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IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE
WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH
GOD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH
HIM, AND HE WAS WITH HIM,
AND HE WAS WITH HIM, AND HE
BEGAN HIS TESTIMONY AT THE
BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY.
THINGS WHICH HE SAW AND HEARD,
HIMSELF HE TESTIFIED, AND HIS
HAS LIFE, AND HE HAS GIVEN
LIFE, AND HE HAS GIVEN LIFE
OF HIS OWN, AND HE HAS GIVEN
THE DARKNESS, BUT THE DARK-
NESS HAS NOT UNDERSTOOD IT.

the gospel of JOHN

CHAPTER 8: 21-46

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.*

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

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.

Continuation of John 8: 21-46

Ver. 21.—*Jesus therefore said to them again.* (1.) Some think that “therefore” only indicates the beginning of a new discourse. (2.) Origen thinks it indicates that what follows was spoken by Christ at the same time and place. (3.) Maldonatus refers it to verse 19, *Ye neither know Me nor My Father.* The time therefore will come for you to know Me as God, but ye will not find Me, for ye will die in your sins. (4.) Rupertus and Toletus refer it more appositely, to the words immediately preceding. Because He saw that the Pharisees understood, and were angered at His words, He adds, *I go My way, &c.*

He had said the same before (see vii. 33), first to the officers, and then to the Pharisees. *I go My way*, that is out of this life to My Father by My cross and death. “Death was to Christ,” says S. Augustine, “a going forth, for He abode not in the world, but passed through it to heaven and immortal life.”

And ye shall seek Me, i.e., ye shall seek another Messiah, and will not find him, says

sinners, Thou didst take on Thee the sins of all, Thou wast made sin for all, but yet no practice of sin could reach Thee. Thou didst dwell among men, as if among angels, Thou madest earth to be like heaven, that even there also Thou mightest take away sin.”

If I say the truth, &c. He here shuts out another objection of the Jews. For they could have said, We believe Thee not, not for any sin which Thou hast committed, but because the things Thou sayest and teachest are not true.” Christ meets the objection by saying, “I have proved to you My doctrine by so many arguments and miracles, that no prudent person who is not blinded by hatred could question its perfect truth. If then My life is most innocent, and My doctrine most true, why do ye not believe Me?” Receive then the truth not as a bare assertion, but as demonstrated by reason.

For he is a liar. From his constant habit of lying, he is altogether made up of lies. And if he ever speaks truth, it is by compulsion, or else by means of truth to persuade men to what is false.

And the father of it. "His father," says Nonnus. The Cainian heretics understood the devil to mean Cain. But the Manicheans on S. Augustine's authority (*in loco*) said that the devil had a father, even the evil god, and that both he and his son were liars. But I maintain that "of it" refers to the word "lie," which is understood in the term liar which occurs just before. And he is the father of a lie. (1.) Because he first invented the act of lying. (2.) Because he fashions and forms lies, as the potter moulds the clay. So S. Augustine and others. It is a Hebraism. Origen says, "The devil begot a lie. He was seduced by himself, and in this respect was worse, because others are deceived by him, whereas he is the author of his own deception." And S. Augustine, "Not every one that lies is a father of a lie, but he only who, like the devil, received it not from any other quarter."

And hence the devil is the father and author of heresies, and therefore heresiarchs have had a devil at their side who suggested their heresies, as well as arguments to uphold them. So Luther confessed of himself. Such a suggester had Arius, Eunomius, Calvin, &c. The Apostle (1 Tim. iv. 1) speaks of heresies as "doctrines of devils" (see notes *in loco*).

45. *But if I speak the truth, ye believe Me not.* His argument stands thus, "Whosoever believeth a lie is a son of the devil. And ye believe a lie, and are therefore sons of the devil." But "if" may mean "because," as some Greek and Latin copies read. And so it would mean, "Because I speak the truth in truly reprovng your sins, and truly asserting myself to be the Messiah, and prove this by miracles, yet ye will not believe Me because ye will not give up your sins, and will not believe what I say and teach, but rather believe the devil who persuades you that I am a false prophet, and my miracles are mere sleight of hand."

