

The  
Proof Texts of the Catechism

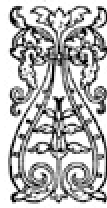
with a

Practical Commentary

By

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## PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

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Prof. Augustus L. Graebner, D. D., originated this book by the serial publication of its first six chapters in the *Theological Quarterly* (now the *Theological Monthly*) in 1898. Subsequently Prof. W. H. T. Dau, D. D., his successor as editor, continued the instalments, embracing chapter seven, thereafter passing on the task to Professor Louis Wessel, D. D. When the publication of these contributions to the *Theological Quarterly* was discontinued, Doctor Wessel carried the work to its conclusion, and in 1920 the Concordia Supply Company of the Springfield Concordia Seminary published a complete edition in two volumes.

This edition is now exhausted, and the present publishers have acquired all publication rights of this valuable text- and reference book. This edition is a zinco-photographic reproduction, a process that does not permit of any changes or improvements in the typography, but makes it possible for the publishers to offer the book at a price much more reasonable than would have been possible if it had been reset.

## ***FOREWORD***

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“The Proof Texts of the Catechism with a Practical Commentary” is the caption of a series of articles now running in the “Theological Quarterly” for well-nigh twenty-two years. The commentary was begun by Dr. A. Graebner of our St. Louis theological seminary in 1898. Advocating a thorough exegetical study of the texts as essential to thorough *preparation* for the work in the class room, and desiring “to be of some assistance toward such preparatory work in the minister’s study,” he “offered a series of specimens, according to which others might continue the work and prepare for themselves an exegetical commentary of all the proof texts of the catechism.” Since they were to be specimens only, the articles were discontinued. What happened? Dr. Graebner says: “From the time we discontinued our articles to the present day so many requests for a resumption of our humble efforts came to us from individual brethren and entire conferences that we are inclined to take up the series where we left it in 1899 and continue these commentaries for the benefit of such as may have use for them in the service of the Master.” (Theol. Quart., Vol. V., p. 91.)

Upon the death of this brilliant scholar in December 1904, Prof. W H. T. Dau, the successor of Dr. Graebner in the editorial chair of the Theological Quarterly, continued the commentary during the year 1906. His many duties becoming too onerous, he prevailed upon Prof. Louis Wessel, of our Springfield theological seminary, to carry on the work. Prof. Wessel began his labors in 1907 and still continues the good work to this day.

When the commentary on the proof passages of the Third Article was nearing completion, requests from ministers, teachers, and students became more and more insistent to publish the commentary in book form.

Complying with this demand, we diffidently undertook the task. In the present volume all the passages in our Synodical Catechism (Dr. Schwan’s) have been covered from *The Introduction* down to the close of the *Third Article*.

From the many encouraging letters we have received, hailing our enterprise with joy, we infer that our fond hope of rendering a distinct service to the brethren in the ministry and to the teachers in our church schools by the publication of the Proof Texts has been realized. May God’s blessing accompany the study of this book.

EDWARD A. WESTCOTT, '20.

PAUL HILGENDORE, '20.

Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, III.  
March 24, 1920.

## GENERAL REMARKS

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Proof texts, in a Catechism, serve a twofold purpose. In the first place, they are adduced as *sources* from which the various points of doctrine exhibited in the questions and answers of the catechism are drawn. Then, again, inasmuch as catechisms present these doctrines in terms chosen and arranged by the authors of such catechisms, the texts are added with a view of showing that these statements of doctrine are in full agreement with the *norm* of Christian doctrine, the holy Scriptures. As these texts, or many of them, are to be memorized by the catechumens, they should not be longer than is necessary for a complete statement of the point or points they are to substantiate. But their brevity does not render them unavailable for their purpose in the catechism; for every plain statement of Scripture is “Scripture” that “cannot be broken” (John 10, 35), and “profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3, 16). Besides, the catechetical instructor is not, in his exposition of the texts, enjoined from entering upon the context and turning its light upon the words adduced in the book; on the contrary, remembering that the exposition and application of the proof texts is the more important part of his work, he will feel thoroughly prepared for his lesson only after careful exegetical preparation for this part of his task. It may be needless to say that we do not think of recommending or inculcating a learned grammatico-historical and theological exegesis before a class of catechumens. But we do recommend a thorough exegetical study of the texts as essential to thorough *preparation* for the work in the class room, and the desire to be of some assistance toward such preparatory work in the minister’s study prompts us to offer the following specimens.

## INTRODUCTION

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1 Pet. 2, 2: *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

These words are addressed to Christians (1 Pet. 1, 1.2), who were born again by the word of God (1 Pet. 1, 23), which by the gospel is preached to them (1 Pet. 1, 25). In view of this new birth, they are called *newborn babes*, who have recently entered into spiritual life, not, however, that they should remain babes, but that they should grow. The proper nourishment of a babe, without which it will not grow, but pine away and perish, is milk, and young babes crave that nourishment and eagerly accept the offered breast. And the proper food whereby the spiritual children of God may be nourished and strengthened and preserved and increased is, of course, *spiritual*. Thus Luther correctly understands the Greek *logikon*, when, in his commentary published in 1539, he says: "These are, again, figurative words; for he does not speak of material milk, but of another kind of milk, which is logical, that is, spiritual, which is taken with the soul and sucked with the heart." The English Bible, rendering *logikon* "of the word," while it fails in the interpretation of the adjective, gives a correct comment, stating properly what the figurative term, *logikon gala*, *spiritual* milk, implies; for this food of the children of the Spirit is indeed the word of God ( 1 Cor. 3, 1.2).

