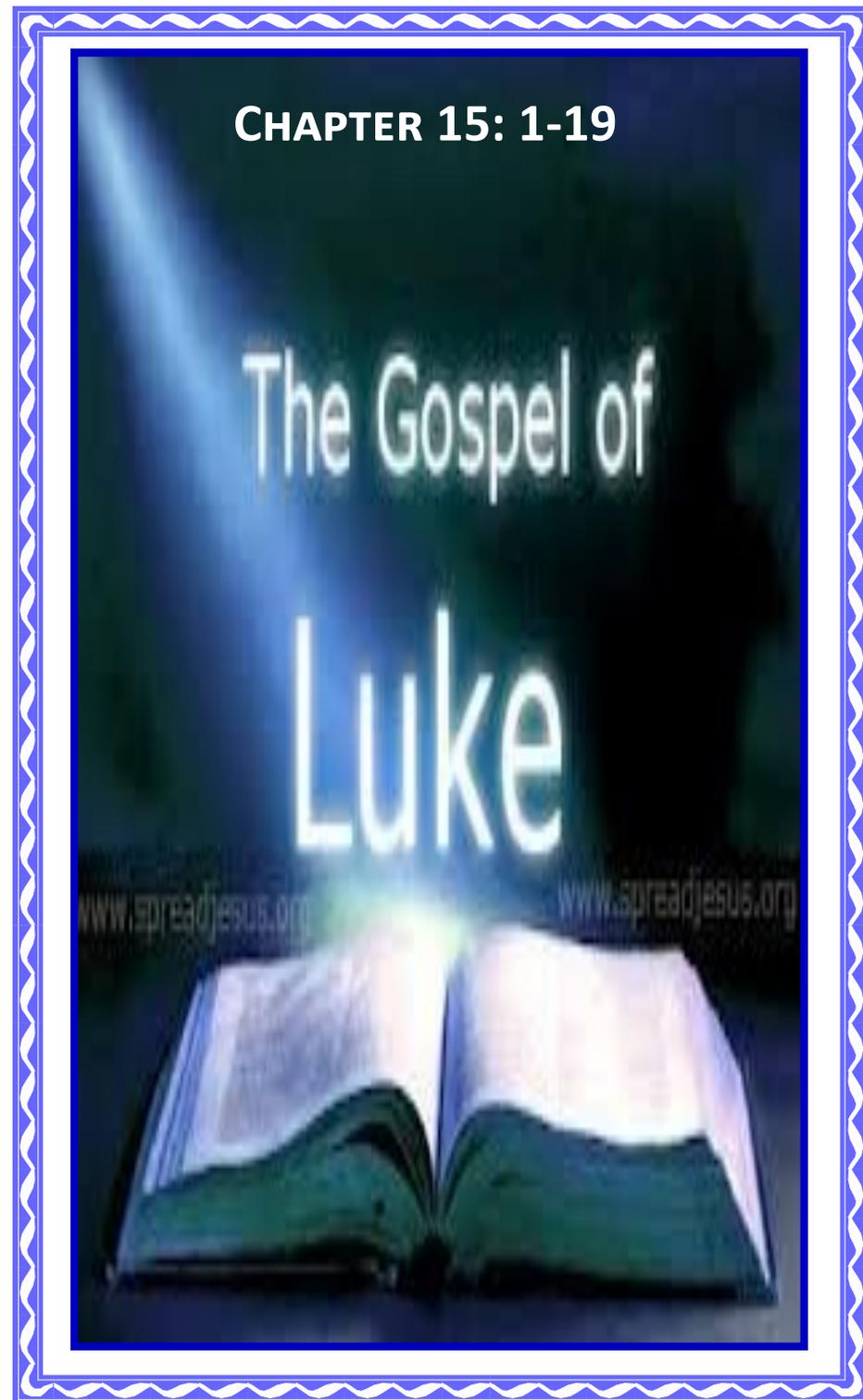


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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten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

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

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.

Luke 15: 1-19

Douay Rheims Version

The parables of the lost sheep and of the prodigal son.

1. And the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him.
2. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.
3. And he spoke to them this parable, saying:
4. What man of you that hath an hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost, until he find it?
5. And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing?
6. And coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost?

judgment, and who not unfrequently inflicts punishment in this life as a warning to others not to offend."

