

The Books of Homilies

Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches

Edited from the Elizabethan and Jacobean folio text of Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches (the First Book, 1547; the Second Book, 1563–71; collected folio, 1623).

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The thirty-fifth of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion names a body of sermons that most Anglicans today have never read:

> THE second Book of Homilies, the several titles whereof we have joined under this Article, doth contain a godly and wholesome Doctrine, and necessary for these times, as doth the former Book of Homilies, which were set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth; and therefore we judge them to be read in Churches by the Ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understanded of the people.
>
> *(The names of the Homilies are then listed.)*

That is the constitutional standing of the Books of Homilies. They are authorized teaching, appointed to be read aloud in churches throughout the realm, ranked by the Articles themselves alongside the Prayer Book. They are not confessions in the strict continental manner, and were never meant to be; neither are they devotional sermons gathered for private reading. They were written to be heard. Composed during the upheavals of the English Reformation, they stand where liturgy, theology, royal supremacy, and pastoral instruction met, in a church still deciding what it was.

The first Book of Homilies appeared in 1547, under Edward VI. Many parish clergy then could not compose a learned sermon, and the kingdom stood amid rapid doctrinal change. The English Bible and the new liturgy had begun to alter the religious life of the nation while the habits of centuries held on. The Homilies answered a plain need: where there was no competent preacher, there would still be preaching. A fixed text, read aloud, taught reformed doctrine in a voice the people could follow.

A second collection appeared under Elizabeth I and was formally authorized in 1571. The two books together took a recognized place among the Anglican formularies. Article XXXV commends them as containing "a godly and wholesome Doctrine, and necessary for these times." They were public ecclesiastical teaching, woven into the constitutional and doctrinal fabric of the Church of England, not private theological opinion.

Their subjects range widely. Some expound the central doctrines of the Reformation: justification by faith, the sufficiency of Holy Scripture, the misery of mankind apart from grace, the true meaning of good works. Others concern Christian morality and social order — fasting, almsgiving, prayer, matrimony, repentance, obedience to rulers, care for the poor, the right use of the sacraments. Several are openly polemical, directed against what the English reformers regarded as the corruptions of late medieval religion: the abuses they connected with images, pilgrimages, relics, the invocation of saints, and the practices they judged to be superstition or idolatry within the contemporary Roman Church.

The Homilies are therefore inseparable from the controversies of their age. Their rhetoric can be severe, their judgments sweeping, their historical claims coloured by the religious conflicts of sixteenth-century Europe. They also show, with unusual clarity, the mind of early Anglicanism before later divisions hardened into church parties. The theology in them is scriptural, conscious of the Fathers, liturgical in instinct, shaped at once by continental Protestant influence and by the inherited structures of the medieval English Church. To their authors, reform meant the restoration of an ancient truth that error and abuse had obscured, not the invention of a new religion.

The style of the Homilies follows from their use. They were written for public reading, and the prose is expansive, rhetorical, repetitive, and heavily cadenced by Scripture. Long chains of biblical citation build an argument by the sheer weight of testimony. Patristic authorities stand beside examples from sacred and secular history. The hearer is exhorted and warned and instructed, and at times chastised, with a directness characteristic of Reformation preaching. Even at its most elaborate, the language keeps the sound of speech meant to be proclaimed aloud beneath timber roofs and stone vaults, to congregations gathered for common prayer.

To a modern reader the Homilies can seem distant, the products of another political order and another style of controversy. Their historical importance is considerable all the same. They preserve the doctrinal atmosphere in which the English Prayer Book tradition matured. They show the scriptural and theological assumptions beneath early Anglican worship and identity. They open a rare window onto the pastoral concerns of the English Reformation at the parish level, where theology was spoken from pulpits to ordinary worshippers rather than debated only among scholars.

One feature may strike the modern reader as curious. Though composed in the age of the Reformation and shaped by its controversies, the Homilies keep the older habit of citing the Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical books often and with reverence. Wisdom, Sirach, Tobit, Judith, and others appear throughout as authorities for moral exhortation and as witnesses drawn from the inherited tradition of the Church. The sharp boundary that later Protestants would draw between canonical and apocryphal had not yet hardened into its later form within the English Church.

