

# THE SECOND SERMON

## GENESIS 25.

- 20** So that Rebecca his wife conceived.
- 21** And when the Children from within her, she said, If it be so, to what end is it? And she went to ask counsel of the Lord.
- 22** To whom the Lord said: There are two peoples in thy womb, and two nations brought forth out of thy womb have decided, of whom one shall be mightier than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.

WE SAW YESTERDAY HOW GOD proved the faith of Isaack, before he gave him any offspring, to wit, for the space of twenty years. Now to the end we should know that he prayed not to God in vain, seeing that God heard his request, the which tended to this, that God might send the savior of the world by means of the seed that he had promised him. Now lo, wherein it was that Isaack might rejoice, and not after the common manner. For his wife had been barren a long time, and he saw that she had conceived, and that God had declared that he had not forgotten his promise, and after he knew that this was granted him, forasmuch as he had his recourse to God. But see a new temptation, and which is more hard and more grievous to be borne, than if his wife had remained barren. For she conceived two children, the which struggled and strove together in her belly. Now this was very hideous thing, and as it were against nature. And see wherefore also she said, that it had been better that she had been dead, and this was not of any impatience that she spake thus, as if she had felt horrible torments and sorrows that had constrained her unto it: but she looked up higher. For she bare in her womb all the hope that might be had of the salvation of the world. Now in the meantime she seeth such a combat, that it seemeth that GOD overthroweth all, and that he would show therein a sign of his wrath. To be short, the thing is detestable of itself, that there should be such a strife and battle in the womb of a woman: and this came not naturally, but God would now do (as we have seen) to Isaack and to her, that all they that should come of their seed after the flesh, should not therefore be reputed of the number of the faithful: but rather that there

should be mortal war amongst them. Now therefore when she saw (instead of having the salvation of the world in her womb) such a sign of God his wrath, and as it were a devilish fight of deadly enemies of the Church, she could not know the whole: but she perceived, that if she had conceived to have such a combat, that this was, as if GOD had been against her, and come with a main army, to say: Thou art unto me as a detestable creature, and I have cast thee off and refused thee. In what case then is she, when she imagineth all these things? And so we ought not to think it strange, if in such anguish, she would rather have chosen to die, than to see so monstrous a thing, which was altogether contrary to the order of nature. Notwithstanding it is said, that in this so great heaviness, she left not off, to have recourse unto God. And in very deed she obtained an answer to comfort her: not but that there was also some grief mingled therewith, but yet God did moderate this passion, that was so grievous unto her, and said, that she had two peoples in her womb: as if he should have said, that his was not only for the two children's sakes, which she bare, but that this had a farther respect: that is to say, that they should be divided the one from the other. And howsoever both two were the sons of Abraham, and that it had been said unto Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, yet it must needs be that from Isaack such must descend, as God should cut off from his Church, who should be rejected, and so consequently should be the enemies of the Church of God. Now it is very true that this might have wounded both Isaack and Rebecca with a deadly sorrow: but yet in the meantime they see that the goodness of God was no whit quenched and that God showed himself faithful in that he had once pronounced. For he had said.

*The elder shall serve the younger.*

Wherein Rebecca knew, that of her, howsoever it should be, should come that blessed seed, which had been promised. See in brief the whole that is here rehearsed. But all would be dark, if it were not declared particularly. Let us note here then, that they that are called into the Church, does not always remain there, as we have seen a notable example in Ismael: who was the eldest son of Abraham, notwithstanding he was banished from the family, and it was said, that he should not be here. And this was not of the riches of the world, nor of those possessions, which Abraham had. For he was rich in cattle, in gold and silver: but he had not one foot of land. This heritage therefore, to what had it respect? Even to the spiritual promise:

that is to say, that God had chosen the seed of Abraham, which was as much to say, as this shall be a people that shall be dedicated to my service: and those that shall come of them, will I receive and accept for my children, to the end I may gather them into everlasting life. Mark then how Ismael with his birthright is cast from the hope of life: and it remaineth only to Isaack. And even so is it herein, concerning Esau and Jacob: For both these were descended of Abraham, yea they were twins, their mother bare them in one belly: yet that one is received, and the other rejected: one is chosen, and the other refused.