Ver. 46.—*Which of you,* &c. This is to anticipate an objection of the Jews. For they might say, "We do not believe thee, because thou art a violater of our law, in healing the sick on the Sabbath-day." Produce any other charge against Me, and I will submit to your disbelieving Me. My healing on the Sabbath was not a violation, but a sanctification of the Sabbath. I leave any further charge to be decided by you who are my sworn enemies. So confident was Christ in His innocence that no one could lay anything to His charge which bore the slightest resemblance to sin. For He was Himself sinless, both on account of the Beatific Vision which He enjoyed, as the Blessed in heaven are incapable of sin for the same reason (for seeing God to be the Supreme Good, they necessarily love Him with all their strength, and hate whatever displeases Him) and likewise from the hypostatical union with the Word. For because His humanity existed in the Person of the Word, the Word kept His humanity free from all sin, and in perfect holiness. For if the humanity of Christ had sinned, the Person of the Word would have sinned; which is impossible. For virtuous or vicious actions relate to persons, and are attributed to them. Hence S. Ambrose (on Ps. xl. 13) brings in God the Father thus addressing Christ, "Thou wert conversant with

Toletus, for there is none other but Me. More simply. Ye shall seek Me, to crucify Me again (see vii 34). So Origen and S. Augustine, who says, "Ye shall seek Me, not from desire but from hatred." For after He had withdrawn from sight, they who hated and they who loved Him alike sought Him, the one to persecute, and the other from desire to hear Him. For He adds, *And ye shall die in your sins.* Your obstinate sins of unbelief and hatred. Ye will therefore seek Me in vain, for I shall ascend to heaven, ye will be thrust down to hell. Euthymius explains "in your sin," in consequence of your sin, for which ye will be slain by the Romans. But the first explanation is the plainest and most forcible. For Christ frequently alarms the Pharisees with the terrors of the last judgment.

Whither I go ye cannot come. Ye cannot, because ye will not, says Origen, for every sin is a voluntary and free act.

S. Augustine thinks that these words were spoken to the disciples, "Whither I go ye cannot go now," not depriving them of hope, but predicting its postponement. But the words which follow were evidently addressed to the Pharisees.

Ver. 22.—*Then said the Jews,* &c. The officers made a wiser inquiry (vii. 35), *Will He go to the dispersion of the Gentiles?* But the Pharisees, blinded by their hatred, thought He had no way of escape but by killing Himself. Wherever He may go, we will follow Him up. If He goes to the Gentiles, we will drag Him back. He must therefore mean that He will kill Himself, so as to escape our hands. A presumptuous and foolish thought, suggested, however, by their malice. He might have withdrawn Himself from them in various ways, as He had already done. But He meant that He would go up to heaven, whither the Pharisees could not come. But His words, says S. Augustine, referred not to His going to death, but to where He was going afterwards.

Ver. 23.—*And (therefore) He said unto them,* &c. Ye cleave to your sins and will go to the lowest depth, while I shall return to heaven, and therefore ye will seek Me and will not find Me. For I am like the soaring eagle, dwelling in the loftiest mountains of eternity, while ye are as worms and insects creeping on the earth. So Rupertus and S. Augustine, who says, "Ye are from beneath; ye savour of the earth; serpent-like, ye eat the earth. But what is meant by eating the earth? Ye feed on things of earth, ye delight in things of earth, are greedy for things of earth, ye lift not up your hearts above."

S. Chrysostom and others, and S. Augustine and Bede among the Latins, think that the Pharisees misunderstood the words of Christ by reason of their earthly minds. Morally:—Ye are from beneath, as descended from Adam, and deriving from him your earthly desires, and inflamed by evil passions, thus hankering only after worldly things. But *I am from above,*

because as God I am begotten of the Father, and as man am incarnate of the Holy Spirit. And therefore My feelings, My love, My desires are all heavenly. And to these ye cannot attain, unless ye are born again; and thus from earthly become heavenly and spiritual, as I said to Nicodemus.

Physically:—Christ here teaches us that our birth-place, training, &c., impart to each one their qualities. And just as fishes could not live out of water, nor birds excepting in the air, so the Pharisees, born in Canaan or Judæa, could not but be earthly both in body and mind, as Ezekiel said (xvi. 3), “Thy birth was of the land of Canaan, and thy mother a Hittite.” But Christ, as born and dwelling in heaven, was heavenly.