In this the Homilies preserve something transitional in the history of English Protestantism. They belong unmistakably to the world of the Reformation, and they still carry traces of the older ecclesiastical and liturgical culture they came out of. They exist as a kind of theological transitionary fossil, an imprint of an earlier religious world set within the language of reform. The English reformers rejected particular doctrines and practices of the medieval Church while continuing to inhabit a scriptural landscape broader and more continuous than later Protestantism would always allow. The Homilies show an Anglicanism still close enough to its late medieval inheritance to speak comfortably in the older biblical register even while it argued for reform.

A word on this edition. The text has been modernized for reading: spelling

brought to current form, proper names regularized to the ones a reader now knows (Isaiah for Esay, Jerome for Hierome, and so on), and obvious printing errors of the early editions silently corrected. The substance is untouched. The Homilies have long been hard to find outside theological libraries and antiquarian reprints, and harder still to read with any pleasure. This volume exists to put them back within reach. We hope you find them worth the reading.



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THE FIRST BOOK OF

HOMILIES

Chiefly attributed to Thomas Cranmer, Abp. Canterbury

A FRUITFUL EXHORTATION TO THE READING AND KNOWLEDGE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE



UNTO A CHRISTIAN man there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable than the knowledge of holy Scripture; forasmuch as in it is contained God's true word, setting forth his glory and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is or may be drawn out of that fountain and well of truth. Therefore as many as be desirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God must apply their minds to know holy Scripture; without the which they can neither sufficiently know God and his will, neither their office and duty. And, as drink is pleasant to them that be dry, and meat to them that be hungry, so is the reading, hearing, searching, and studying of holy Scripture to them that be desirous to know God or themselves, and to do his will. And their stomachs only do loathe and abhor the heavenly knowledge and food of God's word, that be so drowned in worldly vanities, that they neither savour God nor any godliness: for that is the cause why they desire such vanities rather than the true knowledge of God. As they that are sick of an ague, whatsoever they eat or drink, though it be never so pleasant, yet it is as bitter to them as wormwood, not for the bitterness of the meat, but for the corrupt and bitter humour that is in their own tongue and mouth; even so is the sweetness of God's word bitter, not of itself, but only unto them that have their minds corrupted with long custom of sin and love of this world.

Therefore, forsaking the corrupt judgment of fleshly men, which care not but for their carcase, let us reverently hear and read holy Scriptures, which is the food of the soul. Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by man's imagination, for our justification and salvation. For in holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do and what to eschew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hands at length. In those books we shall find the Father, from whom, the Son, by whom, and the Holy Ghost, in whom, all things have their being and keeping up; and these three Persons to be but one God and one substance. In these books we may learn to know ourselves, how vile and miserable we be; and also to know God, how good he is of himself, and how he maketh us and all creatures partakers of his goodness. We may learn also in these books to know God's will and pleasure, as much as for this present time is convenient for us to know. And, as the great clerk and godly preacher St. John Chrysostom saith, "whatsoever is required to salvation of man is fully contained in the Scripture of God. He that is ignorant may there learn and have knowledge. He that is hardhearted and an obstinate sinner shall there find everlasting torments prepared of God's justice, to make him afraid, and to mollify (or soften) him. He that is oppressed with misery in this world shall there find relief in the promises of everlasting life, to his great consolation and comfort. He that is wounded by the devil unto death shall find there medicine, whereby he may be restored again unto health." "If it shall require to teach any

