

The Early Church Fathers Writings

Volume 86

THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS WRITINGS

Volume 86

Commentary on the First Book of Kings, Attributed to
Gregory the Great

c. AD 590 – 1100

S E R M O N I N D E X

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Volume 86: Commentary on the First Book of Kings, Attributed to Gregory the Great

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS VOLUME

How this book is arranged

This is the eighty-sixth volume of a series that gathers the writings of the early Church in order of date, from the generation after the apostles down to the eighth century. This volume holds Commentary on the First Book of Kings, Attributed to Gregory the Great, from the period about AD 590 – 1100.

Within each work the text is divided into chapters and numbered sections, so that any passage can be found again and cited. The small bold figures in the text are the section numbers.

The translations

The text is in English only. Wherever a modern English version has been prepared for SermonIndex it is used here; otherwise the book prints an older public-domain translation. In both cases the wording is the translator's own: older translations have not been altered beyond dividing them into sections. The sources for every work are listed at the back of the book, together with the licence under which each text is released. All the works in this volume are printed in the modern English versions prepared for SermonIndex.

In this volume

Gregory was born at Rome about AD 540 into a rich senatorial family, served as prefect of the city, and gave his wealth to found monasteries. He was sent to Constantinople as the pope's representative about AD 579, and there began to explain the Book of Job to the monks who went with him. He was chosen bishop of Rome in AD 590, in a time of plague, famine and Lombard invasion, and for fourteen years he governed the Church, fed the poor of Rome, and sent Augustine and his monks to the English. His books on pastoral care, his homilies, the Dialogues and the Morals on Job were among the most widely read in the Middle Ages.

The commentary is printed in six books in the order of the story of Samuel, with each chapter marked by its number and, where the text gives it,

the passage of First Samuel on which it comments. The Vulgate calls this book the First Book of Kings, and Gregory's commentators follow that name.

Dates and authorship

Dates are approximate and are debated by scholars. Each work begins with a short introduction that states what is known about its author and its date, and what is uncertain.

P A R T O N E

Commentary on 1 Kings

*An allegorical commentary on the story of Samuel, Saul and
David, in six books.*

Commentary on 1 Kings

GREGORY THE GREAT

c. AD 540–604

This commentary on the first book of Kings, which we call First Samuel, was printed for centuries among the works of Gregory the Great. Many scholars now think it was written by a later monk, perhaps Peter of Cava in the twelfth century. It explains the story of Samuel, Saul and David as a figure of Christ and the Church. It is in six books, and the introduction that stood at the end of the second part is printed first.

INTRODUCTION

1. After the books of Moses and Joshua and Judges, the first book of Kings is shown to be the eighth or ninth in the canon of the Holy Scriptures. Because this book, like most volumes of sacred eloquence, has not yet been expounded by the doctors of Holy Church, some simpler persons judge it not to be mystical, and think it says nothing lofty through the spirit, inasmuch as it seems to narrate plainer things through the letter. But if they were to read what the holy doctors have said in other books of explanations, they would discover how immense is the depth of this history as well. For often in their expositions, what is here said to be plain according to the letter is declared to be very lofty according to spiritual understanding, and they openly indicate that they understand sacred history far more sublimely than what they read on its outward surface. For it is plain that Elkanah, a man of Ephrath, is described as having had two wives (1 Kings 1:1–2); that Eli the priest, while he was weakened by affection from the duty of correcting his sons, fell from his seat and died with a broken neck (*ibid.*, 4:18); that King Saul refused to obey God in the destruction of the Amalekites (1 Kings 15:9), but not long after lost both his life and his kingdom (1 Kings 31:5).

But these evidently plain matters, as they satisfy simpler minds, the holy doctors, in order to perceive them with worthy sublimity, sought their understanding not in the simplicity of the letter but in the flight of allegory.

For this is why, when Saint Augustine (*City of God*, Book XVII, ch. 4) read of Elkanah's two wives in the history, perceiving spiritual height in the plainness of the reading, he explained that the one bore the type of the Synagogue, while the other bore the figure of Holy Church. Saint Jerome likewise (*Against the Pelagians*, Book I, ch. 8; and *Against Jovinian*, Book I, ch. 10) explained that the death of Eli the priest and of Saul was placed in sacred history not only so that their punishment might terrify disobedient leaders, but also so that, while the rejection of the old and transgressing rulers is read, the destruction of the ancient law and priesthood might be signified. Therefore the sacred history of Kings is not to be believed empty of spiritual mysteries because it has not been expounded in sequence by the venerable fathers, but is all the higher and deeper because, like the vastness of an immense river, it could only be drawn from in exposition in some small part, and with their vessels filled, it flows on by the force of its fullness to fill others daily.

Therefore, while they drew certain things from this sacred history for the strength of their works, but passed over its fullness unexamined in the secret of its sublimity, what else did they appear to do but take something from the immense river to offer to the thirsting minds of the faithful? 2. We indeed follow the custom of these men in the present work as well, we who approach this vast history for the sake of opening up its understanding, yet do not dare to undertake the exposition of its entirety — differing from the aforementioned venerable Fathers in this respect, namely that we do not select in scattered fashion and from diverse places what we are about to expound, since they did not take up some part of this sacred history in order, but rather took up scattered testimonies which they might expound for the instruction of the faithful. Therefore, trusting in the help of almighty God, we propose to explain from the beginning of the book up to the anointing of King David, so that by this brief portion which is seen we may test whether we ought to proceed further in expounding. For very many, when they propose immoderate undertakings, can never become the executors of their own proposal — especially since the expositor of sacred eloquence bears the manner of a man standing on a high watchtower, while sacred Scripture bears the likeness of a vaster forest. This man, situated on high, even if with keen sight he surveys the vastness of the woodland, nevertheless, while he looks upon the summits of mountains, the edges of hills, and the tall tops of trees meet-

ing together in a certain level equality, he does not notice how great the valleys, how extended the plains that lie hidden in between.

But if he begins to traverse what seemed brief to him, he suddenly recognizes that very many more things remained which he had not seen — he who had thought he had seen the whole. Hence the immoderate traveler is often deceived, so that he completes his journey all the more dangerously, inasmuch as the wandering of night overtakes him on the road when the day is spent — he who had not thought he would use up even a part of the day in what seemed the space of a short journey. Just so, indeed, when we consider the understanding of sacred history at a certain summit of its meanings, by the grace of almighty God we gaze upon, as it were, the tall treetops of a darker forest from a certain height. But because when those same meanings begin to be considered and brought forth more subtly, they generate others still more manifold — just as on the surface, as it seems, of the entire woodland surveyed, the hollows of valleys and the extended spaces of the plain lie hidden, which are not seen. Therefore we walk more safely if we so measure what we see that we also consider that what we shall see as we proceed must still be traversed. And so, while we propose to explain a small part of this vast history, according to the measure of our weakness we end our journey's course nearby, distrusting alike the slenderness of our talent and terrified by the profundity of the sacred volume.

3. But first I thought it right not so much to instruct as to beseech the reader not to weigh the substance of sacred history by the emptiness of my exposition, because divine utterances must never be estimated by the measure of their commentators. For they are not to be despised because they are not examined with subtlety, nor are they lofty and venerable because they are expounded eloquently and subtly. For the skill that is held in such esteem among the wise of this world is valued only as much as brilliant minds can exalt it. But Holy Scripture, because it is divinely inspired, surpasses even the most brilliant human minds by as much as those brilliant men themselves are inferior to God, and they perceive nothing in that spiritual sublimity except what is revealed to them by the goodness of divine condescension. Therefore no one is so perfect in knowledge of it that he cannot advance further, because every advance of man is inferior to the height of the divinity that inspired it. Hence also it is said of the Lord through the Psalmist: 'Who covers His upper chambers in the waters' (Ps. 103:3). For if by the name of

waters those deep understandings of the angels above are designated, while God is said to cover the height of sacred utterance in the waters, it is abundantly clear that man is always inferior to that of which only its lower parts are revealed to him.

Hence also it is commanded through Moses that the remainder of the lamb be burned with fire (Exod. 12:10), because indeed the sacred Scriptures, which were set forth for the purpose of knowing the Redeemer, are to be venerated on account of the dignity of their sublimity even when they are not understood. And so, even if no weight is given to what is said by me, nevertheless weight must be given to the fact that this Holy Scripture, which is unworthily expounded by me, speaks many good and sublime things to the one to whom Almighty God has willed to open its secrets. For Holy Scripture has been so wonderfully fashioned by Almighty God that even though it may appear to have been expounded in manifold ways, it still does not lack secrets by which it keeps hidden things concealed, because it is almost never expounded in such a way that there do not remain in it many more things to be expounded daily. By this incomprehensibility of it, Almighty God has surely provided for human changeableness with great dispensation; for it has been so wondrously arranged that what is known cannot grow cheap, so that once known it remains unknown, and is read all the more gladly because it is learned anew each day; and while it continually reveals fresh things, it delights all the more sweetly.

4. The History of the Kings, therefore, because it was composed by the same Spirit by which the other volumes of Holy Scripture are also recognized, ought not to be believed to be lesser in its mysteries than those to which it is not inferior in the title of authority. For all its writers are reported to have been prophets, who, when they narrate historical things, signify spiritual things; they speak of outward things and hint at inward things; they set forth earthly things so that they may pursue heavenly things. Whence also the first and second book of this same history are ascribed to the prophet Samuel for this reason: that from the title of the author it may be perceived that the history he writes is not so much history as prophecy — the letter is simple and true, but exceedingly lofty and profound in the multiplicity of its hidden meanings. We, however, from so great a weight, take up according to the measure of our smallness what we are able to bear. For although it is pleasant on the surface of the letter, deeper in the types of allegory, useful for

instructing morals, and clear in presenting examples, nevertheless in individual passages to assert the historical sense, to set forth the typological, to bring together the moral, and to propose examples — from this I shrink; although some things I shall expound under one sense, with the Lord's help, and others under several.

Especially since I have decided to devote effort to writing in these times, in which, while the old anxiety of worldly concern is immersed in the hearts of certain churchmen, they judge new efforts at writing to be superfluous for the reason that they are well aware that the old works of the venerable doctors abound. They would indeed need to be refuted by reason, were they not to display the mark of calumny with brazen face. For those who despise new things as new also disdain through satiety of worldly cares those old things which they approve. Scripture indeed sets forth these many persons under the designation of one, saying: "The soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb" (Prov. 27:7). For the honeycomb contains new honey. As if therefore it were saying: While the care for earthly things is fed too immoderately, the soul does not rejoice in that fresh sweetness of the Scriptures which is accustomed to greatly please. But since they find no commentaries of the ancients on this sacred history, they would act more rightly if they were to embrace the work of our labor with that charity with which it is expended for the benefit of the little ones of holy Church, and instead of the trouble of reproaches, bring the aid of prayers to us who labor in so great a depth of Scripture as in the deepest sea.

From this indeed they make the fruit of our toil their own, because while they love out of kindness, they turn it to their own accumulation of eternal reward — both because for so long a time so closed and unexpounded a Scripture is brought to common understanding, and because the little ones of holy Church, while they receive the splendor of the new religion within the coverings of the Old Scripture, are aided in the advancement of their devotion. 5. But because diverse testimonies of this history are found expounded in the various works of the holy Fathers, the reader should note that sometimes I follow their meaning in my treatment, but sometimes I labor to explain the history differently, so that the work I undertake in hope of divine inspiration may be both strengthened by the authority of the ancient Fathers and in no way tedious to the reader, since amid the old things he already knows, it also presents to him new things he did not know. To

this manner of pronouncing judgments I am sometimes led by necessity, because even the venerable Fathers, if they had expounded in continuous order everything they touched upon in part, could by no means have maintained the sequence of discourse they appeared to observe. Therefore, when I pass over the interpretations of the holy Fathers, I do so sometimes from necessity, sometimes from convenience, because I both remove tedium from the reader, and when I discuss everything in continuous order, many things arise from the middle that do not permit me to follow their opinions. In this work I earnestly ask the reader not to weigh my words by comparison with the eloquent orators of holy Church, but to judge the meaning of the thoughts according to the principles of ecclesiastical discipline, because even if, in accordance with God's prohibition, I do not know how to plant a grove in His house (Deut. 16:21), nevertheless I in no way abandon the rule by which holy Scripture is faithfully expounded.

But also, where the skilled reader finds something less pleasing, let him consider that, when I, like a foreign sailor, venture upon the storms of a great sea — that is, the spiritual history, deep with lofty meanings — it is not very blameworthy if the helm of speech is not guided beautifully, when foaming crests of waves crash in, which often force even the most skilled pilot to release the tiller. Just so indeed, a devoted plowman entering upon wooded land to cultivate it does not lay out straight lines of furrows unless he first cuts through them repeatedly with the plowshare drawn back, because no ease of skill follows if no habit of cultivation is seen to precede that same skill of plowing. But neither should anyone judge the plainness of the history by this estimation, because very often we reach the secrets of spiritual meanings with all the more difficulty the farther away we see the location of the hidden entrances in the plainer letter; and we cannot touch its heights precisely because the step from which we think to touch the heights is lower. For what is the understanding of divinity, if not a certain ineffable summit of the highest elevation? And because almighty God is known through the Scriptures, what is that same sacred Scripture but a kind of stairway that is climbed so that that sublimity may be reached?

Whenever, therefore, the history is plainer but the meaning deeper, what else is it but that that sublimity has such a step from which it cannot easily be reached? If, then, the reader perceives something unfitting even in the explanation of the plainer history, he will be able to grant pardon all the more

kindly, the more reasonably he recognizes that when we stretch beyond from the plain surface that is seen toward those sublime heights, we easily falter. The earlier portions of the book, therefore, because they contain both the mysteries of holy Church and demonstrate the character of a chosen man established in the pursuit of a good life, I expound under both senses separately, so that when we recognize in the deeds of the ancients the principles of the new faith, we may also draw from them the edification of our own way of life. And because in the salvation of the faithful, faith is prior to works, I set forth the typological meaning first, as a solid foundation, upon which the fabric of the entire undertaken work may be laid or may follow in its moral or historical exposition.

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER 1.1 (1 SAMUEL 1:1)

There was a man from Ramathaim Zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. 1. Whom then does this man represent to us, if not our Lord and Redeemer, who both appeared in the weakness of our flesh, and yet did not subdue that same weakness of His assumed nature with the enticements of a more indulgent life? For "man" (*vir*) is named from "virtue" (*virtus*): But man, created in paradise, had war with the apostate angel, whom nevertheless he did not take care to resist through his conditional virtue. Therefore, created strong but weakly subjugated to the enemy, he was not a man by combat, who was one by gift. Thus he was made strong in such a way that, with human nature condemned, he could not prevail over the victorious enemy, unless He who existed above men should assume it. Therefore our Creator became our warrior. But whether He was a man is known if it is considered from the virtue He displayed. He assumed our nature, so that while it conquered in Him, it might restore its created nobility, and what had been made strong but weak in Adam might become weak but strong in the Redeemer (Matt. 4). To Him indeed, while He fasted in the wilderness, the tempter came, renewed the weapons of his ancient victory, and hurled the darts of gluttony, pride, and arrogance; but he found Him resisting in all things. Therefore He shone forth as a man through victory, who, overcoming the apostate angel—already a strong con-

queror—did not display to him the power of His divinity but the weakness of His humanity.

Considering this man, the prophet Jeremiah says: "A woman shall encompass a man" (Jer. 31:22). Zechariah points to Him, saying: "Behold, a man, the Rising is His name" (Zech. 6:12). The blessed apostle Peter, preaching to the Jews, says of Him: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you by powers, wonders, and signs: Him, delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you killed by fastening Him through the hands of wicked men" (Acts 2:22-23). Hence Cleopas, conversing with the same Redeemer on the road, said: "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19). For He was a man who both expelled the ancient enemy from the Church in this world and, dying, bound him in hell. And because He who, dying, shattered the powers of hell, rising again, opened for us the entrance to eternity, He showed us the greatness of His virtue not only by living but also by dying and rising. Therefore, because our Redeemer is known to have done works of great virtue through the humanity He assumed, rightly is he who signifies Him in type declared to have been a man.

2. But we must ask why he is called "one man. For if this "oneness" refers to number, it seems superfluous: for everyone is one, and not two. And Saint Samuel, by whom these things are written, must in no way be believed to have begun in vain contrary to the custom of the writers of Holy Church. For the writer of that volume, when he was presenting the life of blessed Job as an example for the faithful, began thus: "There was a man in the land of Uz, named Job" (Job 1:1). The evangelist Luke also, when at the beginning of his Gospel he was speaking the praises of a just priest, said: "There was in the days of Herod the king a priest named Zechariah" (Luke 1:5). For neither did the former say "one man," nor the evangelist "there was one priest. What then is the reason that the chosen prophet, contrary to the custom of writers, began with such an opening? But because he was not only a writer, but also a prophet, he knew of whom the history spoke; and he knew whom the one spoken of in the history signified. Therefore, what he narrates from history beyond the custom of history, this he speaks for the use of the catholic faith, in the understanding of allegory. Hence also by this new custom, the whole Church together confesses that God and man is one Christ. Therefore he says: "There was one man";

because he was speaking of the God-man, so that he might assert his divinity and humanity, and might more openly demonstrate that the person of the Word receiving and of the man received is not different, but that of God and man is one and the same: which unity, nevertheless, can fittingly be referred to the excellence of his dignity. For even if Holy Church has not had another Redeemer, through the display of virtue she has had many men. Therefore, when he is called "one," he is shown to be incomparable. 3. For He had no equal, who while He looked after the human race with His excellent life and word, was able by a singular gift to give the gifts of Redemption. Hence Paul also says: "Receiving abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, they shall reign in life through one Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Reproaching the Jews for this dignity of His excellence through Himself, He says: "If I had not done among them the works that no other man has done, they would not have sin" (John 15:24). The Psalmist also, considering the excellence of His beauty, said: "Beautiful in form above the sons of men, grace is poured forth on your lips" (Ps. 45:3). Isaiah, testifying to the singular good of Redemption in Him, says: "Truly He has borne our infirmities, and He has carried our iniquities" (Isa. 53:4). The eternal Father also, showing His singular dignity, cried out from the magnificent glory, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17). He was the one man whom Peter, confessing, said: "There is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul asserts this greatness of His excellence, saying: "The Lord exalted Him, and gave Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). And because the excellence of His virtue surpasses not only the elect among men, but also all the blessed angels, Paul, preaching this to the Hebrews, says:

"Who being the brightness of glory, and the figure of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, making purgation of sins, sits at the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are my Son, this day have I begotten you'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son'" (Heb. 1:3-5). Rightly therefore He is called the one man, to whom no one is compared. But now that we have recognized how great He is, let us hear from where He was. 4. From Ramatha Sophim, from the mountain of Ephraim. Ramatha, Sophim, and Ephraim are Hebrew names, of which the

first in our language means "Completed Vision," the second "Watchtower," and the third is interpreted as "Fruitful" or "Fruit-bearing. And what is the completed vision, if not the perfect knowledge of almighty God? Indeed, the teacher of the Gentiles indicates this completed vision, saying: "We see now through a mirror in an enigma, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also have been known" (1 Cor. 13:12). And what is understood by watchtowers, if not that sublimity of the angels? For a watchtower is chosen on high for a clearer view. Ramatha is rightly called Sophim: because that perfect knowledge of our Creator can only be possessed by those blessed citizens who stand in that supernal height. For the radiance of eternal light in its fullness is beheld not in the depths of this present exile, but from the state of eternal sublimity. Hence Ramatha Sophim is rightly said to be situated on the mountain of Ephraim. For what is the mountain of Ephraim, if not heaven? For the fruitful mountain is that which always brings forth the flowers of eternal beauty and the fruits of unfailing joy. Rightly both Ramatha and Sophim are said to be situated on Mount Ephraim, because that eternal vision of almighty God, and that height of the blessed citizens, is not held on earth, but in heaven.

Indicating that he was from Ramatha, he says: "As the Father knows me, I also know the Father" (John 10:15). Hence again he says: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22). He was from the watchtower, that is, from on high, who also rebuking the Jews says: "You are from below, I am from above: you are of this world, I am not of this world" (John 8:23). He was from Mount Ephraim, who says: "I am the living bread who came down from heaven" (John 6:51). John the Baptist, affirming that he was from Mount Ephraim, says: "He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31). Hence the Psalmist says: "His going forth is from the highest heaven" (Ps. 18:7). Hence the teacher of the Gentiles says: "The second man is from heaven, heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:47). Therefore the man, who is declared to have been one, is said to have come from Ramatha Sophim, from Mount Ephraim: because he who was born among all shone forth above all, and appeared so great on earth because he came from heaven. He was from Ramatha Sophim, because even though he shone here incomparably, nevertheless the greatness of his excellence is not grasped except where the perfect

knowledge of him is displayed to the eternal citizens. For one who had beheld him in the excellence of his power here said:

"What we have seen and heard, and our hands have handled concerning the word of life" (1 John 1:1). But because he had not seen the greatness of his excellence, he promises it to us in Ramatha, saying: "When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). 5. Moreover, by the name of this mountain, the most blessed ever-virgin Mary, Mother of God, can be designated: for she was indeed a mountain, who by the dignity of her election transcended all the height of every chosen creature. Was not Mary a sublime mountain, who, in order to attain to the conception of the eternal Word, raised the summit of her merits above all the choirs of angels, even to the throne of the Godhead? Indeed, Isaiah prophesying of the most excellent dignity of this mountain, said: "In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains" (Isaiah 2:2). For she was indeed a mountain on the top of mountains, because the height of Mary shone forth above all the saints. For just as a mountain designates height, so a house designates a dwelling. Indeed, she is fittingly called both mountain and house, because while she was illuminated by incomparable merits, she prepared her sacred womb for the only-begotten Son of God to rest in. For Mary would not have become a mountain on the top of mountains, if divine fruitfulness had not raised her above the height of the angels. And she would not have become the house of the Lord, if the divinity of the Word had not lain in her womb through the humanity he assumed. But she is rightly called a fruitful mountain, from whom the best fruit, that is, the new man, is born;

and certainly the prophet, beholding her beautiful and adorned in the glory of her fruitfulness, said: "A shoot shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise from his root" (Isaiah 11:1). For concerning the fruit of this mountain, David exulting in God said: "Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you; the earth has yielded its fruit" (Psalm 67:6). For the earth yielded its fruit, because what the Virgin bore, she conceived not by material work, but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Hence it is said to that same king and prophet by the Lord: "Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon your throne" (Psalm 132:11). Hence Isaiah says: "The fruit of the earth shall be sublime" (Isaiah 4:2). For he whom the Virgin bore was not only a holy man, but also mighty God.

Concerning this fruit, to the same blessed Virgin, when Elizabeth greeted her, it is said: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Luke 1:42). Rightly therefore she is called the mountain of Ephraim, because while she is raised up by the ineffable dignity of divine generation, in her fruit the barren shoots of the human condition grow green again. Therefore a man from Ramathaim-zophim was made from the mountain of Ephraim: because he who by the power of his divinity created the angels, from the flesh of the most exalted Virgin, took on the form of humanity.

And because through the humanity which he assumed, he wished to be born not from unbelievers, but from believers, there follows: "The son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph." 6. Indeed, four names of the fathers are assigned: because when the Lord took flesh from the faithful people, He had them as fathers through His humanity, whom He illuminated with the glory of just as many principal virtues. Hence it is said by divine promise not to some unfaithful person, but to faithful Abraham: "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). Hence the evangelist Matthew, weaving the order of His genealogy, says: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Hence He speaks to the Samaritan woman through Himself, saying: "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Hence Paul says: "Whose is the adoption of sons, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises: whose are the fathers, from whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is over all things God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:4-5). Because indeed prudence was present in them for the knowledge of things; justice, by which they desired to arrange rightly what they knew; fortitude, by which they were able to carry out the good things they wished; temperance, through which they would accomplish all things with discretion—they are fittingly designated by the number four.

7. There follows: An Ephrathite. But why is he who is said to be from Mount Ephraim called an Ephrathite? Yet this is clear according to the letter, because evidently someone could be from Mount Ephraim who was not born from the tribe of Ephraim. He is therefore called an Ephrathite, so that he who is shown to be from that place might also be recognized as being from that lineage of descent. But since Ephrathite means "fruitful," this is rightly ascribed to the person of the Redeemer, who is proclaimed by the prophecy

of the prophet: He shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, which shall give its fruit in its season (Ps. 1:4). For appearing in the preordained fullness of times, he turned the flowers of heavenly teaching into the fruits of the elect; and as many as he joined to himself from the human race, he brought forth as so many fruits unto eternity. In this passage, while the life of the Redeemer is described, the perdition of the devil is also secretly shown. For he was from Mount Ephraim, and yet was not an Ephrathite: because indeed he fell from heaven, but the bad tree did not bear good fruit. (Verse 2.) He had two wives; the name of one was Anna, and the name of the second was Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Anna had no offspring.

8. What is expressed by Peninnah, except the Synagogue? And what is figured by Hannah, except the holy Church? For the children of Peninnah are reported to have existed: because when our Redeemer appeared in the flesh, through the Law which He had given, through the prophets whom He had sent, He found children brought forth in the faith of the synagogue. But Hannah had no children, because the holy Church, then new and recently joined to her heavenly spouse, was not yet giving birth through preaching. Hence also it is said to her in the voice of the same spouse in the Canticle: Our sister is little, and has no breasts (Song of Songs 8:8). Or certainly she is said not to have had children not because of inequality of age, but through the barrenness of sterility. What therefore is the sterility of Hannah, except the hardness of Judea? For she who could not convert the hard hearts of the Jews to faith in the Redeemer was indeed barren. But it should be noted that Peninnah, who is said to have given birth first, is named the second wife. For indeed the synagogue first brought forth children in the faith, but nevertheless she was lesser in dignity than the holy Church. Therefore she was the second wife, not in time of marital union, but in inequality of prerogative. There follows: (Verse 3) And that man went up from his city on appointed days, to worship and sacrifice to the Lord God of hosts in Shiloh.

9. For what was the spiritual city of the Redeemer, if not Sacred Scripture? This city indeed conferred upon its citizens as many defenses and fortifications as it did precepts; it provided them as many weapons as counsels of salvation. But what was it for our Redeemer to ascend, if not to reveal the heights of his divinity in the form of his humanity? And because he is known in Sacred Scripture, he is rightly said to ascend from his city. The appointed days are the promises about him placed in the Holy Scriptures. They

are indeed days, because they shine for the elect to know him. They are also appointed days, because we know they were placed in that same sacred speech by the ancient Fathers. For Moses was fixing the day of his ascent when he said: "The Lord will raise up a prophet for you from among your sons; you shall hear him as you would me" (Deut. 18:18). He too was appointing a day who said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a leader from his thigh, until he comes who is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of the nations" (Gen. 49:10). Appointing the day of this ascent, Micah says: "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the princes of Judah: for from you shall come forth a leader who will rule my people Israel" (Mic. 5:2). Hence Isaiah says:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive in her womb and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isa. 7:14). For as many promises of the Law and the prophets as there are concerning him, so many appointed days do we behold for his ascent. For he was ascending as on appointed days when he said to the Jews: "Search the Scriptures, in which you think you have eternal life, for they are the ones that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). Hence he says again: "If you believed Moses, you would perhaps believe me also, for he wrote about me" (John 5:46). Therefore he ascended on appointed days, because by appearing he showed the signs of the promises which he placed in the Holy Scriptures. The appointed days can also be understood as the promised splendors of miracles at his coming. Beholding these appointed days, the prophet Isaiah says: "Say to the fainthearted: Be strengthened, and do not fear: behold our God will bring the vengeance of retribution; God himself will come and save us. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall hear: then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute shall be opened" (Isa. 35:4-6). But we who have recognized the appointed days for the ascent of the Redeemer, let us see whether he ascended on them. For when asked by John whether they should expect him or another, he replied to the disciples who were sent and said:

"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is the man who is not scandalized in me" (Luke 7:19). Therefore he ascended on the appointed days, he who, to drive away the darkness of ancient error from the hearts of his elect, shone with the splendors of so many promised miracles. But he ascended to worship and to sacrifice, because he

wished to be known for this purpose: that by dying he might redeem those whom he had taught by living. He worshipped indeed, because as an example for the elect he offered himself wholly humble and lowly to God the Father through obedience. He sacrificed, because he who gave us examples of humility by living, delivered himself to God the Father on the altar of the cross as an offering and victim, and those whom he taught by living, he redeemed by dying. For he knew that both were greatly necessary for us, and therefore he did not bestow one without the other. For when he was born in Bethlehem of Judah, Herod sought to kill him by treachery (Matt. 2:13); but if the Redeemer had died then, he would have sacrificed but not worshipped: because by dying he would have become a victim, but those whom he was to free by death, he would by no means have taught by living.

And if, teaching us by living, he had scorned to die, he would have worshipped but not sacrificed. Therefore, to worship, he fled to Egypt from the king who was persecuting him, and to sacrifice, he rebuked Peter who was dissuading him, saying: "Get behind me, Satan, for you do not savor the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16:23). For indicating that he worships, he says: "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). Hence he also says: "I always do what is pleasing to him" (John 8:29). Also indicating that he sacrifices, he says: "Therefore the Father loves me, because I lay down my life and take it up again: no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down and the power to take it up again" (John 10:17-18). And shortly before: "I am the good Shepherd, who lays down my life for my sheep" (John 10:11). Beholding his sacrifice, Paul says: "He delivered himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet fragrance" (Eph. 5:2). Therefore he ascended to worship and to sacrifice: because for this purpose he showed himself by so many miracles, that he might instruct us by words and examples, and by dying overcome our death.

10. But it should be noted that when the Ephrathite is said to go up to sacrifice, the Almighty God to whom he sacrifices is called the God of hosts. Why is this understood to happen unless because by the death of the Redeemer not only the Jewish people were redeemed, but all the Gentiles? For what are the faithful multitudes of the nations except the army of Almighty God? The Psalmist, exhorting these armies to rejoice at the triumph of their King, says: "All nations, clap your hands, shout to God with the voice of ex-

ultation" (Psalm 47). Likewise, seeing these assemble, he said: "All nations, whatever you have made, shall come and worship before you, Lord, and shall glorify your name" (Psalm 86:9). Therefore he is called the Lord of hosts, because indeed through the Lord's death not only is chosen Judea gathered together, but all nations are led to the service of Almighty God; and while they lead faithful battle lines, robust with the weapons of virtues, against hidden enemies, they arrive at the heavenly kingdoms through the glory of triumph.

11. The place of sacrifice is also declared, because it says: In Shiloh. For Shiloh is interpreted as "sent" or "sending." What indeed is designated by this sending, if not the command of obedience enjoined upon the Only-begotten by the most high Father? What also does it mean that sacrifice is said to be offered in Shiloh, if not that he gave himself to death in no other way than as he had received command from the Father? For he would not sacrifice in Shiloh if he were to die otherwise than as he had received command from the Father. Hence he himself said: "As the Father has given me commandment, so I do" (John 14:31). Thus Paul says: "Made obedient to the Father even unto the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Therefore in Shiloh he both worshipped and sacrificed: because both in living and in dying, he did the will of his Father. There follows: (Verse 3.) "And there were the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of the Lord."

12. Concerning these men, the question is rightly asked why they are called priests of the Lord, when not much further below they are reported to be sons of Belial? But if this question is asked simply according to the letter concerning the sons of Eli, the answer is easy: because at that time they were called priests of the Lord, when priests of idols were designated by the names of false gods. Therefore, when they are called priests of the Lord, they are distinguished from worshippers of idols by the marks of faith. For by these words their faith is proclaimed, not their life: because they practiced wickedness in their deeds, but did not err in faith in the Creator. This, however, is also fittingly ascribed to the prelates of Judea at the time of the divine incarnation. They are indeed reported to be two priests, and this very fact is reported not for the praise of their virtue, but for the reproof of their cunning. Hence the Lord also threatens them through himself, saying: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who are like whitewashed tombs, which

outwardly appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27).

13. But what does it mean that they are reported to have been there? For if Shiloh, that is, "mission," signifies that command of the supreme Father, how were the leaders of Judea there, who did not honor by receiving the one to whom it was enjoined, but killed him by casting him out? Nevertheless they were there, because although they raged cruelly unto the death of the Lord, yet from that cruelty they did not obtain what they determined by raging, but they were fulfilling the counsel of the eternal Father in the death of his only-begotten Son. For their counsel was to deliver him to death so that the people might not be able to believe in him; but he who had his persecutors as helpers of the paternal command enjoined upon him, died and rose again, and the whole world believed in him. For the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there, that is, in the mission: because our Redeemer, to fulfill the will of his Father, had the leaders of the Jews as supporters; although they themselves by no means believed they were supporting him, whom they did not fear to kill. Whence it also follows: (Verse 4.) Therefore the day came, and Elkanah sacrificed, and gave portions to Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters.

14. What day do we believe this to be, except the one which Isaiah established by the testimony of the sacred Scriptures, saying: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer shall be silent, and shall not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7)? For the day came when the brilliance of the promised oracle revealed the time of the Lord's passion. Then Elkanah sacrificed, because our Redeemer offered himself to the eternal Father in the sacrifice of our absolution through the death of the cross. Then he gave portions to Peninnah and to her sons and daughters, because indeed he brought back to the joys of paradise the elect of Judea whom he found in the underworld. For their portions are the gifts of everlasting joys. Whence also the Psalmist, choosing the situation of his lot, says: "Let my portion, O Lord, be in the land of the living" (Psalm 141:6). But fittingly Peninnah is named separately and the sons and daughters separately in receiving portions. For Peninnah signifies the teachers of Judea, while the sons designate her stronger hearers, and the daughters designate the weaker ones, her subjects. Therefore the mother, and sons, and daughters are mentioned separately: because on account of the unequal merits of the ancient elect, their rewards were not

equal. It follows: (Verse 5.) But to Anna he gave one portion sadly: because he loved Anna.

15. What does it mean that when he gave portions to Peninnah, and to her sons and daughters, he was by no means sad: but when he gave one portion to Hannah, he is said to have been sad? But what is the one portion of Hannah, except the temporal affliction of holy Church? For he was giving her this portion when he said: Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be sorrowful (John 16:20). He was giving her this portion when he commended Paul to Ananias, saying: Go, for this man is a vessel of election to me, to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name (Acts 9:15-16). Wherefore in receiving this, the same teacher of the Gentiles glories, saying: I fill up what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ in my body (Col. 1:24). Hence he says again: I bear the marks of Jesus in my body (Gal. 6:17). Hence he says: But far be it from me to glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6:14). For he had received one portion from the bridegroom, who was disposed to glory in the cross alone. Therefore when he gave portions to Peninnah, Elkanah was not sad; because our Redeemer, after the triumph of death, now joyfully restored the elect of the synagogue to the joys of paradise. But he gave Hannah's portion sadly, because he could not but suffer with her whom he was leaving as the spouse of death and the heir of the cross. Wherefore also when Stephen was suffering, with the heavens opened, Jesus is said to stand (Acts 7:55). For to stand is to suffer with him.

16. But what is added, that he loved Anna, can properly be understood as the cause of both things. For whether one accepts that he was sad because he loved Anna, or that he gave her one portion for that reason, it does not lack a good interpretation. For if he did not love her, he would by no means wish to sympathize with her sufferings. For why is she led out of Egypt, unless because she is called to suffering? But places flowing with milk and honey are promised to her. Rightly therefore when he is said to give her one portion, he is declared to love her: because indeed our Redeemer, although he entrusted to the holy Church the labor of his cross, established for her far more excellent gifts of reward in heaven. Expounding indeed the increase of her suffering, he adds and says: (Verses 6 and 7.) But the Lord had closed her womb.

Her rival also afflicted her, and vehemently distressed her to such an extent that she reproached her because the Lord had closed her womb.

17. For the Lord closed the womb of Holy Church, because, rejected by His supreme judgment, it could not give birth to the Jewish people in the faith of our Redeemer. Her rival indeed afflicted her, because the synagogue raged against her with threats and reproaches. But she who had not been broken by either threats or insults was also subjected to punishment by torture. Rightly therefore she is said not only to afflict her but to distress her vehemently: because rejected Judea moved against the chosen Church with the terror of threats, and struck her with blows. Hence concerning Saul, who was persecuting at that time, it is said in the Acts of the Apostles: "Saul, still breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the chief priest and asked him for letters to Damascus, so that if he found any men of this Way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2). For he who was breathing threats and slaughter was not only afflicting but also distressing the Church, which he rivaled wickedly. For he confesses that he was her rival, saying: "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my nation, being more exceedingly zealous for my ancestral traditions" (Galatians 1:13-14). And because Judea fell into such a depth of damnation that she rejoices in being cast off by God's eternal judgment, it is added:

"To such an extent that she reproached her because the Lord had closed her womb. For she still considered it a great thing that she could not prevail to be converted to the faith. Therefore, as if the prophet were marveling at the magnitude of her blindness, he says: She is weighed down by such darkness of error that she insults the good on account of that by which she herself can no longer become good. And because Holy Church grieved for her as she perished, it follows: (Verse 7. Moreover, Anna wept 18. For he also brought forth lamentations of his own sorrow, saying: "I have great sadness, and continual sorrow in my heart: for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2, 3). And because he did not receive joy from their conversion, it is added: (Verse 7.) And she did not take food. She would indeed have taken food if she had received the refreshment of joy from the complete conversion of Judea. Therefore she who wept did not receive food, because

she who grieved over the perishing of Judea did not receive joy from its salvation. But the food of joy, which is not given to the holy Church from the conversion of the Jews, is offered through the encouragement of the bridegroom. For the words of his preaching, even if reprobate hearers do not receive them, nevertheless are not without the reward of recompense. For Almighty God both rewards what is bestowed upon the reprobate without the benefit of the reprobate; and what they inflict upon the elect preachers by way of adversity, He weighs out to them through the balance of just examination as the gain of recompense. Whence it is fittingly added: (Verse 8.) Therefore Elkanah her husband said to her: Anna, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart afflicted? Am I not better to you than ten sons?

19. Therefore, as if the Redeemer speaks to the mind of the teacher through the consolation of inner inspiration: You complain in vain about the lost gain of preaching, you who receive more abundant fruit the more you extend the affection of charity even to enemies. Therefore you grieve over that which should have made you rejoice. And because He Himself is the reward of the elect, He asks saying: Am I not better to you than ten sons? For Anna would have borne ten sons if the primitive Church had begotten the Jewish people, placed under the Decalogue of the Law, in faith. And because some benefit others by preaching, who in many ways displease the Creator, it is shown by reason that Anna's husband is better than ten sons. Moreover, by this inquiry as to why she weeps, the perdition of Judea itself can be signified. As if to say: She is mourned over uselessly, she who is by no means pardoned through the prayer of the righteous. Therefore when He subsequently asks: Why do you not eat? Certainly joy over the conversion of the Gentiles is intimated to her. As if to say: Since you must give birth to the whole world, you do not rejoice in vain that she who was cast off does not abandon the darkness of error. There follows: (Verses 9 and 10.) Therefore Anna rose up after she had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, while Eli the priest was sitting on a seat before the doorposts of the temple of the Lord, and being bitter in soul she prayed to the Lord, weeping copiously.

20. For what was it then for the holy Church to eat, except to receive the food of consolation through divine encouragement? And what was it for her to drink, except to rejoice in the sweetness of inner consolation poured into her? For if food strengthens, drink cheers; therefore we take food when, hav-

ing seen the eternal rewards, we are strengthened amid adversities. And we drink, as it were, after food: because when the mind of the elect strengthens itself in the contemplation of eternal goods, it rejoices all the more abundantly amid the great adversities it endures, the more it sees greater rewards stored up in heaven for its great labors. Made bold by that heavenly refreshment, she renews her strength, so that she may despise earthly things all the more strongly, the more the love of heavenly things exalts her. Rightly therefore, after she had eaten and drunk, Anna is recorded to have risen. For she rose because she reformed her mind toward the urgency of preaching.

21. And because the Jewish people still had the rites of sacrifices, still had the honor of legal teaching, and the loftiness of pontifical dignity, the priest is said to sit upon the seat of Eli. Yet because he was able to exercise that teaching of the Law not spiritually but carnally, he sat not within the temple but before the doorposts of the temple. For what is the temple of the Lord but the spiritual understanding of the Holy Scriptures? The doorposts of the temple are the Law and Prophecy. Hence also on the mountain the Lord appeared transfigured in the midst of Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17:3; Luke 9:30): because then the splendor of his divinity is beheld when his mysteries are sought not in the letter that kills (2 Pet. 1), but in the signification of the spiritual Law and prophecy. Eli therefore sat before the doorposts of the temple, that is, outside, because the teachers of the synagogue had been expelled from the spiritual understanding of the Scriptures, and yet in the subversion of the subject people, they had the authority of teaching and the dignity of prelacy. But Anna is written to have wept with a bitter soul.

22. And since we have referred Anna's drink to the joy of the holy Church, which is shown to rejoice, how is it narrated that she wept with a bitter spirit? But it can reasonably be understood that contemplation of heavenly reward had lifted her up to rejoice, and compassion for rejected Judea stirred her up by affecting her with bitterness of spirit. For caught in the whirlwinds of great persecution, with heavenly rewards revealed to her, she exulted, but she fell into bitterness because she saw the formerly chosen people perishing. Hence she is described as weeping abundantly while praying, so that by the gift of such great affection, she might be able to obtain the salvation of her people from the Lord. This whole passage can also be understood differently. For in Shiloh, that is, in the ministry to which she was sent, she ate; because even if she could not win over the entire Jewish people,

she nevertheless converted many of them to faith in the Redeemer by preaching. Hence when Peter preached, five thousand men believed in one day (Acts 4:4), and on another, three thousand believed (Acts 2:41). And because what we drink we can swallow more easily than what we eat: Anna ate and drank, because she converted some with difficulty and others easily by preaching. For at Peter's aforementioned preaching, many thousands believed in one moment, but Paul did not believe until he had vehemently opposed the preachers themselves with threats and slaughter. But after Anna ate and drank in Shiloh, she arose:

because when she had taken away from Judea those who were predestined to eternal life, she prepared herself for preaching to the Gentiles. But what kind of child she desired to bear is shown by what was added: (Verse 15) And she vowed a vow, saying: O Lord of hosts, if looking you will see the affliction of your handmaid, and will remember me, and not forget your servant, and will give to your servant a male child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head. 23. What does it mean that Anna requests a male child from the Lord, except that those whom holy Church desires to bring forth by preaching, she longs for them to be strong in Evangelical perfection? For in comparison with Evangelical perfection, those works of the Law which seemed strong were not strong, but weak. For there it was commanded: "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy" (Lev. 19:18). But in the Gospel the Lord commands, saying: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:44). There the uncleanness of fornication is cut away from the body, so that the strength of conduct might excel as if by the male sex; here impure thought is also cut away from the heart: "Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her," he says, "has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Therefore the Synagogue, which brought forth the Jewish people through the weakness of its precepts, did not bear the male sex, but rather the female. And so when Anna requests that a male child be given to her by the Lord, what else is she seen to desire, except to bring forth through the Gospel such ones as would appear strong, both in outward purity of body and in inward charity?

24. And because the order of preachers does not seek human glory from the conversion of the Gentiles, it is added: "I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life." For he gives a son to the Lord who does not claim anything

for his own praises from the one whom he begets through preaching. He also gives him to the Lord all the days of his life who ascribes nothing to his own favor from the virtues in which his subject advances by improving. For the days of life of the chosen subject are the holy virtues, which illuminate his soul by their radiance lest it be darkened by the night of vices on the way to the heavenly homeland. 25. But the perfect order of the preacher, while he despises having favors from the profit of preaching, does not take away the temporal goods of his subjects by coveting them. Hence it is well added there: "And no razor shall come upon his head. When a razor comes upon the head, it shaves the hair. For what is designated by hairs, which are superfluous to the body, except the abundant supply of earthly substance? And what is expressed by the razor except the greed of evil pastors? By which razor the head of a born son is shaved, when the goods of subjects are seized through the greed of preachers. Hence also it is said to sinning Judea through the prophet: "Your shepherds are wolves of the evening, not leaving anything in the morning" (Zeph. 3:3). For in the evening the shepherds become wolves, because as this world grows dark and declines toward its end, they do not fear to seize the goods of their subjects. They do not leave anything in the morning, because while they gape after temporal things, as the coming of the future judgment grows bright, they do not reserve for themselves the rewards to be given. These indeed Micah denounces, saying: "The prophets who seduce my people, who bite with their teeth and preach peace; and if anyone does not give something into their mouth, they sanctify war against him" (Mic. 3:5). For the prophets seduce the people of the Lord when reprobate preachers confuse the judgments of their hearers.

And biting with their teeth they announce peace, because in the appetite of their rapacity, while they look up to the earthly gifts of the wicked, they promise them the security of divine indulgence. But they sanctify war against those who do not give something into their mouth, because they terrify even the just with harsh sentences, who do not offer them earthly things according to their desire. These indeed place a razor upon the head of the son, because under the pretext of charity they preach heavenly things, so that they may take earthly things from them through greed. That holy Church does not have this razor for the plundering of subjects, the excellent teacher shows in himself, saying: "I do not seek the gift, but I seek the fruit" (Phil. 4:17). Hence he also says: "Let him who preaches the Gospel live by the Gos-

pel. But I have not used this power" (1 Cor. 9:14, 15). For he who does not care to receive necessary sustenance from his subjects clearly shows with what sublimity of worldly contempt he would reject shameful gains and illicit gifts. Therefore when Hannah vows that a razor shall not come upon the head of her son, she openly suggests the customs of holy Church, which brings forth the elect to eternal life by speaking, but never takes away their temporal goods through avarice. But because this is said of Hannah still vowing and not yet giving birth, it is fittingly added: (Verse 12.

