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OF THE BRONZE SERPENT

I. Among the illustrious Old Testament types, by which the death of Christ and His benefits are foreshadowed for us, the bronze serpent is rightly placed; the history of which Moses sets forth in Numbers 21, and the mystery Christ opens for us, John 3. Thus, diligent contemplation of it cannot but be of great use when it comes to the knowledge of the various evangelical mysteries, and when it comes to the instruction and comfort of all the pious. This reasoning moved us, as it did in the preceding exercises concerning the three miracles performed in favor of the Israeli people in the desert: *Baptism*, that is, in the *cloud* and *sea*, *manna* and *rock*, and this brief Dissertation concerning the *bronze* Serpent, in which no less a miracle of God's grace and power occurs, we will bring to two Heads. In the first the truth of history in the type, in the second the same mystery in the antitype, in which we weigh the goodness of God. In both the evil of sin and the penalty will be attended to with the miraculous remedy presented by God.

II. The story is told by Moses, Numbers 21, where he enumerates that the people, after having supplied water from the rock in Kadesh, and set out from there to Mount Hor, the people saw that he would not go by the straight route to the land of Canaan, but through a wearisome circuit in the land of the Idumeans, and thus wander longer in the desert, so out of impatience they, once again, broke out into harsh and heavy voices against God and Moses. Whereupon God, moved to anger, sent venomous and noxious serpents upon them, by whose fatal bites many great people fell. But when the Israelites recognized and

confessed their sin and pleaded with Moses, they moved Moses to prayers and God provided them with a remedy for salvation, commanding Moses to cast the bronze serpent and to go set it up publicly in a prominent place, adding this promise: all those who were bitten would be healed by looking at it. This occurred as promised, confirming that, indeed, Moses obeyed the divine command, for all who looked at this bronze serpent were healed.

III. Wherein first there is a consideration of the sin of the Israelites, and afterwards of the punishments inflicted on them by God because of their sin. Their sin consisted in the murmuring which arose against God and Moses, either because of the inconveniences and protractedness of the journey, the people being tired and perishing, or because of the scarcity of water and food, disgusted with the manna, while falsely insisting that thirst and hunger were part of the problem, although God had abundantly provided for them in regard to both, "The people spoke against God and Moses, Why did you bring us up from Egypt to die in the desert? For there is neither bread nor water, and our soul is weary of light bread," Numbers 21:5. What the apostle explains through temptation, 1 Cor. 10:9, "Let us not tempt Christ as they also tempted and were destroyed by serpents." They are said to have tempted Christ because Christ was Jehovah's leader of the people in the desert, and they tempted Him when by murmuring they called His power and faithfulness into doubt, as if He could not feed them in the desert, and as if he would not stand by His promises; thus, God was disgusted and nauseated by their wicked ingratitude for the excellent food and drink with which He abundantly supplied them. The punishment was made known through the introduction of fiery serpents, which killed innumerable people with their fatal poison and lethal bite.

IV. Let us now say something in advance about these serpents. We do not need to refute the fiction of those who maintain the devil transformed into a serpent causing this destruction, or those who want it to have been a kind of disease which produced little snakes in the bodies of the Israelites exciting the most serious inflammations in them, the kind of disease which was specific to those who lived around the Red Sea, and he never interfered with any others, as Agatharcides relates in Plutarch's *Symposium*, book 8, q. 9. For the words of the sacred Text sufficiently prove the vanity of this fiction, and do not allow us to doubt that they were true serpents sent by God to punish the people. But the double name was distinguished by Moses אֲשֵׁרִי and שֵׁרִיפִי. The first general name is 'serpent;' later it is explained in two parts. Some want it to be an adjective, by which their quality is indicated, so that they are so called either from the color of the fire which they carried before them, or rather from the effect, either by biting or condition, they introduced a very intense heat which seemed to burn, as Onkelos viewed it, rendering it 'burning serpents.' Thus, Rabbi Solomon and R. D. Kimchi, "those who burn a man with the poison of his teeth or the breath of his mouth." And in the Zohar, book of Numbers, folio 88, "Because they murmured against God and Moses in equal measure, therefore, he sent serpents to them, burning them with fire from their mouths, so that the people fell down and died." Others wish to designate a particular species of serpent, and to add to the former general word by affixing it πρηστηρας and καυσώνας [fiery whirlwind and heat], as the Greeks allude to them with expressions answering directly to the Hebrew expressions..... of which Lucan, book 9:

