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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## **Matthew 7: 1-22**

Douay Rheims Version

*The third part of the sermon on the mount.*

1. Judge not, that you may not be judged.
2. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.
3. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?
4. Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye?
5. Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

works it. For this He only permits. Thus God concurs with an impious priest in the consecration of the Eucharist, even though the priest intends to abuse it for the purposes of sorcery, or blasphemy, yea even to sell it to a Jew to mock at and pierce it. And understand this, that I have said as to a wicked man abusing the gift of miracles, upon the principle, that any grace given by God for one end may be abused by evil men for another end. For it is plain that the power of consecration is given by God to a priest for one end, although he may abuse his power for another end. Still it appertains to the providence of God not to allow an impious man to abuse the grace of miracles to deceive others so as to lead them into heresy, if this misuse should be entirely hidden from them. For then men without any fault of their own, and on the authority, as it would appear, of God's attestation would be led into error, which is impossible. Neither could God correct or amend their error by another miracle. For men would say that if the first miracle were wrought for the confirmation of what is false, by parity of reasoning, the second also might be wrought for the confirmation of what is false: so that God would, as it were, disarm Himself, and deprive Himself of the power of declaring and attesting the truth, and confuting error. For this consists in the working of miracles. In the case of those whom the common people call *Saviours*, even when they are of evil life, it is plain, says Navarrus in his *Manuale*, that the gift of curing diseases has been given them by God for the common good of the Church, and that they can abuse this gift for evil purposes. So also in Flanders, they say that those who are born on Good Friday, and also a seventh son, sprung in continual descent from a seventh son, are able to cure the King's Evil by touching it. But the gift is given by God to the former in honour of Good Friday, and the mystery of Christ's Death and Passion, and to the latter in honour of wedlock, to show that it has been honoured and instituted by God, and raised by Christ to the dignity of a Sacrament. Wherefore if any should use this power for evil, we can see that it is the man who is abusing his gift, not God who is co-operating with him for evil. Thus it is said that the same power of curing the King's Evil has been given to the kings of England and France, on account of the merits of King Edward the Confessor. Indeed, one Tucker, a Protestant, wrote a Book about the persons cured of the King's Evil, by Elizabeth, late Queen of England. But he is completely confuted by Delrio, in *Magis* (lib. 1, c. 3, 9. 4).

At any rate up to the present time there is no case on record in which it can be shown that any one who had even the habitual gift, has wrought a miracle for the confirmation of heresy, or false doctrine, unless we choose to allow that Calvin, pretending in confirmation of his heresy to raise a supposed dead man to life, who was really alive, God, to punish the deceit, caused the man to die. But all such miracles, as it were indications of perfidy, condemn heresy and confirm the true faith.

*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied, &c.* Have we not foretold future events by Thy light and grace? So Maldonatus. Or otherwise, Have we not by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by Thy commission and authority taught and preached the true faith? So Jansen.

*And done many wonderful works.*

He calls *wonderful works, or miracles, virtue*, as it is in the Greek and Vulgate. And those real miracles. For it is plain from this verse that God does sometimes work miracles even by false prophets, as He did by Judas the traitor (Luke x. 17, &c.) and Caiaphas (John xi. 49.) And Balaam the soothsayer (Numb. xxiv. 3). S. Jerome says, "To work miracles is sometimes not because of his goodness who works them: but it is the invocation of the name of Christ which performs them for the good of others." Whence S. Gregory collects (lib. 20, *Moral.* 8): "The proof of sanctity is not the performance of miracles, but to love one's neighbour as oneself, and to think of God what is true, and to think better of one's neighbour than of oneself."

