

7. Richard of S. Victor says, it is to hate and revile God.

I have summarily embraced eighteen expositions of the Fathers (viz., eleven of the Latin Fathers and seven of the Greek) in the foregoing paragraphs.

Lastly, theologians—and from them, catechists—out of various expositions of S. Augustine, collect six sins against the Holy Ghost; namely, presumption, despair, striving against known truth, envy of fraternal charity, impenitence, and obstinacy. They say that these are called sins against the Holy Ghost, because they are committed through undoubted wickedness against the goodness of God, which is an attribute of the Holy Ghost. Thus, likewise, sins which are committed through infirmity are said to be done against God the Father, because power is one of His especial attributes. And sins which are done through ignorance, are said to be done against the Son, because of His attribute of wisdom.

Note, therefore, that Christ is here speaking not of every sin against the Holy Ghost, but only of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which may take place by words; and the same reasoning will apply to thoughts and actions, as when anyone reviles works manifestly divine and miraculous, which God works for the salvation of men, by which He confirms faith and truth. Such a work is the casting out of devils; and because such works proceed from the goodness and holiness of God, they are attributed to the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son by procession and inspiration, as Love, Goodness, and Holiness. When, therefore, anyone calumniates such things, and knowingly out of malice ascribes them to an unclean spirit (as these Pharisees did), such an one is said to commit blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; for such an one directly fights against God and takes from Him His holiness and purity. The whole argument is expressed in the following syllogism:—

The author of the miracles which Christ performs is, according to you, O ye Scribes, Beelzebub: But God the Holy Ghost is, in truth, the Author of these miracles : Therefore, according to you, God and the Holy Ghost are Beelzebub.

What more horrible can possibly be said? What greater blasphemy can be imagined? S. Basil adds that there are such persons even now, who ascribe the fruits and actions of the Holy Ghost to the opposing unclean spirit. We many of us do this, when we call earnestness ambition, and impute the calumny of anger to one who is only moved by zeal and righteous indignation. Moreover, Christ opposes this blasphemy against God and the Holy Ghost to that blasphemy against the Son of Man by which some who were offended at Christ's human conversation, calumniated what He did as man, as when they called Him *a wine bibber*, and *a friend of Publicans and sinners*. This was something more excusable, and less unworthy of forgiveness, because it had respect to Christ as Man rather than as God.



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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 Lapse'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. Lapse'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 12: 1-31

Douay Rheims Version

*Christ reproves the blindness of the Pharisees, and confutes their attributing his miracles to Satan.*

1. At that time Jesus went through the corn on the Sabbath: and his disciples being hungry, began to pluck the ears, and to eat.
2. And the Pharisees seeing them, said to him: Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days.
3. But he said to them: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him:

notwithstanding, ye are secretly My adversaries, and openly ye dissimulate as though ye were judges appointed to make inquisition concerning My life and doctrine.

Thus this saying of Christ is not opposed to what He says in Luke ix. 50—*He who is not against you, is on your part*: for there He is speaking of one who is really in doctrinal agreement with the Apostles, and therefore is with them and for them, although for some just reason he does not profess as much openly.

**Verse 31-** *Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven a man: but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven.* The word *Spirit* is in the genitive case, as is plain from the Greek *πνεύματος*. *The blasphemy* therefore *of the Spirit* is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Whence the Arabic translates, *Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*; Syriac, *Blasphemy against the Spirit of Holiness*.

You will ask, what is this blasphemy? 1. Philastrius (*On the Heresy of Rotorius*) thinks it is heresy, especially that of Eunomius, who said that the Holy Ghost was not God. Thus also S. Ambrose (*Lib. 1, de Spir. Sanc. sec. 3*).

2. S. Hilary thinks that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is when a man denies that Christ is God. "The sin against the Holy Ghost," he says, "is to deny to God the power of virtue, and to take away from Christ His eternal substance, by which, because God came into man, man shall in turn come to God; since God grants pardon to all other things, whilst this only is without forgiveness."

3. S. Ambrose (*L. 2, de pœniten. see. 4*) thinks it is schism; also Simony, the sin whereby, for example, Simon Magus wished to buy the Holy Spirit of S. Peter.