Metaphysically:—*Ye are of your father the devil*, because as he killed Adam by the forbidden fruit, so do ye wish to kill Me. But I am from above, as being the Son of the Most High God. Hear S. Augustine (*Tract xxxvii.*): “*He was from above.* But how was He from above? From the air? By no means. For there the birds do fly. From the heaven we see? By no means. For there the sun, the moon, and stars go their rounds. From the angels? Do not imagine it, for they too were made by Him, by Whom all things were made. How then was He from above? From the Father Himself. For there is nothing above Him, who begat the Word equal to Himself, co-eternal with Himself, His only Begotten before time, by Whom He would create the times. Understand, therefore, this word ‘from above,’ as transcending in Thy conception everything that was made, the whole creation, every body, every created spirit, everything that is in any way subject to change.” *Ye are of this world, I am not of this world*: ye are of this earth, or more closely to the point, ye are worldly. Ye aim at worldly favours, wealth, and honours. Ye live as do worldlings. Ye possess the very qualities of the world, says Toletus. Listen to S. Augustine (*Tract. xxxviii.*): “Let no one say, I am not of the world; whosoever thou be, O man, thou art of the world. But He who made the world hath come to thee, and hath freed thee from the world. But if the world delight thee, thou wishest for ever to be unclean; but if this world no longer delight thee, thou art clean. But if through some infirmity the world still delights thee, let Him who cleanseth dwell in thee, and thou shalt be clean; but if thou art clean thou wilt not abide in the world, nor hear that which the Jews heard said, ‘Ye shall die in your sins.’”

Ver. 24.—*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins.* The sin of unbelief, and all your other sins, for there is no forgiveness of sin, save through faith in Christ, whom ye reject.

For if ye believe not that I am the Saviour of the world, as I constantly affirm and prove also by so many miracles. So Lyra. But S. Augustine, Bede, and Toletus more ingeniously: “Because *I am that I am*; i.e., God.” But Rupertus thus subtilly: “Because I am from above.” *Ye shall die in your sins*, because there is no one but Myself, whom ye despise, who can pardon and take away sin.

Ver. 25.—*They said therefore to Him, Who art Thou?* Because they did not understand, or pretended they did not, they appositely ask, *Who art Thou?*

Jesus said to them, the Beginning (Vulg.), *I who am speaking to you.* S. Augustine,

truth” means in that which was his duty. In S. John, David, and Solomon “the truth” commonly means this (see John iii. 21). There is a threefold truth, in heart, word, and deed. The truth of the heart is opposed to error; the truth of word is opposed to a lie, the truth of deed is when a man acts in accordance with what is practically right, and this is opposed to iniquity and sin. Now the devil did not stand in the truth because he did not persevere in what he ought to have done. He refused to be under God. He claimed to be His equal, a kind of second god, and rose up against Him through pride. Hence he fell from his state of grace, and was cast down to hell (see Is. xiv. 12). And so S. Chrysostom (*Hom. liv.*; S. Leo, *Ser. de Quadr.*, and others). Hence (1.) S. Augustine (*contr. Adimantum iv. 4*), understands by the “truth,” the law, meaning that the devil did not abide in the Law of God. Others by “truth” understand fidelity, or the obedience due to God as the Creator.

(2.) S. Irenæus (v. 22, 23) understands it to mean “veracity,” as our Lord says below he is “a liar, and the father of it.” Christ seems to charge the Jews with two faults, which they had learned from the devil, murder, and mendacity, and calumny.

(3.) Origen (*Tom. xxiv.*) understands it to mean “truth in practical matters,” which Lucifer abandoned when he sinned by pride, which practically was a false step. This resulted from his not abiding in truth of act, and thus he departed from truth in heart and word, and thus by his lies deceived mankind.

Hence S. Augustine (*de Civ. xi. 13*) rightly infers that he was created in grace and righteousness, and that the Manichees were wrong in asserting that he was naturally wicked or created by an evil god. They inferred this wrongly from 1 John iii., “The devil sinneth from the beginning.” The true meaning of this passage is explained *in loco*.

Because there is no truth in him. Neither in thought, word, or deed, for those three kinds of truth have a sisterly relation to each other. But here “truth” rather signifies veracity.

When he speaketh a lie, &c. When he fell from his original beauty as an angel and became a hideous demon, it was innate in him to deceive; his special and proper business was to lie, and to this he entirely devotes himself.

(2.) “Of his own,” means of his own special invention. But men lie from imitating him, and by his suggestion.

(3.) “Of his own,” from his own inward delight in it He delights in it, as a thief in his thefts.

account of some who came of themselves, and were not sent of the Father (see Jer. xxxiii. 21). A warning to such as Lutherans, Calvinists, and others, who have no true mission.