S. Jerome here explains that "he had sinned against his father in that, forsaking his Creator, he had bowed down in worship to idols of wood and of stone."

Symbolically, S Augustine (*Quæst. Evang. lib. ii. q. 33*) interprets the words "before thee" to mean "in the inmost conscience." For the sinner ought to blush even for the sins which he commits in secret, and for the conscience which he defiles, renders dumb, and hands over to Satan.

Ver. 19.—*And am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Because, says S. Jerome, I preferred to serve idols, and to be the slave of vices. "He does not presume," says Bede, "to ask to be treated as a son," because, adds Euthymius, "his life had been unworthy of such a father."

Make me as one of thy hired servants. I have forfeited my position as son, but cast me not out of thy presence, suffer me to take the lowest place in thy household, says Euthymius, that I may make open confession of my sin. For formerly those who had been put to public penance were not allowed to enter the church, but knelt without, humbly asking the prayers and the pardon of all, as S. Jerome tells us that Fabiola did.

These, says S. Augustine (*lib. ii. Quæst. Evang. q. 33*), are the words of one who is turning his thoughts to repentance, not of one actually repentant. For he is not addressing his father, but only determining what to say when he meets him. "But," says Primasius, commenting on Rev. iv., "as the smoke precedes the flame, so must there be confession of sin before the fires of faith and love are kindled in the sinner's heart. Hence the smoke bursts into flame as the fire gains power and intensity; so in like manner confession of sin through force of contrition burns up and becomes aflame with love."

God, therefore, justly and fitly demands of the sinner the confession of his sin.

1. Because a criminal ought to humble himself, and confess his crime, if he would be forgiven.
2. Because, according to Origen (*Hom. ii on Ps. xxxviii.*), as a disordered stomach must be purged by emetics, so must the soul which is full of corruption be purified by confession.
3. Because the sinner has cast contempt on the majesty of God, and can only make amends for his fault by repentance. For repentance gives glory to God, and restores to Him the honour which sin takes away. In a word, the penitent acknowledges that he himself is a sinner, but that God is most holy.
4. The confession of the sinner therefore is for the praise and glory of God the Creator, as well as of Jesus Christ our Saviour. "For," says S. Cyprian, or the author of the Treatise on the Passion, whoever he may be, "when the sinner takes upon himself the office of judge and tormentor, becoming his own prosecutor, and showing by the shame he exhibits that his confession is genuine, his entire self-sacrifice obtains pardon for him in the sight of God. For God does not pass judgment twice on the same offence."

Against heaven. That is,

1. I have sinned so grievously that my sins, as it were, cry to heaven for vengeance, or by a Hebraism, we may understand "against heaven" to mean, against God who dwelleth therein. (See S. Matt. xxi 25.)
2. "Against heaven," because in preferring earth to heaven, I have committed a great wrong and have lightly esteemed heavenly things; so that if heaven were endowed with voice and reason, it would cry out and make accusation against me.
3. "Against heaven" because heaven is my home, and I am only a sojourner here on earth. I have therefore betrayed my native land. So S. Gregory Nyssen, (*De Oratione*), says, "He would not have confessed that he had sinned against heaven, unless he had been persuaded that heaven was his country and that he had sinned in leaving it." And S. Jerome, "He sins against heaven who leaves the heavenly Jerusalem."
4. "Against heaven," *i.e.* "against the angels and those that dwell therein," says the Interlinear, and also S. Augustine
5. Or "against heaven" because according to S. Ambrose, "he had wasted the gifts of heaven." By which we may understand "the endowments of the soul and the spiritual gifts which are impaired by sin and by our departure from the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all."

Symbolically, S. Chrysostom, in the *Catena*, says, "He sins against heaven who sins against the humanity of Christ, which although above us as heaven, is yet visible." For the sinner makes of none effect the blood of Christ, and in a manner "crucifies the Son of God afresh." Heb. vi. 6.

