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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Matthew 5: 6-18

Verse 6- *Blessed are they that hunger*, &c. The meaning both here and in S. Luke, who omits a *after righteousness*, is the same. Blessed are they who hunger after food and drink, in a spiritual sense, *i.e.*, not from any bodily necessity, but with a spiritual end and intention. They hunger and thirst after righteousness, because they wish by such hunger to increase righteousness in themselves and their neighbours. Maldonatus explains righteousness or justice (*justitiam*) to mean, *on account of justice*. Hence S. Luke (vi. 5) opposes these hungry ones to such that are full, *sc.* with wine and delicacies. *Woe to you that are full, for ye shall hunger*. The world calls blessed those that are full, but I, says Christ, call those who are hungry and thirsty with maceration of the flesh, so long as it is on account of their eagerness to obtain and augment righteousness, happy. So S. Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Hilary, Nyssen, Euthymius, Theophilus, and others. Thus hunger, or famine, is to be understood not in a corporeal, but a spiritual sense (Amos viii. 11): "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine upon the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for

Verse 18- *Until heaven pass away*. Not by nature and the perishing of nature, but by the mutation of its condition—that is, until heaven be changed from this state of corruption to a new and glorious state at the Resurrection. In other words, before the end of the world, when heaven and earth shall pass away, *i.e.*, shall be renewed, it is necessary that all things which are written of Me in the Law be fulfilled. Or, rather, *until heaven pass away* means until it wholly perish. The sentence is a hypothetical one, and means, sooner may heaven be destroyed, sooner the earth be riven in twain, sooner the universe come to an end, than the minutest point of the Law not be fulfilled, either in this life or in the life to come. So long, therefore, as heaven and earth shall stand, so long the whole Law shall stand. Heaven and earth shall endure for ever, much more shall the whole Law endure eternally, according to these words of Christ, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Whence the Greek is in the past tense, *ἕως ἄν παρέλθῃ*, meaning, the whole frame of the universe shall perish sooner than the Law of God.

Hear S. Irenæus. "Now, of the name *Ἰησοῦς*, *Jesus*, the letters *iota* and *eta*, *i* and *e*, make up the number 18. These, say the Valentinians, are the eighteen Æons; and this is why the Saviour said, *one jot or one tittle*, &c." A similar phrase is used in a similar sense (PS. lxxii. 7): "In his days justice shall arise, and abundance of peace until the moon be taken away;" also Ps. lxxxix. 37, meaning, "The sun and moon shall endure for ever, much more shall the throne of Christ remain eternally."

One jot. Christ, speaking to Hebrews, said, *one yod*, as the Syriac has. For the Greek translator substituted the equivalent, *iota*. *Yod* in Hebrew, like *iota* in Greek and *i* in Latin, is the smallest letter in the alphabet. From the letter *yod*, although the least, Valentinus, as S. Irenæus testifies, constructed the greatest heresy—*viz.*, that of his Æons, in truth portents of names, rather than names of real existences.

Or one tittle (Vulg. *apex*) of the law. He calls the *apices of the law*, not the Hebrew points and accents, which were not invented by the Rabbin until long after the time of Christ, but the tops or little extremities of the letters in which the Law was written.

Till all be fulfilled. All things, that is, which have been spoken concerning Me and My acts, My Church and Sacraments in the Law and the Prophets. Again, *all things* mean all which have been commanded, or promised, or threatened.

holiness, and who inflame them by the fire of their charity. Whence Christ says of John the Baptist, "He was a burning and shining lamp." (Vulg.) So Enoch and Elias are called two olive-trees, and two candelabra. (Apoc. xi. 4.)

Verse 16- *Let your light, &c. That they may see, &c.* The particle *that* denotes that the Apostles of Christ and all their followers must be careful to shine both in word and example, *not for themselves* but for God, in order that they may draw men to God; and by considering this we may reconcile what is here said with Christ's teaching in chap. vi. 1, 2, and 5. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, *that ye may be seen of them.*" The emphasis is upon these last words, that the Apostles should not do righteous works with any such end in view as being glorified and praised by men; but here Christ commends the doing of good works before men, so this only end be kept in view, that they may glorify God by them. Hear S. Gregory (3 p. *Pastor. Admonit.* 36): "Why then is it commanded that our work shall be so done as not to be seen, and yet that it shall be seen, but that what we do must be hidden, so that we ourselves be not praised, and yet must be made manifest that we may increase the glory of our Heavenly Father? For when the Lord forbids our doing our righteousness before men, He immediately adds, *lest we should be seen of them;* and when, on the other hand, he tells us that our good works should be seen of men, he forthwith subjoins, *that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Whether, therefore, works should be seen, or not seen, He showed must be according to the end we have in view."

