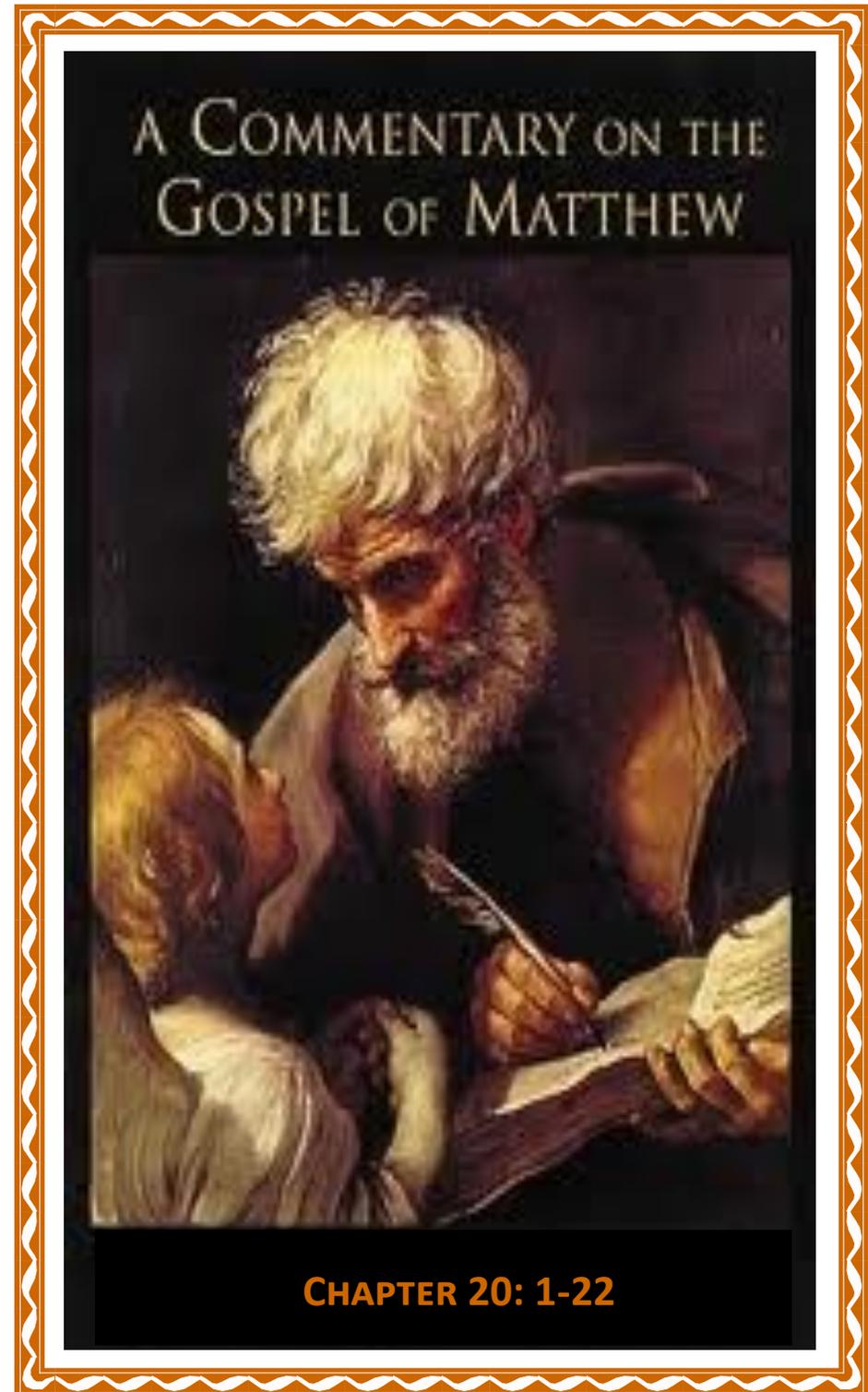


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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten 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 20: 1-22

Douay Rheims Version

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard. The ambition of the two sons of Zebedee. Christ gives sight to two blind men.

