



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.

### **John 15: 1-11**

Douay Rheims Version

*A continuation of Christ's discourse to his disciples.*

1. I am the true vine: and my Father is the husbandman.
2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
3. Now you are clean, by reason of the word which I have spoken to you.
4. Abide in me: and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me.
5. I am the vine: you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.
6. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither: and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire: and he burneth.

of joy to Me, namely, grace and salvation, may be in you. And that your joy which you have in My company may be fulfilled by your gradual advancement to everlasting felicity." And he again says, "What is that joy of ours which He says is to be full, but to enjoy His company? He indeed had perfect joy over us when He rejoiced in His fore-knowledge and predestination of us. But that joy was not our joy, because we were not yet in being. This joy began to be in us when He called us. It begins to be in the faith of those who are born again: it shall be full in the faith of those who rise again."

4th. And most plainly, Christ here brings His disciples a twofold joy as a reward. The first joy is His own, the second that of the disciples. The meaning is, These things have I spoken unto you that in doing them ye may give Me joy. For parents and masters rejoice when they see their children and scholars act aright in obedience to their commands. This is the meaning of, *that My joy may be in you*, namely, that I may rejoice at your conformity to My will. As S. Augustine says, "What is the joy of Christ in us save that wherein He deigns to rejoice concerning us?" The second joy is that of the disciples, concerning which He says, *And that your joy may be full*. This was the joy which the disciples had in Christ, that they were His disciples. Christ has reference to the explanation which He subjoins to the parable of the vine and its branches, *Abide in Me, and I in you*. The meaning is, Like as the vine, if it could rejoice, would rejoice because its branches abode in it, and bore fruit, and as the branches for their part would rejoice because they adhered to the vine, and derived sap from it to bring forth grapes, so likewise if ye, O ye disciples, abide in Me, the true Vine, by love, and I also abide in you by the continual influx of the Spirit of grace for the bringing forth of good works, then shall I have joy in you thus cleaving unto Me, and ye shall have joy in Me because ye derive from Me grace and the Holy Spirit for the conversion of all nations. And this joy shall gradually be fulfilled here, but shall have its perfect consummation in eternal glory.

Lastly, the words *in you* may be taken simply, just as they stand, thus, *These things have I spoken unto you*, that My joy with which I rejoice concerning the glory of God and the salvation of the whole world to be accomplished by Me, I may transfuse into you as My Apostles and fellow-workers; and that this joy may increase as your labours and your fruit increase; until it be fulfilled in this life, but yet more completely in the life to come. For My good is your good, as the good of the Vine is the good of its branches.

This meaning seems the simplest, and is therefore sound. The words, *That my joy may be in you*, are exactly as if He said, That My joy may flow into you, way be communicated to you, and so be made your own.

Admirably saith S. Bernard (*Epist.* 114) "Verily that is the true and only joy which comes not from a creature, but from. the Creator, and which no one shall take away from him who possesses it. Compared with this all other

love those that love Me. Wherefore as the Father greatly loves Me, and so works through Me so many miracles and the salvation of the world, so also do I exceedingly love you, and therefore heap upon you so many benefits, gifts, and apostolic graces. Take heed then that ye continue in this My love and My grace. For so shall ye receive a daily increase of gifts from Me. Perceive from this the excellence and Divine virtue of love and affection. As Climacus says (*Gradu* 30), "I contemplate faith as a ray of the sun, charity like its orb in its fullness. Charity from its own very nature is likeness to God, so far as mortals can attain unto it. As regards its efficacy it is a sort of intoxication of the soul. Lastly, as regards its properties, it is the fountain of faith, the abyss of a just and patient mind, a sea of humility.

Ver. 10.— *If ye keep my commandments*, &c. If ye advance in loving Me and keeping my commandments, ye shall abide in My grace, favour, and affection, so that I shall proceed to heap My love and favours upon you.