Observe, although impious and false teachers may, by the gift of God, prophesy and work miracles, yet they cannot do this for the confirmation of false doctrine. For a miracle, even a solitary one, so long as it is real and plain, is not only a probable, but a morally certain proof of true doctrine, whence Christ and the Apostles use it as an inviolable argument for proving the Christian faith. Nor do we ever read of a miracle being wrought in confirmation of heresy or error. And *à priori* reasoning shows this. For a miracle is a singular and supernatural operation of God alone, by which, as by His own seal, God attests the right faith and truth, wherefore if God should hearken to a false teacher calling upon Him to confirm his error by a miracle, He would seem to co-operate with him, and attest his error, and by consequence, lie and deceive, which is impossible. For God is the Prime Verity, and the Truth itself, and He has reserved the power of working miracles to Himself alone, that by them, as a testimony peculiar to Himself, He may seal His own Word and His own Truth, and testify that they emanate from Him. A miracle therefore is as it were the Voice of God working and attesting that He does speak; and He confirms His words by it as by a seal. For other things are common to God, with angels, and devils. Wherefore in them it is doubtful whether God, or an angel, or the devil speaks and works. So D. Thomas (*2a. 2æ. quæst.* 178, *art.* 2) and theologians *passim*. And S. Augustine (*lib. Contra Epist. Fundamenti*, c. 4) declares that he was held in the Church by the chains of miracles. And Richard de S. Victor says, (lib. 1 *de Trinit.* c. 2), "O Lord, if it be error which we believe, we have been deceived by Thee. For our faith has been confirmed among us by such signs and wonders as could not have been wrought unless they were done by Thee." (See also Bellarmine, lib. 4, *On the notes of the Church*, c. 14.)

Let us observe, however, here, that if the gift of miracles has been given to any one by God for any reason, as an abiding habit, or condition, such a one may afterwards abuse the gift, and work the miracle for an evil end, such, for example, as vain glory, gain, or the confirmation of what is false. For in such a case God concurs indeed with the miracle itself but not with the abuse of it, or with the evil object of him who

6. Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you.
7. Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you.
8. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.
9. Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone?
10. Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent?
11. If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?
12. All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.
13. Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat.
14. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!
15. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
16. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.
19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.
20. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.
21. Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.
22. Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name?
23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.
24. Every one therefore that heareth these my words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock,
25. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock.
26. And every one that heareth these my words and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand,
27. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.

28. And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine.

29. For he was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees.

**Verse 1-** Judge not, rashly and malignantly, *that ye*, &c. Christ does not here prohibit the public judgments of magistrates, by which they condemn the guilty and absolve the innocent, for this is necessary in all commonwealths, but only private judgments, and that when they are rash, envious, detractive, for they are repugnant to charity and justice, yea to God Himself, whose office of judgment is usurped. For we have not been set to be judges but companions of our neighbours. Wherefore if we have an evil opinion of him we do him an injury. And we take away his good fame if we let this judgment go abroad; for reputation is a great good, greater far than riches. So S. Jerome, Bede, and Basil. The *Gloss* says, "There is scarcely any one who is found to be free from this fault." Hear S. Augustine (102 *Serm. de Temp.*): "Concerning those things, then, which are known to God, unknown to us, we judge our neighbours at our peril. Of this the Lord hath said, *Judge not*. But concerning things which are open and public evils, we may and ought to judge and rebuke, but still with charity and love, hating not the man, but the sin, detesting not the sick man, but the disease. For unless the open adulterer, thief, habitual drunkard, traitor, were judged and punished, that would be fulfilled which the blessed martyr Cyprian hath said, 'He who soothes a sinner with flattering words, administers fuel to his sin.'" S. Anthony gives the cause of perverseness in rash judgment, when he says, "We are often deceived as to the motives of actions. The judgment of God, who sees all things, is another thing from ours. But it is right that we should suffer one with another, and bear one another's burdens." So S. Athanasius, in his *Life*.

*That ye be not judged, i.e.*, neither by men nor God. Ye will escape very many unjust judgments of others, or, anyhow, ye will not experience the severe judgment of God. Hear S. Augustine: "The temerity wherewith thou dost punish another will punish thyself. Injustice always injures him who does the wrong."

Some MSS. add here, *Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned*, but it seems to have been added from Luke vi. 37.