4. Origen says it is every mortal sin after Baptism; committed, that is, after the grace of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism. Moreover, Pope Gelasius (*de Anath. vinc.*) understands by it sins which are not forgiven, either in this world, or in the world to come. But he thinks it refers to sinners who do not wish to repent. For he says, that man makes the sentence against himself irrevocable who wills to continue in such a state as that he cannot truly be forgiven.

5. S. Cyprian (*L. 3, ad Quirinal, N. 28*) says, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is every sin committed against God: but blasphemy against the Son of Man is every sin committed against man.

6. The same Saint (*L. 3, Epist. 14*) thinks blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is denial of the faith in persecution.

demons, whom he sends forth into the world. Yet he is not able to hurt men as much as he was before. For Christ has greatly restrained and diminished the power and might of the demons. S. Anthony was taught this by long experience, as S. Athanas. testifies in his *Life*: "The devil" he says, "was hooked by the Lord, like a dragon, by the hook of the Cross; and was taken in a drag-net, and was bound like a fugitive slave, and his lips were perforated by a ring and a bracelet, and he is not permitted to devour any of the faithful. Now, like a wretched sparrow, he is made sport of by Christ; now he groans at his companions, being trodden like serpents and scorpions under the heels of Christians. He who boasted that he drank up every sea, he who pretended that he held the world in the hollow of his hand, lo! he is conquered by you; lo! he is not able to prevent my entering the lists against him." And he confirms this by the devil's own confession (*cap.* 20). "I saw," he said, "a man of enormous height, whose head reached unto Heaven. When I asked him who he was, he said, I am Satan. And I, What seekest thou here? He answered, Why do all Christian people curse me? I answered, Hast thou not read, 'Because the swords of the enemy have failed at the end, and thou hast destroyed their cities?' (*Vulg.*) He said, Lo, now have I no place, I possess no city, I have no arms: the name of Christ sounds throughout all nations and all provinces, and the wilderness is peopled with choirs of monks. Let them, I beseech you, look at themselves, and not wound me without cause."

**Verse 30-** *He who is not with Me is against Me.* First, SS. Hilary, Jerome, Chrysostom, Theophylact expound *of the strong man, i.e., the devil.* The devil is not with Me, in such manner that he is against Me: and the things which I gather, he strives to disperse. This, therefore, is a fourth argument of Christ against the Scribes. Its force is as follows: They whose works are contrary, are themselves contrary. But My works and the devil's are contrary; therefore, I and he are contrary to each other. For, as S. Jerome says, "He, the devil, desires to hold captive the souls of men, but the Lord to deliver them. He preaches idolatry, Christ, the knowledge of the one God; the one draws to vice, the other recalls to virtue. How, then, can they have agreement between themselves, whose works are contrary?"

2. You may take the passage more simply with S. Chrysostom, with an application to the Pharisees, thus: As when a sedition arises in a kingdom or city, and one part rises against another part, so that evil-disposed men endeavour to seize upon the commonwealth, and spoil it, as Catiline with his fellow-conspirators did at Rome; then it is necessary for good citizens to defend the state, and he who does not, but desires to be neutral, is looked upon as an enemy and a companion of the seditious: because, under those circumstances, all citizens are bound to help the city or republic with all their might. Thus, in like manner, I, who have proclaimed universal war with Satan, that I may expel him from his dominion over the world, look upon all men as it were citizens of the world, as subjects of Me, their true Prince. If, therefore, they are not with Me in this war, and if they do not fight under My banner, they are contrary to Me, and My enemies, and, as such, I shall treat them, and punish them. Such, therefore, are you, O ye Pharisees, who ought above all, as my subjects, and better instructed than other men, to receive Me as the Messiah, the Christ prophesied of in your law and the prophets, and to commend Me as such to the people;

4. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the loaves of proposition, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him, but for the priests only?
5. Or have ye not read in the law, that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are without blame?
6. But I tell you that there is here a greater than the temple.
7. And if you knew what this meaneth: I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: you would never have condemned the innocent.
8. For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.
9. And when he had passed from thence, he came into their synagogues.
10. And behold there was a man who had a withered hand, and they asked him, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse him.
11. But he said to them: What man shall there be among you, that hath one sheep: and if the same fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not take hold on it and lift it up?
12. How much better is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath days.
13. Then he saith to the man: Stretch forth thy hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored to health even as the other.
14. And the Pharisees going out made a consultation against him, how they might destroy him.
15. But Jesus knowing it, retired from thence: and many followed him, and he healed them all.
16. And he charged them that they should not make him known.
17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaias the prophet, saying:
18. Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul hath been well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.
19. He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.
20. The bruised reed he shall not break: and smoking flax he shall not extinguish: till he send forth judgment unto victory.
21. And in his name the Gentiles shall hope.
22. Then was offered to him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, so that he spoke and saw.
23. And all the multitudes were amazed, and said: Is not this the son of David?
24. But the Pharisees hearing it, said: This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.
25. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.
26. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand?

27. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

28. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.

29. Or how can any one enter into the house of the strong, and rifle his goods, unless he first bind the strong? and then he will rifle his house.

30. He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.

31. Therefore I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

32. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

33. Either make the tree good and its fruit good: or make the tree evil, and its fruit evil. For by the fruit the tree is known.

34. O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things, whereas you are evil? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

35. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.

37. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

38. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying: Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39. Who answering said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

40. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

41. The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here.

42. The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon here.

43. And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none.

44. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation.

46. As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him.

47. And one said unto him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee.

many dead persons as I have done? Who of them has preached such sublime and Divine doctrine as I preach? Therefore shall the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites, by their faith and repentance in the day of judgment condemn the unbelieving Jews.

**Verse 28-** *But if I by the Spirit of God, &c.* If I by the power of God and the Holy Ghost not of Beelzebub, cast out devils, then that is true (and the Holy Ghost himself manifestly attests it by his concurrence) which I and John Baptist have put forward as the head and sum of our preaching—*the kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. Ye see the kingdom of the devil by Me everywhere destroyed by My words, and by what I effect in the bodies and souls of men: and thus God's kingdom is begun by grace. This is what John says (1 Epist. iii. 8), *In this the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil*. For as S. Leo says, "Those nails which pierced the Lord's hands and feet inflicted eternal wounds upon the devil; and the Punishment of His holy limbs was the death of the hostile powers."

**Verse 29-** *Or how can one enter into the strong man's house, &c.* Instead of, *or*, the Gr. has *ἢ*, which Pagninus translates *otherwise*; the Arab. *and*; others, *for*. A new reason is here given, the third, whereby Christ proves that He casts out devils by the help of God, not of Beelzebub. The argument is drawn from a comparison, thus: As he who attacks the castle of any strong or valiant man, like Samson or Hercules, to spoil it, is not able to accomplish it unless he first vanquish and bind the strong man; so in like manner, I Christ, who spoil the kingdom of Satan by leading sinners, his subjects, to repentance and salvation, must needs overcome and bind Satan himself; for, otherwise, he would not allow this spoliation. Satan therefore is My enemy, and has been overthrown by Me. He is not My friend or ally in casting out demons, as ye calumniously assert. The strong man then, in this passage, is the devil; the house is the world; the vessels are his arms; his goods, his instruments. The arms of the devil are fraud and deceit by which he entices men to sin; his arms are wealth, honours, riches. They are also inferior demons and wicked men, says S. Chrysostom. These the devil makes use of against us, to tempt and vex us. His goods are the souls of sinners, and the bodies of the possessed; yea the souls of the fathers detained in *Limbus* before Christ. All these Christ took away from the devil, and bound him in hell.

Moreover, the devil is here called a strong one, because he goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, as S. Peter saith. Job (40 *and* 41) depicts his strength and might under the figures of Behemoth and Leviathan. By *the strong man* understand Lucifer, the prince of the devils, the antagonist of Christ and S. Michael. For Lucifer, being conquered by Christ on the Cross, was thrust down to hell, that there he should remain, personally bound, until the day of judgment. Then he will be loosed for a little space, as John says (*Apoc.* xx.). Nevertheless, Lucifer is so bound in hell, that he is not only able to go forth himself, but even by means of his

