Moses, Elijah, and the Garden of Eden

James Leon Holmes

Let's begin with this question: if it was necessary for Elijah to come before Jesus, why was it not also necessary for Moses to come? My hope is that this question, like a good opening question in a seminar, will open the text for us and lead us to see aspects of the text that otherwise might escape our notice. My belief is that this question, like a good question in a seminar, arises from the text itself.

That Elijah would come was foretold by the prophet Malachi:

> "For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.
>
> "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.
>
> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."[1]

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God says, in the midst of this prophecy of the great and terrible day of the Lord, to "remember the law of my servant Moses"; but He promises to send not Moses but Elijah.

We are all familiar with the transfiguration, when Jesus took Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart, where he was transfigured before them. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Luke says they spoke of his exodus, which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem.[2] Matthew concludes his record of the transfiguration with a conversation between Jesus and the disciples:

> And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead." And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" He replied, "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.[3]

Once again, scripture states that Elijah must come and so states in the context of a passage in which Moses also is prominently mentioned but not as one who must come. Moses actually does come as a witness to the transfiguration of our Lord; but Elijah alone must come before the Lord's first advent.

However, Revelation 11 describes two witnesses who will come before the end:

> And if any one would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if any one would harm

[1] Mal. 4:1–6.
[2] Luke 9:31.
[3] Matt. 17:9–13.

> them, thus he is doomed to be killed. They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.[4]

The two men in scripture whose foes were consumed by fire were Moses and Elijah; Elijah shut the sky so that no rain fell for three years; and Moses turned water to blood and smote the earth with plagues. It would seem that the two witnesses who will come before the end are Moses and Elijah.

If so, these scripture passages can be summarized as follows: both Moses and Elijah appeared as witnesses to the transfiguration; both Moses and Elijah will come before the second coming of our Lord; but only Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist before our Lord's first coming. These scripture passages thus give rise to our opening question: if it was necessary for Elijah to come before Jesus, why was it not necessary for Moses to come also?

It is not an often asked question. A more often asked question is why Moses and Elijah appear together on the Mount of Transfiguration. The most common answer to this question is that Moses represents the law, while Elijah represents the prophets; so together they represent the witness of the entire Old Testament to Christ. Taking this common assertion as a guide, perhaps we could say the Old Testament consists of the law and the prophets; that Moses represents the law, while Elijah represents the prophets; that Jesus will fulfill both the law and the prophets at his second coming, when he will come as a conqueror in glory; but he fulfilled only the prophets at his first coming, when he came as a suffering servant to die on the cross; and that the transfiguration anticipates his glorious second coming. If we can say these things, it would be fitting for Moses to appear as a forerunner of the

[4] Rev. 11:5–7.

second coming, and it would be fitting for Moses to appear at the transfiguration, which prefigures the second coming; but it would not be fitting for Moses to appear as a forerunner of Jesus' first coming.

However, the answer we have just proposed is at best incomplete and perhaps simply wrong—it raises a number of questions, and it is open to a number of objections. We would wonder, for example, why Elijah is chosen to represent the prophets. Why not Isaiah, who prophesied the virgin birth, who foretold the servant who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities, upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all? Why not Jeremiah, who prophesied the new covenant in which the Lord would forgive his people's iniquity and remember their sin no more? Why not Ezekiel, who prophesied that the Lord would sprinkle his people with clean water, cleanse them of their iniquities, give them a new heart, and put His Spirit to cause them to walk in His statutes and observe his ordinances?

For that matter, why would Moses not be chosen to represent the prophets? Moses was certainly a prophet—he was a prophet whom the Lord knew face to face. Moses prophesied that the Lord would raise up a prophet like himself, one who would speak all that God commanded him. Is not our Lord Jesus the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy? Here we get to the greatest difficulty with an answer to our question that depends on making Moses the representative of the law but not the prophets and Elijah the representative of the prophets but not the law. Moses, himself, was the prototypical prophet—he foretold Jesus just as did Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel—and the prophets, including Elijah, recalled Israel to obedience to the law. In Matthew 11:13, Jesus says, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come." Here, Jesus says, "the law prophesied until John." In John 5:46, Jesus says, "If you believed Moses, you would believe

me, for he wrote of me." We are reminded that the sacrifices commanded by the law of Moses foreshadowed the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world and the great high priest who would enter the Holy of Holies, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, to secure an eternal redemption. The heart of the Old Testament law —the system of sacrifices—prophesied of Jesus.

If the law prophesied—and our Lord said that it did—if Moses wrote of Jesus—and Jesus said he did—and if prophets recalled the people to obedience to the law—and we know they did—we have not much of an explanation if we say that Moses appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration as a representative of the law and Elijah appeared as a representative of the prophets. We then wonder why we need two men to represent a law that prophesies and prophets who recall Israel to the law. Moses, alone, could represent both the law and the prophets; Elijah would seem superfluous. Moreover, if the law prophesied of the lamb of God and of a great high priest who would take his own blood into the holy place—that is, if the law foreshadowed our Lord's first coming—then why was it necessary for Elijah but not Moses to precede the first coming? We still have no answer to that question. Taking as our point of departure the common assertion that Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets seems neither to illuminate the text in any meaningful way nor to advance us closer to an answer to our question as to why it was necessary for Elijah but not Moses to precede our Lord's first coming.

I propose, then, that we review what scripture tells us about Moses and Elijah and then consider whether some other answer to our question emerges.