Leontius, Bishop of Cyprus, in his *Life of S. John the Almoner*, c. 35, relates that Vitalius, who converted many harlots, was slapped on the face, and judged to be a fornicator, by a certain person; but this judge was in turn slapped on the face by the devil, and possessed by him, and could only be delivered by coming as a suppliant to the cell of Vitalius, who was dead. When he came thither, there was found written on the pavement, by the hand of God, "O ye men of Alexandria, judge not before the time until the Lord shall come." Wisely saith S. Bernard (*Serm. 40 in Cant.*), "Make an excuse for the intention with which a thing is done, when you cannot excuse the thing itself; set it down, if possible, to ignorance, inadvertence."

far, that is, as the teacher is good or bad; because in a concrete and material sense, the good doctor may fall away from his goodness, and teach or do wicked things. The Scribes taught right, but their deeds were evil. The converse also of this is sometimes true.

Many heretics have wrested this sentence of Christ, applying it falsely for establishing their own heresies. For first, the Manichæans endeavoured to prove from it that some men are by nature good and others evil; or that there are two natural Principles, one good, which makes some men good; the other evil, which makes some men bad. 2. Jovinian maintained from these words that a man who is born of God is not able to commit sin. (See S. Jerome, *contra Jovinian.*) 3. The Pelagians inferred from it that there is no original sin, because from a good marriage as from a good tree, such an evil fruit as sin cannot be produced. *Teste* S. Augustine (*lib. de Nupt. et Concup.* c. 26). 4. The Donatists gathered from it that wicked priests, as bad trees, cannot properly baptize. 5. The Calvinists argue from it that there is no free will in man to bring forth good works, or bad. The same infer from it that we are not justified by good works, but only declared righteous, since a tree is not made good by its good fruits, but is manifested by them to be good. But all these things are falsely inferred. They have none of them anything to do with the passage. For Christ properly applies this maxim only to prophets, that is to true or false teachers, as I have said.

**Verse 21-** *Not every one that saith unto me*, &c. Behold here Christ clearly describes the fruit of a good tree, *i.e.*, of a good doctor and Christian that verily it is to do the will of our Heavenly Father, that in truth thou shouldst not only believe in Him and in His law as set forth by Christ, but that thou shouldst in deed, and in all things, fulfil the same. So says S. Augustine (*lib. 2 de Serm. in Mont.*). Therefore Christ says, *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord*: that is, not every one who believeth in Me as Lord and God, or invokes Me as such, or who often has My name on his lips, in attestation of his words and his doctrine, as though he were preaching the pure Gospel, as the heretics boast—such a one, I say, shall not enter into the Palace and Kingdom of Heaven's Father, but he who shall do that Father's will, that is, who shall fulfil His Commandments. And these are two. 1. To believe in Christ, with an orthodox faith, and 2, to perform in act and deed the commands of Christ. For "duties in words obtain not the kingdom of Heaven." "We must do some thing and offer some thing that is our own to obtain a blissful eternity," says S. Hilary. And "the road to the kingdom of heaven is obedience, not the speaking of a name," says the *Gloss*.

**Verse 22-** *Many shall say unto me in that day*—the Day of Judgment. For that shall be the last and greatest Day of the world. That Day shall be the gate of eternity, and shall send those who have done good works to a blessed, and those who have done evil works to a miserable eternity. "Then," as S. Chrysostom says, "the works of each shall speak, while their tongues keep silence, nor shall one intercede for another."

ecclesiastics; 4. By the simulation of meekness, simplicity, and piety; 5. By soft speeches, and a garrulous eloquence by which they cover their wolfish ferocity.

*Which come*, in truth, from themselves, neither called nor sent, nor approved by the bishops and prelates of the Church. Concerning these it is said (Jer. xxiii. 21), "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran."

**Verse 16-** *By their fruits, &c. Do men gather?* As grapes are not wont to be produced by or gathered off thorns, nor figs off thistles, so in like manner, no good or sweet fruit can be collected from heresy, or heretics, but only harsh and thorny fruit. This fruit is of two kinds—1. Of false doctrine; 2. Of bad morals and wickedness. Luther and Calvin have given examples in this age. For Luther teaches that vows are not binding upon the religious: that man does not possess free will, that he is the slave of necessity, that he must sin: that faith alone justifies: that good works have no merit before God. Calvin teaches that God is the author of evils: that Christ despaired on the Cross, that He felt the pains of hell, &c.; which things are downright blasphemy, and contrary to the natural law and to reason. Calvin also maintained that the Faith, by which he meant his own perversion of it, should be defended and propagated by force of arms, even by the slaughter of lawful princes and kings, of bishops, priests, and Catholics who opposed it. Whence we have heard of, and almost seen with our eyes in England, France, and Germany, so many murders, robberies, banishments of priests and Catholics, and a vast deluge of iniquity, and as it were a universal conflagration of goodness. We have seen the Blessed Sacraments profaned, the Holy Sacrifice abolished, vows broken, the saints contemned, churches burnt, the sacred canons set at nought, virgins violated, and all such like. For, as John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who, with Thomas More, was a glorious martyr in England under Henry VIII., truly says, "Lust is at once the mother and the child of heresy."