So then we see that they, who for a time have place in the church, and bear the title of the faithful and of the children of God, may well be so accounted before men, but they are not written in the book of life: God knoweth them not, nor avoucheth them for his. Hereby we are admonished, not proudly to vaunt ourselves, nor to be drunken with sottish [*stupid, foolish*] presumption, when God shall show us this favor, to bring us into his church: but let us walk in purity, and labor to make sure our election, and to have the testimony thereof in our hearts, by the holy Ghost, and not to trust only to the outward title and appearance, which we may pretend before the world: see what we have here to mark. And moreover we are taught a far greater thing: and that is in the first place: that albeit God had established his covenant with Abraham, yet notwithstanding he would declare that this was not all, to have made offer of his grace: but that it behooved that he chose according to his liberty, such as he thought good, and that the rest should remain in their cursed state. And therefore Saint Paul allegeth this place to apply it to the secret election of God, through which before the foundation of the world, he chose those as seemed good unto him. Now this is a very high and profound matter, but when it shall be farther declared, everyone may make his profit of it, so that we be attentive unto it. And for the remnant, let us receive that, which the holy scripture showeth unto us, with sobriety, and let us not desire to be wiser, than is lawful for us: but let us rest in that which God shall speak unto us, and moreover let us be humble, not to reply against him, nor to bring forth our fantasies before him, as though we would plead against God: but acknowledging that his judgments are bottomless: let us not search farther therein, than is permitted unto us. Now it behooveth that we handle these things in such sort, that that which at the first show seemeth to be dark, be made more easy to us. We have

already seen that God hath chosen Abraham's seed. Now if a man would ask, why or by whom he was brought so to do: he shall not find that Abraham was any worthier than others: as we have already largely enough handled this matter. Lo then a privilege which was given to a certain family, not flowing from any merit, neither for that God found anything in their persons, wherefore they ought to be preferred: for they were no better nor more excellent than others, but it pleased him so. Now, it is very true the this will be hard for us to digest, if we bring in our own judgment as there are a great sort of fanatical heads which cannot abide this doctrine: For it seemeth good to them to reply against God: But what profit they thereby in the end? We have alleged that herein we must bring with us an humility, for to reverence that which is hidden from us. And indeed Saint Paul hath well showed us this by his example. For instead of disputing the matter he crieth out. O how wonderful are the judgments of God: Behold Saint Paul who was altogether amazed, he found himself astonished, he that had been rapt [*lifted, carried*] up above the heavens, he that had seen the secrets of God which was not lawful for man to utter. Saint Paul then, who was (as a man would say) a companion of Angels, was found in this case to marvel, and to be altogether confounded: and what shall become of these Scullions, who have scarcely licked with the tip of their tongue one word of the law and Gospel, and yet nevertheless would go beyond Saint Paul? And yet men shall find this pride in very many. But for our part let us return to that which is here showed us. *O man who art thou.* When therefore we will make comparison betwixt God and us: who is God? within what compass shall we enclose him? Shall it be within the compass of our brain? And we have scarcely half an ounce of wit, and in mean season God, who closeth his fist, to hold the whole world as a grain of dust (as Esay the prophet saith) (Isaiah 45) and is not comprehended neither in heaven nor in earth, who hath an infinite power, and infinite justice and wisdom, and hath incomprehensible counsels: and yet for all that we must come to make him subject to our foolish fantasy. And whereto will this grow? Moreover who are we? Men, (saith Saint Paul) By which word he meaneth, that we are nothing at all: as if he should say, must it be that thou presume so much, as to dare to inquire of the bottomless secrets of God, seeing thou art nothing but clay and dung? And again, what is thy understanding? Thou art full of sin and iniquity, thou art a poor blind one: and yet thou wilt that God shall make an account to thee: and wilt thou conclude, that if thou find not that which he doeth good and