And before Thee. "Who alone," says S. Chrysostom, "seest all things, and to whom the thoughts of all hearts are revealed. Great then is the shamelessness of the sinner in daring to sin before the living God, who will punish him for his offences in the day of

7. I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.
8. Or what woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it?
9. And when she hath found it, call together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost.
10. So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.
11. And he said: A certain man had two sons.
12. And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance.
13. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance, living riotously.
14. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country: and he began to be in want.
15. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine.
16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.
17. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger!
18. I will arise and will go to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.
19. I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.
20. And rising up, he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him.
21. And the son said to him: Father: I have sinned against heaven and before thee I am not now worthy to be called thy son.
22. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.
23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat and make merry:
24. Because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.
25. Now his elder son was in the field and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.
26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.
27. And he said to him: Thy brother is come and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe.
28. And he was angry and would not go in. His father therefore coming out began to entreat him.
29. And he answering, said to his father: Behold, for so many years do I serve thee and I have never transgressed thy commandment: and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends.

30. But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31. But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me; and all I have is thine.

32. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found.

Ver. 1.—*Then drew near under Him all the publicans and sinners. πάντες*, all, that is, many came together to hear Christ, attracted by His sanctity and by the loving-kindness with which He called sinners to Himself, and promised pardon and salvation to the penitent. For His preaching was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” S. Matt. iv. 17.

Ver. 2.—*And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured*. For as they avoided the touch of unclean bodies, so did they avoid that of sinful souls. Hence they did not deign to speak to sinners, much less to eat with them. This constituted the proud spirit of the Pharisees, who thought themselves pure and holy in all things pertaining to the law, and therefore kept apart from the impure that they might not be defiled. To them the spirit of Christ was clearly opposed; for He came into the world to save sinners, and therefore sought opportunity to converse with them, and when invited was present at their feasts; for nothing is more pleasing to God than the conversion of the sinner. “From which we may gather,” says S. Gregory (*Hom.* 34), “that true justice, *i.e.* the justice of Christ, is full of compassion, but that the false justice of the Pharisees is scornful.” “Indeed, it is,” says S. Chrysostom, “the mark of the apostolic life, to think for the salvation of souls.”

Ver. 4.—*What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?* For a sheep is a simple and foolish animal, which, in search of pasture, easily loses its way and wanders from the fold, and when once astray is unable to return. So that there is need of a shepherd to go forth and seek it.

So we, by reason of our sinful lusts, were as wandering sheep, treading the path which led to perdition, without a thought of God or of heaven, or of the salvation of our souls. Wherefore Christ came down from heaven to seek us, and to lead us back from the way of destruction to that which leadeth to eternal life. So we read, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” Isa. liii. 6; and again, “Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” 1 S. Pet. ii. 25.

Ver. 5.—*And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing*. Or as the Arabic renders it, “He carries it on his shoulders joyfully,” that he may the more quickly return it to the flock.

In like manner on Christ “was laid,” as saith the prophet Isaiah, the iniquity of us all.” Hence Gregory of Nyssa, writes in the *Catena*, “When the shepherd had found the

takes higher ground: “The hirelings are they who busy themselves in walking worthily, looking for the reward which is to be. These have bread enough and to spare, *i.e.* they are sustained by the daily nourishment of Divine grace.”

He then who is restrained from vice by fear of punishment is the slave; by hope and longing for the kingdom of heaven, the hireling; by love of that which is good, the son. And Theophylact, in like manner, makes this threefold distinction amongst those who are saved.

The Interlinear again, and others who understand by the two sons the Jews and Gentiles, explain thus: “The Jews, who like hirelings serve God in hope of obtaining the good things of this world, possess them plentifully; but the people of the Gentiles, together with the idolaters, are wholly cut off from the truth.”

Ver. 18.—*I will arise and go to my father*. “I will arise,” says the Interlinear, “because I perceive that I have fallen prone before idolatry and vice. I will go to my father, for I have wandered far from him, and am wearing away my life in misery and want. I will rise from this wretched life. I will break away from my vices, cease from sin, amend my life. I will repent, and humbly beg of God the pardon of my sin.”

“Well does he say, ‘I will arise,’” writes S. Jerome (*Epist.* 146), “for away from his father he could not stand upright. It is the part of sinners to lie prone, of the just to stand upright.” For as Chrysologus (*Serm.* 1) says, “As long as a man is with his father, his state is happy, his service free, and his safety assured. He reverences his father with gladness. If corrected it is with gentleness. Though poor he is rich, and his possessions are secure.” And again, “he determines to return, because he perceived that with a stranger his liberty was slavery, and because he believed that with his father his slavery would be liberty.”