The first act of Moses recorded in the scripture is that he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. Pharaoh heard of it and sought to kill Moses, who fled to the land of Midian. God called Moses back to Egypt to force Pharaoh to let Israel go. At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to kill him. His wife circumcised his son and

saved his life. Moses appeared in the court of Pharaoh and demanded that Pharaoh release Israel. When Pharaoh refused, the ten plagues were inflicted on Egypt, culminating in the death of the firstborn sons of all the Egyptians and all their cattle. Moses led Israel out of Egypt, parted the Red Sea so Israel could pass through, and then closed it, drowning the entire Egyptian army. Moses received the law at Mount Sinai. While he was on the mountain, Aaron made the golden calf, and Israel fell into idolatry. The Levites came to the side of Moses and at his command killed three thousand Hebrews. Later, Korah and his followers rebelled and were swallowed up by the earth. When Israel came to the border of Canaan, ten spies reported that there were giants in the land, and the Israelites were afraid to enter. The nation then wandered in the wilderness for forty years until the entire generation that had been adults when Israel left Egypt had died. Then, as the nation prepared to enter Canaan, Moses died.

God appointed Joshua to succeed Moses. Joshua parted the Jordan River and led the people into the promised land. The first battle was at Jericho, where the Israelites, saving only Rahab, utterly destroyed all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and asses, with the edge of the sword. One of the Israelites, Achan, took from Jericho a mantle, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold, in disobedience to God's command to destroy everything. Achan's disobedience at Jericho resulted in the Israelites being defeated at Ai. Joshua and the people stoned Achan, his sons and daughters, his oxen, asses and sheep, and all that he had. Then, the Israelites conquered Ai and slaughtered all the men and all the women of the city. Joshua defeated five kings, put them to death and hung them on five trees. He took Makkedah and utterly destroyed every person in it. He took Libnah and destroyed every person in it. He took Lachish and destroyed every person in it. Joshua destroyed every person in Gezar, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, and Hazor. He allotted the land to the twelve tribes, renewed the covenant, and then died.

The theme of this history—the history of Moses and his successor—is death. Death to the Egyptian whom Moses killed in his first recorded act; death to the firstborn sons of all Egypt; death to the Egyptian soldiers drowned in the Red Sea; death to three thousand at Sinai; death to Korah and his followers; death to an entire generation of Israelites in the wilderness; death to Moses; death to every man, woman and child and all of the cattle in Jericho; death to Achan, his family, and his cattle; death to the inhabitants of Ai, Libnah, Lachish, Gezar, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Hazor, and other cities. Death to Joshua.

Moses dispensed the law. He also dispensed death. In the Revised Standard Version translation of II Corinthians 3:7, St. Paul describes Moses' descent from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the law as "the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone." The Greek is "*διακονία τοῦ θανάτου*"—literally, the service of death or the ministry of death. We might pause to note that *διακονία*, service, ministry—catchwords in much of today's pop theology—may be linked to death as well as to life. When Moses descended from the mountain, with his face so radiant the Israelites could not look at him, he brought the ministry of death, carved in letters of stone.

When we turn to Elijah, we see that he re-enacted some of the key points of the life of Moses. As Moses confronted and defeated the prophets of Egypt, so Elijah confronted and defeated the prophets of Baal, whom he killed at the brook of Kidron. He fled from Jezebel as Moses and Israel fled from Pharaoh. He went up Mount Sinai where he saw the glory of the Lord, as did Moses. He anointed a successor, as did Moses. The successor of Moses was named Joshua, which means 'Jehovah is salvation.' The successor of Elijah was named Elisha, which means 'God is salvation.' Elijah made an exodus, as did Moses, and he parted the water of the Jordan River at the beginning of his exodus, as Moses parted the Red Sea at the beginning of his exodus. Elisha, the successor of Elijah, then parted the Jordan River to enter the promised land, just

as Joshua, the successor of Moses, parted the Jordan River to enter the promised land. Even if the New Testament did not connect Moses and Elijah by telling us that they appeared together as witness to the transfiguration of Jesus, where they discussed with Him His exodus, what we are told of them in the Old Testament would suffice to connect them.

If we think the scripture intends for us to connect Moses and Elijah in our minds, and if we view Elijah against the background of Moses, the theme of whose life is in large part death, who brought the ministry of death, then certain aspects of the history of Elijah stand out in bold relief. Elijah raised from the dead the son of the widow in the city of Zarephath in Sidon. This is the first resurrection of the dead recorded in the Old Testament. This boy whom Elijah raised from the dead was a gentile. Elijah, himself, did not die—he was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah's successor, Elisha, resurrected from the dead the son of the Shunnamite woman. This is the second resurrection of the dead recorded in the Old Testament. Both Elijah and Elisha multiplied oil, which was essential to life in the Old Testament. Elisha multiplied loaves of bread, the mainstay of life in the Old Testament. He made the poisonous water at Jericho wholesome. He removed death from the pottage of the prophets at Gilgal. He healed Naaman, a gentile, of leprosy. Elisha died and was buried. A dead man was thrown into his grave; and as soon as the dead man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived. This is the third and final resurrection of the dead recorded in the Old Testament. Elisha's dead bones had life-giving power; his death brought life.

We have noted that St. Paul describes the ministry of Moses as the ministry of death. We do not have a scripture attributing to Elijah the ministry of life. Jesus said he came that his sheep might have life and have it abundantly. In Him was life, St. John says. Eternal life comes through faith in Jesus. Whoever eats his flesh shall never die. The ministry of life belongs to Jesus, not Elijah.

However, scripture also teaches that the Spirit gives life. When St. Paul refers to the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, he contrasts that ministry with the ministry of the Spirit. We cannot identify Elijah with the ministry of life in the same way we can identify Moses with the ministry of death. What we can say is that Elijah and his successor, Elisha, were granted the life-giving power of the Spirit as a foreshadowing of the word made flesh who has life in Himself, who by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit brought life to the world.

