that would not see them want.

CCXVI.

The prophecies that the Son of God should take human nature upon him, are given so obscurely, that I think the devil knew not that Christ should be conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.

Hence, when he tempted Christ in the wilderness, he said to him: "If thou art the Son of God?" He calls him the Son of God, not that he held him so to be by descent and nature, but according to the manner of the Scripture, which names human creatures the children of God: "Ye are all the children of the Most highest," etc. It was not desired that these prophecies of Christ's passion, resurrection, and kingdom, should be revealed before the time of his coming, save only to his prophet's and other high enlightened people; it was reserved for the coming of Christ, the right and only doctor that should open the understanding.

CCXVII.

The reason why Peter and the other apostles did not expressly call Christ the Son of God, was that they would not give occasion to the godly Jews, who as yet were weak in faith, to shun and persecute their preaching, by appearing to declare a new God, and to reject the God of their fathers. Yet they mention, with express words, the office of Christ and his works; that he is a prince of life; that he raises from the dead, justifies and forgives sins, hears prayers, enlightens and comforts hearts, etc., wherewith they clearly and sufficiently show and acknowledge that he is the true God; for no creature can perform such works but God only.

CCXVIII.

The devil assaults the Christian world with highest power and subtlety, vexing true Christians through tyrants, heretics, and false brethren, and instigating the whole world against them.

On the contrary, Christ resists the devil and his kingdom, with a few simple and condemned people, as they seem in the world, weak, and foolish, and yet he gets the victory.

Now, it were a very unequal war for one poor sheep to encounter a hundred wolves, as it befell the apostles, when Christ sent them out into the world, when one after another was made away with and slain. Against wolves we should rather send out lions, or more fierce and horrible beasts. But Christ has pleasure therein, to show his highest wisdom and power in our greatest weakness and foolishness, as the world conceives, and so proceeds that all shall eat their own bane, and go to the devil, who set themselves against his servants and disciples.

For he alone, the Lord of Hosts, does wonders; he preserves his sheep in the midst of wolves, and himself so afflicts them, that we plainly see our faith consists not in the power of human wisdom, but in the power of God, for although Christ permit one of his sheep to be devoured, yet he sends ten or more others in his place.

CCXIX.

Many say that Christ having by force driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, we also may use force against the popish bishops and enemies of God's Word, as Munzer and other seducers. But Christ did many things which we neither may nor can do after him. He walked upon the water, he fasted forty days and forty nights, he raised Lazarus from death, after he had lain four days in the grave, etc.; such and the like we must leave undone. Much less will Christ consent that we by force assail the enemies of the truth; he commands the contrary: "Love your enemies, pray for them that vex and persecute you;" "Be merciful, as your Father is merciful;" "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and humble in heart;" "He that will follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

CCXX.

ˆTis a great wonder how the name of Christ has remained in popedom, where, for hundreds of years, nothing was delivered to the people but the pope's laws and decrees, that is, doctrines and commandments of men, so that it had been no marvel if the name of Christ and his Word had been forgotten.

But God wonderfully preserved his gospel in the church, which now from the pulpits is taught to the people, word by word. In like manner, it is a special great work of God, that the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, have remained and cleaved to the hearts of those who were ordained to receive them in the midst of popedom.

God has also often awakened pious learned men, who revealed his Word, and gave them courage openly to reprove the false doctrines and abuses that were crept into the church, as John Huss, and others.

CCXXI.

The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of grace, mercy, and of all comfort: Psalm cxvii: "His grace and truth is ever more and more towards us." The kingdom of Antichrist, the pope, is a kingdom of lies and destruction; Psalm x.: "His mouth is full of cursing, fraud, and deceit; under his tongue is ungodliness and vanity." The kingdom of Mohammed is a kingdom of revenge, of wrath, and desolation, Ezek. xxxviii.

CCXXII.

The weak in faith also belong to the kingdom Christ; otherwise the Lord would not have said to Peter, "Strengthen thy brethren," Luke xxii.: and Rom. xiv.: "Receive the weak in faith;" also 1 Thess. v." "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak." If the weak in faith did not belong to Christ, where, then, would the apostles have been whom the Lord oftentimes, as after his resurrection, Mark xvi., reprov'd because of their unbelief?