Verse 17- *Think not that I am come to destroy* (Gr. *καταλύσαι*, *to dissolve, abolish*) *the law and the prophets.* Christ's special meaning in this place is that He came to fulfill the moral precepts of the Law by teaching and expounding them more perfectly, and by substituting the sanction of eternal for temporal rewards and punishments, and by adding to things of precept evangelical counsels of perfection, as will be plain from what follows. It is also meant that Christ supplied the imperfection of the Law of Moses by justifying us through faith and the sacraments of the New Law, which He instituted, which the Law of Moses could not do.

Verse 18- *Verily I say, &c. Verily,* Gr. *Amen—i.e., "in truth;"* whence Aquila translates the Hebrew *amen* by *πεπιστομενως—i.e., faithfully, truly, certainly.* As S. Jerome says (*Epist. ad Sophron.*), "Amen is the word not of one who swears, but of one who affirms something he is about to say, or confirms something which he has said. In the former case it is prefixed, in the latter it is affixed, as it were a seal." This may be seen from Deut. xxvii. 26, &c., and 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Wherefore the LXX translate the word by *γενοιτο, may it be done.* In this place Amen has the meaning of affirming and gravely asserting.

Moreover, Christ Himself is called *Amen*, Apoc. iii. 14: "Thus saith the Amen, the Faithful Witness."

water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." Also Ecclus. xxiv. 29: "They that eat me (wisdom) shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty." To these words Christ here alludes.

The 1st degree of this Beatitude is to bear patiently hunger or thirst arising from public or private scarcity of food. The 2nd, to hunger and thirst in voluntary fasting, that by your fasting, you may make satisfaction for your sins, and gain the grace of God for yourselves and your neighbours. The 3rd is, for the faith of Christ to endure prisons, and in them hunger and thirst, even unto death, as befell some of the martyrs. The 4th, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the increase of all virtue. Whence S. Leo says, "To love God is nothing else than to love righteousness."

Righteousness.

1. Righteousness or justice may here be taken for that special virtue which gives to every one their right. As if it were said, "Blessed are they who hunger for justice, who eagerly desire that justice which once fled from the world, according to that verse of Ovid, "Last, the lands, all wet with slaughter, Left Astræa, Heaven's own daughter," that she may return again to earth, and rule over the whole world, and defend the right. Such are they who, oppressed by tyrants, or unjust men, desire that their rights may be restored. Such are they who see widows and orphans oppressed, and have an ardent longing to see them rescued from injustice, and their oppressors punished. For as Aristotle (*Ethics*) says, "Neither the evening star, nor the sun shines as brightly as justice." And as Cicero says (lib. 2 *de Offic.*), "So great is the force of justice, that not even those who feed on evil-doing and wickedness can live in them without some particle of justice."

2. And more fully, take righteousness here to mean a generic term for virtue, yea, the circle of all virtues, because, for it we ought not only to wish, but vehemently to hunger after and covet it, that we may fill our soul with virtues.

Hear what S. Bernard says (*Epist. 253 ad Garinum*), explaining the insatiable desire of profiting in the righteous. "The just man never deems that he has apprehended, never says it is enough, but is always hungering and thirsting after righteousness; so that if he lived always, he would be always striving, as far as in him lies, to be more just, always endeavouring with all his might to go on from good to better, not merely for a year or some set time, like a hireling, but for ever he would surrender himself to the Divine service. Therefore unwearied zeal in making progress, and constant striving after perfection, is counted perfection." And then he concludes with a reference to Jacob's ladder.

"Jacob beheld a ladder, and on the ladder angels, but none of them resting or standing still; but all were either ascending or else descending; whereby

is given plainly to understand that in the state of this mortal life there can no middle course be found between going forward and going back. For just as our body is perpetually either increasing or decreasing, so also must the soul be either making progress or else going backward.”

Well says S. Augustine, “The whole life of a good Christian is holy desire.”

For they shall, &c. “God will give here a constant increase of His grace to those who hunger after it.” “And in heaven,” says S. Bernard, “eternal hunger shall be recompensed with eternal reflection.”