reasonable, that thou mayest accuse him, and must he needs hold up his hand at thy bar? Now let us mark this admonition in the first place, and let us know that our Lord Jesus Christ teacheth us, that we cannot do amiss to harken and open our ears, to inquire and search after that, that it hath pleased him we should know: but let us take heed that we go not beyond it: For there is no rage so great and outrageous, as when we will know more than God doth show us. And moreover we shall have spun a fair thread if we apply all our senses and all our studies thereto: whether is it that we shall come. This shall be always to enwrap us so much the more in a Labyrinth, and maze unless, we have the direction of God to show us the way.

Let us therefore keep this mean: that is to say, to hearken to that which God doth propound unto us: and as soon as he shall once shut his mouth, let us have all our understandings locked up and captive, and let us not enterprise to know more, than that he shall have pronounced unto us. Now therefore see how the stock of Abraham was chosen before all the rest of the world, forasmuch as God so would: but this was not yet enough: For it behooveth that his free election be yet better confirmed unto us. And this is it that is here showed unto us, in the person of two brethren. For behold Rebecca which bare Jacob and Esau: was the one better than the other? Saint Paul expounding this place saith:

And they were not yet born. (<450911> Romans 9:11)

How then could they have obtained favor and grace before God for their merits? For Jacob had done neither good nor evil no more than Esau. Why then doth God make him the greater? It behooveth not that we enter into any deeper disputation of this matter, unless it be to adore with astonishment the secret counsel of God, through which, those which seemed good to him are elected, and the other rejected. See then how God would yet give greater glory and beauty to his mercy, when he had chosen Jacob before Esau. For indeed he might have well placed Jacob the foremost when the Infants should come forth from their mother's womb. Men may well understand, that this was not by any adventure: as it is said in the <192209> Psalm 22:9:

Thou hast drawn me out from my mother's womb:

And God manifesteth a singular power, when children come into the world. And why then did not he permit and ordain that Jacob should have the privilege of birthright? For this was meet since he meant to banish Esau out of the church, and would have Jacob to remain there, and to succeed in the place of his father Isaack and Abraham. And why doth God then pull him back, and make him inferior to his brother, as touching the law of nature, and afterwards setteth him above him? In this we see that God would shut out all glory of man, that he would that all height should be thrown down, and that men should bring nothing of their own: to the end to say: I have attained such or such a good thing. I have gotten it by mine own industry. We see then that which I have already touched: that is to say, that we have here a glass, wherein we may behold, that all they that are of the church, are not advanced thereto by their own virtue, and that they have not obtained this favor by their merits: but that God hath chosen them before they were born: See then briefly what we have to hold out of this place. But now a man might here move some doubt: For Moyses saith expressly that this was extended to two peoples, and that it was not only in respect of Jacob and Esau, that this struggling combat was moved, as touching their persons: but that it was in respect of their successors, and each others posterity. Now it is so, that many which descended of Jacob were nevertheless rejected. For he stayeth upon that that is spoken here: to wit, that the stock and offspring of Jacob was chosen and that of Esau rejected: and yet notwithstanding a man may see, that the most part of those that descended of Jacob, were disallowed of god, and that he pronounceth them bastard children, the children of an harlot, and such as were sprung of fornication, and that they belonged nothing at all unto him, and that it was a vain thing for them, to glory or boast of his name. Now how can these agree together? Let us mark that god setteth such a spectacle before the eyes of Jacob and Rebecca, to show them what the condition and state of the church should be: For God in few words testifieth unto them, that his church should come of Jacob and not that all they which he should beget concerning the flesh must be of the church: but it was enough that he remained there, and that God kept him: and that Esau was driven out in time, as afterwards we shall see. This shall be better understood by that exposition which Saint Paul giveth: (<450906> Romans 9:6) he taketh this sentence thus: *All they which are of Jacob after the flesh, are not for all that, true Israelites*: that is to say, they are not of the people of God. For he had two names, as we shall see