"And it came to pass, as she multiplied prayers before the Lord, that Eli observed her mouth." 26. What was it for the holy Church to multiply prayers before the Lord out of desire for giving birth, except to persist in constant prayers for the conversion of the Synagogue? And what was it for the Jewish priesthood to watch her mouth, except to lie in wait against the preaching of the holy Church? For it watched her mouth, because it strove vehemently to criticize the right preaching of the faith. And it is rightly said to have watched her mouth when she was multiplying prayers, because the more it recognized her greater desires in the urgency of her preaching, the more cunningly it strove to harm her. Finally, it would not have watched but would have heeded her mouth, if it had wished to hear the preaching of our faith for the fruit of its own salvation. It follows: (Verse 13.) Now Hannah was speaking in her heart, and only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard at all.

27. The heart of the holy Church is none other than that devout and learned blessedness of the faithful which is within her. And Anna spoke in her heart, because the preaching of the holy Church benefited only those who were to be illuminated by the true light through divine predestination. What indeed is the movement of the lips but the advancement of signs in the holy preachers? These indeed, although they seemed to speak outwardly like lips and to stand in a lowly position, while they gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead, certainly displayed great movements of merits. Hence also that great lip of the holy Church, while speaking it seemed to stand in a lowly position, because it was not only humble in word and conduct, but also sublime in the power of signs, so that by its movement it raised itself up to heaven, saying: Our conversation is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). And so Eli only saw Anna's lips moving but did not hear her voice at all, because the Jewish priesthood marveled at the works of the

apostles but was not advanced to salvation by their preaching. Therefore Anna's voice was not heard, because although the holy Church was wonderful in the display of signs, when she brought forth words of preaching, she kindled strangers to love of the Redeemer. But what does Eli think of her whom he does not understand? It follows: (Verse 13) Therefore Eli thought her to be drunk.

28. Indeed, we have recognized this also according to the history of the Acts of the Apostles, because on the days of Pentecost the holy apostles were believed to be drunk, when, having received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, they spoke the great works of Christ in every tongue (Acts 2:4). But spiritually the holy Church is believed to be drunk, which Judea does not consider to be asserting true things, but preaching heretical and false things. Yet she was drunk, not with the drinking of error, but with the filling of the Holy Spirit. For drunkenness is accustomed to change the heart, to alienate the mind. But with changed heart he was going about, who recently entering houses, terrifying all the faithful with threats, tearing them apart with slaughter, was now preaching that the Jesus whom he had persecuted was the true Son of almighty God (Acts 9:5, 20). Whence also, glorying that he had lost the madness of his former mind, he says: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and insolent, but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly" (1 Timothy 1:13). Testifying that he had received another heart, he says: "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). Whence also he preached all the more attentively, inasmuch as in the mind of Christ he had received the force of greater love. But while the holy Church loved ardently, while she confidently preached those things which she loved, the priesthood of the Jews held her words as a burden of impatience, not in the sweetness of devotion. Wherefore it also follows: (Verse 14.) And he said to her: "How long will you be drunk?" And because he tried to command her to be silent, he added: (Verse 14.) "Digest a little while the wine with which you are soaked."

29. The wine with which Anna was drunk would have been digested, if the holy Church, overcome by the threats of the Jews, had grown lukewarm from the fervor of preaching. And because they were striving to withdraw from her the understanding of preaching, Anna is commanded to digest the wine for a little while. Did not Eli then command Anna to digest, when the princes of the Jews, having beaten the apostles, ordered them, saying that

they should no longer speak in the name of Jesus? But because they refused to digest the wine with which they were drunk, they answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). And again: "We cannot but speak what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). But because the holy Church preserved the virtue of meekness amid words of freedom, there follows: (Verse 15.) "Not so, my lord."

30. For she called him Lord, to whom she rendered the ministry of preaching, but in calling him Lord, she denied that she was drunk; so that she might subject herself to the higher order out of humility, and contradict the false accusation with truth. For in calling him Lord, she honored him; and in denying that she was drunk, she showed with sufficient humility what she was not. However, the accusation of drunkenness against the holy Church can be understood in another way. For while she was engaged in the ministry of evangelical preaching, while from the gain of believers she came into great glory among the peoples, the priests of the Jews did not think she was seeking the summit of eternal goods, but desiring the glory of earthly exaltation. Therefore, when she is called drunk, she is rebuked for having an overturned state of mind, for setting aside heavenly things and seeking earthly ones.

31. But she who despised the fleeting goods of the world says: "Not at all, my lord. For I am a woman exceedingly unhappy. As if to say: You think I desire the happiness of this passing world, but I see myself as all the more unhappy, the further I recognize the joys of my happiness to be from here. Because I believe I shall be happy there, here I consider myself greatly unhappy, since I desire no glory at all. Indeed, the holy Church is called a woman on account of her fruitfulness, exceedingly unhappy on account of her fortitude, because she was about to give birth to the world through the word, and she could not perfectly despise the glory of the world unless heavenly love strengthened her with wondrous fortitude; or she was exceedingly unhappy because she grieved not a little over the perdition of her people. The wise Solomon, greatly admiring her, says: "Who shall find a valiant woman? (Prov. 31:10). In this passage it should also be noted that she does not say "an unhappy woman," but "exceedingly I am. For she was exceedingly unhappy, whom no enticement of the world pleased. Or certainly she declares herself exceedingly unhappy, who remembers that she was expelled from the joys of eternal life through the merit of the first sin, to which she cannot return ex-

cept through many tribulations of this life. For she would not be exceedingly unhappy if she could have returned to the lost joys of paradise without present tribulation.

Hence Paul, showing the inevitable hardship of this excessive unhappiness, says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21). As if therefore the holy Church, responding to the Jewish priesthood disparaging her, should say: You ascribe to me a kingdom in temporal happiness, but mine is that which is not attained except through the affliction of much tribulation. There follows: (Verse 15) "I have drunk neither wine nor anything that can intoxicate." 32. For he did not drink wine, because he did not seek temporal gains from the office of preaching. He did not drink anything else that could intoxicate, in that the concupiscence of the flesh did not overturn him into a fall of vices. According to the earlier interpretation, however, she did not drink wine, who had nothing of heretical depravity in her refreshment. She would have drunk something else that could intoxicate, if she had swelled up, deceived by eloquence of speech. But because she taught true things with right intention, adding, she says: (Verse 15.) But I poured out my soul in the sight of the Lord.

33. For to pour out one's soul in the sight of the Lord is to preach the knowledge of God's word conceived in the mind for the love of the Creator alone. Indeed, the soul is poured out when the inborn understanding of God's word is spread abroad for the benefit of hearers. For whoever preaches the word of God for human favor, whoever does so for earthly gain, because something other than preaching is sought from the preaching, that word of the soul is not brought forth in the sight of the Lord. Therefore the teacher of the nations also declares, saying: "We are not, as many, adulterating the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak before God in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:17). Therefore Hannah poured out her soul in the sight of the Lord, because holy Church, perfected at the summit of all virtues, brought forth great words of eloquence in the instruction of the faithful, but desired to please God alone through the words of life. She also commends the ministry of this preaching, saying: (Verse 16) "Do not consider your handmaid as one of the daughters of Belial, for from the abundance of my grief and sorrow I have spoken until now."

34. As if to say: She who speaks to you of the goods of eternal life does not deserve to be despised as an idolater. She also asserts that she is His handmaid,

so that he might recognize from the name of her ministry that she desires to serve him for eternal gains. It follows: "Because out of the multitude of my grief and sorrow I have spoken until now." As if she spoke more openly and said: Recognize from this that I have nothing from an evil spirit, because I come to speak out of much pain of persecution, and I do not abandon the urgency of preaching, conquered by no sufferings. The sorrow of Anna can also be referred to the affection of holy Church, and her grief to her passion. Indeed, she spoke out of the multitude of sorrow, she who brought forth the word of preaching to the perishing Jewish people out of the feeling of compassion. As Paul implies, saying: "I speak the truth in Christ Jesus, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness to me in the Holy Spirit, that there is great sadness in me, and continual sorrow in my heart: I wished that I myself might be anathema from Christ for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites" (Rom. 9:1-2 ff.). But let him who implies that he speaks out of the multitude of sorrow say whether he speaks out of multitude: "From the Jews five times I received forty lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned" (2 Cor. 11:24). But holy Church, patiently enduring adversities, humbly manifesting the virtue of her innocence and her truth, persuaded certain priests of Judea by speaking the good of her preaching. Therefore it is also added: 21 (Verse 17.) "Then Eli said: Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you the petition which you have asked of Him."

35. For Eli first contradicted Hannah while she was praying by uttering insults, but afterward he took pleasure in her devotion to him. What is this, except that the Jewish priesthood both opposed the preaching Church through some ministers of its office, and through others finally consented to the recognized truth of our faith? For concerning those who opposed, it is said that they flogged the apostles and commanded them not to speak any further in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40). But concerning those who consented, the same Luke recalls, saying: "A great multitude of priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Therefore Eli prayed for the vow of Hannah's fruitfulness when that great multitude of priests, obedient to the faith, desired that the number of the elect be multiplied through the preaching of the holy Church. He certainly wished her to go in peace, because he desired her to obtain the fruit of preaching without the pain of suffering. And because the holy Church took pleasure in their vow, it follows: (Verse 18) "May

your handmaid find grace in your eyes." As if to say: According to the gaze of your desire, may the grace of divine dispensation follow the work of my ministry. It follows: (Verse 18) "And the woman went her way, and she ate and drank, and her countenance was no longer changed in various ways."

36. The woman went on her way, because the holy Church preached the word of faith to the Gentiles. Which the apostles also say, threatening the Jews: "Because you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). She is rightly called a woman when she departs, because through the preaching of the Redeemer she was about to produce among the Gentiles the fruit of great fruitfulness. Moreover, she ate and drank, and yet her countenance was no longer changed to various expressions, because she gained great profits from the conversion of the Gentiles, but the persecution which she had suffered in Judea, she also found among the Gentiles. But explaining the order in which she departed, it says: (Verse 19) "And they rose early in the morning, and worshipped before the Lord; and they returned, and came to their house, in Ramah." 37. But what does it mean that above it is said singularly of Anna alone: "The woman went on her way," but now in the plural: "They rose in the morning," unless that she is understood to descend with her husband? And because the husband of holy Church is the Redeemer of the human race, who had already ascended to heaven when he was leaving that same Judea overwhelmed by the darkness of its unbelief, how can what is said about Anna and her husband Elkanah now be understood as a type of Christ and the Church—that they rose together in the morning and returned equally to their city? But since we have already said that the city of Ramatha designates the heavenly homeland, how does this apply to holy Church, which did not ascend to the heavenly homeland immediately when it ceased from preaching to the Jews? But because the Lord, rising from the dead, speaks through teachers sent out in preaching, saying: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20), it is not absurd that holy Church is understood to rise and return with him. For he who never abandons his elect through spiritual presence both remains with those who stand and departs with those who go away. We said that Ramatha designates the heavenly homeland, but we did not say that it can signify nothing else. What else, then, does it signify in this place, except the fulfillment of prophecy in the calling of the Gentiles?

For Ramatha is said to mean "vision consummated," as we have already said. And what is the now-fulfilled calling of the Gentiles, except the consummated vision of the prophets? For he was asserting a vision, but not yet consummated, who was still proclaiming about the future what he had seen, saying: "All nations whatsoever you have made shall come and shall adore before you, O Lord" (Ps. 85:9). Hence again he promises, saying: "All kings of the earth shall adore him, all nations shall serve him" (Ps. 71:15). The consummated vision is therefore rightly called the promise of the prophets, because indeed, with God as author, according to their oracles, all nations have believed in the Redeemer of the human race. Now Anna is said to rise in the morning with her husband, because holy Church passed over to the Gentiles at the rising of the interior light with the word of preaching. Or she rises in the morning because she left Judea in the night of unbelief. She also rises in the morning because she found a prosperous journey in the conversion of the Gentiles. And she adored before the Lord, because in the rejection of the Synagogue she venerated the incomprehensible judgment of almighty God. She adored indeed and withdrew, because when she withdrew from preaching to her own nation solely by the ordination of almighty God, she complied through obedience with the divine judgment that she could not penetrate by understanding.

But adoring she returned, because she proposed to fulfill the ministry of preaching in the calling of the Gentiles, but sought the manner of that same preaching only in heavenly contemplation. For to return, for preachers, is to have recourse to the light of divine contemplation. From there indeed they draw the light by which they may both shine for the veneration of the faithful and which they may pour into the minds of their hearers by speaking. For this reason the excellent preacher is first raised up to the secrets of the third heaven, and thus is shown to arrange earthly things, and entering the secrets of paradise he perceives words that it is not permitted for man to speak (2 Cor. 12:2), so that he might be able to discern and speak profitably outwardly. Therefore Anna is mentioned as having returned, because holy Church, while arranging earthly things, is instructed in the contemplation of God—to which she often returns—as to how those same earthly things are to be arranged. And then finally she came into her house, because she was able to establish herself in the devotion of her hearers when she learned the manner of approaching them by returning above. For the devotion of the

Gentiles built the house of the holy primitive Church, which, while she established it for herself among them, she inhabited with the solicitude of guardianship. This house is described as situated in the consummated vision, because it could not be built before the time of its calling predicted by the prophets arrived.

There follows: (Verses 19 and 20. And Elkanah knew Anna his wife, and the Lord remembered her. And it came to pass after a cycle of days, Anna conceived and bore a son. 38. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah at that time when our Redeemer looked upon the appointed time for calling the Gentiles, so that while he poured the grace of heavenly love into the bosom of his new bride, namely the holy Church, he might beget from her a new offspring of the faithful. For it was as if he did not yet know her when the preachers wishing to cross into Asia were forbidden by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6). Hence it is that when he sent his disciples to preach to Judea, Truth himself forbids them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into the cities of the Samaritans" (Matthew 10:5). But when Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, then the Lord remembered her, because the Gentile world was seen to have come into God's memory when the holy Church, joined to the Word of God through the grace of love, is visited with salvation. What is the circle of days in this passage but the manifestation of the divine will shown through the innumerable rays of the Holy Spirit? This manifestation, while it displays to the minds of its preachers, suspended in contemplation, the innumerable brightnesses of heavenly disposition, indeed holds enclosed, as it were many days, a circle of times. For the circle of days preceded Hannah's conception, because the Word of God is not poured into the holy Church for teaching until the rays of heavenly disposition are more fully recognized by her. She, conceiving, bore a son, because those whom she brings forth in the faith of the Redeemer are strong in their new way of life. (Verse 20.) And she called his name Samuel, because she had asked him from the Lord.

39. Samuel is interpreted as "his name is God." Who then does Samuel more fittingly suggest to us than the order of preachers, which was called to faith from among the Gentiles? For because he is strong in conduct, exalted in power, and while the special sign of divine grace is observed in him, devoted crowds of hearers are led to veneration of his preaching, rightly his name is declared by its appellation. Hence it is said by the Lord to Moses: "I

have made you a god to Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:1). Hence also in the law, forbidding, he says: "You shall not speak evil of gods" (Exodus 22:28). And it should be noted that he whose name is called god was a son, not a daughter, because certainly pastoral dignity, when it is weighed down by weak conduct, is not adorned with the splendor of so lofty a name. Since therefore the order of teachers, promoted from among the Gentiles to the ministry of preaching the gospel, was not unequal by the grace of merits to the excellence of their dignity, rightly it is now said: "She called his name Samuel, because she had asked him from the Lord." And it should be noted that in this place "to ask" means what she obtained by asking. Therefore in plain words it is shown why Anna's firstborn is distinguished by so great a name. This is as if to say: She gave him so great a name for this reason, because he who is born by heavenly gift was great by the grace of merits. But to show with what care the provident mother nourishes him, it follows: (Verses 21 and 22.) "And her husband Elkanah went up, and all his house, to offer the solemn sacrifice, and his vow; and Anna did not go up. For she said to her husband: I will not go until the child is weaned."

40. But what is the solemn sacrifice of the victim, if not that offering of love of the holy Church, by which she is joined to her Creator in eternal contemplation? To this sacrifice Elkanah ascended when our Redeemer, now triumphing over death, now overcoming the darkness of our mortality, raised to the heavens the flesh which He had assumed for our salvation. With Him His whole household also ascended, because He lifted the earlier elect of the Synagogue to the height of immortality. Then He offered the solemn sacrifice when He presented Himself to the eternal Father in heaven through the substance of His glorified flesh, and gladdened the nature of the angels both by our redemption and by their own restoration. To this solemn sacrifice Anna is invited, because the holy Church is kindled by daily desires of love through the spiritual encouragement of her heavenly Spouse toward the eternal contemplation of divine brightness. Yet she refrains from her ascent in order to nurse her son, because so that she may benefit the little ones of Christ here, she patiently endures the delay of her glory. Had not that mother been invited to the offering of this solemn sacrifice who said: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23)? But let her who is drawn by the desires of love toward the beauty of the Spouse say whether she loves to nurse her son: "To remain in the flesh is necessary for your sake" (Phil. 1:24).

She also indicates that she had nourished the Corinthians with this food, saying: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2). For to nurse the little ones of the holy Church is for pastors to nourish the hearts of weak or simple hearers with the food of plainer Scripture. To whom indeed that same excellent teacher says: "I judged not myself to know anything among you, except Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

41. Infants are weaned when the little ones of Holy Church receive growth both in spiritual learning and in good conduct, and now seek not the plainer things of sacred speech but its deep mysteries. And the weaned infant is led to appear before the sight of the Lord when through the exhortation of preachers anyone who is subject and progressing well is adorned with good works. For he who is led to appear is brought not only to see but also to be seen. For since many will hear from the Lord at the end: "I know you not" (Matt. 25:12), Samuel is said to appear in the sight of the Lord because, being chosen and a humble subject, while he perfectly despises present things, he is in no way rejected when the final Judge arrives. But those whom the world holds fixed in love of itself do not appear in the sight of the Lord. For those who desire to be seen as more exalted in the honor of passing things accomplish this indeed by their pride: that they are never seen as honorable by Him by whom alone they ought to be seen. Hence even the chosen king, placed at the summit of affairs, begs not to be deceived by the flower of the world, saying: "Cast me not away, O Lord, from Your face" (Ps. 51:13).

Therefore Anna promises both to wean her son and to lead him to appear before the sight of the Lord, because Holy Church teaches the chosen subjects whom she instructs to perfectly despise present things, and to do good, and to hasten through humility to eternal goods. And it should be noted that he who is said to need to appear in the sight of the Lord is declared to be led from the place of weaning, because clearly it is no small part of the spiritual journey when from what we learn from heavenly teaching we advance to the practice of perfect work. But since one must never cease from the pursuit of the same good work, there follows: (Verse 22) "And that he may appear there continually." 42. For we continually appear there from where we never depart. Therefore to appear continually in the sight of the Lord is to obscure the beauty of good conduct with no shadows of life, because he who falls into no unlawful things never departs from the secret of the divine gaze; and divine goodness regards him as if placed in light, because it does not at-

tend to those shadows of sins which it has condemned in the choice of its examination. Therefore Anna announces that she will not go up to offer the solemn sacrifice until the infant is weaned, because holy Church proposes to guard her children for as long as she is able to become secure about their perfection, so that they themselves do not afterward withdraw from the goodness they have received. However, the ascent of the solemn sacrifice can be referred to the height of holy preaching. For concerning the ascent of her husband it is written through the Prophet: "He ascended above the cherubim, and flew upon the wings of the winds" (Psalm 17:11). Indeed the Lord ascends above the cherubim, because he ascends in the sublime minds of his preachers and places the height of his knowledge there. And he flies upon the wings of the winds, because before their spiritual eyes he elevates himself to the height of wondrous understanding by the breathings of the Holy Spirit. "And he made darkness his hiding place" (Ibid., 12), because he hides the sublimity of his majesty from the reprobate. "But around him is his tabernacle" (Ibid.), because to those whom he elevates through sublime gifts, he also manifests the glory of his Majesty.

43. Now when Elkanah's ascent is described, his whole house is said to have ascended with him, because those whose minds he elevates he holds as members of his household and intimates in the height of his contemplation. But what is the solemn sacrifice of Elkanah, that is, of our Redeemer, if not the love of that ineffable inner instruction in the hearts of his saints? For each of them finds ineffable delight in himself through that which the revealed sublimity of the Redeemer teaches so sublimely. Therefore Anna refuses to ascend with her husband until she weans her son, because the holy Church avoided touching lofty matters in her preaching as long as she knew that her unlearned hearers, like little children, were utterly unable to grasp lofty things. For this reason it happened in the very beginnings of the holy Church that, as if to Anna's still infant son, milk was offered through the writings of three evangelists, namely Matthew, Luke, and Mark, who in writing the history of the Lord's humanity treated little of his divinity; but when the infant people of the Church grew, and advanced to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13), for whom the drink of milk was no longer sufficient, they sought to be fed with solid food.

And so mother Church was compelled to ascend, that she herself might also become a cherub, and might draw near to the Redeemer flying above

her, might take up wings, might hold him walking upon them in the height of the sacraments, and might receive from his Majesty what she could give as nourishment to her demanding only child. Hence it came about that the evangelist John, when asked by the brethren, surpassing not only human but also angelic things, transcended all created things, and proclaimed the Only-begotten whom he was worthy to see in the bosom of the Father, saying: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Therefore Anna ascended when the holy Church raised herself so sublimely to the height of divine preaching. Then also she offered the solemn sacrifice, because from the knowledge of divinity she kindled the flame of wondrous devotion in the hearts of her hearers. Indeed it was a solemn sacrifice, from incomparable eloquence, a singular offering of devotion. Then she brought her son into the presence of the Lord, when she instilled perfect knowledge of the supreme divinity into the hearts of her hearers.

And because this knowledge of God must not only be held by faith but also by confession, and we are permitted neither to remain ignorant any longer nor to keep silent about what we believe and confess, the weaned child who is brought to the house of the Lord is declared to remain perpetually in the presence of the Lord. There follows: (Verse 23) "And Elkanah her husband said to her: Do what seems good to you; remain until you wean him." 44. What does it mean that Anna's plan is strengthened by her husband's authority, except that the purpose of holy Church is not presumed from human judgment, but from divine? For whatever holy Church wished to arrange among the nations subject to it, it only then held as ratified when it recognized from the judgment of internal truth what ought to be arranged. And because we have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), who intercedes for us, he adds and says: (Verse 23.) And I pray that the Lord may fulfill His word. 45. What is the word that is asserted must be fulfilled, except the predestined conversion of the gentiles? And because we are reconciled to God through his blood, he himself prays for the fulfilling of the word, by whose intercession our salvation is accomplished. For him to pray is also to continually present himself in his assumed humanity to the eternal Father for our salvation; and while he does not cease to offer himself thus, he opens the way for our reception into life. But because he accomplished the plan of his disposition by seeking it out, it is fittingly added: So the woman re-

mained and nursed her son until she weaned him from milk. Then it follows: (Verse 24.) And she brought him, after she had weaned him, with three bulls, and three measures of flour, and a vessel of wine; and she brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh.

46. For what is signified by a calf in this place, if not the purpose of imitating the life of the perfect? But it is a calf when it arises in the heart of one making progress, yet it becomes an ox when through the strength of virtue it is brought to the disposition of a great conversion. In this place it must be carefully inquired why not one calf, but three are reported to have been brought to the tabernacle. But in the three calves the infant being carried is shown, so that he might suggest the pattern of those who are being trained for the ministry of preaching. For the perfect teacher watches over both the conversion of sinners and the guarding of the just. For like a farmer of the supreme head of the household, he yokes both oxen to the plows, so that he may not only watch over those standing lest they fall, but also raise up the fallen so they may stand firm. But let him who has two oxen in the care of those subject to him, that he may be able to be perfect, yoke a third ox in divine contemplation, so that he may both open the hearts of his neighbors with a complete yoke, by speaking as if by plowing, and always extend himself through the singular strength of love toward the vision of his Creator.

Therefore Samuel is led to the house of the Lord with three calves, when anyone making good progress proposes that through the labor of preaching he may be able to benefit his neighbors, and through the secret of quiet cling to the intimate vision of the Creator. And because an unskilled mind will never be able to exhibit this well, he is also offered with three measures of flour. For when loaves are made from flour, the preparation of refreshment is completed. But because he is offered not in loaves but in measures of flour, a good devotion proposing doctrine is shown, not exhibiting the benefit of doctrine itself. Therefore a measure of flour signifies the preparation for holy preaching. But the infant is brought with three measures of flour, because when we propose to preach, we prepare the word of knowledge for sinners unto conversion, for the just unto the state of perseverance, and for ourselves unto heavenly contemplation; or certainly one measure is, as we have said, for the conversion of the sinner, another for the instruction of the married, and the third for the excellent purity of the continent. And they are called measures on account of the measure of discretion. Whence also the

blessed Paul declares, saying: Not to think more highly than one ought to think, but to think with sobriety (Rom. 12:3).

47. Indeed, what the order of preachers, chosen from among the nations as circumstances required, possessed—not from the fickleness of vanity but from the virtue of good intention—follows: "And a jar of wine." The virtue of good intention is the charity of God, which is poured into the hearts of the elect through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift of charity is rightly figured by the name of wine, because it occupies the mind and alienates it from earthly affections, so that it has no intention toward the world, which it inflames toward desiring heavenly things alone. But so that not the perfection but the beginning of this virtue might be designated, it is shown to have been a jar of wine and not a cup. For we store in a jar what we will someday serve through a cup. Hence it is that he who had tasted the perfection of heavenly charity confessed to almighty God, saying: "You have anointed my head with oil, and my inebriating cup, how excellent it is" (Psalm 22:5). Samuel is shown to have been offered with a jar of wine, because every elect person, when he is prepared for the ministry of evangelical preaching, proposes the good of that preaching to be expended not for the vain ambition of this world, but for charity alone. Therefore he is brought with calves for the purpose of fortitude, with measures of flour for the doctrine of the word, with a jar of wine for the intention of charity.

48. Where indeed these beginnings of virtues are to be perfected, he teaches when he adds: "And she brought him into the house of the Lord in Shiloh." The house of the Lord is rightly understood as the holy Church, which indeed is said to be situated in Shiloh. Now Shiloh is the place where the ark of God is said to have remained. What else, therefore, does Shiloh signify in this place than the tradition of the old law? For it contains, as it were, the ark of God, while it displays outwardly the carnal letter, which holds spiritual knowledge enclosed in its secrets. What then does it mean that the house of the Lord is said to be situated in Shiloh, except that the holy Church is known to be founded in the sacrament of the Scriptures as in a place? Samuel is said to have been brought there, offered there, because apart from the holy Church there is no place where the merits of virtues may grow and come to the summit of perfection. But when he who was brought is mentioned, the reason for his delay is also recalled, when it is added: (Verse 24.) "But the boy was still a little child." For if he had not then been a little

child, while he could come by himself, it would not have been necessary for him to be led here by another. It follows: (Verse 25.) "And they sacrificed a calf, and offered the boy to Eli."

49. Above it was said of Anna alone: "And she brought him with her, after she had weaned him. But now it is added concerning both Elkanah and Anna: "And they sacrificed a calf, and offered the boy to Eli. The calf was sacrificed when Samuel was brought and offered. If therefore Elkanah was there both when he was being brought and when he was being offered, why was it not said "they brought him with them," just as it was said "they sacrificed" and "they offered"? But because we have referred these things to the Church and to Christ, it pertains to her to nurse, to her to bring, but to offer and sacrifice pertains to herself and to Christ. For she herself applies the word of preaching, but she by no means supplies to those to whom she imparts doctrine the power of fulfilling the work. For by speaking she presents the letter of Scripture, but she can give the good itself to those seeking it only together with the Bridegroom. Therefore the calf is sacrificed when divine grace is poured into the heart of one seeking good things, so that the good things which one determines by resolving, one may cheerfully expend in the pursuit of good work. For the calf is then sacrificed, because the offering of good work proposed is received by Almighty God through the oblation of a devout mind, if what the mind presents to Him by vowing is wholly sacrificed to God through cheerfulness.

Concerning this sacrifice of the calf the Lord says in the Gospel: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will my heavenly Father give the good spirit to those who ask Him? Hence Paul says: "He who sows in blessings will also reap from blessings; each one as he has purposed in his heart, not from sadness or from necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. For what is it to purpose in the heart, if not to propose from deliberation? Therefore when he said "he purposed," he affirmed, as it were, that the calf was brought. But when he added "not from sadness or from necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver," he explained how the calf that was brought is to be sacrificed. Calves are therefore brought when we are prepared to propose well the doing of mighty deeds, but the calf is sacrificed when the deliberation of a good purpose is expended on God in the oblation of great devotion. Moreover, both, that is the husband and wife, are said to have sacrificed the calf, because the same cheerfulness is shown to faithful

subjects by the voice of the preacher, and divine grace is propagated in their hearts. Therefore they sacrifice the calf together when in the heart of a subject progressing well the divine agrees with human preaching.

Moreover, three calves are brought, because when we propose to bring help to the fallen and to those standing, and to bring the assistance of guardianship to ourselves, while we attend to these things with one good intention, they are indeed three with respect to the work, but one in the gift of oblation. They are indeed three, because they are rendered toward us and toward our neighbors with different regard and at different times, but they are one calf, because they are proposed together, and are expended on God with equal devotion of oblation, and there is one cheerfulness in them, and no other is had. 50. "And they offered the boy to Eli. In Eli are figured not only the persons of the ancient teachers, but also their doctrine. What then does it mean that the boy Samuel is said to have been offered to Eli, except what is openly understood: that whoever strives to benefit others by preaching ought not only to write new things, but also old things? Hence the Lord also says in the Gospel through a parable: "Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth from his treasure new things and old" (Matthew 13:52). Samuel is therefore offered to Eli when the mind of a well-progressing subject is instructed in the knowledge of the law and the prophets, so that in the books of the ancients he may read the letter that kills, but also understand according to the Spirit that gives life; and so receive what sounds outwardly that, beyond the sound of the letters, he may recognize what the Spirit sounds within; and hold new things for faith, but, as often as necessary, bring forward the old Scriptures for the confirmation of the New Testament. For then he will be able to defend the new when he recognizes their reasoning from the old. Therefore Samuel is openly said to have been offered to Eli, because only he sufficiently preaches the new who does not ignore that reasoning by which the old things are to be understood.

And because we cannot understand those same old Scriptures without a teacher, and a teacher accomplishes nothing in us by teaching if what he himself speaks outwardly is not poured into our hearts through divine grace, the mother did not offer the boy alone, but with her husband. And to him to whom she entrusted her son, Anna made herself known with a word of proclamation, saying: (Verse 26) "I beseech you, my lord, as your soul lives, I am that woman who stood before you here." 51. Anna stood before Eli, be-

cause the holy Church did not fall to any persecutions from the doctors of the synagogue. This is as if the Church, glorying, were to say to the leaders of the Synagogue: Therefore I was able to bring forth the world to God through the Gospel, because I endured unconquered the adversities which you inflicted upon me. For if, overcome by punishments, I had submitted myself to antiquity, I would never have begotten for the Redeemer a new offspring of so many nations. And because she speaks humbly, she calls upon the Lord by beseeching. Because indeed she desires that the pledge of eternal life be given to her in faith in the Redeemer, she says: "As your soul lives." But she who gloried that she had stood spoke great things about herself. And because she had spoken those same great things humbly, not proudly, she immediately referred them to the praise of almighty God, saying: (Verse 27.) "I prayed, and the Lord gave me my petition which I asked of him; therefore I also have commended him to the Lord."

52. Divine grace bestows upon the children of the holy Church for this purpose: that it may instruct them in the doctrine of truth, adorn them with good morals, watch over them with pious guardianship, make them perfectly turn away from evil, and prepare a sufficient abundance of good works for the eternal homeland. These indeed are the duties of pastoral ministry, but the chosen preacher doubts that he can fulfill them by his own strength. Therefore, since he cannot beget any through the Gospel by his own virtue, nor guard those whom he begets, rightly through Anna in the type of the Church it is now said: "I prayed, and the Lord gave me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord, for all the days that he shall be lent to the Lord. For she implores that she may be able to beget; and that those whom she obtains by praying may remain in holy conduct, she likewise commends them to almighty God through prayers. And because she never ceases from these prayers, she says that she commends her son to God for all days. For to commend a son to the Lord for all days is to supplicate him for the salvation of those whom she begets throughout all the time of this life. For the days in which we are commended to the Lord signify the times of the present life.

In which days indeed we need the aids of divine protection all the more strongly, the more heavily we are attacked by the temptations of malignant spirits. But since in many codices it is read not "commended" but "lent," this is not without good meaning. For sons are lent by mother Church in this

life. But whatever we lend, we expect to be returned to us in the faith of the one receiving it. The days are indeed the brilliances of spiritual virtues. In which days certainly Anna's son is lent to the Lord, because the holy Church offers the elect to him in the brilliance of virtues, so that almighty God may afterward present them to himself for the increase of his eternal joy in the splendors of rewards. And it should be noted that he is declared commended for all days, so that nothing may be lacking to him of what must be had from spiritual conduct, whom the chosen preacher will not be able to receive in eternal life as darkened in any part. There follows: (Verse 28. "And they worshipped the Lord there. We also, members of the holy Church, when through the scriptures of the Old Testament we are submitted to the veneration and precept of the Creator, there indeed we worship the Lord, because we hold the faith of the ancient Fathers, and we exercise that same faith through love in good work.

CHAPTER 1.2

We have brought forth these things concerning the beginning in a typical exposition; now let us seek our instruction in the words of the same history through moral signification. (1 Kings 1:1) There was a certain man, he says, from Ramathaim-zophim. 1. In this one man, what is more fittingly designated than each new despiser of the world? For he is called a man because he is strong in purpose; but one, because he is singular in love; for he is a man because from great virtue he despises all present things; but one, because he desires to enjoy the vision of almighty God alone. For whoever perfectly despises earthly things is a man from fortitude, but if he does not ardently desire to see his Creator, he is not one from intention. Therefore the perfection of the man is placed in the praise of unity, so that he who powerfully despises the world may not divide his mind, may yearn only for heavenly things, may sigh only for those eternal joys which come from the vision of the Creator. Such indeed was he who confessing to God said: What remains for me in heaven, and what have I desired from you upon earth (Ps. 72:25)? Hence he also says: Your face, O Lord, I will seek (Ps. 26:8). For he who desired nothing on earth was indeed a man; but he who desired nothing either in heaven or on earth except Him alone, who, spurning all things, sought only His face, was not only a man but also one. Concerning this unity the Lord speaks to Martha in the Gospel, saying: Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled

about many things; but one thing is necessary (Luke 10:41-42). Hence Luke, speaking of the perfect number of believers, says:

They had one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). For they had one heart because through the intention of reason they had looked upon the Creator alone; they had one soul because through the affection of love they desired to see His face alone. Hence it is that the devoted Prophet considers within himself, saying: My soul has thirsted for God, the living fountain; when shall I come and appear before the face of God (Ps. 41:2)? For obtaining this unity, Truth teaching says: Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33). 2. These things also belong to us, because we who, renouncing the world, have sought the seclusion of a more remote life, are called monks. 'Monos' indeed is Greek, but in Latin it means "one. We are inscribed with this title of appellation so that the word of our name may intimate to us the height of our dignity, and our soul may raise itself the more ardently toward the vision of the Creator, inasmuch as it bears, as it were displayed on its forehead, the sublimity of that brightness in which it must always abide. But the sublimity of divine love is granted only within the catholic Church to the truly elect. Rightly therefore is the man who is called "one" said to have been from Ramathaim-zophim, from Mount Ephraim. For Ramathaim, as I have already said, is a Hebrew name, but in Latin it means "Consummated vision. This appellation indeed befits the holy Church, which was foreseen long ago by the prophets, but was established at the end of the ages in faith in the Redeemer. Therefore the holy Church is called "consummated vision" because it was raised up to the summit of religion through the Redeemer of the human race, whereas formerly it was only foreseen through the spirit of prophecy. Moreover, it is described as being built at Zophim on Mount Ephraim (above, at the beginning of the allegorical exposition), because it is most lofty in the contemplation of God and fruitful in spiritual virtues. For Zophim means "watchtower," and Ephraim "fruitful.

These words indeed rightly intimate the position of the holy Church, which is exalted not only in the intention of its vision but also in the excellence of its way of life. By these words also both the madness of heretics and the barrenness of other wicked people are condemned. For those who deviate from the rectitude of faith do not have the speculation of sublimity; while those who see rightly what they should do but always pretend not to do it in-

deed have a watchtower, but do not attain the mountain of virtues through an excellent life. But the holy Church, because it is sublime in Zophim, that is, in speculation, glories, saying: "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Because it is also established on the mountain of virtues through the fruit of good work, condemning the crushed faith of the reprobate, it says: "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20, 26). Hence also in preaching it says: "While we have time, let us do good to all, but especially to those of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Therefore the man who is called "one" is said to be from Mount Ephraim, because both to despise earthly things and to desire heavenly things profits only him who through the catholic faith keeps himself within the holy Church. There follows: (Verse 1) "And his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph."

3. We have also shown above that this name, translated from the Hebrew language into our own, means "fervor of God. This name of the man indeed fits well with the order of spiritual exposition. For he who is called one man must necessarily be regarded as proceeding from the fervor of God. For who could either despise temporal things or love heavenly things without divine grace? It is indeed necessary that divine grace precede him, so that, kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit, the more ardently he loves the highest things, the more strongly he may despise the lowest. For him also, in the order of genealogy, the names of four fathers are recorded, because he was begotten in the faith of the Redeemer through their preaching—those who believed in the same Redeemer of the human race through the writings of the four Evangelists from every part of the world. He is also called an Ephrathite. From Mount Ephraim, and an Ephrathite is one who is not barren in fertile land. For many within the holy Church are counted by the name of faith, yet produce no fruits of action. These indeed, when they come forth from the Church, are perceived to be as if from a fruitful mountain; but because they themselves do not have the fruit of good works, they are not Ephrathites. Therefore, he is from Mount Ephraim and is not an Ephrathite who learned the catholic faith in the Church but does not perform works worthy of faith.

To such as these, Truth threatens in the Gospel, saying: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruit" (Matthew 21:34). Hence, under the image of the fig tree, commanding

the farmer of the holy Church to reject the unfruitful soul, he says: "Cut it down; why should it occupy the land? (Luke 13:7). Hence John the Baptist, threatening, says: "Already the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9). He had also shown that they were from Mount Ephraim but not Ephrathites, about whom Truth says in the Gospel through a parable: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men and lease his vineyard to other farmers who will render him the fruit in their seasons" (Matthew 21:41). Therefore, the man from Mount Ephraim is called an Ephrathite, because all of us who hold the catholic faith within the holy Church, while we cast away earthly things through the ardor of affection and love heavenly things, must also be separated from the earthly things we despise through the labor of good work and be prepared for the heavenly things we love. Therefore, to be in the Church and not to do good works, because it does not profit for acquiring the good of eternal salvation, the man who is declared to be from Mount Ephraim is also remembered to have been an Ephrathite.

4. Hence he is described as having two wives, because he is joined to the active life through the fruitfulness of good works and to the contemplative life through the love of inner delight. Therefore Peninnah is said to have had children, but Anna is said to have had no children. For what are the children of the active life, except the fruits of good works? And what does it mean that Anna has no children, except that the untrained contemplation does not quickly obtain those joys of inner contemplation which it has already begun to love? Indeed, the joys of inner vision are the children of the contemplative life. But the mind that begins to contemplate eternal things arrives at receiving those joys with all the more difficulty, the more it fails to attend to their beauty. Who then is able to rejoice in the glory of a beauty that he does not see? But the mind that newly raises itself up in the contemplation of eternal goods rises to them all the more slowly, the more it does not quickly lay aside the familiar darkness of its humanity, because while it is unable to cast away worldly cares from itself, it carries dust in its eyes, as it were, by which it cannot see what it desires to see. Therefore the dust must first be cast out from the eye, then the eye must be restored.

Dust is indeed cast out when all phantasms of bodily things are removed from the mind's attention, and the eye is restored when by the practice of

continual meditation that same attention of the mind is raised up to eternal things. When this has learned through long custom to dwell in heavenly things, by that same length of custom it obtains the purity by which, while it more clearly beholds eternal things, it may more fully exult in their glory. Therefore Anna is said to have had no children, so that not only the imperfection of the beginner may be indicated, but also the loftiness of the contemplative life. For it is set upon a great height of merits, which cannot easily be had in the joy of its fruitfulness. Hence it is that Jacob desires to have Rachel as his wife (Gen. 29:18ff.), but nevertheless Leah is first given to him, so that in order to obtain her beauty the number of seven years must be doubled in service to his father-in-law, because the lover of the contemplative life desires to attain this quickly in the abundance of eternal joy, but nevertheless the Spirit, the giver of all gifts, does not quickly grant it to him, lest he despise what he has obtained as something cheap, if ease presents it to him according to his wish; but may he enjoy it all the more sweetly and guard it all the more carefully, the more difficultly he has earned it. Wherefore it also follows: (Verse 3.

And that man went up on the appointed days to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. 5. Indeed, he ascends on appointed days, because he advances gradually in the splendors of eternal vision. For what are those manifestations of inner light, if not days of the elect mind? And they are indeed appointed days, because they are arranged by divine ordering for those established in the progress of spiritual life; they are also appointed days, because we cannot be admitted to their brightness when we wish, but when we are raised up by divine condescension. For sometimes he receives us in contemplation of inner light, and sometimes he allows us to slip back even to preferring the darkness of human nature. For he raises us as if on appointed days, he who does not continually open the pleasantness of inner light, but shows it at times of his own arrangement. Therefore they are our days, because we are received in great splendors when the beauty of inner glory is revealed to us. But they are called appointed days because enjoying the innermost light is not a matter of our striving, but of divine condescension. For often through prolonged silence, urgent supplications, and frequent groans, we beg that the glory of inner light be opened to us, and we do not merit to be received into its pleasantness. Often we do nothing of this sort out of desire for it, yet suddenly divine grace anticipates us, raises us from the depths

of our weakness, snatches us to heavenly things, and shows us the glory of his light when we do not hope for it.

Therefore we ascend on appointed days, because we cannot be raised to the contemplation of heavenly things by our own striving, but by divine arrangement. The days of ascent are also thus named because when we do not enjoy that sublime light, we are in the depths; and when we are taken up to that lofty vision, we recognize how low we had lain before the hour of our assumption. We then displease ourselves in what we were, but are pleased in what we are, because the mind, now absorbed by love of heavenly things, while it rejoices in the light it enjoys, disdains with exceeding horror all earthly things. Hence also blessed Peter, when he is taken up onto the mountain, when he is overshadowed by the bright cloud, when the glory of the transfigured Savior is shown to him, says: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matthew 17:4). For because by the gift of almighty God he now merits to be present at sublime things, he ineffably loves that incomparable good there, from whose beauty he condemns as foul all things that pass away.

6. But what does it mean that this same man is said to go up from his city? What else is a city but the fortification of those dwelling together? And what is this city but the perfect watchfulness of a guarded heart through careful circumspection? This indeed protects its inhabitants, as it were fellow citizens, with high walls, because while it diligently watches over the virtues to be guarded, the cunning enemy does not disturb their inner peace. That wise man certainly commanded us to remain in this city when he said: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). Hence also the Lord commands his disciples, saying: "But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Indeed, we sit in the city when through daily solicitude we rest in the defense of inner watchfulness. Sitting in this city, we are clothed with power from on high, because, already prepared as a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, we are raised up through his grace to the contemplation of heavenly glory. Therefore, in that the Ephrathite man is said to go up from his city, what else is indicated but the fault of our negligence? For we wish to search out heavenly things through contemplation, we who have custody neither of our heart nor even of our body.

And indeed we often look at things improperly, listen to idle things, speak superfluous words, and take sleep and food not for the refreshment of

the body but for the enjoyment of pleasure. And so when we wish to examine doubtful matters, to behold heavenly things, to abandon our darkness, to taste the savor of inner sweetness, we are repelled from that secret place all the more deservedly as we more negligently scatter the fortifications of our defense; and now it is all the more difficult for us to ascend as, having fallen back upon ourselves, we have not taken care to raise up the fortifications of the heart to the height of watchfulness. Let the man therefore go up from his city, so that he who desires to advance through interior contemplation may order his exterior senses, govern his mind, and as if received into lofty fortifications, await where the heavenly illumination may visit him. For he who now watches prepared for the ascent on the appointed days is made worthy of the custody of purity, so that he may be visited more frequently by divine condescension. But while he is said to ascend, the cause of the ascent is also mentioned, when it is added: "To worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh."