Verse 7- Blessed are the merciful.

Mercy is joined to justice because every work of virtue is either of debt, which is justice, or else of free gift, which is mercy, and because mercy tempers and sweetens justice. Worldlings count those blessed who give little and receive much: but Christ pronounces a paradox, which yet is most true, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts xx. 35), where I have gone fully into the reasons of this Beatitude, especially this one, “for they shall obtain mercy.”

The same celestial Beatitude which Christ promised to the poor in spirit, under the name of *the kingdom of heaven*, He here promises to the merciful by the name of *mercy*, because, as the Apostle says (Rom. vi. 23), “life eternal is of grace,” both because God promises it freely to those who do well and give alms, as because grace is the beginning of good works and merit. For grace prevents and stirs us up to good works, and gives them a divine worthiness and power of meriting. “Life eternal,” says S. Augustine (*de Corrept. et Gratiâ*, c. 13), “is grace for grace—that is, grace for the merits which grace has conferred,” according to that in Ps. ciii., “Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassions” (Vulg.). Whence the Syriac renders, *Blessed are the merciful, for mercies shall be upon them*. As though He said, *To the merciful shall be recompensed, not one but many mercies*. God, therefore, bestows upon the merciful life and everlasting glory, which is the highest grace, and is here signified by the name of mercy; for, as S. Augustine says (*Epist.* 105), “When God crowns our merits, He does nothing else than crown His own gifts.”

The degrees of mercy are: 1. To sympathize with the wretched. 2. To alleviate corporeal misery by alms. 3. To bring succour to the ignorance of the mind, or to those who are burdened with sin. 4. To seek out the wretched, that we may help them. 5. To deprive yourself of advantages in order to succour them. 6. To spend all you are and all you have, even life itself, for them, as Christ, S. Paul, and S. Paulinus did.

Symbolically. Mercy—i.e., the vision and possession of God, and God Himself, is promised. For the nature of God is nothing else than mercy, according to the words of the fifty-ninth Psalm, “My God my mercy.” (Vulg.) Give therefore to the poor, and you receive God. For alms is not so much mercy as a vast interest and usury with God. Whence the saying: “If you wish to be a usurer lend to God.” As it is in Proverbs,

S. Chrysostom (*Hom.* 10 in *Epist. ad Timoth.*) says, “For this purpose hath He chosen us, that we should be as lights, and act as leaven, that as angels we should be conversant with men on earth, that we should act as men with boys, as spiritual with those who are carnal.” The sun is in heaven, but from thence it disperses its rays upon the earth; so do thou be with thy mind in heaven, whilst thy body is on earth, that thou mayest by thy conversation, and the example of thy virtue, illuminate, warm, and kindle it; so shalt thou be a light and a sun to the world.

S. Chrysostom adds something to be pondered deeply: “Assuredly, there would be no heathen, if we Christians took care to be what we ought to be; if we obeyed God’s precepts, if we bore injuries without retaliation, if when cursed we blessed, if we rendered good for evil. For no man is so savage a wild beast, that he would not run forthwith to the worship of the true religion, if he saw all Christians acting as I have said. And that you may learn that it is so, consider how many one Paul drew to the knowledge of God. If we were all like him, how many worlds might we not be able to win?”

A city set on an hill, &c. Christ here compares His Apostles, 1. To salt. 2. To light. 3. To a city conspicuous on a mountain. The Church, that is to say, the prelates of the Church. are often compared in the Psalms to the same thing, as Ps. xlvi. and xlviiii. and lxxxvii; also Is. lx., lxx., and Ezek. xl. As, therefore, a city upon a mountain cannot be hid, but strikes the eyes of all beholders, so do apostles, prelates, and priests come before the eyes of all men, that if they discharge their office rightly, and preach the gospel more by their lives than by their words, they will attract many to Christ, and have praise of all: but if they do otherwise, they will turn many away from the Saviour and be blamed by all.

Verse 15- Neither do men light a candle, &c. A candle is not wont to be hid under a bushel, *i.e.*, under a vessel, as the Syriac, the Hebrew, and S. Luke have it, *of measurement*, but it is placed on high on a candlestick. So be ye, O ye Apostles! who are placed on a higher step of office and dignity, that ye may enlighten all by your preaching and sanctity.