hereafter, to wit, Jacob and Israel. And that it is so, before the children were born, lo God, which severeth the one from the other, and showeth that this is not one body, and that they were not united together: but that one was reserved, and the other rejected. Saint Paul therefore well understood, that they which should be born of Jacob, were not all elected of God: for he sendeth us to the beginning, and saith that the one was separated from the other by the secret counsel of God, and that we cannot comprehend and set forth the reason thereof: forasmuch (as I have already said) that he keepeth his liberty, in such sort that it well sufficeth that the Church be engendered [*begat, procreated*] of his stock, albeit that all do not appertain unto it. We have before declared that there was a double grace or favor in this stock of Abraham: one was, that God had in general declared, that he would be their father. Circumcision also was common to them all. Now circumcision was not in vain: but it bare witness of the remission of sins and of the righteousness that all the faithful must obtain through our Lord Jesus Christ. Lo then Ismael who was circumcised: as much as was on god's behalf, he received the sacrament that might assure him that God accounted him of the number of his children, that he was a member of Jesus Christ, that the curse which he had drawn from Adam, was abolished: yea but this stood him in no steed at all. As much may be said of Esau, and of all their like: but howsoever it was, we must not despite the benefit that he showed towards all the stock of Abraham. As at this day when we speak of the inestimable blessing that God hath bestowed upon us, when his Gospel was preached: this same shall be spoken unto all indifferently. Men will say that God hath used a very singular mercy towards us, inasmuch as he hath lightened us by his word, that we should know the way of salvation. In the meantime, we see others that wander in darkness and confusion, as if God had forgotten and altogether cast them off. Behold the Papists, albeit they be full of pride and rebellion, yet they are tossed to and fro of Satan: so as they know neither way nor path: and in meantime god calleth us to him daily, and there is mention of his covenant, to the end that we should know that he is always merciful unto us, and that we may call upon him in a true certainty, not doubting, but that he will be our father. Behold then a benefit, which we ought not the esteem lightly of: and yet there are great many, to whom this serveth not, but to condemnation: For there is so much the more unthankfulness, if they be rebels against God, and disdain to accept the fatherly favor that he offered unto them. So then, behold such a favor

already bestowed upon us, as that was upon the stock of Abraham: but yet there was also a second grace, the which must be restrained to these bounds: to wit, that God hath chosen of this stock, those that hath seemed good unto him, as he received Isaack to himself, and Ismael had no place in his house: he might well be accounted for a time a member of his house: but in the end he was cut off. As much may be said of the children of Keturah: and behold although Esau were the firstborn, yet God shut him out. See therefore a second favor which was in Abraham's family: that is, that God held to himself, those that he thought good. For Jacob was as the root of this stock which sprung afterwards. And farther mark for what cause all the elect were figured in his person, and that God setteth forth unto us, that they have not that of themselves, which he through his only goodness giveth unto them, and that they cannot brag, that this was of their own moving, that they attained to salvation: but that they were drawn to it, yea inasmuch as they were chosen before the creation of the world and consequently before their birth. Behold, wherefore Saint Paul, in this place that we have alleged, for the more full declaration adjoineth the testimony of Moyses: (<sup><023319></sup> Exodus 33:19) I will have mercy on him on whom I will have mercy: and I will have compassion on him, on whom I will have compassion. It should seem that this is a broken speech and from the purpose: but it is of great importance: For it is as much as if GOD had said, I know whom I will refuse, and there is no need that any come in this case to plead with me: For this consisteth in my liberty. When we shall mark our common speech, this shall not be dark at all. For if a man say, I will do that, I will do: that is to say, I will do that which I think good to do, by this he showeth, that he will not submit himself to any person: he showeth that he is neither tied nor bound to open his counsel and purpose, in that he hath to do. So God saith, *I wilt show mercy to him, that I will show mercy*: as if he should say: My mercy dependeth neither upon this or that, neither must the cause be sought in any other, nor I bound to any law: For I know what I ought to do: and in the meantime my mercy shall have place, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy. That is to say: I mark not who is worthy of it. For there is not one: But yet I will not cease to show mercy to some, to wit, to such as I shall have chosen. Mark then how precisely God speaketh: and this is to beat down whatsoever men can allege to shut the door against all curiosity, and set a bar against all presumption: and that we do simply reverence him, leaving that to him which he hath reserved to himself: that is to say, when he saveth, it is of

