

# MEDITATIONS ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST



THOMAS à KEMPIS

**Thomas à Kempis**

# **Meditations on the Incarnation of Christ**

**Sermons on the Life and Passion of Our Lord  
and of Hearing and Speaking Good Words**

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# INTRODUCTION

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A new critical text of the “*Omnia Opera*” of Thomas à Kempis is being edited by Dr. M. Joseph Pohl, of Bonn, in seven volumes, of which four have already appeared, and the remainder are to be issued in the course of 1907. An eighth volume is to contain a life of the author, a dissertation on his various writings, and a vindication of his title to the “*Imitation*” by the same industrious hand. The publishers, Messrs. Herder, are doing their work in a way worthy of the subject matter, and of the painstaking toil of the editor; their volumes are a pleasure to behold and handle, a masterpiece of the printer’s and the bookbinder’s art, a contrast indeed to the unwieldy tomes and cramped letterpress, to which, apart from the “*Imitation*,” students of the Ven. à Kempis have hitherto been accustomed. From this edition is taken Dr. Duthoit’s translation, “*Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ*,” published in 1904 by Messrs. Kegan Paul, as also the present volume and the remainder, five in all yet to appear, of this series, embracing, with the exception of the “*Imitation*,” the complete works of à Kempis. Various parts, in fact quite a large proportion of these writings have been already rendered into English, and in many cases well, but at various times, by various hands, in various forms; and it was felt that even a thorough supplement of the portions not yet translated or not translated satisfactorily could in no wise compare with the advantages of a complete, uniform edition, one in fact to rival in English the work so admirably done by Dr. Pohl and Messrs. Herder in the original.

The fact that there is a demand, irrespective of class and creed, for these writings of à Kempis in the vulgar tongue, is one that speaks well for the English people. And whatever other reasons may be brought forward in explanation, it seems to me that the chief cause is one that lies deep in the heart and conscience of the nation. The remarkable love of Englishmen for the “Imitation” and for the other works of the saintly à Kempis may be traced to the strong, personal love which, in however lesser a degree, they share with him for Our Divine Saviour.

It is well known that in pre-Reformation days England was famous for her devotion to the person of the Incarnate Son of God. She was called the most Christian nation of Europe, and precisely, it seems, because of her deep-rooted love and reverence for Christ. The unhappy upheaval of the sixteenth century wrought many sad changes and brought in its train irreparable losses. These have been further accentuated by the countless religious divisions that immediately followed and that still daily spring up around us. But the love of Jesus Christ was too firmly set in the depths of the spirit and traditions of the English people ever to be wholly changed or entirely lost. And for those numerous pious souls who to-day long and pray for the reunion of Christendom there is no more assured motive for the hope that they cherish, no basis more practical for what efforts they can individually essay, than this common love for the Master, Whose name we all glory to bear.

The great attraction, then, which the mysticism of Thomas à Kempis and of the whole school of Windesheim exercises over the English people is to be found in the principal character of that mysticism, an overflowing, simple, almost childlike love and devotion for the person of the Divine Saviour. The opening words of the “Imitation”

strike the keynote: "Let it be our chief study to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ." And the whole spiritual philosophy of that masterpiece may be summed up in the counsel: Shake off all that can hinder free access to Jesus; eagerly embrace all that can make the soul more like to Jesus, bring her nearer to Him, confirm her in closer union of divine love. There are passages there, whole chapters, familiar to all the world, which treat directly of this union in love, and which breathe the most pure and ardent affection. But from the very nature of the work, this latter element finds more free and tender, though certainly not more deep and full expression in the author's other and less-known writings.

What can compare, for instance, with the exquisite tenderness in some of the passages of the Sermons on the Infant Saviour, V-VIII, in this volume? Read especially Sermon VIII, where free rein is given to devotion in kissing the "feet, hands, and mouth of Jesus." And again in Sermon VII, who cannot relish something of the poetry of the sublime simplicity with which the venerable author offers himself to render various little menial services in the Cave of Bethlehem. Bethlehem indeed and Calvary always seem to appeal with the greatest force to the holy Canon Regular, and to call forth the tenderest expressions of the burning love which consumed his soul. And herein again we find him in touch with the truest Christian instincts of the English people, for whom, in spite of growing ignorance, indifference, and materialism, Christmas and Good Friday are still the chief solemnities of the year.