And will say unto him. These words, says Titus, are few, but enough for my salvation; for I know my father’s loving-kindness, and that he will have compassion on the penitent, whom he did not abandon, even when wallowing in the foulness of sin.

Father, I have sinned. “This,” says S. Ambrose, “is his first confession to the author of nature, the dispenser of mercy, the judge of his sin. For although God knows all things, He waits to hear the acknowledgment of our sins, because he who takes the burden of his sin upon himself lessens its weight, and he who by confession anticipates the accuser, deprives the accusation of its sting. In vain wilt thou endeavour to hide from Him, whom nothing escapes, and you may safely discover what you know to be already known.”

a horn (κέζαζ;). These afford excellent food for swine, and are also eaten by men.

But by “husks” the Fathers understand “that worldly and vain knowledge which begets vanity, such as the writings of the poets, or the harangues of the orators.” “Wherein,” says S. Augustine, “this man sought to find something belonging to the higher life, but could not.” The word, however, may be taken to mean more fully “carnal gratifications which puff out and afflict the soul but do not satisfy its yearnings.” So S. Chrysostom in the *Catena* writes, “If thou lovest good wine, thou lovest husks; if thou longest for gold, thou dost seek for husks; if thou followest after sensual pleasures, thou askest for the food of swine.”

Ver. 17.—*And when he came to himself*, or, as the Arabic renders it, “when he was considering within himself.” Euthymius says, becoming master of himself, and as it were waking up from the deep sleep of the drunken.” “Returning from his wanderings abroad.” Theophylact. “For,” says the Interlinear, “he who has gone away from himself does well to return;” and the prodigal had been in a manner beside himself, and a raving madman, but his misery gave him understanding, and hunger taught him to be wise. So S. Gregory Nyssen. (*Trad de Oratione*) writes, “He did not return to his former state of happiness until, coming to himself, he felt the full weight of his cares.” And S. Augustine (*Quæst. Evang. lib. xxi.*): “He turned his thoughts (intentionem) from these things, which act externally as snares and temptations, to his inner conscience” “For,” says S. Ambrose, “he who returns to it returns to himself, but he who departs from Christ forfeits his rights in Christ.”

How many hired servants of my father’s, &c. They have bread enough and to spare, but I, his son, am perishing with hunger. So God is wont to take away from those who live for pleasure all their delights, and send them hunger, sickness, and pain, that they may return to a better mind, and see what happiness they have forfeited, and into what misery they have fallen; which is the first stage of repentance. Hence Titus writes, “Coming to himself, *i.e.* comparing his former happiness with his after misery, he thought of what he was whilst he abode with his father, and meditated over and over again on the vile and wretched state to which he had reduced himself by his rejection of God, and subjection to Satan.” Learn then from the example of the prodigal, that “repentance follows on hasty counsel, and that a bad beginning makes a bad ending;” and again, “that thou be not conquered by a shameful adversary, regard pleasure only when it is departing from thee, for pleasure is the food of the wicked.”

Mystically. If we serve God and follow virtue in hope of worldly gain, we are hirelings; if from fear, slaves; if from love, sons. As the Interlinear says, “How many Jews are there who keep the law only for the sake of present prosperity, and obtain of God that which they desire; but I, who neglect God’s law, prosper neither in my temporal nor my spiritual concerns.”

S. Augustine, on the other hand, says, “These are the reflections of a man who is coming to a better mind again, and finds himself amongst those who preach the truth, not from love of the truth, but from the desire of earthly gain.” But the Gloss

sheep, he did not punish it, he did not drive it to the fold, but placing it on his shoulder, and carrying it gently, he reunited it with the flock.” Oh how wondrous is the meekness, clemency, and love of Christ our Lord! It was to represent this love to the faithful that Christ is depicted in our temples with the lost sheep on His shoulders, carrying it back to the flock, and it is related of the son of Charlemagne, that laying aside his royal state, he became a monk, and when employed in keeping sheep, followed to the letter the example set by the Good Shepherd: for humility and the imitation of Christ is in truth the glory of Christian kings.