**Verse 17-** *So every good tree, &c.* "For a good tree is not distinguished from an evil one by its leaves or flowers," says S. Bernard (*Epist.* 107), but by its fruit.

Observe, 1. By *good tree* in this place, we are not to understand a good will, or charity, and by a corrupt tree an evil will, as S. Augustine, Chrysostom, and others think, but a good or bad teacher, for about these the words immediately preceding are spoken.

Note, 2. By *the fruit of the tree, i.e., of a doctor*, must be understood his doctrine, which comes forth true from a true teacher, false from a false one.

**Verse 18-** *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, &c.* "A thorn tree cannot produce grapes, nor thistles figs, but a thorn must produce thorns, and a thistle thistles, as I have said; and *vice versa*, a vine cannot produce thorns, but grapes; and although the grapes and the figs should not ripen, but remain sour, that does not arise from the fault of the vine, or the fig-tree, but from unseasonable weather, and deficiency of the sun's heat. In like manner a prophet, that is, a true teacher, cannot teach false doctrine, nor can a false teacher teach the truth, or act altogether rightly and holily. You must take this in a composite and formal sense, so

**Verse 2-** *For with what judgment, &c.* Says S. Chrysostom, "In what way thine own sins shall be examined, thou hast thyself provided a rule, by judging severely the things in which thy neighbour has offended, for 'judgment without mercy shall be awarded to him who has shown no mercy,' says S. James" (ii. 13).

Cassian (lib. 5 *de Instit. renunc.* c. 40) says that a certain abbot called Maches was wont to relate of himself, that, by God's permission, he had fallen into three faults for which he had been accustomed to judge others, and had been punished for them. S. Dorotheus (*Doctrina* 6), in a chapter upon not judging, relates that an angel once brought the soul of an adulterer to a certain old man, who had condemned him, and said, "Lo, here is the dead man whom thou hast judged. Where am I to take his soul, to heaven or to hell? Thou hast appointed thyself the judge of the dead, in the place of Christ. Judge then this soul." At these words the old man was pricked with compunction, begged for pardon, and did penance for the rest of his life. Matthew Rader, the Jesuit, among many other golden sayings, has this—"A crooked measuring-rule makes even straight things appear crooked." Thus melancholy, and the proclivity to suspect evil of others engendered by it, is most deceptive: it deceives itself, and then goes on to deceive others. Wherefore let him who suffers from this disease learn, from the experience of his own suspicions, that they are for the most part false and deceptive, and so let him say, 'I will no longer give credit to you, for so far I have found you liars.'"

*With what measure, &c.* This is an adage, signifying the same thing. According to the rule, or measure, by which thou judgest others, so shalt thou be judged thyself. If thou shalt show thyself kindly in judging, then will others judge thee kindly: if thou judgest others severely, then severely will others judge thee. Understand here similar, not equal measure. For our measure cannot equal God's. His severity and His mercy both far surpass ours. Yet is His severity less than our faults. For God punishes sin less than it deserves. S. James follows Christ the Lord, when he says, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. Whoso speaketh evil of his brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law" (iv. 11). See what I have there said.