continually striving to cast out his superior from men. Thus you, O ye Scribes, behold Me, continually and assiduously, with hostility punish the devils, and expel them from the souls and bodies of men. Therefore, not by the help of Beelzebub, but by the power of God, I cast them out. Neither indeed is Beelzebub so foolish as to send the devils who are subject to him, to drive out one the other. For by so doing he would destroy his and their kingdom. So also mutinous soldiers, when they rebel against their prince are closely and intimately united among themselves, for they know, if they should disagree, they would easily be overthrown by their prince. I have spoken of Christ's hostility to the devils; because Apollonius of Tyana, as Philostratus testifies in his life, and magicians cast out devils, but by collusion with them, that they may entice men to sorcerers, and to sorcery, *i.e.*, fellowship with the devil. But Christ proves by what follows, that He had no fellowship with the devil. I spoke also of habitual warfare; for frequently strife and battle will arise among the devils for the possession of a man. An aged priest, worthy of credit, who had discharged the office of exorcist for many years and expelled devils at Rome, once told me he had seen with his eyes, and heard with his ears, two men possessed with devils, contending and fighting with one another, in the Church of S. Matthew. The devil who possessed one of the men was of a higher order and superior to the other; and he wished to cast out the other devil, as an inferior, from the man whom he possessed. But the inferior devil resisted, and greatly abused his superior; and among other things, he said to him, "Thou art an infernal devil, and by the just judgment of God being banished to hell, art far more heavily punished than I am, who am not an infernal devil, but am permitted to live here in the air, because I did not rebel against God as thou didst, but only clave and consented to Lucifer, as a subject to my superior." But such things as this are very uncommon and are succeeded by peace, even as these two devils after a short time laid aside their contention, and rested, and held their peace. For although those who are damned, and the devils, burn with pride, wrath, and hatred one against another, and quarrel, and tear one another in hell like dogs; nevertheless, on earth they must agree among themselves, in order that they may establish their kingdom and dominion over men.

**Verse 27-** *But if I beg Beelzebub*, &c. This is Christ's second proof, by which He shows, that he cast out devils by the help of God not of Satan, By *your sons*, in the first place, SS. Hilar., Chrys., Theoph., Enthym. understand, *your Apostles*, for they were sons of the Jews. These writers think that this happened after Christ sent forth the Apostles, when the Apostles, by the help of Christ, cast out devils, and wrought many miracles. But it is more probable that this happened before the mission of the Apostles. Hence it is better to understand by *your sons*, Jewish exorcists, who, by the method handed down by Solomon, expelled demons. (See *Joseph. Lib. 8, cap. 2.*) Such exorcists were the seven sons of Sceva, a chief of the priests (Act. xix. 14). So Jansen, Tolet, and others.

*Therefore they shall be your judges.* In the day of judgment, they shall, by their deeds, condemn you, because ye have passed so perverted a judgment upon Me, namely that they have cast out devils by the help of God, but I by the assistance of Satan; although ye behold far greater proofs of the presence and operation of God in Me, than in your own exorcists. For who of them has healed so many sick, and raised so

48. But he answering him that told him, said: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?

49. And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren.

50. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.

**Verse 1-** *At that time Jesus went through the corn fields* (Through the crops of corn becoming white, or ripe), &c. Luke adds that this Sabbath was the first from the second (*Vulg.*); which I will explain in the proper place. Again there is here a Hysterologia; for these things appear to have happened after the Mission of the Apostles, and therefore before the Sermon on the Mount, as may be gathered from Mark ii. 22, and Luke vi. 1. That they rubbed the ears of corn in their hands, and satisfied their hunger is, says S. Jerome, a mark of their austere life.

**Verse 2-** *But when the Pharisees saw it*, &c. Luke vii. 2, has, *they said unto them, i.e.*, to the disciples of Christ, because they brought forward the objection first against the disciples, afterwards against Christ.

Observe, they do not find fault with the disciples for plucking ears of corn, or grapes; for this was permitted by the law, Deut. xxiii 25, but because they did it on the Sabbath. For to pluck ears seems a servile work, and therefore, a violation of the rest and sanctity of the Sabbath.

*Allegorically.* SS. Hilary, Ambrose, and Bede think that it is signified by this that the Apostles in the second Sabbath from the first, *i.e.*, in the time of the gospel would gather grains from the seed and crops of preaching, *i.e.*, the elect faithful, from among all nations, by whose faith and piety they should be fed, until they should lay them up with themselves in the heavenly barn. But the Pharisees seeing the Gentiles preferred to themselves in the Gospel envied them, and vainly murmured against the Apostles.