Ver. 6.—*Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* Συγχαζητέ μοι, Let My joy be one with yours—partake of My joy. His joy is so great that he cannot confine it to Himself, His friends must rejoice also. He further indicates that the event is such a happy one, that it ought to afford matter for rejoicing to all. He says not, “Rejoice with the sheep that is found,” but, “with Me.” Because truly our life is His joy. S. Gregory.

Ver. 7.—*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven, &c., i.e.* greater joy, for such is implied by the comparative particle ρ, “than.”

The angels then, and the saints in heaven rejoice with exceeding great joy when it is made known to them, by the revelation of God, that a sinner is converted; for when such an one by repentance passes from condemnation to life, it is a gain to the sinner—to the angels—and above all to God Himself.

The sinner passes from sin unto righteousness, from hell to heaven. The angels therefore rejoice at the blessedness of such an one, because, says Euthymius, they are kindly disposed towards men and because by repentance men become like them in purity and in holiness. They rejoice also on their own account because the ruin which was effected by Lucifer and his angels is remedied by the justification and sanctification of men, and because the places from which these angels fell are restored and filled up. It is a joy to God because He is φιλόψυχος, a lover of souls, and thirsts for the salvation of men.

Again the angels rejoice that the desire of God, whom they love above all things, is fulfilled, and that He is a partaker of this joy, as well as honoured by the penitence of the sinner. Apposite to this matter is the vision of Carpus, to whom Christ made known that He so longed for the conversion of sinners, as to be ready again to suffer death upon the Cross, if thereby this object could be effected. And Palladius relates that a certain Anchorite, who had fallen into sin, repented in sackcloth and ashes with many tears; whereupon an angel appeared to him and said, “The Lord hath accepted thy penitence, and hath had compassion on thee. Take heed that thou art not again led astray.”

By this argument, Christ rebukes the Pharisees for murmuring against Him because He companied with sinners in order to convert them. For the conversion of sinners is a work most pleasing to God and His angels. The Pharisees ought therefore to take part in this work, and to share in the rejoicing. For “all the fruit” of the Incarnation, and of the death of Christ upon the Cross is “to take away sin,” Isa. xxvii. 9,—“to bring in everlasting righteousness,” and to extend the kingdom of God. S. Matt. vi. 10. The knowledge of this ought to excite in every follower of Christ a zealous love for the souls of men.

Hence S. Gregory, when he heard that the English had been converted by the preaching of Augustine, rejoiced in spirit, and wrote; “If there is great joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what joy, think you, has there been over the conversion of so great a people; for by their repentance and faith they have condemned the sins which they aforesaid had committed. Whilst heaven is thus rejoicing, let us repeat the angelic strain, and let us all with one accord exclaim, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.’”

More than over ninety and nine just persons. God and His holy angels, then, rejoice over one penitent more than over one righteous man, nay, more than over ninety and nine just persons; because from the conversion of the sinner there arises a new joy, which seems more perceptible, and is in reality felt more than that continuous and long-standing joy which attaches itself to the ninety and nine; a joy which, although actually the greater, seems to men to lose its freshness by reason of its long duration. For the novelty of a thing which we long for awakens in us a vast and a new joy, which is felt all the more on account of its novelty, as we find when we receive tidings of victories or conversions; and Christ often speaks after the manner of men, especially in His parables. The saying of S. Bernard, that “The tears of penitents are the wine of the angels,” applies here:—The joy over the conversion of a sinner, writes Emmanuel Sà, is sensibly greater. Although in other respects, a man undoubtedly rejoices more over ninety-nine sheep than over one, and God joys more over ninety and nine just persons than over one sinner that repenteth.

S. Gregory adds that God and His angels rejoice the more, because penitents are wont to be more fervent in their love than those who have not fallen away. And elsewhere he says, “The life of fervent devotion which follows after sins committed is often more pleasing to God than that innocence which grows sluggish in its security.” “Just as the leader in battle loves that soldier more who, having turned from flight, bravely pursues the enemy, than he who never turned his back and never did a brave act.” “And as again the husbandman loves that land more which, after bearing thorns, yields abundant fruit, than that which never had thorns, and never gave him a plentiful crop.” Finally (*Hom.* 34), he cites the example of Victorinus who, having fallen into carnal sin, entered a monastery, and there subjected himself to the severest penance, and so merited to be transfused with the light of heaven, and to hear the voice of God, “Thy sin is forgiven thee!”