In addition to this general influence over a whole nation which à Kempis wields as a true interpreter of its noblest aspirations, and apart also from the power, second only to that of Holy Writ, exercised over countless generations by



the pages of the "Imitation," numberless individual instances might be cited of the fascination which the personality of this humble Religious exerts, and of the enthusiasm which his writings arouse in almost every age and country. One has only to remember for a moment the host of zealous scholars who have stood forth to defend the title of à Kempis to the "Imitation" from the day it was first impugned, and whose learned and voluminous labours have now, we may well hope, settled the question for ever.

Two of these, and by no means the least devoted or illustrious in the roll, are with us and active still, Sir Francis Cruise and Dr. Pohl, and each dates his hero-worship of à Kempis from earliest childhood. The former still recalls with gratitude his first copy of the "Imitation," presented him by his sister. The perusal so awakened his interest and enthusiasm that his question at once was, what manner of man had written this? It was then he first learnt of the regrettable controversy, to the solution of which he henceforth devoted the scanty leisure of a most strenuous career, a labour of love which has been to a great extent its own reward, and which has earned for him the esteem and gratitude of thousands. It is due to his suggestion that the present writer first conceived the idea of a complete translation of all the works of à Kempis, a labour, he said, which had been the dream of his life. It is to him, therefore, that this volume is affectionately dedicated.

Dr. Pohl also, in a touching little passage, "Thomæ à Kempis, Opera Omnia," vol. ii, p. 484, traces back his love of the author to the first-remembered lessons of a simple, pious mother, whose reading was almost entirely confined to her prayerbook and her "Imitation." One result of these early impressions is the new edition to which reference has been already made, the fruit of years of patient scholarly

labour and research, a work which will doubtless render the good Professor's name as immortal as that of à Kempis himself.

With regard to the present volume, "A Meditation on the Incarnation of Christ, etc.," Dr. Pohl's text is a careful edition of the autograph MS. preserved in the Royal Library, Brussels, 4585-4587. An inscription is inserted to the effect: "Dono dedit anno 1755 R. P. Rumoldus Waynants museo nostro praesente et consentiente R. P. Provincia(le)." On the top of the first page is written further: "Collegij Soctis Jesu Contraci." A Jesuit, Simon Wynants, was Professor of Grammar at the time and place mentioned in these two notices, and the presumption is that the donor of the manuscript was a relative of his. In any case, at the suppression of the Society, 1773, the valuable manuscript found its way, with so many other treasures of the Jesuit libraries in Belgium, to Brussels.

The Codex contains, in addition to the Meditation and Sermons, the "Alphabetum Monachi," a fragment in Low German, "Van goeden woerden to horen ende die to spreken," and some canticles. These latter seem to have been added as an afterthought to fill some odd pages; the "Alphabetum" is found also in other manuscripts, and I am giving its translation in a subsequent volume, containing several treatises, all concerning life and discipline in the cloister. But the German fragment, of which Dr. Pohl gives a Latin version, I thought as well to place here, ending this volume as it ends the autograph codex, with its date, 1456.

This date, 1456, at which time Thomas à Kempis was in his seventy-seventh year, of itself signifies nothing more than that this small treatise was then copied and the codex completed. But from internal evidence Dr. Pohl is of opinion that the other works translated here are of the same period.

The titles here given, "A Meditation on the Incarnation of Christ," and "Sermons on the Life and Passion of Our Lord," are those assigned by the author himself and by all his editors, with the exception of Sommalius, whose edition has hitherto been the best known and most used. Sommalius puts the Meditation and Sermons together under one head, "Conciones et Meditationes triginta sex utilissimae," with the following interesting appreciation: "In this second part of the first volume are contained both sermons and meditations, very profitable and devout. The sermons are such that they seem to be meditations. Likewise the meditations are so written that sermons can be made of them."