Ver. 10 (Continued).—*Even as I have kept My Father's commandments*, &c. That is, as I proceed to obey the Father's commandments, and to preserve His grace and love towards Me. Hear St. Augustine. "Love precedes the keeping of commandments. For he who loveth not hath nothing from whence he may keep them. In what therefore He here saith He does not show from whence love is generated, but how it is shown, that no one may deceive himself by saying that he loves Him when he keeps not His commandments. This, however, must be referred to the love wherewith He loves us, thus: By this ye shall know that ye abide in the love with which I love you, if ye keep My precepts, not indeed that we first keep His commandments in order that He may love us, but that unless He loved us we could not keep His commandments. This is the grace which is plain to the humble, but hidden from the proud."

Prior therefore is that love of God which is the cause of love in us, and of the keeping His commandments. And this in turn is the cause of God's love towards us being maintained. So fire kindles and burns wood, and by its ignition is preserved and lasts.

Ver. 11.—*These things have I spoken unto you*, &c. This is the seventh and last reason of Christ, by which He persuades them to abide in His love and charity. Because in so doing they would give great joy both to Christ and to themselves.

You will ask, what is this joy?

1st. Jansen explains thus, These things I have said unto you that your joy may be always like unto mine. My joy is because I am loved of My Father. Do you so keep My commandments that ye may be always loved of My Father and rejoice, and that thus your joy may be full through My Resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

2d. S. Cyril explains, These things have I spoken unto you that ye may have joy in those things in which I have joy, namely, in labours and perils endured for the salvation of mankind.

3d. S. Augustine expounds of the joy which God had from eternity at our salvation, thus, "These things have I spoken unto you that what has been from eternity, a cause

7. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will: and it shall be done unto you.

8. In this is my Father glorified: that you bring forth very much fruit and become my disciples.

9. As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love.

10. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love: as I also have kept my Father's commandments and do abide in his love.

11. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled.

12. This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.

13. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14. You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you.

15. I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends. because all things, whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.

16. You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17. These things I command you, that you love one another.

18. If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you.

19. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20. Remember my word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my word, they will keep yours also.

21. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake: because they know not him that sent me.

22. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin.

23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24. If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25. But that the word may be fulfilled which is written in their law: they hated me without cause.

26. But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.

27. And you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning.

Ver. 1.—*I am the true Vine*. The Greek has a double art. *ἡ ἀμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή*, *the vine the true*. The Syriac is, *I am that vine of truth*. Christ here sets forth the parable of the vine and the branches with this end and view, to teach the Apostles that they must abide in His faith and love, and not depart therefrom in consequence of His impending passion and death. That this is the great object of the parable is plain from the ninth verse more especially, *Abide ye in My love*.

Christ here compares Himself to a vine, not as He is God, as Arius maintained, trying to prove that the Son is inferior to the Father, as being the Husbandman, but as man. For so men are grafted into Him as branches. For they are of the same nature and kind as the Vine. Wherefore S. Hilary says (*lib. 9, de Trin.*), “Christ to this end assumed flesh, that we fleshly men might as branches be grafted into Him as the Vine.” But yet the flesh of Christ would not have had that power of producing vine-branches, *i.e.*, faithful and holy people, unless the Godhead had been united to it. Wherefore Cyril says that Christ was the Vine by reason of His Godhead. And S. Augustine saith, “Although Christ would not have been the Vine except He had been man, yet He would not have bestowed His grace upon the branches unless He had been God.”

You will inquire why Christ compared Himself to a vine rather than to an apple, or nut, or some other tree? S. Athanasius (*Dis. cont. Arian.*) and others reply, On account of the many qualities of the vine in which it excels other trees, and which admirably fit it to be a type of Christ. These are—1st, Its most abundant fruit: for it is the most fruitful of all plants. To this David refers (*Ps. cxxviii.*): “Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine.” 2d On account of the sweetness of its fruit. 3d On account of wine, which is made from its fruit, and which makes the heart glad, and which produces many effects which may be likened to the fruits of the coming of Christ. 4th Because of all plants in comparison with the size of its stem it most widely diffuses its branches. By which the extension of the Church is signified, as it is said in *Ps. lxxx.*, “She spread out her branches unto the sea, and her boughs unto the river.” 5th The vine has sweet-smelling flowers, and very broad leaves, with which it gives shade to other plants. Now the leaves of Christ are the external graces of preaching, conversing, &c. 6th The wine from old vines is best, and the wine from those more recently planted is the most abundant. Some vines live for more than 200 years, and then have the flavour of wild honey. 7th No tree has more durable wood than the vine. Lastly, vines need very assiduous culture. It is necessary to dig, to plant, to drain, manure, to prune. Thus, too, does the Church, or a holy soul which is grafted into Christ the Vine, require great and constant care.