7. Whoever is raised up to the height of divine contemplation beholds all things in that light which illuminates, both that which terrifies him wonderfully and that which delights him ineffably. For that supreme vision, as it opens itself to the elect mind, mercifully shows both the unsearchable abyss of God's judgments and the abundance of his goodness, so that it casts down the one seeing with great fear and lifts him up with immense joy; indeed he is cast down with terror so that he may abandon the state of worldly affection, and he is soothed with joy so that he may more ardently desire what he begins to taste beforehand of the Creator's goodness. For then he worships when, having contemplated that immensity of omnipotence, he submits himself to the Creator in such a way that he is not lifted up against spiritual conversation by the impulses of carnal desire. And worshiping, he offers sacrifice, because the more humbly he prostrates himself in divine veneration, the more sweetly he is refreshed by the allurements of that supreme brightness. Therefore, to worship for one ascending is to submit to divine omnipotence with great veneration of chaste love; but to offer sacrifice is to be ineffably delighted by the sweetness of divine light. For the elect mind consecrates itself to God as if in a spiritual sacrifice, while the fire of divine charity more ardently inflames it in that ineffable joy of its elevation.

Therefore, the zeal of each elect person is shown under the figure of the Ephrathite man, and he is said both to worship and to offer sacrifice, because

the elect mind so desires to behold heavenly things that, advancing through spiritual vision, it both crushes every state of carnal life and receives the fullness of eternal joy. For even if some carnal person is not raised to this height of supreme contemplation, yet with respect to that spiritual conversation in which he advances by that ascent of contemplation, before he advances, he is in a certain way carnal. For this very thing is, as it were, carnal: to be unable to be separated from attention to corporeal things through the height of vision. 8. But, so that the rashness of human audacity might be restrained, he is said first to adore, then to sacrifice. For the ordered ascent of the contemplative is such that it should begin from fear. And what is this fear itself but the preordained purgation of the chosen mind passing over to behold the divine glory? For the more purely it deserved to gaze upon the rays of divine light, the more, cast down by a stronger fear, it is presented purer for the vision of the innermost Majesty. Thus, therefore, the outward conduct of this Ephrathite is shown to us, so that it might be reasonably demonstrated to those tending toward perfection what must be done inwardly. Therefore, while we desire to be sprinkled with the brightness of the highest glory, let us fix the boldness of our presumption in this passage of fear, so that the more reverently we fear the almighty Lord, the more clearly we may see the glory of his kindness. The greatness of this fear is also sometimes struck into the chosen mind after the showing of a joyful vision. When this happens, it certainly does not happen to purify the mind for the vision of glory, but to guard it from pride. Hence Peter, James, and John first saw the glory of the transfigured Lord, then, when fear was struck into them, they fell down, lest being lifted up they should lose what they had humbly been taken up to deserve to see (Matt. 17:2ff.).

Sometimes, therefore, adoration precedes sacrifice, sometimes sacrifice precedes adoration, but certainly by divine arrangement, not by our effort. For the Ephrathite man is described as having gone up to first adore and then to sacrifice, because indeed the order is so perfect that from veneration, which is born from the dread of divine severity, we are raised up to the contemplation of joyful majesty. Nevertheless, divine mercy sometimes so gladdens chosen minds with the infusion of its sweetness that it does not lead them into the greatness of fear. Hence it is added: (Verse 4. So the day came, and Elkanah sacrificed. 9. What is it that he says: "The day came, and he sacrificed"; and he did not say: "He worshipped, and he sacrificed," unless be-

cause, as I said above, we are so often raised up by divine condescension to behold the glory of divine brightness that we are then troubled by no mingled consideration of judgments. And although the elect soul never stands before almighty God without great veneration, nevertheless it as it were sacrifices but does not worship, when it so enjoys the happiness of that supreme joy that it is shaken by no dejection of fear. For she had come into this disposition who said: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (Song of Songs 1:1). What disposition of fear does she show who desires to be kissed? Hence also it is written of Moses: "That he spoke to God as a man is accustomed to speak to his friend" (Exodus 33:11). For, as if the day were coming, Sacred Scripture thus shows him sacrificing, such that no worship of fear had prostrated him. In which place I see this must be noted: that in order to worship and sacrifice, he is said to ascend, yet not to have worshipped and sacrificed when the day came, but only to have sacrificed. Therefore there are some days on which we ascend to worship and sacrifice; another is that day which, when it comes, we sacrifice.

For while by our own effort we are suspended in meditation on divine things, they are as it were the appointed days of our ascent, because we behold certain rays of spiritual light, we ordain certain things for ourselves, we are raised up from the depth of our humanity to a certain height. But because nothing is accomplished in these meditations without divine grace, and because we cannot prevail either to strike fear into ourselves or to exhibit the sweetness of divine delight, they are indeed days of ascent on which we resolve to worship and sacrifice, but nevertheless in them we neither worship nor sacrifice. But another day comes, and we sacrifice, because we are sprinkled with the sudden light of divine grace, and from the glory of His Majesty we receive an ineffable abundance of love. This day, therefore, is not one of those, but follows them, because indeed if we cannot receive this bounty of divine grace by our own disposition, nevertheless we never merit it unless we take care altogether that both by meditating, and by reading daily, and by praying, we dwell upon those spiritual brightnesses which we are able to. But the day is said to have come so that heavenly condescension might be designated, because when it visits elect souls, it is not of our capacity but of its own goodness. There follows: (Verses 4 and 5. "And he gave portions to Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave one portion, sad, because he loved Hannah."

10. The sons of Peninnah are the counsels of the holy mind, which grow through the pursuit of piety in the active life. These sons receive portions with their mother when the counsels of piety grow rich in devotion to good works unto the splendor of heavenly grace. For the pious mind, the more sublimely it is raised in divine contemplation, the more devoutly it extends itself in holy action. For the portions of this mother and her sons are the preparations for holy works. But he gives one portion to the sorrowful Hannah, because through contemplation, by which she desires heavenly things, as long as she is hindered in this misery of time and does not obtain the heavenly things she loves, she has the food of refreshment only in weeping. Indeed, she holds herself fasting whenever, remembering that she is cast out from eternal joys, she cannot weep. Therefore she receives one portion from the sorrowful one, because she is never refreshed according to her desire unless she is satisfied by weeping. The Ephrathite husband gives it to her sorrowfully, who when he gave a portion to Peninnah was not sorrowful, because indeed he rejoices in the preparation of good works, but does not rejoice in joys as long as he is delayed from the heavenly things he loves. Certainly he had given this portion to Hannah, who, seeing himself excluded from eternal goods, spoke saying: "My tears have been my bread day and night, while it is said to me daily: Where is your God? (Psalm 41:4).

But the imperfection of one still beginning is indicated when one wife of the Ephrathite is said to afflict and vehemently distress the other. For in the perfect person, the battle of wives is by no means engaged, since firm experience already knows how to arrange discretely the need for work and the intention for contemplation. For he possesses both wives as if in peace, who neither assigns the times of work to contemplation nor disturbs the leisure of contemplation through the intention of work. (Verse 6) Her rival also afflicted her and vehemently distressed her, to such an extent that she reproached her because the Lord had closed her womb. 11. Anna is afflicted by her rival, when immoderate attention to good work disturbs the quiet of inner vision. She is afflicted when she who is proved to be more noble is placed before her, and she is greatly distressed, because the contemplation of the elect mind is narrowed when he who desires to be in the contemplation of sublime things spreads himself too immoderately in the works of the active life. For to distress is to constrict. Indeed the vision of the mind is constricted when, impeded by the occupations of works, it is by no means expanded

in that immensity of inner light. And because she is said to distress her greatly, it should be noted that immoderate concern for good work also harms contemplation not a little. For Peninnah greatly distresses Anna, because when the mind is immoderately devoted to the active life, it is very difficult for it, while it occupies itself with arranging earthly things, to rise powerfully in the vision of heavenly things. Peninnah also reproaches her as if barren, because while we quickly bring forth the fruit of good works from the active life, and cannot easily attain to the joys of inner contemplation, she appears barren while we, inexperienced, despair of her fruitfulness.

Therefore while we love Peninnah for her fruitfulness, Anna is afflicted, distressed, and marked with the reproach of barrenness, because while we do not restrain the concern for good actions with the discretion we ought, we render the purity of contemplation so much more difficult for ourselves, inasmuch as we by no means retain the nobler life with excellent zeal. But because she has begun to ascend to higher things, if she is strong in her purpose, enduring such trials, she does not despair. For she strives toward those lofty heights of contemplation which she has begun, and scorns to be consoled by the food of action, she who has desired to delight in the sight of the Creator alone. And so it is fittingly added: (Verse 7. Moreover Anna wept, and did not take food. 12. For in weeping the burning desire for divine contemplation is shown, while in the disdaining of food the contempt for passing joy is displayed. For the mind that desires inward things with fervent longings, while it rejects the enticement of earthly joy, while with urgent groans it seeks the pleasantness of supernal light to be poured into it, surely weeps and does not take food. For he who said was loathing this food: "My soul refused to be comforted" (Psalm 77:3). But he who disdained to take the food of solace from the delight of created things, because he found the banquet of his delights in the Creator alone, says: "I remembered God and was delighted" (Ibid., 4). To these banquets indeed he was exhorting his weeping spouse when he said: "Why are you sad, O my soul, and why do you trouble me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, the salvation of my countenance and my God" (Psalm 43:5). This same exhortation is recognized here as well, because she is asked by her husband why she weeps, and why she does not eat, and why she has an afflicted heart. As if he were saying: Why are you saddened about not having attained the perfection of contemplation, which if you do not obtain while still a beginner, you will obtain as you progress?

Hence she who, afflicted by her rival, had refused to eat, when encouraged by her husband did eat;

because she who by sounder counsel despises lowly things, holds the perfection of contemplation in hope, which she does not yet hold in the power of experience. For to contemplation that is nearly failing and collapsed, the joy of renewed hope is food. Therefore at the voice of her husband Anna is refreshed, when the intention of contemplation, shaken by temptation, is roused to hope of her progress by him who had begun to love her. Wherefore, having taken food, she rose, poured out prayers to almighty God, and vowed to him a male child, if she should deserve to receive one from him. 13. She vows her son to Almighty God who seeks the joy of contemplation for the fruit of the mind, not for the favor of vanity. But carnal superiors are accustomed to resist vehemently those who rightly seek the desire of contemplation; for they think that those desiring a more secluded life act all the more foolishly, because they themselves are ignorant of the power of interior sweetness. If they sometimes rage against spiritual subjects with the voice of harsh rebuke, they must be calmed by the most humble reasoning. For if they unreasonably rise up against those acting rightly, the reverence due to the higher order requires that they be honored even when they exceed the measure of reason. Both of these—namely carnal prelates and spiritual subjects—Eli and Anna well represent; for when he sat before the doorposts of the Lord's temple and Anna prayed, Eli watched her mouth and called her drunk. But she, who patiently endured the insults, displayed humility of response with truthful reasoning. She declared herself his handmaid, speaking from much grief and sorrow, and not only calmed his angry spirit against her, but even turned him to prayer for obtaining the fruit of her desire.

14. But because we have said these last things about the history, we are not acting amiss if we examine our learning somewhat more carefully in these words of sacred history. If therefore the order of events is sought, she first ate and drank, then had a bitter spirit, prayed to the Lord weeping abundantly, afterward made a vow, and multiplied her prayers. What does the multiplication of Anna's prayers signify, except that perfection of the elect to which the excellent Teacher exhorts us, saying: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17)? For no one can pray without ceasing except a perfect man; for to pray without ceasing is to always stand before the Creator through the affection of supplication. But he who is still weighed down by the weakness of imper-

fection does not beseech the Lord without ceasing, because even in the very time of prayer he slips away from His sight through wandering of mind. And rightly the holy woman is said to have made a vow before the multiplication of prayers, because unless someone shows himself entirely heavenly through the rigor of resolution, he is drawn away from the affection of supplication all the more often, as he is turned by the mobility of mind into the whirl of worldly intention, and is not held in the Lord's sight through strong guardianship.

But the elect mind will be able to vow itself to heavenly joys through spiritual resolution, if it already knows how to weep abundantly, if through abundance of tears it has already learned to taste the savor of heavenly sweetness, and, occupied in the joy of that inner refreshment of itself, disdains to look upon earthly things. Therefore Anna is openly described as having wept abundantly before her vow, because no one will be able to show himself entirely heavenly by forgetting earthly things, unless, inflamed with great weeping, he knows how to receive the sweetness of intimate delight in the consolation of a mind already dead to the world. And because this consolation of tears is not received in the joy of the soul, unless one first afflicts oneself through the bitterness of compunction, and pierces with the dagger of salutary sorrow whatever lives in oneself from fleeting joy. Anna is reported to have wept first with a bitter spirit, and thus to have been able to weep abundantly. Which Solomon rightly suggests, saying: "The heart that knows the bitterness of its own soul, in its joy a stranger does not meddle" (Prov. 14:10). For a stranger is one who still has intention of delight from exterior goods. He certainly is not received into the joy of an embittered heart, because he cannot experience what interior joy is, unless he who perfectly cares to despise exterior things.

But it should still be noted that before all these things she is reported to have risen, and before she rose, to have eaten and drunk. What is the food of the elect soul, except according to the voice of truth: "Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4)? And what is it for her to rise, except to raise oneself to the state of heavenly intention? Therefore she is said to have risen before she had a bitter spirit, and to have eaten and drunk before she rose, because the elect soul cannot grieve over the misery of present life, if it does not stretch itself toward those things which it has lost in heaven; and it does not elevate itself to those highest things, if it fasts from the

nourishment of Sacred Scripture. Therefore that we may rise, we eat and drink, because we are raised to the height of heavenly love when we are strengthened by the profound and plainer meanings of Sacred Scripture. Then if we rise, we acquire bitterness of heart, because while we are carried upward through love, the things that are below do not offer us the blandishments of joy, but the harshness of affliction.

But now from a bitter spirit we ascend to the streams of tears, because when we are pierced through with continual and strong compunction, we are more copiously able to weep over the evils that we incur in this valley of tears, and the future things that we fear, and the eternal goods that we have lost. From this indeed we proceed to the secrets of making vows, because while the abundance of tears buries us from everything that pleases outwardly, it shows us, as if made entirely heavenly, to the sight of those above, and we make vows by which eternal goods please us so much that our mind defiles itself by no earthly or carnal things. Then the multiplication of prayers follows our progress, because we now more gladly, more frequently, and more earnestly seek eternal things by praying, the more we breathe only in the consolation of future goods. And in the morning they worship, and return to their city.

15. After the multiplication of prayers with his wife Anna, to adore in the morning is among the great gifts of virtues to preserve the virtue of humility; and because the soul which is still weighed down by this burden of corruption cannot stand longer in that sublime vision, they are fittingly reported to have returned to their own city. The elect soul, when it is repelled from the contemplation of God by overwhelming weakness, in order to be able to return to the same height of vision, ought to have constructed buildings of fortification, so that, having fallen back upon itself, it may hold itself on high, from where it may again rise to the same height of intimate charity. This is also said under the type of Jerusalem to the elect soul through the Prophet: Stand on high and see the joy that will come to you from your God (Baruch 4:36; 5:5). As if to say, even if you cannot remain continually in the contemplation of God, lest you be cast down to the lowest depths, you may be able to ascend without difficulty from the high towers of your watchfulness to contemplate him whom you desire. Indeed, he returns to Ramatha his own city, if when he is repelled from the vision of the Divine Majesty, he is retained in the contemplation of the holy angels.

But when he is unable to think about that more subtle nature, that is, the angelic, if he returns by meditating to the blessed martyrs, or other elect who have already been received into eternity, because he thinks about their perfect glory, he is doubtless then received in his own city, who is forbidden to dwell in the heights. Moreover, the same Ramatha is rightly called his own city, because what he loves familiarly, he believes without doubt to be his own, for he had recognized this city to be his own, who said: We know that if the earthly house of this dwelling is dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1). Hence again he says: The Jerusalem which is above is our mother (Gal. 4:26). But he who cannot return to that sublime city, let him nevertheless return to his own city Ramatha; and he who is cast down from that highest height, let him be held by the vision of this Church still wandering below, but radiant with the splendor of sublime life. For from here he will be able to return again to revisit the brightness of the high light, inasmuch as he does not cast down to the lowest depths of earth that sense which the burden of flesh withdraws from the secret of the inner light.

16. But what does it mean that Anna conceives and gives birth after the cycle of days, except that contemplation, once elevated to the beauty of the Creator, does not receive the joy of perfect devotion? Therefore she is said to have conceived and given birth after the cycle of days, because when contemplation is habitually seized up to heavenly things, it receives the gift of desired fruitfulness in the vision of heavenly light. For the cycle of days is the infusion of divine light. This is indeed encompassed by many days in its circuit, while it illuminates the mind with its single brightness, yet it gradually introduces the rays of its splendor to the mind through alternating manifestations of its dispensation, until it comprehends a more perfect joy from a fuller manifestation. Or certainly Anna conceives after the cycle of days, because indeed as long as the rawness of contemplation shakes the mind's sharp gaze in the whirl of mutability, the mind itself does not rise to perceive the full joy of inner majesty. For days pass as if in a certain circle, when the mind of the beginner elevates itself to the height of contemplation, but the ray of light, though glimpsed, scarcely keeps the mind, still wavering and wandering, fixed in its light. Therefore she conceives after the cycle of days, because first the soul is led from the dizziness of its change into the strength of standing firm, and when it has learned from practice to stand fixed in con-

templation, it grasps the joy of perfect devotion in the fruit of its fruitfulness. This conception it also brings forth when it makes known to neighbors the glory of heavenly majesty.

17. Now the boy is led to the tabernacle with three calves, because for the abundance of spiritual gifts we ought to give thanks to the supreme Trinity. Concerning these calves the prophet beseeching the Lord says: "Take away all iniquity, and receive the good, and we will render the calves of our lips" (Hosea 14:3). As if to say: For the abundance of gifts we will render sacrifices of praise, through the service of our lips. The boy is brought to be offered in the house of the Lord, when the progress of a holy mind is revealed to the teachers of Holy Church, so that while it is examined through consultation with the wise, it may in no way be stained by the fraud of the cunning enemy. The house of the Lord can also designate the eternal homeland. Of this indeed the Psalmist says exulting: "Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord, they will praise you forever and ever" (Psalm 84:5). The boy is brought into the house of the Lord, when the chosen mind is raised up on high, and strives to give thanks to almighty God for all in which it makes spiritual progress, from whom it recognizes the gifts of its advancement have been bestowed upon it. And rightly one calf is sacrificed, though three are brought, because although the Trinity of persons is sung in divine praises by the confession of the faithful, the inseparable unity of those same persons is proclaimed.

But what kind, or how great is praise, if it is not devout? Therefore fittingly three measures of flour are joined to three calves, so that we may be satisfied through devotion by what we say with our mouth in praises of God. For he offers a calf without flour, who in the praises of God indeed utters words, but with a wandering mind does not attend to what he speaks. But if speaking the words of God in praising or praying, we rejoice, while we mix joy with understanding, we join an amphora of that wine which gladdens the heart of man to the flour. This indeed he suggests, who longing says: "May God bless us, our God bless us, may God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him" (Psalm 67:7-8). He led as it were three calves to the tabernacle, who praising God, by repeating the name of his divinity, set forth the properties of the persons. But when he said "may they fear," he said not "them" but "him," certainly he who brought three calves sacrificed one. And because he mixed flour with the calves, and wine with the flour, he

glories, saying: "To him I cried with my mouth, and I exulted under my tongue" (Psalm 66:17). For while he cried out, he led as it were a calf of sacrifice to be immolated, but he could not exult under his tongue, if he did not understand the lofty words of his prayer.

When therefore he cried out, he understood what he cried out, and when he exulted in the oblation of almighty God, he had not only a calf, but also measures of flour, and an amphora of wine. Therefore the calf, the flour and the wine are the praise of God, the understanding of praise, and the joy of a devout mind. But why are the measure and amphora named in the oblation to God, unless because they are names of measures? Paul also explains what this spiritually indicates, saying: "Each one has his own gift from God, one indeed in this way, another in that way" (1 Corinthians 7:7). Hence the Truth says: "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, they will give into your lap" (Luke 6:38). Sacred Scripture has commanded us to guard this measure, saying: "Do not lift a burden above yourself. But the chosen soul must take great care to offer these three things to almighty God with the ardor of pious devotion and with the zeal for manifest truth. Hence also the son of the same Anna is declared to have been offered to the priest. Which indeed we also do, if when we make progress in holy conduct, when with minds now fruitful we bring forth the fruit of spiritual joys, we lead to the examination of our prelates everything that is generated in us from heavenly contemplation. And because chosen men amid their sublime gifts do not abandon the good of their humility, there follows: (Verse 28.

"And they worshiped the Lord there." 18. In the house of the Lord they adore the Lord, who both raise themselves with lofty mind to the contemplation of the heavenly homeland, yet through humility prostrate themselves before almighty God, and with all their heart are so sublimely elevated in the power of the Spirit. We have touched upon these things not in order, but summarily in expounding the historical or moral sense, so that we might investigate somewhat more extensively the words of the spiritual canticle which follows according to the moral and typological explanation.

CHAPTER 1.3

And Anna prayed, and said: My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord. 1. We have already shown that the type of holy Church lies hidden in the person of Anna. She, indeed, once the child was born, declares that she exults in the

Lord, because she did not swell with vain pride over having drawn the Gentile people to faith in the Redeemer, but kept the intention of her joy fixed on Him from whom she received the gifts of her fruitfulness. By these words she indicates the foundation of her joy in such a way that she also shows the cause of that same exultation. Barren indeed she wept, giving birth she exulted, to foreshadow the character of holy Church, which grieves that it has been cast down from the joys of paradise into this valley of tears, but patiently endures the hardships of its exile for the sake of winning souls. It has been accustomed to exult only in this: if in the tribulation of time by which it is pressed, through the glory of its fruitfulness, with the elect multiplied, the losses of the heavenly homeland may be repaired. Therefore she says: "My heart has exulted in the Lord," because she has obtained the fruit of her purpose. In this passage it should be noted that what she speaks in glorying she is said to have prayed. For it was stated beforehand: "And Anna prayed and said: My heart has exulted in the Lord. But why is she said to have prayed when she is known to ask nothing from God by entreaty?

But because the holy woman knew through the spirit of prophecy that this would come to pass, and she vehemently desires it to happen, she speaks both exulting and praying. Indeed she exulted in the certainty of future things, vehemently desiring to happen what she knew by revelation of the mystery. Holy Church also recalls, proclaims, and prays the divine benefits from that source, loving and venerating them, because indeed it carries out outwardly by speaking what it inwardly desires to happen with wondrous longing, and venerates what has happened with great devotion. Therefore she says: "My heart has exulted in the Lord," because the gifts she receives for the fruit of eternal joy she does not convert to temporal gladness. There follows: (Verse 1) "And my horn has been exalted in my God." 2. What is the horn of Anna, except the power of the holy Church? This horn indeed was wonderfully lifted up when the Son of God, through His assumed humanity, made Himself a participant in our nature. Therefore in this the horn of the holy Church was exalted, in which human nature now shines, elevated above the angels. But in that the holy Church singularly declares Him her God and Savior, she covertly shows the rejection of the Synagogue. Therefore in God our Savior our horn has been exalted, because the sublimity of Ecclesiastical power has been raised up for us in the humanity of the Redeemer. Hence also concerning the same Redeemer it is said through Zechariah: He has raised up

a horn of salvation for us, in the house of David His servant, as He spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets (Luke 1:69-70), because when she reports that her horn has been exalted, she covertly indicates that before she had a horn that was not exalted. For the holy Church before the coming of the Redeemer had a horn, because in the patriarchs and prophets she received from God both the order of right living and the power of correcting those who transgressed. But nevertheless she did not have an exalted horn, because even if she could live justly, still she could not return to the joys of Paradise without the presence of the Redeemer.

But now the horn of the holy Church has been exalted, because we have already received the Redeemer of the world coming, through whose grace we are able not only to live rightly, but also to pass over to the joys of paradise, because He who died for us has already risen, in whose death death died, and paradise opened itself to His faithful ones. Therefore our horn has been exalted in our God, because, with the grace of the Holy Spirit now poured out, we see the image of the Redeemer impressed upon the multitude of the elect, while those who despise all earthly things, flee the pleasures of the flesh, and abandon their own possessions, shine with such higher power as the holy Church did not have these great marks of virtue in the multitude of the ancients. Our horn has been exalted in God our Savior, because to as many as received Him, He gave power to become children of God (John 1:12). Our Savior wished to exalt this horn when He said: Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). Hence again asserting He says: Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven (Matthew 16:19). Hence again He promises, saying: You shall sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Therefore let Anna say:

My horn has been exalted in my God, so that evidently the glory of the holy Church may be designated, which obtains the singular summit of power from the presence of the Redeemer. And because she is now extended throughout the whole world, who once was afflicted by persecutions within Judea, there follows: (Verse 1) My mouth has been enlarged over my enemies. 3. For who else are to be understood as enemies of the Church than the Jews? Over whom indeed she has an enlarged mouth, because against their faithlessness she now moves the tongues of all faithful nations. Therefore the mouth of holy Church has been enlarged, because it is spread throughout

the whole world, and while she instructs all nations by the preaching of truth, she reproves the foolishness of the Jews, as it were with enlarged mouth. And because she was able to do this for the reason that she joyfully received the Redeemer of the world coming in the flesh, she sets forth the cause of her enlarged mouth, saying: (Verse 1.) Because I have rejoiced in your salvation.

4. Now we have learned who the Salvation of God is. Concerning whom Isaiah also prophesying says: All flesh shall see the Salvation of God; all the ends of the earth shall see the Salvation of God (Isa. 52:10; Ps. 97:3). But Jesus in our language is called Savior. Concerning whom Habakkuk also promises himself joy, saying: I will rejoice in God my Jesus (Hab. 3:18). Behold, by the voices of the ancient Jews the Lord Jesus is declared to be God. But now the Jews await a Savior whom they in no way believe to be God. But perhaps the Jews strive to reject this in their own mouth, and while they interpret Jesus as Savior, they understand God the Savior not as the person of the Only-begotten, but of the Father; nevertheless in the same place it is added, whereby the person of the Only-begotten is more openly demonstrated: O Lord God, he says, my strength, set my feet in completion, and place me upon the heights, that I may conquer in his glory (Ibid. 19). Behold, he speaks to God saying: Place me upon the heights. But because he says: I shall conquer in his glory, there is certainly another of whom he speaks. Who therefore is he of whom he speaks except the only-begotten Son of God, whom he believes to be not only true man, but also God? Therefore when he speaks to God, saying:

I will rejoice in God my Jesus, and I shall conquer in his glory, he demonstrates not another God, but another person of God. These are the reasonings of holy Church, these are the invincible assertions spread throughout the whole world against the faithlessness of the Jews. Therefore holy Church has her mouth opened wide against her enemies, because now, with God as author, it is known everywhere, whereby the faithlessness of the Jews is also refuted. Therefore let those who deny the Salvation of God hear the reason for the opened mouth, and let them be struck by the argument of our Savior's joy for their own confusion. But they can be struck, yet they refuse to cease from their blasphemies. Already the world has received the Salvation of God, all flesh has seen, the Jew does not believe, because, as I said, he awaits a Savior who is not God. Therefore let them hear the curse of the prophet saying: Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and whose heart departs from the

Lord (Jer. 17:5). The Jews trust in a man, who refuse to believe in the Redeemer, while they await the Antichrist at the end of the world. For their confusion the Psalmist proclaims, saying: All the ends of the earth have seen the Salvation of God (Ps. 97:3). As if he confounds the faithlessness of the Jews saying: Why do you defer visions to the future?

He whom you await has already come, he whom you held as promised has already appeared to all the ends of the earth; when you closed your eyes, he passed by; indeed you have become so blind that such great light stood before you, and you did not see. Therefore, shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth, sing, and exult, and make melody; make melody to our God on the harp, and with the voice of psalm, with trumpets of beaten metal, and with the sound of the horn trumpet. Shout joyfully in the presence of the Lord the King; let the sea be moved and its fullness, the world, and all who dwell in it. The rivers shall clap their hands together, the mountains shall exult before the face of the Lord, because he comes, because he comes to judge the earth (Ibid. 4, seq.). As if to say: Because they are pressed by such immense blindness that they did not deserve to see, you who have seen, rejoice more abundantly. But how wonderfully and ineffably one ought to rejoice, heaping up signs of joy, he says: Shout joyfully, sing, and make melody. Also desiring to convey the celebration of gladness, enumerating its instruments, he says: Make melody to the Lord on the harp, and harp, and with the voice of psalm, with trumpets of beaten metal and with the sound of the horn trumpet, shout joyfully in the presence of the Lord the King.

What does "in the presence of the King" mean, except in the knowledge of the Redeemer? But he explains by how many this solemnity of joys is to be performed, saying: Let the sea be moved, and its fullness, the world, and all who dwell in it. O unhappy Judea, the ends of the earth have seen the Salvation of God, all the earth moved shouts joyfully, the whole world rejoices, the rivers clap with their hands, the mountains exult; but the impious hearts of the Jews do not believe, and in the darkness of their blindness they are struck with the punishment of envy. But him whom they do not fear to blaspheme, holy Church more attentively commends, saying: (Verse 2. There is none holy as the Lord is. 5. In the description of the Redeemer, all things are designated as incomparable. For the true Redeemer is shown from this: that in everything said concerning His glory, no one is compared to Him. For He redeemed all who excels all. This is rightly said against Judea, which despises

the Redeemer all the more boldly because it recalls having had many men who shone with great praise of holiness. Hence it is that when reproaching the man whose sight was restored, they say: "You be His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this man is from" (John 9:28-29). Hence likewise they boast and say: "We are the seed of Abraham, and we have never served anyone" (John 8:33). But Moses was a man, Abraham was a man, Christ was a man. However, they were assumed for speaking with God; He was assumed into divinity. They were assumed for ministry; He, as the Only-begotten, was assumed to the kingdom. Hence He also speaks, saying: "All things that the Father has are mine" (John 16:15). There is none holy as the Lord is. Sacred Scripture also testifies to this, saying: "In whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Hence John says: "From His fullness we have all received" (John 1:16). There is none holy as the Lord is. Because in that He is declared Lord, the excellence of His holiness is commended.

But the Jews assert that the Christ whom they await is a mere man, and yet they believe He will be their Lord and uniquely holy. But the Psalmist, reproving them, exhorts us to the joy of faith, saying: "Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; serve the Lord with gladness. Enter into His presence with exultation; know that the Lord Himself is God" (Psalm 100:1-3). They call Him Lord who is not God. Therefore we must shout for joy, we must serve with gladness, who have such a Lord who is also truly believed to be God, who proved the majesty of divinity that He claimed for Himself by incomparable miracles. Let those who deny His invisible divinity believe in His manifest works. But how wondrous is that holiness which sanctifies sinners! Hence He says of the sinful woman: "Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much" (Luke 7:47). The woman with the flow of blood, recognizing this excellence of holiness, said: "If I touch even the fringe of His garment, I shall be saved" (Matt. 9:21). But who would affirm her faith if the effect of faith were not evident? For when she touched His garment, the blood stopped. There is none holy, therefore, as the Lord is, because whoever was able to be holy received from His gift that he might be able to be holy. For the holy Church, suggesting this in the following words, turns to the same Redeemer out of exceeding love, saying: (Verse 2) For there is no other besides You.

6. "Holy" is understood. Someone would be holy outside of him, if without the gift of the Only-begotten one could have had the spirit of sanctification. But who would dare assert this about men, when it is by no means established about the Angels? For it is written: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all their power by the spirit of his mouth" (Psalm 32:6). The Word of the Lord is the Only-begotten of God. The evangelist John, indeed pointing to him, says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). If therefore even the angels are believed to be sanctified in the Son, much more is it believed about men that they cannot find the grace of sanctification outside of him. 7. This can also be understood without any implied meaning. Therefore when she says: "Nor is there any other besides you," what else is designated in the Redeemer but the immutability of the divine essence? Hence he also says to the blaspheming Jews: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Intimating the same thing to Moses in Genesis, he says: "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14). For the only-begotten God's being is never to be dissimilarly. This state is certainly as far removed from all mortals as it is more clearly known that they are changed through many things at every single moment. This can also pertain to the state of justice, because the being of the elect is to remain in God through justice. And because the only-begotten of God is God, there is no one outside him, because none of the elect exists except in him. But if this is referred to his divinity, so that it in no way empties the understanding of his humanity, because one who does not have faith in the divine Incarnation cannot be just; therefore the Jews are struck by these individual words, who, while they despise the Redeemer, await the Antichrist, who is clearly proven not to be God. Hence it is also said through blessed Job: "Let the companions of him who is not dwell in his tent" (Job 18:15). The tent of the Antichrist is the love of faithlessness, by which he contradicts the faith of the Redeemer.

In this tent indeed the Jews now remain, because while they lovingly inhabit the position of their faithlessness, they fight against the Redeemer. They are also said to be companions of him who is not, because in their purpose they aid the devil, who, when he fell from the love of that supreme essence, immediately lost true being. For him, indeed, not to be is to be unable to return to that supreme blessed essence through participation in love. And because the people of the Jews had not only the arduous way of life of the an-

cient fathers, but also the display of miracles for the increase of their pride, it is added: (Verse 2) "And there is none mighty like our God." 8. As if to restrain Judea in her vain boasting, he says: Those whom you claim did great things were mere men; He whom I proclaim was not only a holy man, but also mighty God. Therefore, when strength is considered, excellence is indicated, because truly all strength of man is utterly weak in comparison to the divinity. Yet in this passage, the assertion of divinity does not prove the excellence of the work, but the incomparability of strength shows the truth of the divinity. As if to say: In this it is known that he spoke true things, because he proved the divinity which he claimed for himself by incomparable works. Hence through himself he says: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would have no sin" (John 15:24). Now indeed the works themselves must be examined. Moses divided the sea (Exodus 14:12), Elijah divided the river (2 Kings 2:8); our Lord Jesus walked upon the sea (Matthew 14:24). What then is more elegant—to provide a way for the people passing through in the dry bed of the deep, or to make the very surface of the sea a way? For they, because they were weighed down by the burden of humanity, sought a way on the solid floor of the deep by which they might proceed; but He who is known to have assumed the weakness of human nature into the height of divinity was carried upon the waters by his own power.

Moses obtained the splendor of his countenance from communion with the word of the Lord (Exodus 34:29), Joshua fixed the sun by his prayers (Joshua 10:12-13); but because Jesus is God, he shone forth before his disciples with the power of the sun. The children of Israel could not gaze upon the face of the former; those who were worthy to behold the glory of the latter fell down, so that you might openly recognize that what transcended human capacity was divine. To Him, while those others stood by on the mountain, it was said by the eternal Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5-6). And therefore also Elijah, who shut heaven so that it would not rain, and opened it so that it would rain (1 Kings 17:1)—what is he in comparison to Him who, with the heavens opened, presented the Father as witness of his divine generation? Therefore there is none strong like the Lord, because whatever power Moses was able to show, the Lord, not Moses himself, performed. But Jesus displayed everything that he did wonderfully by his own power, because he was Lord even of Moses. For

it was not Moses who rained manna on the people journeying through the desert, but the Lord (Exodus 16:13ff.). It was not Moses, but the Lord who went before the people in a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day (Exodus 14:19).

It was not Moses, but the Word that came to him who brought forth water from the rock (Exodus 17:6). It was not Moses, but the Lord who provided birds to those who desired them (Exodus 16:17). Hence the Lord also restrains the Jews glorying in the strength of their fathers, saying: "Not Moses, but my Father gave you bread from heaven" (John 6:32). 46 Hence the Psalmist, not vainly extolling Moses but laudably exalting the Lord, says: "He did wonders in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan; he divided the sea and led them through, and made the waters stand as in a heap. He led them with a cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire. He brought water out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers. He commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna for them to eat, and rained flesh upon them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the sea" (Psalm 78:12ff.). But the Lord Jesus, incomparably strong, appeared not in another's power but in his own. Hence, powerful of himself, commanding the paralytic, he says: "I say to you, arise" (Matthew 9:6). Hence also it is written: "As many as touched him were made well from whatever illness held them" (Mark 6:56). And again: "Power went out from him and healed all" (Luke 6:19).

For this mark of strength neither Moses nor Elijah could have, so that while incomparable signs were made known, they might most clearly designate the coming of the Only-begotten. Rightly therefore the Synagogue is condemned to perpetual silence, when it is added: (Verse 3) "Do not multiply speaking lofty things. Let old things depart from your mouth." 9. As if to say: While you perceive incomparably new things, you reproachfully bring forth the deeds of the ancients. For those things had preceded as a shadow, as it were. But now the faithful openly and reverently adore these works of our Redeemer, because what was shadowed there by the concealment of the sacrament became manifest at the coming of the Redeemer, having awaited the body of the truth to be revealed. Therefore, if they are referred to the new things, they are not old, because understood in the Holy Spirit, they receive no oldness. Concerning that Spirit indeed who renews all things, the Psalmist prays, saying: "Send forth your spirit and they shall be created, and you

shall renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 103:30). Therefore they are old, if they are compared with the works of the Redeemer; but when we bring forth those things spiritually to confirm these, they are renewed by the same Spirit by which we understand these. Therefore when holy Church reproves the Jews concerning the narration of old things, what else is indicated than that they understand carnally the spiritual deeds of the Fathers? For the Synagogue raises itself against holy Church all the more rashly, the more proudly it is exalted by knowledge of the law and the prophets, which it learned was divinely inspired to its fathers, but exhibited to itself only materially. Hence follows: "Do not multiply speaking lofty things, glorying. And that they might cease to be puffed up, she adds, saying:

"Let old things depart from your mouth. For those things are now old to her which, as I said, are not understood through the renewing Spirit. Therefore it is as if to say: It is fitting that you be silent from the narration of those things whose new and splendid meanings you do not know. And even if you understand these things subtly, they ought not to furnish you the swelling of arrogance, because God is the Lord of knowledge. For the Redeemer of the human race, because He is the Word of the most high Father, is indeed the Lord of all knowledge. For Isaiah spoke lofty and great things, Jeremiah spoke great things; but surely they would have said nothing if this Word, the Lord of knowledge, had not indicated knowledge to them before they spoke. Hence also it is frequently read in the books of the same prophet Isaiah: "The word that was made to Isaiah the prophet. Frequently also it is written in the book of Jeremiah: "The word that was made to Jeremiah the prophet. John, beholding this Word, the Lord of knowledge, in the most high bosom of the supreme Father, says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Hence Paul, intimating that our Redeemer is the Lord of knowledge, says: "Because in him dwells all the fullness of the divinity bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Therefore when she says:

"Let old things depart from your mouth, because God is the Lord of knowledge," what else is it to say, except to show to the Synagogue by clear reason that she ought to be silent all the more carefully, inasmuch as she does not know not only what those things are which she says, but also from whom they are? As if to say: That knowledge which you assert belonged to your fathers ought not to have given you arrogance, inasmuch as it was not theirs but of the only-begotten Son of God, and you do not understand that

very same knowledge. Therefore she says: "Let old things depart from your mouth. So that the Jews may by no means corrupt what they are unable to understand rightly. "God," she says, "is the Lord of knowledge," so that what they prove to be truly of God, they may not falsely ascribe to men. But while Judea is reproved for words of boasting, because she is not stung by any fear, torments are also announced to her concerning the hidden movements of faithless hearts. For there follows: (Verse 3. And their thoughts are prepared.

10. As if to say: Him whom you do not fear to blaspheme, you will have as judge not only of your tongue, but also of your heart. Hence also through Isaiah He threatens, saying: "I am coming to gather their works and thoughts" (Isaiah 66:18). Hence the Lord, threatening through Moses, says: "Are not these things stored up with me, and sealed in my treasures" (Deuteronomy 32:34)? And because by these words silence is commanded to the Synagogue, let us now see with what praises of her fruitfulness holy Church glories in the voice of Anna. For she adds and says: (Verse 4) The bow of the mighty has been overcome. 11. What is the bow of the strong, if not the fraudulent savagery of the Jews? For from concealment, as if from a bow, they had inflicted a wound upon the Redeemer, whom they were killing by the hands of the Gentiles. But the bow of the strong was overcome, because he who died by their wound rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent the promised Holy Spirit to the disciples. Whence it is added: (Verse 5.) And the weak have been girded with strength.

12. Indeed, by the name of strength, the power of the Holy Spirit is shown. Hence the Lord, promising this same Spirit to the disciples, says: 'But remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49). And the grace of the Holy Spirit is rightly called strength, because when the elect receive it, they become strong against all adversities of this world. But who are the weak in this place to be understood as, if not the apostles? But they were certainly weak when the bow of the mighty was bent, not when they were clothed with power from on high. For in the hour of the Lord's arrest it is written of them that, 'leaving the Lord, they all fled' (Matthew 26:56). Was not Peter very weak then, when he feared the voice of a questioning servant girl and denied the Redeemer (Matthew 26:63, 74)? Already indeed the bow of the mighty had been overcome, the savagery of the Jews brought to nothing, because the Redeemer had risen after conquering death; and yet still the weak apostles feared the overcome mighty ones

behind closed doors (John 20:19). But where strength clothed them, it is fitting to observe how strong it made them. For the Holy Spirit came upon them with a sudden sound, and changed their weakness into the power of wonderful love (Acts 2:2ff.). For they began to preach Christ, now clothed with strength, who had not been ashamed to flee and hide from the threats of persecutors;

and those who had feared the words of women broke the authority of rulers with freedom. Strength conquered fear, overcame terrors, threats, and slaughter; and those whom it clothed by coming upon them, it adorned with the insignia of marvelous boldness in the heavenly warfare, so that amid scourges, slaughter, and reproaches they did not fear, but rejoiced. For it is written of them now clothed with this strength: 'The apostles went from the presence of the council rejoicing, because they were counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus' (Acts 5:41). Hence now preaching, they say: 'Count it all joy, brothers, when you fall into various trials' (James 1:2). Well therefore it is said: 'The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girded with strength.' Because first the Redeemer rose from the dead, and thus went to heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples. For first the bow of the mighty had to be overcome, and afterward the weak were to be girded with strength. Hence it is also written: 'The Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified' (John 7:39).

13. In this passage it must be noted that this is said against Judea, which despises the miracles of the Redeemer all the more proudly insofar as it recognizes that He died amid torments. She says therefore: "The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girded with strength." As if she were answering the Synagogue that slanders the death of the Redeemer, saying: Do not despise the fact that He was able to die, but rather marvel that, having died, He rose again, and by coming back to life overcame the savagery of your nation. And because she shows this concerning the past, she speaks to her not only by proclaiming but by reproaching. For as if she were rebuking one who taunts in vain, she says: What did it profit you to have killed Him whom the snare of death could not hold? You killed Him lest the whole world should go after Him; but for this very reason the whole world goes after Him, because He proved Himself to be the true Son of God — by redeeming the human race through dying, by showing Himself alive through rising again, by ascending to heaven, and by sending the promised Holy

Spirit to His disciples. And because the Synagogue, on account of its deserved unbelief, was driven from participation in the promised grace, holy Church, reproaching her for this very thing, adds and says: (Verse 5.) "Those who were full before have hired themselves out for bread, and those who were hungry have been satisfied."

14. Who were previously filled, if not those who had the knowledge of God before the other peoples? Who then should be understood as previously filled other than the Jews, who were instructed in faith in the Creator almost from the very beginning of the world? They indeed hired themselves out for bread. For what do "breads" signify in this place, if not the mysteries of the divine Incarnation? And the place for finding the breads is Sacred Scripture. Hence also the Bread who descended from heaven says to those who do not know where to find him: "Search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). They therefore hired themselves out for bread, because they had received all the Scriptures so that in them they should have found the sacraments of the divine Incarnation. But when the Bread came, the Synagogue, which had hired itself out for bread, abandoned the place in which it should have found the bread it was seeking. It had the Scriptures, as I said, for recognizing the Redeemer, but it rejected him when he came according to the Scriptures. The hungry, therefore, were satisfied, because those from the Gentiles who believed, while they reverently receive the mysteries of the divine Incarnation, possess heavenly food for the enjoyment of interior delight. They are indeed called hungry because, before the coming of the Redeemer, cast out by the famine of unbelief, they had no food of spiritual refreshment.

Or certainly they are called hungry because they receive the sweetness of spiritual food with great eagerness. But let the filled, who hired themselves out for bread, hear the one they were awaiting: "I am the living bread who came down from heaven" (John 6:33, 41 ff.). But because they did not deserve to recognize him, they answered: "Is this not the son of Joseph? How does he say that he came down from heaven?" (Luke 4:22; John 6:42). But he himself, who knew all things, was prophesying that the hungry would come to the banquet of his delight, saying: "Amen I say to you, that from the East and the West they will come, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness" (Matt. 8:11-12). The filled, therefore, hired them-

selves out for bread, but the hungry are satisfied, because the children of the Synagogue had in the Holy Scriptures the nourishment of faith concerning the future Incarnation of the Redeemer; but now, with them cast aside, while the Gentiles truly believe in him, they receive the sacraments of his divinity and humanity in the refreshment of innermost delight.