And stretching out his insatiable lips, foaming a fiery whirlwind,

which Dioscorides wants to be the same as vipers because of the thirst experienced due to poison which burns. [Turretin then cites several ancient authors who believe them to be winged serpents, such as Cicero, Josephus, Pomponius Mela, Gaius Julius Solinus, Ammianus Marcellinus, which flew from Arabia to Egypt.] They draw upon Isaiah 30:6, where Egypt is called the land in which there is the viper and flying Seraph. Herodotus observes, book 3, that such Hydras have the appearance of a snake, and the form of a Hydrus is like that of a Hydra. Hence, Bochartus, not without great probability, casts it by the design of a Hydra or serpent, which has a most acrid and noxious virus, burning with its bite whatever it touches, of which Virgil, book 3, *Georgics*:

After the swamps and the earth were drained and divided by fire

He sprang to dry land, and twisting with flaming lights

He rages in the fields, thirsty and terrified by the heat.

But in whatever way the word is explained, it is certain that the serpents, which have killed many of the people with their bites, are known to be malignant and highly poisonous.

V. There is no need, however, to ask anxiously whether these serpents were natural or miraculous. Did they exist in the desert, or were they brought in from somewhere else? For it is clear from the Scriptures that there were many such serpents in the wilderness, whence Deut. 8:15, it is called the place of serpents and scorpions. There is no doubt, however, that something miraculous and extraordinary must be acknowledged, by such abundance which invaded the Israelites so quickly, which the sacred writer does not obscurely hint at, when he

says the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, insinuating that these serpents were θεηλάτω aroused by some divine power, or they were brought up from another place to punish the rebellious people. In this way, the frogs in Egypt left their natural places, from the rivers, the banks, and the marshes, and covered the whole earth, so that they even ascended the upper floors of the buildings. What is relevant is that in Wisdom 16:5, it is said of the serpents sent by God, "when there came upon them," that is, as if unexpectedly, "the ferocious fury of the beasts, they were consumed by the bites of writhing serpents." I know the Hebrews believed these serpents were natural, and it was only by a miracle that the desert was swarming with serpents and scorpions, yet they had not yet been able to harm them, God restraining them from setting upon them, so much so that during the whole 40 years during which the Israelites wandered in in the desert, not even one person was injured by them. And in this matter they refer to the tradition of the Rabbis, in Bhumidhar Rabba, section 1, that seven clouds surrounded the Israelites in the desert, one from above, the other from hell, four from four quarters of the World; and in short, one which preceded, striking them with serpents and scorpions, leveling the mountains and valleys, burning thorns and thistles, and making smoke rise, when the kings of the West saw them, they said, Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness? Song of Solomon 3:6. And this cloud was especially intended for this miracle. But when they had uttered and spewed insulting words on the One who was the greatest jewel and profit to them, God sent those serpents to scorch those who were in the desert. But as these things are invented ατερ γράφης [without the Bible], he proposed to refute them.

VI. And if it is asked, Why did God send this punishment on them? It is answered that their ingratitude was rightly punished in this manner, so that they might feel the foolishness in revolting against God, by sending the serpents which were no match. Hence, to humble them, the best strategy was to scornfully put them at war against the serpents to convict them of their weakness. Secondly, a wonderful dispensation of God also occurred, by introducing punishment corresponding to sin, so that those who imitated virulent serpents were punished by serpents. For murmurers and detractors are said to "sharpen their tongues like serpents, and bite, and have the poison of an asp under their lips," Psalm 140:3 and Ecclesiastes 10:11, where Solomon compares a cursed or blasphemous person with a snake that bites without being enchanted. Hence, it is gathered that the serpent's bite was just punishment for the insolence of the Israelite people's biting tongues. Thus, He punishes blood with blood, Gen. 9, sword with sword, desolation with desolation, adultery with adultery, 2 Samuel 12:11, Isa. 33:1; thirsty, throwing children into the sea of rivers, Exodus 14, so that by what one sins, he is punished by the same; and by punishing in the image of the sin the justice of the punishment may be more easily recognized. But because God does not seek men's *πανολεθριαν* [debacle] in the infliction of punishments, but wants them tamed and corrected by these scourges to become wise, and to be compelled into the circle of divine obedience. Therefore, as soon as the Israelites repented of their sin, God also gave a remedy to heal their wounds, so that He might show himself merciful and gracious to the ungrateful and stiff-necked people. And previously in the baptism in the cloud and sea He gave a symbol of vivification and a kind of resurrection. Indeed, manna and rock are a pledge of preservation and nourishment. Thus,

He wanted to give a sign of healing in the bronze serpent, by which He would testify that whatever was necessary for the benefit of the people and εἰζωίων [their lives], [through Him they can] obtain, preserve, and heal life.