Before we are ready to propose an answer to our opening question, we need to say something about why Moses is identified with the ministry of death in contrast to Jesus, who is identified with the ministry of life. In II Corinthians 3, in the same passage where St. Paul refers to the ministry of death, he refers to that same ministry as the ministry of condemnation. The ministry of death is the ministry of condemnation.

With that in mind, we could offer the following as an answer to our question. Moses brought the law, the righteous commandments of God. Fallen man invariably violates the law: he sins. Under the law, therefore, fallen man stands condemned. The just punishment for sin is death. Hence, the law is the ministry of condemnation and death. Jesus became incarnate to fulfill the requirements of the law and to redeem us from sin, which is to say, he came to remove the condemnation to death. He came to bring life. The Old Testament gave the law, the ministry of condemnation and death; however, the Old Testament also foreshadows the New Testament. The Old Testament figure who most aptly foreshadows the ministry of life is Elijah. Elijah performed the first resurrection of the dead. Elijah, himself, did not die. Thus, we could say it was necessary for Elijah to come before Jesus because the purpose of the first coming of Jesus was to bring life, to redeem men from the condemnation of the law. It would have been unfitting for Moses, who personifies the ministry of condemnation and death, to have come with Elijah at the eve of the ministry

of life. At the second coming, Jesus will come in glory, not only as saviour but also as judge. Thus, both Moses and Elijah may fittingly precede the second coming. The transfiguration was a prefigurement of the second coming, so it was fitting for both Moses and Elijah, who will precede the second coming, to witness the transfiguration.

Now, this answer to our opening question offers an explanation as to why both Moses and Elijah are present at the Mount of Transfiguration and why both apparently will be witnesses who precede the second coming, but why only Elijah precedes the first coming. It is a more satisfactory and more complete answer than the answer we proposed earlier in which we said that Moses and Elijah were present at the transfiguration as representing the law and the prophets respectively. I think this answer to our opening question is in large measure true. However, it is open to at least two objections.

First, Moses said in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live." Moses told the Israelites he had set before them both life and death; and he exhorted them to choose life. If we say simply that Moses brought the ministry of death, that he did not set life before the Israelites, then we are saying that Moses, in his capacity as teacher of the Israelites, taught a falsehood to the Israelites. On the other hand, St. Paul describes the descent of Moses from Mount Sinai with the law as the ministry of death. If we deny that Moses brought the ministry of death, we are saying St. Paul taught a falsehood in Holy Scripture.

As I mentioned, our proposed answer is open to a second objection as well. Our proposed answer makes the relation between the promulgation of the law and the ministry of death depend upon the fact that fallen man cannot keep the law and thus stands condemned. Elijah foreshadows and Jesus carries out the ministry of life, which is the ministry of redeeming man from the condemnation under which he

stands as a breaker of God's law. This answer thus hinges on the fall. On this account, both the ministry of death and the ministry of life are what they are because of the fall; the law brings death because of the fall; and Jesus brings life because death has resulted from the fall.

While these propositions may be true, it would seem that they are at least incomplete. We can bring to light why it seems incomplete to predicate our answer entirely on the fall if we step back and consider the nature of the law. While it may be true that the law resulted in condemnation and death, and while it may be true that this consequence was part of the divine plan, it would not be true that the first purpose of the law was to bring condemnation and death. The first purpose of the law was to teach—to teach the Israelites what to do and what not to do. The first principle of ethics is to do good and avoid evil, but that admonition is not sufficiently specific to be an adequate guide for conduct. The law was given to teach the Israelites with some specificity the good they were to do and the evil they were to avoid. And so the law was given to impart knowledge of good and evil.

When we put it that way—when we say the law was given to impart knowledge of good and evil—we are reminded of the Garden of Eden. We are reminded that before the fall God planted in the midst of the Garden the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and that before the fall God warned Adam, "You may freely eat of every tree of the Garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall die." We are reminded also that God placed another tree in the midst of the Garden: the tree of life. The tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life are paired with one another in the Garden before the fall. Thus, in the Garden, before the fall, the knowledge of good and evil is associated with death; and in the Garden, before the fall, this knowledge of good and evil is juxtaposed to life. To the extent our earlier answer was dependent on the fall for the juxtaposition of the ministry of life and the

ministry of death, that answer is called into question by the Garden of Eden.

We have, then, two objections to the answer we most recently proposed to the question of why it was necessary for Elijah but not Moses to precede Jesus. The first objection is that it seems to contradict Moses, who told the Israelites in Deuteronomy that he had placed before them both life and death, not simply death. The second objection is that our answer makes the fall the cause of the law being the ministry of death; and our answer makes the fall the reason Jesus came to bring the ministry of life; but scripture seems to juxtapose these things in the Garden before the fall. Let's take up the second objection first.

Let's begin with the question, what is wrong with the tree of knowledge of good and evil? If our first parents were warned that they should not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil or they would surely die, what was wrong with the tree? We could ask the same question about the law. If the law brings condemnation—if the promulgation of the law is the ministry of death, what is wrong with the law? The answer has to be nothing. Nothing is wrong with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Nothing is wrong with the law. God created the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so it has to be good. God pronounced all of creation good, indeed, very good. Likewise, God gave the law, so it has to be good. St. Paul raised the same question: if the law brings death, does that mean the law is sin? and he answered the question, "the law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good."[5] So the tree of knowledge is good, indeed, very good; and the law is holy and just and good.