A striking likeness will be found between the contents of the present volume and Dr. Duthoit's translation, already mentioned, "Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ." Dr. Pohl collects from the two works a number of parallel passages of evident similarity. Indeed, it is the eminent critic's opinion that this resemblance was the occasion of the puzzling omission, without a word of explanation, in Sommalius' third edition of the above "Prayers and Meditations," which had already appeared in his second, under the title "De vita et beneficiis, etc." This second edition is the best that appears under Sommalius' name. At the time of publishing the third edition the learned Jesuit was already eighty years of age, and moreover actively engaged in other affairs. Dr. Pohl then argues that he left the care of this new edition to his publisher, with the result that the latter, noticing the similarity between the two treatises in question, took the liberty, without his knowledge or consent, of suppressing one of them.

The question will naturally occur to many, whether these sermons were actually delivered as such, and, if delivered,

to whom. We know that for two periods of his life, covering a considerable number of years, Thomas à Kempis was sub-prior of the Canonry of Mount St. Agnes. One of the duties of this office was the care and instruction of the novices and younger professed brethren. And in fact we have a whole volume of sermons by à Kempis, thirty in all, addressed to novices, a translation of which will appear shortly. With regard to these the author expressly states that they are a collection of discourses "given at different times to our novices by way of sweet conference." There is another treatise of "Nine Sermons to the Brethren." But we know from Francis Tolensis and other biographers that à Kempis frequently preached to the people also, who, as the fame of his holiness of life and eloquence and unction of word spread abroad, flocked in crowds to the Mount to hear him. Hence the inference would be that these present Sermons, treating of the mystery of our Redemption from its revelation to the prophets to the descent of the Holy Ghost, were in the first instance actually preached to the faithful. The difficulty is that much therein seems addressed directly to religious, and that the whole tone is of too elevated a devotion for the people in general.

However, we must bear in mind the particular class of faithful who would form the majority of his audience, and the close connection of these with the Canons of the Windesheim Congregation. To realize this better we must go back to the origin of this Congregation, as described by John Buschius in his "Chronicles of Windesheim," and by à Kempis himself in his charming biographies of Gerard Groote, Florence Radewyn, and others their disciples, an excellent translation of which forms one of the volumes of this series, "The Founders of the New Devotion." The

question is treated at some length in my “Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis” (London, Washbourne), ch. i-v.

To give here a brief résumé: Gerard Groote was a cleric of Deventer, in Holland, who, after a more or less worldly youth, came under the influence of the great religious movement, which invaded the Low Countries in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and became himself its chief protagonist. At the end of three years’ retirement in the Carthusian Convent of Monichuisen, acting on the advice of friends there, Gerard went forth to communicate to others by word and example some of the zeal for perfection with which he was himself filled. To this end he received deacon’s orders from the Bishop of Utrecht—his humility forbade him ever to aspire to the priesthood—and authority also to preach. “Clergy, religious, and laity, men, women, and children, learned and ignorant, princes, magistrates, lawyers, tradesmen, servants, pilgrims, and beggars—all flocked to hear the new apostle, and listened for hours to his impassioned exhortations to repent of their sins, to despise the fleeting pleasures of the world, to lead a better life. His words bore marvellous fruit. Besides the many sinners whom he recalled to a sense of their duty, numbers of the clergy and laity placed themselves unreservedly in his hands, and under his direction began to lead lives that in simplicity, devotion, and contempt of the world rivalled those of the primitive Christians.”

Through much misrepresentation and some unfortunate misunderstanding an inhibition was procured from the Ordinary forbidding Groote to preach. He submitted at once. Retiring to his native town, he now devoted himself unreservedly to the task of forming to a perfect Christian life the many who had been converted by his burning eloquence. A large band of disciples, priests, clerics and

laymen, gathered round him, not forsaking their ordinary avocations, but united simply by an ardent pursuit of holiness, and an earnest emulation of the fervour of the first Christians, the unworldliness or other-worldliness, poverty, simplicity, and devotion of early days. At the suggestion of his most devoted admirer and follower, Florence Radewyn, Gerard consented that some, who so chose, should live together in community, though still bound by no manner of vow. The greater proportion of those who availed themselves of this permission were poor students, frequenting the public schools of Deventer. One stringent rule was that all should labour for their maintenance. This was to prevent abuses which, throughout the Netherlands and elsewhere, had arisen in similar bodies of men and women, who had commenced in a laudable spirit of poverty to live on alms, but who had degenerated into idle and insolent beggars. The chief work undertaken by the students was that of copying manuscripts, a highly-appreciated and well-paid service in those days, before the invention of the press. At the same time, a community was formed of pious females, who, following a similar manner of life under the guidance of a confessor, supported themselves also by the labour of their hands. They were called simply, "Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life." The whole movement was known as the New Devotion, and its followers styled the Devout. These latter terms are of frequent occurrence throughout the works of à Kempis.