1. The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.
2. And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.
3. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the marketplace idle.
4. And he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.

that they may also themselves be able to shed their blood for the sake of Christ." For at that time they used to communicate daily, and that under both kinds, bread and wine. S. Chrysostom remarks how "Christ encourages and draws them on by the way in which He puts the question. For He did not say, can ye shed your blood, but *can ye drink the cup?* Then, drawing them on, He says, *which I shall drink of*, so that by sharing with Him in His labours they may be rendered more ready to undergo the same."

Christ also calls His Passion a baptism, because in it He was wholly immersed and plunged, *i.e.*, He died.

They say, We are able. John and James seem to have understood the meaning of the cup; and yet as they had shown their ambition in asking for the primacy, so they rashly answer, that they can drink the cup, whereas, in truth, they could not yet do so; but afterwards they were able, through the grace of Christ given by the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost.

prebends and appointments are not mine to give as I please, and because I so choose, to my relations and servants; I am a steward, not an owner; God will require an exact account of my stewardship. For great is the injury to Christ and His Church, and it is the cause of many evils, if appointments and benefices are given on account of relationship and friendship, to unworthy persons.

Ye know not what ye ask. First, because ye think that My kingdom is an earthly one, and one of outward show, like that of David and Solomon; whereas it is spiritual and heavenly. So S. Chrysostom says: "He says this to show that they were seeking nothing spiritual." Secondly, because they were asking for what had already been promised—namely, to sit with Christ, and with Him to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. So S. Hilary: "They know not what they ask, because there was no doubt about the glory of the Apostles, for His former discourse had made it clear to them that they should judge the world." But among these thrones they seemed to have asked for the first, and the next to Christ, though they had not yet been specially promised by Christ to them. Thirdly, because they were asking for what exceeded the measure of their gifts and merits. Bede says: "They know not what they ask when they ask for a throne of glory which they had not yet merited." For the first thrones in Heaven belong to those who are of greater—yea, of the greatest—merit. Fourthly, because they were asking at an unsuitable time, when the Passion of Christ was at hand. As S. Chrysostom says: "Ye speak of honour, but I speak of labours and toil; for this is no time for rewards, but rather for slaughter, battles, and perils." Fifthly, because they were asking for what was contrary to their vocation; for they were called to follow Christ in His poverty and cross, not to strive after honours. Sixthly, because they ought to have sought for the labours of the cross, by which they might merit honours. Seventhly, because they asked to sit on the left hand as well as on the right. For those condemned in the judgment will stand on Christ's left hand; which is, says S. Chrysostom, as it were to say, "I have called you to My right hand, and you willfully are hastening from My right hand to My left." But this is a mystical meaning; the most suitable meanings are the first, the third, and the sixth.

Are ye able, &c. Through the Cross and Passion the way lies for Me to My kingdom, therefore the same way might be trodden by you if you desire it. S. Bernard says, that "Christ like a good and wise physician first drank the draught Himself which He was preparing for His own, *i.e.*, He underwent His Passion and Death, and so He became immortal and impassible; thus teaching His own how they might confidently drink the draught which produces soundness and life." S. Chrysostom and Theophylact say that Christ called His Passion a cup, because He so willingly endured, and, as it were, drained it, as a thirsty man would a cup of wine. In Scripture, and among profane writers, the cup signifies the lot, whether good or evil, which God appoints, and as it were administers to each man.

S. Cyprian, understanding martyrdom by the cup, says, "A fiercer conflict is now at hand (for God had revealed to him that the Valerian persecution was coming), for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with firm courage, considering that for that very reason they daily drink the cup of the blood of Christ, so

5. And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner.
6. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle?
7. They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go ye also into my vineyard.
8. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first.
9. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.
10. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more: And they also received every man a penny.
11. And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house,
12. Saying: These last have worked but one hour. and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats.
13. But he answering said to one of them: friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny?
14. Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee.
15. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good?
16. So shall the last be first and the first last. For many are called but few chosen.
17. And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart and said to them:
18. Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes: and they shall condemn him to death.
19. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified: and the third day he shall rise again.
20. Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of him.
21. Who said to her: What wilt thou? She saith to him: say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.
22. And Jesus answering, said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to him: We can.
23. He saith to them: My chalice indeed you shall drink; but to sit on my right or left hand is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.
24. And the ten, hearing it, were moved with indignation against the two brethren.
25. But Jesus called them to him and said: You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and that they that are the greater, exercise power upon them.
26. It shall not be so among you: but whosoever is the greater among you, let him be your minister.