Moreover, there were two peculiar and chief reasons why Christ here compares Himself to a vine, rather than to any other tree. The first was that Christ had just previously instituted the Eucharist, and under the species of wine had given the Apostles His Blood to drink, and had left It to be drunk by the faithful throughout all ages, that they might glow with His love as with new wine, and overcome all temptations.

Wherefore, since shortly before He had admonished the Apostles to persevere in His love, even when they saw Him betrayed by Judas, and crucified and slain, so now He

Christ urges His disciples to abide in Him and His love, because, that is, it will conduce to the great glory of God. “Abide in Me and My love, because by so doing God the Father will be glorified, *that* ye may bear much fruit,” *that* being used in the sense of *if*. Abiding in Me, ye will bring forth much fruit, even a mighty harvest of souls, and the conversion of the whole world. *And that so ye may be made My disciples*, namely, perfect and exemplary disciples. For they were already Christ’s disciples, but novices, and imperfect. He means, Ye shall glorify God the Father if ye abide in Me, and preach My faith to the whole world. For by this means ye shall take away the idolatry of all nations, and bring in everywhere the worship of one God in true holiness. And this will be the greatest ignominy to Satan, and the greatest glory to God. For the conversion of the nations will not be your work, but God’s, who will bring it about by His grace. “For by whom shall we bring forth fruit, except by Him whose mercy preventeth us?” saith S. Augustine.

Again, *that ye may become My disciples*, may mean my imitators in zeal and preaching the Gospel. A disciple is put for an imitator, because it is the part of a disciple to imitate his master. And so the disciples did imitate Christ, by giving themselves up even unto death to preach the Gospel.

Ver. 9.—*As the Father hath loved Me*, &c.—This is the sixth reason by which Christ stirs his disciples up to persevere in Him and in His love and faith. The word *as* does not imply equality, but similitude of love. For the Father loveth Christ far more than Christ loveth us. The meaning therefore is, As God the Father hath loved Me as man without any merits of mine freely before all others, and hath raised me to the Hypostasis of the Word, that I should be the Son of God, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world, and therefore not a natural vine but a Vine of salvation, so in like manner have I freely chosen you before other men, without any merits of your own, and raised you to the Apostolate, that ye should be made very near to Me as branches to the Vine, and that I through you should work out the salvation of all nations. Take heed therefore that ye abide in this My love. And this ye will do by loving Me and keeping my commandments. For so ye will deserve to be loved in return by Me, and be by Me constantly endowed with the benefits of which I have spoken. So S. Augustine.

Observe here, that Christ’s predestination, election, love, and grace are the means, the end, and exemplar of our predestination, election, love, and grace. See what I have said on *Rom. i 4*.

*Abide ye in My love*; take care that I always love you. For it is a great thing to be loved by Christ. It is the fount and the cause of all graces. This is the active sense of the word *My*. But Rupertus here takes the *love of Christ* in a passive sense, meaning, abide in My love, advance in My love. This is an apposite, but not the direct meaning. It is inferential, thus, Take care that I love you. And this ye will be careful about if ye proceed to love Me. For I

separated from the Church of the faithful, who are the members of Christ. And then he shall wholly be withered, *i.e.* shall be deprived of all the good sap of grace, and shall be gathered by the devils with the rest of the reprobate, that he may be cast into the fire of hell, there to burn everlastingly. Now every word expresses a punishment. They must therefore be considered separately.

The first punishment is, *he shall be cast out of doors*, *i.e.* from Christ, from God, and heaven, from the company of the angels and the saints.

The second, *he shall wither*. For in this life sinners often retain faith and hope, often feel the illumination of grace and Divine impulses to repentance, are often warned by preachers and others to amend their lives; and they often do works morally good. For they remain in Christ as the Vine, and do drink from Him some of the sap of goodness. But after this life, being cut off from Christ, they cannot derive any sap of grace, but all God's gifts will be taken away from them (Luke xix. 26), so that they are fit for nothing but to become the fuel of hell.