Ver. 43.—*Why do ye not understand, &c.* Because cleaving to your pride, avarice, hatred, and enmity against Me, ye will not hear Me and understand. “They could not hear,” says S. Augustine, “because they refused to be corrected by what they heard;” but (as says the Gloss) ye are of the devil, and have elected to go on with him. S. Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat. iv., de Theol.*) tells us that in Scripture “I cannot” sometimes means “I will not.” (See Matt. xix. 12.) But secondly, and more properly and forcibly, “Ye do not understand My words because ye cannot endure My teaching, and will not let My words enter your ears, so hateful am I to you, and so obstinately have you from hatred hardened your hearts against Me.” Thus Emmanuel Sa.

Ver. 44.—*Ye are of your father the devil.* “Not by descent but by imitation,” says S. Augustine, quoting Ezek. xvi. 4; and adding, “The Jews, by imitating their impieties, found for themselves parents, not of whom to be born, but with whom they would be lost, by following their evil ways.”

S. Epiphanius (*Her. 38, 40*) by the devil in this place understands Judas Iscariot, whom our Lord also calls a devil. But the author of “Questions on the Old and New Testament” (*apud* S. Augustine) understands Cain. But it is certain that it must be taken literally to mean Lucifer. For the Jews in persecuting Jesus followed him as their father; “not by succession in the flesh, but in sin,” says Ambrose (*Lib. iv. in 1oc.*)

Ye are of, &c. “In order to kill Me.” He explains that they are of the devil, by following his suggestion. S. Chrysostom says he speaks not of “works,” but of desires (or lusts), showing that both lie and they greatly delighted in murders. For the devil has an ardent desire to destroy all men, both because he grudges them the glory from which he himself fell, but also to injure God, whom he hates as his torturer, and wishes to tear away men from Him whom He created in His own image, and called and predestinated to His own eternal grace and glory.

He was a murderer, &c. For as soon as Adam was created, Lucifer, the very same day through envy destroyed both him and all his posterity, by persuading him to eat of the forbidden fruit. And in like manner does he endeavour through you, O Jews, to kill Me, by Whom all men are to be redeemed from death. For he ever persists in his eager desire to destroy men, as the leopard and wolf, which feed on human flesh. He urged on Cain to kill Abel, and Joseph’s brethren to destine him to death. And even now instigates all murderers to commit their murders. And much more does he thirst for the death and destruction of souls, though bodily death is here more properly meant, for this it was they plotted against Christ. Euthymius and S. Augustine (*Contra Petib. ii. 13*).

And abode not in the truth, i.e., in the integrity and perfection, the grace, righteousness, and sanctity in which he was created. True means pure and unadulterated. As Nathaniel is called “a true Israelite, in whom is no guile.” Again “in

Bede, Rupertus, and S. Ambrose (*De Fide, iii. 4*), consider the word, *the Beginning*, to be in the nominative case, explaining it, I am the Beginning, the First and the Last, or the Beginning of all things, for all things were made by the Word of God. In the Greek the word is not ἀρχή, but, ἀρχήν, *in the beginning.*

S. Augustine and S. Ambrose explain it (2.) by supplying the word “credite” which is not in the text. We must therefore consider it to be a Greek form of expression, ἀρχήν for κατ ἀρχήν, *in the beginning.* I am from the beginning, *i.e.* from eternity (*before Abraham*, as He said Himself, verse 58), Very God of Very God. And therefore I am the beginning of time, and age, and of all things. And yet I am speaking to you; that is, it is I who announce this to you, for I assumed flesh, and was made man in order to announce it, and save those who believe in it. I am from the beginning, which very thing I solemnly declare to you. Or rather, since I am the Word, which the Father spake from all eternity, I having been made man to announce to you the same truth. For the Son is the Word by whom the Father speaks, and the Son is also the Word which speaks to us. The word “beginning,” therefore, is more appropriate to the Son than to the Holy Spirit, for the Son is together with the Father the source (*principium*) of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is not the source of any other Divine Person, but only of creatures; and further, because He is the beginning (*principium*) proceeding from the beginning, that is to say, from the Father. And accordingly this word signifies His origin, as being begotten of the Father. This is clear from what is said below, verse 27. The Vulgate does not translate it literally *from the beginning*, but *the beginning*, signifying thereby the Eternal Word, which was from the beginning, and begotten of the Father, to be with the Father, the beginning both of the Holy Spirit and of all creatures.