*Tropologically:* Bede says, "Those walk with the Lord, through the corn fields, who delight to meditate on the sacred oracles. They hunger, when they desire to find therein the bread of life; and that on the Sabbath, when they are glad to rest with a mind free from disturbing thoughts. They rub the ears, and purify them from the husks that they may reach the grain, when they take up the testimonies of Scripture, and dwell upon them until they find in them, as it were the marrow of love. But this refreshment of the mind is displeasing to fools, and is approved by the Lord."

**Verse 3-** *But He said unto them, Have ye not read—And they that were with Him?* This last seems to be at variance with 1 Sam. 21, where it is said, David was alone. I answer, David flying from Saul, went alone to Ahimelech,

whom Mark calls Abiathar, the high priest; and asked, and received the loaves from him, which he brought to the companions of his flight, whom he had left, elsewhere, waiting for him, as is plain both from this passage, as well as from 1 Sam. 21, where David says to the priest, “I have appointed to the young men for such and such a place. So S. Jerome.”

**Verse 4-** *How he entered, &c. The shew-bread.* The shew-bread were loaves always set forth in the Holy Place, before the Holy of Holies, which was, as it were, the throne of God, sitting upon the Mercy-seat; they were loaves, therefore, set forth before the face of God. Whence the LXX. has *ἀρτους ἐνώπιους, i.e., panes faciales*, Syriac, *the bread of the Lord's table*. In Heb. they are called, פנים לַחֲמֵה *lachme panim*, that is, *loaves of faces*. They were twelve, six on one side of the table and six on the other side, as there are two cheeks on a face. By these twelve loaves, the twelve tribes of Israel confessed that they were continually fed and nourished by God. Wherefore frankincense was put upon them (see Lev. xxiv.); for frankincense was the symbol that they were the Lord's, and were offered to Him. In return, God, from His satisfaction at the offering of these loaves made manifest that He always remembered the twelve tribes, and had them before His face continually. See what has been said on Exod. xxv. 30. God had commanded these sacred loaves to be renewed every Sabbath. New loaves were placed upon the table, and the old were taken away. They were eaten by the priests only, and that only in the Tabernacle, as is plain from Lev. xxiv. 8, 9. The force of the argument is this: David, a man after God's own heart, made use of the holy shew-bread, in the necessity of his hunger—loaves which it was not lawful for laymen to eat—because he wisely judged, that this positive law concerning laymen not eating them ought to yield to the law of nature, which dictates that in grave necessity of famine life ought to be preserved by eating any bread whatsoever, even loaves consecrated to God. Thus, SS. Paulinus and Laurence, and others, sold chalices and vessels consecrated to God, that by the money which they fetched they might afford help to the poor in their hunger and necessity. Therefore, saith Christ in effect, “Much rather is it lawful for Me and My disciples to pluck ears of corn on the Sabbath, that by the grains extracted from them we may relieve our hunger. For the sanctity of the Sabbath, forbidding servile work, such as plucking ears of corn, is a divine positive law, and ought to yield to the law of nature, which dictates that in hunger it is our duty to sustain life by any kind of food.”

**Verse 5-** *Or have ye not read, &c. Profane, viz., by slaying and skinning and cutting up the victims, by laying the wood in order, and by kindling a fire, by which the victims might be burnt in God's honour.* These works, considered merely in themselves, are servile, and would profane the Sabbath unless piety excused them, and, instead of servile and profane, made them sacred and divine. The meaning is, As necessity excused David and piety the priests, so do both excuse My disciples from a breach of the Sabbath, for this plucking of the ears. For they follow Me as the Messiah, and are so intent upon My sacred doctrine that they have forgotten to prepare food. Observe the expression, *have ye not read?* The following words are nowhere found literally in Scripture, but they occur in sense in Numb. xxviii. and elsewhere, where the rites of sacrificing on the Sabbath are sanctioned. Hence it is an axiom of the Jews, “there is

demoniacal possession. The demon, therefore, had not made him blind, nor taken away the faculty of speech, but only hindered the exercise of both. Whence, when the demon was cast out, without any other miraculous operation, the man began both to speak and to see. Thus S. Chrysostom, Enthym., Lyra, Jansen, Maldonatus. Hear S. Chrysostom: “O pestiferous craft of the devil! he seized upon, and obstructed both the ways,—sight and hearing—by which the man might believe.” Hence S. Luke says *that demon was dumb, &c.*, in its effects, because it made the man dumb whom it possessed. There was, then, in this miracle a threefold effect. For, as S. Jerome says, “In this one man three signs were wrought at one and the same time; the blind sees, the dumb speaks, the possessed of the devils is delivered.”