truth or reprove false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, to comfort, or to exhort, or to do any other thing requisite for our salvation; all those things," saith St. Chrysostom, "we may learn plentifully of the Scripture." "There is," saith Fulgentius, "abundantly enough both for men to eat and children to suck. There is whatsoever is meet for all ages and for all degrees and sorts of men." These books therefore ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths, but most of all in our hearts. For the Scripture of God is the heavenly meat of our souls: the hearing and keeping of it maketh us blessed, sanctifieth us, and maketh us holy: it turneth our souls: it is a light lantern to our feet: it is a sure, steadfast, and everlasting instrument of salvation: it giveth wisdom to the humble and lowlyhearted: it comforteth, maketh glad, cheereth, and cherisheth our consciences: it is a more excellent jewel or treasure than any gold or precious stone: it is more sweet than honey or honeycomb: it is called the best part, which Mary did choose; for it hath in it everlasting comfort. The words of holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life; for they be God's instrument, ordained for the same purpose. They have power to turn through God's promise, and they be effectual through God's assistance; and, being received in a faithful heart, they have ever an heavenly spiritual working in them. They are lively, quick, and mighty in operation, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and entereth through even unto the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow. Christ calleth him a wise builder that buildeth upon his word, upon his sure and substantial foundations. By this word of God we shall be judged; for the word that I speak, saith Christ, is it that shall judge in the last day. He that keepeth the word of Christ is promised the love and favour of God, and that he shall be the dwellingplace or temple of the blessed Trinity. This word whosoever is diligent to read, and in his heart to print that he readeth, the great affection to the transitory things of this world shall be minished in him, and the great desire of heavenly things, that be therein promised of God, shall increase in him. And there is nothing that so much strengtheneth our faith and trust in God, that so much keepeth up innocency and pureness of the heart and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and recording of God's word. For that thing which, by continual use of reading of holy Scripture and diligent searching of the same, is deeply printed and graven in the heart, at length turneth almost into nature. And moreover the effect and virtue of God's word is to illuminate the ignorant, and to give more light unto them that faithfully and diligently read it; to comfort their hearts, and to encourage them to perform that which of God is commanded. It teacheth patience in all adversity, in prosperity humbleness; what honour is due unto God, what mercy and charity to our neighbour. It giveth good counsel in all doubtful things. It sheweth of whom we shall look for aid and help in all perils, and that God is the only Giver of victory in all battles and temptations of our enemies, bodily and ghostly. And in reading of God's word he most profiteth not always that is most ready in turning of the book, or in saying of it without the book; but he that is most turned into it, that is most inspired with the Holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and changed into that thing which he

readeth; he that is daily less and less proud, less wrathful, less covetous, and less desirous of worldly and vain pleasures; he that daily, forsaking his old vicious life, increaseth in virtue more and more. And, to be short, there is nothing that more maintaineth godliness of the mind, and driveth away ungodliness, than doth the continual reading or hearing of God's word, if it be joined with a godly mind and a good affection to know and follow God's will. For without a single eye, pure intent, and good mind nothing is allowed for good before God. And, on the other side, nothing more darkeneth Christ and the glory of God, nor bringeth in more blindness and all kinds of vices, than doth the ignorance of God's word.

The Second Part of the Sermon of the Holy Scripture



N THE FIRST part of this Sermon, which exhorteth to the knowledge of holy Scripture, was declared wherefore the knowledge of the same is necessary and profitable to all men, and that by the true knowledge and understanding of Scripture the most necessary points of our duty towards God and our neighbours are also known. Now as concerning the same matter you shall hear what followeth.

If we profess Christ, why be we not ashamed to be ignorant in his doctrine, seeing that every man is ashamed to be ignorant in that learning which he professeth? That man is ashamed to be called a philosopher which readeth not the books of philosophy; and to be called a lawyer, an astronomer, or a physician, that is ignorant in the books of law, astronomy, and physic. How can any man then say that he professeth Christ and his religion, if he will not apply himself, as far forth as he can or may conveniently, to read and hear, and so to know, the books of Christ's Gospel and doctrine? Although other sciences be good and to be learned, yet no man can deny but this is the chief, and passeth all other incomparably. What excuse shall we therefore make at the last day before Christ, that delight to read or hear men's phantasies and inventions more than his most holy Gospel; and will find no time to do that which chiefly, above all things, we should do; and will rather read other things than that for the which we ought rather to leave reading of all other things? Let us therefore apply ourselves, as far forth as we can have time and leisure, to know God's word by diligent hearing and reading thereof, as many as profess God, and have faith and trust in him.

But they that have no good affection to God's word, to colour this their fault, allege commonly two vain and feigned excuses. Some go about to excuse them by their own frailness and fearfulness, saying that they dare not read holy Scripture, lest through their ignorance they should fall into any error. Other pretend that the difficulty to understand it, and the hardness thereof, is so great, that it is meet to be read only of clerks and learned men.

As touching the first, ignorance of God's word is the cause of all error, as Christ himself affirmed to the Sadducees, saying, that they erred, because they knew not the Scripture. How should they then eschew error that will be still ignorant? and how should they come out of ignorance that will not read nor hear