From the beginning signifies two things; first from all eternity, and next as begotten of God the Father. It is the same thing to say I am from the beginning, or I am the beginning. (See John i. 1; Rev. i. 8, iii. 14; and also Col. i. 18.) And this is what SS. Augustine, Ambrose, and others above mentioned consider it to mean. So says the Gloss, “The Father is the Beginning, but not from the beginning: the Son is the Beginning, from the Beginning, that is, from the Father, who worketh all things by the Son, for He is the Right Hand, Strength, Wisdom, and Word of the Father.” But the Greek ἀρχή means also the Chief Rule (*principatus*), meaning that to Christ belongs the dominion and rule over all things. (See Ps. cx. 3, Vulg., and Prov. viii. 22, sec. lxx. See also S. Augustine, *contra Max. cap. xviii.*, and S. Thomas, part 1, Quest. xxxvi., art. 4, *who show that the Father and Son are not two, but the one principle of the Holy Spirit.*)

Morally: learn that Christ, as God and man, must be regarded as the beginning and the end of all our doings; after the example of S. Paul and the other Apostles both in the beginning and end of their Epistles. S.

Gregory Nazianzen begins his acrostics in this way, and Paulinus, "In Thee my only hopes of life depend, Thou my beginning, Thou my goal and end." As all numbers start from unity, and all lines run from the centre to the circumference, so should all the actions of a Christian begin and end in Christ (see Col. iii. 117).

Nonnus and others explain, I am the same as I said to you at first; that is, that I am the Messiah, the Light and the Salvation of the world, but ye believe Me not. But this is a strange interpretation.

Some others refer to what comes afterwards, Because ye do not believe Me, I have more to say to you,, And to judge of you. But this is a mere evading of the question. As if Christ said, Ye are unworthy of an answer, but yet deserve My condemnation.

Ver. 26.—*I have many things*, &c. I have many things to say against you, and to accuse you of. And in the day of judgment I will do so. As S. Cyril says, "I will accuse you not of one thing but of many, and of nothing falsely. For I can condemn you as unbelieving, as arrogant, as insulting, as opposers of God, as impudent, as ungrateful, as malignant, as lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, as courting the praise of men, and not seeking the glory of God."

But He that sent Me, &c. I will omit many points and will merely say this, in refutation of your unbelief, that the Father who hath sent Me is true, and whatever therefore I say is true, and worthy of belief by all. "I am true" (says S. Augustine) "in judgment, because I am the Son of Truth, and the Truth Itself." But others explain differently, (1.) Toletus: "I have many things to say against you. But I will not do so now, for the Father sent Me into the world, not to judgebut to save it, and therefore, in obedience to Him, I say only those things which concern its salvation." (2.) Maldonatus, as though it were, "*Because*" He that hath sent Me is true, not "*but*" He that sent Me, &c. (3.) Rupertus refers it to what He had said before, that *He was the Beginning*, "These are not My own words, but what the Father bade Me say of Myself." (4.) Ye do not believe in Me as the Messiah, but this is what the Father wishes Me to proclaim. (5.) Ye do not believe Me now, but My Father is true. He will fulfil His own word that I shall be your judge, and reward you according to your deeds. But the first meaning is the best. *Which I have heard of Him*, both as God and as man. The Interlinear Gloss says, "To hear from Him, is the same as though being from Him." "The co-equal Son gives glory to the Father, why then dost thou set thyself against Him, being only His servant?" So S. Augustine.

Ver. 27.—*They knew not*, &c. For Jesus spake covertly and obscurely, for fear of exciting the hatred of the Pharisees. But some of the more acute of them began to suspect the true meaning of His words, though they did not clearly understand them, and could not refute Him. None of them fully knew it. And God so ordered it, that the Passion of Christ, and the consequent redemption of the world, might not be hindered. (See 1 Cor. ii. 8.) "I withhold the knowledge of Myself," says S. Augustine, "that My Passion may be effected" by your hands.

Ver. 28.—*Then said Jesus*, &c. When ye have lifted Me up on the Cross. He calls it His

Ver. 40.—*But now ye seek*, &c. Abraham did not injure any one, but saved Lot, and as many as he could. But the Jews were eager to kill Christ. The Jews (*Perke. Avoth. cap. v.*) draw the same contrast between a disciple of Abraham and of Balaam.