This is an important point. One strand of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is anti-rationalist: it tends to see reason as evil and knowledge as bad. Lev Shestov, a Russian Jew and I think the most intriguing representative of the anti-

[5] Romans 7:12.

rationalist strand of Judaeo-Christian thought, equates the fall with philosophy. He says that the sin of Adam was the desire to philosophize, and the desire to philosophize leads to death. "If God has spoken truly, knowledge leads to death; if the serpent has spoken truly, knowledge makes man like God. This was the question posed before the first man, and the one posed before us now."[6] Speaking of the medieval philosophers, Shestov says,

> their intellectual longing will be satisfied only when the word of God brought by the prophet will have obtained the blessing of the principle of contradiction or some other principle that is as immutable and impassive as the principle of contradiction. Now this is precisely what the first man wished when he stretched forth his hand to the tree of knowledge. . . . He wished to "to know," not "to believe"; he saw in faith a kind of diminution, an injury to his human dignity, and he was certain of this when the serpent told him that after he had eaten of the fruits of the forbidden tree he would become like God—knowing. . . . The medieval philosophers who aspired to transform faith into knowledge were far from suspecting that they were committing once again the act of the first man.[7]

In the face of this kind of attack on knowledge, appealing as it does to God's warning to the first man that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge lest he die, it is important to hold on to the truth that God created the tree of knowledge and pronounced it good.

On the other hand, we cannot be intellectually honest and ignore the fact that the fruit leading to death was fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We cannot gloss over the nature of the tree, which some commentators seem to do, as though the nature of this tree is an insignificant detail

[6] Shestov, Lev, *Athens and Jerusalem*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1966; pg. 280.

[7] *Ibid.*, pg. 282.

that the author of scripture might just as well have omitted. Shestov says,

> the Bible warned man of the horrible danger involved in tasting the fruits of the tree of knowledge, Greek philosophy considered *gnosis* (knowledge) as the spiritual nourishment par excellence and saw the supreme dignity of man in his faculty of distinguishing between good and evil. Medieval philosophy was incapable of renouncing the Greek heritage and found itself obliged . . . to ignore the Bible.[8]

One thing we cannot do is to ignore the Bible. We cannot ignore, in Shestov's words, that "the Bible warned man of the horrible danger involved in tasting the fruits of the tree of knowledge." Nor can we ignore that the Bible teaches that all of creation, which must include the tree of knowledge, was good.

How, then, do we reconcile these two teachings, both of which we are obliged to hold, neither of which we are free to ignore? Obviously, I have some thoughts as to how we answer this question else I would not have raised it, but it is with some trepidation that I offer them on what I consider a most difficult subject. That having been said, here are my thoughts.

I would suggest that we begin by thinking, not about the tree of knowledge but the tree of life, or more precisely, about life. I would begin by saying that life is a gift: no one bestows life upon himself—everyone receives life from another. Moreover, life is transparently a gift: no one can think that he has bestowed life upon himself. One may think that life originated from a chance strike of lightning hitting a chance concoction of primordial soup; but no one can think he is the origin of his own life. A second characteristic of life is that it does not admit of degrees. The difference between a living thing and a non-living thing is qualitative, not quantitative. One is either alive or one is not. All living men are equally living. One

[8] *Ibid.*, pg. 285.

may be taller than another who is also tall, or heavier than another who is also heavy, or more beautiful than another who is also beautiful; but one may not be more alive than another who is also alive. A third characteristic of life is that no one is likely to think of it as the highest good. Life is the foundation of other goods, so some men might think of death as the greatest evil, but no one thinks of life as the highest good. The consequence of these characteristics of life is that the mere possession of life is not likely to be an occasion of pride. Life is not something we attain for ourselves; it is not something of which we can have more than others; and it is not something we are likely to regard as the highest good.

Not all goods share these characteristics of the gift of life. Some goods are not transparently gifts; we can attain them for ourselves, or so at least it seems; so that it may not be clear to us that these goods are gifts as distinct from our own accomplishments. Some goods are distributed unequally; one may have more than another. It is in the nature of such goods that they may be occasions of pride. That it is in the nature of such goods that they may be occasions of pride does not deprive them of their goodness. To the contrary, it is precisely because they are good that they may be occasions of pride. We may be proud of having attained one of these goods precisely because it is good. We may be proud of having more of one of these goods than someone else precisely because it is good. We may think of one of these goods as the highest good precisely because it is good. And so we have this paradox: it is the nature of some goods to be dangerous to us precisely because they are good.

If we ask what kinds of goods have these characteristics, the answer would have to include any kind of human excellence, any kind of virtue. Choosing to cultivate excellence is an essential human characteristic. All humans cultivate excellence in some form or in many forms. A beautiful rose doesn't choose to be beautiful, it becomes so by nature. A fast cheetah doesn't choose to be fast; it becomes so by nature. In contrast,

notwithstanding all of his natural talent, Michael Jordan did not become the greatest basketball player in history simply by nature; he chose to develop his excellence in basketball, and he worked hard at it. Whoever is this year's Miss America undoubtedly has natural beauty; but she would not have become Miss America without cultivating her beauty and the other forms of excellence it takes to achieve that honor. All human beings choose to cultivate some form of excellence, and usually many forms of excellence.

Whatever excellence we attain may ultimately be a gift from God; but it is not transparently so. Unlike the life we enjoy, which we did nothing to originate within ourselves, we work to attain any excellence we attain. Any excellence we attain is distributed among men unequally. We can always find some excellence of which we have more than someone else. In the backwoods of the South, before we all got homogenized by television and public schools, some men cultivated excellence in spitting; and I am sure it must have been an occasion of pride to be the best spitter in the county. Of course, those men were unsophisticated, uneducated, backwoods rednecks. Sophisticated, urbanized young men from California of course do not cultivate excellence in spitting. Instead, they cultivate excellence in skateboarding. I am told there are world championship competitions in skateboarding—why I don't know. I'll bet whoever wins that championship is proud, and so is his mama and daddy, his grandma and grandpa, all of his relatives, and his whole hometown.