*Tropologically:* S. Jerome says, “What was then done literally is daily fulfilled in the conversion of believers, that, when the devil has been driven out they may first behold the light of faith, and then open their mouths to speak the praises of God.” Then S. Augustine says, “He, having a devil, is blind and dumb, who does not believe: and he is a slave of the devil, who does not understand, and does not confess the true faith, or who does not give praise to God.” (*Lib. 1. quæst. Evangel. q. 3.*) The devil then makes men dumb lest they should confess their sins and expel their poison; lest they should praise God; lest they should instruct their neighbours: but Christ by His grace, looses their mouths to confess, to praise, to teach. Wisely saith S. Bernard (*in Senteentiis*) “Why art thou ashamed to speak of thy sin, when thou wast not ashamed to do it? or why dost thou blush to confess to God, from whose eyes thou canst not be hid? And if thou art so grievously ashamed to expose thy sin to one man, a sinner himself, what wilt thou do in the day of judgment, when thy consciousness of guilt will be exposed to all?”

**Verse 23-** *And all the multitudes were amazed, &c. ἐξίσταντο, i.e., were astonished and admired so that they, as it were, were rapt out of themselves in an ecstasy, at seeing so many and so great miracles of Christ; wherefore they said, No Prophet hath done so many miracles as Jesus hath. Therefore He is greater than them all. Consequently, He is the Son of David, the Messiah promised to David, whom we are all eagerly expecting.*

**Verse 24-** *When the Pharisees heard it, &c.* The Pharisees were so blinded by their envy and hatred of Christ, that when they could not deny His miracles so clearly attested, they slanderously said, that they were magical, and not wrought by power of God, but by Beelzebub. They made Christ to be a magician who had a familiar demon, by whose power He wrought miracles.

**Verse 26-** *But if Satan cast out Satan, &c.* It means the kingdom of Satan upon earth could not stand, if Satan, *i.e.*, one devil were constantly to rise up against another devil, and fight with him, so that the inferior should be

**Verse 18-** *Behold My servant* (Vulg. *puer meus*) (*Messias*, Chald.), &c. *I will put my spirit* &c. I will endow Him with the gifts of the Holy Ghost in His conception. The Heb. is, אבדי *Abdi*, i.e., *My servant*, from whence it is plain Isaiah here speaks of Christ, not as He is God, but as He is man, for as such He is God's servant.

It proves that Christ, by teaching and healing the sick, fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Himself, and His modesty, mercy, and equity; and therefore showed that He was the very Messiah foretold by Isaiah, and renowned for these gifts as by certain marks. Instead of, *whom I have chosen*, the Hebrew is, *I will receive Him*; LXX., *I will take Him up*; Chaldee, *I will move Him*.

*And he shall show judgment*, &c. i.e., what is just and equal: for this is the judgment of righteous judges. For Christ, as a law giver, shall preach the Evangelical law, not only to the Jews, like Moses, but, by the Apostles, to all nations whatsoever.

**Verse 19-** *He shall not strive*, &c. the meekness of Christ, and His gentle method of teaching, are here noted.

**Verse 20-** *A bruised reed*, &c. Syriac and Arabic, *and He shall not extinguish a lamp verging on extinction*. This is a genuine proverb, meaning that Christ will not contentiously rebuke and oppress those who are weak in faith, hope, and love, but will strengthen and kindle them by His own meekness, gentleness, and patience. Listen to the Fathers. S. Jerome says, "He who does not stretch out his hand to a sinner, nor carry a brother's burden, breaks the bruised reed; he who despises a spark of faith in the little ones, quenches the smoking flax." S. Hilary: "He shows that He might easily break the persecutors as a broken reed, and quench their fury;" but, says S. Augustine, "He spares them because He came not to judgment." Rabanus says, "The bruised nations were not broken, but were reserved for salvation: neither were the Jews, who were agitated by the wind, condemned immediately, but were patiently borne with."