Allegorically. SS. Hilary, Ambrose, and Bede say, that it is here meant that the light of the Gospel was not to be shut up within the narrow confines of Judæa, but to be placed upon the height of Rome, that it might illuminate all the subject nations.

1 *Candle*, Gr. *λύχνον*, *i.e.*, lamp, torch, candle, anything which gives light; for torches and candles are properly placed upon stands, and in Italy, lamps upon lamp-stands. So also the Hebrew *לפיד* *lappid*, which we translate, lamp or lantern, signifies anything which gives a light of flame. Hence lamps and torches, as here and elsewhere in Scripture, signify holy, and especially Apostolic men, who illuminate others by the light of their doctrine and

to be a priest among the people, that whosoever is joined to a priest, he may be seasoned, as if from a rock of salt, with the seasoning of eternal life." Let priests read that entire homily of S. Gregory's, and they will find it a golden mirror for their life, that they may be the salt of the earth. Wisely saith S. Chrysostom, "Do you wish to know if the people of any place are righteous? Look what sort of a pastor they have. If you find him pious, just, sound, believe the people will be the same, for they are seasoned with the salt of his wisdom."

But if the salt have lost his savour, &c. If an apostle, if a bishop, if a priest—who ought, like salt, to season the morals of others—shall, through gluttony, uncleanness, fear, or flattery, lose the vigour of his spiritual salt, who shall restore it to him? No one. This may be seen in the case of some of the priests and pastors of the past age, who either led scandalous lives, or else were ignorant and negligent in instructing the people wandering in, or verging upon, heresy. Whence the ecclesiastical order came into sad contempt, whence the heresies of Luther, Calvin, and the rest sprung up, who, says Maldonatus, are like unto unsavoury bugs: when they are alive they bite, when dead they give out an offensive smell.

Trodden under foot, &c. "For it is not he who suffers persecution," says S. Augustine, "who is trodden under foot of men, but he who is so foolish as to fear persecution. For only an inferior can be trodden down; but an inferior he cannot be whose heart is fixed in heaven, although his body may suffer many things upon earth."

Although salt be of an igneous nature, yet it dissolves if it be mingled with water. A good religious priest too is dissolved and becomes effeminate, if he associate too much with women, even pious ones. Hear what the Elder, cited by John Moschus, says in his *Spiritual Meadow*, c. 217: "My little children, salt is of water; and if it approach water, forthwith it fails and is dissolved. A monk suffers the same from a woman; and if he approach a woman, he too is dissolved, and comes to such a pass that he is no more a monk."

So too does a priest come to naught if he be too accommodating to people of the world. Let him remember that he ought to be salt, and preserve his vigour, gravity, and liberty in rebuking vices. Let him not be ashamed to profess openly that he is an ecclesiastic and a religious, that is, a worshipper of God, a spiritual person, a despiser of the world, a lover of heavenly things. "Let him enter with another man's, let him go out with his own," says our S. Ignatius. That is, in the beginning, let him accommodate himself to the disposition and speech of seculars, but afterwards let him dexterously bring them round to spiritual things, to change of character, to sanctity of life. Thus shall he be as the salt of the world.

Verse 14- *Ye are the light of the world. Ye are;* again this means, *ye are* by My election and commission what *ye ought to be* in actual truth. *The light of the world*, that ye may by the light of your doctrine and evangelical life illuminate the world obscured by the darkness of errors and sins. So S. Hilary.

"He that giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and what he layeth out it shall be paid him again." As S. Chrysologus says (*Serm.* 42), "God eateth the bread in heaven which the poor man hath received on earth. Give, then, your bread, give your drink, if you would have God for your debtor instead of your judge." Powerfully writes S. Augustine (on Ps. xxxvii.), "Consider what the usurer does: he wishes to give little and gain much. Do thou the same. Give small things, receive great. Behold how wonderfully your interest grows. Give temporal things, receive eternal. Give earth, receive heaven." Lastly, S. Chrysostom (*Hom.* 32 in *Epist. ad Heb.*) says, "Almsgiving is a virgin who hath golden wings, and is seen of all. She hath a beautiful girdle. Her face is gentle and comely. Her carriage is graceful, and she always stands before the throne of the King. When we are judged, straightway she comes to our aid, and delivers us from punishment, overshadowing us with her wings. God Himself loves her better than innumerable sacrifices."