But the apostle adds another adjective, *adolon*, *sincere*, *unadulterated*. Thus St. Paul warns the Christians against those who *corrupt the word of God* (2 Cor. 2, 17). False doctrine does not come alone, but as an adulteration of sound doctrine, and is all the more dangerous as it comes with the appearance of milk, the proper spiritual food of God's children.

The pure, sincere milk of divine truth is what St. Peter would have us *desire*, as a sucking child eagerly craves its mother's breast, and drinks until its hunger is appeased, and craves again after a few short hours. So we, likewise, should seek with eagerness the spiritual milk of the word, largely and frequently partaking thereof.

And this do, says the apostle, *that ye may grow thereby*. By *hina* he indicates that our spiritual growth should be not only a consequence, but an end and purpose of our craving for and partaking of the spiritual food prepared for us in the word. And when he says *en auto*, he says more forcibly than he would by *di auton*, that the word is not only the means whereby, but the power *wherein* we should grow into spiritual maturity.

This text, then, should be made to furnish, at the very outset of this course of instruction, an exhortation and admonition to the catechumens that they would earnestly and assiduously and with the proper end and aim apply themselves to the study of this compend of Christian doctrine, the Catechism.

2 Pet. 1, 21: *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

This text is a part of the dictum classicum beginning with v. 19 and asserting the firmness or reliability of the divine word of Scripture by emphasizing the fact that it is the word not of man, but of God. The English Bible fails to indicate the emphasis which, in the original, lies on the words *hupo pneumatos hagion*, *by the Holy Ghost*. These words, which, in the translation,

occupy the last place, the place they would also occupy in Greek if they were not emphasized, are placed first in the original, even before the verb, *feromenoi*, *moved*, *driven*. What the apostle would inculcate is that the word of Scripture is not human but divine, the word of GOD. The *holy men of God*, holy and men of God as they were, were not the authors of this word of prophecy. They wrote not under the promptings of their holiness or godliness; they were *driven* to write what they wrote, as ships are driven by the wind that swells their sails; and he who drove, impelled them, was God, the Holy Ghost. And when the apostle says *elalesan*, he thereby refers not to the thoughts only to which they gave utterance, which he might have done by *elegort*, but to the *words* they pronounced and the sounds of which those words consist, or the characters representing those sounds. They are called *holy men of God*, because they were the instruments of God, and the emphasized words indicate that it was the Holy Ghost who used them as His instruments, as by and through them He gave utterance to the words of prophecy, which were not their own but His own.

2 Tim. 3, 15-17: *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

This text is not quoted here for the purpose of inculcating the early training of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, though that may be incidentally pointed out as implied in the opening words of v. 15. What the words here quoted should teach is the nature and use of the holy Scriptures. The term *ta hiera grammata*, *the holy writings*, is used only here to denote the Old Testament Scriptures, the more common terms being *he grafe*, *hai grafai*, or *hai grafai hagai*. The form *ta hiera grammata* is more expressive of the nature of the holy books as a revelation of God laid down in *written characters*, *grammata*, as distinguished from spoken words, and by the article, *ta*, these writings are presented as a fixed quantity, the books which were known and acknowledged as *the holy writings*. The adjective, *hiera*, denotes a relation to God, and distinguishes these writings from secular literature. But while these books may be termed *holy* in various respects, as to their contents and purposes, they are related to God in a peculiar way indicated by another adjective, *theopneustos*, v. 16.

The English Bible correctly renders *theopneustos given by inspiration of God*, Luther, *von Gott engegeben*. The two versions disagree as to the syntactical relation of the adjective, the English Bible taking it as the predicate of the subject, *pasa grafe*, and supplying the copula accordingly: *All Scripture IS given by inspiration of God*; while Luther takes *theopneustos* as the attribute of *pasa grafe* and, making *pasa grafe theopneustos* the subject, and *of elimos*, etc., the predicate, supplies the copula after *theopneustos* and translates: *Alle Schrift von Gott eingegeben IST nuetze*, etc. Either construction is grammatically admissible. But as the divine inspiration of the Scriptures was not at issue, and the apostle evidently means to state more explicitly than in the previous verse the *use* of the holy Scriptures, Luther's construction would seem to deserve the preference. The *kai* before *of elimos*, which neither version has noticed, must then be given by *also*, and we would translate, *All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is also profitable*, etc. Since, however, what is an attribute of a thing can also be predicated of that thing, the text teaches the divine inspiration of all Scripture, whether *theopneustos* be attributively or predicatively construed, just as holiness is ascribed to the church, whether we say, *the church is holy*, or, *the holy church*.