CCXXIII.

A cup of water, if a man have no better, is good to quench the thirst. A morsel of bread stills the hunger, and he that needs it seeks it earnestly. Christ is the best, surest, and only physic against the most fearful enemy of mankind, the devil; but men believe it not with their hearts. If they want a physician, living a hundred miles off, who, they think, can drive away temporal death, oh, how diligently is he sent for - no money or cost is spared! But the small and little heap only stick fast to the true physician, and by his art learn that which the holy Simeon well knew by reason of which he joyfully sang: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" Whence came his great joy? Because that with spiritual and corporal eyes he saw the Saviour of the world, the true physician against sin and death. 'Tis a great pain to behold how desirous a thirsty man is of drink, or a hungry man of food, though a cup of water or a morsel of bread can still hunger and thirst no longer than two or three hours, while no man, or very few, desires or longs after the most precious of all physicians, though he lovingly calls us to come unto him, saying, "He that is athirst, let him come to me and drink," John vii.

CCXXIV.

Even as Christ is now invisible and unknown to the world, so are we Christians also invisible and unknown therein. "Your life," says St Paul, Coloss. iii., "is hid with Christ in God." Therefore the world knows us not, much less does it see Christ in us. But we and the world are easily parted; they care nothing for us, and we nothing for them; through Christ the world is crucified unto us, and we to the world. Let them go with their wealth, and leave us to our minds and manners.

When we have our sweet and loving Saviour Christ, we are rich and happy more than enough; we care nothing for their state, honor, and wealth. But we often lose our Saviour Christ, and little think that he is in us, and we in him; that he is ours, and we are his. Yet although he hide from us, as we think, in the time of need, for a moment, yet are we comforted in his promise, where he says, "I am daily with you to the world's end;" this is our richest treasure.

CCXXV.

Christ desires nothing more of us than that we speak of him. But thou wilt say: If I speak or preach of him, then the Word freezes upon my lips. O, regard not that, but hear what Christ says: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you," etc.; and "I am with him in trouble," "I will deliver him, and bring him to honor," etc. Also: "Call upon me in the time of trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me," etc., Psalm 1. How could we perform a more easy service of God, without all labor or charge? There is no work on earth easier than the true service of God: he loads us with no heavy burdens, but only asks that we believe in him and preach of him. True, thou mayest be sure thou shalt be persecuted for this, but our sweet Saviour gives us a comfortable promise: "I will be with you in the time of trouble, and will help you out," etc., Luke xii. 7. I make no such promise to my servant when I set him to work, either to plough or to cart, as Christ to me, that he will help me in my need. We only fail in belief: if I had faith according as the Scripture requires of me, I alone would drive the Turk out of Constantinople, and the pope out of Rome; but it comes far short; I must rest satisfied with that which Christ spake to St Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is strong in weakness."

CCXXVI.

From these words, John xiii., which Christ spake to Peter: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me," it is not to be understood that Christ, at the same time, baptized his disciples; for in John iv., it is clearly expressed that he himself baptized none, but that his disciples, at his command, baptized each other. Neither did the Lord speak these words only of water washing, but of spiritual washing, through which he, and none other, washes and cleanses Peter, the other disciples and all true believers, from their sins, and justifies and saves them; as if he would say: I am the true bather, therefore if I wash thee not, Peter, thou remainest unclean, and dead in thy sins.

The reason that Christ washed not his own, but his disciples feet, whereas the high-priests in the law washed not others but his own, was this: the high-priest in the law was unclean, and a sinner like other men, therefore he washed his own feet, and offered not only for the sins of the people, but also for his own. But our everlasting High-priest is holy, innocent, unstained, and separate from sin; therefore it was needless for him to wash his feet, but he washed and cleansed us, through his blood, from all our sins.

Moreover, by this his washing of feet he would show, that his new kingdom which he would establish should be no temporal and outward kingdom, where respect of persons was to be held, as in Moses kingdom, one higher and greater than the other, but where one should serve another in humility, as he says: "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant;" which he himself showed by this example, as he says, John xiii.: "If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, then ought ye to wash one another's feet."