Verse 8- Blessed are the pure in heart

1. A pure heart means a chaste mind, free from all lust and carnal concupiscence. As though He said, Blessed, not those who have a clear intellect, as philosophers, nor yet those who have clean and fashionable clothes, which many cannot have, but who have a pure and chaste mind which all can have. So S. Chrysostom.
2. And more fully: Blessed are those who have a pure conscience—those, namely, who have cleansed it from every stain of sin, from evil thoughts and desires, from passions and perturbations, from all evil intention, and especially from all duplicity and hypocrisy. Thus if a fountain be pure and unmuddy, so will the waters which flow from it be pure and un-muddy likewise; and if the heart be pure, the actions which spring from it will be pure and clean. So S. Jerome.
3. And most fully: They are in the highest grade of purity of heart, who have cleansed their hearts from all creature love, that their hearts may be like that of an angel—a pure mirror—and shrine of the Deity.

Cassian (lib. 6 *de Instit. Renunc.*, c. 10) gives it as a mark of perfect purity of heart when any one has no impure dreams, but all his visions are pure and holy. Moreover, Cassian and Sulpitius, (lib. 4 *Vit. Pat.*, c. 31) describe the ladder by which we may mount by degrees to this purity. "The beginning of our salvation is the fear of the Lord. Of the fear of the Lord is born wholesome compunction. From compunction proceedeth contempt of possessions, and divesting ourselves of them. From this divesting proceeds humility. Of humility is generated mortification of the will. By mortification of the will all vices are rooted out. When vices are expelled, virtues fructify and increase. By the growth of virtues purity of heart is gained. By purity of heart the perfection of apostolic charity is possessed."

Wherefore S. Anthony, according to S. Athanasius, teaches that purity of heart is the way to prophecy. "If any one would be in a position," he says,

“to know future events, let him have a clean heart, for I believe that the soul which serves God, if it shall persevere in that wholeness in which it has been born again, is able to know more than the demons. Such was the soul of Eliseus, who was wont to perform miracles unknown to others.”

For they shall see God—i.e., face to face, and shall be blessed with the vision of God. “Cleanness of heart, and purity of conscience,” says Chromatius, “will suffer no cloud to obscure the vision of God.” Hear S. Leo (*Serm. in Fest. Omn. Sanct.*): “Let all the mists of earthly vanities pass away, and let the interior eyes be cleansed from all squalor of iniquity, that the purified sight may feed only upon the vision of God.” Hence it is plain, as S. Augustine says, that God is seen by the blessed, not with the eyes, but with the heart—*i.e.*, with the mind.

Lastly, this vision of God may be understood to mean the pure and affectionate knowledge which He often imparts in greater degree in this life to the pure in heart than to others. Let, then, every one say, with Herminius, “I had rather die than be defiled in heart.”

Verse 9- Blessed are the peacemakers.

As though Christ said, The world calls blessed those who bravely wage war, and subdue their enemies, but I pronounce those to be blessed who reconcile those who quarrel and fight, and recall them to peace and union among themselves and with God. This, indeed, is a work arduous and difficult, but one most pleasing to God. So S. Chrysostom, &c. (See S. Gregory, 3 p. *Pastor. Admonit.* 24.)

The degrees of this Beatitude are—1. To have or procure inward peace of soul with God. 2. To cultivate peace with neighbours and friends. 3. To recall those who disagree to the concord of charity. The 4th grade is to make others like ourselves, by instilling into them a zeal for peace, that they too may study to make peace between those who disagree.

There might be a religious order or congregation instituted to promote this object, with great profit to the Church, in the same way that congregations have been instituted for the promotion of the other works of mercy—such as nursing the sick, showing hospitality to strangers, burying the dead, &c. Similarly, there might be founded a congregation of peacemakers, whose office it would be to quell all lawsuits in a city, and to bring back all who quarrelled to concord and charity. For this is an exemplary work of charity, in which one Father (Gaspar Barzaus, of Goa) so excelled, that the lawyers said they should die of hunger, in consequence of his putting an end to all the litigations by which they gained a living. (See his Life, written by Father Trigantius.) In fact, in some cities, such congregations of peacemakers have been founded, by which much harm arising from discords, strifes, hatreds, has been warded from the commonwealth.

For they shall be called, &c., i.e., they shall be sons of God.