his free goodness: and when he condemneth, that we should not enterprise to bark against God, but that we shut up our mouth: unless it be to glorify him. Now let us mark that this was spoken by Moyses when the people already multiplied, and after that God had brought them out of Egypt. Behold a Church descended from the race of Jacob: For from this same barren house, and which was as it were desolate, GOD had drawn so great a multitude therefrom, that this seemed rather to be a notorious miracle, and that this promise was verified: that *Abraham's seed should be as the stars of Heaven*. Was not this in a goodly show in respect of men? God saith of this multitude here, I will retain as many as I shall think good: I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and let no man ask the reason thereof. It is true indeed that God hath reason, but it followeth not therefore that we can comprehend it, or that we must break out beyond our bounds into his secrets. We must therefore know that in respect of us, there is no reason: but the counsel of God ought to be unto us in all respects the rule of righteousness, wisdom and equity. Mark therefore how the exposition of Saint Paul agreeth very well to that which is here pronounced: that is to wit, that there were two peoples in the belly of Rebecca, and that from her bowels two nations should be divided: and this was as much as if God had testified, that there should be such a divorce, that yet the stock of Jacob should remain blessed: Not altogether without exception, but those whom it should please GOD to keep to himself, as he had chosen them before the creation of the world. See then the sum of that which is contained here. But before we go any farther, let us well note that which hath been said: that is to say, that the principal thing which we have to observe, is this, that God will have the whole praise of our salvation to be attributed to him. For what is the root and beginning of the church? It is his election. See whereto Moyses calleth us, yea according to the interpretation of Saint Paul: and the text also herein is most plain. For here (as I have said) there is not any question of any earthly or transitory inheritance: it is of everlasting life that Abraham had hoped for according to that he had received through the promise. Now see Jacob an heir: and why so? was it because he put himself in the favor of God, or for that he had purchased favor for anything he brought? It was not so. See then Moyses's text without any gloss, which showeth sufficiently, that the Church springeth from the pure grace of God: and so that all the praise of our salvation, must wholly be reserved to himself. Now, for all this, they that would overthrow and darken this doctrine say, although that God

knew no merit in Jacob: yet he foresaw well enough that he should be such a one. Behold for what cause they say he was chosen, and Esau rejected. To be short, inasmuch as a great sort of those Dogs dare not openly and flatly deny the election of God, they would that there should be a superior cause, to wit, his foreknowledge. And what is that foreknowledge? It is that God foreseeeth what manner of one everyone must be: and he choseth (say they) those whom he hath foreseen to be of a good nature and affection: and it is no marvel if he accept them before others: For he knoweth the good which appeareth not yet, but is to come. But such kind of men have no drop of the fear of God. For they manifestly blaspheme against the holy ghost, who hath spoken by the mouth of Saint Paul, and these mock at that which Saint Paul hath spoken as if it were a fable. For if a man accept their solution, then hath Saint Paul spoken as an ignorant and unadvised man: For he taketh this reason, he found neither good nor evil, neither in Isaack nor in Esau, nor in Jacob. Notwithstanding God chose the one and rejected the other. But the reply shall be easy, in the opinion of these fanatical persons. And how? It is true that there was neither good nor evil: but there must be either good or evil, and God did so foresee it. But Saint Paul presupposeth that this be true, to wit, that we are all damned, and that until that God had chosen us, it must needs be that we should remain as Serpents full of venom, and that there was nothing in us but matter of wrath and of the vengeance of God, and that we are altogether confounded, and full of poison and iniquity.