*Until he bring forth*, &c., i.e., until He lead *judgment*, i.e., justice, or faith, and gospel sanctity, *to victory*, so that it may indeed have dominion over the whole world. Wherefore, the Vulgate in Isaiah translates *He will place* (as though a lord and conqueror) *judgment in the earth* (as it were a queen and lady governing all). The Hebrew is, *He shall bring forth judgment unto truth*, i.e., He shall bring true judgment.

**Verse 21-** *And in His name*, &c. Instead of Gentiles, the Hebrew has *islands*, meaning most remote nations, dwelling in islands, who shall place all their hope in Christ the Saviour. I have expounded all this more at length on Isaiah xlii. 1, which see.

**Verse 22-** *Then there was brought unto Him a man having a devil*. Luke (xi. 14) says only that he was dumb: whence S. Augustine (*L. 2 de Consens. Evang. sec. 37*) is of opinion that Luke is speaking of another demoniac; but Luke does not say that he was not blind. Now the man was not blind and dumb from birth, or by disease, as Abul. and Barradi think, but was deprived of the use of his eyes and ears through the

no Sabbath in the temple;" that is, no cessation from work, because of the slaying and burning the sacrifices.

**Verse 6-** *But I say unto you*, &c. For Christ, Who here speaks, allows His disciples to pluck the ears. Christ speaks of Himself in the third person out of modesty. The meaning is, If the sanctity of the temple frees from blame the sacrificing priests who break the Sabbath, a like cause excuses My disciples, for I am greater and holier than the temple. Yea, I am the Lord of the temple, to whom, in truth, all the victims in the temple were offered and sacrificed.

**Verse 7-** *But if ye had known what that meaneth*, &c. Syriac, *ye would not have condemned them* (my disciples), *since they are guiltless*. He cites Hosea vi. 6, which see. The force of the argument is, mercy is more powerful, and better than sacrifice or Sabbath, therefore for its sake it is lawful to violate the rest of the Sabbath. Wrongly, therefore, O ye Scribes, do ye condemn My disciples in this matter, for they are innocent, and free from all blame therein, because of the mercy which is here exercised. The mercy is that I have permitted My hungry servants to pluck these ears on the Sabbath. Moreover, I enjoin upon them by My word, as well as by My example, that they should have compassion upon so many wretched perishing souls, and should procure their salvation, by teaching, admonishing, and praying for them, with zeal and care. To this applies that golden sentence of Simeon the just (this is he who, as the Hebrews think, took Christ in His arms, and sang his last song, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*) in *Pirke Aboth*, i.e., *The sentences of the Fathers*, "The world rests upon, and is supported by three things, 1. by the law, 2. by Divine worship, 3. by mercy."

**Verse 8-** *For the Son of man*, &c. I, who by nature am the Son of God, and have deigned to become the Son of Man, i.e., man, am by this very circumstance, the Lord, that is the author and lawgiver of the whole Mosaic Law, and consequently also of the Sabbath. Therefore I am able to give to My disciples a dispensation with respect to it.

**Verse 9-** *And when he had passed over from thence*, &c. Luke adds, that this was done on another Sabbath. For Christ designedly chose the Sabbath day for a fresh miracle, that he might, again and again, refute the error of the Scribes, that it was unlawful to heal sick persons on the Sabbath.

**Verse 10-** *And behold a man having his hand withered*, &c. S. Jerome adds, "in the Gospel, which the Nazareni and Ebionites use, which we have lately translated from Hebrew into Greek, and which is called by very many Persons the original (*authenticum*) of Matthew, this man, who had the withered hand, is called a mason. And he prayed for help in these words, I was a mason, gaining my livelihood by my hands: I beseech Thee, O Jesus, that Thou wouldst restore me to soundness, that I may not shamefully beg

my bread." By the word *hand* understand *arm*: for *χείρ*, *i.e.*, *hand*, is made by Hippocrates to extend from the shoulder to the fingers. This man's arm was affected by a double disease. 1. A convulsion of the nerves. 2. Atrophy, for it was dried up for want of aliment, and was therefore naturally incurable.

**Verse 11-** *And they asked him, i.e.*, the Scribes and Pharisees asked Christ, whether it were lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? Then, as Mark relates (iii. 4), Christ in turn asked the Scribes another question, which was the solution of their own, *i.e.*, whether it were lawful to do good on the Sabbath, and heal the withered hand; or to do evil, *i.e.*, not to heal, and do harm? He intimates, not to do good to one who is in misery, when it is in your power, is to do him an injury; and not to save life, or a soul, when you can, is to destroy it. Since, therefore, this is a command of the law of nature, it is not forbidden by the positive law of the Sabbath; for that would be unreasonable.