27. And he that will be first among you shall be your servant.
 28. Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a redemption for many.
 29. And when they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
 30. And behold two blind men sitting by the way side heard that Jesus passed by. And they cried out, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us.
 31. And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us.
 32. And Jesus stood and called them and said: What will ye that I do to you?
 33. They say to him: Lord, that our eyes be opened.
 34. And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw and followed him.

Verse 1- *The kingdom of heaven is like.* That is, God acts in the kingdom of Heaven like a master hiring labourers into his vineyard; for strictly speaking, the kingdom of Heaven is not like the householder himself, but like his house and family.

Christ's purpose is by means of this parable to prove the truth of His last saying in the preceding chapter, *many that are first shall be last*, &c., and to shew that by the grace of God, without any injustice or injury to anyone it will come to pass that those who here seemed to have the first place will in the Day of Judgment have the last, and those who seemed to have the last will then have the first; that is, that the Apostles and the despised faithful who followed Christ will in the kingdom of Heaven be preferred to the Scribes and Pharisees; and the believing Gentiles to the Jews, who were called by the Lord that they might obtain the first place in the kingdom of God, that is, in the Church both militant and triumphant; or, that the Sons of the New Testament, and especially the Apostles who are to sit on twelve thrones in the Day of Judgment, will be preferred to the Sons of the Old Testament, who under the shadows of legal sacrifices performed a laborious service, because, trusting in the works of the Law, they falsely claimed the kingdom of God for themselves, and rejected Christ. Whence they deservedly lost the kingdom; while the others submitted with humility to Christ, and zealously co-operated with Him, and therefore were elected in preference to the Jews both to grace and glory. That this is the scope of the parable is evident. 1. From the saying which precedes and follows it, *many that are first*, &c. 2. From S. Luke, who in chap. xiii., 29, 30, explains these same words of the admission of the Gentiles and the exclusion of the Jews. 3. Because otherwise we cannot explain the murmurings of those who were first called, for in Heaven among the blessed there is no murmuring, but only in hell among the damned.

By the vineyard we are to understand the Church; by the market place the world; by those called at the first, third, and sixth hour, the Jews, called in their fathers, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, to the faith and worship of God; by those called at the eleventh hour, we are to understand the Gentiles; by the evening, the Day of Judgment, in which each will receive his reward, either already given in this life (as it was given to the Jews), or to be then given, as in the case of the Gentiles in Heaven.

general petition, which if He granted He would be unable to refuse the particular petition. This is the manner of women. In the same way Bathsheba introduced her petition to Solomon to give Abishag to Adonijah in marriage, 1 Kings ii. 21, Solomon consented; but afterwards when she made her request known he refused, saying, Ask for him the kingdom.

Verse 21. *And He said unto her*, &c. Christ wisely refuses the general petition, and would have her express it particularly, lest she should be asking for something foolish and unworthy, which He foresaw she would do, in order that He might teach us to do like He did.

She said to Him, &c. S. Chrysostom says, "They wished, since they had heard that the disciples should sit upon twelve thrones, to obtain the primacy of that seat, and they knew that they would be preferred before the rest with the exception of Peter; but fearing that Peter was preferred before them, they dared to say, 'Grant that one of us may sit on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left.'" We may learn from this how bold and blind and insatiable ambition is to which she incited these two Apostles, because they had seen that in the Transfiguration which was the beginning of Christ's kingdom they were preferred by Christ to the other Apostles.

But the mother is to be excused because she makes her request of Christ, her kinsman according to the flesh, for her sons whom she loved, even more than herself. So S. Jerome says, "The mother asks this from womanly error, and affectionate piety, not knowing what she was asking."

In the same way or manner S. Chrysostom excuses her sons. "Let not any one," he says, "be disturbed at our saying that the Apostles were so imperfect, for the mystery of the Cross had not yet been consummated; the grace of the Spirit had not yet been infused into their hearts."