**Verse 3-** *And why beholdest thou?* Gr. οὐ κατανοεῖς, *dost not perceive. The mote*, Gr. τὸ κάρφος, that is, *bit of straw, or chaff, or tiny particle of wood*, such as easily get into the eye. These things are put in contrast with a heavy beam or block. The *mote* signifies little faults and defects; the beam denotes greater crimes. There is an elegant allusion to the *sight* of the eye. The eye does not see itself and its own blemishes, but those of others. In a similar manner the critics see not, nor think of their own defects, but those of others. To their own they are as blind as moles: for those of others they have the eyes of lynxes. They take offence at the very least faults of others, but view with complacency and approval their own huge faults. To this

refers the proverb, “We, do not see the bag on our own backs” about which Æsop has a fable. “Every man,” he says, “carries two wallets, one on his breast, the other hanging from his shoulders on his back, and into the first we put other people’s faults, but our own into the bag behind.” This is that selfishness (*φιλαυτία*) which is innate in men.

By the same fable an abbot dealt with and corrected his criticizing anchorites. (*Vit. Pat. lib. 5, libello 9, hum. 9.*) He filled a sack with a great quantity of sand, and put it on his back, and carried before him in his hand a basket with a very small quantity of sand. When asked why he did this, he replied, “That bag which holds most sand is my sins, and because they are many, I have put them on my back lest I should grieve and lament over them; but the little quantity of sand is the sins of my brother, and they are before my face, and in them I exercise myself in judging my brother.” When the Abbot Isaac had once judged a certain person, an angel stood before him and said, “God has sent me to ask you whither I am to cast that brother whom you have judged?” When Isaac heard this, he sought forgiveness. And the angel said, “Arise, God forgives thee, but be careful for the time to come not to judge any before God judges them.”

**Verse 4-** *Or how wilt thou say, &c., With what face canst thou animadvert upon, or correct a slight fault of thy neighbour’s, when thou toleratest an enormous offence in thyself?*

**Verse 5-** *Thou hypocrite, &c. See clearly: Gr. διαβλέψεις ἐκβαλεῖν.* As it is impossible that he who has a beam in his own eye could see to pluck out a little mote from his brother’s eye, because of the beam filling and darkening his own eye, so in like manner it is barely possible that any one whose mind and reason are clouded by grave sin could see how to correct the very small faults of others. For how canst thou hate the very small developments of those things which in an extreme degree thou perceivest not in thyself?

**Verse 6-** *Give not that which is holy, &c.* Christ, according to His custom, proceeds to teach by parables and proverbs. There is here a double proverb, each signifying the same thing. And both are rightly connected with what precedes. He had just shown who and what manner of persons they ought to be who correct others. Now He teaches who ought to be corrected and taught, and who not. *Pearls*, therefore, and *that which is holy*, here signify the same thing, namely the precious and heavenly doctrine of the Gospel, of faith and truth, and, by consequence, the holy sacraments. Moreover, the same persons are denoted by dogs and swine, viz., those who are perverse and obstinate. These, on account of their impurity, are like pigs, and on account of their rebellious barking, like dogs. He adds the reason, because they, like hungry swine, stolid and impudent, despise and trample on holy doctrines which are the food of the soul, because they are contrary to their appetite and uncleanness. In the next place they are bitter against the setter forth of the holy doctrine, and tear him either by words, or deeds.

These words of Christ must be taken *per se*, because, *per accidens*, Christ the Lord, S.

deluge. From this Noah only, with seven souls, escaped. The deluge swallowed up all the rest on account of their sins. In the world is a deluge of iniquity, and thus of punishments and all calamities. The third was the entrance into the Promised Land, which was a type of heaven. Into this of six hundred thousand Israelites, there entered but two, Caleb and Joshua. All this is taught too by the infallible words of Christ, “Many are called, but few chosen.” Wisely does Cassian advise, “Live with the poor that thou mayest deserve to be found and saved amongst the few.”

This moreover is true if you consider the mass of mankind. For by far the greater portion of men are infidels, Turks, Saracens, or heretics. S. Augustine (*lib. 4 contr. Crescent. c. 53*) compares the Church to a threshing-floor in which there is far more chaff than grains of wheat, more bad than good, more who will be damned than will be saved. Yet others, with greater mildness, think it probable that the greater portion of professing Christians will be saved, because most of them receive the Holy Sacraments before they die. And they justify sinners, not only those who have contrition, but who have attrition. But this seems to be true of those who have not lived in constant and habitual sins, such as fornication, usury, hatred. For such, when they are sick, conceive with difficulty any serious and efficacious purpose of amendment, or if they do conceive it, God in just punishment of their past sins suffers the demon of their bygone lusts to tempt them, and he furbishes and sharpens their memory, and so the sick man in consequence of his habits easily yields, and consents in his heart to sin, and thus he falls and is damned. Of this there are many examples.