15. For since it is said by the distinguished Doctor: 'They all ate the same food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ)' (1 Cor. 10:3–4), it can reasonably be gathered that those ate and were not satisfied, while these ate and were satisfied. Which is indeed rightly said by holy Church against the Synagogue, so that those who are under grace may be shown to surpass with wondrous exaltation those placed under the law. For what was it for them to hire themselves out for bread, except to search out in sacred Scripture the mysteries of the coming Redeemer? Of whom indeed each one ate and was not satisfied, because he believed in the future Incarnation of the supreme Only-begotten but did not see it present. For him, to eat was to sweetly hold the divine Incarnation in the desire of his mind, and not to be satisfied was not to see His longed-for presence. But the weak, who were to be girded with strength, heard the proclamations of their satisfaction from the bread by which they were satisfied: 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. Amen I say to you, that many kings and prophets wished to see what you see and did not see, and to hear what you hear and did not hear' (Matt. 13:16–17). For those who wished to see were already eating the bread of inmost delight through desire;

but because they could not see, they had the joy of desire but did not have the enjoyment of satisfaction. For even if Scripture says: 'That bread having every pleasantness and all sweetness, God gave to them' (Wis. 16:20), it is said to be received by them in the way it was known—in the way that, known by them through faith, it could be longed for through the desire of charity. Therefore, against the Synagogue glorying in the early fathers, those girded with strength are set above, so that while the new and lofty summit of the elect is beheld, it may no longer glory in vain. And because the food of life is never taken away from the table of holy Church, intimating things future as well as past, she says: (Ver. 6) 'Until the barren woman has borne many, and she who had many children has grown feeble.'

16. Who is the barren one, if not holy Church, as we have already said more fully above in the type of Anna? What then does it mean that the hungry are satisfied until the barren woman gives birth, if not to possess the bread of life until the end of the world? Which He Himself also promises, saying: "Behold, I am with you even until the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). For those whom holy Church brings forth are none other than the hungry. Therefore, as long as she gives birth, the hungry are satisfied, because until the end of the world she begets children for God, who, while they believe that the Redeemer has come in the flesh, eat the bread of life which they desire and are filled with fullness. But while the barren woman gives birth to very many, she who had many sons is weakened. For the Synagogue to be weakened is to be unable to bring forth by the institution of the old law. For she who lost the faith of her former husband now gives birth to the devil and no longer to God. And rightly it is said, "She who had many sons," because while in the truth of the Scriptures she anciently taught the people subject to her to desire the coming of the future Redeemer, she was bringing forth sons from the embrace of the heavenly Bridegroom. But now she who had sons is weakened and has no sons.

She indeed presents the Scriptures to her hearers, but because she denies the Redeemer, she never begets children for God. Therefore she is said to be weakened, to whom spiritual fruitfulness is denied. And because both the rejection of the Synagogue and the election of the Gentiles were accomplished by the incomprehensible judgment of God, there follows: (Verses 6–8. "The Lord kills and gives life, He brings down to the grave and raises up; the Lord makes poor and makes rich; He humbles and He exalts. He raises the needy from the dust and lifts the poor from the dunghill, that he may sit with princes and hold a throne of glory." 17. As if responding to someone astounded at the rejection of so chosen a people, he says: Why do you seek reason in these things which the supreme Reason does incomprehensibly? Reproving this very manner of inquiry, the outstanding teacher also says: 'O man, who are you to answer back to God? Does the thing formed say to its maker: Why have you made me thus? Does not the potter have power over the same lump of clay to make one vessel indeed for honor, and another for dishonor' (Rom. 9:20–21)? It is therefore as if he were saying: Since the Lord of all is rightly acknowledged, let us recognize that His work, both in the rejection of Judea and in the election of the Gentiles, is to be revered and not scrutin-

ized. The Lord indeed kills, because by incomprehensible judgment He separates the once-chosen Jewish people from the knowledge of truth and condemns them forever. He gives life, because He receives the Gentile people in time through faith unto the knowledge of His Only-Begotten, and leads them eternally to the contemplation of His glory. He leads down to the underworld, because by His strict judgment avenging Gehenna receives for everlasting punishment those who through the fault of unbelief separate themselves from the worship of the Redeemer. He brings back from the underworld, because He takes up the Gentile people devoutly approaching faith in His Son, for whom the immense darkness of error had been like a deep prison of the abyss.

He makes poor and enriches, because He strips rejected Judea of spiritual virtues, and adorns the chosen Gentile people with both the treasure of faith and the splendors of good works. He is also said to humble and to exalt. For the Synagogue, by withdrawing from the Redeemer, cast down the heights of its own sublimity, and holy Church, by worshiping the Redeemer, rose from the depths of unbelief where it had lain cast down, to the height of right faith and the eminence of Christian authority. Therefore, because Judea despised the Son of God and the Gentile people merited Him, rightly the former is believed to have been humbled and the latter exalted. There follows: 'Raising up the needy from the dust, and lifting the poor from the dunghill, that he may sit with princes and hold a throne of glory.' 18. The needy and poor one is understood as the gentile people, who is said to be raised from the dust and lifted from the dung, because when he is received into the faith of the Redeemer, both his lesser and graver sins are forgiven. For since dust is easily shaken off, while filth that defiles with dung fouls horribly, dust signifies lighter sins and dung graver sins. Rightly also the needy one is said to be raised from the dust, and the poor one lifted from the dung. For he was sleeping among those things from which he could be roused by a light touch of grace. But he was lying among those things because, having fallen into graver sins, he needed the hand of great help. But now let us hear to what height of honor the needy one who is raised from the dust, and the poor one who is lifted from the dung, is advanced.

19. That he may sit with princes, and hold the throne of glory. Now who are designated as princes in this place if not the holy apostles? Concerning these princes, indeed, it is said to God through the Psalmist: You shall make

them princes over all the earth; they shall remember your name, O Lord (Ps. 44:17, 18). What does it mean that the poor man sits with princes, except that the order of preachers, chosen from among the nations, obtains in the holy Church the height of apostolic authority? He sits with princes, indeed, because from the throne of heavenly teaching he sets forth the doctrine of salvation. And he holds the throne of glory, because he spreads the fragrance of good reputation among those over whom he stands preeminent in dignity. Or certainly he holds the throne of glory and sits with princes, because he both shines with the honor of sublimity and gleams with miracles. But He who is raised up to such sublime dignity indicates how one ought to use it, when He adds: (Verse 8.) For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them.

20. The hinges of the earth are the extremities of the earth. By the name of hinges, he wished to designate those chosen preachers from among the nations. They are called the extremities of the earth because they are brought forth from the lowly and, in a certain sense, despised condition of the Gentiles. They are indeed called the hinges of the Lord on account of the mortification of their own will. They are truly the Lord's, because they do not seek their own interests, but those of Jesus Christ. But when they are called the Lord's, a certain singular holiness is indicated in them. Let those who are the Lord's consider that the world is placed upon them, not beneath them. For what is designated by the name of the world but the fullness of the faithful subject to the holy Church? God placed the world upon the hinges of the earth, because preachers are set over the holy Church for this purpose: that they may relieve the weakness of others and carry the feeble toward the heavenly homeland, as though bearing a weight placed upon them. Therefore, they should not always look upon themselves as superiors, but sometimes as subjects, so that by discipline they may preside over the restraining of vices, yet by the esteem and obedience of their ministry they may often be subordinate to those over whom they hold the charge of governance. And because the burdens that preachers bear are great, he adds and says: (Verse 9.) He will guard the feet of his holy ones,

21. As if to say: Under such immense burdens they would collapse, if the Lord did not preserve their feet. The feet of His saints are indeed the affections of their minds. These are truly preserved by the Lord, because through Him the grace of wondrous devotion is poured in, by which they bear so

great a burden willingly. The Lord is said to preserve the feet of His saints because they would flee the mass of so great a weight, if charity infused from above did not lighten what would otherwise be intolerably heavy for them. The standing of fortitude can also be signified by the term "feet. The Lord preserves the feet of His saints when He strengthens them with wondrous fortitude, so that under such immense burdens they by no means fall. And because He is said to preserve not one foot but feet, what do we understand by each foot of the saints, if not fortitude and humility? For lest we fall, we stand on both feet. For whoever presides over faithful flocks, on the way by which they journey toward the heavenly homeland, encounters now prosperity, now adversity. For prosperity itself, because it stirs up elation in the mind, assails it greatly toward a fall; yet lest the chosen mind fall, it strives to stand firm on the foot of fortitude on one side, and stands on the foot of humility on the other.

It would indeed retain a firm standing between each temptation, if it stood with such solid humility that no prosperity would lift it up and no adversity would cast it down. 52. What then does it mean when it says, "He will keep the feet of His saints," except that all human virtue is weak without the help of the Creator? For our weak humility, while it is soothed by the favor of prosperity, is overthrown by the impulse of foolish joy. Our weak fortitude, while it is struck by adversity, is easily overcome. But we are crushed by sorrows and enfeebled by joys when Almighty God abandons us to ourselves, not when He bestows the help of His protection. Therefore He says, "He will keep the feet of His saints," because Almighty God aids our weakness in bearing the burdens of those subject to us, so that neither adversities wear us down nor joys seduce us. Our feet are indeed preserved by the Lord when, strengthened by divine help, we despise the joys of the world that confront us, fear no adversities, when with steadfast patience we willingly bear evils, and with unshaken humility we restrain our lofty spirit from vain delight.

22. Moreover, the feet of the saints can be understood as faith in and love of the Redeemer. By these feet indeed they walk, when they follow with love Him whom the faithful believe through faith. He who prayed was indeed asking that these feet be preserved for him by the Lord, saying: 'Set me upon the heights, that I may conquer in His glory' (Hab. 3:19). He is set upon the heights to whom the divinity of the Redeemer is revealed. And he conquers in His glory, because while he is illuminated by the rays of His glory, all the

temptations of the evil spirit are destroyed. He keeps his feet set firm upon the mountain who is lofty in the contemplation of truth and kindled with love for Him whom he believes to be the Only-begotten of the most high Father. Peter indeed was set upon the heights, who, when he confessed the Lord, saying: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God', immediately heard: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 16:16-17). For founded in faith, kindled with charity, he also preached Him whom he loved. Well therefore is it added concerning the reprobate: (Verse 9) 'And the wicked shall be silenced in darkness.'

23. For who are understood as the ungodly in this place, if not the Jews, who are strangers to the devotion of the true faith, and stained with the blood of the Redeemer's death? Of whom it is rightly said: "In darkness they shall be silent," because the saints, established upon the heights, confess with eternal praises the Redeemer of the world, whom they behold in the brightness of the divine majesty. Therefore the ungodly are silent in darkness, because the Jews do not proclaim the Redeemer, since that ineffable brightness of divinity does not illuminate them. For it is written: "Let the ungodly be taken away, that he may not see the glory of the Lord" (Isa. 26:10). Indeed, beholding them condemned in these darkneses, John says: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5). Hence David, not wishing but prophesying, says: "Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always" (Ps. 68:24). Therefore the ungodly are silent in darkness, because even though the Jews utter the words of divine Scripture in the praises of God, while they deny the Son, they consecrate no service of their voices to God the Father. For he is silent before God who, while praising the Father, is silent about the praise of the Only-begotten. But Him whom they despise as crucified, when He comes as Judge they shall tremble before. Whence it is also added: (Verses 9, 10.) "For not by his own strength shall a man be strengthened; the adversaries of the Lord shall fear Him."

24. But now he is hardened in unbelief, strong in error, and he who scorns to believe God does not fear to blaspheme boldly. As a mighty man indeed he cannot now be conquered, but then he shall by no means be strengthened as a mighty man, when He who was crucified by their treachery shall be seen in His majesty. Then His adversaries shall tremble, when

they see all things shaken by the power of the Crucified One, when all things are subjected to His judgment, when through the high heavens they hear the thundering judgments of their eternal damnation. Whence it is also added: (Ver. 10.) And He shall thunder upon them in the heavens. 25. For who are designated by the name of "heavens" in this place, if not the holy apostles? To these heavens indeed the Lord, promising the glory of His sublimity, says: "You will sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). The Lord, intimating to the Jews the thunders of these heavens, says: "They themselves will be your judges" (Luke 11:19). Therefore He will then thunder in the heavens upon the impious Jews, because they will then hear from the holy apostles the terrible judgments of their damnation, so that they may receive the sentence of eternal death at their examination—they who afflicted with persecutions those who were humbly preaching the goods of eternal life. And that these things should be understood concerning the last judgment, there follows: (Verse 10) "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth."

26. What are the ends of the earth, if not the furthest parts of this world? Indeed the Lord judges the ends of the earth, so that the sentence of His equity may leave nothing unpunished or unrewarded, because while He concludes the final things in judgment, He does not abandon anything that must be examined. (Verse 10.) Then He will exalt the horn of His Christ. 27. When He will receive all the elect into the eternal contemplation of His Only-Begotten, so that He may preside over them with that eternal and ineffable Majesty — those who, while they were living in the pilgrimage of the present life, were not with Him. Then He will exalt the horn of His Christ, when in His loftiness the sublimity of the Redeemer will be beheld. Concerning this sublimity, it is said through John: "We shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). For the power or kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is always equal; but it is said to be exalted then, when we shall be such as to be able to gaze upon His sublimity; for whatever the human mind can now imagine to itself concerning that sublimity is altogether nothing in comparison with that glory. For it is written concerning it: "What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him" (Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Therefore, first dominion is given to Christ, then His horn will be exalted, because then the height of His sublimity is beheld, when our nature too is raised up from the depths of its corruption, when by rising again it receives the wholeness of its

renewal, by which it may be able to contemplate the surpassing light of the Redeemer.

28. But if someone wishes to understand a kingdom by the horn, the holy Church is designated by the kingdom of Christ. This horn will indeed be exalted, because our lowly state will be brought to equality with the angels. Hence the Lord also says of the elect in the Gospel: "They were like the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). Concerning this exaltation of His horn, He says again: "The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). The horn of Christ will therefore be exalted, because the holy Church will be raised up in the eternal contemplation of her Redeemer; and she who is now pressed down in this valley of misery by the punishment of her fallen state will then, with death swallowed up, be lifted up, renewed at the summit of eternal joy. But we have now set forth these things by typological exposition; it remains for us to express them morally in the following volume.

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER 2.1

1. In the previous book, while we were discussing the text of sacred history in a moral sense, we placed Anna's fruitfulness in the perfection of the highest contemplation, because for the mind to conceive is to rejoice ineffably in the contemplation of the supreme omnipotence of God, while to give birth is to be unable to conceal the marks of the charity conceived in the mind. Now, what does it mean for her who gives birth to sing a canticle, if not to proclaim with true praises the Creator whom she loves ineffably? She says therefore: (1 Samuel 2:1) My heart has exulted in the Lord. 2. But she who ate and drank, who had a bitter spirit, who wept abundantly, who made a vow—because that mind can worthily praise almighty God which has arrived at the heights of His love through worthy struggles—she indeed learned through long practice to despise all things; and while she casts aside all created things from her attention, she rejoices all the more in the vision of eternal majesty, inasmuch as no appearance of any creature prevails to hold her back in love of itself. She therefore says: "My heart has exulted in the Lord," she who, despising all things, loves Him alone. He had indeed come to this same affection who said: "What remains for me in heaven, and what have I desired from you upon the earth? (Ps. 72:25). Hence, exulting in God, she says: "Your

face, your face, O Lord, I will seek" (Ps. 26:3). Hence the bride in the Canticles asks, saying: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (Cant. 1:1). Therefore when she says, "My heart has exulted in the Lord," what else does she glory in than that she has clung to the kisses of Him whom she ardently loves? And for this reason she alone says these things, who knows from experience what the power of love is in the bridegroom's chamber. For illuminated by victories over all passions and raised to the summit of virtues, she arrived at that height from which, through the joy of wondrous devotion and exultation, she placed her heart in God.

And because she says "my heart," what else has she declared than the freedom of her mind? The reprobate indeed do not have their own hearts, because the devil possesses them. Whence it is also said of the traitor: "When the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray him" (John 13:2). For if Judas, and not the devil, possessed his heart, he himself would rather have placed good in it than the devil evil. On the contrary, the chosen man speaks, saying: "I carry my soul in my hands" (Job 13:14). For what else is the hand of the elect but the power of inner freedom? What then is it for him to carry his soul in his hands, but to retain the glory of inner freedom in his power? Therefore, as often as we gravely sin, we do not have our own heart. Wherefore Jeremiah also, reproaching the Jewish people for sinning gravely, says: "Hear, O foolish people, you who have no heart" (Jer. 5:21). Hence likewise another prophet, turning back, confesses to God, saying: "Your servant has found his heart" (2 Kings 7:27). She therefore says: "My heart has exulted in the Lord," to declare the freedom of mind without which she could not worthily praise God. There follows: (Verse 1. "My horn is exalted in my God.")

3. By the horn, the intention of the elect mind is designated, which is wonderfully exalted when it arrives rejoicing at him who stands above all things. Hence she declares that her horn is exalted not in anything else, but in God. For whoever loves passing goods, his intention is assuredly lowered, not exalted, because it is fixed in the depths where it is placed by desire. Hence it is that the Lord says in the Gospel: Where your treasure is, there is your heart also (Matt. 6:21; Luke 12:34). Therefore the Lord wished to exalt our horn when he said: Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20, 33). Those to whom Paul conformed himself had an exalted horn, when he said: Our conversation is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). But whoever loves only heav-

only things, if he has not known how to taste that sweetness of intimate delight, although he may be greatly exalted, he has not yet reached the height of this exaltation. He, therefore, is sublime with this exaltation who, advancing through the increase of virtues, has attained the height of supreme contemplation—not only so as to love heavenly things perfectly, but also so as to rest, in the perfection of love, in the contemplation of almighty God alone. He has his horn exalted in God who enjoys the lofty vision of the interior light, in which he glories with a certain familiar singularity. Wherefore she does not say, "In our God," but "in my God."

For she says "my" of him whom she loves familiarly and singularly. To which dignity of divine familiarity he had certainly arrived who said: You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, and I will exalt you (Ps. 117:28). Hence Isaiah says, rebuking the unbelieving: Is it a small thing for you to be troublesome to men, that you are troublesome also to my God (Isa. 7:13)? She, therefore, who is raised up by the exaltation of her horn in God, singularly proclaims him her God, because that supreme infusion of divine sweetness makes the exalted mind both receptive of itself and deeply familiar. There follows: (Verse 1. My mouth is enlarged over my enemies. 4. Who are the enemies of the elect mind, if not evil spirits? What then is it to have a widened mouth over one's enemies, if not to reject all the persuasions of evil spirits by the most ample bounty of grace poured into oneself? For he has a narrow mouth who cannot prevail against all the deceits of evil spirits through the consideration of reason. For the mouth of the mind is reason, and to speak is to deliberate. For the mouth is filled when the reason of the mind is raised up through grace poured into it to the contemplation of the highest truth. Indeed, for it to be filled is to be imbued with the illumination of the highest truth. There it learns both what to desire eternally and what to despise temporally. And because the highest truth is love, the elect soul is raised up by the subtlety of truth and is inflamed with love for that thing which it has learned, and it keeps the teaching all the more strictly, the more fervently the force of love embeds it within itself. To this soul, even if evil spirits suggest evil things, they are confounded by the opening of its widened mouth, because, instructed by the truth of the highest wisdom and kindled by the torches of the highest love, it now possesses against the suggestion of error the immense light of wisdom, and possesses against the offered pomp of this world an ineffable love.

In the immensity of light it sees what to reject, and through the force of the highest love it delights in rejecting the unworthy things which it knows. Through wisdom it rebukes the evil things suggested, and in the power of love it refutes the things it has detected. Therefore it widens its mouth over its enemies, because from the abundance of reason it deliberates many things against the demons, and it destroys their objections all the more keenly because it recognizes in lofty things that by which it may reject evil suggestions. Whence, immediately intimating the cause, she says: 56 'Because I have rejoiced in your salvation.' 5. Which is indeed as if she were saying: Because my horn is exalted in my God. This certainly is to rejoice in the salvation of God, namely to have one's horn exalted in one's God. This is not understood of just any joy of salvation, but of that most perfect joy by which the chosen and perfected soul, in the manner of a bride, rejoices in the bridegroom. Concerning which joy David entreats, saying: Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and strengthen me with a princely spirit (Psalm 50:14). She, therefore, who glories in having her mouth opened wide over her enemies, is described as having first rejoiced in the salvation of God, because that blessed mind will be able to powerfully reject the persuasions of malignant spirits, which, having been sublimely raised up through contemplation into the divinity of the Redeemer, receives from Him both the greatness of wisdom and the fullness of charity. Whom indeed she proclaims with worthy praises, saying: (Verse 2.) There is none holy as the Lord is; for there is none other beside you, and there is none strong like our God.

6. For by these words of Anna, every chosen soul cries out this in praise to the Redeemer, which it believes to be a gift from him. But from this order of pious confession, the order is indicated by which we may attain those same goods of the gift which she set forth in sequence. Therefore the Lord is declared holy and strong, by whom we are sanctified, led to rest, and glorified. We receive sanctification from the Lord in the power of regeneration; but being—that is, rest from the changeableness of this corruption—in the ending of exile; and strength in the triumph of the resurrection. Therefore we attain the first of these gifts in this life, when the soul of each chosen one is in the flesh, but both are still placed in the struggle of labor; the next, however, in the soul alone apart from the flesh, after the life of the flesh, and now taken up from the labors of this life; but the last, in flesh and soul, but both now renewed through the glory of eternity. Therefore he is first called

holy, because for those regenerated through the washing of salvation, the love of God is poured into our hearts, through whose grace we are prepared for the goods of the eternal homeland, so that while this life slips away through the time of its course, that life may receive us, whose joy the departing souls of the elect from here may possess without fear of death.

Then being is ascribed to him, because, secure, we await the day of our consummation, namely the glory of the final resurrection, while in that gift of received rest we learn not to fear the scrutiny of the final judgment, but to await the joy of the promised glory. But in the last place he is declared strong, because in the joy of the future resurrection our weaknesses are strengthened, when the flesh rises from the dust; but that same dust of our flesh, transferred into the glory of perpetual incorruption, returns no more to the misery of its frailty. But it should also be noted that in these three we are led from one to another; but when one begins to have what was not had, he who receives what he did not have does not lose what he had before. For when we are led from sanctification to rest, and from the rest of the soul we are led to the strength of eternal incorruption, both the sanctification of love is increased for us in that rest, and rest and love grow greatly in the resurrection. For let each soul, joined to its Creator through love, beholding such great gifts, say in the words of Anna how well the gift of perfect regeneration and the power of love tastes to it. Let it say: There is none holy as the Lord is. Let it say how much better a gift is the promise of rest in the hour of its passing: Neither is there any other besides you.

Let it say how the most excellent and pleasing reward is its final renewal, in the joy of its perfected spirit and glorified flesh. Let it say: And there is none strong like our God. And it should be noted that Anna speaks this in a canticle of prayer. For to the chosen mind, to ask these things in a canticle is to desire such great gifts with joy. Indeed, for it to ask is to desire, and to rejoice is to sing. But she who so joyfully beholds the gifts of her dignity, how strongly she reproaches hidden enemies becomes known. For it follows, and says: (Verse 3) Do not keep talking so very proudly, boasting; let old things depart from your mouth. 7. For evil spirits speak lofty and ancient things, when they suggest to the faithful that the high things of this age, as they appear, should be sought after. Therefore, one who has already learned to exalt his horn in God, who knows how to be held in the joy of Majesty, looks down with reproach upon whatever is offered to him from the enticements

of this passing age, saying: "Do not multiply your speech, boasting lofty things; let the old words depart from your mouth." As if he were speaking openly and saying: "The things offered to me displease me precisely because through desire I see other things that greatly please me."

8. Because this is indeed said to apply to one who is already recognized as fit for the ministry of preaching, these words are fittingly understood as directed both against the arrogantly wise and against those who neglect the profession of a holy life. For he speaks lofty things boastfully who glories sublimely in the knowledge he has received, priding himself on his understanding. And he speaks old things who, setting aside the words of Holy Scripture, occupies himself with secular speech. Therefore it is said to the arrogant: "Do not speak lofty things, boasting." By these words it is shown that he does not forbid the manner of speech, but the disposition of the intention. As if he were saying openly: speak lofty things, but flee from glorying in what is called high. Hence Paul also piously admonishes his disciple, saying: "Be not high-minded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20). He did not say "Do not speak high things," but "Be not high-minded"; just as here it does not say "Do not speak lofty things," but "Do not speak boastingly," because the sacred words must be sought out on a deeper level, but the more deeply one advances in seeking them out, the more one ought to restrain oneself from the swelling of vainglory through the custody of humility. It is also said to those who speak idly: "Let old things depart from your mouth." For old things are the words of the world, because while the mind of the speaker is fixed upon them through intention, it is stripped of the beauty of its devotion. The reason why those who boast should not speak lofty things, and why old things should depart from their mouth, is shown by the cause that follows: (Verse 3) "Because the Lord is a God of knowledge."

9. Let the one who is knowing and arrogant therefore hear that he himself is not the lord of knowledge, but God is. For he would rightly speak boastfully if he himself, not almighty God, had been the master of the knowledge by which he is puffed up. Let us also hear, when we speak the words of the world, that God is the Lord of knowledge. For indeed the knowledge not only of the New but also of the Old Testament now renews the minds of the elect; for He came who would say: Behold, I make all things new (Isaiah 43:19). Since therefore we have so many new things which we can speak, we are by no means able to speak old things without fault. Let the old

things therefore depart from our mouth, so that when the fault of condemned oldness is restrained even from speech, we may pass over into the beauty of the new man. But if indeed we despise this, let us hear: (Verse 3.) And by Him thoughts are prepared.

10. As if from a lesser fault, with the comparison understood, he terrifies us, saying: Hence let those who speak idle words consider how greatly they ought to fear the fault of speech, if he to whom one sins by speaking reserves even the excesses of thoughts for the examination of his judgment. Let the arrogant likewise hear what follows: (Verse 4.) The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girded with strength. 11. For we have already said in the allegorical exposition that unclean spirits are designated by the name of these mighty ones. Since they fell from heavenly glory through pride, they are fittingly set before proud teachers as a warning, so that they may now think humbly of themselves to the degree that they contemplate how even angels fell from supreme glory through the desire for vain glory. We recall that our Redeemer also did this with His proud disciples, who, when they boasted of having demons subject to them, immediately heard from Him: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). The bow of the mighty, therefore, is the pride of malignant spirits. They are called mighty either because they thought great things of themselves, or because they overcome the human race by the force of great temptations. This bow, when impious intent stretched it, strove to hurl the arrows of its malice upward against its Creator. "I will set my throne in the North," said their prince, "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). But the bow of the mighty was overcome, because God resisted the pride of the apostate spirits, cast them down from heaven, and stripped them of the glory of their created excellence, so that in the fallen angels man might learn what to fear. For what will become of an earthen vessel, if God does not spare even golden ones that are full of the stench of pride? Hence Peter also speaks in his Epistle, saying: "God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down into hell with chains of darkness and delivered them to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). It is as though an elect and humble preacher were saying to the proud: That you may cease from your haughtiness, look upon the penalties of deserved damnation in the angels who are like you — that is, the fallen ones.

12. And setting forth whom they ought to imitate, she says: 'And the weak have been girded with strength.' If on account of the presumption of self-esteem the evil angels are called strong, the name of the weak rightly belongs to the blessed spirits, who, presuming nothing of themselves, are subject in perpetual humility to the power of their Maker. 'The weak have been girded with strength,' because, by the merit of voluntary subjection, the holy angels are joined to their Creator by the bond of inward love. To whom the name of girding fittingly applies, because anyone who is girded is held fast on every side by the belt with which he is girded, because clearly those most blessed spirits are so established in eternity that they can never fall from it. Hence it is that an angel is sent to Daniel preaching in Babylon, who is described as girded with fine gold (Dan. 10:5). Hence it is that the angel with whom John held conversation in the Apocalypse he beheld encircled with a golden girdle about the breast. Because indeed those same blessed spirits have risen from the merit of humility to the glory of love, but because they possess that same glory in the embrace of eternity, and do not possess it in fear of losing it, they are indeed ineffably glorious, but they can never lose that ineffable glory.

Therefore, that the arrogant may cease to boast, let him hear: 'The bow of the mighty is overcome.' And that, with the fault of pride condemned, they may advance in humility, it is said to them: 'The weak have been girded with strength.' For strength is bestowed upon the weak when, by the merit of subjection, the power of heavenly charity is poured into the meek. We are also girded when we are prepared for the ministry of the word. Rightly therefore the weak girded with strength are set before those who boast in lofty speech, because those spirits who are sent forth in ministry, for the sake of those who receive the inheritance of salvation, were humble before they were girded for ministry. For weakness is mentioned first, but the girding of strength afterward. Paul indeed points out to us these girded ones, saying: 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth in ministry, for the sake of those who receive the inheritance of salvation' (Heb. 1:14)? Of whom the prophet also speaks, saying: 'Thousands of thousands ministered to him' (Dan. 7:10). As if therefore she were saying: First know yourselves, and so prepare yourselves for the salvation of others, because the good of preaching is then well fulfilled when the preacher who is lofty in word strives to be humble in ministry. But because she rebukes the proud and arrogant preachers by speaking, she adds,

saying: (Verse 5) 'Those who were full before have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have been satisfied.'

13. Those are filled first who, while they receive the foods of pride as refreshment for the mind, cannot take in the delights of holy virtues, as though already full of food. But nevertheless they hire themselves out for bread, because in the Scriptures which they understand they think they receive spiritual gifts of virtues according to the greatness of wisdom. But they cannot be satisfied, because they can in no way add the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the fullness of arrogance. For the spirit of discipline itself flees from what is feigned, and does not dwell in a body full of sins (Wisdom 1:5). Hence it is also written: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble' (1 Peter 5:5). In vain, therefore, do they eagerly desire to receive the things of God, who by the very fact that they are proud make the bestower of gifts their adversary. Therefore they cannot be satisfied, because they do not obtain the gifts of spiritual graces. But who are the hungry, if not those empty of the foods of vices, fasting from pride? The hungry, therefore, are satisfied, because holy men, endowed with the stronghold of humility, while they do not think highly of themselves, merit the lofty gifts of virtues. For through the good of humility they become seats of the Holy Spirit, and while they receive him abiding in them, they are more fully filled with his gifts. Whence the Lord also says through the Prophet: 'Upon whom does my spirit rest, if not upon the humble, and quiet, and the one trembling at my words' (Isaiah 66:2)? Greatly, therefore, are the hungry satisfied, because in the fullness of gifts the Holy Spirit rests upon the humble.

14. This, however, can not unfittingly be said against negligent ministers of the sacred altar and presumptuous receivers of the Lord's body. For those who hire themselves out for bread were filled beforehand and saturated with the food of vices, because they do not prepare their body for the reception of the Eucharist. They indeed eat and cannot be satisfied, because even though they receive the sacrament with their mouth, they are in no way filled with the power of the sacrament. They therefore fast from that power of the sacrament precisely because they had been filled beforehand. For they do not receive the fruit of salvation in the eating of the saving host, who carry in their mind the sins with which they had filled themselves. Therefore none are satisfied except the hungry, because those who perfectly fast from vices receive the divine sacraments in the fullness of their power. And because even the

elect cannot be without sin, what remains except that they strive to be emptied daily of the sins with which human frailty does not cease to stain them? For he who does not daily drain off what he commits in transgression, even if the sins he heaps up are small, little by little the soul is filled, and they rightly take from him the fruit of interior satisfaction. Paul, urging us to empty ourselves of this fullness, says: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

For what does "prove" mean in this passage, except, having emptied out the wickedness of sins, to present oneself approved and pure at the Lord's table? Concerning those who are full he also adds: "For he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment upon himself. Therefore, since we sin daily, let us daily run to the laments of repentance, because that alone is the power which empties out what guilt accumulates in the belly of the soul. And then the hungry are truly satisfied, because the more diligently we are cleansed by the lament of repentance, the more abundant the fruit of divine grace we receive in spiritual refreshment. Because this satisfaction of the elect extends all the way to the end of the world, she adds and says: (Verse 5. "Until the barren has borne many, and she who had many children has grown feeble." 15. Who therefore is signified by the name of this barren woman, if not she of whom Paul speaks, saying: "The Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother" (Gal. 4:26, 27)? Whence also shortly after he fitted to her the prophecy of Isaiah, saying: "For it is written: Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry out, you who do not travail, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her who has a husband" (Isa. 54:1). But how is Jerusalem understood as barren—namely, the holy society of the blessed angels—when according to the meaning of its name it is fruitful with everlasting joy from the eternal vision of peace? But if she is the mother of the elect among men, she was indeed barren when the human race had perished in Adam. For she was as though unable to bring forth, since she lost through the persuasions of the fallen spirit him in whom she ought to have extended the bosom of her fruitfulness. The weak are girded so long until the barren one gives birth, because we have need of the powerful ministry of the humble angels until as many as are predestined to life from the human race are gathered together, even to the end of the world. For the Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather His elect from the four winds (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27).

For they are to be sent then to gather those for whose salvation they are sent daily, because they will not gather into the kingdom any except those to whom they now offer assistance through the strength of their girding. Even until the end of the world the hungry are filled. But rightly is this barren woman said to bear very many, because not all men, but only the elect, are led to eternal joys. Fittingly therefore she is also said to give birth, because through the ministry of angels we are taught to seek heavenly things, so that we may be able to attain their goods. But when this barren woman gives birth, she who had many children is weakened, because the fuller the gains of the elect that the heavenly kingdoms receive through the ministries of angels, the more the children of this Babylon are diminished. For she is as though weakened in her childbearing, who through the disordered love of passing things cannot, as she was accustomed, bear children. For everywhere the heavenly kingdoms are now preached, and indeed while the minds of the faithful love what they hear, while they also seek those things through good conduct, Babylon is as though constricted in her childbearing, because our mother Jerusalem brings forth throughout the world for God those whom Babylon was accustomed to bear for hell from her exhausted womb of perdition. Yet the strength of those who are girded is ascribed not to themselves, but to Him by whom they are girded.

Fittingly therefore it is added: (Verse 6) "The Lord kills and brings to life." 16. In these words, indeed, the order too must be noted. For he is said first to kill, then to make alive, because unless we cease to love the world, we cannot live for God through love, as John attests, who says: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Whence also he who remembered that he had been put to death and made alive, that he had been cast down and raised up, spoke, saying: "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). He was living, but not with the life of the world, because he said: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). Therefore it is not any of those who are girded, but the Lord who kills and makes alive. For to be put to death and made alive is to desire nothing that is present and to long for things eternal. To whom, then, thanks ought to be rendered for these gifts, she sets forth, saying: "The Lord kills and makes alive." Whence also the oft-named preacher of the nations says: "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). But in what order almighty

God works these things in His elect, she sets forth, saying: (Verse 6) "He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."

17. For in order to kill, He leads down to the depths; and in order to give life, He leads back from the depths. For to Almighty God, to lead to the depths is to terrify the hearts of sinners by the consideration of eternal torments. And for Him, to lead back from the depths is to raise up the terrified minds of the penitent and those mourning their sins, with the hope of un-failing life. For we cease to sin when, our hearts having been softened by heavenly grace, we dread future torments. And we are led back from the depths when, visited by inward consolation, we breathe again with hope of pardon from the lament of penitence. And so the Lord is fittingly said to lead to the depths and to lead back, because human hardness, by the preaching of man alone, is neither shaken by terror nor lifted up by love. For if it belonged to teachers to kill, as many as their preaching touched would cease to sin; and if it belonged to them to give life, whoever heard heavenly things from them, the love of their inmost affection would immediately kindle them to seek those things with every effort.

But now, since they often threaten sinners with eternal punishments, since they preach to them what heavenly goods they can, and yet they neither fear the punishments nor desire the joys, let us cry out with the words of Hannah in the praises of God, and attributing to Him also that by which some make progress through them, let us say: The Lord kills and gives life. The Lord therefore leads to the depths and leads back, because those can fear future torments, those can love heavenly joys, in whom through the words that man speaks outwardly, the mercy of God works inwardly. Moreover, there is that by which each person may recognize in himself whether he has already been led to the depths and led back, whether he has died to the world and lives for heaven; for if he is chosen, he makes progress. But concerning this same progress, she adds: (Verse 7) The Lord makes poor and makes rich.

18. The rich of this world therefore glory in their abundant wealth, because by the high and incomprehensible judgment of God, heavenly goods are hidden from them. The Lord therefore makes the poor, because while He reveals eternal goods to the elect, they consider themselves the poorer insofar as they see themselves driven from true riches. Whence also that king who was most abundant in worldly possession, because the Lord had shown him true riches, cried out to Him, saying: Look upon me and have mercy on me,

for I am alone and poor (Psalm 24:16). Hence the prophet Jeremiah, expressing in himself the illumination of each of the elect, says: I am the man who sees my poverty (Lamentations 3:1). For the Lord to make poor is therefore to rouse the minds of the elect, in the contemplation of everlasting goods, to contempt for all visible things. But since to the one to whom He reveals the highest things He also indicates that these same highest things must be sought through the prolonged price of labor, let it say that He who makes poor also enriches, because assuredly while we receive from Almighty God the knowledge of heavenly goods, from Him also we obtain the strength to strive with worthy labor for them. And well is it added: (Verse 7) He humbles and He lifts up.

19. Because in the contemplation of heavenly things they perceive how lowly they are on earth, but in that same lowliness of temporal want, through the grace of God, they lift themselves on the wings of their merits to the joys of everlasting life. They therefore receive humility in the estimation of their exile, but sublimity in the preparation of holy work. There follows: (Verse 8.) He raises the needy from the dust, and lifts the poor from the dunghill, that he may sit with princes. 20. For dust is the subtle deliberation of illicit thought, which renders foul the mind in which it has settled. For what is designated by dung except the foulness and boldness of committed wickedness? Hence the prophet too, beholding the life of carnal people buried under the filth of foul deeds, says: "The beasts have rotted in their dung" (Joel 1:17). Therefore, the gifts of God are enumerated in fitting order in the conversion of the wicked. For the needy one is first raised from the dust before the poor one is raised from the dung, because the deliberation of impure thought is first cut away from the heart, and afterward the fault is severed from action. Fittingly too the needy one is said to be raised from the dust, and the poor one to be lifted from the dung, because the one inwardly deliberating on wicked things sleeps from the contemplation of justice, while the one outwardly committing unlawful deeds lies in iniquity through action. And because he now wins trophies with the strong over malignant spirits, the text sets forth what the needy one, once raised, and the poor one, once lifted, deserves, saying: "That he may sit with princes, and hold the throne of glory."

21. For to sit belongs to one who triumphs. Hence also in the Apocalypse of John the Lord shows the dignity of our victory, saying: "He who over-

comes, I will make him sit on my throne, just as I also overcame and sat with my Father on his throne" (Rev. 3:21). Seeing this, Paul too, counting among God's praises the gifts of our resurrection and our being seated, says: "He raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). Princes therefore sit with him, because those who by his help suppress the forces of malignant spirits hold the dignity of being seated in their triumph over those whom they dominate by the power of the one presiding over them. Likewise princes sit with him, because even though they are seen to stand bodily in the hardship of this passing life, they nevertheless hold a seat of merits with the Redeemer on high, from whose conformity of glory they are not separated even in this valley of corruption. The needy and the poor in possessions are those who for the sake of the Gospel abandoned everything they could have had in the world. They, to be sure, in order to sit with princes, must be raised from the dust and lifted from the dung. For what are the flatteries of the tongue, what are the trappings of fleeting dignities, but dust? For by their fawning they defile the mind and blind it from true splendors.

And what are perishing riches and transitory possessions but dung to those who love eternal things? For dung is what holy souls hold in the contempt of humility, not in the appetite of desire. Hence Solomon too, seeing a rich man of the world saddened by the loss of temporal goods, says: "The sluggard is to be pelted with the dung of oxen" (Sir. 22:2). As if to say: He endures the blows of grief from that which the one who desires to labor for eternal life despises as dung. Hence Paul says: "I have counted all things as loss and consider them dung, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). The needy one is therefore raised from the dust and the poor one is lifted from the dung when the mind, renouncing the world, tramples underfoot whatever used to please it—the flatteries of human tongues, the honor of dignities, and the abundance of possessions—while it looks only to eternal things, which alone it ardently loves. For to be raised and lifted is to despise by sublimity of mind those things which one leaves behind in the body. And to sit with princes is to share with the citizens of the heavenly fatherland in the joy of eternal rest. Such a one then surely holds the throne of glory, because one who presides so sublimely never falls silent from the praises of his Creator. For the Psalmist, admiring this seat of glory, speaks to the Lord, saying: "Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O Lord;

they will praise you forever and ever" (Ps. 83:5). Isaiah proclaims this seat of glory, saying: "Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of praise" (Isa. 51:3). Holy Tobias likewise, showing this same seat, says: "And its streets will be paved with every precious and pure stone, and through all its lanes Alleluia will be sung" (Tob. 13:22). But let the rescued poor man look at what follows, because he is not brought immediately to the seat of princes and the throne of glory as soon as he has been raised up: "The hinges of the earth," it says, "are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them" (v. 8). 22. Because sinners are designated by the name "earth" in sacred Scripture, these "hinges of the earth" can fittingly be understood as those in whom the world revolves through foolish desires, and leads from one to another. When therefore we behold converted sinners, let us break forth in praise of the Creator with these words of Hannah. For it is as if we say in other words: Those who were long held on the wheel of passing things by worldly desire have now begun to belong to the Lord through His grace. And when, having now abandoned the allurements of secular life, they bravely endure powerful temptations, let us say: "He has set the world upon them." For He has set the world upon them, which, before it was placed upon them, was beneath them. For they now bear as a burden of temptations that which, by flattering them, served them as if subject to them, when they reclined upon it by pursuing pleasures and delights. And because those who had great delights in it suffer great temptations from it, there is added: (Verse 9) "He will guard the feet of His saints."

23. By these words indeed the help of divine protection and propitiation is shown in such a way that the grave dangers of temptations are indicated. For it is as if she were saying: They endure such great trials from the world to which they had clung, that only He suffices to help who cannot be absent from His faithful ones in tribulation. For to preserve the feet of His saints is to strengthen by grace the shaken affections of the elect in temptation, lest they fall. Hence also the prophet, who had wavered toward falling and yet had been preserved by the Lord, said: "But my feet were almost moved, my steps were nearly poured out" (Psalm 72:2). Hence again: "I was pushed and overturned so that I might fall, and the Lord upheld me. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He has become my salvation" (Psalm 117:13, 14). And concerning the weakness of the enemies she added, saying: (Verse 9) "And the wicked shall be silent in darkness."

24. But what does it mean that when the Lord is said to guard the feet of the saints, the silence of the wicked is mentioned, unless that we are never driven to the fall of sin except when the perverse temptations of malign spirits are suggested to us? When therefore the Lord guards our feet, the wicked are silent in darkness, because while we are protected by divine grace, the unclean spirits are utterly unable to give us the voice by which they might cast us down. Indeed they are silent in darkness, because they possess the darkened hearts of the reprobate, from whose obscurity they dare not advance toward us. Moreover, he explains why he guards the feet of the saints, saying: (Verse 9.) For a man shall not be strengthened by his own might. 25. As if to say: Therefore He holds them, because without Him they could not stand. For even if a man is recognized as a man of virtue, in his strength he has the fear of falling, he does not have the firmness of strength, and he falls by desiring unlawful things as often as his inner steps are abandoned by the Lord who holds him. Was he not indeed a man, he of whom it was sung in the chorus of young women: "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7)? Who indeed, when he was left amid his burdens to his own strength, fell driven into the sin of his flesh, and learned by experience in himself that a man does not have in himself the firmness of strength, but the fall of weakness. Whence also, fearing to fall back, he earnestly seeks Him by whom he ought to be held firm, saying: "Do not utterly forsake me" (Psalm 119:8). Let no one therefore deceive himself, as if he might find in himself the strength to stand, because even if we often overcome the great wars of hidden enemies, if we worthily pursue them by rejecting their persuasions as though turned to flight, the fleeing spirits do not then fear us, but Him whom they behold in us. Or certainly, if they also fear us, they fear us for this reason indeed: because they see us taken up into the strength of divine grace. Fittingly therefore it is added: (Verse 10.) "The adversaries of the Lord shall fear Him, and He shall thunder upon them from the heavens."

26. For we are heavens when we are lifted up to the height of the divine grace that presides over us. And we have thunders against His adversaries when with the powerful voices of holy desires we shatter everything that breathes upon us from their suggestion. For whatever thunder strikes, it kills. Therefore the thunders of the heavens are the perfect desires of the elect. For they come forth as if sounding terribly from the height of the heavens, when

from that summit of the mind they strike the malign spirits, over which Almighty God so presides that by the love of the One presiding, one easily overcomes everything that the audacity of the enemy suggesting evil things could have stirred to battle. But with the Redeemer forewarning, we know that he who perseveres to the end, he shall be saved (Matt. X, 22). And with the same Lord promising, we have learned that at whatever hour the sinner is converted, he shall be saved (Ezek. XVIII, 21). Therefore at the end of her canticle let Anna add, and let her say what should terrify the sinner, let her say what should make the righteous more cautious. (Verse 10.) The Lord, she says, will judge the ends of the earth.

27. He does not say "the earth," but "the ends of the earth." For the ends of the earth are those who have closed the final moments of their life with the commission of sin. For he who sins and corrects what he has done wrong is earth through sin, but is not the end of the earth, because by sinning he cast down the heights of his redemption, yet from the depths of his fall he rose again before judgment. For he wept over what he had done, and he awaits the coming Judge all the more joyfully, because in the condemnation of his earthliness he holds through penance the scourges of vengeance upon himself. Because, therefore, the Lord judges the ends of the earth, let the converted sinner not be terrified before the Lord by his former or middle deeds. Because likewise the Lord judges the ends of the earth, let the just man not presume upon his begun righteousness. For if sudden death overtakes him while he is still slipping from that righteousness from which he can fall, because sin is enclosed in his final moments, he is judged by the law of the ends of the earth. There follows: (Verse 10.) And He shall give dominion to His king, and shall exalt the horn of His anointed.