Wherefore if you wish to learn what their virtues were, consider what they were after the Spirit had been given, and you will see that all restlessness of mind was removed from them. For this reason only their imperfection is made known that you may perceive clearly what they were suddenly made by grace."

Verse 22- *Ye know not what ye ask.* Because ye know not, in the first place, of what sort My kingdom is—namely, a spiritual and heavenly one, not a carnal and an earthly one. Secondly, because ye are asking for the triumph before the victory; "for the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Thirdly, because you suppose that this kingdom is given by right of blood to those who seek it, whereas it is given only to those who deserve and strive. Let bishops and princes, then, follow this example of Christ, and make answer to their friends, their sons, and to importunate women, when they ask them for prebends, dignities, and appointments for which they are unfitted, "Ye know not what ye ask." My

us how we ought to suffer for the truth; in His resurrection we ought to hope in the Trinity, whence He says 'and on the third day He shall rise again.'" And S. Chrysostom "This was said, that when they should see the sufferings, they should look for the resurrection." And S. Augustine adds the reason "For one death, that namely of the Saviour according to the body, was to us a salvation from two deaths, both of soul and body; and this one resurrection gained for us two resurrections."

Morally, Christ often repeats the mention of His passion, that He might commend His love to them, and they might love Him in return, and repay love for love, blood for blood, death for death. For the Cross of Christ is the furnace and fire of love. Wherefore S. Bernard (*De Quad. Deb.*) says "Thou owest to Jesus Christ thy whole life, because He laid down His life for thine, and endured bitter torments that thou mightest not endure eternal torments;" and in conclusion he says, "When therefore I have given Him all that I am, and all that I can, is it not like only a drop compared to a river, or a grain of sand to a heap?" And again he says (*Tract. de dilig. Deo*) "If I owe my whole self in return for my creation, what can I add now for my re-creation, and for my re-creation in such a manner? For it was more easy to create me than to re-create me. For He who created me at once and with a word only, in re-creating me spoke many words, and performed wonderful acts, and endured afflictions, and not only afflictions, but indignities: in His first work He gave me to myself, in His second He gave Himself to me; and when He gave Himself He restored me to myself. For my creation and for my re-creation I owe myself for myself, and that doubly. What shall I give to God for Himself? for even if I could repay myself 2 thousand times over, what am I compared with God?"

For the sake of Christ therefore we should not refuse to endure reproaches, crosses and flames; for to Him belongs our life and all that we are, for He Himself bought and redeemed us not with gold, but with the Divine price of His own blood. S. Leo (*Serm. 8, de Pass.*) says, "Thy cross, O Christ, is the fountain of all blessings, by which is given to them that believe strength out of weakness, glory out of reproach, life out of death."

Verse 20- *Then came to Him the mother, &c. Then*, when they had heard from Christ that His death was at hand, and after death His Resurrection, after which they expected the glorious kingdom of Christ; wherefore they lose no time in making a request that they may themselves obtain the chief place in it above the other Apostles.

The mother of Zebedee's children. By name Salome. See S. Mark xv. 40., S. Matthew xxvii. 56. S. Mark says that the petition came not from the mother but from the sons. The petition of the mother proceeded from the petition of the sons, so that the sons spoke by the mouth of their mother.

A certain thing; saying, as S. Mark has it, *we would that Thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire*, for they feared that if they expressed their desire for the first place Christ would at once refuse it. They wish therefore to bind Christ by a

By the penny (denarius) is signified a whole day's pay. The denarius was a common coin, of which there were many different kinds; for there was the copper, the silver, and the gold denarius. And it is clear, that the pay given to the labourers was unequal, because the last were preferred to the others who came at the first, third, and sixth hour, for although the latter had laboured for a longer time, yet the former had laboured with greater grace, diligence and zeal.

You will say then, that to the greater *labourer* the less reward is given. I answer: True, but not to the greater *merit*; for to this a greater reward is always due, and is always given. Moreover, it is not the greater labourer that makes the merit greater, but grace, and co-operation with grace. The Apostles had greater grace than the Scribes, Christians than Jews, and co-operated more with grace, and therefore the greater denarius, *i.e.*, the greater reward was promised them. For to the Jews the denarius promised by God was a temporal reward, an abundance of temporal blessings; but to the Gentile Christians was promised by Christ a denarius far more noble, namely eternal life. The Jews therefore received a denarius of copper or silver, the Christians one of gold. For otherwise if the denarius signified exactly the same reward, it would not agree with the words which precede and follow the parable—*the first shall be last, and the last first*.