**Verse 15-** *Beware of false prophets, &c.* Christ passes on to a most salutary admonition concerning the taking heed of false teachers, who teach that the way to heaven is not strait, but easy, and who thus send those who follow them not to heaven but to hell. They teach that we need not fast, nor go to confession, nor preserve virginity, nor religious vows; they allow all sorts of liberty to the flesh, and take away all merit from good works. Observe, a prophet in Scripture means not only one who foretells future events, but many other persons, such as holy and religious men, singers, workers of miracles, and here as in many other places, a doctor or teacher. For the prophets were teachers, who made known the way of life, and of understanding things which were not plain to others, whether he foretold future events or not. For in Hebrew a prophet is called a seer, because he sees secret and hidden things, especially such things as future events. False prophets therefore are false teachers, whether they be heretics, or Gentiles and Pagans.

Now the sheep’s clothing which these wolves put on are to veil their errors and heresies, first under the plea of liberty of conscience; 2. By quoting texts of Scripture that serve to favour their heresies; 3. The pretext of reforming the morals of the Church, especially those of the clergy and

of zealous toils those who pursue it to a blessed end.” Wherefore S. Luke has (xiii. 24), *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*, where for *strive*, the Greek has ἀγωνίζεσθε, *i.e.*, agonize, contend as it were in a contest and an agony, exercise your utmost power and might as in a wrestling match, as if for life itself, if ye conquer; but for death, if ye be overcome; according to the words of the Apostle, “Every one that striveth for the mastery (*in agome*, Gr. and Vulg.) is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.” We then enter upon a contest and in it we strive and agonize for heaven or for hell, for a most blessed or a most miserable eternity. And let each see in how great a match he wrestles: for the course and the way to life is the Cross; the course and the way to perdition is indulgence: it is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The way to life is continence, poverty of spirit and humility. Wherefore S. Barlaam said to king Josaphat, that the way to life is martyrdom, either of blood or of will and penitence: this is the way in which Christ has gone before us: and for this cause the first Christians and those who followed Him willingly met martyrdom, and when persecution had ceased, those who came after inflicted upon themselves the voluntary martyrdom of an austere life in monasteries, deserts, and caves.

So also S. Perpetua saw in her dream a golden ladder, but hedged about with knives and swords. By this ladder she had to climb to heaven, and by this dream she knew that martyrdom was foretold to herself and her companions.

So also S. William, who, from Duke of Aquitaine, became a penitent hermit, gathered from these words of Christ, that all superfluities ought to be cut off, and the body only indulged in things necessary. “How many brethren,” said he, “have served the Lord these many years in Egypt without eating fish? For how many tyrants, now in hell, would Jerome’s sack, Benedict’s frock, Arsenius’ tears, Elisha’s cowl, have sufficed to keep them out of hell? But woe to us, miserable, who changed superfluity into necessity.”

Pythagoras saw the same thing in a shadow. He said that at first the path of virtue is narrow and confined, but afterwards it becomes wider by degrees: but the way of pleasure on the other hand is wide at the beginning, but afterwards it becomes more and more straitened. For as the Apostle says, “Tribulation and anguish is upon every soul of man that worketh evil, but glory, honour and peace to every one that doeth good.” (Rom. ii.) For charity and the grace of Christ enlarge the heart, so that the believer may say confidently with the Psalmist, “I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou hast enlarged my heart” (*Vulg.*).