CCXXVII.

So long as Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, Saturn, Juno, Diana, Passas, and Venus ruled among the heathen - that is, were held and worshipped for gods, the Jews having also very many idols which they served, - it was necessary that first Christ, and after him the apostles, should do many miracles, corporal and spiritual, both among the Jews and Gentiles, to confirm this doctrine of faith in Christ, and to take away and root out all worshipping in idols. The visible and bodily wonders flourished until the doctrine of the gospel was planted and received, and baptism and the Lord's Supper established. But the spiritual miracles, which our Saviour Christ holds for miracles indeed, are daily wrought, and will remain to the world's end, as that of the centurion in Matt. viii., and that of the Canaanitish woman.

CCXXVIII.

The greatest wonder ever on earth is, that the Son of God die! the shameful death of the cross. It is astonishing, that the Father should say to his only Son, who by nature is God: Go, let them hang thee on the gallows. The love of the everlasting Father was immeasurably greater towards his only begotten Son than the love of Abraham towards Isaac; for the Father testifies from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" yet he was cast away so lamentably, like a worm, a scorn of men, and outcast of the people.

At this the blind understanding of man stumbles, saying, Is this the only begotten Son of the everlasting Father - how, then, deals he so unmercifully with him? he showed himself more kind to Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate, than towards his only begotten Son. But to us true Christians, it is the greatest comfort; for we therein recognize that the merciful Lord God and Father so loved the poor condemned world, that he spared not his only begotten Son, but gave him up for us all, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

They who are tormented with high spiritual temptations, which every one is not able to endure, should have this example before their eyes, when they are in sorrow and heaviness of spirit, fearing God's wrath, the day of judgment, and everlasting death, and such like fiery darts of the devil. Let them comfort themselves, that although they often feel such intolerable sufferings, yet are they never the more rejected of God, but are of him better beloved, seeing he makes them like unto his only begotten Son; and let them believe that as they suffer with him, so will he also deliver them out of their sufferings. For such as will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution; yet one more than another, according to every one's strength or weakness in faith: "For God is true, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear."

CCXXIX.

It was a wonderful thing when our Saviour Christ ascended up into heaven, in full view of his disciples. Some, no doubt, thought in themselves: We did eat and drink with him, and now he is taken from us, and carried up into heaven; are all these things right? Such reasonings, doubtless, some of them had, for they were not all alike strong in faith, as St Matthew writes: When the eleven saw the Lord, they worshipped, but some doubted. And during those forty days, from the resurrection until the ascension, the Lord taught them by manifold arguments, and instructed them in all necessary things; he strengthened their faith, and put them in mind of what he had told them before, to the end they should in nowise doubt of his person.

Yet his words made little impression, for when the Lord appeared in the midst of them, on Easter-day, at evening, and said: "Peace be with you," they were perplexed and affrighted, supposing they saw a spirit; nor would Thomas believe that the other disciples had seen the Lord, until he saw the print of the nails in his hands. And though for the space of forty days he had communed with them concerning the kingdom of God, and was even ready to ascend, yet, notwithstanding, they asked him, Lord! wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

But after this, on Whitsunday, when they had received the Holy Ghost, then they were of another mind; they then stood no more in fear of the Jews, but rose up boldly, and with great joyfulness preached Christ to the people. And Peter said to the lame man: Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Yet notwithstanding all this, the Lord was fain to show unto him, through a vision, that the Gentiles should be partakers of the promise of life, although, before his ascension, he had heard this command from the Lord himself: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And "Teach all nations."

The apostles themselves did not know every thing, even after they had received the Holy Ghost; yea, and sometimes they were weak in faith. When all Asia turned from St Paul, and some of his own disciples had departed from him, and many false spirits that were in high esteem set themselves against him, then with sorrow of heart he said: "I was with you in weakness, fear, and in much trembling." And "We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, and within were fears." Hereby it is evident that he was fain to comfort him, saying: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is strong in weakness."