If we were to ask which forms of human excellence are the most excellent, it seems to me the two leading candidates would be knowledge and moral virtue. Like life, I would say that knowledge and moral virtue are gifts, but unlike life they are not transparently so. We do in some real sense attain them for ourselves, and we may work hard to do so. Knowledge and moral virtue are not equally distributed among men. Some men are more knowledgeable than others; some are more virtuous than others. Of all the goods that one might think to be

the highest, the strongest arguments can be made for knowledge and moral virtue. The consequence is that the man who knows and the man who has moral virtue is the man who has the greatest danger of falling into pride; not because knowledge and moral virtue are evil but precisely because they are good.

It is common to ask why God created man in such a way that he could sin; and it is a common answer that man would not be man without free will, but that free will necessitates the possibility of sin. What we have just outlined is a corollary to that proposition. Man would not be man unless he were the kind of creature who cultivates excellence, in particular knowledge and moral virtue. Free will gives man the capacity for sin; the cultivation of excellence, including—perhaps especially—the cultivation of knowledge and moral virtue, gives man the temptation to pride, the first of the capital sins.

We might approach the point from a slightly different angle. Whatever we have is a created good, a gift from God. A created good can be accepted with gratitude toward God as a gift from God; a created good may also serve as a means toward attainment of union with God; or, a created good may be chosen in preference to God, as an end to itself or as a means to some other end of our own. In other words, a created good may be used as a means in the movement of the soul toward God, or it may be used as a means in the movement of the soul away from God.

These same things can be said of human excellence in whatever form we attain it. Any excellence we attain can be accepted as a gift from God and can be used as a means in the movement of the soul toward God; or it can be chosen in preference to God, which is to say that any excellence we attain can be used as a means in the movement of the soul away from God.

We can say the same things about knowledge and moral virtue more specifically. We can have knowledge, as we can have moral virtue, as a gift from God. We can have know-

ledge, as we can have moral virtue, as a means to the attainment of the knowledge of God. On the other hand, we can have knowledge, as we can have moral virtue, as an end in itself or as a means to some other end of our own. Knowledge and moral virtue can be means in the movement of the soul toward God; or they can be means in the movement of the soul away from God.

Let's consider the first man's first sin, taking St. Thomas as our guide. In the *Summa Theologica*, Part II-II, Question 163, article 1, St. Thomas takes up the question of whether pride was the first man's first sin. In his answer St. Thomas states:

> Now man was so appointed in the state of innocence that there was no rebellion of the flesh against the spirit. Wherefore it was not possible for the first inordinateness in the human appetite to result from his coveting a sensible good, to which the concupiscence of the flesh tends against the order of reason. It remains therefore that the first inordinateness in the human appetite resulted from his coveting inordinately some spiritual good. Now he would not have coveted it inordinately by desiring it according to his measure as established by the Divine rule. Hence it follows that man's first sin consisted in his coveting some spiritual good above his measure; and this pertains to pride. Therefore it is evident that man's first sin was pride.

In the same article in reply to the first objection, St. Thomas identifies what the first man coveted inordinately: "Now the first thing he coveted inordinately was his own excellence; and consequently his disobedience was the result of his pride."

St. Thomas says two things: first, he says that man's first sin consisted in his coveting some spiritual good above his measure; secondly, he says that the first thing man coveted inordinately was his own excellence. This is a remarkable statement, that man sinned by coveting his own excellence inordinately. My prior remarks were intended to lay the foundation for understanding what St. Thomas might mean by this remarkable statement. Man can desire his own excellence as a means

toward glorifying God or as a means toward union with God —in other words, man's desire for his own excellence can be motivated by the love of God. Man also can desire his own excellence for his own sake, not as a means toward glorifying God or as a means toward union with God—out of love for himself rather than out of love for God. Thus, I interpret St. Thomas to teach that the first sin of man was the desire for his own excellence for his own sake. God was not the end for whose sake the first man desired his own excellence; rather the first man, himself, was the end for whose sake the first man desired his excellence.

In the second article of question 163, St. Thomas asks whether the first man's pride consisted in coveting God's likeness. He answers, "the first man sinned chiefly by coveting God's likeness, as regards knowledge of good and evil, according to the serpent's instigation, namely that by his own natural power he might decide what was good and what was evil for him to do. . . ." Perhaps we can explain what St. Thomas means in this manner. If God is the end of our excellence—if the purpose of our excellence is to glorify God or to attain union with Him—then it is necessary that we learn from God what we are to do and what we are to be to glorify Him or attain union with Him; but if we desire excellence for our own sake without reference to God as the end of that excellence, then we can decide by our own natural power what we are to do or what we are to be. If human excellence is to be a means in the movement of the soul toward God, that excellence must be informed by God. On the other hand, if human excellence is to be a means in the movement of the soul away from God, it need not be informed by God.

In Question 167, four questions after the question of man's first sin, St. Thomas discusses the vice of curiosity. He first asks whether the vice of curiosity can be about intellective knowledge. St. Thomas answers that curiosity about intellective sciences can be sinful. He says that the desire or study

in pursuing the knowledge of truth may be right or wrong. One of the instances St. Thomas gives of when the desire or study in pursuing truth is wrong is "when a man desires to know the truth about creatures, without referring his knowledge to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God."[9] The critical word here is creature. Creature is a term of relation; implicit in the notion of creature is the relation between the creator and the created. We cannot know a thing as a creature without recognizing it as created by a creator. All objects of our direct knowledge are creatures. There is nothing we can know directly that does not exist in the creator/created relationship. The due end of all of our knowledge is not to know a thing in and of itself or to know a thing in relation to how it may serve our desires; the due end of all of our knowledge is the knowledge of God.