that thing which should give them knowledge? He that now hath most knowledge was at the first ignorant: yet he forbare not to read, for fear he should fall into error; but he diligently read, lest he should remain in ignorance, and through ignorance in error. And, if you will not know the truth of God (a thing most necessary for you), lest you fall into error, by the same reason you may then lie still, and never go, lest, if you go, you fall in the mire; nor eat any good meat, lest you take a surfeit; nor sow your corn, nor labour in your occupation, nor use your merchandise, for fear you lose your seed, your labour, your stock: and so, by that reason, it should be best for you to live idly, and never to take in hand to do any manner of good thing, lest peradventure some evil thing may chance thereof. And, if you be afraid to fall into error by reading of holy Scripture, I shall shew you how you may read it without danger of error. Read it humbly with a meek and a lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it; and read it not without daily praying to God, that he would direct your reading to good effect; and take upon you to expound it no further than you can plainly understand it. For, as St. Augustine saith, the knowledge of holy Scripture is a great, large, and a high palace, but the door is very low; so that the high and arrogant man cannot run in, but he must stoop low and humble himself that shall enter into it. Presumption and arrogancy is the mother of all error: and humility needeth to fear no error. For humility will only search to know the truth; it will search and will bring together one place with another; and, where it cannot find out the meaning, it will pray, it will ask of other that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define any thing which it knoweth not. Therefore the humble man may search any truth boldly in the Scripture without any danger of error. And, if he be ignorant, he ought the more to read and to search holy Scripture, to bring him out of ignorance. I say not nay, but a man may prosper with only hearing; but he may much more prosper with both hearing and reading.

This have I said as touching the fear to read through ignorance of the person. And concerning the hardness of Scripture, he that is so weak that he is not able to brook strong meat, yet he may suck the sweet and tender milk, and defer the rest until he wax stronger and come to more knowledge. For God receiveth the learned and unlearned, and casteth away none, but is indifferent unto all. And the Scripture is full, as well of low valleys, plain ways, and easy for every man to use and to walk in, as also of high hills and mountains, which few men can climb unto. And "whosoever giveth his mind to holy Scriptures with diligent study and burning desire, it cannot be," saith St. John Chrysostom, "that he should be left without help. For either God Almighty will send him some godly doctor to teach him, as he did to instruct Eunuchus, a nobleman of Ethiope, and treasurer unto queen Candace; who having a great affection to read the Scripture, although he understood it not, yet, for the desire that he had unto God's word, God sent his Apostle Philip to declare unto him the true sense of the Scripture that he read; or else, if we lack a learned man to instruct and teach us, yet God himself from above will give light unto our minds, and teach us those things which are necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant." And in another place Chrysostom

saith, that "man's human and worldly wisdom or science needeth not to the understanding of Scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore." He that asketh shall have, and he that seeketh shall find, and he that knocketh shall have the door open. If we read once, twice, or thrice, and understand not, let us not cease so, but still continue reading, praying, asking of other; and so, by still knocking, at the last the door shall be opened, as St. Augustine saith. Although many things in the Scripture be spoken in obscure mysteries, yet there is nothing spoken under dark mysteries in one place but the selfsame thing in other places is spoken more familiarly and plainly to the capacity both of learned and unlearned. And those things in the Scripture that be plain to understand and necessary for salvation, every man's duty is to learn them, to print them in memory, and effectually to exercise them; and, as for the dark mysteries, to be contented to be ignorant in them until such time as it shall please God to open those things unto him. In the mean season, if he lack either aptness or opportunity, God will not impute it to his folly: but yet it behoveth not that such as be apt should set aside reading, because some other be unapt to read. Nevertheless, for the hardness of such places the reading of the whole ought not to be set apart. And briefly to conclude: as St. Augustine saith, by the Scripture all men be amended, weak men be strengthened, and strong men be comforted. So that surely none be enemies to the reading of God's word but such as either be so ignorant that they know not how wholesome a thing it is, or else be so sick that they hate the most comfortable medicine that should heal them, or so ungodly that they would wish the people still to continue in blindness and ignorance of God.

Thus we have briefly touched some part of the commodities of God's holy word, which is one of God's chief and principal benefits given and declared to mankind here in earth. Let us thank God heartily for this his great and special gift, beneficial favour, and fatherly providence. Let us be glad to revive this precious gift of our heavenly Father. Let us hear, read, and know these holy rules, injunctions, and statutes of our Christian religion, and upon that we have made profession to God at our baptism. Let us with fear and reverence lay up in the chest of our hearts these necessary and fruitful lessons. Let us night and day muse and have meditation and contemplation in them. Let us ruminate and as it were chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort, and consolation of them. Let us stay, quiet, and certify our consciences with the most infallible certainty, truth, and perpetual assurance of them. Let us pray to God, the only Author of these heavenly studies, that we may speak, think, believe, live, and depart hence according to the wholesome doctrine and verities of them. And by that means in this world we shall have God's defence, favour, and grace, with the unspeakable solace of peace and quietness of conscience, and after this miserable life we shall enjoy the endless bliss and glory of heaven. Which he grant us all that died for us all, Jesus Christ: to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be all honour and glory both now and everlastingly. Amen.