The third is, *they shall gather them*. By this it is meant that the reprobate are to be gathered together into bundles, that they may be thrown into the fire, from which they will never be able to deliver themselves, according to the parable (Matt. xiii. 41). At the same time it is signified that their reason will be bound, and their freedom of will taken away, so that henceforth they will not be able either to will or to do any good thing.

Fourthly, *they shall cast them into the fire*, namely into hell, burning with fire and brimstone, where the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever.

Fifthly, *shall burn*, *i.e.* shall immediately begin to burn everlastingly. This ends the third reason of Christ by which He exhorts His disciples to abide in Him. The fourth derived from the reward comes next.

Ver. 7.—*If ye shall abide in Me*, *i.e.* if ye shall persevere in My love and grace, *and My words in you*, in your memory, that you constantly call them to mind, and in your will, that you love them, and in works, that ye always fulfil My commandments, *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done for you*; because ye will ask nothing except according to My will. In truth ye will ask nothing except what ye know is pleasing to God, and will be for the advancement of His glory and your own and your neighbours' salvation. For abiding in Jesus, *i.e.* the Saviour, they can only wish for what pertains to salvation, as S. Augustine says. For the branch which exists in the vine, if it could ask for anything, would ask for nothing else but to be kept in the vine, and by the influx from it to produce grapes. Thus the righteous ask to be kept in the grace of Christ, and to do good works, and this they obtain. For if they should ask anything carnal, vicious, disgraceful, injurious, or unprofitable, they would ask what would be displeasing to Christ, and forbidden by Him. Therefore they would offend Him, and so could not abide in Him, nor obtain what they asked. Wherefore S. Augustine says, Christ's words in this place have to do with the prayer which He taught us (Matt. vi. 9). Let us not depart from its spirit in our prayers, and whatsoever we ask shall be done unto us.

Ver. 8.—*In this is My Father glorified*, &c.—That is, is about shortly to be glorified after My death and the coming of the Holy Ghost. This is the fifth reason by which

inculcates the same by the parable of the vine, thus: As the branch always inheres in the vine, and cannot be torn from it by cold or tempest, so that it should not bear fruit; so likewise do ye, O My Apostles, abide in My love, neither do ye fall away from believing in and loving Me because of My passion and death, for so will ye bring forth great and abundant fruit.

The other reason was because Christ was now going to His passion and death upon the cross, which the vine with her grapes very excellently represents. For as the choice wine is expressed from the trodden grapes, so also from Christ trodden in the winepress of the cross was expressed the blood which redeemed the world. Christ here alludes to what Jacob foretold concerning Him (Gen. xlix. 11), "Binding His colt to the vine, and to the grape-tree, O my son, His she ass. He shall wash His robe in wine, and His cloke in the blood of the grape. His eyes are more beautiful than wine."

Hence St. Hilary says, "Rising up to the consummation of the sacraments of the Passion, He sets forth the mysteries of corporeal assumption, by which, as though we were branches, we dwell in the Vine."

See St. Bernard's Treatise on the Passion (if indeed it is his work, for the style is different), on the words, *I am the true Vine*, when he says among other things, "The vine is wont to be propagated by slips, not sown; so Christ is the Vine begotten of the Vine, *i.e.*, He is God begotten of God, the Son of the Father. But that He should bring forth more fruit, He was planted in the earth, *i.e.*, was born of the Virgin Mary." Thus he adapts all the circumstances of the vine to Christ. "How," he says, "was the glory of Christ cut off? with the knife of ignominy. His power? with the knife of humiliation. His pleasure? with the knife of pain. His riches? with the knife of poverty." In the 4th chapter he treats of the bonds of the vine, and applies them to the cords with which Christ was bound when He was taken, and when He was bound to the pillar and beaten: also to the crown of thorns with which the Jews bound His head, also to the iron nails with which He was bound to the cross. In the 5th chapter he treats of the culture of the vine; in the 6th of the leaves of the vine, which are very broad, and which he explains of the words of Christ, especially His seven last words which He uttered on the Cross. For they as it were by their shadow protect and comfort us in every time of temptation.