In a word, the parable signifies that the Gentiles who believe in Christ will be preferred to the Jews who despise Christ. And this is what S. Paul teaches in many places, and especially in his Epistle to the Romans. And Christ Himself says, *The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you*. (See also S. Matt. viii., 11, 12, and S. Luke xiii., 28, 30.)

According to this sense, the *first* will be saved, the *last* will be damned. But in another sense, the first who will be the last are those who were first called but arrive at their reward last; while the last who will be the first are those who though called last become the first in reward. Whence the Fathers, doctors, and schoolmen commonly explain this parable as if Christ intended to say that the first as well as the last, *i.e.*, Jews as well as Christians, who serve God, will receive the same eternal life; nor will it be to the injury of anyone that he has been called at the end of the world or of his own life; yea, rather he will be preferred in heavenly glory before others who were called long before, if with greater labour and zeal he co-operated with the greater grace given him by God. This is the interpretation of S. Jerome, S. Augustine, S. Chrysostom, S. Thomas, Maldonatus, Gregorius de Valentia, Bellarmine (*Lib. iii. de Justificatione, cap. 16*), and Suarez. And this interpretation is very probable, and it is much in its favour, that it is better explained in this way how the same denarius is given to all the labourers. For the Fathers everywhere by the denarius understand eternal life.

You will say, how is it that in this denarius the first and the last are equal, since the first excel the last in the felicity and glory of eternal life? I answer,

that the same denarius denotes the same blessing generically and objectively, *i.e.*, the same Divine essence which constitutes the blessedness of the saints; for this is one and the same, but nevertheless the fruition of it is different according to their different degrees of merit; for those who have served God with greater grace and labour, as those did who were called last, will behold God in a clearer and more perfect vision, and therefore will have a fuller fruition of His love, and will be more blessed than those who served God with less grace and labour. So S. Gregory, S. Augustine, S. Jerome, S. Thomas (*Part I., quæst. 15, art. 6*), and others explain it. To these may be added Bellarmine in the place already quoted: *for that denarius*, he says, *signifies an equality of eternity, not of glory*. Again, this opinion is favoured by the words of Christ (chap. xix. 21, and following), which are closely connected with this payable. And now to explain the several points of the parable according to this sense: By the day is to be understood the course of this world; by the various hours the different ages of the world; so that the first hour is the age from Adam to Noah, the second that from Noah to Abraham, the third from Abraham to Moses, the sixth from Moses to Christ, the eleventh from Christ to the end of the world. Thus S. Hilary, S. Gregory, and Theophylact explain it. Or the day is the life of each man; the first hour being infancy; the third, youth; the sixth, manhood; the ninth, old age; the eleventh, decrepitude. So S. Jerome and S. Basil explain it. By the murmuring, understand with Theophylact, Suarez, and others, the surprise of the saints when those who shall be less in glory, and yet (as the Jews) had laboured more here will wonder that others, who laboured less here, but excelled them in the measure of grace, are preferred to them in glory. To conclude: the sense will be complete and adequate, if this second meaning is taken in conjunction with the first; for as I said at the end of the preceding chapter, *the last* can be taken in both ways—either as meaning the last, in the sense of the damned, or the last in Heaven itself, and therefore saved. The first sense applies to those who were first called, and clearly explains their murmuring; while the second sense applies to those last called, and in their case clearly explains the denarius, how the same denarius—*i.e.*, eternal life—is given to all. Wherefore, the second sense supplies the first, and the first supplies what is wanting in the second.