VII. The remedy prescribed by God was the making of a bronze serpent, and erecting it on a pole, so that it could be seen by all. Initially, it would seem there is nothing less agreeable or more foreign to reason than [the command] that a bronze serpent should be made: the sight of which kills the deadly poison. But this seeming absurdity was far more apt to illustrate the grace of God than if there had been anything natural in the remedy. Indeed, God could with one word drive away those serpents and finish them, but if they had been immediately removed, they would easily have thought the attack accidental, and the evil had naturally disappeared. He could have prepared other suitable remedies for the treatment of this disease, if there had been anything beneficial. In such a case, He would have been able to provide the suitable and appropriate remedy. God's power and goodness would have been covered in this way. So that they might feel that they alone could be saved from death by the Grace of God, the mode of sensation chosen was so foreign to the nature of things and to human reason, that it was almost like a plaything. And so, He wished also to test the obedience of the people by prescribing a method of seeking salvation which should hold captive all the senses; for what could the sight of a snake contribute to the healing of a snake's bite? But this is the proper virtue of faith, to be willingly foolish that we may learn wisdom only from the mouth of God. Thus, we see that God has frequently used in His works those means which seem either weak or altogether unfit to produce the work which He intends. Thus, Trumpets broke down the

walls of Jericho; thus, the Midianites poured out shell vessels and lamps, thus, He restored the sight of the fallen by laying mud on them for cleansing. Of course, [all for the purpose] that we should bring the received glory to one God, not to ourselves; nor should men be seen to have obtained it by their own energy, but by the power of God alone, which is acknowledged to be the greater, [no matter] how small and paltry God's remedies seem to be.

VIII. And it is not without reason the Hebrews note here a miracle upon a miracle, that God cares by opposites, just as a bitter tree makes water sweet, Exod. 15:25, Salt that brings barrenness makes barren land fertile, 2 Kings 2:21. Bronze is naturally injured by the bite of a snake; yet it kills snakes if they gaze at white-hot bronze, as the Medici assert. It was a miracle, therefore, that the same person who had breathed in the poison took care of it, so that it was all the more clear that God alone could heal, which Abarbanel notes, "There is no doubt," says he, "that the serpents were removed from the midst by the prayer of Moses, but many of the sick who had been bitten still remained among the people. Therefore, to heal these, God said to Moses, Make an offering and put it on a tree, so that everyone who is bitten may look and live. It is also agreed that Nachmanides wrote that this should rather have increased diseases because those bitten by poisonous beasts should not look at the images of that by which they were bitten. But this was done in order that they might recognize and know that their diseases and cures were miraculous, not natural; hence, by the sight of that thing which hurt them, they received medicine." Thus Chaskuni, "specifically commands to make a serpent, and not another beast, in order to make known the wonderful works of God, of course, because the same razor with which he inflicts a wound also heals it."

IX. But it can it not be asked again, why did Moses make the ancient serpent when the matter was not expressed by God, nor signified to him? God had said simply to Moses, "make for yourself a fiery serpent," Numbers 21:8, and it is said of Moses in verse 9, "and Moses made a bronze serpent." The Hebrews answer in different ways. Rabbi Solomon gives an account of the notation of the Name: "It was not said to him," he says, "that he should make it out of air, but Moses thought and said, God is calling him; therefore, I will make him," from "out of air," because of the affinity and congruity of the words. Nachmanides thinks Moses reasoned that "for this reason this artificial snake would have the color of a natural snake, and would represent it so much better, because he did not see how he could fulfill God's command otherwise than by making a bronze snake, for here he refers to the likeness of a burning or fiery snake, since fiery snakes are red like bronze or copper." Others, with no less reason, want this done because of the luster of the polish in the air, so that, by diffusing the rays hither and thither, it might be seen more comfortably both by those near and far. Be that as it may, it must be certain that Moses, who was the Prophet of God, and consequently θεόπνευστος [divinely inspired], did not do anything of his own free will here, but from God's command, whether explicit and external, or implicit and internal. Moreover, it may be asked: Where did Moses get such a supply of bronze which was required for the making of that serpent, and which had to be huge to facilitate the sight of so many myriads of Israelites? It may be answered, that it was not brought from another location, but that it was taken from the place where they were encamped at that time, namely from Phevon or Phuvon, a location in Idumea which had a very notable copper mine, as the ancients observe when speaking of various Martyrs, who were slain at