**Verse 14-** *For strait is the gate*, &c. This is the voice of Eternal Wisdom: He then who is wise, and will set himself in earnest to save his soul, let him take the narrow way. The measure of this straitness and narrowness of the way to heaven, and the fewness of those who find it, and are saved, you may gather from the types. First there is Lot, who only with his two daughters escaped from the burning of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, when all the rest were burnt up because of their lusts. For the world is like Sodom, it is inflamed with lusts and passions. Wherefore the greater part of the lost are damned on account of pollutions and lusts. The second type is the

Stephen, S. Paul, and others, preached the Gospel to the perverse and obstinate Jews, although they knew that they would be slain by them for so doing. For this they did that they might give public testimony to the truth and glory of God, and for the profit of those who were standing by. For in this way holy things are not presented to swine, but to God and His elect. Thus S. Augustine, who by *dogs* understands opposers of the truth, and by *swine* despisers of it. But by *dogs* S. Chrysostom understands the Gentiles, as most impure; by *swine*, heretics, as addicted to the belly. *By that which is holy*, he understands Baptism and the Eucharist, which must not be given to impure and unworthy persons; *pearls* are the mysteries of the truth, enclosed in the Divine words as in the depths of the sea, *i.e.*, in the profundity of Holy Scripture.

**Verse 7-** *Ask and it shall be given*, &c. He returns to the subject of prayer, of which He had begun to treat, vi. 5. *Ask*, viz., from God, by prayer, those things about which I have been teaching, such as are necessary for you, but arduous and difficult, and especially the things which I have laid down to be looked for in the Lord’s Prayer. For to it Luke refers these words (xi. 9). Observe, these three words, *ask*, *seek*, *knock*, mean the same thing, that is, earnest prayer. To *ask* signifies confidence in prayer as a prime requisite; to *seek* signifies zeal and diligence, for he who seeks for anything, applies the whole vigour of his mind to obtain what he seeks. To *knock* means perseverance.

Christ then signifies that we must pray faithfully, diligently, ardently, and perseveringly. So S. Augustine, who says that *ask* refers to praying for strength, by which we may be able to fulfil the commandments of God. *Seek*, that we may find the truth: *knock*, that heaven may be opened unto us.

To this we may add the words of S. Chrysostom. “*Ask*,” he says, “in supplications, praying night and day: *seek* by zeal and labours, for heaven is not given to the slothful: *knock* in prayers, in fastings, and almsgiving, for he who knocks at a door knocks with his hand.”

Again, these three words denote increasing earnestness in prayer. When anything is asked for, it is first spoken for; by-and-by, if no answer be given, we cry out; if calling out do not suffice, we seek for some other means of gaining attention, we apply our mouth to some chink in the door by which our voices may be made to reach the master of the house: if that too fail, we beat at the door, until we gain a hearing. Hence Remigius thus expounds, “We *ask* by praying; we *seek* by living well; we *knock* by persevering.” Others, “*Ask* by faith, *seek* by hope, *knock* by charity.” Lastly, Climacus (*Gradu* 28) says, *Ask* by striving, *seek* by obedience, *knock* by long-suffering.

*Mystically*, S. Bernard (*in Scala Claustralium*): “*Seek* by reading, and ye shall

find in meditation: *knock* in prayer, and it shall be opened to you in contemplation. Reading offers solid food to the mouth, meditation masticates it, reason gives it flavour, contemplation is the very sweetness itself which pleases and refreshes." He then defines these four processes. "Meditation is a studious action of the mind, which under the guidance of right reason searches out the knowledge of hidden truth: contemplation is the elevation of a mind depending upon God, and tasting the joys of eternal sweetness. Reading searches, meditation finds, contemplation feeds, prayer asks."

**Verse 8-** *For every one that asketh receiveth*, &c. Elegantly and truly says S. Augustine, or whoever was the author of *lib. de Salutar. Monitis*, (c. 28), "The prayer of the righteous is the key of heaven. Prayer ascends, God's mercy descends." The same S. Augustine (*lib. senten. apud Prospr. Sent.* 87), says "The physician knows best, what is good for the sick man. Therefore God sometimes in mercy hears not." Again he says (*ad Paulinum, Epist.* 43), "The Lord often denies what we wish for, that he may give us what we would rather, in the end." And the *Gloss* says, "God does not deny Himself to those who ask, for He voluntarily offered Himself to those who asked not for him. And those who seek shall find Him: for He gave Himself to those who sought Him not, that He might be found of them: and He will open to those who knock, for He it is who crieth out, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'"

**Verse 9-** *Or what man is there of you*, &c. The force of the *or* in this verse is, that God is more liberal than man. It, as it were, compares God and man, and shows the superiority of God to man.