The words *pasa grafe* are in both translations correctly rendered, *all Scripture, alle Schrift; for the entire Scripture, die ganze Schrift*, would be *pasa he grafe*. But if whatever is holy Scripture is given by inspiration of God, then the entire Scripture is thus given. There is, however, a significance in *pasa grafe* which would not be found in *pasa he grafe*. The latter form, *the whole Scripture*, would be understood to refer to the body of the Old Testament Scriptures as it was then in the hands of the Jews and had been known to Timotheus from his youth as *he grafe*. All Scripture, *pasa grafe*, says more; it includes not only the Scriptures that had been handed down, Moses and the Prophets, but also the Scriptures that were then being given by inspiration of God through the Apostles and Evangelists. Scripture (Old and New), *whatever is Scripture given by inspiration of God, is also profitable, etc.*: this is what the apostle here says.

Of the *purposes* of Scripture, the apostle here teaches that it is profitable, 1. *for doctrine*, i.e., to teach, to communicate truth to such as would or should learn and know the truth, to give knowledge of those things which are therein set forth (Rom. 15, 4); 2. *for reproof*, i.e., to convict sinners of their sinfulness and the erring and gainsaying of their error (Titus 1, 9.13. 1 Tim. 5, 20. Titus 2, 15; 3. *for correction, for our admonition*, 1 Cor. 10, 11, that we may amend our evil ways in accordance with the divine norm of right and truth; 4. *for instruction in righteousness*, our spiritual *education* toward that ripeness of spiritual manhood which should be the aim of every child of God. Of the ulterior purpose of the written word the apostle has said before, v. 15: it is *man's salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The *perspicuity* of the Bible is asserted when the apostle says that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and that not only to readers of ripe understanding and profound learning, but even to a child, v. 15.16.

The *efficacy* and *sufficiency* of Scripture is also apparent, when it is said to be able to make *wise unto salvation*, and to make the man of God *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, The *man of God* is every man who is of the household of God, either in the ministry or otherwise. Whatever duties may be incumbent upon a Christian, he may be fitted for their performance by the word of Scripture, and by the same means he may obtain his soul's salvation. Such is the efficacy and sufficiency of the Book of books.

Thus, then, we have in this text a compend of Bibliology and an earnest admonition to use the Scriptures with all diligence and unceasingly all the days of our lives.

1 Cor. 2, 13; *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

The apostle, having in the preceding context declared that he and his fellow apostles were by the Spirit of God imbued with a *knowledge* of spiritual things, now proceeds to state that the utterance of these things was not in words of human wisdom, but that the same Spirit who taught them to know whereof they spoke, also taught them to speak of what they knew, so that when they spoke they uttered the thoughts of the Holy Ghost in the words of the Holy Ghost. The progress from *eidomen* to *laloumen* is marked by *kai, also*, and *laloumen* more expressly than *legomen* denotes the utterance in words, *logois*. The verb *sugkrinein*, which the English Bible renders *compare*, and Luther, *richten*, means to *match together*. Uttering the *things* of the Holy Spirit in *words* of the Holy Spirit, the apostles match or join together spiritual things with spiritual, both the things and the words being of the Spirit of God.

John 5, 39: *Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

This is an endorsement of the entire Old Testament as a revelation of God to teach the way of salvation and to testify of Christ, the Savior. The plural, *tas grafas*, refers to the various books of Scripture, *the Scriptures*, the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and Christ approves them all without exception or restriction. The verb, *ereunate*, is of peculiar force, denoting a thorough search as distinguished from a superficial view or hasty persuasion. *Ereunate* may be either indicative or imperative. If the latter, it is an injunction, if the former, an approval, of the study of the written Word, not for the purpose of Higher Criticism, for which this text leaves no room, but that the reader may be made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Luke 11, 28: *Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

A voice out of the multitude had pronounced the mother of Jesus blessed because of her motherhood. The Lord accepts the macarism, but gives a different reason. Mary was indeed blessed, but not because she had been made the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, had given the proper reason, saying, *Blessed is she that BELIEVED* (Luke 1, 45). Mary had believed the word that came to her by the angel in the annunciation (Luke 1,38), the words that the shepherds reported in the night of the nativity (Luke 2, 19), the words of the boy Jesus spoken in the temple (Luke 2, 51), the Words spoken to the fathers of old (Luke 5, 54.55), and we are repeatedly told that she *kept* these sayings and things and *pondered* them in her heart (Luke 2, 19.51). Such was the manner of Mary's blessedness. Not by immaculate conception, not because of her virgin motherhood, but by the word of divine grace which she had heard and kept, was she blessed. And this blessedness was not open to her alone, but to all who would likewise hear and accept and keep the word of God in which we have eternal life.