Lo Jacob's case as well as Esau's. For what shall we find in the race of Adam, but all corruption? We are therefore infected before God: and inasmuch as the root is accursed and vicious and altogether rotten, it must needs be that the fruits be of the same sort. So then when God shall leave us such as we are, it must needs be that we all perish, and that there remain not one, but that we be all lost and consumed.

To be short, this doctrine is common enough in the holy Scripture, that we are all the children of wrath. It followeth then that there was no diversity in Esau and Jacob, and that God had not distinguished the one from the other, for that he found or foresaw any good either in the one or other. For what could he foresee, but this corrupted mass of Adam, that brings forth no other fruit but malediction? See therefore what he foresaw as well in the one as in the other indifferently. It followeth then, that he had put in Jacob

that which is found in him, and that he left Esau such a one as his birth brought him forth. See also why it is said in another place,

That God hath chosen us, to the end that we should be holy and unblamable before him. (<490104> Ephesians 1:4)

He saith not, because God foresaw that we should be holy, he hath chosen us: but contrariwise he deriveth all our holiness and righteousness, and all the good which shall be found in us, he deriveth it from this root: to wit, from the election of God, to the end we should walk in his fear, that we should have some integrity in us, that we should have some zeal and affection to do well. If this be so, it followeth then that God hath foreseen nothing in us. For let us take away election, and what shall there remain? As we have declared, we remain altogether lost and accursed. And not without cause: For God saw nothing in us but corruption: and it must needs be that he must disallow us, and renounce us, as it is said, that he repented that he had made man. Behold then what we may allege on our part. So then, this is too trifling a folly to say, that God hath chosen his, according as he foresaw they should become afterwards: for it must needs be, that he put in them that which is good, and place it there, because he hath chosen them. Mark therefore the first step whereby we must begin: that is to say, that we nothing differ one from another, unless in this, that God hath discerned us. Mark also for what cause Saint Paul disannuleth all the glory the which men may usurp: Who is it (saith he) that doth discern thee? he hath nothing but this word there to beat down and disannul all pride. And why so? For hast thou anything (saith he) which is thine own? Hereby he showeth that men cannot choose their own place, to say, I will dispose myself to do good, and God shall have pity upon me, and I will come unto his grace, I will have a good motion, I will have this preparation. Now Saint Paul excludeth all this, in saying that we are all lost, that one with another, we must be all thrown down, and enter into the gulf of hell, except it please God to discern us. Lo from whence all our dignity and excellence cometh: that is, for that it pleaseth God to lend us his hand. Again let us hold fast this principle, and apply all this doctrine which we have rehearsed to this purpose, how God hath set forth unto us, in Jacob and Esau, a glass to look into. Likewise let us content ourselves, that these two persons may be unto us, as two lively images, to show us that the world in itself, is of like condition: but that one sort is called and not the other, because it hath so pleased God. And specially (as I have noted)

Jacob was the younger, and it seemed rather that he should be subject to his brother, according to the order of nature: notwithstanding mark that he was placed in the degree of the firstborn: and Esau not only was put under him, but he was utterly rejected: For in the end he had no part nor portion in the church. This thing showeth very well unto us, that God would hold us always convicted, that there is no question of bringing anything before God on our part, to thrust in ourselves there, as if we had any value and worthiness in us: For God is not contrary to himself: nevertheless he would show here a certain kind of repugnancy and contrariety. It is he which ordained that the firstborn of the house, should be the head. Now he set down this law: and yet in the meantime he overthroweth it: but (as I have said) all this agreeth very well: For God is above his ordinary law, and yet he would change that which was accustomed by a common rule: and he doeth it to the end that we should know that it is (as Saint Paul also hath said) (<450916> Romans 9:16) neither of the willer, nor of the runner: but only of him which showeth mercy. Now when Saint Paul saith, that it is neither of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth: he meaneth not that we may have some good will of our ourselves: as he hath declared in another place: (<503813> Philippians 2:13) For *it is God which giveth it*: and also he meaneth not that we can enforce ourselves: but he showeth that men have nothing, and therefore they can bring nothing to God.