the mines of Phevon, as seen in Eusebius, book 8 of his *History*, chap. 13 [?], and Athanasius, in his letter to the Hermits, relates that Eutybios was sent to the mines, and not only to any mine, but to the mine of Phevon [Phaeno]. And Jerome more clearly in *Locis*, "Fevon," says he, "the camp of the children of Israel in the desert: but there was a certain city of the princes of Edom, now a village in the desert, where copper mines are dug for the executions of the condemned," etc. Now it is evident the Israelites were in that location; for although Moses does not say precisely in what location this serpent was erected, yet it is not obscurely gathered from what he says that the Israelites camped from there in Oboth, Numbers 21:10, just as from Numbers 33:43, it is clear they set out, "from Punon they encamped in Oboth."

X. After making the serpent, its erection follows. This God commanded Moses so that those bitten by snakes would be healed at its sight: "Make for yourself a burning serpent, and place it on a tree," or in a tree, "And whoever is bitten, and looks at it, shall live." The voice is rendered in different ways by the Interpreters. Some want a sign to be designated here, and to be rendered a sign, others that it may be the opposite of a sign, so that Syrus, Aben Ezra, Jerome, who expound it as a sign, may be put in place of this: But less conveniently, because the boundary of the erection is not so much designated as the manner or subject in which it was to be raised, as the preposition clearly evinces. For although the image of the bronze serpent was really the sign and type of the crucifixion of the Messiah, as is gathered from the Gospel, yet this [truth] is not gathered as much from these words as from the entire narrative of the matter. Nor do the words teach anything else, other than those images must have been placed by Moses in a lofty place, so that they might be visible to all the people, or placed on some

lofty beam above: Wherefore Cajetan rightly criticizes that version of Jerome, "for a sign," "According to the Hebrew, put it on a pole, nothing is said about a sign, but it is decided that it should be placed on a wooden pole, therefore, the serpent and the pole are not the same, but rather the serpent upon the pole." Others, far more conveniently, explain it either from a bar, or a high stake, an oblong pole, as Lyra, Pagnino, Cajetan, Tremellius, Drusius, Piscator, but to the mind of Rabbi Solomon who interprets it by the French word *Perche*, which is derived from the Latin word *pertica*, for a pole, or a mast of a ship and sail yard. For these things, although they are somewhat different, are nevertheless referring to the same thing, to suggest some very high and huge tree, to which a bronze serpent was affixed, so that it could be seen by all and from all sides. Then, to warn them of their sin by erecting this serpent, they might in the future guard themselves against a similar fall, and as Rabbi Levi ben Gerson notes, "It is my opinion that God willed there should be a sign and a monument of this matter as a place of memorial for themselves, by which they would guard themselves from slander and disparagement in the future." Then by its sight they were healed of the bites of the snakes. Abarbanel thinks the term is used here equivocally, which does not mean only a sign or standard, but also "a miracle and a prodigy, which would be miraculous in the same thing that it struck....."

XI. The remedy of the erected serpent would have been made in vain unless the Israelites turned their eyes to it, which was its purpose, as the Lord expressly noted, "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live," that is, he will receive health and be freed from death, which would otherwise cost him. Of course, he wanted the Israelites to look at this Serpent, both with

regard to the Israelites themselves, that they might be healed from the poisonous snakes' bites, and also with regard to himself, so that it would be a greater miracle if a living snake bit him, and a dead snake healed him, and indeed, with a single look. But this insight is not to be understood only corporeally and externally, but also spiritually and internally with the aspect of faith and the lifting up of the heart to God, which the Hebrews note, whence Jonathan the Chaldean Paraphrast translates thus, "make for yourself a bronze serpent and place it in an elevated place, and it shall be if a serpent had bitten him, and it was looked upon so he would recover, if indeed, he directed his heart to the word of the Lord." Targum Hieros., "And it shall be if any man is bitten by a serpent and lifts his face to his father in heaven in prayer, and looks upon the bronze serpent, he shall be healed. Rabbi Solomon observes that the word וַיִּרְאֵהוּ used in verse 9 means, "to look with the intention of the heart, that is, to God." Hence the Arabic, "He who turns to him in repentance will survive." The book of Wisdom 16:5-7 speaks of it in this way, "When the ferocious wrath of the beasts invaded them, and they were destroyed by the bites of the noxious serpents, your wrath did not remain to the end, but by the grace of admonition they were disturbed for a little while, having a sign of salvation to remember the commandments of your Law and would return them: for he who looked not for the sake of the thing seen, but because of thee, the Savior of all, was kept."