If therefore penance be of such avail in a sinner, how great, infers S. Gregory, must be its power in a just man! For many, he says, are conscious of no evil, yet subject

S. Peter Chrysologus (*Serm.* 2.) says, “Behold the effect of unbridled desires. It turned a citizen into an alien, a son into a hireling, a rich man into a beggar, a free man into a slave. It associated him whom it separated from a kind father with swine; that he who had despised a holy affection might be the slave of the greedy herd.”

S. Ambrose judges rightly that by the expression “he joined himself to” we are to understand a dangerous as well as a laborious service. For as a bird is snared when seeking food, so the unhappy sinner, hoping for the delights of freedom, falls into a perilous slavery.

And he sent him into his field. That is, says Bede, “he became a slave of earthly desires.”

To feed swine. “To feed swine,” says S. Chrysostom in the *Catena*, “is to nourish in the soul sordid and unclean thoughts. See here how marvellously the condition of the sinner is changed, as a just punishment for the foolish use he made of his freedom. He who was unwilling to be held in honour as a son, is obliged to become the bond slave of an alien. He who would not obey the laws of God, is compelled to serve Satan. He who would not abide in his father’s palace, is sent to dwell amongst clowns. He who would not associate with his brethren and with princes, becomes the attendant and companion of swine. He who refused the bread of angels, would fain satisfy his hunger with husks from the hog-trough.”

Ver. 16.—*And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.* So those who foolishly squander their possessions on others, find none to give them even husks in their misery and want. S. Chrysostom (*Serm.* 1) says, “Hunger, to luxury a torment, is now his lot, that where his guilt had been flagrant there an avenging punishment might rage.” And again, “How cruel a service! He lives with unclean animals, yet does not share in their feast. Wretched man that he is; half famished, he hungers for the swine’s coarse food, yet does not obtain it.

S. Jerome (*Epist.* 146) here remarks, “that the Devil, when he has brought a man into subjection, fires his soul with desires of all kinds, but cheats him of their gratification, that by longing after them he may increase his guilt, and by failing to gratify them may add to his punishment and misery.” Such is the deceitfulness and the tyranny of Satan. “Husks” are the empty pods of beans, peas, and the like, which fill but do not nourish the body. Yet country folk mix these husks with flour or meal, and make thereof a common kind of black bread on which they live. Hence Horace (*Epist.* 1, *lib.* ii.) writes, “He lives on husks and coarse bread.” Jansenius understands by “husks,” the fruit of the Carob tree, which is like a bean, of a blackish colour, curved, as long as a man’s finger, and as broad as his thumb. Each pod contains four berries called ceratia from their likeness to

received at his baptism, *i.e.* nobility of soul, and the capability of living a godly life, for such things as these made up the riches of the prodigal.

With riotous living. By living an abandoned life (*ἀσώτως*), only sinful but also luxurious and intemperate.

“A prodigal life,” says the Gloss, “loves to occupy itself in outward show, forgetful of God, who has His dwelling within.”

Ver. 14.—*And when he had spent all . . . he began to be in want.* Or, according to the Arabic, “he became destitute,” as those who lose by one year’s debauchery all that their parents have left them; and after that are reduced to misery and to begging their bread. Nor do they lose their property only, but their health and good name as well, and by reason of the foulness of their habits and the diseases which they contract, become a burden to themselves, and a disgust to their fellowmen. For it is acknowledged by all that luxury and extravagance make the richest poor, and reduce men to the very verge of starvation.

Mystically. The sinner suffers from the want of all things, whether of nature or of grace, because he turns the gifts which he possesses to his own destruction, and therefore is in a far worse condition than if he had never received them.