You will ask further, why Christ is called the *true Vine*? Euthymius answers, Because He brings forth the fruit of truth. The same Euthymius says, Because He is the excellent, incorruptible, and spiritual Vine.

I would say that Christ is called *the true Vine*, because He truly has the nature, properties, and qualities of the vine. For as a true vine produces true branches and true grapes, so does Christ bring forth true believers and true virtues by His grace, which He instils into them by His wine-bearing

sap. Thus then He is called *the true Vine* not corporeally, but spiritually. *The true Vine* therefore is opposed to the false and deceitful vine—that which has the appearance but not the nature of a vine, which produces not grapes but wild grapes. Such are the vines of Sodom, which produce grapes fair in outward sight, but when you touch them, they crumble into dust and ashes, as Josephus testifies (*lib. 2, de Bell. c. 5*). Such like vines were the Jews, revolting from God to idols and sin. These are spoken of Deut. xxxii. 31, “Of the vine of Sodom is their vine, and of the suburbs of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, and of a most bitter cluster: their wine is the gall of dragons, and the deadly venom of asps.”

2d Christ is the true, special, and perfect Vine, compared with whom all others are not true vines, but only shadows. So Christ is called true Light, true Life, true Bread, because He shines, quickens, nourishes, more really than any corporeal light, life, or bread. Christ therefore is *the elect Vine*, Heb. *Sorec, i.e.*, the singular and chiefest Vine, of which Isaias speaks chap. v. This hath propagated its branches of faith and the Church throughout the whole world, and every where produces grapes, *i.e.*, troops of Martyrs, Virgins, Confessors, and all Saints, according as it is said (*Zach. ix. 17*), “For what is His goodness, and what is His beauty, unless the corn of the elect, and the wine that bringeth forth virgins? (*Vulg.*)

*And My Father is the Husbandman, i.e.*, the Vinedresser. For it is He who has planted Me as it were a Vine in the earth, and who prunes My branches, *i.e.* the Apostles and the rest of the faithful, cutting off the worthless, purging the fruitful that they may bring forth more fruit. Listen to S. Augustine (*de Verb. Dom. secund. Joan. Serm. 59*), “We honour God by worship, not by ploughing: and God honours us by making us better. For He by His words extirpates the evil seeds from our hearts. He opens our hearts as it were by the plough of His word, He sows the seed of His precepts, He expects the fruit of godliness.”

The Arians made the following objection: The vine and the husbandman have a different nature. Since therefore God the Father is a Husbandman and Christ a Vine, Christ cannot be God. Athanasius, Basil, and Ambrose answer them by saying that Christ is the Vine according to the human nature which He assumed, and so far is of a different nature from the Husbandman, *i.e.* God the Father. Again, although we grant Christ to be the Vine according to the Godhead, even so they gain nothing. For in the comparison of things that are like, not identity or similarity of nature is to be looked for, but that in which the likeness consists. For similitudes are commonly of a diverse and dissimilar nature, but they are compared in some quality in which they agree. There is a similitude between a vine and a husbandman, not in respect of their nature, but in respect of the branches and the fruit, that is to say, the grapes which they bring forth.

Ver. 2.—*Every branch*: Christ says nothing about the Vine itself, but only speaks of the branches, because Christ the Vine is self-sufficing. But the disciples have need of much help and culture from God. So Chrysostom.

*Every branch in Me, &c., i.e.*, every Christian who by faith and baptism has been as it

illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is deceived by the spirit of heresy, not understanding the voice of God, speaking in the Gospel, *Without Me ye can do nothing.*” And how this should be understood the Council seems to explain, saying (ch. 9), “It is of the Divine gift both that we have right thoughts, and that we keep our feet from falsehood and unrighteousness. For as often as we do good, God is in us, and with us, since He works that we may work.”

Moreover, Calvin foolishly thinks that by the expression *nothing* the co-operation of free-will is taken away. Rather it establishes free-will. For if we can do no good supernatural work without Christ and His grace, it follows that with His grace we can do good works. As the Apostle says, “I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I (not by my own power), but the grace of God which was with me.”