*That they might accuse Him*, to the common people, as being either powerless, or unmerciful, if He did not heal the sick man; but to the chief priests, as a violator of the Sabbath, if He did heal him.

*But he said unto them*, &c. He means to say, ye Scribes teach the Sabbath is not broken, if any one pull out a sheep fallen into a ditch on the Sabbath day that the sheep may not remain in the ditch and suffer hunger, on the Sabbath. Much more therefore is it lawful to release on the Sabbath a man afflicted with sickness. Thus thought the Scribes in the time of Christ, but now some Jews observe the rest of the Sabbath so superstitiously that they are not willing on that day to pull a man out of a ditch or sewer, nor to suffer themselves, if they have fallen in, to be drawn out. Volater (*lib. 3, Geograph.*) relates an amusing thing, which happened in the reign of Henry III. of England. A certain Jew fell into a drain at Tewkesbury on the Sabbath, and on account of his religion would not be drawn out. The Christian earl of the place, seeing it, would not allow him to be pulled out on the next day, through reverence for Sunday. Thus the man was choked, and died before he was drawn out. The Jew said—

“With putrid mud I’d rather choke,  
Than Jewish Sabbath should be broke.”

To whom the earl replied,

“The Christian Sabbath keep thou too,  
Friend Solomon, thou faithless Jew.”

**Verse 12-** *How much rather is a man better* (more worthy, noble, excellent), &c. If it is lawful to release a sheep from calamity on the Sabbath, why not a man? Especially since in lifting out the sheep there would be need of considerable labour; but Christ was about to effect the healing of the sick man by a single word. How could this be a servile work? Wherefore Mark adds, *looking round about upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.*

**Verse 13-** *Then He saith to the man*, &c. Christ first by reason, now by a deed, *viz.*, a miracle, confutes the ignorance of the Scribes, and makes manifest His own wisdom and goodness. Hear S. Athanas. (*Hom. de Semente, sub fin. tom.*), “Then Jesus saith to him, Stretch forth thine hand, for I do not touch thee, lest the Jews should have wherewith to accuse Me, lest with them, to touch, should be the same as to work. I act by word alone, for it has not been forbidden by God to speak on the Sabbath. If, then, a word performs the work, let him who says this word be held in admiration by you. Observe, too, the different way in which miracles are wrought. When Peter healed the paralytic at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up. The Lord, on the other hand, only commands, saying, Stretch forth thine hand, I give thee power to be healed. Thus He spake, thus He did, and the hand was restored.”

*Allegorically.* 1. Beda says, Adam plucking the forbidden fruit, dried up the hand of the human race, *i.e.*, he deprived man of the power to be fruitful in good works. Christ restored that power by stretching forth His own hands upon the cross.

2. S. Jerome: “Until the coming of the Saviour, the hand of the Jews was withered in the synagogue, and the works of God were not done in it. Afterwards He came on earth, and the right hand of believers was restored by the Apostles, and rendered fit to do the first works.”

*Tropologically.* Hear S. Anselm: “The hand that is withered, and is to be healed, is ordered to be stretched out, because the weakness of an unfruitful soul can be cured no better manner than by the liberality of alms-giving. Wherefore John the Baptist advised the multitudes who asked him what they should do that they should not like dried trees be cast into the fire, do this one thing, ‘He who hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he who hath food, let him do likewise.’ And in Eccclus. iv. 36, ‘In vain does a man stretch forth his hands to God, to beg remission of his sins who does not extend the same hands to confer a benefit upon the poor man who asks him.’”

**Verse 15-** *Going out*, &c. The Pharisees went out of the synagogue and left the multitude, in whose presence they did not dare to murmur against Christ.

**Verse 16-** *And He commanded them, that they should not make Him known.* *Commanded*, Gr. *ἐπετίμησε*, *i.e.*, He rebuked, threatened, commanded with threats, that they should not make known the miracles which He did, as well that He might not offend the Scribes, and excite them to greater envy and wrath, as that He might show how far removed He was from seeking glory of men.