1. For God very greatly loveth peace, and for its sake He sent His Son into the world.

wisdom. For as salt seasons food and makes it savoury, so does wisdom season the mind and make it wise. Thus in Latin a foolish man is called a man without salt (*insulsus*) or unsalted, according to the verse of Catullus—“Not one grain of salt in so big a body.”

The Apostles therefore were salt because they corrected the unsavoury morals of the world, and made them wise and savoury.

3. Salt, says Pliny (lib. 31, c. 10), contains two elements, of an igneous and watery nature—igneous because it is sharp, like fire, and if it be cast into fire it makes it flare up; and if salt be cast into water it is dissolved in it. The same Pliny adds (c. 9) that there is nothing more beneficial to the body than salt. The Apostles therefore were the salt of the earth, because by their igneous force they kindled it with the love of God, and by their aqueous flow of words and their wisdom they watered its dryness as with a spiritual dew, and made it fruitful, that it should bring forth the fruit of good works and all virtues.

4. Salt flavours insipid food, and by its pungency renders it pleasant and wholesome. Thus the Apostles have emended the insipid and foolish opinions, mistakes, and customs of men by their forcible language, and made them pleasing to God and the angels.

5. As salt penetrates flesh, and preserves it from corruption by drying up the humours by which flesh is corrupted, so have the Apostles taken away from the minds of men the corruption of fleshly concupiscences, and preserved them for the immortality of everlasting incorruption. So Cicero (lib. 2 *de Nat. Deorum*) says, “What hath a sow besides its flesh? Chrysippus says that a soul hath been given it for salt, lest it should corrupt.” Thus to men who, like sows, were wallowing in flesh and blood, God hath given the Apostles, as it were salt and a soul, which might spiritually animate them, lest they should putrefy.

6. Salt excites thirst. So the Apostles have excited a thirst for heavenly things. Hear S. Hilary. “The Apostles are the preachers of heavenly things and, as it were, sowers of eternity: they bring immortality to all upon whom their speech is sprinkled.” Or Euthymius: “Ye have been chosen by Me to cure all the putridity of the world: ye are the salt of the earth.”

7. Salt, by its pungency, bites and pricks, dries and burns. Listen to Pliny (lib. 31, c. 7): “The nature of salt is igneous, and yet an enemy to fire. Putting it to flight, it dries substances and binds them together. But salt has such power over dead and putrescent substances that by its means they will endure for ages.” Thus, too, the Apostles, by their sharp and fiery speech, and by their life, have bitten, pricked, dried up, and shaken off the vices of men. Hear S. Gregory (*Hom.* 17): “If we are salt we ought to season the minds of the faithful. As is among brute beasts a rock of salt, so ought

intimates that they succeeded to the place of the prophets, yea, were superior to them, because they were called to loftier things, to preach, not the Law, but the Gospel, not only to the Jews, but to the whole world. Wherefore He subjoins, *Ye are the salt of the earth, &c.*

Observe here, as against modern heretics, the word *reward* (Gr. *μισθός, hire, wages*, Lat. *merces*) from whence we collect the merit of good works. For the merit is merit of reward, and the reward is the reward of merit.

Listen to S. Cyprian (lib. 4, *Epist.* 6): “The Lord hath willed us to rejoice and exult in persecution, because when the persecutions are accomplished, then are given the crowns of faith, then the soldiers of God are approved, then the heavens are opened to the martyrs.”

Thus did S. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, exult, when sent to Rome. Bravely and with alacrity he entered the amphitheatre, and looking round upon the vast multitude of at least a hundred thousand people, he saluted them in a friendly manner, and said, “Do not think, O ye Romans, that I am here condemned to the wild beasts on account of any evil deed, for I have committed none, but because I desire to be united to Christ, for whom I insatiably thirst.” And when he heard the lions roaring he said, “I am the corn of Christ, let me be ground by the teeth of the beasts, that I may be found pure bread.” Read his Epistle to the Romans, in which he begs, and as it were conjures, them, not to hinder his martyrdom nor take away his crown from him. “I wish to enjoy the beasts which are prepared for me. If they will not come to me I will use force. Now I begin to be a disciple of Christ.”

This is the thought which S. James proposes to be as it were the theme of his Epistle: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;” where I have said a good deal upon this subject.