**Verse 10-** *Or if he ask a fish*, &c. For a serpent has the appearance and form of a fish, so that it might be deceitfully substituted for a fish, though only by an enemy, not by a father. He says the same thing that He said in the previous verse, but by a still more striking similitude. For if a father gave a stone to a child who asked him for bread, he would only give him a useless and uneatable thing; but if he gave him a serpent when he asked for a fish, he would give him not only a useless but a noxious and poisonous thing. Thus Christ speaks of what is a moral impossibility.

**Verse 11-** *If ye then being evil*, &c. *Being evil: i.e.*, "by the natural propensity to evil, which ye have contracted in your nature by sin." So S. Jerome. "Also by your own will and actions." Whence it is plain that these words were spoken to the people generally, not to the Apostles. For the Apostles were good, but among the multitude there were many who were evil and entangled in vices. S. Chrysostom was of another opinion: "In comparison with God," he says, "all appear evil, even the good, as in comparison with the sun all things, even such as are light, appear dark."

*Give good things.* Luke has, *will give the good Spirit*. For all good things are given by the grace of the Holy Spirit, says Remigius. By *good things* understand true and solid goods which lead to blessedness. Whence S. Augustine says, "Gold and silver are good, not because they make thee good, but because thou mayest do good with them."

**Verse 12-** *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would*, &c. The word *therefore*, some are of opinion, has not here any inferential meaning, but is only an enclitic particle, denoting the conclusion of this part of our Lord's Sermon. Hence the Syriac omits it. On the other hand we may, with S. Chrysostom, take the *therefore* as inferential, and then the meaning would be this: "What I have hitherto said at large concerning love of your neighbour and giving of alms, all these things arise out of this primary natural precept, and first principle of moral philosophy, and rest upon equity, that what thou wishest to be done to thyself, that thou shouldst do to others, and what thou dost not wish to suffer from others, that thou shouldst not do unto others." Understand that *wishest* and *wishest not*, must be taken in a good sense, as guided by right reason. For the man who wishes wine to be given him that he may get drunk may not lawfully offer it to others for such a purpose. Christ here alludes to the monition which Tobit, when he was dying, gave to his son (iv. 16): "That which thou wouldst hate to be done unto thyself, take heed that at no time thou doest it to another."

**Verse 13-** *Enter ye in at the strait gate*, &c. *The strait gate*, by which there is an entrance into heaven, to blessedness and the feast of celestial glory, is, says S. Augustine, the Law of God, which straitens and represses our desires: it is also obedience, continence, mortification, the daily cross, which the law bids either to be made or to be carried. *The broad gate* which leads to perdition is concupiscence, too great liberty, gluttony, lust, &c. Christ has here regard to His own sanctions and explanations of the Law, as, *Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire, and, If any one shall smite thee on thy right cheek, offer him the other also*, &c. For all these things are arduous and strait, or narrow. It is as though He had said, "I may seem to you to have made narrow the way of salvation by my precepts, but know ye, that it is strait even in itself, and therefore I have not straitened it, but have only described it as it really is; for the way to celestial glory is purity and sanctity, which in this corrupt state of your nature consist in a strict bridling and mortification of your passions." By liberty and indulgence Adam fell into sin, and we all through him, and then into all concupiscence. Thus the remedy for these things is nothing else but strict self-restraint, the cross, and mortification; for contraries are cured by contraries. S. Ambrose says, on the first Psalm, "There are two ways, one of the just, the other of the unjust: one of equity, the other of iniquity. The way of the just is narrow, that of the unjust is broad. The narrow road is that of soberness, the broad of drunkenness, that it may receive those who are tossing about." Clemens Alexandrinus (*Strom.* lib. 4) cites with praise the words of Hesiod: "Intense labour is placed before virtue, the way to it is long and steep." Also that of Simonides, "Virtue is said to dwell on rocks difficult of access." And so S. Basil says on the first Psalm: "That broad and easy road which goeth downward hath the deceiving evil demon who draws those who follow him by indulgences to perdition. But a good angel presides over the rough, and steep, and difficult way, which leads by means