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## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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Micah 6, 8: *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

This text closes the first act of *the Lord's controversy* with His people (Micah 6, 2ff). The Lord has challenged the ungrateful people to state what grievance they may have against Him who has done them no evil and only good (Micah 6, 3-5). Thereupon Israel, knowing arid acknowledging that the people cannot lay charges against the Lord, but that, on the contrary, the Lord has just claims to make against His people, answered the question, "What have I done to thee?" with the counter question, "What are we to do to the Lord? What does He demand of us? Would He have sacrifices of calves, of thousands of rams, of ten thousand rivers of oil, of our first born?" (Micah 6, 6.7). The climax is very emphatically expressive of the people's readiness to balance their account with God, to be even with Him at any cost. To humble the pride and arrogance hidden in this offer of the conscience stricken people, the prophet steps in with the words of our text. He accosts the speaker, *O man, adam* as if to say, "What manner of language is this? Hast thou forgotten what thou art, *man* taken from the dust of the earth, flesh born of the flesh? Wouldst thou place thyself on a level with the Lord, thy Maker, and barter with Him? What wouldst thou give Him that is not already His own? It is *thyself* thou owest Him, thy body and soul, and in order that thou shouldst serve Him in righteousness, He hath shown thee what is good, and requires of thee to live according to His commandments, not in arrogant self-righteousness, but loving mercy and walking humbly with thy God." *With thy God* is not the same as *before* thy God, but indicates that our ways should be the ways of God, He being ever with us and we with Him, *walking*, that is, moving forward step by step, as He directs us and leads us by His commandments. And this conformity with the commandments of God should not be of outward works only, but also of heart and soul, a heart that *loves mercy*, and a soul that is *humble* and trusts in God, *its* God. This is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mark 12, 23).

Deut. 6, 6.7: *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.*

The words referred to are the words of the *Law*, and the present admonition is addressed to Israel, the people of God (Deut. 6, 4.5). The speaker is Moses, by whom God promulgated His Law in Israel, and what he here says is itself an injunction to all those to whom he was, under God, the lawgiver of the people. It is a maxim of human law that the first demand the law makes is that it should be known. And here the duty to know the law and to bear it in mind is imposed upon all whom the law concerns. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, but is itself a violation of the law. And inasmuch as a father is responsible for his children and bound to see to their welfare, it is also his duty to teach the law to his children, and to do this with all diligence, lest his children, being ignorant of the law, in and by such ignorance offend against the law. Again, the children also are not excused by ignorance of the law, and if it is the parent's

duty to teach them the law, it is their duty with all diligence to learn the law and to keep it in mind at all times and everywhere. See continuation, Deut. 6, 7-9.

Rom. 2, 14.15: *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*

The text is here quoted to substantiate the statement that God, in the creation of man, wrote the law in man's heart. St. Paul speaks of the Gentiles and describes them as *having not the law*. He thereby distinguishes them from the Jews, who had the law, that is, the written law as it was codified and promulgated through Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. And yet the Gentiles are not without the law. While they have not the law written in the book of the law, they are *a law unto themselves*, a norm of right and wrong which is really and truly *law, nomos*, the published will of the lawgiver, of equal stringency with the law of Sinai, but differing in form and in the mode of publication. Through Moses the law was published as a code of statutes written in the book of law, or as words or commandments graven in tablets of stone. The Gentiles, too, had the moral law, but differently published, *written in their hearts*, and in a different form, *showing the WORKS of the law*, indicating in every instance of internal or external human action what was in accordance with the will of God, so that, whatever any man would do or forbear, commit or omit, he might, by consulting the moral norm inscribed in his heart, know whether such act or work was good or evil, in conformity or at variance with the divine will. Thus the Gentiles, when they obeyed their superiors and maintained conjugal fidelity, or when they abstained from murder and theft and fornication, *did the things contained in the law*. And doing these things *by nature*, they showed the works of the law written in their hearts, a natural law handed down from generation to generation, not by traditional statutes, but by natural propagation, inheriting with their nature the natural law. And as at no time a new race of men had been created from which the Gentiles had taken their origin, but as *from one blood all nations of men have come* (Acts 17, 26), the natural law must have come down to the later generations of men from the same source from which their common nature was descended, from Adam and Eve, our common ancestors, in whose hearts as in those of their natural descendants the natural law must have been written by the Creator's hand.

That this natural, law is really *law*, a stringent and authoritative norm of right, is evinced by man's *conscience*, which *bears witness* to the law and testifies to every man that he is subject to that law and responsible to him who has given it and, as a jealous God, watches over and vindicates its dignity. As a law, it is not an aesthetical, but an ethical norm, not a rule determining what is pleasing and beautiful or the contrary, but what is right and wrong, and, therefore, the thoughts that are set astir by the voice of this law and the testimony of man's conscience are not of aesthetical, but of ethical concern, *accusing or else excusing one another*.

1 Tim. 1, 5: *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.*

The *commandment, parangelia* here spoken of is the doctrine which Christian ministers are charged to preach concerning those things which the Christians should observe in holiness of life. The *end, telos*, that to which it should tend or lead, is said to be *charity, agape, love, out of a pure heart*. Sin, the transgression, of the law, proceeds out of the heart, the impure, evil heart (Matt. 15, 19). Thus, also, the fulfillment of the law should proceed from the heart, a pure heart sanctified by the Spirit of God. While, according to this text, compliance with the law may seem

a very simple and easy thing, only love and nothing more, the text teaches that the fulfilling of the law is not only difficult, but impossible, to the natural man, who lacks precisely that from which the fulfilling of the law must spring, *a pure heart*.