Ver. 41.—*Ye do the works of your father*. He persists in saying that they were not Abraham's children, but does not say whose children they were.

Then said they unto Him, We be not born of fornication, &c. Origen, Cyril, and Leontius think that in these words they implicitly reproached Him with His own birth. An atrocious statement, which the Pharisees studiously propagated, to detract from our Lord's credit and authority. But it would have been atrocious blasphemy. (2.) Euthymius and Rupertus suppose it to be only an assertion of their descent from Sarah, and not from Hagar, and thus not spurious, or in a secondary rank. (3.) We are not born of spiritual fornication, *i.e.*, idolatry. We are not Hagarenes, who were idolaters. Rupertus objects that to make out this meaning the word "but" should have been inserted. But Maldonatus maintains that such particles are often omitted, adding that fornication in the prophets means idolatry, as being spiritual fornication, drawing away the soul from its true Spouse (see Hos. i. 2). Theophylact explains it to mean, "We are not born of mixed marriages of Jews and Gentiles, which were forbidden, and counted illegitimate by the Jews." (4.) The Jews reply in a straightforward manner, Abraham is our true earthly father; and one is our Father, even God in heaven. Your charge is therefore false. You unjustly claim the God of Abraham for thyself alone, and exclude us from sonship with Him, and hand us over to another father, the devil, making us spurious, and consequently infamous.

Ver. 42.—*Jesus said*, &c. Put syllogistically, our Lord's argument runs this, "He who loves God, loves also the Son of God. But ye do not love Me, who am the Son of God. Therefore ye love not God. Just as the Arians, who by denying Christ to be the Son of God, deny the Father also; for if He has not a Son, He cannot be called God the Father.

For I proceeded forth (ἐξῆλθον) and *came* (ἦκω), *I am here*. S. Augustine, S. Hilary (*de Trin.* vi.), consider that the twofold generation of our Lord is here set forth. I came forth by eternal generation. I am come into the world by My Incarnation. "That the Word proceeded forth from God, is His eternal procession" (says S. Augustine), but He came to us, because He was made flesh; His advent was His being made man. But Jansen, Maldonatus, and others refer both the expressions to the Incarnation, but yet as implying, and presupposing His eternal generation. "I came forth from God, and came into the world, though I had before come forth from God, and was in heaven as God" (see chap. xvi. 27).

For I came not of Myself, but He sent Me. He teaches that He was not self-originate, says S. Hilary (*de Trin.* vi.). Origen adds, He says this on

says, Thou art clearly mine, for knowest thou not that I have set thee over others that thou mightest serve me? knowest thou not that I have conferred power on thee, in order to subject thee to mine own power? All the vices come, and say severally, *Thou art mine*. What a vile bond-slave is he whom so many compete for? And moreover the sinner who cannot say to God, *I am Thine*, hears from the devil, *Thou art mine*." For as S. Ambrose adds, "Satan came and entered into him, and began to say, he (Judas) is not thine, O Jesus, but mine. He thinks those things that are mine, he ponders my thoughts in his heart; he feasts with Thee, and feeds with me; he receives bread from Thee, and money from me; he drinks with me, and sells me Thy Blood; he is Thy Apostle, but my hireling."

Ver. 35.—*The servant abideth not*, &c. He who is the servant of sin, like you Jews, has not the right of remaining in his Master's house (that is the Church of God) for ever: for after death he will be cast into the outer darkness of hell, as ye too will be cast out. But the Son abideth for ever in His Father's house, that is, I ever abide with My Father in heaven. But if through Me and My grace ye have been delivered from the bondage of sin, ye will abide for ever with Me, as adopted children, in the house of God, that is in the Church militant by grace, and in the Church triumphant, for ever happy and glorious in heaven. So S. Augustine, Bede, and others.

Ver. 36.—*If therefore the Son*, &c. I alone can make you free, not Abraham or Moses, though most beloved servants of God. So S. Chrysostom and others.

Ver. 37.—*I know*, &c. By nature ye are Abraham's children, but in your deeds ye are degenerate. Your descent from Abraham will not therefore profit you. It will increase your damnation, for he will say at the last day, I acknowledge you not as my children, for ye have crucified Christ, my son and your brother.