Lastly, some Catholics falsely infer from those words of Christ, *Without Me, &c.*, that all the works of unbelievers who have not the faith and grace of Christ are sins. For the expression *nothing* refers to works of Christ’s grace, not to works of nature. Therefore unbelievers are able to do such natural works as honour parents, feed the hungry, do good to their neighbours, but not such as pertain to the grace of Christ, or those which are fruitful for meriting eternal life. For between grace and sin stands nature, or a natural good deed, which is not sin, nor yet a work of grace.

*Ye are the branches.* Cyril observes that we are joined to, and inhere in Christ as branches in the vine, as well spiritually, by faith, hope, and charity, as corporeally, in that the vine is Christ’s Humanity, of which we are branches on account of the identity of the human nature, especially in the Eucharist, in which we are joined and commingled with Christ, not only as branches to the vine, but also as melted wax commingled with other melted wax. Wherefore as Christ spoke of the Eucharist (ch. vi.), saying, “Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of man, ye shall not have life in you,” so here He speaks concerning the vine and its branches, *If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast out as a branch, and be withered, &c.* And Jeremiah says (ch. ii.), “I planted thee an elect vine, a wholly true seed, how then art thou turned for me into a perverse, strange vine?” Christ therefore is called “the true (Hebrew *neeman*) Vine,” *i.e.* the faithful, sincere Vine, because He never forsakes His branches, nor leaves them without His inflowing, but continually instils into them the sap of wine, that they may produce true grapes, and the wine of charity, grace, and glory.

6. *If any one abide not in Me, &c.*—That is, just as the unprofitable branch is cut off from the vine, and cast outside the vineyard, where it altogether dries up, and is gathered into bundles, and cast into the fire, and straightway burned, so in like manner the Christian who does not abide in Me by faith and charity, shall, after death, be cast out of doors, *i.e.* be

grace, but grace alone does the whole work. For as the vine-branch draws all the juice of its grapes from the vine, and has no juice of itself, so does a man derive all his power of doing good works from grace. And by consequence, he hath nothing of himself wherewith to co-operate with grace, or which he can communicate to the work which is done by grace. I reply, 1st By denying the consequence. For indeed in similitudes all things are not similar, so that they might or can all be applied to the thing compared, but the similarity must be reserved for what is intended to be the likeness. Christ therefore in this place makes His simile to consist only in this, that as the vine-branch derives all its vigour and sap for producing grapes from the vine, so likewise must a believer draw from the grace of Christ all the nutriment and power needful for producing supernatural works. But there is this distinction to be drawn, that a man, inasmuch as he is a rational being, co-operates with grace, and that freely. This the branch in the vine does not do, because it is but a piece of wood devoid of reason. Now it is the result of man's free co-operation that a good work is a free and human work, even as it is because of the influx of grace that such a work becomes supernatural, worthy of God, and pleasing to Him.

2d I deny the antecedent: for that a vine-branch, in addition to the vigour and the sap which it derives from the vine, does of its own nature contribute something to the production of grapes is plain from this, that if some other non-fruitbearing branch, or one bearing a different kind of fruit, as apples or cherries, were grafted into the vine, it would either produce nothing, or else would produce apples or cherries, not grapes. That it produces grapes, therefore, comes from its being a vine-branch. I confess, however, that the co-operation itself of free-will is also of grace in this sense, that unless free-will were prevented, lifted up, strengthened and stirred up to co-operation by grace, and unless it had auxiliary and co-operating grace, it could not co-operate, or do anything. This is the same reason by which Christ stimulates His Apostles to abide in Him.

Ver. 5.—*I am the Vine*, &c.—That is, him who abides in Me by faith formed by love I likewise will love, and imbue with My spirit. *This man bears much fruit*, i.e., of good works, by which he continually merits an increase of grace and glory. Hence the Councils of Milevis and Orange condemn the Pelagians for saying that we have from God to be men, but from ourselves to be just. Such, S. Augustine (*Tract.* 21) says, are not the upholders but the destroyers of free-will. He thus sums up against them, "He who thinks that he bears fruit of himself is not in the Vine: he who is not in the Vine is not in Christ: he who is not in Christ is not a Christian."