Rom. 13, 10: *Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

In the 8th verse of the chapter St. Paul has said, *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*. This he has proved in the 9th verse by showing that all the special commandments of the law are summed up, *anakefalaoutai*, are briefly recapitulated, in the word, *Thou shalt Love thy neighbor as thyself*. For this he gives a reason when he says, v. 10, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbor*. To work ill to his neighbor is the manner of an enemy, who hates his neighbor, while love is kind, *chresteuetai*, (1 Cor. 13, 4), a disposition to do good, to benefit others. Now, every commandment of the law which regulates our relations to our neighbor serves as a safeguard and protection to the neighbor's interests, his dignity, life, spouse, property, and honor, his welfare in general. Hence, the apostle concludes in our text, *love is the fulfillment of the law*, as already stated in the words above, *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*, and not only the commandments of the second, but also those of the first table, since only *he who loveth God loveth his brother also* (1 John 4, 21).

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## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

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Is. 42, 8: *I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*

The text condemns idolatry of every kind, gross and fine. To give to any person or thing besides God the honor and praise we owe to God, is idolatry. This is a sin for which there is no excuse. God has revealed Himself to man as *the one personal (Ani, I,) Supreme Being*; this is His name, whereby we should know Him as what He is and would be to us, and whereby He would be called by us, *Thou, the Lord, my God*. Instead of this, the idolater turns around and says to the fine gold, *Thou art my confidence* (Job 31, 24) or cries out, saying, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians* (Acts 19, 28), giving honor and praise to a graven image. Such is idolatry.

Matt. 4, 10: *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*

This text pertains to the words of Answer 15: *actually to adore a creature as God.*

Satan had tempted Jesus in the desert to commit idolatry by worshiping him, and this is a part of Christ's reply to the tempter. Being Himself God, He might have said: "Get thee down before Me, Satan, and worship Me." But being man, *made of a woman and made under the Law* (Gal. 4, 4), in His state of humiliation, He gave as the reason for His refusal to comply with the devil's demand a commandment of God saying, *It is written; Thou shalt, etc.* He refers to such passages as Deut. 6, 13 and 10, 20; and thus His refusal to worship Satan is stamped as an act of obedience to the Law of God. But if this Law, though it does not mention Satan, prohibits the worship of Satan, it also prohibits the *worship* of all other creatures, all manner of idolatry.

Ps. 115, 3.4: *But our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.*

This text sets forth the blasphemous perverseness and foolishness of idolaters, who, instead of trusting in God, the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, who from His celestial throne governs the universe, repose their trust and confidence in what is so far beneath themselves as they are beneath God, idols of silver and gold, the work of their own or other men's hands. This ungodly foolishness is more at length described and derided in the verses following our text, as also in Is. 44, 9-19 and Jer. 10, 3-9. Such foolishness is also practised by those who seek help and succor before the statues or pictures of saints, etc.

Matt. 10, 28: *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

The context shows that these words are specially directed to those who are threatened or afflicted with persecution because of their confession of the Christian faith (Matt. 10, 16-39). God is almighty and omniscient; He has numbered the very hair of our heads and promised us His protection (Matt. 10, 30.31), while, on the other hand, Christ will deny those who deny Him, and he that finds his life by denying Him shall lose it (Matt. 10, 31.39) under the just judgment of Him who *is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. On the other hand, our enemies and persecutors are creatures who may, at their utmost, kill the body, and that only with the permission of Him without whom no sparrow falls to the ground (Matt. 10, 29.30). In view of all this it is evident idolatry to fear the creature instead of fearing the Creator, the Father Almighty, and putting our trust in Him.

Matt. 10, 37: *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

That children should love their parents, and that parents should love their children, is proper according to the will and commandment of God. But filial and parental love is perverted into a sin when it infringes upon the love we owe our Savior and our God. He is Supreme, over all, God blessed forever (Rom. 9, 5); and hence, to love any inferior being more than God is clearly idolatrous, placing that creature not only beside but even above God. The judgment which Christ pronounces upon such idolaters is, *They are not worthy of Me*. The meaning of these words appears from the parallel text, Luke 14, 26: *If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother . . . . ., he cannot be My disciple*. Christ loved the Father above all things, also above His mother according to the flesh (Luke 2, 48.49), even above His own life (John 14, 31), and His disciples must do likewise. Hence an idolater cannot be a disciple of Christ; and he who is not with Christ, is against Him, an enemy of Christ under the wrath of God.

Prov. 3, 5: *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

God is the supreme Intelligence. *The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens* (Prov. 3, 19). Hence, to lean to our own inferior understanding instead of trusting in the Lord with all our heart is idolatry. As in the previous text God does not prohibit filial and parental love, but its perversion into idolatry, so also here God does not forbid the ordinate *use* of our understanding, but its idolatrous *abuse*.