Gerard Groote, however, anxious for the continuance of the good work and for its preservation against opposition from without and disintegrating elements within, had already conceived the idea of placing the whole body under the protection and guidance of a canonically instituted religious Order already existing in the Church. While he was



maturing his plans and looking for resources to make a commencement, Deventer was devastated by one of the periodical plagues of those days.

Gerard himself fell a victim to his devotedness to the stricken, and at the very moment when the legacy of a pious and wealthy friend had removed the financial difficulties which had hitherto stood in the way of his scheme. However, on his death bed, as the expression of his last wishes, he told the weeping brethren that as soon as possible some of them should enter an Order approved by the Church, and from the cloister be the guides, directors and protectors of the Devout still living in the world. They asked him which Order they should join. Some suggested the Carthusians. Groote objected that they were too secluded for their purpose. Others mentioned the Cistercians. The Master replied that these were too severe. "Rather," said he, "you should enter the Order of Canons Regular. For this Order follows an easier rule, and is well adapted to all who are just able to serve God in holy religion. Neither do these Canons seem to differ much from you in their manner of life, except that they observe by profession and vow what you observe without vows, to wit, charity, and poverty, chastity, and obedience."

And in effect, shortly after the death of Groote, six Devout Brethren founded the monastery of Windesheim, and made their profession in the Order of Canons Regular as the first members of a Congregation, which in a marvellously short space of time covered all the Netherlands with new establishments and affiliated centres. I hope to speak more at length of the Congregation of Windesheim and of the Canonical Order itself in introductory notes to subsequent volumes of this series.

For the first years of its existence the new Congregation drew all its recruits from among the Devout. The greater number of the canonical foundations also owed their origin to a humble community of Brothers; Mt. St. Agnes itself, the cloistral home of our venerable author, is a striking instance, as may be seen from the opening pages of his "Chronicle of Mt. St. Agnes." Throughout this Chronicle, as also that of Windesheim, we find constant proofs of the amicable relations, of patronage on the one hand and willing submission on the other, existing between the Canons Regular living under vows in the cloister, and the Congregations, as they were called, or communities of Devout Brothers and Sisters. Busch is especially eloquent in his testimony as to the numbers trained by the Brothers to "contempt of the world, the purpose of a better life, the desire of religion (i.e., the religious state), discipline of morals, fear of God, dread of hell, and love of the heavenly fatherland," and then sent by them with vocations thus nurtured, not only to join the Canonical Institute, but to become bright examples of observance and zealous reformers in many monasteries of other religious orders also.

The two bodies continued thus side by side for centuries. But the Brothers of the Common Life, after doing magnificent work in art and literature, suffered much from the troubles of the Reformation period, and especially in their schools from the competition of the new Congregations of Religious which arose at that time, devoted to the work of teaching. Both one and the other were swept out of existence by the ravaging storm of the French Revolution.

As a final instance of the primitive spirit of these Devout Brothers and Sisters, I may quote the Rule of Life drawn up for their guidance by Florence Radewyn, after the death of

Gerard Groote, as given by Badius Ascensius in his "Vita Thomae à Kempis," c. ix.

"All were to approach as near as possible the life of the Apostles and of the primitive Church of Christ, so that in the whole congregation there should be one heart, and that no one should consider or call anything his own. No one should seek outside the house the cure of souls, ecclesiastical benefices, or worldly occupations for the sake of gain; but clerics, who should be found worthy, would be promoted to cures that were not too lucrative. All should dwell together in chastity and poverty, and should be clad in that manner of dress which Gerard Groote had approved. No one should beg from door to door, and in order that they might not be driven to this by want, all should avoid idleness, and according to their abilities should transcribe books, or instruct children. They were to take care that they themselves, and all whom they should teach, should venerate and worship God with the deepest piety. They should love their neighbour with due charity, and should assist the poor with alms, according to their means. All should observe brotherly love. To their Superior or spiritual Father in all lawful and just concerns they should yield unquestioning obedience, considering that their highest merit consisted in charity and submission. All earnings accruing from their labour in common or in private they should, according to the apostolic rule, lay at the feet of the Superior, and if perchance they left the Brotherhood they should carry nothing with them."