This is to me, and to all true Christians, a comfortable doctrine; for I persuade myself also that I have faith, though it is but so so, and might well be better; yet I teach the faith to others, and know, that my teaching is right. Sometimes I commune thus with myself: Thou preachest indeed God's Word; this office is committed to thee, and thou art called thereunto without thy seeking, which is not fruitless, for many thereby are reformed; but when I consider and behold my own weakness, that I eat, drink, sometimes am merry, yea, also, now and then am overtaken, being off my guard, then I begin to doubt and say: Ah! that we could but only believe.

Therefore, confident professors are troublesome and dangerous people; who, when they have but only looked on the outside of the Bible, or heard a few sermons, presently think they have the Holy Ghost, and understand and know all. But good and godly hearts are of another mind, and pray daily: "Lord, strengthen our faith."

CCXXX.

When Jesus Christ utters a word, he opens his mouth so wide that it embraces all heaven and earth, even though that word be but in a whisper. The word of the emperor is powerful, but that of Jesus Christ governs the whole universe.

CCXXXI.

I expect more goodness from Kate my wife, from Philip Melancthon, and from other friends, than from my sweet and blessed Saviour Christ Jesus; and yet I know for certain, that neither she nor any other person on earth, will or can suffer that for me which he has suffered; why then should I be afraid of him? This, my foolish weakness, grieves me very much. We plainly see in the gospel, how mild and gentle he showed himself towards his disciples; how kindly he passed over their weakness, their presumption, yea, their foolishness. He checked their unbelief, and in all gentleness admonished them. Moreover, the Scripture, which is most sure, says: "Well are all they that put their trust in him." Fie on our unbelieving hearts, that we should be afraid of this man, who is more loving, friendly, gentle, and compassionate towards us than are our kindred, our brethren and sisters; yea, than parents themselves are towards their own children.

He that has such temptations, let him be assured, it is not Christ, but the envious devil that affrights, wounds, and would destroy him; for Christ comforts, heals, and revives.

Oh! his grace and goodness towards us is so immeasurably great, that without great assaults and trials it cannot be understood. If the tyrants and false brethren had not set themselves so fiercely against me, my writings and proceedings, then should I have vaunted myself too much of my poor gifts and qualities; nor should I with such fervency of heart have directed my prayers to God for his divine assistance; I should not have ascribed all to God's grace, but to my own dexterity and power, and so should have flown to the devil. But to the end this might be prevented, my gracious Lord and Saviour Christ caused me to be chastised; he ordained that the devil should plague and torment me with his fiery darts, inwardly and outwardly, through tyrants, as the pope and other heretics, and all this he suffered to be done for my good. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes."

CCXXXII.

I know nothing of Jesus Christ but only his name; I have not heard or seen him corporally, yet I have, God be praised, learned so much out of the Scriptures, that I am well and thoroughly satisfied; therefore I desire neither to see nor to hear him in the body. When left and forsaken of all men, in my highest weakness, in trembling, and in fear of death, when persecuted of the wicked world, then I felt most deeply the divine power which this name, Christ Jesus, communicated unto me.

CCXXXIII.

It is no wonder that Satan is an enemy to Christ, his people and kingdom, and sets himself against him and his word, with all his power and cunning. `Tis an old hate and grudge between them, which began in Paradise: for they are, by nature and kind, of contrary minds and dispositions. The devil smells Christ many hundred miles off; he hears at Constantinople and at Rome, what we at Wittenberg teach and preach against his kingdom; he feels also what hurt and damage he sustains thereby; there rages and swells he so horribly.

But what is more to be wondered at is, that we, who are of one kind and nature, and, through, the bond of love, knit so fast together that each ought to love the other as himself, should have, at times, such envy, hate, wrath, discord and revenge, that one is ready to kill the other. For who is nearer allied to a man, than his wife; to the son, than his father; to the daughter, than her mother; to the brother, than his sister, etc.? yet, it is most commonly found, that discord and strife are among them.

CCXXXIV.

It is impossible that the gospel and the law should dwell together in one heart, for the necessity either Christ must yield and give place to the law, or the law to Christ. St Paul says: "They which will be justified through the law, are fallen from grace." Therefore, when thou art of this mind, that Christ and the confidence of the law may dwell together in thy heart, then thou mayest know for certain that it is not Christ, but the devil that dwells in thee, who under the mask and form of Christ terrifies thee. He will have, that thou make thyself righteous through the law, and through thy own good works; for the true Christ calls thee not to an account for thy sins, nor commands thee to trust in thy good works, but says: "Come unto me all ye that be weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," etc.