*For without Me* (not only by general and natural, but by special and supernatural prevenient and co-operating grace) *ye can do nothing*, i.e., in the way of fruit, which is the fruit of the Vine, i.e. of Christ, or grace going before. That is, Ye can do nothing worthy of eternal life, or grace, or merits, as the Pelagians held, who supposed that good and meritorious works could be done absolutely by free-will, though more easily by grace. But Christ did not say, without Me ye will have *more difficulty* in doing good, but, ye can do *nothing*. Listen to the Council of Orange (cap. 7), "Whosoever shall say that we can think or choose any good thing pertaining to everlasting salvation by the force of nature, or can believe the preached Gospel without the

were a vine-branch grafted into Me, if he bear not the fruit of good works, God the Father will take him away, i.e., will cut off from the Vine the unfruitful and worthless branch. This He does both by secretly severing him from the communication of the Spirit and grace of Christ, and also by publicly separating him from Christ by means of excommunication, or by permitting him to fall into heresy. And thus in death He separates him from the company of Christ and His saints. But He will purge him who is bearing fruit from too great luxuriance of leaves, from insects, and from every evil thing, i.e., from the love of the vanity and the filth of this world, that he may bring forth more fruit. Christ is speaking primarily of the apostles, then of all the faithful. For so God the Father had just before separated Judas the traitor from Christ and the other apostles, compelling him to depart out of their house and family. But He purged Peter and the other apostles from too great love of this life, and from the fear of the Jews, through which, when Christ was taken, they either denied Him, or fled. He did this when He sent down upon them the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. He cut off that sinful love and fear, and so filled them with the love of God that they did not fear the threats of the Jews.

Now *the pruning-hook or knife* by which God purges the vine-branches, i.e., the faithful, is, 1st The word of God, whence He adds, ver. 3,—*Ye are clean through the word*, &c. For the word of God teaches us, and stirs us up to cleanse our minds from filth. 2d *The pruning-hook* is tribulation, affliction, persecution, poverty, hunger, and such like. For those things call us away from the love of the world, and constrain us to flee to the love of God. Listen to S. Gregory (*lib.* 7, *epist.* 32). "The fruitful branch is said to be purged, because it is pruned by discipline that it may be led to richer grace."

3d *Pruning-hooks* are illuminations, terrors, rebukes, which God sends into the minds of the faithful, to purge out of them the hindrances of their faults. Thus was S. Jerome rebuked, yea scourged by God, because he applied himself more closely to the study of Cicero than to the Holy Scriptures. Hear what he says in his 22nd Epist. to Eustochium. "I was hurried in spirit before the tribunal of the judge, where there was such excess of light, and the lightnings so shot from those that stood around, that I fell to the ground, and durst not look upward. Being asked concerning my profession, I replied that I was a Christian. Then spake the judge, and said, Thou liest: thou art a Ciceronian, not a Christian. For where thy treasure is, there also is thine heart. Immediately I became dumb, and amidst the blows, for he commanded me to be beaten, I was yet more tormented with the fire of my own conscience, remembering the verse, Who will confess to Thee in hell? Thus I began to cry and to howl, saying, Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me. I declare to you that my shoulders were livid, and that I felt the blows after I awoke. And from that time forward I was more zealous in reading the Divine writings than I had been before in reading those of mortal men."

From what Christ here says, the necessity together with the power and the integrity of good works, and that faith alone does not suffice for salvation, as the heretics say, is plainly manifest. For Christ here requires the fruit, and unless He find it, He threatens every vine branch, *i.e.*, every professing Christian, with cutting off from the Vine, and everlasting damnation. Wherefore they were in error who said that perfect men were not under obligation to do good works. For Christ's words *in Me* are strong against them. As though He said, It is a disgraceful thing that any one believing in Me should not bring forth the fruit of charity and other virtues, but should be lazy and slothful.

2d It is plain that Luther is in error when he says that all the works of the faithful are sin, because they emanate from innate concupiscence, and are not done in perfect charity. For if this were true, Christ would not require them, nor call them *fruit*, but rather condemn them as poison. (*See Council of Trent, sess. 6, can. 25*).

3d It is plain that Luther equally errs when he says that faith is lost by every mortal sin. This, too, the Council of Trent condemns. For Christ here speaks of a believer who abides in Him by faith, and yet has not the fruit of charity. Such a one therefore hath faith, but not charity.