There is nothing then but his mercy alone. For if men had anything to set against it, there must be a parting of stakes, and that must be known which is from God, and that which is from men. And then it might be said, that we have not all from the only mercy of God: but that therein there is our good will, our good running and our good zeal. Men might so speak: But Saint Paul would here make frustrate, whatsoever men might bring of themselves, and show that nothing hath dominion herein, but the only mercy of GOD. It is very true that many people will enforce themselves, yea and they allege the example of the Jews, who were swollen as Toads with a devilish kind of pride, thinking that God was bound as it were to them, and who would be accounted righteous according to their works: but herein they deceive themselves, and shall do nothing but go back instead of going forward. When men presume so of themselves, it is certain that they rob God of his honor. See then these sacrilegious persons and worse than these, and moreover until God shall have renewed us, whatsoever goodly

show we have, it is certain, that there is nothing in us but stench, and we shall be as vile vermin before GOD.

So then let us not pretend that we can either will or run: but it behooveth that God find us as lost, and that he recover us from that bottomless pit, and that he separate us from them with whom we were lost, and to whom we were alike. For (as I have said) the condition of mankind is all one. It is true, that the one sort, are the Children of wrath, and the other God blesseth. But from whence cometh this separation, and this divorce? From mercy. And we must not go to inquire any farther, but we must content ourselves with this word alone, instead of all reason.

Mark then for what cause, namely the firstborn was cast out from his place: and in the mean season Jacob who was the inferior, was set in his place, yea, to remain the only heir. When Malachi the Prophet (<sup>390102</sup> Malachi 1:2) speaketh of this he reproacheth unto the Jews their ingratitude. It is true that this was for an outward sign, that GOD had chosen Jacob rather than Esau, forasmuch as he had given the land of Canaan to be his inheritance, and that Esau was sent far off amidst the Mountains: but this is not the sentence whereupon the Prophet resteth: he looketh unto a thing much higher.

Saint Paul also when he useth this testimony of his, seeing that GOD had taken unto himself the stock of Jacob, he attributeth all this to his mere mercy: But the Prophet saith. And Esau, was he not the brother of Jacob? As if he should say. You are full of pride and obstinacy, yea, you burst yourselves therein, and it costs you nothing to say, O we are of the holy and sacred stock of Abraham: we are the Church, we are the people whom God hath blessed and sanctified: yea, and from whence have you this (saith he?) For was not Esau, Jacob's brother? You see the Idumeans your brethren: and are they the people of God? You say that they are strangers from the Church: and although they have circumcision, yet notwithstanding God hath cut them off. And when cometh this (saith he?) Who is it that hath so separated them? If you will go from age to age: very well, you shall find how you are the Children of Jacob. And Esau, whose child was he I pray you? Did not he descend from Abraham and Isaack as well as you? But here he speaketh not only of the land of Canaan: but he goeth farther, and saith *That he loved Jacob, and hated Esau*. And this love which he bare unto Jacob, from whence proceeded it? It is certain that

Jacob could not be accepted of him (as we have said) being considered in himself. For behold him the child of wrath, and bringing nothing from the womb of his mother, but this horrible curse, which was cast upon all mankind: notwithstanding God did love him. Now God loveth not iniquity, he hateth sin as we know. How then loved he Jacob? This was for that he drew him from that perdition, wherein he was. And why did he hate Esau? Now it is very true that there is just cause why God should hate all mankind: For as we have said, there is nothing in us but vice and iniquity: but yet when we will go farther, and that we will demand, why God before he created the world, and before the fall of Adam, why this should be, that he would hate or love? here we must hold ourselves mute and still: Here we must not lift up our horns. For what shall we gain, when we will enter into debate and question with God? It is certain that we shall cast stones upon our own heads, and they will fall neither here nor there, they cannot reach unto the majesty of God: but they shall return upon our own pates, and it must be that we be crushed and bruised therewith.