XII. From which it is concluded that neither the serpent itself had any power to procure this healing, nor that its appearance contributed anything to it; for what could either the bronze serpent or the sight of it help in the cure of lethal poison? We now wish to expose what is the imaginary figment of those who have invented it, that it is some

astrological image made according to certain constellations as well as the aspects or positions of the stars which had the power to drive away serpents and to cure the bites of horses. Such as are the figures which the Arabs call *Talismans*, as others impiously invented, not paying attention to the vanity of these observances and the prohibition so often given by God in doing them. Thus, there could be nothing else than a mere moral cause, the presence of which God was working, or an external and sensible sign of the grace which God wished to bring forth from this work, just as in the miracles performed by men, or whatever means He wished to use regarding themselves, for they contribute nothing to the extraordinary work produced. God used such instruments as a sign of His grace and power which worked in the presence of the people. The view of the serpent was, therefore, necessary by the mere necessity of the commandment, because God required this condition from those who wished to be healed, without which there could be no hope of salvation from the bite. Moreover, if it is asked: How could this bronze serpent be seen by so many people, who had to occupy such a great space because of their multitude? It may be answered that the serpent was raised so high in the midst of the camp that it could be seen with little difficulty by the people. And if some could not look at it because of the great distance, they could come closer, or be carried by others, so they could look at it.

XIII. From this, however, it is not obscure, though without rationale, that the Pontiffs seek from this serpent an argument for the worship of images. For it is certain that it was not cast to be worshipped, but only to be looked upon; not as an object of worship, but only of contemplation, for in the course of time, when the Israelites were burning incense to it, Ezekiel ordered it to be broken, as it is written, 2

Kings 18:4, so that in the future the Israelites would not be abused by idolatry, "He removed the high places and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because up until those days the Israelites burned incense to it, and he called it Nehustan" by way of reproach, so that it might be noted that it was nothing but brass, which had no strength, no working power, and no divinity, and therefore, it was not to be held in affection by giving it divine honors. Nor could Joannes Lorinus and Gabriel Vasquez conceal this, who admit this serpent was not intended for worship, but only for contemplation, and that it had never been worshiped at the time of Moses.

XIV. And these things are said of Types. Now we must come to the *τυπωθεν* [original type] or mystery contained under this figure. For although we may easily grant that the Israelites looked upon this miracle, and that God gave them various documents which serve either to show the gravity of sin, or to acknowledge the severity of divine justice, or to celebrate the greatness of mercy and grace, there is no doubt, however, that it had a special *σχέσιν* [relationship] to some Evangelical mystery, which He wanted to teach us by using this figure. And if Christ himself did not reveal this to us, as he does very clearly, John 3:14-15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life;" yet the nature of the matter itself would suffice to prove this. For why would God have chosen this wonderful and extraordinary kind of remedy, if He had proposed no other end than the healing of the wounded? Is it likely that He wished to apply His wisdom to a matter so seemingly absurd and alien to reason if He intended nothing else than to provide for the

salvation of the Israelites, and had not looked further to something more sublime? We may observe the same thing here, which occurs not a few times in other legal ceremonies, so that we can hardly give an account of them, if we remain in history itself and the type, and do not ascend to the truth and the antitype, why God wills the posts of the Israelites to be sprinkled with blood so that the Egyptians may be cut off by an angel, as if the angel could not have sufficiently distinguished the houses of both without this sign. But in this way the great mystery of Redemption is revealed most clearly that our hearts must be sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of God, so that we can be delivered from the punishment of ολοθρεύτου [the destroyer], the hand of divine justice. So why is the serpent erected to cure the plague of the Israelites? Why does the sight of it heal? This was doubtless not without the Lord's wonderful reason, whatever it may be, but whatever the Jews bring forth they will never achieve, unless one looks to Christ, who, as the interpreter of the divine plan and Old Testament, opens to us and supplies us with the key to this mystery, as well as the end to which God especially looked upon here. So that here we should not look upon the serpent as a simple likeness, but as an expressed type, and purposed by the Spirit to signify these three things: (1) To foreshadow sin and the misery brought on by sin. (2) A description of the redemption which was brought to us through Christ. (3) The manner and instrument by which this redemption is applied to us; which three are contained in this type. For the wounds and bites of the serpent which mark the deadly virus of the Devil are noted, by which we are fatally wounded. Thus, the bronze serpent, Christ the Redeemer, and the sight of it, miraculously presents us with faith looking back to Christ, as we shall now see a little more distinctly.