Ver. 3.—*Now ye are clean through the word, &c.* This is the pruning-hook with which God the Father *καθαρίζει, i.e., purges and cleanses* His apostles, that they may be *καθαροί, i.e., pure and clean*, as the word of Christ. For as S. Paul says (Heb. iv.), "The Word of God is living and powerful, and more penetrating than any two-edged sword, and reaching, even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." The meaning then is, My word, *i.e.*, My doctrine which I have taught you, that ye may obey and believe it, is that *pruning-hook* which has purged you from error and sins, and has made you clean, holy, and pleasing to God.

Christ is speaking especially of His speech after the Last Supper, which had immediately preceded. For, as Toletus rightly perceived, this discourse inflamed the hearts of the disciples, who were already bearing fruit in Christ, and purged them by grace and love that they should bring forth more fruit.

For by this discourse of Christ the Apostles were purged from a certain *ignorance*. For Peter knew not whither Jesus was going. Thomas knew not the way. Judas asked to see the Father. The Lord pruned away this ignorance. They were also purged from *vain confidence*. For to Peter, their chief, it was said, Thou shalt deny Me thrice. They were purified from a sort of *carnal affection*. For they were too much addicted to reliance upon the sensible presence of Christ, desiring always to possess it. But now they hear that the Lord is going away to the Father, and that they must remain. They were purged from *faint-heartedness*, which made them almost despair of their own salvation when Christ should have departed. There were many other imperfections which the Lord pruned from His disciples on this night of the supper.

Ver. 4.—*Abide in Me*, as branches in the Vine, not dry and fruitless by faith only, but as bearing fruit and living by love with zeal for good works. *And I in you*. This clause is

partly a promise of Christ, meaning, "If ye abide in Me by faith formed by love, I promise you that I will for My part abide in you, as the Vine remains in the vine-branches by a constant influx so as to afford them vital sap and nourishment for the production of grapes. In like manner I will supply you with the Spirit of grace to produce good works of charity and all virtues." So S. Augustine, Bede, and Euthymius. The clause is partly also a precept, meaning, "Take heed that ye abide in Me, and I then will abide in you, for without Me ye can do nothing. And this ye will take care to do if ye abide in My love. For so ye will bring about that I in like manner shall abide in you by My grace. And I will cause My Spirit continually to flow into you, by which ye shall grow and increase in spiritual life, and make advancement in spiritual works." So Toletus and others. Hear S. Gregory, in his exposition of the 6th penitential Psalm, on those words, "My soul hath waited on His words:" "Where must we abide except in Christ? Houses will fail, palaces crumble into ruin, cities be destroyed to their foundations, castles fall, heaven and earth pass away, but the Word of the Lord remaineth for ever: let us then abide in Him who abideth eternally."

This is Christ's summing up by which He exhorts His disciples to abide in Him, and persevere in His love and doctrine. This He proceeds to maintain by giving seven reasons.

Here is the first:—

*As the branch cannot bear fruit, &c.* That is, as a vine-branch draws life and sap from the vine for producing grapes, so also do ye draw life and the spirit of grace from Me to bring forth good works which may deserve eternal life. From this passage then it is plain that a man cannot of himself, nor by his own natural powers, not even externally from human teaching, or personally, draw the power of bringing forth good works. It must flow from the inward grace of Christ. This applies especially to good works beyond the power of nature, and the effect which such works have of meriting increase of grace and glory. For the vine-branch hath nothing of itself, but draws all its sap, efficiency, and power of producing grapes from the vine. Thus the Council of Trent defines, and explains this passage (*sess. 6, cap. 16*), and adds the reason: "For since Christ Jesus is Himself the Head to the members, and as the Vine to the branches, He causes virtue continually to flow into them that are justified, which virtue always precedes their good works, accompanies and follows them, and without it they are not able in any manner to be pleasing to God, and meritorious. It must be believed that nothing more is wanting to those who are justified whereby, in those works which are done in God, they may fully satisfy the Divine law according to their condition in this life; and they should be truly believed to have merited to attain eternal life in its own time, if indeed they have departed in a state of grace."

Calvin objects: man has not free will, nor does he by it co-operate with