Verse 13- *Ye are the salt, &c.* That is, you, O ye Apostles, who are sitting here next to Me, to whom I have spoken primarily the eight Beatitudes—*ye are*, by My election and appointment (for I have chosen and appointed you unto this) *the salt of the earth, i.e.,* ye ought to be, and by My grace ye shall be. Christ passes from the Beatitudes to salt, because He delivers His moral teaching after the manner of the ancients, by short, separate maxims, and because the connection here may be easily traced. You, O Apostles, whom I choose to be, after My example, humble, meek, &c., shall, in so being, be the salt of the world.

You ask why does Christ call His Apostles the salt of the earth rather than the gold, or silver, or precious stones? I answer,

1. Because salt is a thing universally necessary and useful. Salt is as it were the balsam of nature, which preserves and seasons almost all things with which it is mixed, and keeps them from corruption. Thus the Apostles were the salt, *i.e.,* the balsam of the earth.
2. Salt denotes the office, power, and dignity of the Apostles. For salt is the symbol of

For He Himself is in His essence peace and union: for God Himself unites and joins in closest union the Three Divine Persons in one and the same undivided Essence and Godhead. Hence God is called the God of peace (Philip. iv.); as, on the contrary, the devil is a god of contention, and they who sow it are sons of the devil.

2. Peacemakers are called the sons of God, because they share in the name and office of Christ the Son of God, whose office it is to reconcile men to God and one another, and to bring to the world that peace which the world cannot give. Whence His name is the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah ix. 6.)

3. Most properly and most fully, the peacemakers shall be called and shall be sons of God and heirs of God in celestial glory, which they shall inherit as the reward of their efforts to make peace. For in heaven all the Saints are, through the beatific glory, sons and heirs of God. “These are the peacemakers,” says S. Leo (*Serm. in Fest. Omn. Sanc.*); “these who are of one mind, who shall be called by an everlasting title sons of God, and co-heirs with Christ, for this shall be the reward which love of God and our neighbour shall win, that it shall feel no adversity, fear no scandal, but, all the contest of temptation being finished, it shall rest in the most tranquil peace of God.”

Verse 10- *Blessed are the which are persecuted, &c.* This is the eighth and chief Beatitude, subsisting in suffering and patience, whereas the others were placed in action. Whence S. Ambrose says, “He leads thee to the end. He brings you up to martyrdom, and there He fixes the palm of the Beatitudes.” For it is more difficult to suffer hard things than to do difficult things, according to the saying, “To act bravely is the part of a Roman, to suffer bravely is the part of a Christian.”

Acutely and subtilly does Nyssen (on the Beatitudes) trace out the etymology of *persecution*, which is a word used of those who run and follow, and strive to surpass those who are before them in a race. And so Nyssen meditates thus, that a holy man and tribulation, or persecution, as it were, are running together, but that when he does not give in to persecution, he, as the victor, runs in front, but persecution follows behind his back, and for that reason is called persecution; because, saith he, their enemies follow the righteous, but do not overtake them, for they are overcome by the patience and constancy of the righteous.

For righteousness’ sake. Because they are just, because they are Christians, because they follow after justice, because they keep the law of God, or the statutes of their Order, or defend the property and rights of the Church, and stand up for the rights of orphans, or because they are zealous for the reformation of the clergy or their monastery. For righteousness here has a wide signification, and embraces every kind of virtue, says S. Chrysostom. Although, indeed, some philosophers seem to have suffered and been

killed for the sake of righteousness, as Socrates was put to death because he said, "Many gods ought not to be worshipped but one God only;" yet where there is not true faith nor charity, there neither is true and perfect righteousness, says S. Augustine.

1. Blessed, then, are they who suffer for righteousness' sake, because persecution separates us from the world, and unites us to God.
2. Because we suffer it for the sake of God.
3. Because by this we become like Christ, who all His life long, unto the death of the Cross, was persecuted by the Jews. "Let us therefore go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Heb. xiii.) The Church has always increased in time of persecution, decreased in prosperity. So too with all the religious orders.

For this cause God sends, *i.e.*, permits, persecution to come upon the faithful, clergy or religious, to cut down the vices which, like tares, spring up in a time of peace, and revive the primitive vigour of virtue. In this way, under the two Philips, Christian Emperors of Rome, the virtue of the faithful languished in peace, and Christians gave themselves up to gluttony, avarice, and pride. Then God sent the Emperors Decius and Valerian, who sharpened the virtue of believers by persecution. This was revealed to S. Cyprian, as he himself declares (lib. 4, *Epist.* 4), "Ye may know that this reproof was given by a vision, that we were sleeping in our prayers. This persecution is the trial and examination of our sins." And (*Serm. de Laps.*), "A long peace had corrupted the discipline delivered unto us: heavenly correction has raised up prostrate and all but slumbering faith: there was no devoted religion among the clergy, no inward faith in their ministrations, no mercy in works, no discipline in morals," &c. Eusebius gives the same reason for the persecution under Diocletian. (*Hist.* lib. 8, c. 1.)