Tropologically. The vineyard is the soul which each man has to cultivate. Morally, therefore, we learn that we are called to labour in the vineyard, *i.e.*, our own souls and the Church of God. The cultivators of this vineyard are not held in honour for the time during which they have laboured, but for the diligence, the zeal, and the spirit with which they have laboured. S. Jerome (*Epist. 13, ad Paul*): Hence the Spouse in the Canticles says, They have made me keeper of the vineyards, mine own vineyard have I not kept. The essence of the soul is the vineyard, planted in the soil of the body; its faculties are the vines, and works of charity are its wine; the vines are to be fastened to the Cross, at the foot of which we make a grave, against the approach of our death and burial. This vineyard must be kept from the wild boar out of the wood (Ps. lxxx.)—*i.e.*, from lustful pleasure; and from the singular wild beast (Vulg.)—*i.e.*, from the sin of pride, which makes a man singular; from the fox of cunning flattery; from the wolf of greediness; from the dog of detraction. We must pray the Lord to send upon this His vineyard the rain of His doctrine, and the warmth of His charity,

Here is brought to conclusion the narration of the events of the third year of Christ's ministry; for a short time after this He raised Lazarus, which event took place in March, after which in the same month and year He was crucified.

Verse 17. *And Jesus going up, &c.* This was the last journey of Christ to Jerusalem. From S. John xi. 54., &c., it is clear that after raising Lazarus He had departed to the city of Ephraim, to escape the hatred of the Pharisees, and now from that city on the approach of that Passover, when He was put to death by the Jews, He went up to Jerusalem according to the law. And truly He went up that He might accept, and, as it were, eagerly seize the cross and death appointed for Him in Jerusalem, and prepared by the decree of the Father for the redemption of the world.

Verse 18. *We go up.* That is, because Jerusalem, and especially the temple were on Mount Sion. Again, *we go up*, in order to submit to the Cross, according to that saying, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, &c." Again He says "*we go up*" to mark this stedfast purpose, as S. Chrysostom paraphrases, "Ye see how I go of My free will to death; when then ye shall see Me hung upon the Cross, think not that I am no more than man: for though to be able to die is human, yet to be willing to die is more than human."

Lastly, *we go up*, as if to our triumph on the citadel of Jerusalem and Calvary; for on the cross Christ triumphed over death, sin, the devil and hell; as the Apostle teaches, Coloss. ii., 15.

The Son of Man is betrayed, &c. "For," says Rabanus, "Judas betrayed the Lord to the Jews, and they delivered Him to the Gentiles, *i.e.*, to Pilate and the Romans. To this end the Lord refused prosperity in this world, but chose rather to suffer affliction, that He might shew us who have fallen by delights through what bitterness we must needs return; whence it follows *to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify.*" "The whole salvation of men," says S. Chrysostom, "rests on the death of Christ; wherefore there is nothing for which we are more bound to render thanks to God than for His death. He imparted the mystery of His death to His Apostles in secret, because the more precious treasure is ever committed to the more worthy vessels." And again, "when sorrow comes at a time we are looking for it, it is found lighter than it would have been had it come upon us suddenly."

Verse 19- *To mock, and to scourge, and to crucify.* These were the three principal parts of the passion of Christ.

And the third day He shall rise again.

This is the honey of the resurrection in which is hidden the gall of the passion. Whence S. Augustine (*De Civ. I. 18*) says "In His passion He shews

had laboured little; that those who labour much may not glory in their own strength.”

Verse 14- *Take that thine is.* Take, O Pharisee, thy wealth and honours which I have given thee in this life and which thou didst desire more than eternal life; be content with them, and go thy way. But Remigius explains the words thus: “Take thy reward, and enter into glory.”

I will give unto this last (i.e., the Gentiles), according to his merit, even as unto thee. But Origen says: “Perhaps He says to Adam, Friend, I do thee no wrong, &c.” One may reasonably suppose that *this last* is the Apostle Paul, who laboured one hour. Others interpret: “Take thy damnation due to thee on account of thy murmuring, and go thy way to hell.”

So the last shall be first. According to the first sense of the parable, the last who will be the first in Heaven are the elect; but the first who will be the last are the called only, who have not followed their calling or who have abandoned it, and are therefore damned. These are many, if they are compared with the elect, who are few (S. Matthew vii. 14). But according to the second sense, which I have given above, it is not easy to connect the latter clause, “Many are called, &c.,” with the first, “so the last shall be first.” Maldonatus thus connects them. “From the particular sentence in which He said that the first should be last and the last first, He draws a more general conclusion—that not all who are called will receive a reward, because very many when called will not come.” Suarez considers that it is an argument *a fortiori*—You will not be astonished that the first will be last and the last first, since many are called but few chosen, and therefore all the rest will be damned, which is more to be wondered at and dreaded; for if many are called who are not saved, what wonder is it that many are called who are not first in reward, although they may obtain something?