CCXXXV.

I have set Christ and the pope together by the ears, so trouble myself no further; though I get between the door and the hinges and be squeezed, it is no matter; Christ will go through with it.

CCXXXVI.

Christ once appeared visible here on earth, and showed his glory, and according to the divine purpose of God finished the work of redemption and the deliverance of mankind. I do not desire he should come once more in the same manner, neither would I he should send an angel unto me. Nay, though an angel should come and appear before mine eyes from heaven, yet it would not add to my belief; for I have of my Saviour Christ Jesus bond and seal; I have his Word, Spirit, and sacrament; thereon I depend, and desire no new revelations. And the more steadfastly to confirm me in this resolution, to hold solely by God's Word, and not to give credit to any visions or revelations, I shall relate the following circumstance: - On Good Friday last, I being in my chamber in fervent prayer, contemplating with myself, how Christ my Saviour on the cross suffered and died for our sins, there suddenly appeared upon the wall a bright vision of our Saviour Christ, with the five wounds, steadfastly looking upon me, as if it had been Christ himself corporally. At first sight, I thought it had been some celestial revelation, but I reflected that it must needs be an illusion and juggling of the devil, for Christ appeared to us in his Word, and in a meaner and more humble form; therefore I spake to the vision thus: Avoid thee, confounded devil: I know no other Christ than he who was crucified, and who in his Word is pictured and presented unto me. Whereupon the image vanished, clearly showing of whom it came.

CCXXXVII.

Alas! what is our wit and wisdom? before we understand anything as we ought, we lie down and die, so that the devil has a good chance with us. When one is thirty years old, he has still Stultitias carnales; yea, also, Stultitias spirituales; and yet `tis much to be admired at, how in such our imbecility and weakness, we achieve and accomplish much and great matters, but `tis God does it. God gave to Alexander the Great wisdom and good success; yet he calls him, in the prophet Jeremiah, a youth, where he says, a young boy shall perform it; he shall come and turn the city Tyre upside down. Yet Alexander could not leave off his foolishness, for often he swilled himself drunk, and in his drunkenness stabbed his best and worthiest friends, and afterwards drank himself to death at Babylon. Solomon was not above twenty when he was made king, but he was well instructed by Nathan, and desired wisdom, which was pleasing to God, as the text says. But now, chests full of money are desired. O! say we now, if I had but money, then I would do so and so.

CCXXXVIII.

Christ said to the heathen woman: I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; yet afterwards he helped both her and her daughter; therefore a man might say: Christ here contradicted himself. I reply: True, Christ was not sent to the Gentiles, but when the Gentiles came unto him, he would not reject or put them from him. In person he was sent only to the Jews, and therefore he preached in the land of the Jews. But through the apostles his doctrine went into the whole world. And St Paul names the Lord Christ, *ministerium circumcissionis*, by reason of the promise which God gave to the fathers. The Jews themselves boast of God's justness in performing what he promised, but we Gentiles boast of God's mercy; God has not forgotten us Gentiles. Indeed, God spake not with us, neither had we king or prophet with whom God spake; but St Paul, in another place, says: It was necessary that the Word should first be preached to you, but seeing you will not receive it, lo! we turn to the Gentiles. At this the Jews are much offended to this day; they flatter themselves: Messiah is only and alone for them and theirs. Indeed, it is a glorious name and title that Moses gives them: Thou art an holy nation: but David, in his Psalm, afterwards promises Christ to the Gentiles: "Praise the Lord all ye nations."

CCXXXIX.

We should consider the histories of Christ three manner of ways; first, as a history of acts or legends; secondly, as a gift or a present; thirdly, as an example, which we should believe and follow.

CCXL.

Christ, our blessed Saviour, forbore to preach and teach until the thirtieth year of his age, neither would he openly be heard; no, though he beheld and heard so many impieties, abominable idolatries, heresies, blasphemings of God, etc. It was a wonderful thing he could abstain, and with patience endure them, until the time came that he was to appear in his office of preaching.

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