28. Since we referred this passage above to the Redeemer, we do not change it in the order of this explanation either. For He Himself is our peace, who made both one (Eph. 2:14). He is also the cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:4, 5, 6), in whom, while both walls of the elect are joined together, the structure of the eternal city is arranged. Let our discourse therefore maintain its custom, so that, having now set forth both the moral and allegorical understanding of the sacred canticle, both may converge in Him whom we believe by faith and whom we merit by our conduct.

CHAPTER 2.2

For the divine word follows, and says: (Verse 11.) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house. 1. We have shown that this man indeed designates the Redeemer of the human race; Anna his wife, His Church; the boy Samuel, the people of believers from the nations; and Ramatha the city, the heavenly homeland. What then does it mean that after his wife's canticle Elkanah is said to have gone away to Ramatha his city, since Anna sang her canticle to God after the boy was born, and the Redeemer ascended to heaven before the holy Church had begotten the gentile people in faith? This question is raised only by those who are known to understand only the bodily presence of our Lord. For did not Paul, who had ascended to the Father, have Him with him when he said: "Do you seek proof of Christ who dwells in me" (2 Cor. 13:3)? He likewise declares, saying: "As from God, before God and Christ we speak" (2 Cor. 2:17). What does it mean, then, that He was sometimes present to the holy Church through the grace of His gift, and sometimes withdrew Himself from her through the dispensation of trial? For He was present so that in the acquisition of the Gentiles He might abundantly pour forth the words of life; but sometimes, as though absent, He hid Himself, so that, with the gift of the word taken away, she might recognize what she was without His presence. Therefore, after the end of the canticle it is said:

"Elkanah went to his house," because the holy Church preaches lofty things from His presence, and He who withdraws Himself from mortals through dispensation continually presents Himself to the eternal citizens. For His house is that eternal fellowship of the heavenly citizens, which the Lord inhabits by loving, filling, and uniting Himself to them. He goes to it, therefore, when He leaves Anna, because He who beneficially withdraws Himself from us who are still making progress, unceasingly joins and shows Himself to the perfected and consummated citizens of the eternal homeland, for whom it is no longer necessary to be tested by His absence, since they have already been proven. Fittingly, therefore, after Anna's canticle it is said: "Elkanah went to his house," because the holy Church, which teaches the elect such sublime things, just as she is always left by the Lord's loving dispensation, so also she does not always have those lofty things to teach. But many hear the words, detest their past wickedness, and resolve upon works of amendment of life; yet when they cease to hear, they return to iniquity as if

they had never heard those same words of life. The gentile people, as hearers of the holy Church, were devout in listening and ready in acting. Fittingly, therefore, it is added: The boy Samuel was ministering in the presence of the Lord, before the face of Eli the priest.

2. As if it were openly said: From what he heard, he strove to please Almighty God. He is fittingly called a boy, because even though he had undertaken great things to be done in defense of our faith, nevertheless in that same generation of faith he was still new. And because he rendered a pleasing ministry to Almighty God, he was a minister in the sight of the Creator. For he is in the sight of the Lord whom divine favor gladly looks upon in the offering of his services. Fearing greatly to be cast out from this sight of the Lord, someone prays, saying: "Cast me not away from your face" (Psalm 50:13). Likewise, ardently desiring to be received into it, he considers with himself the delay of his waiting, saying: "When shall I come and appear before the face of God? (Psalm 41:3). Hence Elijah boasts and says: "As the Lord lives, in whose sight I stand" (3 Kings 17:1). Samuel therefore was a minister in the sight of the Lord, because in the services of the new religion the Gentile people was greatly accepted by Almighty God. By this word indeed the rejection of Judea is also secretly intimated, since Samuel alone, in whom the faithful people of the nations is represented, is said to minister before the Lord. He alone therefore was in His sight, because indeed the Jewish people had ceased to please Him. The Lord speaks both of these things through Malachi. For intimating the rejection of Judea, He says:

"I have no pleasure in you, and I will not accept a sacrifice from your hand" (Malachi 1:10). But He who cast Jewish faithlessness from His face, adding whom He gladly beholds, says: "From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations, and in every place a pure offering is offered to my name" (ibid., 11). But it must be carefully observed that it is said: "Before the face of Eli, Samuel ministered to the Lord," because the order of the ancient teachers long before recognized by foreseeing, and proclaimed by prophesying, that the ministry of the holy Church's preachers would bring about the conversion, love, and reverence of the Gentile people concerning service to the Redeemer. For he who said the following knew this people would be devoted in the Lord's service: "All kings of the earth shall adore him, all nations shall serve him" (Psalm 71:11). Hence Haggai speaks, saying: "The desired of all nations shall come, and the house of the

Lord shall be filled with glory" (Haggai 2:8). Hence Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse, who shall rise to rule the nations; in him the nations shall hope" (Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12). Hence the Psalmist says: "Praise the Lord, all nations, and praise him together, all peoples" (Psalm 116:1). Hence the patriarch Jacob says: "He shall be the expectation of the nations" (Genesis 49:10).

Before the face of Eli, therefore, the boy Samuel was a minister of the Lord, because what the Gentile people afterwards worthily offered to God, the order of the ancient teachers foresaw through the spirit of prophecy. And immediately concerning the rejected ones it is added: (Verses 12, 13. Now the sons of Eli, not knowing the Lord, and the office of the priest to the people. 3. Supply "were. For who else are the sons of Eli, if not the Israelites according to the flesh, who knew the Sacred Scripture published by the fathers, and yet did not know the one whom Scripture had promised? Whom indeed Truth itself rebukes in the Gospel, saying: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). And again: "If you believed Moses, you would certainly believe me also, for he wrote about me" (John 5:46). Therefore they did not know the Lord, who spurned the Redeemer coming in our flesh. Whence He complains through Isaiah, saying: "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's manger; but Israel has not known me" (Isaiah 1:3). As if to say: I opened to him the ways of my incarnation long before through the prophets, and yet he did not accept what I had promised when it was presented. For this reason he also did not know the duty of the priests toward the people. For he would have recognized the priestly office if he had preached that the one who had been promised by the law and the prophets had already come for the redemption of the human race. Because indeed he not only did not believe in Him, but even raged in persecuting Him, he neither knew the Lord nor the duty of the priests toward the people.

Yet his malice would have been less if he who refused to benefit the lesser ones by preaching the coming of the Redeemer had at least feared to do harm. It follows therefore, and says: 67 (Verses 13, 14. But whenever anyone had offered a sacrifice, the servant of the priest would come while the flesh was being cooked, and he had a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the basin, or the kettle, or the pot, or the cauldron, and whatever the fork brought up, he would take for the priests. 4. For what is it to immolate a victim, except to offer the confession of true faith to almighty

God? And what are the vessels in which the flesh is cooked for the sacrifice, except the minds of the faithful? For when they believe that the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, is the true Only-begotten of the most high Father, surely in them the flesh is cooked which is to be immolated to God through the service of inmost devotion. Who is the priest's servant other than the people subjected through obedience to the faithless pastors of the Synagogue? He is fittingly called a servant, because while he preferred to hold to the weak things of the law according to the letter, he refused to grow into a perfect man through the Gospel. But what does it mean that he is assigned to seize the portions of food by force? What again does it mean that he is said to hold a three-pronged fork in the violence he inflicts? The food of the chosen soul is the person of the Redeemer. This food is indeed cooked in the sacred vessels, while through the heat of the Holy Spirit it is prepared for the sweetness of refreshment in the minds of the elect. For the flesh is cooked when, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we both firmly believe and effectually confess that the Lord's humanity was assumed into the nature of divinity.

Hence also through Moses he suggests that the flesh of the Paschal Lamb is to be eaten, saying: "You shall not eat any of it raw, or cooked in water" (Exodus 12:9). To eat it raw is, apart from the grace of the Holy Spirit, to believe our Redeemer to be a mere man. It is cooked in water when the essence of the Redeemer is sifted through human wisdom. The Jews therefore eat it raw, the heretics cooked in water, because the former deny his divinity, while the latter, through human wisdom, empty out the mysteries of both his divinity and his humanity. The priest's servant is therefore sent to take away the food of the faithful, because the Jewish people, expelled from faith in the Redeemer, strove vehemently to tear away the love of faith in him from the hearts of the faithful. He is fittingly said to have held a three-pronged fork in his hand, with which he might prevent from being cooked whatever portion of flesh he could pierce and draw out. For the fork thrust by the hand of the servant is the persecution of the Jewish people against holy Church. And because he tried to harm the faithful with enticements, punishments, and terrors, the fork indeed had three prongs.

But it is rightly said that what the fork lifted up, the servant took for the priests, because it was a great feast for the wicked prelates if the crowd of their fawning or raging attendants could overthrow someone whom they

had recognized as standing firm in the height of our faith through confession. There follows: (Verses 14, 15. "So they did to all Israel who came to Shiloh, even before they burned the fat." 5. Fat indeed is the internal richness, in which that devotion of mind is expressed by which the minds of the elect are joined to their Creator in more perfect charity. They rightly offer sacrifice with meat already cooked, because no one will be able to rise to the sublimity of charity unless he first loves the mysteries of the incarnate divinity which he believes. For to believe through the Holy Spirit that the humanity of the Lord Jesus was assumed into divinity is to cook the flesh that is to be offered to God. Therefore, before the fat could be burned, the boy hastened to seize the flesh in all Israel, because the officers of the Synagogue thought to overthrow the new confessors of Christ before perfect charity could unite them to almighty God. This the very words of the sacred history indicate more plainly, where it says: "While the flesh was being cooked." By which words, certainly, not the completion of the cooking but the preparation is indicated. But the order of this wicked extortion is shown through what follows: (Verse 15.) "The priest's boy would come and say to the one offering sacrifice: Give me flesh to cook for the priest; for I will not accept cooked flesh from you, but raw."

6. He would give raw meat to the boy, who before the persecutors would assert the pure humanity of Christ, and the boy would cook it for the priest, because through the fire of malice the Jewish people would think this: that their leaders would willingly receive it in the refreshment of their mind. Therefore the priest's boy came and demanded raw meat, when the Jewish people, serving the letter of the law, urged the faithful to deny the divinity of the Redeemer. Coming therefore he says: "I will not accept cooked meat from you, but raw." Because the one whom the faithful person was compelled to confess as a mere man, he did not even wish to hear was God. The impurity of this people is indeed shown when sacrilegious words are doubled in wicked exaction. For it follows: "I will not accept cooked meat from you, but raw." Because he greatly desired to hear that Jesus our Lord and Redeemer was not Lord and man, but only a mere man. But those whom he tested as if imperfect in the flesh, he found perfect. For those who were compelled to deny the divinity of the Redeemer not only refused to deny the Redeemer, but took care to draw their very compellers to life. Whence it also follows: (Verse 16.) And the one sacrificing would say to him: "Let the fat be burned

first according to custom today, and take for yourself as much as your soul desires."

7. Indeed, he who promises him cooked meat at his pleasure strives to turn away the one demanding raw meat from a bestial appetite. As if the holy Church were giving an answer to the badly hungering Jews, and in place of the simple humanity which they desire to devour through craving, were promising back the food of divinity, saying: First allow to be cooked what you may have as understanding in the Holy Spirit for the refreshment of life. Did not the priest's servant then seek raw meat, when it was said to the one who had been born blind and was enlightened by the Lord: "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner" (John 9:24)? What is it to say, "Give glory to God," except: do not attribute the praises of your healing to this man, because he is not God? And he who is declared a sinner is not only denied to be God, but even a righteous man. To him indeed the blind man refused to offer the raw meat that was sought, and offered cooked instead, because by firmly declaring him the author of his salvation, from the displayed sign of such great wonder, he showed him to be not only a holy man, but true God. But the people, who had begun to follow beasts, having lost reason, importunately demanded that raw meat be served to them. For it follows: (Verse 16.) "You will give it now, otherwise I will take it from you by force." It follows: (Verse 17.) "For the sin of the servants was exceedingly great before the Lord." And he adds the reason by which this sin was shown to be great, saying: (Verse 17.) "Because they were drawing men away from the sacrifice of the Lord."

8. The sin is recognized to be exceedingly great which is not washed away by the tears of repentance. For the prophet, beholding this exceedingly great sin of the Synagogue, says: "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond" (Jeremiah 17:1). Or certainly the sin was exceedingly great before the Lord because it was dragging others into sinning. Wherefore it is also added: "Because they were drawing men away from the sacrifice of the Lord." They were indeed drawing men away from the sacrifice, because they were preventing the hearts of the weak from advancing to the confession of the true faith. And it should be noted that those who are drawn away from the sacrifice are called "men," because surely if they had persisted in the true confession of our faith, the divine word would have marked them with the title of sons of God. To whom indeed the Lord says

through the Psalmist: "I have said, you are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High; but you shall die like men" (Psalm 82:6–7). And there follows: (Verse 18.) "But Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy girded with a linen ephod."

9. A linen garment is known to be finer than a woolen one. And fittingly Samuel is said to have been clothed with a linen ephod, by whom the order of priests chosen from the nations is designated. For in comparison with the life under the Law, the new manner of life of the Gospel is the fineness of linen. For there something carnal was commanded; there everyone is cursed by whom no seeds of offspring are left in Zion. But in the New Testament, because all things are more refined, whoever follows its precepts is adorned as if with a more delicate linen garment: there indeed abstinence from marriage is condemned, here it is honored with wondrous praises; there priests beget carnally, here they bring forth the fruit of spiritual offspring all the more abundantly, inasmuch as they cannot suffer any loss of chastity even through the good of marriage. And fittingly, when Samuel's garment is described, it is reported to have been linen, so that it might openly show the glory of the new priesthood, which would shine with the splendors of a new chastity. But when Samuel is said to be a minister in the sight of the Lord, he is recorded as girded with a linen ephod, because divine services are then well performed when the person performing them is not defiled by the filth of carnal pleasure; and the gift of ministry is then acceptable to God when, through the purity of holy living, the person of the minister is pleasing to God. And because he was advancing in the beginnings of his newness, there follows further: (Verse 19.) And his mother made him a little tunic, which she brought to him when she went up with her husband to offer the solemn sacrifice to the Lord.

10. To offer a sacrifice of the Holy Church is to kindle the hearts of one's hearers in love of the Creator through the words of preaching. At that time, therefore, a small garment is said to have been brought to Samuel, because while he was still advancing through the growth of his newness, he received from the Church tokens of righteousness suited to his smallness, with whose splendor he might shine. There follows: (Verse 20.) And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, saying: May the Lord grant you offspring from this woman, in return for the loan which you have entrusted to the Lord. 11. Because in the person of Eli the priest the good teachers of the ancient people are also signi-

fied, he is known to have blessed Elkanah and his wife, since indeed the order of those same ancient teachers foresaw the spiritual union of Christ and the holy Church, and preached with devotion that the future offspring of those elect ones would be worthy of heaven. Although this was done long before, nevertheless it then became known that he had thus blessed them, when, with the grace of our redemption now revealed, each faithful person was able to believe that our ancient fathers proclaimed so many good things about this renewal. And so that the order in which this happened may be recognized, it is added: (Verse 20.) And they went to their own place.

12. For her to go away to her own place with her husband is for the holy Church to flee at times from the troubles of the active life and to devote herself through contemplation to the joys of the heavenly life. For that mother had left her child for a time, she who said: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). Was she with the child when the force of love had carried that distinguished teacher up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4)? Was she then with the child when, received into paradise, she heard words that it is not permitted for man to speak, and was caught up to her own place, because he showed this, saying: "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Heb. 13:14)? But maternal affection compelled her, who was going away to her own place with her husband, to return to her son. For she spoke and said: "To remain in the flesh is necessary for me on your account" (Phil. 1:24). There follows: (Verse 21.) Therefore the Lord visited Anna, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters.

13. By the three sons are designated all the more perfect members of the holy Church, who are known to have always done mighty deeds for the faith of the Trinity. But if the holy Church were to bring forth only the perfect, our weakness could not attain the rewards of eternal life. Therefore the frailty of the two daughters follows the strength of the sons, because although the holy Church has brought forth strong ones against the proud enemy of the human race, nevertheless even her weak members are led to the joys of the eternal homeland through the two precepts of charity. And because whoever had at that time begun to be trained for the priestly ministry did not always remain in the initial stages of his beginning, there follows: (Verse 21.) And the boy Samuel grew great in the sight of the Lord. 14. In this passage it is very much to be noted that the boy Samuel is said to have been both a boy and magnified. But when he is declared to be magnified, this

praise of his virtue is said to have been held not in the sight of men, but in the sight of the Lord. Why then is he called a boy, unless because he had been raised to the height of perfection? Samuel is therefore called both a boy and magnified in the sight of the Lord, because the new order of preachers, even if it has attained to the height of great conduct, has not lost the virtue of its humility. Indeed, to be magnified before God would be of no profit if one ceased to be a boy, because having lost humility, one would be unable to please almighty God by the loftiness of one's conduct. For they had already been magnified who were casting out demons from the possessed in the name of Jesus; but because they had lost the good of their childhood, the Truth rebuked them, saying: "I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Hence again, making a pronouncement, He says: "Unless you are converted and become like little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Because, therefore, the life of the new preachers is both sublime in merit and lowly through humility, Samuel is fittingly declared to be both magnified and a boy. And because on both accounts they are greatly acceptable to God, he is said to have been magnified not simply, but in the sight of the Lord. There follows: (Verse 22.) Now Eli was very old, and he heard all the things that his sons were doing in all Israel, and how they slept with the women who kept watch at the door of the tabernacle.

15. In the person of Eli, not only the old priesthood but also the teachings of the ancient fathers are prefigured, because from the fact that he presided with spiritual dignity, he undertook this office: that he should instruct with saving preaching those for whom he would offer pleasing sacrifices to the Lord. What then does it mean that Eli is said to be old, except that in the hearts of the reprobate Jews the force of the heavenly commandments is weakened? Indeed Eli was young as long as Sacred Scripture maintained the force of great authority among the elect of the Synagogue, because evidently it had received the promises of the coming Redeemer and awaited him with great desire. Eli therefore grew old when Judea lost the devotion of observing the promise, so that it beheld the Redeemer desired by its fathers proving himself by miracles before it, and, utterly blind in so great a light of his, doubted the presence of truth. He is also said to have been very old, so that it might be taught that all the force of faith in the Synagogue had withered away. And we truly say that if Eli was very old, he lived altogether feebly. For

what was it then for the aged Scripture to live, except to minister a very feeble aspiration of faith to the Synagogue?

Indeed he could be very old and yet live, since the hearts of the Jews wavered so that they neither believed the Lord Jesus to be the true Redeemer, nor openly condemned him as a blasphemer. For the evangelist John shows the weakness of this old age, saying: "Some said, 'He is good,' but others said, 'No, but he deceives the crowds'" (John 7:12). Hence the Jews themselves, bringing forth the cunning of their craftiness, say: "How long do you hold our souls in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). Hence likewise they say: "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you" (Matthew 12:38). 16. But Eli, very old, heard all the things that his sons were doing to all Israel. He certainly heard these things, because he knew them. For what we have come to know, we hold enclosed within the halls of memory. Indeed, the sacred eloquences, when consulted, bring forth from within themselves all the perfidy of the Jews written outwardly, and display it as if long preserved in memory. Amos, as it were ascribing this knowledge of hearing to Eli, says: 'The Lord God will do nothing upon the earth, which He has not revealed to His servants the prophets' (Amos 3:7). Hence Habakkuk confesses to God the Only-begotten, saying: 'O Lord, I have heard your report, and I was afraid; I considered your works, and I was astounded; in the midst of two animals you shall be made known' (Hab. 3:1, from the interpretation of the LXX). For the ancient teachers of the Synagogue to hear of the crimes of the sons is to foreknow them. But he sets forth what he foreknew, because it says: 'All the things that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they were sleeping with the women who kept watch at the door of the tabernacle.' For to sleep with Jewish women is to be defiled by various heresies. And fittingly those same women are reported to keep watch at the door of the tabernacle. For what is the door of the tabernacle, if not the letter of the spiritual law?

But when the Jews understand sacred Scripture according to the letter alone, they established heresies at the very place from which they could have entered into the secret of the true faith. For just as one enters through the door into the interior of the tabernacle, so through the letter of sacred Scripture one enters into the spiritual knowledge of the Redeemer. Therefore, because Judea is deceived through observance of the letter, the women are reported to keep watch at the door, not inside the tabernacle. And because the Jews contradict our Redeemer in all the Scriptures, it is said that there was

not one woman, but many. These things indeed the sons of Eli do to themselves, because according to the voice of the prophet: 'The soul that sins, it shall die' (Ezek. 18:4, 20); but they are said to do these things to all Israel, because while the leaders perish in the night of their error, they wrap the lesser ones in the blindness of their own darkness. The sons of Eli therefore sleep with the women, because the reprobate Jews are defiled by the mingling of their heresies even until the end of the world. They also sleep, because although they are overwhelmed by the most grievous night of their error, they are nevertheless to be awakened to faith in the Redeemer at the end of the world through Elijah (Matt. 17:11). There follows: (Verse 23.) 'And he said to them:

Why do you do things of this kind, the worst things which I hear from all the people?' 17. Behold, Eli was an old man, and he spoke sharply, because the power of sacred eloquence, even if it fails in the heart of the reprobate, nevertheless before those who rightly understand, subtly searches out the faults of the Jews. For examining strictly, he says: "Why do you do such things as these, the very worst things that I hear from all the people?" But he who, searching, asks "Why do you do this?" clearly shows that they were plunging into the night of heresy without the discernment of reason. Moreover, he says that they had done the very worst things, which he was hearing, and he asserts that those very worst things were from all the people. What is this, except that the whole of the Jewish people had fallen into the depths of heresies? But the cause of that ruin was the reprobate priests. Whence also Hosea, prophesying, says: "The cause of the ruin of the people is the wicked priests" (Hosea 5:1). For the subject people fell precisely because they eagerly imitated their fallen leaders. Therefore, when he says, "the very worst things that I hear from all the people," these things should be understood as being done by the people, not reported by them. This is as if he were saying: "The very worst things that I hear are being done by all the people — why do you do them?" Whence also, immediately making clearer what he had said, he adds: (Verse 24) "Do not, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear of you, that you cause the people of the Lord to transgress."

18. But how would the people of the Lord transgress His commandments, if they themselves were sleeping with women? But because this was happening to them in a figure, it was assuredly prefiguring what was destined to occur at the time of the Lord's Incarnation. For when priests sleep with wo-

men, their subjects transgress the commandments of the Lord, because while prelates are stained by the admixture of heresies, the reprobate multitude of the subject Synagogue is plunged into the same corruptions. He says therefore: "Why do you do such things as these, which I hear, the worst things, from all the people? This is as if he were saying: You sin all the more gravely, inasmuch as you stain the entire people more foully by your crime. Something similar is also said through the prophet: "From Dan," he says, "was heard the snorting of his chariots and horses" (Jeremiah 8:16). In this passage, it should certainly not be understood that he is reporting a sound heard from Dan, but rather that Dan himself, raging with chariots and horses, produces the very sound that is heard. In this passage it should also be noted that he who reported having heard the worst things from all the people added words of gentle affection, saying: "Do not, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear about you, that you cause the people of the Lord to transgress.

And indeed Eli rebuked sharply and admonished gently, because Scripture, both denouncing the error of the Jewish people on behalf of the ancient fathers and rebuking it, also calls them from the night of that same error of theirs, with benevolent affection, to the day of true faith. He calls them sons, so that they may recognize that they ought to be heirs of the paternal promise, and receive the Savior of the world all the more devoutly inasmuch as they are not unaware that the promise of Him was made to the fathers. But also, desiring to call them back from the audacity of sin, he adds a reason, saying: (Verse 25) "If a man sins against a man, God can be appeased on his behalf; but if he sins against God, who will pray for him?" 19. For a man to sin against a man is for one human to do perverse things against another human. What then does it mean when he says, "God can be appeased for him," unless that such sins were light in comparison with those which the Jews were planning to commit against the Son of God? For they were sinning against God, because he whom they were plotting to kill had shown himself to be God by the most manifest light of miracles. For the Lord showed this through himself, saying: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else has done, they would have no sin" (John 15:24). And to show the implacability of God the Father, he adds, saying: "But now they have no excuse for their sin, because they have seen and hated both me and my Father" (ibid.). It is therefore as if he were saying: By whose prayer is that

sin pardoned which is committed against the very one who pardons? Who beseeches the almighty Father on behalf of the one who condemns the co-eternal Only-begotten to death? For he would say nothing more plainly if he were to declare openly, saying: This one whom you persecute as a mere man is also God. The law of reason therefore demands that he who persecutes the Creator be deprived of pardon. But divine mercy surpasses the strictness of reason;

for he showed the equity of the law, but did not maintain the force of the pronounced declaration in the execution of the promulgated judgment. For by the rigor of equity it was decreed that no prayer would attain the obtaining of pardon; but for those for whom no prayer of man sufficed, the mercy of the Redeemer did not fail. Every man who might pray for the transgressions is removed; but for those for whom no man was sufficient, God himself became man, a merciful intercessor. For hanging on the cross he prayed, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). God was therefore appeased toward those who had sinned against God, not by another's prayer, but by his own. But God was appeased not toward all, but toward some. For some persecutors of the Lord were converted when the apostles preached, but the rest perished. For Luke mentions these, saying: "Their number came to be five thousand" (Acts 4:4). But concerning the reprobate it is added: (Verse 25) "And they did not listen to the voice of their father, because the Lord willed to kill them."

20. The Lord, declaring through the prophet, says: "I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live" (Ezek. 18:23; and 33:11). How then does it befit Him to wish to kill the sinner, and yet not to desire the death of the sinner? But in the aforementioned testimony there follows that from which the truth may be recognized; for He says: "But that he be converted and live. For He who wishes the sinner to live so that he may be converted, if He knows by divine foreknowledge that this one is inconvertible, kills him. The Lord therefore wishes to kill, but those whom He foreknows will refuse to be converted. For He is declared merciful and just when the Prophet implores: "Lord," he says, "deliver my soul; our God is merciful and just" (Ps. 114:5). Through mercy indeed He awaits the conversion of sinners; through justice He condemns those who have not been converted. Through mercy He wishes sinners to be converted and to live, but through justice He wishes to punish those who have refused to be converted;

mercifully He saves no one except the willing; through justice He condemns the unwilling. Therefore, when He is said to wish to kill, the greatest and incorrigible impiety of sinners is shown, which is punished by the voluntary execution of divine justice. So indeed we see the most merciful judges of secular affairs act, who would wish that no one transgressed, so that they themselves would have to punish no one;

but when crimes are boldly committed by the wicked, they willingly punish those whom they would have more gladly preferred not to have committed punishable offenses. Against this, however, it is observed in this passage that it does not say: "Because they refused to hear the voice of their correcting father," but: "They did not hear, because the Lord wished to kill them. But whoever rightly considers the equity of divine judgment thinks it makes no difference whether someone is killed, or is left in that crime in which he perishes by eternal reprobation. It is as if it said: So great was the magnitude of their guilt that they both received the admonitions of conversion and were in no way able to rise from the pit of their death; and those who had drunk the ocean of God's wrath had as the culmination of their damnation not only the punishment for the crime committed, but also the added vengeance for the preaching they had despised. But why do we marvel at this concerning the past, when we perceive it happening even now: namely, sons despising the admonishing Eli, and the Lord wishing to kill? For what else does Sacred Scripture daily suggest to the Jews other than the darkness of their error? It does not indeed so preach the Redeemer through hidden and spiritual meanings that it does not openly show His incarnation, nativity, passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Nor are they so irrational that they cannot see that such excellent goods befit the Redeemer;

but nevertheless they are blind, so that they hear that the signs promised to their fathers have shone forth in the Redeemer, and do not believe. They are therefore blind not only in seeing what was promised, but in not believing what has been fulfilled. Why do they not hear the voice of Scripture admonishing them, unless because the Lord wishes to kill them? Nor is it surprising, however, if they perish by the judgment of Him whose Only-Begotten they killed. For it is by the strictness of innermost equity that it is dealt with the Jewish people, that they hear the admonitions of life daily as the Scriptures speak, and yet they in no way believe the Scriptures that admonish them. But, having rejected the faithlessness of the Jews, he sets forth with

what successes the order of holy preachers prevails among the nations, saying: (Verse 26. "But the boy Samuel advanced and grew, and was pleasing both to God and to men."

21. Indeed, it was advancing through the gain of preaching, and growing in the number of ministers. For the Apostle boasts of its progress, saying: "From Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). Luke also recalls the manner of its growth, saying: "As the number of disciples was growing, there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the ministry" (Acts 6:1). And shortly after: "They chose," he says, "Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Prochorus, and the rest" (ibid., 5). They set these before the sight of the apostles, and praying, they laid hands upon them. Likewise, concerning this advance of the new preachers, it is written: "Their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Ps. 18:5). 22. But it must be subtly considered what is said: 'He was pleasing both to God and to men.' A teacher is pleasing to men when he presents himself as venerable to his subjects and adorned with good character. But he is pleasing to God when he refuses to glory vainly over his good conduct and desires to merit the praise of God alone. Therefore it says: 'He was pleasing both to God and to men,' because some preachers display a pretense of holiness which they do not possess. These, therefore, because even though they please men they displease God, it is now said of Samuel in the type of the new and chosen preacher: 'He was pleasing both to God and to men.' They present themselves as venerable to their subjects, and they offer to God the purity of their intention. Indeed, he had strived to please men who said: 'We are the good fragrance of Christ in every place' (II Cor. 2:15). And likewise: 'I have become all things to all men, so that I might save all' (I Cor. 9:22). He also taught his hearers to please men, saying: 'Be without offense to Jews and Gentiles, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking what is useful to me, but what is useful to many' (I Cor. 10:32, 33). But he who had indicated that he was pleasing to men commends the purity of heart, saying: 'Our glory is this: the testimony of our conscience' (II Cor. 1:12). 'He was pleasing both to God and to men.' This new order of preachers presented itself outwardly as venerable to its hearers for imitation, and inwardly as acceptable to God through innocence of will. There follows: (Verse 27.) 'A man of God came to Eli.'

23. What is represented by this man of God, if not that venerable company of the holy apostles? He is indeed called a man of God on account of the excellence of his holiness, because he governed the summit of authority, which he had ascended in the governance of the whole world, with an equal loftiness of virtue. He came to Eli at that time when he approached the chief priests to announce the rejection of the Synagogue. There follows: (Verses 27, 28.) And he said to him: Was I not plainly revealed to the house of your father, when he was in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh, and I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to ascend to my altar, and to burn incense before me, and to wear the ephod in my presence, and I gave to the house of your father all the sacrifices of the children of Israel?

24. Because Judea is rejected by divine judgment, it is shown with what wonderful disposition of equity the severity of that judgment itself was brought about. For first the gifts bestowed upon Eli are enumerated, so that while almighty God is shown to be so generous a giver, it may be known how justly He strikes the one who despises Him. He declared that He had revealed Himself to the house of his father, so that he could have no excuse of ignorance. And He teaches that He had shown him this same knowledge of His revelation in Egypt, so that Eli might by no means think that he had obtained it by his own merits. As if He were openly saying: There I offered Myself to be known by him, where he could forget Me, where he did not know how to remember Me. And lest perhaps the very gifts of divine knowledge might seem small to the reprobate, he is declared to have been raised from the other tribes of Israel to the summit of the priesthood. As if He were saying: I preferred him to those to whom he was not superior, but equal.

25. It should be noted that three things are indicated in the office of the priesthood itself. "That he should go up," it says, "to my altar, and burn incense to me, and wear the ephod before me. What is shown by this altar, if not that stone which the patriarch Jacob set up as a pillar (Gen. 28:18)? And what other stone is expressed by this, if not the one Paul proclaims in praise of the faithful, saying: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20)? The father Eli was therefore chosen by the Lord for the priesthood so that he might go up to the altar, because the order of the ancient teachers presided over the people subject to them for this purpose: to proclaim the restoration of the human race that was to come in the advent of the Redeemer. And he burned

incense, because he joined the hearts of his hearers through desire to the one whom he proclaimed as the future Redeemer. He also wore the ephod, because through the longing of so great an expectation he displayed the adornment of a worthy manner of life. He would indeed burn incense and yet not wear the ephod if he set the hearts of his hearers ablaze with desire for the coming Redeemer, from whom he himself would differ by the inconsistency of a shameful way of life.

And because almighty God sought the truth of religion and not its pretense, "before himself" and not before the people, he declared that he had commanded him to wear the ephod. To wear the ephod before the Lord is to seek from the innocence of one's life the reward of divine goodness alone. Now these things are openly spoken against Eli by way of reproach. For he did not go up to the altar, because that priesthood which presided over the Synagogue in the time of the revealed truth in no way proclaimed to the peoples subject to it the one who shone forth as the Redeemer of the human race with such greatness of signs. And he did not burn incense to God, because he stirred the people to persecution of him, not to love. He also disdained to wear the ephod before the Lord, because he shone with no truth of religion. For even if that outward adornment of life displayed certain marks of respectability, it was from the pretense of deceit, not from the intention of charity. Hence the Lord also rebuked this very thing in them, saying: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, because you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful to men, but inside are full of dead men's bones" (Matt. 23:27). But to the one to whom he had given so many spiritual gifts, he would have seemed to have conferred too little unless he also provided temporal things. Hence it is added:

"And I gave to the house of your father all the sacrifices of the children of Israel. As if he were recounting to him with open accusation, saying: "In nothing did I fail him; I bestowed the heights of spiritual honor and power, and I supplied an abundance of earthly plenty for temporal uses. But let us hear with what urgency of inquiry he who so reasonably enumerates the gifts he bestowed now examines the audacity of his transgression. For it follows: (Verse 29. "Why do you kick at my sacrifice and my offerings, which I commanded to be offered in the temple?" 26. For "why" is not said except by a judge who urgently investigates. And he who is rebuked for having kicked away the victim of God and His gifts is judged to have done injury without

the counsel of reason. It should be noted that he speaks in the plural number: "Why have you kicked away my victim," so that what is said may seem to pertain not only to Eli but also to his sons. For wild animals are accustomed to kick away things clinging to them. For what other victims did the faithful have than to persist in the praises of their Redeemer, to proclaim that Christ Jesus died for the salvation of the world, and that by rising again He restored the life of the human race? And what other offerings were theirs, except to ceaselessly offer thanksgivings to Almighty God for such great benefits bestowed upon them? These indeed the sons of Eli kicked away, because in their rejection of the new preaching, they did not follow the counsel of reason through the sacred Scriptures, but the impulse of savagery. For the Truth desired to call them back from irrational cruelty to the intention of rational counsel, saying: "Search the Scriptures, for you think that in them you have eternal life; and they bear witness of me" (John 5:39). Whence here also it is said: "Which I commanded to be offered in the temple.

For in the law, the psalms, and the prophets, it had been written concerning the passion, the resurrection of the Lord, and the state of the universal Church. Therefore the leaders of the Synagogue kicked away with their heel the victim and the gifts of the Lord commanded to be offered in the temple of the Lord, because indeed they strove not to examine the preaching of the holy Church by the authority of Holy Scripture, but to reject and cast it away by the sole impulse of their savagery. For if they consulted the commandments of God in sacred Scripture with an enlightened mind, they would have received the holy preachers, whom they fiercely cast out, as though divinely sent to them. But He who rebukes the sons of Eli, that is, the old teachers of the lesser order, for their irrational savagery, also accuses the father himself of negligence, saying: (Verse 29) "You have honored your sons more than me."

27. As if openly rebuking, he says: They have driven others away, and you have honored those who drive them away. He honored his sons more than God, because while he despised their openly wicked deeds, he provided them with temporal gains. Hence he also adds: (Verse 29.) That you might eat the firstfruits of every sacrifice of mine. 28. By which words indeed he seems to reproach the greater order of teachers, who for this reason consented to the Redeemer's death, because they feared losing the profits of the old offerings. Whence also, having taken counsel with the Pharisees, they said: What do we

do, because this man performs many signs? If we let him go on like this, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation (John 11:47, 48). And again: See that you are gaining nothing; behold, the whole world has gone after him (Ibid. 12:19). He therefore honored his sons so that they might eat, because he fell silent from the intention of preaching, lest while he asserted the truth of the new offering, he would no longer be able to have the old things for the indulgence of his own pleasure. Since therefore he has set forth the greatness and character of the guilt, let us now see with how great an equity of examination he suggests the measure of punishment. For adding he says: (Verse 30.) Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: Speaking I spoke, that your house and the house of your father would minister in my presence, henceforth and forever. But now far be this from me.

29. As if striking with an open and fitting meaning, he says: You honored your sons, so that you might eat the firstfruits of every sacrifice; but therefore the rights of the firstfruits are taken from you, because those who were honored were unworthy. For what does it mean to say: "Far be it from me that your house should minister in my sight," except: I cast you down from that summit to which the rights of the firstfruits were owed? By a wonderful execution of justice, therefore, he was caught, so that from the very thing for which he greedily sought the eating of the firstfruits, from that very thing he fasted from the receiving of the firstfruits. For he endured the Redeemer's death lest he lose the priestly gains, but He received from the triumph of death that by which He destroyed the profits of the old sacrifice. And He says: "I spoke and declared that your house and the house of your father would minister in my sight; but now, far be this from me." As if He were saying in plainer words: That you might stand on so great a height of dignity, I frequently admonished you, but now you are not such as I desired you to be. And because this is said concerning the rejection of the Jewish people, there is added concerning the order of the new preachers: (Verse 30.) "But whoever glorifies me, him will I glorify."

30. For now we behold the glory of the one who glorifies, because the preachers of holy Church sing the praises of almighty God with great splendor of life, and rejoice in their universal preeminence throughout the world. Behold, now all the Gentile nations are laid beneath the footsteps of the priests, and those whom they rejoice to submit themselves to in obedi-

ence they glory to possess as patrons in heaven. The Lord therefore glorifies the one who glorifies Him, because those from whom He daily receives devoted praises He raises up to honor throughout the whole world. Is it not the glory of one who has been glorified to remain on earth and to shut heaven? To live life in common with other men, and yet to open the heavenly seats above to those subject to the authority of their power? For he was glorifying the Lord who said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). But the Lord glorified the one who glorified Him, because He answered him, saying: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (ibid., 19). But concerning the cast-off reprobates of the Jews it is added: (Ver. 30.) "But they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

31. Indeed they themselves despise, who by no means believe that he is the Redeemer of the world: about whom certainly the Truth itself complains in the Gospel, saying: "But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying: We do not want this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). But we now see their ignobility, because they are proscribed both in lineage and in condition. They are indeed ignoble in lineage, because they heard from the Truth itself: "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). They are also ignoble in condition, because having lost their liberty and kingdom, they are oppressed by perpetual servitude among the nations. But he shows the order of punishments more clearly, saying: (Verse 31.) "Behold, the days are coming, and I will cut off your arm, and the arm of the house of your father, so that there will be no old man in your house."

32. Now he is without an arm, because he who lost the temple and the tabernacle does not extend his hand for the offering of the old sacrifice. And because He was speaking to Eli, that is, to the chief priests of the Synagogue, He threatens to cut off not only his arm but also his house, so that He might clearly indicate the universal destruction of the old rite, and so that we might perceive that what we now see accomplished in the new age was ordained in ancient times. Therefore the Lord cut off both his arm and his house, because He utterly removed both the high priests of Judea and the lesser priests from the old sacrifice. Whence it is fittingly added: 'So that there shall not be an old man in your house.' By old men we should understand priests, whose office, because it is carried out with the weight of great

dignity, is emptied of no childish levity by the burden of religion. His arm, therefore, and the house of his father were so cut off that there is no old man in his house, because the rite of the old priesthood so vanished that absolutely no one remained who could any longer sacrifice according to the old custom. For after the Redeemer of the human race offered Himself for our sins in the new manner of sacrifice, being a priest according to the ancient custom ceased. But he who suffers the losses of a forfeited priesthood bears the torment of a greater punishment from the pain of envy. Wherefore it is added: (Verse 32.) 'And you shall see your rival in the temple, in all the prosperity of Israel.'

33. For he sees his rival within the temple, because he himself has already been cast out. For who else is the rival of the old priesthood, if not the order of the new preachers? Who indeed, while striving to equal the zealous efforts of the ancient and chosen fathers by their manner of living and teaching, assuredly emulates the good things of Eli in a good way. Hence Paul admonishes, saying: "Be zealous for good in all good things" (Gal. 4:18). And what are the prosperous things of Israel to be understood as, if not the felicities of this passing age, in which Israel according to the flesh greatly rejoiced? Therefore, in all the prosperous things of Israel, he sees his rival—that is, he who beholds the preachers of truth in the holy Church prospering both in abundance of resources and in the eminence of their dignity. What is also asserted about his being seen in the temple is made clear by a more perfect understanding. For in all prosperous things the rival is in the temple, because the order of preachers arranges everything that serves them from temporal happiness in the contemplation of eternity. There follows: (Verse 33.) "Yet I will not entirely remove from you a man from my altar."

34. For He would have entirely removed the man from His altar, if He had admitted none to the unity of our faith. Therefore He did not entirely remove him, because even though He rejected the reprobate priests of the Synagogue, He nevertheless mercifully brought many of them to the knowledge of Himself. Of these indeed Luke makes mention in the Acts of the Apostles, saying: 'A great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7). For those were found worthy of so great and new a ministry, who were unwilling to remain in their old state with the lost. But because not only the elect preachers from the Gentiles, but also those who believed from Judaea, were a source of tormenting envy to the Jewish priesthood,

there follows: (Verse 33.) 'But one to make your eyes fail and your soul to waste away.' 35. Or for this reason He did not entirely remove a man from His altar descended from him, so that Eli's eyes might fail and his soul waste away, because indeed He did not wish to take up the elect from Judea for the ministry of the new preaching, so that, with them removed, guilt might hold the reprobate fast unto punishment. For the eyes of Eli failed when the supreme priesthood had the truth of faith on the lips of preachers within its hearing, and did not recognize it. His soul also wastes away, because indeed through the punishment of its rejection it withered, when it lost the grace of the Holy Spirit. There follows: (v. 33.) 'And a great part of your house shall die when they have reached manhood.'

36. The age of manhood is the time of the Lord's Incarnation, which indeed the Apostle indicates, saying: "When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem those who were under the law, and that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). What then were the precepts of Judea, if not certain instructions of infancy? The Apostle likewise indicates the time of this childhood, saying: "When we were little ones, we were serving under the elements of this world" (Ibid., 3). In the age of manhood, therefore, she died, because in the fullness of time she raged against the Redeemer of the world, and pierced herself through with the sword of unbelief. But it is well that not the whole house, but a great part of his house is foretold as about to die, because some of them believed in the Redeemer. And adding the cause of greater grief, he says: (Ver. 34.) "And this shall be the sign to you, that which shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. In one day they shall both die."

37. We have shown above that in the two sons of Eli the twofold order of the old priesthood is designated. They certainly died on one day, because they came together simultaneously in the death of the Redeemer. Moreover, the death of the priests is fittingly recorded as placed as a sign of the house that was to die, because when the shepherds perish, it is necessary that the flock follow to the same destruction. And because they were deceived by a false reasoning, they are said to die in the day. Of the falseness of which light blessed Job speaks, saying: 'So in darkness, as in light they walk' (Job 24:17). But He who cast out the old prepared a new priesthood. Whence it is also added: (Verse 35.) 'And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest.' 38. For when

the sons of Eli were dead, the Lord raised up a faithful priest for Himself, because when the leaders of the ancient people were destroyed in their faithlessness, He chose elect ones to carry out the ministry of our redemption. He is indeed called a faithful one who was taken up, because the old one, whom he succeeded, was rejected on account of unfaithfulness. And because that faith of his is ascribed to the praises of the priest, which works through love, the very works of love are indicated by the words that follow. For it continues: 80 (Verse 35.) 'Who shall do according to my heart and my soul.'

39. For the ineffable divine substance wished to be signified through the parts of a human being, which ought not to be understood according to the letter as referring to God Himself. And so He said: "Who shall act according to my heart and my soul." Not that the incorporeal and uncircumscribed substance of God has a heart and soul, but He speaks to man as a man is accustomed to speak to a man, so that through what a person recognizes from hearing His word, he may openly know what God also wills. This indeed could have been said more simply: "Who shall do my will." And He sets forth the rewards of the work, saying: (Verse 35.) "And I will build him a faithful house." 40. For what else is this house understood to be, if not the eternal homeland? Which house indeed the Lord, commending it, speaks of: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions' (John 14:2). But this house is now said to be built, because it is prepared through the actions of a pious life. Nevertheless, for meriting it, the work of man is unworthy if the grace of a merciful God does not accomplish this. Rightly therefore, when the building of the house is set forth, the Lord promises to build it for him, because indeed human powers fall short of so great a work if they are not divinely aided. Hence Paul says: 'It is God who works in me both to will and to accomplish' (Phil. 2:13). Hence again he says: 'It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who has mercy' (Rom. 9:16). He was promising to build this house when He said: 'I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and will receive you to myself, that where I am, you also may be' (John 14:2, 3). But because he was going to devoutly follow, from the freedom of his will, the grace calling him, it is added: (Verse 35.) 'And he shall walk before my Christ all his days.'