Again many, *i.e.*, all are called to eternal life, yet He says many, because all are many and because He opposes them to the few who are elect: “live therefore like the few,” says Cassian, “that with the few you may merit election and a place in Heaven.” Lastly, some explain thus, many, *i.e.*, all are called to grace and to the keeping of the commandments, but few are chosen to extraordinary grace, and to the keeping of the Evangelical counsels.

Of this opinion are those schoolmen who hold that there are two classes of the elect. 1. The ordinary class consisting of those who upon the pre-knowledge of their merits are elected to glory; the other, consisting of those who are elected to glory before their merits are pre-known, whom they call extraordinarily predestinated and suppose to be here intended, when it is said, “few are chosen.” Among these few are the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, and a few others; but the former are far more numerous, and therefore of them it is, many are called.

The Arabic version renders *How many are called, &c.*, as if the words were an exclamation of Christ moved with wonder and pity at the multitude of the called and the fewness of the elect, and consequently at the multitude of the damned.

and dung—*i.e.*, the memory of the death of His Son and of the holy martyrs. The soul is green like a vineyard with flowers and leaves, that is, with holy desires and edifying speech; it pours forth the tears of compunction; it sheds forth the sweet odour of virtue; it bears the ripe grapes of good works. Again, the faithful man performs in his own soul the same works as the vine-dresser in the vineyard. He prunes, hoes, transplants, disentangles, &c.; the faithful does the same mystically in his own soul.

And now to explain each verse briefly.

Verse 2. *When he had agreed with the labourers.* Jovian and Calvin have asserted that all the just are equal in reward, *i.e.*, in the denarius of eternal life, and that therefore they are equal in merit, and all good works are equal. But I have already answered that all are equal generally in eternal life; but in this there will be degrees, for some will have a clearer and others a dimmer vision of God, and therefore the one will be more and the others less blessed and glorious.

Verse 3- *And he went out about the third hour.* The Romans and the Jews used to divide the night as well as the day into twelve hours reckoned in four periods which in the night were called watches. The first hour began at sunrise, the sixth at midday. Again, in winter the hours were shorter in the day and longer in the night, and the reverse in summer.

Verse 4- *And He said unto them, go ye also.* To these He does not promise a denarius, but *what is right (just, Vulg.)* By this is signified the merit of good works, which according to justice merits a reward, which God promises to each work according to distributive justice.

Verse 5- *Again He went out,* This shews the carefulness of God who is desirous that all men should be workers in the vineyard of their own souls, and of the Church, that both may be adorned with fruits of every kind.

Verse 6- *About the eleventh hour.* This is the last hour of the day, and those called at this hour are Christians. Origen says that Adam was called at the first hour, Paul at the eleventh.

Verse 7- *Because no man hath hired us.* This is the vain excuse, S. Chryostom says, of slothful men; for God calls all to virtue from childhood. But again S. Chryostom says the hiring is the promise of eternal life: but the Gentiles knew neither God nor the promises of God, so they say that they had not been hired, or called, though they had been called by the law and light of nature.

Verse 8- *And when the evening was come.* The evening is the end of the world and the Day of Judgment.

Symbolically, Origen understands by the steward the holy Angels, as S. Michael; but Remigius understands Christ, Who as man is the steward of God the Father, and in His name will judge the quick and dead. Irenæus (*Lib. iv. contr. hæc. c. 70*) understands the Holy Spirit who dispenses both gifts and graces, and glory and rewards.

The Gentiles had more grace, and co-operated with grace more than the Jews who were first called, and therefore they obtain a higher place in Heaven. We may learn from this that a man may easily gain an increase of merit and glory if he practice frequent acts of charity, and perform all external works from charity and the love of God; for thus he will merit more even than the religious who undergo hard penances, if he practise his works with greater charity than they do, although they be less difficult,

Verse 8 (Continued)- *Beginning with the last.* S. Gregory says, Those who are called at the end of life are often times rewarded before others, inasmuch as they depart out of the body into the kingdom before those who were called in childhood.