Wherefore B. Francis Borgia, the third General of the Jesuits, was wont to say, there are three things which preserve the Society of Jesus: 1. The study of prayer. 2. The union of the members among themselves. 3. Persecution. And he gives the reasons. Prayer binds us closely to God; concord unites the brethren with one another; persecution separates us from the world, and compels us to act with prudence, that our persecutors may have no handle against us.

For theirs, &c. He begins the Beatitudes with the kingdom of heaven, and He ends them there. He assigns it to the first and last Beatitudes, that we may understand that it is implied in the intervening six. S. Ambrose, indeed, thinks that the heavenly kingdom is a promise to the poor in spirit *quoad* the soul, which presently migrates from death to heaven; but to those who suffer persecution, *quoad* the body, which shall be endowed with eternal glory in heaven after the Resurrection. Beautifully and accurately does S. Augustine (*Ps.* 94) make God speak thus, "I have something for sale." "What, O Lord?" "The kingdom of heaven." "How is it to be purchased?" "The kingdom by poverty, joy by sorrow, rest by labour, glory by vileness, life by death." Note, 1. That these eight Beatitudes are all connected among themselves. Nor, indeed, is any one blessed who has the first, unless he has the other seven likewise.

That I may say all in a word, it is, Blessed are they who despise the good things of this world through poverty of spirit, and its honours through meekness, and its pleasures through mourning, who moreover follow hard after justice and mercy, and come to purity of heart; those also who labour to make others have peace with God and among themselves, and finally who, because of these and other works of righteousness, suffer persecution, for this is the apex of Christian perfection and blessedness. Again, the first Beatitude disposes to and becomes a step to the second, the second to the third, and so on, as S. Ambrose, Leo, and others teach. For poverty of spirit or humility disposes to meekness, for the humble are meek; meekness disposes to mourning, for the meek soon perceive their own and others' afflictions. Grief or compunction disposes to hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thirsting after righteousness disposes to mercy, for he who desires to increase in righteousness and holiness does works of mercy. Mercy disposes to purity of heart, because almsdeeds quench sin as water does fire, and increase the charity which loves God alone with a pure heart. Purity of heart disposes us both to be at peace with ourselves, and to promote peace among others, since strifes and wars arise from a heart which is impure and full of covetousness. Lastly, those who promote peace and the other virtues spoken of, fall under the hatred of many who are depraved and covetous, and are persecuted by them, which persecution they nobly endure, and so perfect the crown of these eight Beatitudes, and crown themselves with it.

Observe, lastly, how S. Augustine (lib. 1 *de Serm. Dom. in Mont.*) beautifully compares the seven Beatitudes to the seven gifts of the Spirit. The fear of God is consonant to the humble, piety to the meek, wisdom to mourners, strength to the hungry and thirsty, counsel to the merciful, understanding to the pure in heart, wisdom to the peacemaker.

Verse 11- *Blessed are ye when men shall revile* (Gr. *ὀνειδίσωσι*) *you*, &c. Because, *i.e.*, ye follow My faith, My morals, My life. *Falsely* (Syr. *in a lie*), because, forsooth, they falsely accuse you as disturbers of the public, innovators, superstitious for making a God of a crucified man and worshipping Him. This, therefore, is the summit of beatitude, to suffer patiently and generously—yea, joyfully—all wrongs and injuries for the sake of Christ, for piety and virtue's sake.

Verse 12- *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad*, &c. Rejoice in calumnies, in false accusations, in persecutions, for, 1. By them ye are blessed. 2. Because there awaits you an ample reward in heaven. 3. Because ye are like the prophets, such as Isaiah, who, on account of his prophecies, was sawn asunder by Manasseh with a saw; Jeremiah, who was stoned by the Jews to death; and the rest of the prophets, who were almost all put to death in one way or another. He animates His own disciples by the example of the prophets, because by sharing their lot in suffering persecution they were about to become sharers in their society and glory. By this Christ tacitly