41. For to walk before Christ for each of the elect is to always see oneself in the sight of the Redeemer, and to do those things which one knows are acceptable to Him. Or certainly one walks before Christ who in everything

he does always looks to Him, and directs the uprightness of his life toward Him whom he recognizes as having come through the assumed humanity to set in order the form of the elect. But Judea is not to be forever abandoned in the darkness of her blindness, because through the prophet it is said: "If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant shall be saved" (Isaiah 10:22). Hence Paul says: "Blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles enters in, and so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). Therefore he subsequently shows this visitation of Judea, because he says: (Verse 33.) "And it shall come to pass that whoever remains in your house shall come, that he may be prayed for."

42. Then indeed Judea asks that the Lord be prayed for on her behalf, when, with the elect already gathered from the nations, she does not ignore the darkness of her own blindness, when she desires that offering be made to her through the priests of almighty God by the confession of the Holy Trinity, because in her former old state she does not presume to merit heavenly joys, but also bestows the faith of the Redeemer, which she received upon her conversion, by preaching it to others who are yet to be converted. It is also well added: (Verse 33.) That he might offer a piece of silver money. For by silver the divine utterances are signified, because it is said through the Prophet: The words of the Lord are words tested by fire, silver tried by fire (Psalm 11:7). And indeed Judea then spends this silver in the praises of God, when she openly preaches our faith, which she previously contradicted while established in unbelief. And because she also imitates through compassion the same Redeemer whom she preaches through love, it is added: (Verse 33.) And a cake of bread.

43. For by the name of bread, He is expressed who says of Himself: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). The cake of bread, therefore, is the flesh of the Redeemer, afflicted with sufferings. For the prophet, beholding this cake of bread, said: "Truly He has borne our griefs, and He Himself has carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). And because it is said by a certain wise man: "If you sit down at the table of a powerful man, wisely consider what is set before you, for you must prepare similar things" (Proverbs 23:1-2, according to the LXX), Judea then offers a cake of bread and a piece of silver when she proclaims our Redeemer with open confession, and for the love of Him whom she proclaims, does not refuse to endure torments from the faithless. And because she is greatly delighted in this

imitation of the Passion and refreshment of sweetness, there follows: (Verse 33.) "And let her say: 'Send me, I beseech you, to one of the priestly portions.'"

44. "Dismiss me," she says, as if to say: Do not reject me as infamous and stained with the blood of the Redeemer's death. She also begs that one priestly portion be granted to her, because she desires to be joined to the true priests, so that she may be able to share in the joys of those whose offerings she desires to imitate by offering herself. Hence, setting forth the desire of her refreshment, she says: (Verse 33) "That I may eat a morsel of bread." In this matter it should be noted that she is foretold as having a cake of bread in the devotion of offering, and a morsel in the appetite of eating. Why then is not a cake of bread, but a morsel desired for eating? And why is not a morsel, but a cake said to be offered? But because a morsel is made in roundness, and roundness itself is in a certain way recognized as having neither beginning nor end, rightly by the morsel of bread the eternity of the Redeemer is signified. A cake of bread therefore can be offered by us, and not a morsel, because we who can imitate the Lord's passion by dying or by afflicting the flesh do not have eternity in ourselves which we might present before His sight. And a morsel, not a cake of bread, ought to be for us in the perfection of desire, because we who follow the Redeemer of the human race by suffering temporally with Him desire to possess Him in the heavenly homeland no longer as mortal or suffering, but as eternal and reigning. Therefore she who desires to offer a cake of bread says: "That I may eat a morsel of bread," because those converted from Judea desire to possess our Redeemer in the eternity of refreshment, whose passion they imitated here for the vigor of warfare, not for the reward of recompense.

CHAPTER 2.3

45. We have run through these matters from sacred history by way of typological explanation, so that we might seek out something of moral understanding in the same words of sacred history. And so the boy Samuel is declared a minister in the sight of the Lord; yet this ministry is recorded as being rendered to the Lord not absolutely, but before the face of Eli. By these words, therefore, what is shown is not the perfection of ministry, but of humility. For the face of Eli represents the judgment of each one's instructor. For he ministers to the Lord before the face of his teacher who does not follow the reasoning of his own judgment in the performance of his ministry,

who walks along that path of work which is foreseen for him by the knowledge of his master. For all perfect men, and those taught by God (John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13), are indeed ministers in the sight of the Lord, but are not His ministers before the face of man, because the divinity itself teaches them inwardly how they should be ordered outwardly also in life, conduct, and teaching; whence also it is promised to the forerunner of the Redeemer with the praise of a paternal oracle: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76).

He is described as going before the face of the Lord who in his ministry was not going to follow the judgment of a superior man, but the inspiration of the divinity. Therefore Samuel is said to minister to the Lord before the face of Eli, so that all who are subject may be taught by his example, that they should strive to please their Creator in their ministry in such a way that they do not presume to do anything contrary to the judgment of their superiors. For he who is declared a minister of the Lord before the face of his instructor, if through pride he disdains to go before his face, does not exist as a minister in the sight of the Lord, because he is proved to be ignorant of the Almighty, whom he disdains to please through his instructor's judgment—the Almighty who subjected him to that authority so that he might please Him. Whence the sons of Eli are said both to be sons of Belial and not to know the Lord, and not to know the office of the priests toward the people. For sons are those who are subjected to spiritual fathers for instruction. Who indeed, when through pride they disdain to follow the counsels of those same fathers, are rightly called sons of Belial, because they become imitators of that apostate spirit who fell from heaven through pride. Who certainly are ignorant of the Lord all the more grievously, the more arrogantly they ascribe knowledge of Him to themselves.

For it comes about that they are ignorant of what they ought to know all the more dangerously, because, not knowing what they think they know, they do not care to learn. And because they cannot love the invisible Creator whom they do not know, in their appetite for visible things they squander the very ministries of God which they have usurped for themselves. Whence those who are reported as priests who do not know the Lord are also said not to know the office of the priests toward the people. 2. And to reveal the causes of his reproof, the priest's servant is recorded as coming with a three-

pronged fork to every one who was sacrificing, and violently demanding raw flesh. By these words, indeed, three species of gluttony are noted in the greediness of their rapacity. For he whose servant came to inflict violence on their behalf before the flesh was cooked could not endure the lawful hour of refreshment; and he for whom flesh was sought did not know how to use simple foods; and because, refusing what was cooked, he demanded raw flesh, he disdained to eat that flesh prepared in the common manner. But since the perversity of the servants served the pleasure of the priests, why is it recorded that the sin was exceedingly great before the Lord, not of the priests themselves, but of the servants? Yet by these same words the greater guilt of the priests is shown; for he who asserts that the sin of the lesser ones was exceedingly great before the Lord recognized to what a heap of condemnation the iniquity of the greater ones had grown. This magnitude of guilt, however, is asserted not only on account of the appetite for unlawful eating, but also on account of the violence of their rapacity.

3. But the divine discourse returns to the narrative of the chosen boy, so that in him we may more attentively consider not what is to be condemned, but what is to be imitated. And so he is said to have been girded with a linen ephod and to have been in the sight of the Lord. What then is shown in the linen ephod except the brightness of continence? With which ephod we are indeed girded when we are restrained on every side toward the splendor of chastity, when no part of soul or flesh is released from the law of strictness through which we might dissolve into the darkness of luxury. Such a minister, therefore, is in the sight of the Lord, because he is not deceived concerning the hoped-for vision of almighty God, whom he serves with such great splendor of his girding. To this boy indeed his mother, ascending with her husband to sacrifice the solemn offering, is said to have brought a small tunic. The mother indeed ascends with her husband when the mind of the preacher raises itself through the foreknowledge of the interior spouse to contemplate those sublime joys of eternity. Then indeed she sacrifices the solemn offering, because while she is joined to the Creator through the ineffable sweetness of that love, a festive devotion is presented at the heavenly altars.

And then indeed she brings a small tunic, because even if through the great grace of interior visitation the soul of the pastor is lifted up to heavenly things, nevertheless he ought to impose the precepts of conduct upon the

little one not according to the measure of his own subtlety, but according to their strength. Hence also Moses, returning from the mountain in the immense splendor of his countenance, veiled his face so that the people might be able to direct their gaze upon him (Exod. 34:33). Therefore let her who is a spiritual mother bring a small tunic to her son, so that she may prescribe to the little ones still certain beginnings and plain things, and not impose upon them the burden of her own strength. For often those who can conquer the enemy through lesser works fall amid great ones. Hence also David, advancing into battle against the mightiest of the Philistines, laid aside the breastplate, shield, and all military equipment; and he who could not wield himself against the enemy under their weight struck him down with a single stone from a sling (1 Sam. 17:39, 40 ff.). That mother had ascended to sacrifice the solemn offering, who said: "I know such a man, who was caught up into paradise" (2 Cor. 12:4). But from such great magnitude he did not bring a great garment to the little ones, because he says: "He heard secret words which it is not permitted for a man to speak" (ibid.). Likewise:

"I gave you milk to drink, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2). Therefore let the mother bring a small tunic to her small son, and let the measure of the garment be stretched according to the size of the body, so that while he fights with the virtue of a temperate way of life, the enemy may not overthrow him with an unequal burden of arms. 4. And because God multiplies for the preacher the gains of converts through the discerning zeal of pastoral care, Anna is said to have been visited by the Lord, and through the grace of the divine gift to have merited the grace of fruitfulness in sons and daughters. She bears sons when she gains through the word those through whom she bestows the seeds of preaching to others. She bears daughters when she calls back to the service of almighty God those minds which, although they are not suited for preaching, nevertheless diligently nurture the seed of the word of God received from preachers, which, as if giving birth, the daughters afterwards bring forth through good works as an example to their neighbors. But since Samuel is first said to have been girded with a linen ephod, and then the mother's fruitfulness in the multitude of children can reasonably be understood as what we observe happening daily—namely, that from the good reputation of a chosen disciple, the gains of converts increase for the master. Hence after the birth of brothers and sisters, Samuel is said to have been magnified before the Lord, because indeed those are already great be-

fore the Lord who through the examples of their devout way of life turn the hearts of their neighbors to the service of almighty God.

5. But a great fear is struck into us, because Eli is condemned for the fault of his sons, though no sins of his own are reported. For good subjects, living well suffices for salvation, but for prelates their own life does not suffice. For he is truly very old who always strives to live blamelessly. Whence it is also written: "For venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years; but the understanding of a man is grey hairs, and the age of old age is an unspotted life" (Wisdom 4:8). But some excel by living well, who have none of the authority that leadership demands. For even if they are eager to rouse their subjects to do good, they are yet ashamed to oppose offenders through zeal for righteousness. Who indeed, even if they sometimes come forth to reprove them, harm rather than help by speaking, because they do not confound their obstinacy with fitting severity. For Eli himself heard the crimes of his sons, and how they slept with the women at the door of the tabernacle; who, as though beginning with a harsh rebuke of authority, declared that he had heard the worst things from all the people. But he who ought to have pursued the faults he had set forth softened them through his subsequent words, saying: "Do not, my sons.

In which address of kinship, indeed, it is clear how far he dissented from the Lord's will, because he called them sons whom the divine word above declared to be sons of Belial, that is, of a wicked spirit, saying: "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial. For to sleep with women is to sin securely and without fear of future punishment. For the harlot women are worldly desires. Who are rightly said to watch at the door of the tabernacle, because they lie in wait for those striving toward the entrance of the heavenly kingdom. But he who follows the desires of the world in such a way that he is often terrified by the consideration of divine fear is indeed defiled with women, but does not sleep, because even if he falls through transgression, he nevertheless by no means rests in security in the crimes he has committed. Therefore, one who sleeps with women is not to be honored with the name of kinship, because those who, having already cast off the fear of God, are obstinate in their crimes, are not to be rebuked with a lighter reproof, lest they think the weight of the sin into which they fall is light, when what is preached to them from authority does not sound grave to them. But lax pastors, amid their soothing words, are accustomed to bring forth certain arguments of

reason. Whence it is also said in the voice of Eli: "If a man sin against a man, God may be appeased for him;

but if a man sin against God, who shall pray for him?" 6. For a man to sin against a man is for people to harm one another in matters of passing things. But to sin against God is to take away from Him those things which He established for eternity. Therefore whoever draws either his own or another faithful person's soul into sinning is convicted of sinning against God, because he strives to take away from Him what is properly His. This is shown to be a sin all the more grave, inasmuch as one who might stand as a worthy intercessor for its absolution is more rarely found. For under the question "Who will pray for him?" it is not said that the remedies of repentance are denied even to such persons, but that the deeper wounds of sins are healed with greater difficulty. 7. However, this can be understood to have been said because the priests are being rebuked. For a man sins against a man when he offends whose fault looks to the judgment of a superior person for correction. Therefore, since the sins of the subject people, which pertain to the priests, are wiped away by the prayers of those same priests, when the priest falls into fault, there is no superior person by whose prayers he may be expiated. And the Truth Himself intimates this, saying: "If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted?" (Matt. 5:13). Let him therefore say: "Who will pray for him?" As if to say, who remains as intercessor for him, when the one who was ordained to intercede for others casts himself down by transgressing? By this indeed the magnitude of the guilt is shown, because many of them are cast by the Lord into the darkness of an impenitent heart, and they do not come to their senses by any human exhortation. For this reason it is fittingly added: (Verse 25.) "They did not listen to the voice of their father, because the Lord willed to kill them."

8. Now the boy Samuel is recorded as both advancing and growing, and as pleasing both God and men, so that the zeal of the chosen hearer may be indicated—one who directs his efforts toward the heavenly homeland by the path of an upright life, as he grows stronger toward greater things. Hence it is also said through the Psalmist: They shall go from strength to strength; the God of gods shall be seen in Zion (Psalm 83:8). Therefore, advancement in conduct means to grow in merits; to please God and men belongs to consummate perfection. And because conduct pertains to works, and merit proceeds from charity, those hearers advance but do not grow who perform

good works out of a desire for vanity and do not have charity. We therefore advance and grow if, together with a more exalted manner of life, we are raised up through better works, and from that very sublimity of work we direct our attention solely to the joys of eternity. Moreover, to please both God and men belongs to great virtue, because very often we offend our neighbors by our good work if we do not perform those same good works with great caution. He therefore pleases both God and men who is careful in the good work that he devotes to the service of Almighty God—who so takes care to please God that he offends no one through God's ministry.

9. And because this is said about Samuel, still a boy and placed under another's instruction, the life of those living in community is thereby instructed. For some living in community in sacred places, with the fervor of novices, desire to devote themselves to their own pursuits under the appearance of great works, and the less useful they are to their fellow brothers, the less they please them. Therefore through Samuel a model is set forth for those living in community, upon which they may be formed. Each of them therefore pleases both God and men when he is useful to his brothers and devoted to God. Therefore let them so attend to their own care that they do not neglect the things that belong to their neighbor, so that through kindness they may please those who are with them in the lowly place, while before heavenly eyes they cautiously display the strength of their devotion, lest they crush the hearts of the weak while hastening toward heavenly things with the force of their own strength.

10. Now a man of God is described as having come to Eli, who, being about to bring forth the severity of the divine sentence, carefully enumerated how many gifts He had bestowed upon him. And because he finally announces the punishment of the vengeance that he deserved, what does this give us to understand, except that the faults of pastors are judged more strictly? And not only do their sins increase the punishment of retribution, but also the gifts that were granted. Likewise, because he recounts those same gifts one by one, he indicates something more serious: that each individual gift comes to be a torment, when it is proved to have been poorly preserved. For he poorly guards in himself the gifts of almighty God who defiles the splendor of the pastoral summit through the stains of wicked conduct. Whence also the house of Eli is fittingly rebuked for having kicked away the gifts and sacrifices of the Lord with the heel. The heel indeed is that part of

the body by which we touch the ground. In this lower part of the body, therefore, is shown that disposition of the soul by which earthly things are desired.

11. And because, as it has seemed to some, victims were customarily offered for a victory obtained or to be obtained, and gifts given to friends, what is signified by victims and gifts except the vows of those still advancing and the devotions of the perfect in the praises of almighty God? For we who advance through the temptations of hidden enemies, when we prepare virtue for the conflict against them, surely hold victims in the praises of almighty God. But when the battles that are thrust upon us have now been conquered, when we give thanks to almighty God for the victory obtained, we undoubtedly sacrifice victims to the same Lord. But those who offer him the affection of intimate love bestow gifts as if upon a friend. Gifts, therefore, are the affections of charity, by which the hearts of the elect burn with desire for their Creator. And because when a ruler pursues earthly things, he harms many who are engaged in spiritual conflict and many also who are now beginning to aspire upward, he indeed kicks aside the victims and gifts of God with his heel, because by the example of his depravity he drives away the endeavors of both groups. And so the victims are cast aside, because often the labor of spiritual warfare is abandoned by the untrained soldiers of Christ, when the leaders of the Christian campaign are seen to pursue bodily leisure in the repose of earthly pleasures.

The gifts are kicked aside, because the affections of charity grow cold in the minds of many who already love heavenly things, while they see their prelates seeking the heavenly homeland through no desires of love, but lying bound by the coldness of the body in the lowest pleasures. Among whom indeed there are some who bestow spiritual honors in a carnal manner, and attribute to kinship what is owed to merits. Who would surely tremble at the guilt of their presumption, if they carefully considered what the Lord complains about concerning Eli the priest. (Verse 29. "You have honored your sons more than me," He says, "so that you might eat the first portions of every sacrifice of my people Israel." 12. For he honors his sons and relatives more than the Lord, who chooses persons for sacred orders not from the integrity of their conduct, but from love of kinship. Therefore the sons are said to have been honored, so that they might eat the firstfruits of the sacrifice, because carnal prelates bestow the heights of spiritual honor upon their car-

nal relatives for this reason: that they may be enriched with ecclesiastical resources and heaped with an abundance of plenty in the loftiness of their office. Nor do they care what sort of persons come to the spiritual ministry, but only that they may advance in temporal dignity those whom they embrace with carnal affection. He is therefore accused of having honored his sons—but wicked ones, who ought not even to be held as close by carnal kinship, if they in no way shine forth in the conduct of ecclesiastical teaching. But those who promote the reprobate are shown to confound the very order of promotion, since it says he honored his sons so that they might eat the firstfruits of the sacrifice. For the priest does not preach in order to eat, but rather he ought to eat in order to preach. This Paul also suggests, saying: "Let him who preaches the Gospel live from the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). Hence he says again: "Do not muzzle the ox that treads the grain" (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; Deut. 25:4), so that, namely, the preacher of the holy Church may supply nourishment to his body for this reason:

that he may be able to bear the labor of preaching. Therefore those who promote their relatives are proven to pervert the right order of promotion—not for the purpose of ministry, but for the pursuit of dignity. This they certainly would not do if they did not love themselves and their relatives in a carnal manner while in a spiritual position. But if they understand the rejection of Eli, let them also fear the judgments of their own guilt. For by the divine voice it is said: "You have honored your sons more than me, so that you might all eat the firstfruits of my people Israel. (Verse 30. "Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: I spoke and declared that your house and the house of your father would minister in my sight forever. But now, far be this from me." 13. Behold, Eli is deposed from the height of his dignity by divine sentence, who is convicted of having honored his wicked sons for the eating of the firstfruits, so that indeed the preachers of holy Church may understand that if through carnal love they knowingly commit spiritual ministries to the reprobate, they have fallen by the equity of the internal Judge from that summit on which they appear outwardly to stand. And because He subsequently added: (Verse 30.) But whosoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify.

14. Their audacity also secretly suggests that He was dishonored. To whom indeed Paul also, reproaching this very thing, says: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom. 2:24). For because they

stain the beauty of the dignity they received through the filth of a wretched reputation, they indeed dishonor the Lord. For he is rightly driven from the height of honor who does injury to the one by whom he is proved to have been honored. Against which He affirms with a general promise, saying: "But whoever glorifies me, I will glorify him. For the pastor glorifies God who shines by the example of good works for the imitation of the faithful, who from the height of governance radiates with the great light of an excellent manner of life, who, regarding the mirror of sacred orders, does not accept the persons of reprobate ministers, but chooses for the pattern of the subject flock those whom everyone who looks to imitation, because he follows the true light in them, does not stumble against. To whom indeed Truth speaks through Himself, saying: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

The Lord indeed glorifies those who glorify Him, because what the chosen pastors of the holy Church outwardly bear of the glory of their high position, this they inwardly receive from the grace of divine goodness, and the honor by which they are exalted in the eyes of men, they merit by worthy effort inwardly from the bounty of the interior majesty. Against which He complains that the glory of those who dishonor Him was not bestowed upon them by Him, saying: "They have reigned, but not from me; they became princes, and I did not know it" (Hosea 8:4). For they reign from themselves, and not from the election of the supreme ordination, because they are not called by divine will to the glory of the ecclesiastical summit, but are led there through cupidity. Whom indeed the Lord does not know, because He rejects them through the judgment of interior equity. It is therefore as if He were saying: Even if the honor they hold appears to be mine, they did not merit it by obedience, but seized it through cupidity. Whence He also subsequently adds: (Verse 30. "But those who despise me shall be without honor."

15. As if he were speaking openly, saying: Even though they display the nobility of their dignity under the pretext of religion, they are nevertheless ignoble, because they do not match the excellence of the glory they possess through sublimity of life. But since all of this is promised in the expression of the future tense, it can not unfittingly be referred to the merit of the coming retribution. About which indeed John says: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Hence the evangelist Mark, affirming, says: "Then

they shall see the Son of man coming with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26). Moreover, when he declares that he will glorify the one who glorifies him, he assuredly promises him the glory of his own likeness. For the Lord glorifies the one who glorifies him, because he rewards with eternal sublimity those who now within holy Church shine in the eyes of the elect through the examples of good works. But the despisers will be ignoble, because they do not deserve to be received into the glory of the elect. For because they now clothe themselves in the image of the fallen angel through their reprobate way of life, they will then be ignoble with him, when they are joined to him in internal punishment. For the Prophet, beholding the glorification of the former and the ignobility of the latter, says: "The saints shall exult in glory, they shall rejoice in their resting places.

The praises of God shall be in their throats, and two-edged swords in their hands. To execute vengeance upon the nations, rebukes among the peoples. To bind their kings in shackles, and their nobles in iron chains. For the Lord glorifies the one who glorifies him, because the humble elect exult with him in eternal glory. And because they receive the brightness of glorification from the manner of their own way of life, they are said to rejoice in their resting places over the glory they have obtained. But his despisers are struck with perpetual ignobility, because the kings and nobles of the nations are bound with iron, that is, eternal chains for punishment. Moreover, the kings and princes of the nations are the proud and vainglorious leaders of carnal people. And they will then be ignoble, when they are bound with iron chains, because those who now temporarily exalt themselves against the little ones are restrained by eternal punishment from the splendor of honor and from the audacity of their tyranny. Whence here also it is added: (Verse 31. "Behold, the days are coming, and I will cut off your arm, and the arm of the house of your father."

16. For the arm of the scorner is temporal strength. And because he departed from the household of the supreme Father by transgressing, the fallen angel began to have him as a father, now cast out from heavenly glory. Therefore the house of his father is that society of subjects which favors him in evil. Of whom indeed it is said above: "You have honored your sons more than me. The arm of the scorner, therefore, and the house of his father is cut off when, with the intervention of the death of the flesh, both the prelate and his subjects alike lose the violence of their tyranny. For then he is

without an arm, when he can in no way exercise violence in the oppression of the little ones. Whence it is also decreed by the equity of the eternal Judge: "Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the outer darkness" (Matt. 22:13). In whose house also there shall be no old man. For the house of a condemned man is hell. But true old age is the maturity of wisdom. Therefore in his house there shall be no old man, because in hell no counsels of salvation can be found. Whence also sacred Scripture stirs us to works of true wisdom, saying: "Whatever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly, for there is neither reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the underworld, where you are hastening" (Eccles. 9:10). Hence Paul says: "Behold, now is the acceptable time;

behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Therefore in the house of the scorner there shall be no old man, because whoever rightly has wisdom has prepared a dwelling for himself not in hell but in heaven. This scorner also, to the increase of his punishment, sees his rival in the temple amid all the prosperity of Israel. For the temple of God is the heavenly homeland, of which it is also said through the Prophet: "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven" (Ps. 11:4). And by Israel, which is interpreted as "seeing God," is signified that blessed multitude of angels, of whom the Lord says in the Gospel: "Their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). And the prosperity of Israel is the everlasting joy of those blessed spirits. Therefore the scorner will behold his rival in the temple, because the reprobate preacher, now condemned, recognizes the order of the humble already rejoicing in the heavenly places. To this rival indeed all the prosperity of Israel is granted; for it is written: "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Therefore all the prosperity of Israel designates all that God is to those most blessed citizens. For although that eternal essence—namely, the supreme and simple good—exists in itself, nevertheless, because by the revelation of his Majesty he satisfies all the desires of those blessed spirits, the distinguished Teacher shows this to be so.

Whence he also carefully preaches that God is not all things in himself, but all things in all, because he who in his own nature exists ineffably as one and simple good, is as many goods to all the good as they themselves are filled with joys from the contemplation of his glory. Therefore all the prosperity of Israel is granted to the rival, because the order of the humble elect is received among the choirs of angels, so that it may be satisfied with

an eternal perception of the joys of divine contemplation. He is rightly said to be the rival of the scorner, because the elect of God receive the encouragements of good admonition even from proud and negligent preachers. Whence the Lord also commands, saying: "Whatever they tell you, do; but do not act according to their works" (Matt. 23:3). Hence Paul says: "Be zealous for good in all things" (Gal. 4:18). But since Scripture says: "Let the wicked be removed, lest he see the glory of the Lord" (Isa. 26:10), it seems contradictory that those who are condemned in hell should be understood to see those who rejoice in heaven. But since "to see" also pertains to knowledge, he sees his rival in the temple because, even though the wicked man is held bound by the punishments of hell, he does not doubt that the humble elect, whom he does not see with his eyes, share in the joys of angels in heaven. And it should be noted that it is said twice:

"There shall be no old man in your house," because the condemned is instructed unto salvation neither from the experience of punishments which he endures, nor from the knowledge of another's happiness, nor from the experience of punishments which he does not endure. Sometimes, however, the elect are born as children through the teaching of reprobate pastors. The guilt of pastors does not hold these bound, because they follow the encouragements of good preaching that they hear, and not the perverse works that they see. Whence it is also added: (Verse 33. "Nevertheless I will not entirely remove from you a man from my altar." 17. For they are men who shine forth from the lofty citadel of strict conduct. As if therefore He were saying: For this reason I do not remove them from My altar, because they are men. For according to the merit of their conduct, strength and loftiness of power is preserved for them. Whence also through the prophet the Lord proclaims the decrees of equity, saying: 'The soul that sins, it itself shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father that of the son' (Ezek. 18:20). The Lord would therefore justly remove a man from His altar on this account, if the son were to bear the iniquity of the father. But from this very fact that a chosen hearer is seen in glory, punishment is heaped upon the reprobate teacher. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 33.) 'But that your eyes may fail, and your soul may waste away.'

18. For his eyes fail, because those who fulfilled what he perfected by his exhortation are put to shame by his life. His soul also wastes away, because he is compelled to grieve all the more abundantly, while he knows that the

good which he taught flourishes through the glory of recompense in his subjects, and yet he himself did not take care to practice it. In these words it should also be noted that he who promises that he will not entirely remove a man from his altar is found to be rare in whom he receives, because indeed of a reprobate teacher there are more hearers who follow the wicked things he does than the right things he teaches. Whence here also a great part of his house is declared to be about to die in the prime of manhood. 19. For the age of manhood is the time of administering the priesthood. Therefore the imitator of the reprobate teacher is brought to manhood when he is promoted to the height of holy orders. When indeed he has reached that age, he dies, because whoever has approached so great a ministry unworthily, or has lived unworthily in it, is condemned. Whence Paul also, making mention of the Lord's body and blood, says: "He who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). Therefore they die in manhood, because they perish from the presumption and boldness of a higher ministry. Hence therefore, hence indeed let the reckless take heed, and let them not eagerly seek but rather dread to undertake the burdens of so great a ministry. For he who is foretold to die when he reaches manhood lives until he reaches it, because indeed all who are weak and unequal to so great a ministry, if they consider the measure of their own smallness, have a place in the holy Church in which, guarding themselves, they may live. Whence the Lord also declares through Moses, saying: "If a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned" (Exod. 19:12; Heb. 12:20). Hence it is also that when Lot went out from Sodom, he refrained from ascending the mountain and turned aside to Zoar, a small city (Gen. 19:20ff.), lest while still small he strives for higher things and, striking against manhood, dies. For we leave Sodom when we turn away from the fires of burning desire.

We do not immediately ascend to lofty things, because we do not touch the heights of a superior ministry, while we consider our own weakness by measuring it, lest if we despise keeping the measure of our weak age, we who have lived as little ones may die in manhood. As a sign indeed of the house about to die, both sons of Eli are foretold to die in one day. We have said that those sons signify those who are promoted to holy orders by carnal relatives, not with the intention of administering the order, but for the glory of worldly dignity. Therefore both die in one day, because they perish in the desire for worldly happiness. Worldly glory, the reverence of honor, the

power of high position, the splendor of dignity, the throng of attendants, the abundance of possessions loved in a worldly manner—this is a day, but one that kills.

20. Let the sons of Eli hear, therefore, that both die on a single day. For those who, from the pastoral eminence they have received, love the happiness of a fleeting life, have indeed the intention of joy but the fruit of lamentation, a purpose set on the exultation of life but an arrival at the sorrow of death. They hasten toward death, therefore, as often as they vainly rejoice over temporal happiness. The Apostle also confirms this when he mentions the apostatizing widow, saying: "But she who lives in pleasures is dead while she lives" (1 Tim. 5:6). For he declared that she dies on this day, who showed that pleasures are the cause of the widow's death. But the death of the sons would be less grievous if it did not itself become the cause of another's death. Hence they are foretold not simply to die, but to die as a sign of a house about to perish, because when those nearby imitate a reprobate teacher, they fall into the same ruin, and the followers of followers are heaped together in collapse. Let those who love temporal happiness from the office of the eminence they have undertaken hear this, therefore, and let them dread the magnitude of their guilt.

They are deserving of a punishment all the graver inasmuch as they openly see that they do not die alone from the vanity they love, because while they drink down death under the pretext of worldly gladness, they transmit the poison of their drink to the multitude of those who follow them. Yet by these words the brevity of the present life can be made known to reprobate teachers. For they die in a single day, because when they reach the end of this life, all that they have lived is seen to have been brief. Hence it is said by a certain wise man: "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment" (Job 20:5). Again, blessed Job speaks of the lovers of this world, saying: "They spend their days in prosperity, and in a moment they go down to hell" (Job 21:13). But when the reprobate are snatched away to punishment, wise and chosen pastors are raised up for the care of the Lord's flock. Wherefore he adds next: (Verse 35. "And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest."

21. For the Lord raises up a faithful priest for Himself, because indeed the highest position demands for its care one who not only rightly understands, but who faithfully ministers. Moreover, he will then be able to minister rightly when he recognizes the measure of his ministry from sacred Scrip-

ture. Hence, when a faithful priest is promised, he is declared to act according to the heart and soul of Almighty God. For what do we understand by the heart and soul of God, if not His sacred Scripture? For with the heart we think toward deliberation, and with the soul we are moved toward love. Since, therefore, in sacred Scripture we recognize the counsels of Almighty God, and there we find the love with which He loved the human race, that same Scripture reasonably designates His heart and soul. Accordingly, Almighty God chooses for His ministry the priest who acts according to His heart and soul, because indeed no one else is worthy of so great an office unless he has learned His will from sacred Scripture and devotes what he has learned to the benefit of his neighbors through the zeal of charity. But we must still attentively consider what is said: (Verse 35.) 'According to my heart and my soul.'

22. For certain precepts are found in Sacred Scripture which are indeed precepts of God's dispensation, and not of God's love. If the priest who is promised to be raised up were to fulfill these, he would indeed act according to the heart of God, and not according to His soul, since he would have rendered in works the counsel of divine dispensation, and not the precept of love. Were not those commandments of His, of which He speaks, saying: "I gave them statutes that were not good" (Ezek. 20:25), from the dispensation of God? And when the Pharisees disputed with Truth Himself about giving a bill of divorce, they heard: "Because of your hardness of heart Moses gave you the law" (Matt. 19:8). Since therefore those things were from the dispensation of His counsel, whoever made use of those same precepts acted according to the heart of the Lord, and not according to His soul. For the precept of the heart and soul is that of which it is said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Because what He commands through counsel, He embraces through the embrace of charity. Hence He likewise says: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). Hence He likewise commands, saying: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."

These therefore and precepts of this kind are precepts of God's heart and soul, because by the revelation of His secret counsel it is shown what is received in His sight through the proof of charity. Therefore the faithful priest is known by this sign: namely, if he acts according to His heart and soul, because indeed he is then truly faithful if he follows not the license of His dis-

pensation, but the precepts of love. But because he is chosen not in vain, but for the profit of the people subject to him, he adds and says: (Verse 35) "And I will build him a faithful house." 23. For the house of the priest is the congregation over which the subject peoples dwell. This house is indeed built for him as faithful by the Lord, because it is raised up to the zeal of obedience by divine inspiration. For an unfaithful house is that society of subjects which daily receives the preaching of a good ruler, yet does not intend to obey him through the pursuit of good works. For it is recognized as an unfaithful house, because the currency of God's word, which is entrusted to it through the ministry of its preacher, is squandered through the negligence of a prodigal life, and what is committed to it for the profit of business is by no means found at the time when an accounting must be rendered. Therefore a faithful house is built by the Lord for a good preacher when the hearts of the subject people are divinely prepared to obey his voice, so that it not only guards what is stored within it from the talent of the word, but brings it, accumulated with manifold profit, to the table of eternal reception. And it should be noted that a faithful house is said to be built by the Lord, so that the preacher may never glory vainly in the good conduct of the subject people.

It should also be noted that the Lord raises up a faithful priest for himself, so that the hearts of subjects may not presume to attribute to their own merits the very fact that they are governed by an excellent ruler. It should also be noted that the Lord calls the priest whom he raises up faithful to himself, but the house which he builds for him he says will be faithful to the priest himself; because indeed the preacher owes obedience to God, and the subject to the prelate. But then the prelate rightly walks before the subject if truth itself is seen to direct all the paths of his life. Therefore it follows: (Verse 35. And he shall walk before my Christ all his days. 24. But the Christ of the Lord is the Redeemer of the human race. Who indeed, because He is now believed to have ascended to the heavens, is seen by His faithful not with bodily eyes, but with the mind. Therefore he walks before Him all his days who does nothing from sudden impulse. For in order to place right steps outwardly in action, he looks inwardly to Christ, whom he carries in his heart through contemplation. But because He still speaks to the reprobate pastor, He adds, saying: (Verse 36.) And it shall come to pass that whoever remains of your house shall come that it may be prayed for him.

25. For someone is said to be about to remain from his house, because a great part of it is declared to be about to die. For from the house of the wicked pastor, he remains whom the consciousness of sin does not extinguish from the hope of obtaining pardon. He remains, therefore, because the weight of conscience is lightened through the resolution of repentance by the hope of obtaining life. He indeed comes so that prayer may be offered for him, and hastens through repentance to God, from whom he departed by sinning. He comes, therefore, so that prayer may be offered for him, because he who has made himself unworthy of God requires a worthy intercessor, so that he who is recognized as unable to be cleansed by his own prayers may be expiated by the prayers of others. Whence James also devoutly admonishes, saying: Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved (James 5:16). Hence again: The persistent prayer of a righteous man avails much. But prayer avails for him who, while he restrains himself from the uncleanness of sin, restores himself to the likeness of God, of which he stripped himself by sinning. Whence here also it is added: (Verse 36.) That he may offer a piece of silver.

26. On the coin, therefore, the image of the Lord is engraved, so that it may be recognized as belonging to him by whom it is commanded to be formed. The coin is accordingly understood as his likeness to God. Whence he speaks in Genesis, saying: 'Let us make man in our image and likeness' (Gen. 1:26). And because from sacred Scripture we recognize the image and likeness of God to which we are to be restored, it is declared to be a silver coin. He therefore who comes from the way of sin so that prayer may be offered for him ought to offer a silver coin, because it profits him nothing that he is pricked with compunction in repenting, nor that he confesses with weeping, if, unamended and uncorrected, he is recognized as in no way shining inwardly with the beauty of good will and the light of God's image. For the image and likeness of God is to hate evil with noble hatred and to love God with perfect love. Whence the Prophet also, seeing that the brightness of the divine likeness had perished from the human race, looks to him who came from heaven with the glorious light of our restoration, saying: 'You have loved justice and hated iniquity' (Ps. 44:8). Hence, considering himself now renewed through contemplation of him into the form of perfection, he says: 'I have hated the unjust, and I have loved your law' (Ps. 118:113).

He therefore who comes from the house of the reprobate through confession, who through humility asks the Lord that prayer be made for him, must take care entirely to offer a silver coin, so that, having taken on the splendor of good will, he may perfectly hate the evil he has done and love with whole love the good he has neglected. Whence also by the examination of the just Judge, decrees of propitiation are proclaimed. 'On whatever day or hour', he says, 'the sinner is converted, he shall live with life and shall not die' (Ezek. 18:21, 27). But the conversion of the sinner does not consist in the humility of confession, but in the renewal of the inner man, when to the sinner, now corrected by divine inspiration, the evil he loved displeases him, and the good he hated pleases him. For there are some who accuse themselves of the wickedness of their crime and yet do not correct the depravity of their will. These are certainly not believed to be converted to the Lord, because true conversion is not received in the mouth but in the heart. For to be converted is to be completely turned around. The true conversion of the sinner, therefore, is when both our inner and outer man is brought back to the good pleasure of our Creator, when both our flesh is restrained from the perpetration of crime through hatred of iniquity, and through love of justice our mind extends itself to the intention of good works.

But because there are some within the Church who come to the satisfaction of penance only at the end of their life, and it is said by the judgment of Truth, 'At whatever hour the sinner is converted, he lives', it is often greatly asked by some whether those who commit sins during the great span of their life and only at the end of life accuse themselves of having acted wickedly immediately find life after the death of the flesh. To which it must be said that by the power of conversion the magnitude of the crime is blotted out. But the power of conversion is the affection of charity infused into the heart by the visitation of the Holy Spirit. And it is written of the same Spirit: 'That he himself is the remission of sins.' For when he graciously visits the hearts of the elect, he powerfully purges them from all uncleanness of sins, because as soon as he pours himself into the mind, he immediately and ineffably stirs it into hatred of sins and vices and into love of virtues. He makes it immediately hate what it loved and ardently love what it had hated, and greatly groan at both, because it recalls that it damnably loved the evils it now hates and hated the good things it now loves. For who would dare to say, even

though one is weighed down by every kind of burden of sins, that anyone visited by the grace of the Holy Spirit can perish?

Since therefore the sinner is converted at no hour except that in which he is illuminated by the Holy Spirit, what remains except that, just as he abandons the death of sin by execrating it, so he lives by the life of justice to which he longingly turns? He is received into life immediately after death, if he receives such a fire of love in his conversion as can consume in his soul all the accumulated rust of sin. Whence it is also said of the sinful woman: 'Her many sins are forgiven her, because she loved much' (Luke 7:47). Hence by the same Truth hanging on the cross it is said: 'Amen I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:43). At the end of life, therefore, only those come wholesomely to their senses who both through internal visitation perfectly love good things and hate the evils they had loved. Yet if they cannot grieve sufficiently for the iniquities they have committed, nevertheless even these live in the hour in which they are converted. For those who had the perfection of good will in the confession of sin pass through to life after death by the purgatorial punishment of sin, if they did not at all have sufficient power of love for blotting out their sins. Whence Paul also says: 'So they shall be saved, yet as through fire' (1 Cor. 3:15).

But let the sinner who has merited to be saved there through fire fulfill here through the affliction of the flesh what he recognizes is lacking to him in the power of love. (Verse 36.) 'And a cake of bread.' 27. For by the name of bread, the refreshment of earthly delight is sometimes designated. Wherefore the prophet Jeremiah also, recalling the people of corrupted Judea in their worldly appetite, says: 'All her people groan' (Lam. 1:11), 'and seek bread.' The converted sinner therefore twists bread when he torments his past delight through the affliction of repentance. For to twist bread is to afflict the flesh for the delight that was committed. He therefore who desires to pass to salvation without the torment of fire, let him offer a cake of bread with a silver coin, so that he who abandons sins through good will may utterly extinguish them by vigorous affliction of the flesh. For he was offering a silver coin who, having already received the likeness of God, by confessing execrated what he had done, saying: 'My wounds have festered because of my foolishness' (Ps. 38:5). And again: 'I am bowed down and humbled exceedingly.' But he who feared that a silver coin would not suffice for his offering took care to add a cake of bread. For he confesses and says: 'I roared from the

groaning of my heart' (Ibid., 9). For roaring suggests the weeping of great sorrow in the affliction of the penitent. Joining this cake of bread to the silver coin, he himself speaks, saying: 'For I will declare my iniquity, and I will think upon my sin' (Ibid., 19). For to think upon one's sin is to set before oneself a fitting affliction of the flesh for past delight.

He was therefore twisting bread to be offered, who, while declaring the shameful deeds he had committed, was thinking about how he might blot them out. And because the desire for praise is wont sometimes to creep upon penitents from the austerity of their way of life, the intention of the truly converted sinner is indicated by what is added next: (Verse 36.) 'And let him say: Send me, I beseech you, to one of the priestly portions.' 28. For the priestly portion of each one is the reward of the elect in eternal life. For all His elect are priests of God, because they never cease to offer sacred gifts to Him whom they unceasingly serve through the offering of their ministry. Whence also those rejoicing in the kingdom say: 'You have redeemed us to God in your blood, and have made us a kingdom and priests to our God' (Rev. 5:9, 10). Therefore, for the converted sinner to say: 'Let me go, I beseech you, to one priestly portion', is from the austerity of life and penance to await only a portion of eternal blessedness, so that he may find the security of delight, which he may possess in perpetual enjoyment, and never drag behind him the torments of penance. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 36.) 'That I may eat a morsel of bread.'

29. For if bread in sacred Scripture is taken to mean delight, a morsel of bread is the unfailing delight of eternal life. Concerning which delight, indeed, it is said through the prophet: 'Joy and gladness shall be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of praise' (Isa. 51:3). Hence likewise, now looking upon the guests invited to the table not of a cake of bread but of a morsel, he says: 'Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and exultation' (Isa. 35:10). Hence the Psalmist, speaking in the voice of the corrected penitent, says: 'You have made known to me the ways of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, delights at your right hand forever' (Ps. 15:10). For the ways of life are the afflictions of penance, by which indeed the sinner is led from the abyss of his damnation to the heavenly homeland, while he is voluntarily tormented for the iniquities he has committed. Whence also, when he indicates that he is a corrected sinner, he presumes to say: 'You are, O Lord, who have restored my inheritance to me' (Ps. 15:5). And likewise

trusting, he says: 'For you will not abandon my soul in hell' (Ps. 15:10). For the ways of life become known to the sinner when the afflictions of penance are divinely impressed upon him—when, that is, with enlightened mind he considers what bitterness of life he should set against each pleasure of his past sin.

He indeed glories in being filled with joyful gladness in the presence of Almighty God, because he is refreshed by the manifest fullness of divine contemplation; and he who on the left hand of the present life is pierced with compunction for a time through penance, on the right hand of eternal life is satisfied with delights forever. He therefore who offered a cake of bread is brought to the eating of a morsel, because he who for love of the heavenly life crucifies harmful pleasures prepares for himself perpetual refreshment at the banquet of eternal joy. There follows:

CHAPTER 2.4 (1 SAMUEL 3:1)

Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. 1. Moreover, it is shown that he repeated in this passage what is mentioned above concerning the chosen boy, where it says: "But the boy Samuel was a minister in the sight of the Lord before the face of Eli. For to minister to the Lord before Eli is the same as to be the Lord's minister before the face of Eli. And because we explained that passage more fully there, with the Lord's help, we do not delay at all in repeating its exposition. But since it is the divine word that speaks this both in this passage and in that one, it is shown that He did this not without a useful reason. Therefore, out of concern for the reader's weariness, we pass over the explanation in silence, but we state the reason for the repetition for his benefit. For certain people who are subject to the authority of the prelates of holy Church obey as untrained beginners; but when they advance a little higher through their manner of life, they by no means persist in that same humility of obedience. The handmaid Hagar of Sarah fittingly represents these in a spiritual sense, for when she saw that she had conceived by Abraham her husband, she despised her mistress (Gen. 16:5). For Hagar conceives when the reprobate mind of a subordinate believes that it is advancing either through the acquisition of knowledge or through its manner of life.

And she, being pregnant, is said to have despised her mistress, because she now disdains to submit herself through obedience to the will of her superior who is set over her. But she who despises her mistress is declared to be a handmaid, because proud subjects are also weak through their arrogance, and they

do not attain to the number of the children of God. Moreover, Samuel's progress is set forth because it was said above: "But the boy Samuel advanced and grew and was pleasing both to God and to men" (1 Kings 2:18). With what sublimity of life he accomplished these three things has been explained above. Since, therefore, even now he is mentioned as ministering before his master, what does this mean except that he provides a pattern for chosen hearers, so that the higher the life to which they advance, they never forget to preserve the good of obedience? For they truly advance if they strive toward the height of merits both by the strength of their works and by the virtue of humility.