XV. As for the first, who does not see in the murmuring of the Israelites and the plague of serpents the state of men who have fallen into sin, and through sin into death, graphically depicted? Who does not know the Devil is the serpent of old, who wounded the first parents with his lethal bite so that he spread death upon the whole human race, pouring out his deadly virus upon the whole of mankind; especially upon the heart as the citadel and fountain of life, so that here we have at the same time the image of sin and punishment? Sinful, indeed, because as a serpent's bite is extremely narrow in scope, but the most excelling poison which rightly seeks the heart itself, burning and inflaming souls with the deadly fire of carnal lusts, consisting of the many fiery weapons of Satan, Eph. 6:16, which arouse a most burning and insatiable thirst with its bite, causing innumerable evils. But because the poison of sin is so cruel and deadly, its punishment brings the most certain death to a man, unless a remedy comes to him from some other source. In one word, there is no other image more fitting than the serpent to describe the frauds, fallacies, and most cunning arts by which the Prince of darkness, the Devil, who has the power of death, creeps like a twisting serpent, through roundabout, twisty and windy paths, with his pestilential hissing, seeking those in whose heart he can establish tyranny: Like a roaring lion, he rages with fierce cruelty against the seed of the woman.

XVI. (2) The remedy prepared for us by God and intended for our salvation is most aptly noted here. But no one could heal the plague of the Israelites except God alone. Thus, no one could heal the deadly plague of sin and death, except the merciful grace of God, who, looking in the *πολιποίκιλου* [diverse] treasury of His wisdom saved us by sending his Son into the world, who would offer Himself on the cross on

our behalf to God. So, by means of the bronze serpent He wished to foreshadow it with various illustrations: as poison was injected by the serpent and the remedy brought by another serpent, the serpent is opposed to the serpent, the salutary to the harmful, the medicinal to the deadly. Thus, it is man who destroys us, it is man who saves us, death by one man, resurrection by one man, 1 Cor. 15, and as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many are made righteous, Romans 5:19, by whom He willed man to be saved, by whom he had perished; death, which was fatal to all, now becomes the instrument of salvation and redemption. He who had the power of death is destroyed by death, in order to deliver those who had been enslaved all their lives because of the fear of death, Heb. 2:15. And thus, the riddle of Samson is fulfilled, *out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came forth sweetness*, from death itself the remedy for death is sought, the scorpion is wounded by the wound which he has made and is healed, and from the viper the most salubrious theriac is made, by which his bite is healed.

(3) The serpent, indeed, had the form of a fiery serpent, therefore is it called 'serpent', but not the nature, nor the poison: Thus, Christ was indeed made in the likeness of sinful flesh, but he did not have the flesh of sin, Romans 8:3, because he was made like us in all things, except sin, Heb. 4:15, to this, however, must we add the distinction that the serpent had only an external form, but Christ an internal one, because he was a true man no different from us.

(4) The serpent is not made of gold or silver, but of the baser metal of brass, which is truly solid and lasting: Thus, Christ was without

adornment and without form, Isa. 53:2, but He is firm and unshaken, the rock and immovable rock of salvation.

(5) Of all metals brass is the most sonorous, whence Paul, 1 Cor. 13:1, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχῳν I am tinkling brass. Thus, Christ crucified is rightly marked by brass, as well as the preaching of the cross by which the sound of Christ smitten was heard throughout the whole earth, Romans 10:18.

(6) The serpent was not formed by human work, but was fused by fire: thus, Christ was not born by the work of man, but was conceived by the power of the Spirit, and baked in the fire of charity, as it were, on the Cross, that He might become a salutary remedy for us.

(7) As one serpent was given to the Israelites, so that they all looked to him: so one Christ is given to all, salvation in one and not in any other.