Behold then what we shall gain when we open our throat, to cast forth blasphemies against God: For we shall but cast out our darts and stones into the air: but they shall not reach unto him, it shall be rather that we be pierced and wounded by them, and that we remain confounded in that our rashness and overweening [*high opinion*]. Thus, let us content ourselves with that which God hath pronounced, that is to say: that he hath hated Esau and loved Jacob. Now by this the Children of Jacob were as well convinced, that they had nothing whereof they might glory in themselves, and that there rested nothing, but that they made an acknowledgment unto God of such a liberal and bountiful goodness which he had used towards them, and whereof none could find any reason, unless in this that it so pleased him. But notwithstanding they were full of impiety against God, and would hold this privilege: but God showeth them, that it doth not belong unto them, and that if they accounted him for their father, they must be his children. But hereby we are admonished, that although our salvation proceed from the only grace of God, and that therein in consisteth to the end: Notwithstanding it followeth not, that under the shadow hereof, we can let loose ourselves to evil, and give over ourselves thereto. But there are villains and dogs that bark against God, and there are also Hogs, which overthrow this doctrine of election, by their loose and lewd life. For there are two sorts of people, that are enemies to this

doctrine. The one are as dogs, and the other as Hogs. The one, which are they? they which will bark and come to show their teeth, and who despite God by their wicked questions: as we see at this day in those villains who make no scruple, to rend in pieces all the holy Scripture to corrupt, pervert, falsify and adulterate all, so that they may darken the election of God, to wit, to make nothing of all. And mark whereunto this tendeth, to make this doctrine odious. For they will say, that they that thus speak, they put no more any difference betwixt good and evil, and that God by this means should become unrighteous, if he should put any difference between one and another, and that there should be acceptance of persons in him. Behold then the dogs that bark and whet their teeth against this doctrine. Now there are also Hogs which will not despite in such sort against it, but will say, very well. If I be elected I may do as much evil as I will: For God knows well how to keep me, and I can never perish: and contrariwise if I be reprobate, why should I torment myself so much to do well, seeing that I can never be saved. These then (as I have already said) come not to spew up their contradictions, to overthrow the truth of God: but they wallow there, and remain in their sins as brute beasts. But we must take heed both of the one and the other. And for this cause (as I have said) the Prophet Malachi showing to the people, that all that he had done unto them, came of the mere and free bounty of God, exhorteth them to holiness of life. And therefore as it is said unto us, that God is the author of our salvation, and that we can bring nothing to serve in that matter, and that yet we must always be kept under his guard, and that he must perfect and accomplish that which he hath begun, let not this be to the end, to let loose the bridle to our vices: but rather to keep us in his fear.

And in very deed when Saint Paul saith, that these are the hidden letters, and that it is an incomprehensible secret, to know who be the children of God, he addeth:

Whosoever calleth upon the name of God,  
let him depart from all iniquity. (<sup><550219></sup> 2 Timothy 2:19)

Let us mark then, that GOD would give us no occasion to do evil, when he chose us without any regard to our merits, and that he also maintaineth us by his mere goodness: but this is to the end that we should honor him, and we should walk in so much the greater carefulness. And therefore let us return to that we have touched: to wit, that he hath chosen us, to the end

that we should be holy and without blame before his face. It is true that he hath not chosen us, for that he found us such: but when he chose us, it was to the end we should be such. It behooveth therefore that we march thither, and that this be the Mark that we aim at all the days of our life.

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good GOD, in acknowledging of our faults, praying him that he will in such sort make us to feel them, that it may be to humble us, and to draw us to true repentance, to the end, we may renounce all our fleshly lusts and affections: and that being so cast down in ourselves, we may be enlightened by the power of his holy spirit, to the end to serve and honor him all the time of our life: and that by this means we may so much the more be stirred up to give ourselves wholly to him, knowing that we hold all of his mere goodness: and that this may be to glorify his holy name, not only in mouth but in our whole life. That not only, etc.