Jer. 17, 5: *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*

The continuation of this text is, *For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.*

*Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. (Jer. 17, 6-8).*

Here, then, we have two parallel statements, the one beginning with, *Cursed be the man*, and the other with, *Blessed is the man*. The blessing is pronounced on *the man that trusteth in the Lord*, and his blessed state is then described as a state of prosperity such as God only, the Almighty, can give. The curse is, correspondingly, pronounced on him who in his heart *departeth from the Lord* and places his trust in man and his reliance on flesh, making that *his arm*, i. e., his strength (Cf. Ps. 84, 5), and when God in His wrath leaves these idolaters to their gods, their lot is as the prophet describes it, *like the heath in the desert*, etc.

Eph. 5, 5: *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, or unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

The statement in point is that the covetous man is an idolater and cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The covetous man, *pleonektes*, is he who craves for MORE possession (*pleou echein*). The German *habsuechtig* or *habgierig* comes near the Greek word, but does not quite cover it. But why is covetousness, *pleonexia*, a species of idolatry? Because the insatiable love which the covetous man bears toward created things is greater love than that which man may bear toward God. For the love of God satisfies the soul, so that having Him the heart will want no more. But the covetous man is never satisfied, but, having much, wants more, and still more, and infinitely more. Thus covetousness, *pleonexia*, is in its very nature idolatry, placing silver and gold not only beside, but above God, and justly excludes the covetous from that inheritance of which the Psalmist says, *I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness* (Ps. 17, 15).

Phil. 3, 19: *Whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*

The form of idolatry here described is, like that of covetousness, largely prevalent in our day, as it was in the days of St. Paul. It is the sin of materialism, of those *who mind earthly things*, who are absorbed in the things of this world; whose maxim is, *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*, (1 Cor. 15, 32). Of such the apostle says they *serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly* (Rom. 16, 18), or, in our text, *whose God is their belly*. Man was made for God (1 Cor. 8, 6. *eis auton*), and every man should say with St. Paul: *God, whose I am and whom I serve* (Acts 27, 23). Christ has died for all, *that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again*. (2 Cor. 5, 15). To live for this world and to serve the belly instead of living unto Christ and God and serving Him is, therefore, manifest idolatry, and idolatry of a base kind, whereby the votaries of the belly seek their glory in what is their shame, disgracing themselves in dishonoring God.

Ps. 14, 1: *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.*

The denial of God is also a violation of the first commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me*; for this implies that man should regard and adore as his God the one true God who places at the head of His commandments the statement, *I am the Lord thy God*. (Ex. 20, 2. Deut. 5, 6.) The text calls him who denies the existence of God a *fool*, whose sin is not only ungodly, but also unreasonable, being at variance with the joint testimony of all the creatures

of the universe, the *fool* himself not excepted, whose very existence and nature would be impossible without a Maker of heaven and earth. But the text gives also the reason why such fools deny the existence of God: *They are corrupt; they have done abominable works.* Being wicked, they have an interest in denying the existence of a righteous, holy, and almighty God who will punish their *abominable works*. And this motive, their surpassing love of darkness which prompts them to hate the light again stamps them idolaters. (John 3, 19.20.)

John 5, 23: *That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.*

This text is directed against a species of idolatry also very prevalent in our day, especially in secret societies which perform religious rites and ceremonies, but exclude the worship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and only Savior of mankind. It will not do to say, "We pray to the Father in the lodge and do not prevent others from praying to the Son without the lodge." *All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father, and he that does not honor the Son, not only withholds from the Son the honor which is His, but does not truly honor the Father whom he professes to worship. For whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* (John 2, 23.) What has he then? An idol, the creature of his own imagination, a false, man-made God, no more the true God than any idol of wood or stone.

Gen. 17, 1: *I am the Almighty God; walk before Me and be thou perfect.*

This is a very remarkable text. Twenty-four years after God had led Abram from Haran to the land of Canaan and given him the promise that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12, 1-3), these words were spoken. Abram was then a worshiper of the true God (Gen. 12, 7.8; 13, 4.18), who had declared Himself his shield and exceeding great reward. (Gen. 15, 1.) Abram then stood justified by faith. (Gen. 15, 6; Rom. 4, 3. Gal. 3, 6.) And this man it was to whom the words of our text were spoken. They consist of a statement and an injunction. The statement is, *I am the Almighty God*, The Hebrew El Shaddai designates God as the *Almighty Mighty One*, the *God of transcendent power*. The injunction is, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*. What God demands of Abram is nothing less than perfect holiness; and to render such holiness, he is to walk before God, to take every step, perform every act, both external and internal, in thought, word, or deed, as before, under the very eyes of, God; and all that constantly remembering that He, under whose watchful eyes he walks, is the Almighty God, before whom even the holy man must stand in awe and with bated breath, under whose mighty scepter the righteous may abide in peace and perfect security, but who is to the unrighteous a consuming fire.

There is, perhaps, in all the Scriptures no other text which in words as brief as these inculcates the true fear of God as an incentive to true holiness of life in those who are the children of God by faith and in whom the renewal of the image of God is in progress.