Verse 9- *When they came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.* This penny (denarius) was, as I have said above, in kind the same, but in appearance different. The meaning is that the Apostles and Christians called in the last age of the world have received a better denarius, and one that corresponds (*congruentem*) and is due to their labour and merit.

You will say that the first called, murmured and said, *Thou hast made them equal to us*, and therefore the same denarius was given to both; for if it had been a better one, they would have said, *Thou hast made them superior to us*, and they would have murmured much more.

I answer, that the day's hire is given to workmen in the evening, and therefore those who come last could not easily perceive what sort of denarius was given to those who preceded them, but they only heard the steward say to each, receive your denarius: or if they did see it, they could not clearly perceive in the darkness that they had received a copper denarius, while the others had received a gold one. For copper (aurichalcum) resembles gold in glow and brightness, so that they thought the same denarius was given to them as themselves, and were offended. All this parabolically signifies the envy of the Jews against the Gentiles, for they were offended because the Gentiles were made equal to them in the grace and glory of their Messiah: for they thought that these things were due properly and entirely to them alone, but to the Gentiles only by a certain gratuitous dispensation. Whence arose that contention of the Jews against S. Peter for preaching the Gospel to Cornelius; and that more vehement contention against S. Paul, as is clear from the Acts of the Apostles.

If you ask why Christ did not say expressly that those who came at the eleventh hour received a greater denarius, I answer that Christ was not here treating of that point, but He only intended to eradicate from the Jews their prejudice, and arrogant claim

to the first place in the kingdom of Heaven. In opposition to this therefore He teaches that the first shall be last and the last first. For He wishes to confirm His promise made to the Apostles (S. Matt. xix. 28). For thus the Apostles will be first in Heaven, inasmuch as they will be the judges of the rest, but the Jews will be the last, as they are to be judged by them.

Morally, S. Chrysostom says, they are called at the eleventh hour who are called in old age; so that this parable was spoken to quicken the zeal of those who are converted in extreme old age, so that they may not suppose that they shall have any less than others.

Verse 11- They murmured. By the murmuring, S. Chrysostom says, is signified the greatness of the reward and glory, which in the Apostles is so great that the rest of the elect and blessed from among the Jews would envy them and would murmur, if envy and murmuring were possible among the blessed. In a different way, S. Gregory says, Because the Fathers before Christ were not brought to the kingdom; this is to have murmured. Lastly, S. Chrysostom thinks that this murmuring is only an ornament of (a point introduced into) the parable, and therefore not to be applied to the thing signified by it.

Verse 12- We have borne the burden and heat of the day. That is, we have toiled under the burden of the Law. The Scribes and Pharisees used to fast twice in the week, give tithes of all things to God, teach the people, compass sea and land to make one proselyte; so that they had a weight of labours, but often an unprofitable one.

Verse 13. But He answered, &c. An evil eye is an envious eye. The sense is, Since I have bestowed a favour of grace on those who came at the eleventh hour by giving them a denarius, I have done thee no wrong. The Master might have made answer to the murmurer, Those who came at the eleventh hour worked with greater grace and zeal, and accomplished more in one hour than thou didst in the whole day, and therefore merited more, as the first have received a better denarius. But it did not become the Master to contend on an equality with His servant, but rather to silence his murmuring by asserting his own right of ownership, liberality, and grace. You will object, that S. Prosper here seems to take away all merit: for (*lib. 2, de Vocat. Gent. c. 5*) speaking of this parable, he says. "We read that the same reward was given to all the labourers, in order that those who laboured much without receiving more than the last might understand that they had received a gift of grace, not a reward of work." Bellarmine answers: "S. Prosper considers eternal life is the reward which is the same and equal in the case of all the blessed: and God bestows this eternal life as a gift of grace, not a reward of works, in that sense of which S. Augustine speaks, 'God crowns His own gifts, not thy merits;' and therefore He willed to bestow eternal life on those who had laboured much and on those who