Because My word, &c. Because ye will not take it in. Origen and S. Chrysostom think that these words were said to those who had before feebly believed in Christ, but who, on hearing themselves called "servants," were incensed against Him and wished to kill Him. But it is more probable that they were addressed to unbelievers who had before that plotted His death.

Ver. 38.—*I speak*, &c. Ye not only speak, but do that which ye have learnt from your father, the devil, especially in seeking to kill Me, implying that Abraham was not their father. See this more clearly declared verse 44.

Ver. 39.—*They answered*, &c. Because Christ seemed to imply that they had another father, they wished to learn from Him who he was. We own Abraham, and none other as our father.

Jesus saith unto them, If ye are the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. It is so in the Vulgate. But some Greek MSS. read as in the English version. He does not deny their extraction, but condemns their doings. Says S. Augustine, "Your flesh may be from Abraham, but not so your life."

exaltation, for though it seemed to be His greatest degradation and disgrace, yet it was made to be, by God's Providence, His greatest exaltation and glory, that all nations should adore Christ crucified, and hope for pardon from Him. For this Christ won for Himself by His great humility (see Phil. ii. 8 seq.). And thus does God deal with every follower of Christ who humbles himself for Christ's sake, as He says, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled," &c.

Then shall you know that I am Messiah, the Son of God, whom I declare Myself to be, and not a mere man, as ye now think Me. For many of the Jews, when they saw in the Cross, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, such patience, charity, zeal, and such great prodigies and miracles, were moved with compunction to believe in Him. Christ had obtained all this by His Cross, and obtained it from His Father (see Acts ii.41). As S. Augustine says, "He saw that many would believe after His Passion. And this He says that no one who is conscious of guilt should despair, when even His own murder was condoned." See S. Cyril, and others.

I do nothing of Myself, &c. Christ frequently inculcates the same truth, both in order to speak humbly of Himself, and to gain authority for His doctrine from God the Father. "But the Father," says S. Augustine, "did not so teach the Son, as though He were ignorant when He begat Him; but His teaching Him, was His begetting Him full of knowledge." For with the Son His being is His knowledge. And therefore the Father by begetting gave Him both existence and knowledge.

Ver. 29.—*And He that sent Me is with Me*. He adds this (says S. Chrysostom) lest He should be accounted inferior to the Father who taught Him. The one relates to the Incarnation (*dispensationem*), the other to the Godhead. "The Father," says S. Augustine, "sent the Son, but did not leave Him." Moreover, the Father is ever with the Son, not only by the inseparable essence of Deity, which continues ever in number the same, but also by the special providence and guidance vouchsafed to the manhood which He assumed, the Godhead guiding and directing it in every work, to make all His work perfect and divine.

Ver. 30.—*As He spake these words many*, &c.; *i.e.*, many of the simple-minded, candid and teachable people, but few or none of the proud Pharisees. And they believed, not only as convinced by the force of His arguments, but charmed by the grace and power of His words. "Never man spake like this man."

Ver. 31.—*Then said Jesus*, &c. He wished to confirm them in the faith they had accepted. If ye are so faithful and constant as to follow Me through persecutions and crosses, even to heaven itself, ye will be worthy not only of the name and title of My disciples, but also of their deserts and reward.

Ver. 32.—*And ye shall know the truth*, &c. The Greek Fathers understand by the Truth, Christ Himself; meaning ye shall know Me to be the Truth, shadowed forth by the figures of the old Law, from which I will set you free, that ye may serve God not with bodily ceremonies, but in the Spirit and truth of faith, hope, and charity (see above, iv. 23).

(2.) Hence, in accordance with the mind of Christ, If ye abide in My doctrine, ye shall taste by experience how sweet it is, and it will free you from the yoke of sin (see below, verse 34). For faith in Me will lead you to penitence, contrition, and charity, which does away with all sin. “If the Truth pleaseth thee not, let liberty please thee.” He clearly restored liberty, and took away iniquity.