When we consider that it was to such as these that à Kempis addressed himself, we need not be surprised at the sublime spirituality pervading his sermons. In the light of these facts, the last three sermons of this volume, for instance, treating of the Holy Ghost and of the primitive

Church, are clothed with fresh significance. Indeed, for a right appreciation, not only of these sermons but of all the writings of à Kempis, it is absolutely necessary to gather some knowledge of the times and characters among which he passed his peaceful days, and especially the atmosphere, intellectual and spiritual, wherein he lived, the spirit of the circle or school of Windesheim.

Happily, without seeking beyond English authors, there is abundance of excellent material for this study. We have Sir Francis Cruise's "Thomas à Kempis. Notes of a visit to the scenes in which his life was spent, with some account of the examination of his relics" (Kegan Paul and Co.). These notes form a most interesting portion of one of our best works on à Kempis and his claims to the authorship of the "Imitation." The same writer has issued two smaller works, through the London Catholic Truth Society, one on the controversy, the other on the life and character of the author of the "Imitation." We have also Rev. S. Kettlewell's "The Authorship of the 'De Imitation Christi' " (London, Rivingtons), a valuable contribution to the question. By the same author we have "Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life" (Kegan Paul and Co.). This work, in two large volumes, contains a mass of valuable and interesting information on the whole movement of the New Devotion; but, unfortunately, the writer has at times allowed his prejudices to lead him into strange errors, especially in the efforts which he constantly makes to reconcile the conduct and teaching of Gerard Groote and his followers with those of the sixteenth century Protestants. There is also the "Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis," mentioned above, compiled chiefly from the writings of à Kempis himself and his contemporaries. Finally, there are the two historical volumes of this series, translated by J. P. Arthur, "The

Founders of the New Devotion," and "The Chronicles of Mt. St. Agnes."

A word now as to the method of translation I have adopted in the present and subsequent volumes. The chief object has been absolute fidelity to the thought, expression, and, as far as possible, style of the original. With this end in view, I have underlined and double-underlined the words and passages so marked by the author, as reproduced in Dr. Pohl's edition from such autograph manuscripts as are still extant. For the same reason, I have followed, as closely as the English idiom would permit, the peculiar punctuation of the author, again as faithfully rendered by his recent editor. It is well known that a certain rhythm runs through all the works of à Kempis, purposely introduced, it seems, as an aid to the memory, when books were rare in proportion to their costliness. A special system of punctuation was employed for this purpose, often having reference rather to the sound than to the sense of a passage. Besides the note of interrogation, of which the use was as with us, there were four other signs, the point, or full-stop, followed by a capital letter, and the same followed by a small letter, the clivis, or flexa, now obsolete, and the colon. Hirsche, quoted by Dr. Pohl, vol. ii, p. 447, explains that the pause at the full-stop before a capital letter should be long, as with our point, slightly shorter at the clivis, shorter still at the colon, and very slight at the full-stop before a small letter. In Dr. Pohl's edition, and, as near as feasible, in this translation, the last-named is represented by a comma, and the clivis by a semicolon.

THE TRANSLATOR.