And again, the sinner being without God, lacks everything; for all things depend upon Him, and in Him live and have their being. Hence the Interlinear, “Every place whence the Father is absent, is a place of penury and want.” For he who has not God possesses nothing, although he be king of the whole world. Again he who has God possesses all things, although he may not have a farthing to call his own. Or, as S. Francis expresses it, “God is mine and all things.” For God alone can be said to be; and all things else compared to Him, not to be. See Exod. lii

Moreover, the Gloss says, “Pleasure always hungers for itself—the more we indulge in it, the more insatiably we thirst after it;” and S. Jerome, “Our health and strength depart from us by reason of our sinful indulgences, yet we do not lose the desire of indulging.

“While yet in sport, for other sports we burn,
In gardens fair, for other gardens yearn.”

Ver. 15.—*And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country*, *i.e.*, to an evil spirit, for the devils are the citizens of the country far off from God. So S. Augustine (*Quæst. Evang. lib. ii. q. 33.*) says, “He joined himself to a certain prince of the air belonging to the army of the devil, whose fields signify the manner of his power. The swine are the unclean spirits which are under him, and to feed them is to work those things in which they delight.”

So also S. Ambrose, “The citizen is the prince of this world,” and in like manner the Gloss.

themselves to austerities as extreme as if they were beset by every kind of sin. They eschew all things, even such as are lawful, they gird themselves about with a lofty disdain of earth and earthly things, they consider every pleasure forbidden, they deprive themselves of such good things as are allowed them, things that are seen they despise, they yearn for the things which are invisible, they rejoice in mourning, in all things they humble themselves, and deplore sins of thought, as many mourn over sins actually committed.

Ver. 8.—*Either that woman having ten pieces of silver, &c.* “Sweep,” or as the Arabic renders it, “cleanse;” not “overturn,” as some read with S. Gregory.

The “piece of silver,” or drachma, was a coin weighing the eighth part of an ounce. Hence S. Cyril explains, that by the parable of the lost sheep we are to understand, mystically, that we are the creatures of God who made us, and the sheep of His pasture, but that by this second parable we are taught that we were created in the image and likeness of God, just as the coin bears the image of the king.

S. Gregory (*Hom. 34*), very fully explains the parable, and applies it in the following manner: “He who is signified by the shepherd, is signified also by the woman. For it is God Himself—God and the wisdom of God. And because there is an image impressed on the piece, the woman lost the piece of silver when man, who was created after the image of God, by sinning fell away from the likeness of his Creator. The woman lighted a candle, because the wisdom of God appeared in man. For the candle is a light in an earthen vessel, but the light in an earthen vessel is the Godhead in the flesh, and when the candle was lit she overturned (*evertit*) the house. Because as soon as His divinity shone forth through the flesh, all our consciences were appalled. But the word ‘overturn’ differs not from the ‘cleanse’ or ‘sweep’ of the other MSS. Because the corrupt mind, if it be not first overthrown through fear is not cleansed from its habitual faults. But when the house is overturned the piece of silver is found, for when the conscience of man is disturbed, the likeness of the Creator is restored in him.” And again, “Who are the friends and neighbours but those heavenly powers afore mentioned, who are near to the Divine Wisdom, inasmuch as they approach Him through the grace of continual vision?” Hence in conclusion he says, “The woman had ten pieces of silver, because there are nine orders of angels, but, that the number of the elect might be filled up, man, the tenth, was created, who even after his sin did not fall utterly away from his Maker, because the eternal Wisdom, shining through the flesh by His miracles, restored him by the light of the earthen vessel.”

Or, as Theophylact interprets it, “The friends are all the heavenly powers; but the neighbours, the thrones—cherubims and seraphims—which are most nigh unto God.”

Lastly, S. Gregory Nyssen, says, "The ten pieces of silver are so many virtues, of which we ought to lack none, for like the commandments they are complete in themselves (decem). The candle is the divine word or perhaps the torch of repentance; the neighbours, reason, desire, anger, and such like affections."

Ver. 11.—*And He said, A Certain man had two sons.* This parable is the third of the series, and like the two preceding ones, is designed to show the joy which is in heaven over the conversion of a sinner. And so there are three principal persons in the parable, the father and his two sons, the elder careful of his possessions, the younger a spendthrift. The father is God, who created all men, or Christ, who redeemed and regenerated all men with His blood, and who daily regenerates them by baptism. The two sons are understood by universal consent to represent the Jews and the Gentiles. By the elder, who was ever with his father, we may understand the Jews; by the younger the Gentiles, who having worshipped God in the days of Adam and Noah, turned aside to idols and the sins of the flesh: an interpretation which is borne out by the 25th verse, for it was the Jews who murmured because the Gentiles were received into grace and favour by Christ.