A SERMON OF THE MISERY OF ALL MANKIND AND OF HIS CONDEMNATION TO DEATH EVERLASTING BY HIS OWN SIN

THE HOLY GHOST, in writing the holy Scripture, is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man's vainglory and pride; which of all vices is most universally grafted in all mankind, even from the first infection of our first father Adam. And therefore we read in many places of Scripture many notable lessons against this old rooted vice, to teach us the most commendable virtue of humility, how to know ourselves, and to remember what we be of ourselves.

In the book of Genesis Almighty God giveth us all a title and name in our great-grandfather Adam, which ought to warn us all to consider what we be, whereof we be, from whence we came, and whither we shall, saying thus: In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou be turned again into the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; inasmuch as thou art dust, and into dust shalt thou be turned again. Here, as it were in a glass, we may learn to know ourselves to be but ground, earth, and ashes, and that to earth and ashes we shall return. Also the holy patriarch Abraham did well remember this name and title, dust, earth, and ashes, appointed and assigned by God to all mankind; and therefore he calleth himself by that name, when he maketh his earnest prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah. And we read that Judith, Esther, Job, Jeremiah, with other holy men and women in the Old Testament, did use sackcloth, and to cast dust and ashes upon their heads, when they bewailed their sinful living. They called and cried to God for help and mercy with such a ceremony of sackcloth, dust, and ashes, that thereby they might declare to the whole world what an humble and lowly estimation they had of themselves, and how well they remembered their name and title aforesaid, their vile, corrupt, frail nature, dust, earth, and ashes.

The book of Wisdom also, willing to pull down our proud stomachs, moveth us diligently to remember our mortal and earthly generation, which we have all of him that was first made; and that all men, as well kings as subjects, come into this world and go out of the same in like sort, that is, as of ourselves, full miserable, as we may daily see. And Almighty God commanded his Prophet Isaiah to make a proclamation and cry to the whole world: and Isaiah asking, What shall I cry? the Lord answered, Cry that all flesh is grass, and that all the glory thereof is but as the flower of the field: when the grass is withered, the flower falleth away, when the wind of the Lord bloweth upon it. The people surely is grass, the which drieth up, and the flower fadeth away. And the holy Prophet Job, having in himself great experience of the miserable and sinful estate of man, doth open the same to the world in these words. Man, saith he, that is born of a woman, living but a short time, is full of manifold miseries. He springeth up like a flower, and fadeth again, vanishing away as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one state. And dost thou judge it meet, O Lord, to open thine eyes upon such a one, and to bring him to judgment with thee? Who can

make him clean that is conceived of an unclean seed? And all men, of their evilness and natural proneness, were so universally given to sin, that, as the Scripture saith, God repented that ever he made man: and by sin his indignation was so much provoked against the world, that he drowned all the world with Noah's flood, except Noah himself and his little household.

It is not without great cause that the Scripture of God doth so many times call all men here in this world by this word, Earth. O thou earth, earth, earth, saith Jeremiah, hear the word of the Lord. This our right name, calling, and title, Earth, Earth, Earth, pronounced by the Prophet, sheweth what we be indeed, by whatsoever other style, title, or dignity men do call us. Thus he plainly nameth us, who knoweth best both what we be, and what we ought of right to be called. And thus he setteth us forth, speaking by his faithful Apostle St. Paul: All men, Jews and Gentiles, are under sin. There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are all unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used craft and deceit; the poison of serpents is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and wretchedness are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. And in another place St. Paul writeth thus: God hath wrapped all nations in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all. The Scripture shutteth up all under sin, that the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ should be given unto them that believe. St. Paul in many places painteth us out in our colours, calling us the children of the wrath of God when we be born; saying also that we cannot think a good thought of ourselves, much less we can say well or do well of ourselves. And the Wise Man saith in the book of Proverbs, The just man falleth seven times a day.