Returning to Genesis, the woman saw that the tree of knowledge "was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise. . . ." If we re-state this passage in the terms that St. Thomas used in describing the vice of curiosity, we can say the woman desired to know the truth about the tree without referring her knowledge to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God. She saw that the fruit of the tree of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was good for food for her; it was good to delight her eyes; and it was desirable to make her wise. She did not see the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil as a creature, standing in the creator/created relationship, the knowledge of which must be referred to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God.

These reflections on the fall—the faithlessness of the first man—cast light on the account of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Our understanding of the fall—if we have understood it properly—along with an understanding of the ac-

[9] Part II-II, Q. 167, Art. 1.

count of Abraham, then casts light on the two covenants—the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and on our questions about Moses and Elijah.

In our interpretation, the faithlessness of the first man arose from the disjunction between God and His gifts. The first man chose the gifts in preference to the giver. He had an inordinate desire for his own excellence. He loved his own excellence more than he loved God.

God promised Abraham great gifts—that his seed would be as numerous as the sand of the sea, and that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan. In Abraham's old age, God gave him a son through whom He would fulfill these promises; but then God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. . . ."[10] The Scripture says God tested Abraham. One way of conceiving the test is this: Abraham, do you love God for the sake of the gifts he has given you? Or, do you love the gifts for the sake of God who has given them? Abraham is asked to sacrifice the son whom he loved, the son through whom God's promises were to be fulfilled. Abraham could be tested as to whether he loved God for the sake of the gifts or the gifts for the sake of God only if he was asked to sacrifice the gifts for the sake of God.

Abraham also was asked to sacrifice his own moral excellence. He was asked to kill an innocent human, his own son whom he as a father had a duty to defend. He was asked to violate the natural law, the fifth commandment. We have no account anywhere of God asking anyone other than Abraham to do such a thing. It is inconceivable to me that God would ask one of us to do such a thing. It is inconceivable that God would have permitted Abraham to go through with the sacrifice. Yet, it is essential that God have asked such a thing of one man on one occasion, and that we have a record of it; for it is by the testing of Abraham that we see that even our moral

[10] Gen. 22:2.

excellence—including our solemn duty to protect and defend our children rather than murder them—must be subordinate to the love of God. The due end of moral excellence is the God who gives us that moral excellence, just as the due end of our knowledge of creatures is the God who created them and who gives us that knowledge.

Ethics is not its own end; it is not the highest good. Ethics has an end toward which it is directed, which is proven by the fact that it could be suspended on that one occasion in the name of the end toward which it is directed.

God fulfilled a part of his promise to Abraham by liberating the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and giving them the land of Canaan. After God had liberated the Israelites from Egypt and before He gave them the land of Canaan, He made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. God promised the Israelites that if they would do all that He said, He would be an enemy to their enemies, bless their bread and water, take away sickness from them, give them an abundance of children, drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, and set their bounds from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, from the wilderness to the Euphrates.[11] In a nutshell, God would make them a great political kingdom and would bless them with material prosperity—He would give them great gifts.

The Israelites, however, did not keep the law. Repeatedly, they fell into idolatry. Again and again, they worshipped the Canaanite gods who were thought to provide rain, abundant crops, fertility, military victory, and other such gifts. Again and again, God allowed the Israelites to be oppressed until they repented, and then He restored their prosperity. Eventually, He allowed them to be taken into captivity in foreign lands, but He heard their prayers and restored them to Canaan.

When they were restored from exile, the Jews renewed and deepened their commitment to keep the law. The books of the Maccabees show their fierce determination to keep the

[11] Ex. 23:22–33.

law, never again to commit the sins of their fathers. As a nation they never again worshipped the pagan gods who were thought to provide rain, crops, fertility, military victory, and other such goods.

It is in this context—when for the first time in their 1,400-year history, the Jews had a firm and unqualified commitment to keeping the law, to abiding in the monotheistic faith received from Moses—that Jesus came. He was rejected and killed. The Gospel of John tells us why.

John chapter 5 records the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath and then says,

> And this is why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working." This is why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

After the resurrection of Lazarus, John chapter 11 states,

> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." . . . So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death.

If we put John 5 and John 11 together, we can say the leaders of Israel decided to put Jesus to death to avoid the loss of the gifts God had promised first to Abraham and then to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. They wanted to avoid the destruction of the seed of Abraham; they wanted to preserve

the proper place of the seed of Abraham in the land God had promised; and they wanted to be faithful to the law—to keep the Sabbath holy and to avoid destruction of the temple where the holy sacrifices to almighty God were offered. St. Paul says,

> I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.[12]

In a sense, the leaders of Israel faced the same test Abraham had faced, but the leaders of Israel did not make the same decision Abraham had made. When God asked him to do so, Abraham was willing to sacrifice the promise of a seed as numerous as the sand of the sea who would inhabit the land; and he was willing to sacrifice his claim to be a man who keeps the law. Abraham loved the God who gave these gifts more than he loved the gifts. The leaders of Israel were unwilling to sacrifice the gifts God had promised to Abraham and given to them. They sought to kill Jesus, whom we believe to be the God who gave Israel the land and the law, in order to preserve the land and the law. In the name of the law, seeking to establish their own righteousness, they crucified Christ who is the end of the law.