XVII. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so it was necessary for the Son of God to be lifted up. Moses would have prepared this serpent in vain, unless he had afterwards set it up on a stake or pole, so that it could be seen by all. Thus, it was not enough that the Son of man was born and took the form of a servant, unless he was hanged on the infamous tree of the cross and became a καταρα [curse] or curse; for this reason alone He became our savior and giver of life. It was therefore necessary to exalt the Son of man, not only to fulfill the figures and oracles of old, but especially due to the necessity of our salvation, because no other remedy could be found for our sin, as there was no hope of healing the Israelites except in the sight of the bronze serpent raised up. And this ὑψώσιν [lifting up] or exaltation of Christ which is to be related to His crucifixion and death is gathered from John 12:32, where Christ says, "If I be lifted up from the earth will

draw all men to me," signifying as John adds, "what death he should die," evidently on the cross, on which He ought to have been lifted up, from the use of the Syriac language, in which the word which properly means to lift up, is often taken in the idea of crucifying, Matt. 20:19, and they lift Him up, that is, they crucify Him, as in Greek it is σταυρωσάι [crucify]. And Matt. 26:2, The Son of Man is delivered up to be lifted up, that is, *to be crucified*, εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι. That sense is familiar to the Chaldeans, Esther 7:10, "They lifted Haman up on a tree," that is, "they hanged him," as it is in the Hebrew. They were called holocausts or ὑψωσεῖς because they were lifted up, and signified that Christ, offering Himself for sins, would be exalted on the cross: upon which He is rightly attached to the pole on which He was raised, especially if it was formed in the form of a cross, as it must have been if it had the image of a winged serpent [Isa. 14:29, 30:6].

XVIII. Although this erection of the serpent foreshadows the death of Christ on the cross, there can be no doubt that it looked further, if we pay attention, that is, why it was erected so that it could be seen, otherwise it could not have been seen unless it had been exalted in another way besides being erected on the cross. Now three exaltations of Christ can be distinguished which we consider to be gathered here: the first is *punitive* on the Cross, the second *triumphant* in Heaven, the third *mystical* in the Word. By the first He was erected on the cross to satisfy the justice of God, and to atone for sins by the merit of His blood. By the second He was raised up into heaven, to preserve, by His intercession, the salvation which He obtained for us by His death. By the third, He is exalted in the Church by the preaching of the Gospel, applying the salvation of the elect and converting them to Christ. Christ speaks of the first, quoting John 12:32, "When I am lifted up I will draw

all people to me," of course, the sweet fragrance of His sacrifice and death, and John 8:28, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He," that is, after you have crucified me. Of the other, by which the Victor of sin, of the devil, and of death, not only rose from the dead, but also ascended into heaven, says Paul, Philip. 2:9, "Whom," he says, "the Father ὑπερύψωσεν," that is, highly exalted, giving him the name above every name," etc. The third, which pertains to the preaching of the Gospel, is hinted at, Isa. 11:10, "In these days," he says, "the nations will seek the root of Jesse, which will be set up as a standard." For Christ is set up in the Gospel as a standard, so that we may turn to Him with the view of faith, and here he [fulfills the prophecy as to] what the evil pole on which the serpent was erected is called: ,Dḳ which signifies a standard. Moreover, like the serpent, He was not placed in a corner, but in public and in the midst of the people, so that He could be seen by all. Thus, Christ was preached not to one people only, but to all nations, and was proposed as a sign of salvation, whence, Gal. 3:1, it is said that he was presented to them, and as if depicted crucified among them.

XIX. Thirdly, the contemplation of the serpent was also mystical. For Moses had to be roused to bring it forth; consequently, it was necessary the serpent had to be seen on the part of the Israelites. [Thus, there are several similarities between the type and the antitype which can be listed]: (1) Christ does not help unless He is known, nor is His death helpful, but only to the faithful who apprehend him. This apprehension is effected in no other way than by faith, which is the eye of the soul by which we look at Christ: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life," John 6:40. And John 3:14, "And as Moses lifted

up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." In this way faith is occasionally conferred upon the eye, because its chief act is placed in knowledge. This is the condition under which Christ is offered in the Gospel, under which those who are destitute [of faith] cannot enjoy Christ, nor can they determine that it is destined for them by God. By the counsel of God, the brazen serpent benefited only those who looked to it. Whenever there were those who were banished in Israel, or turned their eyes away, there was no hope of salvation for them, so that even today the rebels against God do not believe, Job 24:13, as also those whose minds the god of this age has blinded, 2 Cor. 4:4. (2) The Israelites were not healed by another's sight, but only their own: So, too, we live by our faith, not by another's, Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17. (3) Even a feeble person could see for salvation: Thus faith, which is still weak, delivers us from death, provided it is true and sincere. (4) Anyone who looked, of whatever age, sex, or condition, was healed: So, too, everyone who believes in Christ, whether male or female, whether free or servant, whether rich or poor, whether educated or uneducated, is kept indiscriminately in Christ, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all," Col. 3:11. Again, the inequality of the evil does not take away the equality of the remedy, for all were healed, no matter how they were bitten. Thus, whatever disease of sin you are detained by, whatever wounds you are afflicted with, if only you believe, you will be saved. (5) As he once had been healed by looking to the serpent, if he was bitten again he resorted to the same remedy: Thus, if after spiritual healing we slip into sin again, the same faith as before finds salvation by looking to Christ. Hence, as the Israelites relied on such immediate help, they were little