The most tried and approved man Job feared all his works. St. John the Baptist, being sanctified in his mother's womb, and praised before he was born, called an angel and great before the Lord, filled even from his birth with the Holy Ghost, the preparer of the way for our Saviour Christ, and commended of our Saviour Christ to be more than a prophet and the greatest that ever was born of a woman, yet he plainly granteth that he had need to be washed of Christ; he worthily extolleth and glorifieth his Lord and Master Christ, and humbleth himself as unworthy to unbuckle his shoes and giveth all honour and glory to God. So doth St. Paul both oft and evidently confess himself what he was of himself, ever giving, as a most faithful servant, all praise to his Master and Saviour. So doth blessed St. John the Evangelist, in the name of himself and of all other holy men, be they never so just, make this open confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we knowledge our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. Wherefore the Wise Man, in the book called Ecclesiastes, maketh this true and general confession: There is not one just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not. And St. David is ashamed of his sin, but not to confess his sin How oft,

how earnestly and lamentably, doth he desire God's great mercy for his great offences, and that God should not enter into judgment with him! And again, how well weigheth this holy man his sins, when he confesseth that they be so many in number and so hid and hard to understand, that it is in manner unpossible to know, utter, or number them! Wherefore, he having a true, earnest, and deep contemplation and consideration of his sins, and yet not coming to the bottom of them, he maketh supplication to God to forgive him his privy, secret, hid sins, to the knowledge of the which he cannot attain. He weigheth rightly his sins from the original root and spring-head, perceiving inclinations, provocations, stirrings, stingings, buds, branches, dregs, infections, tastes, feelings, and scents of them to continue in him still. Wherefore he saith, Mark and behold, I was conceived in sins. He saith not sin, but in the plural number sins; forasmuch as out of one, as fountain, springeth all the rest.

And our Saviour Christ saith there is none good but God, and that we can do nothing that is good without him, nor no man can come to the Father but by him. He commandeth us all to say that we be unprofitable servants, when we have done all that we can do. He preferreth the penitent Publican before the proud, holy, and glorious Pharisee. He calleth himself a Physician, but not to them that be whole, but to them that be sick, and have need of his salve for their sore. He teacheth us in our prayers to reknowledge ourselves sinners, and to ask forgiveness and deliverance from all evils at our heavenly Father's hand. He declareth that the sins of our own hearts do defile our own selves. He teacheth that an evil word or thought deserveth condemnation, affirming that we shall give an account for every idle word. He saith he came not to save but the sheep that were utterly lost and cast away. Therefore few of the proud, just, learned, wise, perfect, and holy Pharisees were saved by him; because they justified themselves by their counterfeit holiness before men. Wherefore, good people, let us beware of such hypocrisy, vainglory, and justifying of ourselves. Let us look upon our feet; and then down peacock's feathers, down proud heart, down vile clay, frail and brittle vessels.

The Second Part of the Sermon of the Misery of Man

FORASMUCH AS THE true knowledge of ourselves is very necessary to come to the right knowledge of God, ye have heard in the last reading how humbly all godly men always have thought of themselves, and so to think and judge of themselves are taught of God their Creator by his holy word. For of ourselves we be crabtrees, that can bring forth no apples. We be of ourselves of such earth as can bring forth but weeds, nettles, brambles, briars, cockle, and darnel. Our fruits be declared in the fifth chapter to the Galathians. We have neither faith, charity, hope, patience, chastity, nor any thing else that good is, but of God; and therefore these virtues be called there the fruits of the Holy Ghost, and not the fruits of man.

Let us therefore acknowledge ourselves before God, as we be indeed, miser-

able and wretched sinners. And let us earnestly repent, and humble ourselves heartily, and cry to God for mercy. Let us all confess with mouth and heart that we be full of imperfections. Let us know our own works, of what imperfection they be; and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge any part of justification by our merits or works. For truly there be imperfections in our best works: we do not love God so much as we are bound to do, with all our heart, mind, and power; we do not fear God so much as we ought to do; we do not pray to God but with great and many imperfections; we give, forgive, believe, love, and hope unperfectly; we speak, think, and do unperfectly; we fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh unperfectly. Let us therefore not be ashamed to confess plainly our state of imperfection; yea, let us not be ashamed to confess imperfection even in all our own best works. Let none of us be ashamed to say with holy St. Peter, I am a sinful man. Let us all say with the holy Prophet David, We have sinned with our fathers; we have done amiss, and dealt wickedly. Let us all make open confession with the prodigal son to our Father, and say with him, We have sinned against heaven and before thee, O Father; we are not worthy to be called thy sons. Let us all say with holy Baruch, O Lord our God, to us is worthily ascribed shame and confusion, and to thee righteousness: we have sinned, we have done wickedly, we have behaved ourselves ungodly in all thy righteousness. Let us all say with the holy Prophet Daniel, O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee; unto us belongeth confusion. We have sinned, we have been naughty, we have offended, we have fled from thee, we have gone back from all thy precepts and judgments. So we learn of all good men in holy Scripture to humble ourselves, and to exalt, extol, praise, magnify, and glorify God.