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# **A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST**

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# **HERE BEGINNETH A MEDITATION ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF HOLY WRIT**

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“Search the Scriptures,” saith the Lord. O most sweet Lord Jesus, grant me Thy unworthy servant devoutly to ponder the mystery of Thy incarnation; to search wisely, to understand sublimely; what is not understood to venerate humbly: and ever to give thanks to Thee for condescension so great, and love so inestimable. For to contemplate this mystery affords me the greatest delight; and amid all Thy other wonders brings me the sweetest savour, touches me most deeply: draws me most mightily, and ravishes my whole spirit within me. Grant me then often to dwell thereon: and carefully to consider how it was foreknown and foretold by the holy prophets. Open Thou my eyes: and I will consider the wondrous things of Thy law. For Thou art the founder of the law, Thou the inspirer and teacher of the prophets: by whose utterances in wonderful and manifold ways Thou wast foretold and prefigured; now clearly, now darkly: as the whole sequence of the Old Testament when examined manifestly shows forth. For nothing therein is without mystery; but most faithful witness is there contained as well of Thy divine as of Thy human nature. And although the testimony of men is not necessary to Thee, Who art the Truth, and, at Thy pleasure, makest of men prophets; nevertheless, for our instruction and strengthening in the faith, Thou didst will these things to be

foretold and written long before by Thy saints: and Thou didst will to clothe their words with such authority, that no man might dare to gainsay them in any point; so that also when Thou shouldst be present in the flesh, Thou couldst be recognized the King of Israel and Saviour of the World: Whom Holy Writ in so many places had declared to be coming. And this it is that in person Thou didst give as answer to the doctors of the law not believing: but closely watching and cunningly tempting Thee. "Search the scriptures: for you think in them to have life everlasting. And the same are they that give testimony of Me."

The patriarchs give witness: the prophets and the other just give witness of Thy incarnation. For Abraham, first of the patriarchs by the merit of his faith and his act of perfect obedience: received this promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." In which seed, to wit, Thou wert designated and prophesied: Who, born of the Virgin Mary, didst truly spring from the flesh of Adam, truly from the stock of Abraham. Who also didst transmit this blessing to all the nations throughout the world, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized: shall be saved." This blessing, I say, is not an earthly, but a heavenly promise: not transitory fruitfulness, but everlasting bliss; unending life with the angels: not temporal length of days. Which, as it was promised to faithful Abraham: so also through Thee was it given to him, and to all the followers of the true faith. For not those only, who were born of Abraham according to the flesh, are to be reckoned children of the promise: but they that follow in the footsteps of his faith are included in the blessing; whether sprung from him of the flesh: or born again of the spirit from the other nations. And therefore he is called the father of many nations, not of the Jews only:

but of all them that believe in Thee throughout the universe of peoples.

A splendid witness also to Thee bears Isaac, the son of Abraham, in the things that befell him. For his birth, foretold by an angel, is a presage of Thy nativity: which however far surpasses the manner of birth of all that are born of women. He was brought forth of a barren mother through the promise of an angel: but Thou, promised from the beginning of the world, in a more ineffable fashion wast born of a virgin mother for our salvation. He in his conception gave joy to parents and friends: but Thou in Thy birth didst give great joy to angels and men. This very miracle wrought in the womb of old age makes easy of belief the child-bearing of maidenhood. Thou therefore, Who didst perform this in Thy servant, couldst certainly do more in Thyself. For seeing that Thou art the Author of nature, Thou holdest all things under Thy power: and Thou art bound by the law or right of none.

In him also is resplendent a figure of Thy Passion: when he was bidden sacrifice himself by his Father, to whom a message from God to this effect had previously been brought by an angel. He carried the wood of the sacrifice: Thou didst bear the wood of the cross, unto the wiping out of the handwriting of original sin. He is bound and speedily placed upon the altar: Thou, after Thou hast been bound and cruelly scourged, art at length lifted up upon the cross, that Thou mayest draw all things to Thyself. He was obedient to his father Abraham: and Thou didst obey Thy Father God, even to the death of the cross. He is offered, but not slain: because he was the figure, Thou the truth: he the symbol, Thou the true sacrifice. He should not die, because he was not the redeemer of the world: but Thou shouldst die, still not of Thy own, but for our crime: because, true

Redeemer of the world, Thou wert born unto this, and didst receive this commandment from the Father.