2. In this passage there is another thing that ought to be noted: because Samuel is shown to be ministering to the Lord before Eli at the very time when Eli himself is rebuked by the Lord for his negligence regarding his sons. For some subjects, while they consider the measure of their own strength, prefer to be severe judges of their superiors rather than pious listeners. These indeed, because they are accustomed to exaggerating and scrutinizing the lives of their superiors, if they observe stains of even the slightest fault in their conduct, refuse to submit to their authority by obeying. But they would be truly strong if they humbly bore what they consider to be the weaknesses of their superiors. For before God, that person is known to be great in merit who submits himself in good obedience to one who does not seem venerable in some respect. For behold, Eli is rebuked by the open sentence of God for the guilt of his committed negligence, yet the boy Samuel is recorded as ministering to the Lord before him, so that one may indeed reflect within himself what kind of person he is who despises his superior for a lighter fault, if Samuel submitted himself in obedience to one whom almighty God condemned with such severity of his judgment. But because Eli is rebuked for having honored his sinning subjects too greatly, the very dignities of the sacred orders must be weighed.

For a ruler ought not to honor a sinning subject unless he has been corrected, but the subject ought not to despise his superior even when he recognizes himself as just and the other as a sinner, because the eternal Judge has given the judgment of subjects to the rulers of Holy Church, but has reserved those same rulers to be examined at his own judgment. Yet this very thing ought to be greatly feared by rulers, that they are reserved for God's examination, because they must prepare all the more exacting accounts of their life

and teaching as the Judge whom they face is wiser. Nor should they fear his future judgment in the life to come only, as though it were placed far off, lest he who is everywhere present strike the unwary from close at hand. For negligent pastors, in order to escape the punishment of future vengeance, count on the long stretches of present life before punishment comes; but the Judge, who is everywhere, inflicts retribution from close at hand, because he first withdraws from them the light of contemplation, then snatches them away to torments through death. Whence also concerning the same Eli, who a little further on dies with a broken neck, it is added: (Verse 1. In those days there was no manifest vision.

3. For when the ruler despises doing what he knows should be done, it is dealt with him by strict judgment, so that he does not see what should be done, because he was unwilling to fulfill what he saw. For the manifest vision belongs not to the negligent pastor, but to the loving one. Whence also Truth itself says: 'He who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him' (John 14:21). For the brightness of manifest vision is the revelation of beloved truth. Which truth indeed, if it is shown by the merit of love, is most justly hidden from those who are sluggish in good work, because the sign of love is not in the affection of the mind, but in the zeal of good works. Whence also in the Gospel the Lord said beforehand: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me' (Ibid.). Because therefore from negligence of work the darkness of inward vision is incurred, most fittingly, while the priest is rebuked for contempt of the commandments, the hidden vision is mentioned. There follows: (Verse 1.) 'And the word of the Lord was precious.'

4. As far as the truth of the sacred history is concerned, he used "precious" in place of "rare." The word was therefore precious, because while he who discerned the highest things by contemplation was rare, he who proclaimed good things by speaking could not be frequent. Which we see happening now also in the holy Church, because while many seek the glory of honor from the reverence of high position, while they neglect the ministries of sacred order, they cannot preach to the peoples subject to them the highest things which they are unable to see, and in their household the word is known to be precious, because they rarely hear the encouragements of good preaching, whose prelates do not seek from desire the heavenly things they might speak, but the earthly things they might pursue. Whom indeed sacred

Scripture marks, which says: 'Dumb dogs unable to bark' (Isa. 56:10). It did not say "unwilling," but "unable," because certainly while they love the glory of the world with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind and strength, they would wish to speak lofty things to the people, so that they might also have glory from the sublimity of their word. Therefore dumb dogs, wishing to bark, cannot, because while they meditate on earthly things with a corrupt heart, they grasp by no revelation the hidden things of truth that they might set forth. But because what is precious is usually guarded with great diligence, this which is said, "There was no open vision," can be referred to the negligence of carnal prelates.

5. But as for what is added, 'And the word of the Lord was precious', this pertains to the burning zeal of good subjects, since faithful subordinates, even if they do not have someone who frequently preaches heavenly things to them from the treasury of sacred speech, embrace with wondrous devotion only that which they were once able to learn, and guard it as something ineffably precious, while through good works they store it up in heaven, where thieves who might take it away by no means draw near. Whence also in the Gospel it is said of the buyer of the good pearl: 'Having found one precious pearl, he gave all that he had and bought it' (Matt. 13:46). Therefore, when in the time of hidden vision the word is described as precious among the elect, the praises of the subjects are proclaimed, because they are to be extolled with a glory all the more sublime, inasmuch as that good which was lost from a higher place remained among those in lower positions through the perfection of great charity. By their good conduct it is indeed often brought about that the vision which had been hidden is made manifest, so that those who devoutly guard the least things may come to know and do greater things as well. Whence it is also added: (Verses 2-4.) 'And it came to pass on a certain day that Eli was lying in his place, and his eyes had grown dim, nor could he see the lamp of God before it was extinguished. And Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. And the Lord called Samuel.'

6. For the boy Samuel is called by the Lord whenever the secrets of divine counsel are revealed to humble subjects, and they acquire by the merit of their humility the light of contemplation, which proud preachers lose as the recompense of their pride. But it should be noted that this is shown to have happened on a certain day, on which Eli is reported both to have been lying

in his place and to have been unable to see. For he is called in the daytime who is raised up to know the secrets of heavenly wisdom for his own and others' salvation. On the contrary, Solomon received wisdom in the night, so that the darkness of the time might indicate that he would not receive that same wisdom with perseverance (1 Kings 3:5, 12). This can also be understood in another way, since the darkness of Eli is mentioned. By the setting of the daytime, the greatness of his blindness is shown, because he surely had great darkness who did not see in the day. Now also, if we look to the state of the Church, there is a general grace of light. For He came who, scattering the rays of true brightness, would say: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me does not walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

And because the glory of His inner splendor is ineffable, it does not say "on this day" or "on that day," but "on a certain day"—whose brightness certainly exists, but the greatness of whose brightness is unknown. Therefore the Pastor endures great darkness if he who is known to be the eye of the Church by his office does not have vision amid the grace of so great a light. Wherefore Truth itself shows the darkness of that same eye to be great, saying: "How great will that darkness be! (Matthew 6:23). But now the text suggests whence so great a darkness arises for him, because it says: "He was lying in his place. For the place of the preacher carries the duty of standing, not of lying down. Whence also the Lord provides an example of this to preachers concerning Himself, saying: "But I am in the midst of you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27). For to stand in the midst of the brethren is to offer oneself as an example to those beneath through a laborious manner of life. To stand, therefore, pertains to the labor of work and to the necessity of battle. Whence also the director of the spiritual contest commands, saying: "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth" (Ephesians 6:14). And because lying down belongs to one who is at rest, he who is said to lie in his place is rebuked for following the lukewarmness of rest in the place of battle and labor.

To stand is also the mark of the just man. Whence Paul also says: "For by faith you stand" (2 Corinthians 1:23). To lie down therefore also pertains to the negligence of a more lax life. Thus Eli lies in his place when a reprobate preacher rests in the seat of the just man through a fall into wickedness. Therefore the eyes of one lying in his place grow dim, because those who do not carry out works of virtue from the height of the pastoral summit, but are

immersed in the allurements of a more lax life, are unable to see the highest things. He is indeed called the lamp of God no longer in the truth of praise, but as a reproach of derision. For he who bears the title of lamp of God and is reported to be unable to see is rather mocked by so great a name by which he is called. For in true praise of the just man it is said: "He was a burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35). For the radiance of the true light which he had drunk in by loving, he poured forth by speaking. Even the carnal preacher is called a lamp by his office but blind in his intention, because he holds the dignity of providing light but fixes his mind on the darkness of vanity.

7. His thoroughly consummate perversity is indicated by the fact that it does not say "he did not see," but "he could not see. For this reason also, when the Lord mentions the bad tree, He says: "A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). The lamp of God, therefore, cannot be seen when he who stands preeminent in pastoral dignity is pressed down by so great a thickness of worldly love that he is raised by no inspiration of grace toward the vision of interior brightness; when, that is, cast out by the just indignation of God, he is left in the blindness of his own darkness, so that he is never again visited by the infusion of heavenly light. But it is well said: "Before it was extinguished. For not to see is the punishment of a sinner still living in this present age, but not to be able to see belongs to the dead wicked man already condemned to eternal punishment in the age to come. Hence also, by the judgment of the Creator, he is commanded to be shut in outer darkness, so that he may never be brought back to the sight of light. Therefore, when the reprobate preacher, still living in this present age, is said to have been unable to see before the lamp was extinguished, he is likened to the wicked man already condemned to perpetual blindness. Now the lamp is extinguished when the pastor dies.

Or certainly the lamp is extinguished because when the reprobate preacher perishes through the death of the flesh, whatever in him seemed to shine he loses from the glory of his high position, and he remains like the mere clay vessel of a lamp without light, when the person is forced to be kept for the eternal judgment who is utterly stripped of all worldly splendor. Therefore, before the lamp of God is extinguished, he cannot see, because he both possesses the merit of future damnation through the eternity of his blindness, and yet still shines before men through the splendor of the dignity he received. (Verse 3. Now Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord, where

the ark of God was. 8. Now rightly the reprobate prelate is said not to sleep but to lie down, while the boy, a subject and one of the elect, is said not to lie down but to sleep, because "to sleep" is sometimes taken in a good sense, while "to lie down" is almost always taken in a bad sense. Hence also the Bride in the Song of Songs says: 'I sleep, and my heart watches' (Song 5:2). In the sleep of the perfect boy, therefore, the rest of every elect subject from wicked work is signified. For he sleeps in the temple and where the ark is who, occupied with heavenly desire and with meditation on Sacred Scripture, does not attend to those things that pertain to perversity. For some sleep in the temple but do not sleep in the place where the ark of God is, because certain simple people rest in heavenly contemplation through love, but do not know how to meditate on the hidden things of sacred speech. But Samuel, who is said to sleep not only in the temple but before the ark of God, signifies the learned and elect subjects alike, because while they draw the flames of their love from sacred Scripture by meditating more frequently, they are raised up more highly to the desire of the heavenly homeland, and they choose, as it were, the innermost parts of the temple for sleep, since they are separated the further from the public activity of earthly work the more secretly they are hidden away through meditation in the sanctuary of inner vision. (Verse 4.) 'And the Lord called Samuel.'

9. For to call is to rouse through the force of a greater grace. For the Lord calls one who is sleeping, because He stirs up those who are resting from earthly pursuits to an increase of heavenly knowledge. For while we keep watch through concern for outward things, we do not perceive what is inward and spiritual. The setting aside of earthly care, therefore, is our preparation for receiving heavenly grace, because in the elect the outpouring of the divine gift becomes more abundant in proportion as the mind has been purer through the keeping of interior meditation. There follows: (Verses 4–9.) And the Lord called Samuel. Who answering, said: Here I am, and he ran to Eli and said: For you called me. Who said: I did not call you, my son; go back and sleep. And he went away and slept. And the Lord again called Samuel once more. And rising up, he went to Eli and said: Here I am, for you called me. Who answered: I did not call you, my son; go back and sleep. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord been revealed to him. And the Lord called Samuel again a third time. Who rising up, went to Eli and said: Here I am, for you called me. Eli therefore under-

stood that the Lord was calling the boy, and he said to Samuel: Go and sleep, and if He calls you henceforth, you shall say: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

10. What is it then that almighty God introduces his calling with such skill that the mind of the one called is restrained from recognizing the one who calls him; that hearing God, he thinks this master is a man; that he sends forth the calling yet conceals the cause; that he allows him to go to his master, to return so many times to the quiet of sleep, and yet does not permit the sleeper to rest? For surely he who called whomever he wished to know his secrets, with a voice merely resembling Eli's—could he not have called with whatever voice he wished? And he who called when he wished—could he not have immediately indicated the cause of the calling? And he who wished to rouse him so that he might hear—could he not have taught him how he ought to listen except through his master? But in this matter almighty God employs a great dispensation, so that the hearts of the elect may indeed be taught by a twofold instruction: that on the surface of the history those who are subjects may see the good of obedience which they should follow, and that superiors may perceive the hidden mysteries which they may bring to the light of understanding by examining them. But what I think should be said first is this: the boy who thought the Lord speaking was his master heard a bodily voice.

Therefore God spoke to the boy not through himself but through an angelic spirit, because he who is not confined by bodily form is not restricted to the sound of a voice by a bodily instrument. Which indeed was fitting for a childish hearer. For even if the merits of a beginning subject are great, because nevertheless he is recognized as not yet being in perfection but in the progress of his way of life, he does not attain to that speech by which almighty God speaks through himself. Indeed almighty God through himself, that is, the supreme and uncircumscribed Spirit, speaks spiritually to great and spiritual men, when by spiritual speech he indicates to their minds both the things to be done that they should do and the things to be spoken that they should know. Therefore he produced the outward voice through an angelic spirit, but by the presence of his grace the Creator Spirit indicated what he wished. Therefore calling with a voice, while he was thought to be Eli, he remained hidden from recognition, so that the boy might run to his master, and while hearing that he had not been called, being mistaken he

might show on what a summit of virtue he stood. Therefore the boy, humbly subject to a man and raised up on the lofty citadel of obedience—when called he came, when commanded he returned—what else does he offer us by his example, if not the pattern of the highest obedience?

11. For true obedience neither examines the intention of superiors nor distinguishes between commands, because he who has submitted all judgment of his life to a greater rejoices in this alone: that he carries out what is commanded him. For whoever has perfectly learned to obey knows not how to judge, because he considers this alone to be good: that he obeys commands. But in such great glory of his perfect way of life, our own life is put to shame. For behold, we have resolved to set out for the heavenly homeland under the leaders of the Christian army, yet we murmur when we are ordered to perform various tasks even at various times. For who would restrain himself from murmuring, who would hold back from anger, if he heard himself called two and three times, and yet perceived from the caller's response that he had not actually been called at all? We suffer indeed this darkness of our slothfulness because we do not see with what brightness of reward so great a virtue of goodness corresponds. For obedience is the sole good for the recovery of life, if the fault of disobedience was a sufficient evil for bringing about death. If therefore death prevailed through the evil of disobedience, we are restored to life as many times as we obey.

And so the boy Samuel was offended neither when called nor when turned away, because he did not wish to scrutinize the mind of the one calling or turning him away, for he had learned to rejoice in this alone: that he obeyed. And since rising pertains to labor, but returning to sleep pertains to rest, what does this suggest, except that both prepare life for us, if the obedient mind in what it does considers nothing but the good of obedience? For a command ought to be weighed solely on this basis: that it is the command of a superior; and he who carries out the good of obedience ought not to consider the task enjoined, but its fruit, because for meriting the joys of eternal life, what is required is not the quality of the work, but the mortification of one's own will and the execution of another's. Hence Paul also says: "Circumcision profits nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19). Therefore now, in the sight of almighty God, neither those things that pertain to labor nor those that pertain to rest are small, if they can prepare eternal life for the obedient. Who-

ever therefore is subject to another's authority, let him consider this alone: that what is enjoined upon him according to God is exceedingly great and lofty as gain to the mind, because it prepares life as the reward of recompense.

On the other hand, let the disobedient observe that the first parent of the human race fell from the joys of paradise not by theft, nor by robbery, nor by adultery, nor by murder, but by disobedience regarding the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). From this it is also fittingly gathered that if small things—as they seem—when the commands of superiors are despised, separate us from inward joys, then even the least things that are carried out in obedience prepare life. 12. Therefore the diligent worker of the communal life, and the pious emulator of those serving God together with him, if he desires to obtain a greater reward of eternal merit through the good of obedience, let him recognize that he excels in this alone: if above all others he has subjected his own will to the judgment of his superior. For neither the great gains of fasting nor the pursuits of an austere life are to be greatly weighed by devoted soldiers of Christ against the command of their superiors. For a meal enjoined by charity is of greater merit than a fast undertaken by one's own deliberation. For he who, being commanded, refreshes the flesh, has unwillingly earned the reward of fasting through devotion, and has obtained a greater reward of obedience by eating. Therefore God called the boy, but with a voice similar to the master's, so that He might indeed indicate the manner of His speaking. He was silent about the reason for the calling, so that the chosen boy might show by what humility of obedience he would be exalted. He endured going to his master, so that he might offer the gift of his devotion. He is allowed to return to the rest of sleep, so that indeed we may not despise even the things that are least. He rouses him again, so that He might show that he whom He wished to set as a pattern for the elect would not be wearied even by the urgency of commands. Through him who was to be rejected he learned how he ought to respond, so that indeed we may know that the commands of superiors are to be venerated even when they themselves do not have a praiseworthy life, because their teaching, which through wicked conduct can become worthless to the proud, causes humble hearers to arrive at the height of divine intimacy.

13. But because what follows is, "Moreover Samuel did not yet know the Lord," and above he is reported to have ministered to the Lord, what is said

seems very contradictory, because he could not be ignorant of the one whom he was serving. For who serves one whom he does not know? But indeed through what is added, it becomes clear by what fitting reasoning that which sounds contradictory ought to be understood: "Nor had the word of the Lord been revealed to him. By which it is surely given to understand that the one whom he knew by love and ministry, he did not know by the revelation of His word. For he had not yet heard calling him the one whom he testified that he had known both by the devotion of ministry and by the power of love. But this is fittingly understood in the life of the faithful; for many advance well under another's guidance, who in the time of their newness perform services to almighty God, and yet do not attain by the purity of contemplation to the vision of His inner beauty. When by the merit of their submission they also receive the gift of divine contemplation, they understand by the experience of inner vision that they did not yet know the one whom they were serving. This Jacob well represents, setting out to receive a wife, who after the labor of his journey saw the Lord through the sleep of rest, but awakening from sleep said:

"Truly the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it" (Gen. 28:16). For he who perceived that He exists everywhere could not have doubted that the Lord was there before he fell asleep; but because he then learned Him more perfectly, he declared that he had been ignorant of Him when he had not known Him more intimately. For the way by which one travels to a wife is the intention of devoted obedience, by which the fruitfulness of inner charity is desired to be attained. Jacob therefore sleeps on the way when the faithful subject, the supplanter of the evil spirit, is received through the labor of obedience into the rest of inner vision. Who will indeed then confess that he has come to know the Lord, because while he marvels at that vision of inner light to which he has been newly raised, he recognizes by the experience of revealed beauty how much he did not know before. For by faith, as if by report, we know God, but by the love of contemplation He who became known to us by report is revealed to us as if by the showing of His presence. And rightly the subject advancing through obedience, while he is led to the height of contemplation, is said to have long been ignorant of the Lord, because He is found as if from the truth of His presence, who before seemed as if unknown by report and not known as if present.

14. But because it is said separately, "He did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord been revealed to him," it can be understood more subtly. For in one and the same internal contemplation of God, both a wondrous charity is poured into the one contemplating from the fruit of so great a glory, and a great amazement at the revelation of the secret word. Some therefore know the Lord and receive the revelation of His word, because they are both filled with wondrous sweetness from that infusion of so great a charity which they draw from habitual practice, and they are instructed with great wisdom by the revelation of the word. But by some the Lord is known to whom the word of the Lord is by no means revealed, because certain simple men, yet perfected by a great manner of life, receive indeed an ineffable sweetness of love by contemplating the glory of divine contemplation, but nevertheless do not reach the height of His revealed word, because they have been taken up into the order of those who love, not to the loftiness of preaching. The word is indeed revealed to him so that it may be loved, and lest it be preached, it is hidden.

But it is well said of him who is raised to the ministry of preaching, "He did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord been revealed to him," so that while he, still unformed, indicates the things he does not yet possess, he openly shows with what good things a preacher ought to be enriched. For he who has not yet received that power of intimate love assuredly does not know the almighty Lord—whom he knows by faith as if by report—by the great presence of His charity. And if he loves ardently but does not yet know how to examine the secrets of the mysteries through the Spirit, he indeed already knows the Lord, but has not yet arrived at the revelation of His word. But concerning the obedient boy it is immediately added: (Verse 9) "So Samuel went and lay down to sleep."

15. For now the boy, having been instructed, is sent to the knowledge of divine speech, when the chosen one, subject to the counsel of his superior, is prepared for knowing spiritual things. And indeed for him to sleep is to rest in the desire of eternal life, when, that is, to the soul now thirsting for heavenly things alone, all present things are held in contempt, so that the more eagerly everything corporeal is driven from its attention, the more abundantly it is filled with the love of invisible things. And it should be noted that he is now commanded to return to the rest of sleep four times, because while we carelessly occupy ourselves with this world regarding visible things, we are

awake in deed, speech, and thought. Therefore we are commanded to sleep three times, so that we may be prepared for the knowledge of heavenly things through rest from works, silence of the mouth, and the rejection of superfluous thoughts. But in the fourth place we are sent to sleep when by the permission of our superiors we are commanded to cease even from useful ministry, so that while we are hindered by no care of anxiety, the mind may gather itself entirely to the contemplation of the heavenly vision.

16. And it should be noted that the Lord rouses the boy while he is resting, without Eli knowing, yet once roused, He by no means reveals the reason for his calling unless that same Eli instructs him, because He raises chosen subjects through hidden inspiration toward the desire for the heavenly homeland, yet through their rest He does not permit them to be called to the homeland they love without the permission of their superiors. Since, therefore, as many times as the boy is called, so many times he is allowed to go to his master, what else does this mean except that the desires of subjects, divinely inspired, are submitted to the judgment of superiors? For the work of a subject that is divinely inspired is recognized as pleasing to God when it is carried out by the command or permission of a superior. The boy is therefore called four times by the Lord, and the quiet of sleep is commanded four times by the master, because we are kindled by divine inspiration toward the moderation of work, the silence of the mouth, the casting away of inner anxiety, and the cessation of ministry, for the love of a more secluded life, and yet we are forbidden to fulfill the desires of our love without the permission of our superiors. The Lord therefore calls and is silent about the reason for the calling, so that, with the master's permission, He may reveal Himself to the called subject. For He who, unbidden to listen, fell silent after He had called, once the human teacher gave the command, God who was calling made known the reason for the calling. For there follows: (Verses 9–11.) So Samuel went and slept in his place. And the Lord came and stood, and called as He had called the second time, Samuel. And Samuel said: Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening. And the Lord said to him.

17. By these words indeed, because what is known to pertain to a body is said of the incorporeal and invisible divine substance, it is necessary that it be understood in a rational manner. For where does he come who is everywhere? In what way is he said to stand and speak who is not formed of bodily substance? But while that substance governs all things, the words of our

poverty are employed, through which we may be able to rise to knowing the mysteries of his working. For the Lord's coming is to touch the hearts of the elect by the presence of his grace; his standing is, by the abiding gift of his grace, to retain the minds he touches with the unwavering gift of his grace. His calling, moreover, is to arouse the chosen mind to the increase of greater grace. For the Lord comes and does not stand when the hearts of the negligent are touched by grace, and yet they do not at all persevere in the affection and love of the grace that touches them. For he is as it were present when coming, and departing when not standing, when from the present touch of divine grace they suddenly resolve to do good, and immediately, being abandoned, they forsake the intention of that same good resolve.

But if this is referred to the power of contemplation, the Lord comes and stands when he both suddenly touches the hearts of the elect by grace and does not suddenly abandon them once touched, so that by coming he may visit, by standing he may confirm, and he who is shown to the joy of the mind beloved to him may not himself depart before that mind is satisfied in its living experience. But because he is said to stand, it is indicated that he will at some point depart, because even if he sometimes satisfies chosen souls in his revelation through a brief lingering, he withdraws the sweetness of his presence, so that they may more ardently desire what has been withdrawn. The Lord therefore comes by visiting, stands by sweetly showing himself, and calls by arousing through most ardent desire toward the love of his revealed glory. Hence also the boy was aroused so many times by the repeated name. He is called because a calling by name designates the affection of great charity and intimacy. Hence he also speaks to Moses, saying: "I know you by name" (Exodus 33:12, 17).

The name of the one called is therefore repeated when the mind of the one who sees is now received into great intimacy with the interior Majesty, and is elevated by its burning desires toward the love of the one who calls, so that nothing may please it beyond what it hears, and it may desire to dwell perpetually in the joy of what it has heard. Hence it is also openly added here: "Samuel therefore said: Speak, Lord, for your servant hears. He who therefore said "Speak" was compelled by necessity. For it is as if he were saying in plainer words: I answered "Speak," because I could not have answered otherwise. For what else can a mind desire that has been taken up into that joy of the speaking Majesty? For to say to God in the mind "Speak" is to desire always to

hear that ineffably sweet speech. He therefore says "Speak" who would wish that he never be silent. Hence it is also added: "for your servant hears. As if to say: because that which I receive by the experience of interior affection, I desire to enjoy in eternal perception. He therefore asks that he speak, who desires that he never be silent in his interior affections, lest he who is lifted up by such sublime exultation when the Lord speaks be cast down, when he is silent, to endure the straits of condemned humanity.

For if we are raised from the darkness of our corruption when he speaks, when he is silent to us through the withdrawal of grace, we are subjected to those same darknesses. Rightly therefore, having been raised to such a height, he says to the Lord "Speak," because he takes pleasure in that joy of interior hearing in which nothing in his outward circumstances pleases him; and he would desire all the more ardently to remain with the one conversing with him, the more gladly he would have wished never to be cast down to his own infirmities. 18. Indeed, when by God's authorship we say "Speak" to the Lord, we say it by His own gift; yet we cannot express with what affection the more perfect elect say this to Him, because what belongs to ineffable desire is not expressed by the utterance of reason. Peter indeed well suggests this affection, who, when he stood by the Lord transfigured on the mountain, and beheld His face shining like the sun, and had seen His garments gleaming white like snow, said: "It is good for us to be here; if You will, let us make here three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matt. 17:4; Luke 9:33). For he who says, "It is good for us to be here," would never have wished to be taken away from that vision of such great glory, if he could have remained. For when Peter says, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," and Samuel says, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears," the words indeed are different, but the affections are equal. For Peter signifies on the mountain, with the Lord transfigured, what Samuel signifies when he is called by the Lord coming, standing, and standing a second time. But even though Peter is reproved by the Evangelist as one not knowing what he was saying, this does not seem contrary to this meaning.

For the Evangelist reproves not Peter's affection but his reasoning, because, having been taken up with the Lord apart in glory, he desired to remain so always, and did not want Him to descend to the ignominy of the cross for the common redemption. He did not know, therefore, what he was saying, but he ardently loved what he saw, because indeed he beheld so great

a good that it could in no way not be loved. Hence, even though Peter is justly reproved, he is nonetheless reasonably pardoned, because he was overcome by love of such great Majesty through its enjoyment. Nevertheless, when Peter is charged with ignorance of what he was saying, the cause of that same ignorance is mentioned. For the Evangelist adds: "For they were terrified with fear. For that ineffable beauty of the inner Majesty sometimes shakes with wondrous dread the chosen mind to which it delightfully reveals itself, lest it leap into pride from the greatness of the vision, if the spirit that advances it—whose gentle contemplation raises it to such heights—does not restrain it with the governance of fear. In one and the same vision of revealed glory, both the goodness of the Redeemer is beheld as ineffably gentle and His justice as ineffably terrifying, so that the more sweetly the soul of the beholder is nourished by the regard of God's goodness, the more, terrified by the consideration of His justice, it may take care not to be vainly satisfied.

Hence also, when Samuel is raised to the intimacy of divine speech, not joyful things about the progress of the elect are announced to him, but terrible things about the downfall of the great. For it continues: (Verse 11) "And the Lord said to Samuel: Behold, I am doing a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it shall tingle." 19. For among sublime gifts, the elect mind is restrained from pride all the more cautiously, the more it perceives through the justice of almighty God that even those who seemed to be supported by more sublime gifts have been cast away. For this reason also, concerning the word which the Lord threatens He will accomplish, the ears of those who hear are declared to ring. For the ears of the body ring when they are struck by an unbearable sound. For when a cry is poured into the ear beyond the capacity of hearing, the narrowness of its function converts the sound it rejects into a ringing, because while the voice hisses through the caverns of the ears, having been poured in all at once, it does not pass into the interior. But to the ears of minds, the unbearable cry is the rejection of some great preacher. Therefore the magnitude of the outpoured cry is not grasped, because while the sublime gifts granted to the rejected preacher are recalled, it remains unknown by what examination of divine equity he is cast out. Therefore the magnitude of the outpoured voice is converted into a ringing of the ears, because even if the judgment of God by which it happens is not grasped by the mind's attention, while it is long weighed through consideration, hearts are struck with terror by that consideration. For just as ears

ring from the confined sound of a great voice, so the hearts of the righteous tremble greatly from the long-considered rejection of great men.

But both ears are said to ring, namely the right and the left. And because by the right eternal life is signified, and by the left the present life, and through the ear we hear what is said, what do we understand by the left ear except the attention to pious works, and what by the right ear except the attention to the heavenly vision? And so both ears of the hearer will ring, because when the ruin of the greatest men is shown, both directions of the elect's attention are disturbed, because they both raise themselves with trembling heart to contemplate eternal things, and do not manage temporal things without great dread. For he had suffered this ringing of the ears, who spoke to the Lord, saying: "Your righteousness is like the mountains of God, Your judgments are a great abyss" (Psalm 35:7). For by the mountains of God are understood the highest and elect men. And indeed God's righteousness is matched to those mountains, when they fulfill His lofty commands in deed; but yet the divine judgments are a great abyss, because even if in the eyes of holy men what they do is upright, before the eyes of almighty God they cannot know what quality those things possess. Whence they both ceaselessly do the good works they are able, and tremble at that abyss of judgments thundering above them, because by the accomplished word of the Lord which they hear, their hearts are shaken with the ringing of great terror.

But fittingly, only the ears of those who hear are declared to ring. For in the Gospel too He warns of this, saying: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:8). For those who with all their attention are watchful for outward things do not know this ringing of fear, because they in no way weigh the height of divine judgments above them. But behold, upon him who refused to weigh God's subtle judgments above himself, how sharp the sentences of those judgments are now unfolded. For He adds, saying: (Verses 13 and 14) "For I foretold that I would judge his house forever because of iniquity, in that he knew his sons were acting unworthily, and he did not correct them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated by victims and offerings forever." 20. For since the sentence of just severity is usually tempered by clemency, it is a judgment of great strictness where the sentence of punishment is affirmed by repetition. For He foretold above to Eli when, through a man of God, without naming him, He announced the sentence of his rejection. But be-

cause now too He swears that He will do the same thing, He indeed repeats the judgment of condemnation. In this matter it should also be noted that he who did not correct his sons when they acted wickedly is reprov'd for having committed an iniquity that will never be expiated by sacrifices and offerings. What then will be the severity for one's own iniquity, if the negligence of caring for others is an irremediable fault? For if the uncorrected sins of subjects bind us with perpetual guilt, with what punishments does the boldness of our own iniquity bind us? Rightly therefore do the ears of the hearer tingle, because indeed the minds of the elect, which consider this attentively, tremble at such great severity. Rightly do the ears of the hearer tingle at this, because it indeed possesses an immensity of outcry that chosen hearts can scarcely endure. And indeed the right ear of the hearer tingles, because even if anyone raises himself by the merit of his perfection to contemplate heavenly things, yet he does not trust in the loftiness of his life. The left ear also tingles, because even if one has the gift of knowledge to order temporal things perfectly, yet he has no confidence in the perfection of his ministry. For amid sublime gifts they hear a word from whose outcry each ear suffers a ringing, under which, as long as this life of uncertainty is led, one does not cease to tremble. Whence also it is fittingly added: (Verse 15) Samuel slept until morning.

21. For he sleeps until morning who rests in the conduct of a good work begun until the splendor of the coming Redeemer appears. He sleeps until morning who throughout the whole night of the present life waits through the purpose of justice begun, so that the brightness of the promised Redeemer may shine forth for him unto the joy of a merited reward. For he heard the word promised in Israel, about which his ears do not cease to ring, because from the observed severity of divine justice he drew in a spirit of fear, under whose weight he will not be able to awake to the love of the world. But perhaps he is said to sleep until morning on account of the ringing of the right ear. For the right ear rings, because while the perfect lover of the interior life doubts about the perfection of contemplation, he desires more and more to advance in that sublimity of life which he has begun. But as long as we are in this mortal flesh, evil spirits lay snares for those striving toward the heights; and in order to draw them back from the vision of interior glory, they gather together phantoms of foolish thoughts, which they set before their interior eyes. Well therefore is it said: 'Samuel slept until morning.' The

temptation of unclean spirits is night; but he who sleeps until morning does not open his eyes the whole night. He therefore sleeps in the night who disdains to look upon the phantoms of demons in temptation.

He also sleeps the whole night, because he is not overcome by the darkness of temptation, but manfully endures, until he is visited by the light of heavenly brightness through the coming of grace. And then indeed he awakens as at morning, because he is gladdened by the delight of light poured back upon him after the darkness. For as one awakening he then opens his eyes, because he joyfully beholds the light with which he is bathed, he who did not care to look upon the darkness brought against him. From the ringing of the right ear indeed he obtains that he who rests upon heavenly things disdains to behold wicked things, and it suggests the certainty of his progress, since what he gains in peace he does not lose through open and violent wars. There follows: (Verse 15.) 'And he was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.'

22. For he feared to reveal to him what the Lord had shown to him, so that he might restrain the recklessness of human boldness with the force of discipline. For some are so reckless that they easily rush forth to rebuke their superiors, and do not tremble to threaten them with future punishments for their errors. These indeed, because they do not know the manner of Holy Scripture, have in no way heard the Lord speaking to them. For those to whom Almighty God, speaking, reveals the punishments of their superiors, dread to tell them what they have heard. From this, therefore, let those who rebuke their superiors consider with how great thoughtlessness they cast themselves headlong, and let them greatly fear the depths of their fall. For if those to whom Almighty God speaks fear to speak to their superiors, those to whom God has in no way spoken — with how great terror ought they to have hidden themselves under the silence of their tongue? Therefore Samuel's fear does not suggest a servile dread, but the reverence due to the eminence of pastoral authority. For even if a negligent preacher deserves rebuke and threats on account of his own guilt, the loftiness of his order demands the fear of reverence. There follows: (Verse 15.) And he opened the doors of the house of the Lord.

23. What does it mean that he who feared to speak opened the doors of the Lord's house, except that he who dreaded announcing sorrowful things was not ashamed to obey? For it was said above: Samuel slept in the temple of

the Lord, where the ark of God was. For the boy, who is said to have slept in the temple of the Lord and now to open its doors, is shown to have had an assigned ministry, so that at the proper hours he would open and close the doors. He therefore who dreaded revealing the vision and yet opened the doors of the Lord's house, showed double reverence to his master: namely, the care of his ministry and the guarding of his speech. How strictly he maintained this guard over his speech is shown, if what follows is carefully considered. For it is immediately added: (Verses 16-18.) So Eli came to Samuel and said: Samuel, my son. He answered: Here I am. And he asked him: What is the word that the Lord spoke to you? I beg you, do not hide it from me. May God do this to you and add this, if you conceal from me any word out of all the things that were said to you. So Samuel told him all the words and hid nothing from him.

24. For he who is said to have been compelled to speak by such great urgency of entreaty is shown to have been bound by a great strictness of silence. And because some subjects are accustomed to keep silent not so much for the preservation of purity as from the obstinacy of impudence, Samuel showed the pattern of a chosen subject, who kept silent reverently, but when commanded to speak, was afraid to keep silent. And so he shone with the twofold light of his conduct, since he who had kept silent by the virtue of filial fear gained by speaking the benefit of speaking. There follows: (Verse 18.) And he answered: It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes. 25. He who considers this response of Eli more simply than he ought thinks that he responded as rightly as he did humbly. For as it is heard outwardly, what could he have responded more humbly, he who heard his own reprobation and offered to God who was threatening—indeed, promulgating the sentence of his reprobation—whatever He wished to do concerning him? But certainly if this humility of response is examined more carefully, it is not true humility. For that is recognized to be true humility which accompanies the good of obedience in carrying out the commands of a superior. He would therefore truly have been humble if he had offered himself for the amendment of the fault for which he was being rebuked. But perhaps he would have been even more truly humble if, when rebuked, he had not responded at all, but had applied to his wicked sons the correction he had neglected—if even then he had persisted with pastoral zeal and had punished the crimes of the flagitious priests with fitting vengeance. Therefore, when he says, "He is the Lord; let

Him do what is good in His eyes," he is recognized to have uttered a word of his own choosing rather than a response of humility, because indeed he preferred to incur the causes of God's threats rather than condemn his sons for the iniquities they had committed. Oh, how many are still imitators of Eli, who, though they daily perceive from sacred Scripture that Almighty God threatens them, nevertheless tremble at displeasing men and do not fear to incur the threats of divine indignation, and while they dread the enmities of men as though they were implacable, they presume upon God's mercy even while sinning!

26. But disordered confidence can have a place of vengeance before almighty God, yet cannot obtain pardon. For to an uncorrected sinner, persisting in the purpose of his fault, what is it to say concerning God who threatens him, "It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes," except to trust in a disordered way in the most ordered mercy of God? For he trusts in an ordered way in the mercy of almighty God who corrects by repenting what he committed by sinning, and wipes it away by weeping. Therefore, to sin and to presume upon the clemency of God the Creator is to be exposed to the deep of His justice. Thus indeed, not to wipe away sins committed by repenting, and to presume upon God's mercy, is to stumble into the judgment of His severity. Therefore, while Eli's life is described as a pattern of reprobate preachers, not only is the fault of his fall shown, but also the false security in the headlong rush of fault. For he who could have appeased the greatness of divine indignation by the fear of repentance, while he neglected what he heard, incurred what he deserved.

27. For Almighty God, although He is just in equity, is nevertheless believed to be more abundantly compassionate in mercy. Whence it is also said through the Prophet: "His mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 144:9). Hence it is that through the prophet Jonah He brought forth threats of overthrow against the Ninevites, and yet spared the penitent from the punishment of destroying the city (Jonah 3:1, 2, ff.). Hence it is also that to King Hezekiah (IV Kings 20:1, ff. the punishment of death was promised through the oracle of the prophet (Isaiah 38:1, ff.), but because the king, fearing death, afflicted himself before the Lord with tears of repentance, he did not find the death by which he was to die with Him whom he feared. And above indeed the Lord declared that He had spoken so that the house of Eli and of his father should minister in His sight forever, but He who had spoken good

things concerning one who acted well changed His sentence concerning the house now become reprobate, saying: "But now far be it from me" (1 Kings 2:30). If therefore Almighty God revokes good things promised, because those to whom He had promised them are changed for the worse, how much more does He withdraw the execution of threats, when He sees those well converted to whom He had announced the punishment of retribution for their committed iniquities? What then do we say to these things, we who sin daily and are unconcerned in the bondage of our guilt?

Therefore this very thing, that we do not apprehend the severity of divine justice, is greatly to be feared by us, because behold, he who is cast off by divine indignation is reported to have been troubled by no fear for the fault of his perpetrated negligence. But since we have learned of the reprobate preacher's rejection unto fear, let us hear of the progress of the elect. For there follows: (Verse 19. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him." 28. If this is read according to the historical sense, it is indicated that the boy Samuel grew in bodily age; but if, as with the rest, we examine these things by spiritual investigation, the Lord is described as being with him who is recorded to have grown. But he grows who advances in the age of mind toward a perfect man. Whence also through the Prophet it is said of the elect who are advancing: 'They shall walk from virtue to virtue; the God of gods shall be seen in Zion' (Psalm 83:8). Hence Paul says: 'Until we all come to meet him in a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13). But there are some who, while they grow in virtues, fall through pride. These indeed appear to grow, but nevertheless the Lord is not with them, because by thinking lofty things of themselves they cast away from themselves him whom, when established in the progress of virtues, they could have had with them through humility. Or if he is understood to have grown through outward dignity, the Lord is recorded as being with him, because indeed many are devout in a humbler rank; but when they suddenly reach the summit of dignity, they abandon their first works together with humility. Samuel therefore both advanced and in advancing had the Lord with him, so that he indeed displayed the manner of the elect preachers, who when they obtain gifts and dignities by which they may benefit others, do not neglect to please God in themselves, and from that source they multiply the gifts which they received for others, whereby they show forth in themselves the good which they desire to spread among them by

speaking. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 19.) 'And none of all his words fell to the ground.'

29. Indeed, the word of the preacher falls on the ground when it becomes worthless because of the preacher's reprobate conduct. Hence it is said by the voice of Truth: "It is good for nothing anymore, except to be cast out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matt. 5:13). And it should be noted that of all his words not one is said to have fallen to the ground, so that assuredly the preacher may do nothing that he rightly condemns. For whatever he forbids to be done, if he himself does it, his word falls to the ground, because while it is despised by the one speaking it, those who hear it by no means revere it. The Lord was forbidding any word from falling to the ground when He set forth to negligent preachers the sentence of their own negligence, saying: "Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). For the preacher breaks not even the least commandment whose word, of all his words, does not fall to the ground. Moreover, when it is said that of all Samuel's words not one fell to the ground, whose character does Samuel represent, if not those who by the merit of both their preaching and their works are great in the kingdom of heaven?

And so of all his words not one falls to the ground, because everything lofty that the perfect preacher of Holy Church speaks is also proclaimed by him through his sublime manner of life, since, as though stationed on a high watchtower, he both instructs the wise by his word and shows the simple by his works the path by which they ought to enter the eternal homeland. Hence it is also added: (Verse 20. "And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord." 30. For what is designated by Dan except the simple, and what by Beersheba except the wise? From Dan even to Beersheba Samuel is acknowledged as the faithful prophet of the Lord, when the life of a chosen preacher is set forth to the simple as an example of salvation, and to the wise the mysteries of Holy Scripture are revealed through his teaching. But since Beersheba is interpreted as "the seventh well," by Beersheba can be designated not only the wise, but also the righteous. For what is the seventh well except the grace of the sevenfold Spirit? By Dan the life of sinners is shown, because it is said through the ancient prophet: 'Let Dan be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, biting the

horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward' (Gen. 49:17). Therefore from Dan even to Beersheba Samuel is known as the prophet of the Lord, since the life and teaching of a chosen preacher is venerable both to sinners and to the righteous—so that in him, namely, the fallen may see the good by which they may correct themselves through repentance, and the good may marvel at the loftiness of life toward which they may daily grow stronger by advancing. There follows: (Verse 21.) And the Lord continued to appear in Shiloh.

31. Above, concerning the time of the reprobate pastor, it is said: "In those days there was no open vision." When therefore the best preacher is shown forth from sacred Scripture, the Lord is said to appear again, because indeed the knowledge of the divine counsel, which is hidden from the reprobate, is revealed to the elect by the merit of purity. For if even the counsels of men are not entrusted except to close friends, is Almighty God to be thought to lay open the secrets of His plan to His enemies? First, therefore, the life of the just teacher is proclaimed, then the Lord is said to have added that He appeared, because indeed the manifestation of the divine light flees the reprobate and the false, while it opens itself to the elect and to pure hearts. Hence the true Light itself also, speaking through itself, enlightens us, saying: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Therefore, the Lord added that He appeared because He saw the pure eye of His preacher. But when it added "that He appeared in Shiloh," it is indicated that He appeared to him in the same place on another occasion. But because it said where He appeared, lest it be believed that He appeared to Eli, it subsequently shows also the person to whom He appeared, saying: (Verse 21) "Because the Lord had revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh, according to the word of the Lord."

32. For He then revealed Himself to him when He opened to him the secret of His counsel concerning the rejection of the reprobate priest. This is indeed affirmed to have been accomplished according to the word of the Lord, so that what had been said above, not very long before, through the man of God to Eli might be perceived to have been fulfilled also according to the historical sense: 'And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall act according to My heart and My soul, and he shall walk before My Christ all his days' (1 Kings 2:35). And again: 'You shall see your rival in the temple, amid all the prosperity of Israel' (ibid., 32). But if we search accord-

ing to the spiritual understanding, how does the Lord "add" so as to appear to the elect, unless because He who marvelously terrifies His elect through the contemplation of His justice also ineffably soothes them through the display of His glory? For He who, by appearing as just, strikes the hearts of the saints with terror, "adds" that He may appear, when the sweetness of His loving-kindness is poured back into the terrified heart. For this is why He did not always appear to Moses in fire, but sometimes in fire, sometimes in a cloud. In fire, indeed, there is the terror of judgment. Whence also concerning the second coming of our Redeemer it is said through the Psalmist: 'Fire shall go before Him, and round about Him a mighty tempest' (Ps. 49:3).

But in the cloud the protection of mercy is expressed, because the Lord, promising to His elect the gentle comfort of that same protection, says: 'Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud' (Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). Therefore the Lord appears in fire and cloud to those journeying through the desert, because the minds of those contemplating Him in this pilgrimage of exile, even if He sometimes terrifies them with His justice, He raises up when cast down by fear through the gentle comfort of His protection. The Lord therefore appeared to Samuel, and "added" that He might appear, because He who is beheld by the minds of the elect in the fire of terror is also manifested in the cloud of sweetness. For he had seen inwardly a vision of fire who proclaimed outwardly, saying: 'Holy and terrible is His name' (Ps. 111:10). Likewise, desiring to show Him seen in fire, he said: 'Come and see the works of the Lord, terrible in His counsels over the sons of men' (Ps. 66:5). But He who appeared to him in fire "added" that He might appear, because He also offered him from the cloud the sweetness of glory and of His own gentleness. Wherefore he who had been terrified, now gladdened, said: 'How great is the multitude of Your sweetness, O Lord, which You have hidden for those who fear You' (Ps. 31:20).