The test faced by the leaders of Israel is also, in a sense, the same test the first man had faced, and they made the same decision he made. St. Thomas said the first man fell because he had an inordinate desire for a spiritual good. St. Thomas also said the first thing the first man coveted inordinately was his own excellence. The leaders of Israel decided to seek the death of Jesus out of a desire for a spiritual good—to avoid destruction of the temple where the sacrifices to the Lord God were offered; and they decided to seek the death of Jesus in order to maintain their obedience to the law—a desire for

[12] Rom. 10:2–4.

their own moral excellence. If our interpretation is correct, the decision to execute Jesus was a repeat of the sin of the first man—a second fall.

With that in mind, let us return to the Garden.

In the midst of the Garden, God made to grow not only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but also the tree of life. At the conclusion of the story of the fall, God sent man from the Garden, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."[13] This passage teaches two things. First, man had the opportunity in the Garden to eat of the tree of life. Secondly, the tree of life would bestow the gift of eternal life. Man had the opportunity in the Garden to gain eternal life by eating of the tree of life.

Jesus begins his high priestly prayer, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, with the following words:

> Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

Eternal life is to know God. We come to know God through his Word, who became incarnate as Jesus. Thus, power over all flesh, the power to give eternal life, has been given to Jesus. Jesus is the pre-existent Word of God. When we speak in the terminology of knowing God, we refer to Jesus as the Word through whom we come to the knowledge of God. When we speak in the terminology of eternal life, we refer to Jesus as the bread of life. Knowing God and eternal life are the same thing. The Word of God and the bread of life are the same thing. To say that Jesus is the bread of life who gives eternal life is the same as saying Jesus is the Word of God who gives the knowledge of God.

If eternal life is to know God; if we come to know God through Jesus because he is the Word; if Jesus is the bread of

[13] Gen. 3:22.

life who bestows eternal life; then we should identify the tree of life in the Garden with Jesus, the Word of God, the bread of life. The tree of life, the bread of life, and the Word of God are one and the same. If that is true, then the first man turned away from Jesus—the tree of life, the bread of life, the Word of God—out of an inordinate desire for his own excellence. He had the opportunity for union with God, but he loved himself more than God. The first man rejected the tree of life—he rejected Jesus—out of an inordinate desire for his own excellence. He committed the same sin that was committed at Calvary; or, more precisely, the sin committed at Calvary was the same as the sin committed by the first man in the Garden of Eden.

We were led to this discussion of the Garden of Eden by our question as to how to explain St. Paul's description of the descent of Moses from Mount Sinai with the two tablets as the ministry of death. We first said that St. Paul's statement can be explained in light of the fall, that the law reveals our sinfulness and thus our condemnation. We later observed that the law teaches the knowledge of good and evil, which raised the question of whether the law is connected to the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

If our argument is correct, we can say that the law has some correlation to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I would propose the following way to summarize what we have said. The first man was a righteous man. Abraham was a righteous man. The leaders of Israel were righteous men. The temptation that faces righteous men is not so much that they may choose evil; the temptation that faces righteous men is more that they may choose the highest good other than God in preference to God. The highest good in the Garden other than God was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The highest goods available to Abraham other than God were the promises of the covenant and his own moral virtue. The highest goods available to the leaders of Israel other than Jesus were the promises of the covenant and their obedience to the law.

Both the law and the tree of knowledge of good and evil are good—they are perhaps the highest goods men might attain other than God—and therefore they are the greatest temptations presented to righteous men. They represent what a righteous man might choose instead of God.

I would add that the first man, Abraham, and the leaders of Israel represent the whole human race. The first man and the leaders of Israel manifest the sin that each of us commits. Abraham is the father of the faithful because at the decisive moment he overcame the temptation to that sin.

The other objection we raised to the description of Moses descending with the law as the ministry of death was that Moses tells the people in Deuteronomy, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live." Moses makes this declaration in Deuteronomy, but not in Exodus. St. Paul's statement that Moses descending from Mount Sinai with the law was the ministry of death describes the promulgation of the law in Exodus. The end of the covenant in Exodus was the attainment of the land—if you do all that God commands, He will give you the land and keep you prosperous in it. That end is present in Deuteronomy, but something new is added. Moses explains at length in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy that Israel must keep the commandments if they wish to attain the land and live long in it; but this explanation is prefaced with the great proclamation, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."[14] Keeping law is not what gives life; the end of keeping the law, the end of our entire existence, of all that we do —loving God—is what gives life.

As we retrace our steps, we are now in a position to return to the question of why, if it was necessary for Elijah to come before Jesus, was it not also necessary for Moses to come. We

[14] Deut. 6:4–5.

have said that in some way Moses and Elijah correspond to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Our interpretation of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life posited a distinction between goods that are transparently gifts and goods that are not transparently gifts, goods that are of such a nature that men, including righteous men, might be tempted to choose them in preference to God. If our interpretation is correct, the two trees in the Garden are not peculiar to the state of perfection that existed there; rather, the two trees represent the nature of creation as we know it. In other words, the two trees—or the kinds of gifts they represent—would exist after the fall as well as before. We also said that the law represents the same kinds of goods as the tree of knowledge of good and evil, goods that men are tempted to choose in preference to God—the land, material prosperity, abundance of children, a political kingdom, knowledge of good and evil, and the system of sacrifices to the Almighty God.

We identified the tree of life, not with Elijah, but with Jesus. Jesus brought the New Covenant, the ministry of life, as Moses brought the Old Covenant, the ministry of death. The Old Covenant brought the knowledge of good and evil —the gifts that are distinct from God and might be chosen in preference to Him. The New Covenant overcomes the disjunction between God and His gifts. In the New Covenant, God gives Himself, and by giving Himself, He gives us eternal life. The Old Covenant, where God and His gifts are disjoined, and the New Covenant, where God and His gift are the same, together summarize all of God's gifts.