Ps. 33, 8: *Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.*

This text, taken, in conjunction with its context, has this in common with the preceding text that it points out the omnipotence and sovereign majesty of God with a view of inculcating due reverence and fear of God. In the previous context the psalmist speaks of the exhibition of divine power in the creation of the world and the government of the universe, as *By, the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He*

*gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; he layeth up the depth in storehouses. And in the subsequent context he continues, FOR He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. And therefore, he says in our text, let all the earth fear the Lord, which, by a parallelism familiar in the psalms, he repeats, saying, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him, the second member, as is frequently the case, dropping the figure of speech employed in the first member, substituting the inhabitants of the world, for all the earth, which stands for the dwellers on the earth.*

But the argument of our text and context agrees with that of the text from Gen. 17 also in this that it makes the fear of God a mainspring of our obedience to the will of God as revealed in his commandments. Having called upon all men to fear God and stand in awe of Him, he continues, *For He SPAKE, and it was done; He COMMANDED, and it stood fast;* as if to say: Heaven and earth came into being in *obedience* to His *word* and in *compliance* with His *command*, as it was God, the Almighty One, who spoke and commanded. How much more should man, to whom God has revealed Himself in many ways, be moved by the fear of God to obey Him and perform His holy will.

Gen. 39, 9: *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

The sin which Joseph, then an inmate in the house of Potiphar, was here tempted to commit was the sin of adultery, by which Joseph would have violated the conjugal rights of his master and the trust which Potiphar had reposed in his Hebrew servant. This was in Joseph's mind when he said, *Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife.* Yet Joseph does not continue in words as these: "How then should I commit this great sin against my master?" or, "What would Potiphar, my master and thy husband, say and do if I were to commit this grave offense against him?" Joseph knows that the eye of One who is greater than Potiphar is upon him, that by yielding to the temptation of this adulterous woman he would offend against the holy will of God, and it is the fear of God that prevails in him and puts into his mouth the words recorded in our text. Thus here, again, the fear of God is shown to be a cardinal virtue, a safeguard against all manner of sins, and a source of true holiness according to all the commandments of God.

Ps. 73, 25.26: *Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.*

The love of God in a human heart is nowhere in the Scriptures uttered more forcibly than in this text. The love of God which is here described is so much a love of God above all things, that it is a love of God to the utter exclusion of all things. Aside of God heaven with all its host, its glory and bliss, is void and empty, and the earth with all its treasures and pleasures is vacant space to the psalmist, who in heaven and earth knows of but one object of his possession and desire, and that is God. Nor is this all. The psalmist loves God even with the exclusion of his own self. If his flesh and his heart, his body and soul, should fail him, that is, if he should be deprived Of that wherein he exists, then he would still cling to God and live in spite of death and destruction, since God is his strength and his portion forever. This last sentiment is given by Paul Gerhardt in the words;

Du sollst sein meines Herzens Licht,  
Und wann mein Herz in Stuecken bricht,  
Sollst du mein Herze bleiben,

And the whole text is exquisitely versified in the following words of Martin Schalling's hymn, *Herzliech lieb hab ich dick, o Herr*:

I scorn the richest earthly lot,  
E'en heaven and earth attract me not,  
If only thou art near to me.  
Yea, though my heart be like to break,  
Thou shalt my trust that naught can shake.  
My portion and my comfort be.

Ps. 42, 11: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

The psalm of which this text is the closing verse is a lamentation of an anguished soul, thirsting after God. The second section of the psalm begins with the words, *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee*, v. 6. Finding no strength within himself and no help about himself, he lifts up his thoughts to God. And now he argues with his soul. He does not deny the power of his enemies nor his own weakness. Neither does he behold the helping hand of God already turning away the oppression of the enemy. And yet he reproaches his soul for being bowed down and moaning in trepidation and thus troubling him without cause. For is not God still *God*, a mighty helper above all his enemies? And so firm is his reliance on Him who is the health of his countenance, and his *God*, under whose protecting care no harm can befall him, that in the midst of his tribulations, and while he is yet exhorting his soul to wait for future help, he is, as it were, already tuning his harp to songs of praise and thanksgiving; for he *trusts in God*.

Ps. 118, 8: *It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.*

Here, again, the power of the Lord is contrasted with the strength, or the weakness, of men. But the text is taken from a song of praise rising from the hearts and lips of those who have experienced the goodness and power of God. In v. 5, the psalmist points to a certain distress, from the midst of which, as in Ps. 42, the believer called upon the Lord; and the Lord answered him and helped him, so that from gladsome experience he could say, *The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me*. And now, as the psalmist contemplated the ways of men, who, when threatened or assailed by enemies, will look about for allies among men and the princes of men, he takes comfort in knowing that the Lord is on his side and takes his part as his ally against all his enemies. For while confidence reposed in men, even in princes, is often misplaced, and human aid is often by sad experience shown to be of no avail, his experience has taught him that *it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes*.

But what is true as to men in general and princes in particular is also true as to physicians and their remedies, fathers and mothers, wealthy and influential friends and relatives, and

whoever else may be looked upon as deserving of trust and confidence: it is better to trust in the Lord; and to confide in them instead of or above and before the Lord is idolatry.