Analogically: My doctrine will deliver you from the corruption of this place of mortality, change, and exile, because it will bring you to the liberty of a blessed immortality, and the glory of the children of God. Thus S. Augustine on this passage: “What doth He promise to those who believe? Ye shall know the truth. But did they not know it, when the Lord spake? for if they knew it not, how did they believe? They believed, not because they knew, but that they might know; for what is faith but believing that we see not? But the truth is, to see that which thou hast believed.” There is a fourfold bondage which Christ did away with, and a fourfold liberty which He bestowed. (1.) The bondage of the Law which Christ did away with by the liberty of the Gospel, (2.) Bondage under sin, which He took away by the liberty of righteousness. (3.) Bondage under the dominion of concupiscence, which He took away by the liberty of the Spirit, and the dominion of charity and grace. (4.) Bondage under death and mortality, which He will take away by the liberty and glory of the resurrection. It does not refer to the liberty of the will, as though sinners were so entirely the slaves of sin as not to have any free-will, and that Christ gives it them back when He justifies them. For a sinner sins by free will, and a penitent repents and is justified only by his free-will, aided by the grace of God.

Calvin foolishly denies free-will both to sinners and to the righteous. “Let us who are conscious of our own bondage glory only in Christ our deliverer.” For he thinks that we are not intrinsically free, just as we are not intrinsically just by inherent righteousness, but only by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Each of which opinions is not only an impious, but also a foolish heresy.

Ver. 33.—*They answered Him*, &c. Christ in what He had said indirectly charged the Jews with ignorance and bondage. But as glorying in their descent from Abraham, they felt wounded; and putting aside the charge of ignorance, they proudly deny the charge of bondage, and say that they had no need of the liberty of Christ. We are slaves neither by birth, nor by condition. “And in like manner,” says S. Chrysostom, “men when charged with impurity and wickedness put it aside, but when their family and work are impugned, they start up, as if they were mad.” But the Jews did not understand Christ, for He spake not of civil, but of spiritual bondage, and that He would set them free from the bondage of sin by the liberty of grace. But did the Jews say truly that they were never in bondage to any man? S. Chrysostom and others say that they spoke too boastfully, but that they veiled their falsehood, because though

often conquered they had never been sold as slaver.

(2.) Cajetan, Toletus, Jansen, and others reply to the charge by saying that though the Jews had formerly been in bondage, yet that the present generation of Jews had never been so, for they were merely the subjects, not the slaves, of the Romans. And this seems to be the most satisfactory meaning; for to say that their fathers had never been in bondage would have been a falsehood at which the sun itself would have blushed, and Christ would have at once confuted it. All they meant to say was that their race was a free and noble one, and that their subjection to the Romans was not slavery.

Ver. 34.—*Verily, verily*, &c. Most assured, *i.e.*, the saying is, and specially commended to their notice. But our Lord speaks to them modestly and becomingly, using only general terms and the third person. He might have said, Ye commit many sins, and are therefore the servants of sin, and from this bondage no one but Myself can deliver you. “A miserable bondage,” exclaims S. Augustine *in loc.*, and adds the reason. “A man slave, when worn out by his master’s cruel treatment, can at length escape and be at rest. But whither can the servant of sin flee? He carries with him himself, whithersoever he flies. A wicked conscience cannot fly from itself; it has no place to go to, it follows itself. It cannot withdraw from itself; for the sin which causes it is within.” (2.) S. Peter (II. ii. 19) gives a further reason. “Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.” (3.) He who committeth sin is the servant of the devil, who instigates to sin, and he is a cruel tyrant, who drives on sinners, as though they were his slaves, ever drawing them on from one sin to another, and in the end to hell. (4.) Every sin leaves behind it a desire and inclination to repeat the sin, and this concupiscence remains, even after the sin has been given up, for our punishment and temptation. Whence the Apostle says that he was sold under sin, that he did what he would not (as feeling against his will the motives of concupiscence), and that he cannot do the things he would. (5.) Because the sinner is bound by the chains of the sin he has committed, so that he cannot free himself, unless Christ sets him free by His grace, according to the saying (Prov. v. 22), “His own iniquities take the wicked himself, and he is bound with the cords of his sins.” In these passages, to sin, which is inanimate, is ascribed the character of a master, or tyrant, to signify (1.) the tyrannical power of sin and concupiscence, and (2.) because by sin is understood the devil, who holds sway in the realm of sin, and holds stern dominion over sinners.

St. Ambrose, on the words of Psalm cxix. 94, “I am thine, O save me,” says strikingly, “the worldling, cannot say to Him, I am Thine, for he has many masters. Lust comes, and says, Thou art mine, for thou desirest the things of the body. Avarice comes, and says, Thou art mine, for the silver and gold thou hast is the price of thy bondage. Luxury comes and says, Thou art mine, for one day’s feasting is the price of thy life. Ambition comes, and