Thus we have heard how evil we be of ourselves; how, of ourselves and by ourselves, we have no goodness, help, nor salvation, but contrariwise sin, damnation, and death everlasting: which if we deeply weigh and consider, we shall the better understand the great mercy of God, and how our salvation cometh only by Christ. For in ourselves, as of ourselves, we find nothing whereby we may be delivered from this miserable captivity, into the which we were cast, through the envy of the devil, by breaking of God's commandment in our first parent Adam. We are all become unclean: but we all are not able to cleanse ourselves, nor to make one another of us clean. We are by nature the children of God's wrath: but we are not able to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God's glory. We are sheep that run astray: but we cannot of our own power come again to the sheepfold; so great is our imperfection and weakness. In ourselves therefore may not we glory, which of ourselves are nothing but sinful. Neither we may rejoice in any works that we do; which all be so unperfect and unpure that they are not able to stand before the righteous judgment seat of God, as the holy Prophet David saith: Enter not into Judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for no man that liveth shall be found righteous in thy sight.

To God therefore must we flee; or else shall we never find peace, rest, and quietness of conscience in our hearts. For he is the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation. He is the Lord with whom is plenteous redemption. He is the

God which of his own mercy saveth us; and setteth out his charity and exceeding love toward us, in that of his own voluntary goodness, when we were perished, he saved us, and provided an everlasting kingdom for us. And all these heavenly treasures are given us, not for our own deserts, merits, or good deeds, which of ourselves we have none, but of his mere mercy freely. And for whose sake? Truly for Jesus Christ's sake, that pure and undefiled Lamb of God. He is that dearly beloved Son for whose sake God is fully pacified, satisfied, and set at one with man. He is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world: of whom only it may be truly spoken, that he did all things well, and in his mouth was found no craft nor subtilty. None but he alone may say, The prince of the world came, and in me he hath nothing. And he alone may say also, Which of you shall reprove me of any fault? He is that high and everlasting Priest, which hath offered himself once for all upon the altar of the cross, and with that one oblation hath made perfect for evermore them that are sanctified. He is the alone Mediator between God and man; which paid our ransom to God with his own blood; and with that hath he cleansed us all from sin. He is the Physician which healeth all our diseases. He is that Saviour which saveth his people from all their sins. To be short, he is that flowing and most plenteous fountain of whose fulness all we have received. For in him alone are all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God hidden; and in him, and by him, have we from God the Father all good things pertaining either to the body or to the soul.

O how much are we bound to this our heavenly Father for his great mercies, which he hath so plenteously declared unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour! What thanks worthy and sufficient can we give to him? Let us all with one accord burst out with joyful voices, ever praising and magnifying this Lord of mercy for his tender kindness shewed to us in his dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hitherto have we heard what we are of ourselves; verily, sinful, wretched, and damnable. Again, we have heard how that, of ourselves and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed: so that we can find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction. Again, we have heard the tender kindness and great mercy of God the Father toward us, and how beneficial he is to us for Christ's sake, without our merits or deserts, even of his own mere mercy and tender goodness. Now, how these exceeding great mercies of God, set abroad in Christ Jesus for us, be obtained, and how we be delivered from the captivity of sin, death, and hell, it shall more at large, with God's help, be declared in the next Sermon. In the mean season, yea, and at all times, let us learn to know ourselves, our frailty and weakness, without any cracking or boasting of our own good deeds and merits. Let us also knowledge the exceeding mercy of God toward us, and confess that, as of ourselves cometh all evil and damnation, so likewise of him cometh all goodness and salvation; as God himself saith by the Prophet Hosea: O Israel, thy destruction cometh of thyself, but in me only is thy help and comfort. If we thus humbly submit ourselves in the sight of God, we may be sure that in the time of his visitation he will lift us up unto the kingdom of his dearly beloved Son Christ

Jesus our Lord. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.