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## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

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Ps. 48, 10:.. *According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth: Thy right hand is full of righteousness.*

The 48th psalm is a song of victory to celebrate a new manifestation of divine power and greatness in the protection of the city of God. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised*, is the opening strain and the burden of the psalm. The name of God is that by which He is known, and we cannot know God unless He reveals or manifests Himself. Again, to praise God is to voice forth His name by extolling His deeds. The fame of God is, according to our text, in accordance with His name: that which may be said of Him is commensurate with what He has revealed of Himself. And His right hand is full of righteousness. Our right hand is our chief organ of action, the fighting hand in war and the working hand in peace. Thus the right hand of God again stands for His activity, whereby He manifests Himself as what He is, power, love, truth, or, what the text mentions, righteousness. And *righteousness* is a divine name; *this is His NAME whereby he SHALL BE CALLED, the Lord our righteousness.* (Jer. 23, 6; 33, 16.)

Lev. 24, 15.16: *Whosoever curseth his God, shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death.*

The sin here proscribed is that of speaking evil against God and impugning His name. A son of an Israelitish woman and an Egyptian father, in a quarrel with a man of Israel in the camp, had committed this offense and was stoned pursuant to a special order of God, v. 10-14. Before this sentence was executed, v. 23, God caused the injunction set forth in our text to be published to all the children of Israel with the express statement that it should apply to the stranger as well as to him that was born in the land, v. 16.

Gal. 6, 7: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked.*

In the words preceding our text the apostle has enjoined upon the hearers of the word the duty of contributing from their temporal goods toward the support of their teachers. To render this commandment all the more impressive, the apostle adds the solemn warning, *Be not deceived God is not mocked*, or, in other words, God will not allow this commandment to be set aside with impunity. The verb *mukteridzein* signifies a contemptuous gesture, as an unruly inferior may turn up his nose and sneer at the command of a master whom he holds in contempt. Thus the apostle teaches that wilful disregard of the manifest will of God is also a manner of blasphemy which will not go unpunished, and that he who neglects or refuses to heed this will but deceive himself.

James 3, 9.10: *By the tongue bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren these things ought not so to be.*

This text would, from two different points of view, teach all Christians to Consider and comprehend the utter impropriety of cursing their fellow-men. In the first place, a Christian,

whose duty and daily occupation is to bless God, would by cursing a fellow-man expose himself to such divine censure as this: "How canst thou, while praising Me, the Creator, at the same time curse my creature, made after My own similitude, in My own image? Gen. 1, 26.27. Is not this gross inconsistency? Is not thy praise thereby turned into scoffing?" But cursing in a Christian is not only improper when the objects of his blessing and cursing are considered, but also, in the second place, in view of the subject which performs these contrary and contradictory acts, and the nature of these acts themselves. God has given us our mouths as all other organs that we should use them in His service, in obedience to His commandments. But what consistency is there in blessing God in obedience to this Second Commandment, and abusing His name by cursing in open violation of this same commandment? Is it not mockery that these two acts, so incompatible with one another, should proceed from the same mouth, the mouth of a Christian? The same argument is continued in the subsequent context: *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place siveet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?* Thus, also, he. would say, it is not in the proper nature of a Christian, not compatible with his fruit, that he should curse. And hence, these things ought, surely, not to be.

2 Cor. 1, 23: *Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul.*

For *record* the Revised Version has substituted *witness*, the correct translation of the Greek *martura, Zeuge*. That whereto he calls upon God to testify is the truth of his assertion, *that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth*. The emphasis is on *feidomenos humon, to spare you*, which states the motive whereby the apostle was prompted to delay his return to Corinth. But a man's motives, which reside in his soul are known only to himself and God, and the apostle, as he is about to state his motive, calls upon God, who knows all things and is Himself the Truth, to be his witness and testify to the truth of his statement. This is the very essence of an oath sworn by God's name.. And as it is an apostle of Christ who, under inspiration of the Holy Ghost, makes this solemn appeal, we may know that it is not under all circumstances wrong to "call upon God as the witness of truth or the avenger of falsehood."

Matt. 5, 33-37: *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

To understand this text correctly, we must, in the first place, remember that it cannot be intended as an absolute prohibition of oaths, since lawful oaths are expressly sanctioned by divine commandment and example and by numerous appeals of the holy men of God, even under divine inspiration, to God as the witness and judge of the truth of their statements (Deut. 6, 13. Ex. 22, 11. Deut. 10, 20. Is. 19, 18; 65, 16. Jer. 4, 2; 5, 7; 12, 16. Ps. 63, 11.—Gen. 22, 16. Hebr. 6, 13. 16. 17. Luke 1, 73. Matt. 26, 63.64.—Rom. 1, 9. Gal. 1, 20. Phil. 1, 8), and no interpretation of a text can be correct which conflicts with other oclear texts of Scripture. In the second place we must consider the scope of this admonition. From the forms of oaths quoted by Christ, which were not judicial oaths, we see that the Lord here deals with the evil habit of irreverent swearing, of loading down commonplace conversations and assertions with all manner of oaths, a custom which to this day prevails among Jews and Mohammedans. In