afraid of the snake's bite and sting: So, likewise, the faithful one who relies on Christ, rejects the insults of demons and the stings of sin, crying out with confidence, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. 15:55. And yet the Israelites were not really secure, though they had [false] confidence in this medicinal remedy when provoking the serpents to bite again: Thus, we must be careful, lest, relying on Christ's grace and help, we should voluntarily fall into temptations, carried away by carnal presumption and rash confidence. But by working out salvation against holy fear, the Devil must be constantly resisted, so that he may flee from us, James 4:7.

XX. It is true that in these cases there is a manifold agreement between figure and truth, yet it must be admitted that there was also no less discrepancy between them, and that this one was by far the most important. (1) The bronze serpent, used as a remarkable symbol of God's grace, was nevertheless able to do nothing by itself, "for not he who looked at what he saw will be saved, but through you, the Savior of all," as the book of Wisdom, chap. 16, truthfully says. Only Christ is truly said to be the cause of salvation and life. Whence it is said that the Sun of righteousness brings healing in its wings, Mal. 4:2, the resurrection is said to be life, He who has life in Himself and quickens whomever He wills, John 5:21, became a life-giving Spirit, 1 Cor. 15:45. (2) The bronze serpent was supposed to be the salvation of only the Israelites, but faith in Christ is for all, from whatever nation, sex, condition and age, so that whoever believes, whether Jew or Greek, may not perish but have eternal life. (3) The serpent delivered those bitten from death in such a way that they were still subject to death: But through Christ we are freed both from the death of the soul and of the body for eternity. (4) The power of the serpent lasted only a few

days, or God, in its presence, granted the people healing from their wounds for a short time: But Christ is always the same today, yesterday and forever, Heb. 13:8, His eternal and infinite power never fails. (5) The serpent was proposed for contemplation, but not for adoration, whence when the people began to adore it, he was broken at the command of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:4, for "all must honor the Son, as they honor the Father," John 5:23, and "all the angels are commanded to worship him," Heb. 1:6, nor to another end "God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and all confess that he is Lord, to the glory of the Father," Phil. 2:10. And if the bronze serpent was broken because it immediately began to be worshipped; those who have not worshiped Christ must be crushed like the serpent: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Psalm 2:9; but the blessed kiss the Son with a religious kiss, placing their trust in Him.

XXI. This is the office which Paul prescribed, 1 Cor. 10:9, where he talks about the sin of the Israelites, from which he elicits the practical use of not testing Christ, but rather of worshiping and glorifying Him, as the most faithful and powerful God, "Let us not tempt Christ, as they tempted him, and were destroyed by serpents." This furnishes us with the strongest argument for the divinity of Christ against the Socinians: not only from the fact that Christ is already said to have existed under the Old Testament, that it could not have been said of Him unless He were God, but also whom the Israelites themselves are said to have tested, which is only said of God. Nor should Socinian Eniedinus be heard, who wants Moses to have been tempted by the Israelites, Numbers 21, "The people spoke against God and Moses." For it is one

thing to speak and grumble against someone, and another to test him. That can be done against man, but this only against God, so Moses himself distinguishes, Exodus 17:2, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you tempt Jehovah?" [Turretin then delves into a detailed examination of the grammar which proves the Socinian argument lacking authority.]

Furthermore, although Christ had not yet been anointed as to humanity, yet Christ could no less be called as to the person and office of mediator, because the anointing does not denote only the contribution of gifts to humanity, but also the calling and holding to the office, which belongs to the person already executing that office under the Old Testament. This was particularly evident in the pilgrimage of the people in the wilderness, in which He was present to the people as their leader, as is clear from Exodus 23:21-22. For neither is that Angel, who is said to be sent by the Lord before the people, in whom the name of God should have been, that is, divine and equal authority with the Father, and whose offense was to be carefully avoided, because He was not going to spare their sins, different from Christ, who it is often described by the Angel of the his presence and the Angel of the covenant, Mal. 3:1. From which it is concluded that Christ was really tempted by the Israelites and thus, is truly eternal with God the Father.

The End