The patriarch Jacob likewise bears most true testimony to Thee. He, taught by the spirit of prophecy: foretold to his children many things to come. For he made known the tribe of which Thou wert to be born, and the time wherein Thou wert to come: when, blessing his son Juda, among other things he said: "The sceptre shall not be taken from Juda," quoth he, "nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent: and He shall be the expectation of nations." Which testimony indeed rightly understood stands undoubtedly accomplished in Thee, Who didst most worthily spring from the tribe of Juda: and didst enter this light of the world at that epoch, when a legitimate ruler had failed in Judea: and a king of foreign race, Herod, there held princely sway. Thou art not therefore awaited, as the Jew madly raves; but Thou art believed to have already come God in the flesh: as the Christian confesses, and the Catholic faith teaches. Certainly, there is no longer a ruler in Judea, the law has ceased therein; the priesthood is silent, the temple has fallen, the kingdom is destroyed, that nation is scattered through the world: that the whole world may know, that Thou, the Saviour of Israel, the expectation of the nations and the desired thereof, hast come. The ancient law then was due to cease, after the new grace and truth shone forth with Thy coming: for all that former dispensation was a minister to give witness to Thee. With this agree the voices of the prophets: who, foreknowing Thy coming, foretold the days of grace in which we abide.

For Moses, the lawgiver and teacher of Thy people Israel, utters a most trustworthy testimony: "The Lord Thy God will raise up to thee a prophet of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me." Moses called Thee simply a prophet

addressing a rude people: who maybe was not yet found capable of grasping a more sublime title of Thee. Which also is sufficiently clear from the gospel, where, when Thou hadst worked the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, this was the saying repeated by the people: "This is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world." But we, now endued with a more certain truth and a higher understanding of faith: truly confess and believe Thee not only a prophet, but the Lord also of the prophets, and the true Son of God. Nor is it strange if Thou didst speak many things darkly to that people by Thy servant Moses, and to us more things more clearly in Thy own person: for thus it befitted the order of justice, thus the law in fine and grace. This Moses then, in the longing for Thy advent, prayed and said, "I beseech Thee, Lord: send Whom Thou wilt send."

This is the Moses, who is sent into Egypt to free the children of Israel: to whom also is likewise given the power of working signs and marvels. He wrought many things and strange, which, read or heard, excite no little wonder: but, understood mystically and duly referred to Thee: convey to pious and faithful minds a higher meaning and a more saving fruit. He led forth the children of Israel from the land of Egypt: Thou didst redeem Thine from the old life, from the slavery of the devil, from the confines of hell. He, having overwhelmed Pharaoh in the Red Sea, made them enter the land of promise: Thou, having destroyed original sin by the water of baptism, makest Thy faithful enter the kingdom of the dwelling above. He on Mount Sinai received the law of the decalogue written on tables of stone, and delivered it to the people to observe: Thou, having become the mediator of the New Testament, didst preach the law of grace to the disciples on the Mount: which also by the spirit of love Thou didst deeply impress upon their minds. He wandered forty

years in the desert with the children of Israel: by many signs and wonders he was glorious in their midst; Thou, three and thirty years seen upon earth and conversing with men, didst show forth so many signs of Thy divine power: that the world would scarcely be able to contain them, if they were all written. He acted as a faithful servant: Thou didst act as the Lord and the only Son of the Father: into Whose hands the Father gave all things. Therefore neither he can be compared with Thee: nor indeed any one of angels or men. For to all the spirit is given in measure; but to Thee remaineth power ever equal with the Father: there abideth also in Thee according to Thy human nature an excellence of singular dignity far above the other saints, communicable to no creature. "For to which of the angels hath it been said at any time, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee' "? Or which of the saints has heard the Father saying to him, "Sit thou at my right hand"? It is a great thing for an angel to be a minister: it is a great thing for any of Thy saints, to sit at table in the kingdom of Thy Father: but to Thee is given all power in Heaven and on earth. And if Thou didst appear in the substance of our mortal flesh; Thou art nevertheless above all the unchangeable God: receiving what is ours, and not losing what is Thine own. Unwaveringly therefore and boldly we confess Thee the Christ, the only-begotten of God, the Saviour of the world, and the Holy of holies promised in the law; desired by the patriarchs; foreseen and foretold by the prophets. Whose witness if a man hesitate to believe, he deprives himself of the light of truth: not keeping the base on which to set the foot of faith: nor looking to the light shining in the darksome place. For the law is a flame, and prophecy a precious lantern, leading us on to Thee the true light of the soul: in Whom they that believe are saved by faith. For without faith