But still more in accordance with the purpose of the parable, we may take the two sons to represent the just and the unjust, whether Jews or Gentiles. For the sinners with whom Christ companied, thereby causing the Pharisees to murmur against Him, were clearly Jews and not Gentiles.

The elder son represents the just, *i.e.* those who were really just, as well as those who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, claimed to be such.

The younger son, the prodigal, is put for open and notorious sinners, such as the publicans and harlots, with whom Christ was wont to associate in order that He might win them from the error of their way. So S. Jerome and most other interpreters explain the parable.

Ver. 12.—*And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.* The younger, *i.e.* sinners and harlots. For youth is less restrained, more foolish, more inconstant, and more prone to indulgences of every kind. According to the Fathers, the "goods," "substantia," must be taken to mean man's free will, called in Greek *βίος*. "Because by it," says S. Jerome, "man lives freely and as it pleases him." "For," observes Theophylact, "the substance of man is the capacity of reason which is accompanied by free will." S. Ambrose and others, by substance, understand more fitly the grace of God, virtues and good habits. For it is these which are really wasted and destroyed by the sinner, whilst his free will cannot be lost, as is clear from the parable. You may therefore take the word to mean all the gifts of God, of body and soul, of nature and grace; for these the younger son demands to be entirely given up to him, because he was unwilling any longer to submit to the authority of his father, but desirous of being his own master, and of being free to use or abuse the gifts of God as might seem to him good.

So S. Augustine (*Evang. lib. ii. q. 35*) writes, "To live, to understand, to remember, to

excel in quickness of intellect, these things are gifts of God, which men receive into their own power by freewill." So also S. Jerome, Titus, and Euthymius.

And he divided unto them his living. Placing the gifts just mentioned at the free disposal of each, for "He left man in the hand of his counsel." Ecclus. xv. 14.

Ver. 13.—*And not many days after the younger son, gathered all together,* or, according to the Syriac version, "collected together all that had come to him," *and took his journey, into a far country*—"far off," says Euthymius, "not by local separation, but by separation in point of virtue." Such is a state of concupiscence and sin, for the sinner by sinning goes far from God and from heaven, and subjects himself to the dominion of Satan. "But," says Euthymius, "the elder son being wise, remained with his father."

Hence S. Augustine goes on to say, "The far country is forgetfulness of God, a forgetfulness which is mutual, for inasmuch as the sinner forgets God, God in His turn is in a manner forgetful of the sinner, *i.e.* God ceases to bestow on him light, grace, or guidance." For S. Jerome says, "We must bear in mind that we are with God, or depart from Him, according to our disposition, not according to 'distances of place.'"

Therefore, adds Theophylact, "when a man departs from God, and from the fear of God, he wastes and consumes all God's gifts."

And there wasted his substance, *i.e.*, all the gifts of nature and grace. For the sinner, giving himself up to pleasure and licentiousness, incurs the loss of all God's gifts of grace.

He becomes dull of understanding and is unable to recognise God, or the beauty of holiness. He grows forgetful of God's law and God's goodness towards him. He so corrupts his will as to prefer vice to virtue, pleasure to reason, earth to heaven, the evil one to God; and forsaking the paths of virtue, gives himself up to every kind of evil. Hence he becomes destitute of counsel, reason, sense, and everything that is good; and at last, with all the powers of his soul and body, he worships the creature rather than the Creator, and falls into that sin to which the Psalmist refers, "So they that forsake Thee shall perish; Thou hast destroyed all them that commit fornication against Thee." Ps. lxxiii. 26.

The prodigal son "wasted all the graces of nature," says Euthymius, because, adds S. Augustine, "he made a wrong use of his natural gifts." "He then," says Titus, "expended his goods" (substantiam), *i.e.*, the light which was in him, temperance, the knowledge of the truth, the remembrance of God. And lastly, says Euthymius again, "he corrupted the gift which he had