Moses personifies the Old Covenant. He brought military power and political freedom; and he promulgated the law. Elijah seems to have had little or no purpose other than to signify the New Covenant that would supersede the Old. He did not bring material prosperity or political power, nor did his ministry eliminate Israel's idolatry and avoid Israel's exile. Elijah raised an unnamed gentile boy from the dead; and he

was assumed into heaven without death. He signified the future coming of a king who would bring, not material prosperity or political power, but the resurrection of the dead. Moses personifies the Old Covenant and hence the gifts provided by it. Elijah signifies the New Covenant and hence the gift provided by it. If the Old Covenant and the New Covenant together summarize all of God's gifts, then Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses on the Mount of Transfiguration and at the end of this world because together they represent the complete summary of all of God's gifts. All of God's gifts stand with Jesus at his transfiguration as a witness that he is the God from whom all good gifts come and to whom they should be referred as their due end.

It was fitting for Elijah to come before Jesus because he was the Old Testament figure whose primary purpose seems to have been to signify the New Covenant. It would not have been misleading for Moses, who personified the Old Covenant, to come before Jesus precisely because he personified the Covenant that Jesus was to supersede. The leaders of Israel did not recognize that the Mosaic Covenant could be superseded. They chose to sacrifice Jesus in an effort to maintain the Mosaic Covenant and to preserve its benefits. Even the disciples of Jesus had difficulty comprehending the fact that Jesus was not a new Moses who would bring material prosperity and political freedom. Even after the resurrection, as Jesus was about to ascend to heaven as Elijah had done before, his disciples asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" The coming of Elijah pointed to a heavenly kingdom. The coming of Moses would have pointed to an earthly kingdom. The coming of Moses would have signified the beginning of an earthly battle, of warfare on earth where men kill other men to attain the blessings of liberty for themselves and their posterity. Hence, it would have been unfitting and misleading for Moses to appear publicly as a forerunner of Jesus.

The last vision of St. John recorded in the book of Rev-

elation—the last vision recorded in Holy Scripture—is the vision of the new heaven and the new earth, with the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb. St. John says,

> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk . . . Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.[15]

John says that the tree of life will grow in the New Jerusalem; but he makes no mention of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. John says the New Jerusalem will have no need of the sun or the moon or other sources of knowledge, for the nations will walk by the light of the glory of God and the Lamb. He also says he saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God and the lamb.

I would suggest we can restate St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem in terms of the argument of this essay as follows: in the beatific vision, the New Covenant will be consummated; the disjunction between God and His gifts will be overcome.

St. Paul says, "Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. . . . For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge pass away. They are gifts from God and their end is God; but they have no place when we are finally united with God. We should choose them in reference to God, not in preference to God. Love never ends. It can only increase when we are finally united with God.

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[15] Rev. 21:22–22:2.

My concluding remarks are more in the nature of an epilogue than a part of argument, more in the nature of food for thought than a part of the analysis. We have endeavored to find the significance of Moses, the first and greatest teacher in the Old Testament, and Elijah, who did not teach but who was given a supernatural charism by the Holy Spirit.

Whether or not this essay has correctly articulated the significance of Moses and Elijah, it seems that the great epochs of the Church have been marked by these two kinds of persons, the great teachers and those who do not teach but who are given a supernatural charism by the Holy Spirit. As He hung on the cross dying for our sins, our Lord spoke to St. John, who would become the most profound theologian of the original twelve apostles, and to our Lord's mother, who did not teach but who certainly was given a supernatural charism by the Holy Spirit. And then we have the two great saints from the medieval era—St. Thomas, arguably the greatest teacher since the apostles, and St. Francis, who was not a teacher but who was given a supernatural charism by the Holy Spirit. In this last half of the twentieth century, when the world seems so dark and so bleak, we are blessed to have as our holy father a man who may well be the greatest teacher to have occupied the see of Peter; and we have been blessed to have in our midst a woman who was not a teacher but who may have been the greatest saint since St. Francis. It is a sign of hope that at the close of the bloodiest century in history God has provided a pope, John Paul II, as a teacher for us and all the world, and a great saint, Mother Teresa, as an example to us and to all the world.

My final comment regards St. Thomas Aquinas—not his teaching, of which I know precious little—but his sanctity. The Church presents St. Thomas to us as a great teacher, a wise man, perhaps the greatest teacher and wisest man since the apostles. Certainly, St. Thomas possessed great knowledge, perhaps the greatest knowledge of the highest things that any man has ever possessed. If the thesis of this essay is correct,

it follows that St. Thomas had a great temptation to pride, perhaps the greatest temptation to pride of any man since St. Paul. On December 6, 1273, when he was 48 years old, St. Thomas ceased writing and said, "I can do no more; such things have been revealed to me that all that I have written seems to me as so much straw." Those magnificent writings, those profound teachings, which have inspired popes, guided councils, and earned St. Thomas the title of the Common Doctor—seemed to St. Thomas as so much straw. Such a statement is the mark of an uncommonly humble man. We wretched sinners, with our polluted souls and our pitiful little minds, love the least of our writings, the most insignificant of our insights. St. Thomas, who had far greater reason for pride than we do, was far more humble than we are. This extraordinary humility marks St. Thomas as a saint, a man of heroic and supernatural virtue. I believe such humility in a man who had such temptation to pride must have been attained through a great and final battle, a fight to the death, in the soul of St. Thomas. That great and final battle was won in the forty-eighth year of his life, when such things were revealed to St. Thomas that all that he had written seemed as so much straw. Like St. John, St. Thomas was given a vision that transcends this world—he was given a vision of the New Jerusalem, where the tree of knowledge does not grow, where the nations need no light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God is their light.