Hence also, marveling at the added apparition, he said: 'How good is the God of Israel to those who are upright in heart' (Ps. 73:1). 33. But we must attentively consider what is added next: According to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord, therefore, must be known before we deserve to attain to the appearing of the Lord, lest an unjust and indiscriminate vision of fire and cloud not only fail to show us the perfection of the heavenly journey, but drive us into the submersion of error. For Origen, while he wished to see the Lord appearing without the word of the Lord, beheld the vision of the cloud

in a disordered way, because he shrank in horror from the appearing of the fire. For while he denied or diminished the justice of God and preached His excessive clemency, he asserted that God would not only spare all condemned men, but would even at some point free the reprobate angels from eternal punishment. Novatus, however, loved to gaze more upon the vision of fire, for while he called the severe justice of almighty God implacable, he took away from sinners all hope of obtaining pardon and every remedy of repentance. Therefore the Lord appeared neither to Novatus nor to that other one, because each of them did not behold the almighty Lord according to what is perceived through the truth of sacred Scripture. The Lord therefore appears according to His word when He reveals Himself to the mind by that manifestation which the faith of Sacred Scripture does not reject. Hence it is aptly added next: (Verse 21.) And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

34. For the word of heretics does not come to pass. For the word of Novatus was that a just God by no means spares the faithful who have once fallen. The word of Origen was that the merciful Lord permits no rational creature to perish through eternal damnation. But because sinners who are converted to the Lord by no means perish, and the angels who once fell and sinners who died in their sin are never saved, the word of heretics assuredly does not come to pass. Therefore the word of Samuel came to all Israel, because the preaching of a catholic man is fulfilled, which is rightly recognized in the truth of sacred speech. And it should be noted that the word is said to have come to him to whom the Lord is reported to have added His vision, because surely his preaching is true to whom the terror of divine justice is so shown that the abundant grace of His kindness is not concealed; namely, so that the truth beheld may so terrify the mind of the one seeing it that the kindness also shown may not permit the terrified mind to fall into despair; so that one may so trust in His kindness as not to rush headlong into the boldness of transgression. But let these things that have been discussed in the second book of the present work suffice, so that while we arrange to begin what follows with a new starting point, our zeal for speaking may also be renewed through devotion.

BOOK THREE

CHAPTER 3.1

1. Since we were diligently seeking how the meaning of the sacred history might correspond to the conduct of the elect, we deferred revisiting the order of allegory by exposition. Therefore, to supply what we are seen to have omitted, the question is asked: What does it mean that while Samuel is recorded as ministering to the Lord before Eli, the word of the Lord is described as being precious? But, as was said above, by Samuel the preachers of holy Church are signified, and by Eli the elect fathers of the Old Testament are also designated. The boy Samuel therefore was ministering to the Lord before Eli, when the new order of teachers was preaching the faith of the Redeemer. Of which ministry Paul indeed speaks, saying: "As long as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I will honor my ministry" (Rom. 11:13). Again he says: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? So am I" (2 Cor. 11:22). To minister to the Lord, therefore, is to proceed into the labor of preaching. Which ministry Samuel is indeed said to have rendered to the Lord before Eli, because whatever the new order of preachers asserted concerning the religion of the new faith, it confirmed by the authority of the ancient Fathers. For Samuel was ministering to the Lord when the new preacher was asserting, saying:

"For I say that Christ Jesus was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom. 15:8). And indeed, so that he might render the ministry he was performing for the Lord also before Eli, he added, saying: "As it is written: Praise the Lord, all you nations, and let all peoples praise him together" (Ps. 116:1). And so that he might more closely confine himself before Eli in the ministry of the Lord, he added: "For Isaiah says: There shall be a root of Jesse, who shall rise to rule the nations; in him shall the nations hope" (Rom. 15:12; from Isa. 11:10). The boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord when Peter was asserting the glory of the Lord's Resurrection, saying: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you by signs and wonders, delivered up, you killed by the hands of the wicked; this Jesus God raised from the dead on the third day by his predetermined plan, since it was impossible for him to be held by the pains of hell" (Acts 2:22ff.).

2. But this ministry, which he performed for the Lord, he also performed before Eli, because he added, saying: For David says: "Because You will not abandon my soul in hell, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27; Psalm 15:10). Therefore Samuel is fittingly said to have ministered to the Lord before Eli, because the chosen preachers of holy Church, while they were raising up the structure of the new faith by preaching, confirmed by the authority of the ancient Fathers what they had endeavored to assert by reason. 3. And at that time the word of the Lord is said to have been precious. For indeed a precious thing cannot be bought at a small price. Now the price by which the word of God is bought is the labor of holy work. For we buy, as it were, with a price the thing we wish to have, when through the word of preaching which we receive we put forth the labor of work. But at that time the word was precious, when it was not given for any amount of labor of work, when everyone who killed a buyer of the word thought he was rendering service to God. Therefore at that time the buyer of the word needed a great price, because without great labor he could not preserve the word of faith, since he who believed arrived at torments on account of what he believed. For it was then a time when the word that was being bought exhorted not by a figuratively shaped type of morality, but by the precept of open speech, saying: "Whoever wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Hence likewise he says: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). And: "Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). And so when the ministry of Samuel is set forth, the word of the Lord is said to have been precious, because assuredly in the beginnings of the faith, those who believed the teachers preaching eternal life must be believed to have expended works of great labor for the word of faith they received. And because the Jewish people had already lost the light of divine knowledge, there follows: (1 Kings 3:1) "In those days there was no open vision."

4. For his vision would have been clear, if he had believed in the Redeemer whom he had heard had come to visit him. Concerning this blindness of his, it is added: (Verse 2. Now it came to pass that Eli was lying in his place, and he could not see the lamp of God before it was extinguished. For the vision of Eli is not clear, because the priesthood of the Jews is buried in the blindness of its own faithlessness. Eli therefore lies in his place, because he

both possesses the letter of the law, and yet in the law and the prophets he does not have the standing of light, but the fall of blindness. For the place of Eli, that is, of the Jewish preacher, is the sacred law. Because therefore the Jewish priesthood still possesses Sacred Scripture, it is in its place. And because, not knowing the power of Sacred Scripture, it is not raised up to the standing of faith, it is rightly said not to stand in its place, but to lie down. Because likewise it has been cast out until the end of the world, it is recorded as being unable to see the lamp of God.

Hence also, when they daily receive so many exhortations of preaching from holy Church, when the Jews, overcome by so many assertions of the sacred faith, still do not believe, what else is this but what we read about them in Sacred Scripture, and also hold through experience — namely, that they have been cast out, not only so that they do not see, but so that they cannot even see? Hence also the apostles, reckoning as futile the labor spent on those who could not see, say in their Acts: "Because you have made yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). But he who is reported as unable to see is called the lamp of God. For the ministry of the Synagogue was the lamp of God, when in the chosen Patriarchs it shone both through the light of true preaching and through the promise of the coming Redeemer. Which lamp indeed could not be seen while Samuel was ministering, because at the time of the new preaching, the authority of the Synagogue incurred the punishment of perpetual rejection.

5. And it should be noted that it is not said that it could not give light, because indeed it still carries the light of Holy Scripture for us, but it does not know what it carries. Hence it is also said that before it was extinguished, it could not see. For it is not yet extinguished, and it cannot see, because certainly, as I have already said, it bears a light that it does not heed; for before it is extinguished, it exists as long as it shines. And because Holy Scripture is not taken away from it all the way until the end of the world, if before it is extinguished it does not see, it extends in blindness until the end of the world. But if its lighting is referred to the zeal of its unbelief, it cannot see precisely because it is not extinguished. For if it were to extinguish the fire of unbelief from its mind, with the zeal of impiety removed, it would open the eyes of the mind to the light of the pleasure of true faith. But since it is said to be unable to see, it is declared an unworthy lamp, and the one that is worthy is sought for seeing those things. For it adds, saying: (Verse 3.) Now

Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of the Lord was, and the Lord called Samuel.

6. With the blindness of Eli confirmed, the Lord called Samuel, because, with the Jewish priesthood condemned, He took up a new order of preachers unto a greater grace. But He who explained whom He called also showed from where He called; because He declared that Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord, where the ark was. For the temple of God is the place where God dwells. Whence it is also said through the Psalmist: "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's seat is in heaven" (Ps. 10:5). Paul indeed points to this place, saying: "The temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:17). Therefore the temple of God is the soul of each elect person. The temple where the ark of God is kept is the mind, in which the mysteries of the divine word are preserved through understanding. What else, then, is it for him to sleep in the temple, but to persist through the guard of intention in self-examination? Samuel therefore was sleeping in the temple of God, because each preacher of the new grace, when he has perfectly despised all things that are of the world, rested in the inward self-examination of his elect mind. And because he was instructed in the mysteries of divine Scripture, he was sleeping in the temple, where the ark was.

7. And it should be noted that it does not say "he slept" [dormivit], but "he was sleeping" [dormiebat], because indeed he strove to maintain that same watchfulness of his mind not in passing, but in the endurance of perseverance. The sleep of Samuel therefore signifies a perfect contempt of the world in the mind of the teacher. The preacher therefore sleeps in the temple when, having thoroughly driven worldly anxiety from himself, he conceals himself in his mind through the contemplation of spiritual things. For Peter had chosen the rest of this sleep when he said: "It is not right that we should leave the word of God and serve tables" (Acts 6:2). Hence Jethro the Midianite rightly reproved his kinsman Moses, saying: "You will be consumed with foolish labor; but hear my words, and the Lord will be with you. Be you for the people in those things that pertain to God, that you may bring what is said to Him" (Exodus 18:18, 19). Hence Paul calls the Corinthians back to the sleep of the temple, saying: "Already indeed it is a fault in you that you have lawsuits among yourselves. Why do you not rather suffer fraud?" (1 Corinthians 6:7). For he had perceived that those whom the preoccupation of lawsuits was drawing back from spiritual meditation were unable to sleep in the

temple of God. He who was sleeping in the temple is therefore said to have been called by the Lord, because that teacher was taken up to know divine secrets who, through the attention of his heart, was dwelling not in outward things but in inward things. There follows: (Verses 4, 5.) Who answering, said: "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said: "For you called me." Who said: "I did not call you, my son; return and sleep."

8. Why did the one who heard the Lord calling him run to Eli, unless because he thought he had been called by Eli? And since we are following the order of typological explanation, how is Eli considered to be the one speaking when God speaks to the boy who was called? But whatever our ancient Fathers spoke in the Holy Scriptures is referred back to the speech of Eli. They, of course, because they did not speak of themselves, since God spoke through them what He willed, the voice that is heard in the Holy Scriptures is recognized as being God's, which is uttered through Eli. Moreover, the boy, because when God spoke he ran to Eli, shows that God indeed produced a voice similar to Eli's. What then does it mean that the voice of the divine speech does not differ from the voice of Eli, except that He Himself produces His speech also through the ancient Fathers? For the voice of Eli is recognized as being God's, since whatever the chosen Fathers speak through the sacred utterances, they received not from themselves but from the Lord. Hence also in the prophets, through nearly every utterance it is repeated: "Thus says the Lord," so that we may understand that the voice which resounds through the oracle of the prophet is not that of the man speaking but of God commanding.

9. Sometimes God speaks through Scripture, and sometimes through hidden inspiration. He speaks by hidden revelation when things to be done or taught are disclosed to the chosen mind through the Spirit. And so Samuel, when he heard the Lord calling him, ran to Eli, because the chosen order of preachers of the holy Church sought in sacred eloquence to determine the nature of what it had come to know by God's revealing. For the rule of right understanding is set forth in the books of sacred Scripture, because the divine counsels have been expounded there through our venerable Fathers, who possessed the Holy Spirit. Therefore Samuel, called so many times by the Lord, ran to Eli, because the order of preachers consulted the sayings of the ancient Fathers in everything it learned by spiritual revelation, so that it would only then believe something had been revealed to it by the Lord when

it recognized that it in no way differed from what it read in sacred Scripture. For he is easily deceived who does not know how to examine in the clear truth of holy Scripture the nature of what he gathers by hidden contemplation. Hence the Apostle also warns, saying: "Satan transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). But how are false things discerned in the brightness of true light? Samuel therefore runs to Eli every time he is called by the Lord, because the holy preachers, lest they be deceived by the image of false light in inward contemplation, examine the manner of hidden revelation in the open truth of holy Scripture.

10. Because in this matter it must be asked how it is fitting for Eli to say: "I did not call you, my son." But our Fathers, who speak to new preachers through sacred Scripture, do not call them, but indicate what their internal revelation is like. For to call is to arouse the minds of God's elect by the inspiration of his grace. But the ancient Fathers indeed speak through sacred Scripture, yet they cannot arouse the hearts of their hearers by the inspiration of divine grace. Therefore the sacred Scriptures, when consulted, while they indicate that they cannot give the gift of spiritual grace, excuse themselves as Eli, as it were by certain utterances, through the authority of the account of Samuel. But assuredly, what they cannot give, they can suggest how it ought to be acquired. Whence also it is said by the voice of Eli to Samuel: "Return, and sleep."

11. What is it that Eli commands the boy who was called to return to sleep, except that he shows preachers to prepare themselves through quietness of mind for receiving the gift of interior grace? And it should be noted that it says: "Return." For Samuel returns when the chosen preacher goes back from meditation on sacred Scripture to the secret of interior contemplation. Having returned, therefore, he slept, because he rested in the intention of interior contemplation. In this passage it should also be noted that Samuel is called three times by the Lord, and three times again is commanded by Eli to go back to sleep: 12. What is this, if not that we have learned, with Truth itself teaching, that there are three degrees of love? "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole strength" (Matt. 22:17). But what do we understand by the heart, if not counsel? What by the mind, if not the will? And what is signified by strength, if not the affection of love? But through counsel, what else do we seek than the certainty of truth? And through the will, what do we desire

when loving, if not to ardently long for good things? Through affection, what do we seek if not the full enjoyment of true joy? For we are raised up to the highest things through the degrees of love, when truth is revealed to the counsel of our heart, and true goodness is granted to the will of the mind, and spiritual and true joy is given to the affection of our strength through the infusion of divine grace.

13. Samuel was therefore called three times by the Lord, because when the order of preachers, still young in the Church, stretched itself toward heavenly pursuits, it sought truth in the reasoning of counsel, goodness in the choice of the will, and true joy in the intention of the affections. He also went three times when called to Eli, because concerning every desire of his he consulted Sacred Scripture with the eagerness of meditation. Likewise three times he heard that he was not being called by him, because through meditation he learned that our Fathers handed down to us the sacred words written for our instruction; nevertheless, they are utterly unable to give us spiritual gifts. What then does it mean to say "I did not call you," except "I did not give you the desire for spiritual gifts"? For if Sacred Scripture, or any one of the writers, could confer spiritual gifts, then as many as read the sacred words, as many as heard the expositors of Holy Scripture, would be adorned with spiritual gifts. But in truth, since many read Sacred Scripture and hear preachers expounding, and after the pursuit of reading and the exhortation of preaching, some remain in the old coldness of their vices while others burn through grace with love of holy virtues, it is plainly evident that the order of venerable Fathers shows us the gifts of virtues through the Scriptures they produced, but the love of the virtues they set forth is bestowed upon us by the Creator alone.

Therefore James also devoutly admonishes, saying: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Hence Paul says: "Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). What else then does it mean to say "I did not call you," except to show by plain instruction that the fact that a faithful soul is raised to heavenly desires is produced solely by the infusion of divine grace? Because therefore he is called three times by the Lord and three times ordered by his master to return to sleep, he indicates how those three degrees of love are acquired. For since we have applied counsel to the heart, and counsel indeed desires to find truth, a great sleep is

certainly necessary, lest the lover awaken before the sought truth is found. Let the boy therefore return and sleep, so that he who desires to find the light of truth may, through rest, take care not to admit the darkness of errors into himself. Let him also sleep a second time, so that he may devote the service of love to almighty God with his whole mind, that the good things he loves may shine with pure simplicity and not be obscured by any veil of evils. Because this indeed is recognized only by the great subtlety of discernment, the boy, called by the Lord, is ordered by Eli to return and sleep.

For if he neglects to sleep for the sake of ascending this degree of love, he does not acquire what he seeks from virtue, because even if we can already love good things by God's inspiration, unless we judge with great quietness of mind what the very good things we desire truly are, we do not discern them rightly. Samuel is therefore sent to sleep three times, because indeed the new order of preachers is admonished to love with all its strength. And since we have referred virtue to the affections, and the affection of the mind is perfected by spiritual joy, Samuel had a great quiet of sleep; and while the order of preachers, made certain through rest, learned spiritual things, it did not receive a foreign joy under the appearance of true joy. For just as with other virtues, so also regarding the progress of contemplation, the mind of the contemplator often becomes vainly elated. Samuel therefore slept again, because surely the order of teachers, unless it carefully examined itself in contemplation, would sometimes think it was rejoicing with true joy when it was rejoicing vainly. And so he slept the first time, because while he directed his mind to knowing the truth, he rejected all erroneous things with great subtlety of counsel. He slept a second time, because when he learned to love the Creator with his whole mind, he arranged within himself with great quiet that he would not mix any reprobate things with the good things he desired.

He also slept a third time, so that while he perceived the supreme joy from divine contemplation, he might be able to reject vain gladness with a deliberate mind. And because this is said of Samuel while he was still advancing, it is fittingly added: (Verse 7. "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him." 14. For at that time the order of preachers did not know the Lord with that perfection to which it later advanced. Or perhaps he is said not to know the Lord because he was not yet revealing to his still weak and untrained hearers the deep and profound things that he knew. Hence, Truth says to those wishing to know the day of the

Lord's coming — things which He who knew all things did not wish to disclose: "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Mark 13:32). What does it mean that the Son, who knows all things, does not know the day of judgment, except that among all the things He knew, though He knew the day, He did not know it so as to speak of it, but He knew its time and its nature? Hence John the Baptist, who knew the Lord perfectly, sent his disciples to Him as though not knowing, saying: "Are you He who is to come, or do we look for another?" (Luke 7:20). For Samuel was preaching as though not knowing the Lord, just as the evangelist Matthew, passing over the divinity of the Redeemer, began from His humanity alone, saying: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1ff.).

But he assuredly knew the Lord, and the word of the Lord had been revealed to him, just as John, undertaking to expound His divinity in lofty terms, said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He did not know the Lord when Paul was speaking, saying: "I became all things to all men, that I might save all" (1 Cor. 9:22). For he who became weak with the weak, and little with the little, and all things to all, surely was also ignorant with the ignorant. For to use the very word of that ignorance, speaking to the Corinthians he says: "I judged myself to know nothing among you except Christ Jesus, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). For with the wise he both knew the Lord and had His word revealed. Hence he also says: "But we, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Hence he likewise speaks, saying: "We speak wisdom among the perfect, not the wisdom of this world, nor of the rulers of this age, but we speak the wisdom of God, which is hidden in mystery" (1 Cor. 2:6). Hence he likewise proclaims Him whom he knew as Lord, saying:

"Who, being the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, making purification of sins, sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having been made so much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You?' (Heb. 1:3-5). Therefore, he is said not to know the Lord not through ignorance of knowledge, but under the guise of simplicity. There follows: (Verse 9. "Eli therefore understood that the Lord was calling

the boy." 15. For if he had not understood, he would by no means have ministered to him the counsels of salvation through the sacred Scriptures. For he understood, because he foresaw. For whatever almighty God arranged to do in the building of the future Church, this He revealed to the ancient Fathers through the holy spirit of prophecy. For through the prophet Amos it is said: "The Lord God will not make a word which He has not revealed to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). For what else had he understood but the calling of the new preachers, who said: "Instead of your fathers, sons have been born to you; you shall establish them as princes over all the earth" (Psalm 44:17). But to him whom he understood was to be called, he also supplied counsel, saying: (Verse 9.) "Go and sleep, and if he calls you again, you shall say: Speak, Lord, for your servant hears."

16. Enough has already been shown, I believe, that the sleep of Samuel signifies the quiet of interior meditation. This sleep is indeed commanded to Samuel by Eli, because the teacher is taught through sacred Scripture to devote himself to contemplating interior mysteries. But what does it mean that each time Samuel is called, he is sent back to sleep, and yet he is by no means yet commanded to say to God: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears"? For there he is commanded to sleep, but not yet to speak; here, however, along with the obedience of sleep, permission to speak is also enjoined. There also, when sent to sleep, it is not said "Go," but "Return"; here likewise it is by no means said "Return," but "Go. For what does such variety in commanding mean? We recognize this variety more clearly, of course, if we attend to what sleep signifies for Samuel in this passage. And since we have referred the earlier modes of sleep to the testing of the gifts of holy love (above, nos. 11, 12), what is it for Samuel in this passage—that is, for the new preacher—to sleep, except to possess those same gifts, now tested and known, with the repose of security? Rightly, therefore, previously it was not said to him "Go," but "Return"; now, however, not "Return," but "Go. For he who was still examining was commanded to return, so that with tranquility of mind he might test another gift, having already recognized another by that same quiet of mind.

But to him, because he had now proved all things by examining them, "Go" is said, because he was now being sent with secure intention to possess what he had come to know. Why then is sleep first commanded without speech, but now sleep with speech, unless because it was not permitted to say

"Speak" except to one who was certain with true knowledge that the one speaking to the affections of his mind was God? Therefore it is not said to one who is still examining, because unless he perfectly discerns the one speaking within, he ought not to desire spiritual speech still uncertain to him, nor receive it as though it were certain. For to say to God in one's mind "Speak" is to receive his interior inspiration with security. Therefore this belongs to one who knows perfectly, not to one still testing, because before the judgment of interior examination, just as divine speech is not proved, so what is unknown to us concerning God is not received as certain and known. For it was said to Samuel "Go and sleep," because when the order of holy preachers has learned spiritual gifts through the testing of sacred Scripture, it has come to know by the instruction of that same holy Scripture how to rest more securely through love in those same gifts, the more clearly it has recognized their power by open reason.

He was also commanded to say to God when he called, "Speak, Lord," because he was taught by the study of sacred speech not only to hear the Lord devoutly speaking through the grace of interior visitation, but also to implore him with great desires when he was silent, that he might deign to speak. (Verse 9. So Samuel went and slept in his place. 17. The preacher of the holy Church has as many places as he has advances in life. Whence also blessed Job, consecrating the places of his advancement with divine praises, says: "At every step of mine I will proclaim Him" (Job 31:37). For he is not placed in a position of examination, but certainly of knowledge, when he is raised to higher things. For the place of the preacher is the certain knowledge of the things to be known. For concerning reprobate preachers the Lord says: "Those who held my law did not know me" (Jeremiah 2:8). Samuel therefore slept in his place, when the order of teachers retained the knowledge of spiritual things with the certainty of truth. But to what degree he advances is shown, because it is suddenly added next: (Verse 10.) "The Lord therefore came and stood."

18. Because the Lord is said not to return but to come, the abandonment of Judea and the visitation of the holy Church is signified. Hence He is described not only as coming but also as standing. He indicates that He came to visit Judea, saying: "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). But having come, He did not stand, because He abandoned her as she despised the good of her own salvation. Hence He also

threatens the rulers of the Synagogue, saying: "Your house will be left to you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Again, declaring this, He says: "Amen, I say to you that the kingdom will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits." Therefore He came to Samuel and stood, because He once took up the preachers of the holy Church, from whom He no longer departs through the guardianship of His grace. For He had come to Samuel when, presenting new preachers to the world, He said: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15ff.). But let Him who came say whether the Lord ought to stand: "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Therefore the Lord had come not to depart but to stand, because He chose new ministers of the faith, whom He protects even to the end of the world as they succeed one another through the patrimony of holy virtues devoted to Him. But let us hear what He adds—He who comes visiting through grace, who stands persevering through the unchangeableness of His election. (Verse 10.) "And He called, as He had called the second time, Samuel, Samuel."

19. For he called a second time, because he provided him with a twofold office in the ministry of preaching: namely, that by repelling the pride of the Synagogue he might crush it, and that by calling the humility of the Gentiles to the faith he might raise them up. Or indeed he is called a second time because he is roused both to the destruction of the old man and to the building up of the new. He was called once when he was being instructed through the Spirit as to how he might be able to blot out sins and vices in the hearts of sinners; he was called a second time when God instructed him by the teaching of the interior Master, so that, having destroyed the edifice of impiety in the minds of the converted, he ought to raise up a new structure of holy virtues. And indeed, because the order of holy preachers both gladly learned this teaching and devoutly offered themselves to obey, there follows: (Verse 10.) Samuel therefore said: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

20. To hear God speaking is to fulfill His precepts by works. On the contrary, in the Gospel, Truth itself says to the reprobate: He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God (John 8:47). But to the one listening, He adds what He desires to make known; for it follows: (Verse 11.) And the Lord said to Samuel: Behold, I am doing a thing in Israel, at which both ears of everyone that heareth it shall

tingle. And opening up this same word, He says: (Verses 13 and 14.) For I have foretold to him that I would judge his house forever for the iniquity, because he knew that his sons were acting unworthily, and he did not correct them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated by sacrifices and offerings forever.

21. For what else is designated by these words than the rejection of the Jews, already explained so many times? For the house of the preacher is the multitude of the people subject to him, which he inhabits as if by possessing it, while he preserves it through the care of his solicitude. The house of Eli, therefore, that is, of the old priesthood, was Judea, which, while he cultivated it through a reprobate manner of life, he made unclean with the stains of his depravity. He indeed saw his sons acting unworthily, because the supreme priesthood saw the priests of a lesser order raging against the Redeemer, and did not rebuke them, nor recalled them by any authority from the shedding of so great blood. Therefore it is promised to him by divine threat that his house would be judged forever. For to judge, in God's case, is to condemn. Therefore it is judged forever, because it is decreed to perish by eternal punishment. And because this happens by God's eternal judgment, He declared that He had affirmed by oath that the iniquity of the house of Eli would not be expiated forever by prayers or offerings. Which we see fulfilled in manifest truth, because the Jewish people perseveres in the obstinacy of its unbelief. For what is the present hardness and blindness of a people once so chosen, if not the oath of divine judgment? For he confined himself under eternal death by a fitting punishment, who did not shrink from forcing eternal life to death in time. But what He asserts by oath, He says He had foretold, because indeed to the subsequent doctors of the holy Church that became known concerning the rejection of Judea which He had previously made manifest to their predecessors, because what is now said through Samuel to Eli is what was said to him above through the man of God. There follows: (Verse 15.) Samuel slept until morning.

22. What is it that Samuel's sleep is described so attentively through sacred Scripture? And since he is said to have repeated his sleep four times already, anyone who does not believe this was spoken spiritually by the Spirit of God is greatly foolish. For even if he is rightly understood to have slept so many times according to the truth of history, it is written for this purpose: that from the truth of the letter, meanings of allegory may be brought

forth. What then does this fifth sleep of Samuel signify? But since we referred the first sleep to the pursuit of truth, the second to the testing of true work, the third to the exploration of true joy, the fourth to the full enjoyment of perfection found, proven, and known, the fifth kind of sleep is referred to the effort of arranging one's speech. Samuel therefore slept a fifth time, because the order of preachers, even though through the counsel of the heart it learned the truth, through the will of the mind chose good things, through the affection of virtue received true joy, and through the certainty of beatitude found and known rested in the security of sublime virtues, nevertheless could not preach to those under its care what it had come to know within itself without the great ordering of counsel.

For very often a teacher both possesses within himself what he should preach, and yet cannot preach what he possesses as he ought, because even if he has already learned by the Lord's revelation what to say, he does not know the manner in which it should be brought forth to the people. Samuel therefore slept again, because the order of preachers disposed within itself with great intent of quiet lest by preaching it scatter uselessly the seed of God's word that it had gathered by profitable contemplation. For while a preacher is compelled to consider what and how much, or when, he speaks, what he should say to all together, how he should admonish some separately — because he employs the great quiet of holy meditation — Samuel is quite fittingly said to sleep again as a type of the new preacher. For to sleep then is for him to arrange in a tranquil mind the manner of speaking. And to awake is for him to go forth from the quiet of meditation to speaking. And because he does not reasonably awake before he has arranged what must be said, there follows: "Until morning. For morning is the perfected knowledge of pronouncing the word in the mind of the teacher. Whence the Prophet also rebukes hasty teachers, saying: "It is vain for you to rise before the light" (Psalm 126:2).

For those rise before the light who do not sleep until morning, but awake in vain, because they utter the word uselessly, having learned by no meditation how it ought to be uttered. Whence he also shows them counsel, saying: "Rise up after you have sat down," so that through the quiet of meditation they may gather the word, which through the labor of speech they may scatter not in vain, but for the profit of their hearers. There follows: (Verse 15. "And he was afraid to tell the vision to Eli." 23. What was it that he feared, if

not because he had learned this while sleeping? For he who arranges a word by meditating, determines by reason when he should also speak the word. For Samuel saw a vision and feared to tell Eli, because the order of the doctors of the Holy Church both perceived the deserved rejection of Judea and dreaded casting it in her face before the times of her rejection. Whence he rather exhorts her to the remedy of repentance, saying: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized" (Acts 2:38). Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 15.) "He opened the doors of the house of the Lord."

24. What other house of the Lord is there but the holy Church? And what are the doors of this house, if not spiritual virtues? For Samuel opened the doors of the house of the Lord when, as people were running together to the unity of the true faith, the order of preachers laid open the gifts of spiritual virtues. For it was as though the doors of the house were closed when the virtues of the holy Church were unknown. And fittingly, when Samuel feared to reveal the vision to Eli, he is recorded as having opened the doors of the house of the Lord, because before the order of preachers would declare the open rejection of Judea, while it admonished them to repentance, it unlocked the hidden things of spiritual virtues to the elect who were running to the faith. For he who in the time of mercy feared to speak of the things he had seen, in the time when justice was to be sought, declared the vision of justice, saying: "Because you have made yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:45). From this reasoning indeed a question arises, because it is related that the vision was revealed to Samuel more by the prayer and imprecation of Eli. For it is added: (Verses 16–18.) "So Eli came to Samuel and said: Samuel, my son. He answered: Here I am. And he asked him: What is the word that the Lord spoke to you? I pray you, do not hide it from me. May God do these things to you, and add these things, if you hide from me any word out of all that was said to you." Samuel therefore revealed to him all the words, and did not hide anything from him.

25. For how did he learn from the executor of the divine sentence the vision of his own rejection, he who heard this not so much from one threatening as from one who was rather compelled by prayers? But let those who inquire about this first understand that we are discussing these things not according to the letter, but according to their spiritual and typological meaning. For in this passage, the coming of Eli is referred neither to a bodily movement of the Jewish priesthood nor to a disposition of the mind, but

rather his coming was this very thing: that the rational creature of God appeared to the preachers. He came, therefore, when he was seen in human nature and moved the hearts of the teachers to compassion toward himself. Therefore, Eli's coming is not, among the ancient people, an approach of mind or of body, but a manifestation of the human condition. Or perhaps his coming was from the fact that he was chosen from among all peoples for the worship of God. He also called him "son"—he who is regarded by the one who is remembered as having been the founder of the holy Church among the chosen Fathers. He therefore calls him "son" not out of affection in the address, but as a display of lost dignity. And because he is seen in the darkness of blindness, he is reported to have asked that the vision be revealed to him.

For his beseeching is, with regard to their common nature, to provoke the minds of the preachers to mercy. He also added an imprecation to his prayers, because the order of preachers, while it considered the Jewish priesthood placed in such great misery, feared that the almighty Lord would be angry with them if they did not come to his aid with the word. Whence it is also fittingly added: 'Samuel told him all the words, and hid nothing from him.' Indeed, he told him all the things seen, so that, having heard what he deserved, the greatness of his fear might turn him to the solicitude of obtaining divine mercy. He told him all the words of the Lord, so that while he recognized himself cast off in his old state, he might hasten through tears of repentance to the renewal of true faith. And he indeed responded, saying: (Verse 18) 'It is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes.'

26. By these words, indeed, what else is more clearly recognized than the faithlessness of the Jewish people? For he who calls the almighty God Lord still considers himself to be serving Him. When therefore his rejection is made known to the Jewish people by the doctors of the holy Church, he says: He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes. Because while he believes himself to please God through the old institution, he is in no way frightened by the threats of the holy Church. For it is as if Jewish faithlessness were to assert with a more open voice, and were to say to the preachers of the holy Church who threaten them: You strike no terror into us by your threats, inasmuch as we believe ourselves to minister in faith to Him from whose grace you proclaim we have fallen. When therefore he adds: Let Him do what is good in His eyes, he mocks the doctors of the holy Church rather than offering himself to the divine judgment. As if he were speaking with

another intention, and saying: He does no such thing to us, inasmuch as He is our Lord, the very one whom you set before us for vengeance. There follows: (Verse 19.) And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him.

27. What does it mean that after Eli explained the vision, Samuel is said to have grown, except that the order of our teachers, after it repelled the sons of the Synagogue by the word, found a glory of greater reverence among the Gentiles? He grew, therefore, because he who first confined himself through the ministry of the word to one nation, afterward spread the fame of his holiness and teaching throughout the whole world. Whence it is also said through the Psalmist: 'Their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world' (Ps. 19:4). Again, speaking of the holy Church, he says: 'Instead of your fathers, sons have been born to you; you shall make them princes over all the earth' (Ps. 45:16). He grew, therefore, when he shone throughout the whole world. The Lord is also said to have been with him, because everything that gave forth the fragrance of holy fame, everything that shone brightly through the word, he received from the presence of the Redeemer whom he had with him. For even if Paul by the word penetrates not only what is weak and earthly, but also what is highest and heavenly, he obtains this power of speaking from him whom he affirms to be with him, saying: 'Do you seek a proof of Christ who speaks in me' (2 Cor. 13:3)? For he who spoke in him was with him.

He gives forth fragrance to the whole world through his life, but he draws the odor of life from him whom he reveals, saying: 'We are the good fragrance of Christ in every place' (2 Cor. 2:15). John indicates that all things come from the presence of the Redeemer, for he says: 'Of his fullness we have all received' (John 1:16). Therefore, when Samuel is said to have grown, the Lord is recalled as being with him, because when the order of teachers shone throughout the whole world with the grace of great holiness and teaching, it was able to appear so great because of him who did not abandon it while it was placed in the world. There follows: (Verse 20.) 'And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord.' 28. By these names of the land, indeed, the whole of Judea is designated. What then is designated in all of Judea except the entire Church? The whole of Israel, therefore, recognizes that Samuel is a prophet of the Lord, because indeed everyone who is faithful believes that the order of holy preachers speaks truly about things to come. For the office of a prophet is both to foretell the future

and to reveal hidden things. Moreover, the holy preachers of the Church, when they detect whatever hidden vices lurk in the mind, when they open up the secrets of spiritual virtues, when they bring forth the hidden meanings of the Holy Scriptures to common knowledge, when they promise anew the future joys of the heavenly homeland to the chosen faithful, exercise the ministry of a prophet. By all Israel, therefore, Samuel is recognized as a faithful prophet of the Lord, because one who does not place faith in the teachers of the holy Church cannot see the almighty Lord by faith. And because that same glory of divine knowledge remained in the holy Church, which first revealed itself to the early teachers, it is added: (Verse 21.) And the Lord continued to appear in Shiloh.

29. For Shiloh is interpreted as "sent." And because He sends into the ministry of preaching even to the end of the world, the Lord appears in Shiloh, because He shows Himself more clearly to those through whom He opens the glory of His light to others. Moreover, it is well said, "He continued to appear," because those upon whom the brightness of the divine light is poured are unceasingly chosen. Whence he also adds the reason why he affirms the vision was heard, saying: (Verse 21.) Because the Lord had revealed Himself to Samuel. 30. For this reason he adds "so that he might appear," because the Lord who had been revealed reveals himself again and again, and by no means withdraws the gift of his manifestation from holy Church, which he has not ceased to bestow upon her from her beginning. But although it is stated that he was revealed to Samuel, it is not reported how many times he continued to appear, because indeed holy Church is led all the way to the end of the world, over which preachers preside, who preach the lofty joys of eternity among those below, inasmuch as they see the highest things they preach in the lofty manifestation of God. Which appearance indeed is declared to have been made according to the word of the Lord. But what is the word of the Lord, if not the promise of the Redeemer? He continued therefore to appear according to the word of the Lord, because he does not cease to display the truth of his promise. For the word of the Lord in the continuation of his appearing is: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). There follows: (Verse 21.) And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

31. For the word is known to come when the promise of our preachers is fulfilled. For the promise of the word is joy that will endure without end.

Therefore the word of Samuel came to all Israel, because the entire multitude of the holy Church arrives at the joy of eternal blessedness, and what is now promised in the faith of the word by its holy preachers is bestowed upon it in truth in the heavenly kingdoms. For the word of the teachers in the promise of the faithful is: Everyone who believes in him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life (John III, 15). Or certainly the word of the teachers in the promise of gifts is: What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ascended into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him (Isa. LXIV, 4; I Cor. II, 9). And so the word of Samuel came to all Israel, because whoever believes the holy preachers both urging a devout manner of life in the present and promising eternal joys to the just, has passed by dying in the flesh to those eternal joys which he had awaited by living piously. Whence he in whose faith he had promised also affirms, saying: Amen I say to you, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Mark XIII, 31). Or certainly the word of Samuel has now come to all Israel, because through the effect of divine punishment the general rejection of the Jews is recognized as fulfilled. Whence, expounding more broadly the order in which this same word came to all Israel, he says:

CHAPTER 3.2 (1 SAMUEL 4:1-3)

For Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle, and encamped near the Stone of Help. Moreover the Philistines came to Aphek, and drew up their battle line against Israel. When the battle was joined, Israel turned their backs, and about four thousand men were slain in that battle scattered throughout the fields. And Israel returned to the camp. 1. The blessed Apostle shows that there are spiritual battles, when he exhorts the camp of holy Church to victory, saying: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Concerning these battles, also providing counsel for obtaining victory, he says: "And take up the shield of faith, with which you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (ibid., 16, 17). Hence Peter, exhorting, says: "Be sober and watch in prayers, because your adversary the devil goes about, seeking whom he may devour; resist him, strong in faith" (1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8). Therefore, while battles are related to the Israelites according to the letter, internal and spiritual battles are signified. For "Philistines" is interpreted as "falling by the cup"; by

which name indeed the reprobate angels are expressed, because through a more abundant draught of pride they lost the state of eternal life. For to fall as if by a cup was for them to take up the draught of pride without any delay of reconsideration. For what is drunk is easily consumed. Of the prince of these fallen ones, the Lord speaks as if of one drinking: "Because he did not stand in the truth" (John 8:44). For he fell as if by a draught, who, drunk with the swiftness of his own pride, did not stand even for a moment in the truth in which he had been created.

2. But it must be carefully inquired how Israel according to the flesh is understood to go out to battle against these who fall by the cup. For no one fights with one who is subject to him. How then is the Jewish people, who are subject to malign spirits through unbelief, said to go out to battle against them? Yet they are said to fight not by the truth of strength, but by the deception of self-estimation. For in truth of strength he has been conquered by malign spirits, but nevertheless, while he keeps the traditions of the ancient Fathers, he thinks he has a contest with malign spirits. Whence also he is bound all the more tightly under the chains of his captivity, the more the confidence of a liberty he does not possess is suggested to him by their cunning. For crafty adversaries by hidden suggestions proclaim to him the strength of a false liberty, so that he does not attend to the darkness by which he is oppressed, and they possess him, already deceived, all the more securely because he does not care to be loosed from the bonds of unbelief by which he is held by believing in our Redeemer. And it should be noted that it is said of the rejected people: Israel went out. Then he rightly went out when he abandoned the monuments of sacred faith. Whence also concerning those who by erring had deviated from the mysteries of Holy Scripture, John says:

They went out from us, but they were not of us (1 John 2:19). Therefore for Israel according to the flesh to go out is to pass beyond the boundaries of right faith by erring. But because they do not cease to expect another Christ, they pitch camp beside the Stone of Help. Rightly therefore Israel is said to have turned their backs, because he is also reported to have gone out. For if he had remained within, he could in no way have been conquered, because if he had kept himself within the fortifications of faith, he would have vanquished the armed spirits of error. And because he is overcome by fraud, the Philistines are reported to have drawn up their battle line at Aphek. For, for

malign spirits to draw up a battle line is to arrange arguments of deception against the unwary hearts of the Jews. But when battle was joined, Israel turned their backs, because while he fears to die, he does not resist malign spirits. For indeed fugitives from battle turn their backs to the enemy, lest by resisting they die. But because the Jews tremble at dying if they believe in the Redeemer, for this reason they do not resist, so that they may live, because they do not believe in the Redeemer, so that they may be saved in the old circumcision. For they would resist malign spirits if they had held the arms of their strength in faith in our Redeemer.

But therefore they flee lest they die, and therefore because they flee they die. For the pursuing enemy kills the one fleeing all the more easily, because he who is struck while fleeing does not resist the sword of his impending conqueror. Whence also in that same battle four thousand of the Jews are recorded to have been slain. For what are these four thousand, except those who refused to receive the truth of the four Gospels? For this reason they are also reported to die in the fields, because they linger in the breadth of their errors. And because they do not yet at all abandon the hiding places of their error, Israel is said to have returned to the camp. For, as I have already said, he still thinks he has a contest with malign spirits when he rather obeys their will than opposes it. 3. But because "cup" is also taken in a good sense, those falling by the cup can be understood as the preachers of holy Church. Of this cup, indeed, the Prophet boasts, saying: "You have anointed my head with oil, and my inebriating cup, how excellent it is!" (Ps. 22:5). For the inebriating cup is the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, which is fittingly called a cup because by its fullness the hearts of the elect are inebriated in an instant. Hence it is also said of the first pastors of holy Church: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty spirit, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). By this cup, indeed, the preachers fall, because while they abundantly receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, they entirely abandon the state of carnal life. For daily, drinking as it were excessively from this cup, they fall, because even if carnal impulses sometimes raise them up toward committing faults, yet by the power of the Spirit they have drunk, they are not found standing in a state of sin. And because the Jewish people indeed has with these preachers a contest of faith against those Philistines, carnal Israel daily goes out to the field of battle.

4. Moreover, by the name of the Philistines the preachers of the holy Church can be understood, because they were led from the error of the Gentiles to the grace of faith through the mercy of God. Fighting against them, Israel indeed turned its back, because it could not resist the Spirit speaking through the mouths of the preachers. For Israel had gone out to battle against the Philistines when the Jews opposed Stephen as he preached and disputed concerning the reasoning of our faith. But fighting, it turned its back, because it could not resist by disputing. For concerning those who turned their backs, it is said in the Acts of the Apostles: "They could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke" (Acts 6:10). Moreover, for the Israelites to be slain is to be separated from the life of unbelief. They are also fittingly said to die in the fields; for the fields of the contest are the verdant understandings of sacred Scripture. Therefore, thousands of slain Israelite warriors are recorded in the fields, because those who were converted from Judea by the ministry of the holy preachers believed in the Redeemer of the human race through the teachings of the holy Scriptures. And four thousand slain are recorded, because they devoted themselves to the same authority of sacred Scripture from the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospel.

But while some were slain, others returned to the camp, because some from Judea were led to the knowledge of the Redeemer by the ministry of the preachers, but the fullness of that same nation more boldly opposes the assertions of the holy Church, the more deeply it is cast into the darkness of its unbelief and is not led to the light of truth. Indeed, for it to return to the camp is not to cease opposing. And because they accuse those who had believed as if foolish and overcome by no sufficient reasoning, there follows: (Verse 3. And the elders of Israel said: "Why has the Lord struck us today before the Philistines?" 5. For "why" in this place is not an interrogation of inquiry, but a complaint of amazement. They ask about the defeat, then, with amazement, because they were unable to arrive at the reason by which they had observed that the men of their religion had received the faith of the Redeemer. And it should be noted that those who ask with amazement are recorded to have been the elders of Israel, because indeed all the proud, glorying in their own wisdom, were in no way able to arrive at the knowledge of divine mysteries. Whence also in the Gospel the Lord speaks to the Father, saying: "I confess to you, Father, King of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the prudent and wise, and have revealed them to

little ones" (Matt. 11:25). They indeed complain that they were struck, because while they observed that through those who believed the old custom of the law was being dissolved, they supposed that certain wounds of a blow had been inflicted upon them by the incomprehensible judgment of God, which they might proclaim with shared grief. But those who complain that others have fallen add by what plan they prepare themselves to resist: (Verse 3.) "Let us bring to ourselves the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh, and let it come into our midst, and let it save us from the hand of our enemies." And concerning the carrying out of this same counsel it is immediately added: (Verse 4.) "Therefore the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts sitting upon the cherubim."

6. This is certainly the plan, this is the work of Israel against the battle of those falling by the cup — but indeed an unheard-of plan and work, because it is not of Israel according to the spirit, but of Israel according to the flesh; that is, not of one who sees God, but of one who thinks he sees the God whom he despises. For what is it to send to Shiloh, except to have recourse to the law of Moses, to whom it is said by the Lord: "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh" (Exod. 3:10)? What is it to bring the ark of the Lord, except to bring forward the sacraments of the old law by recalling them in order to refute the truth of the new faith? And because they allow none of their own to be ignorant of the same knowledge of the law, the ark is ordered to be brought into their midst. What likewise is the meaning of what they say, "And let it save us from the hand of our enemies," except that while they stubbornly defend the old things, they repel the new, and they hold this as their confidence of salvation — that they cannot be drawn by the zeal of good preachers to the reasoning of the true faith? Therefore, because they boast that they possess the truth of divine knowledge through the old law, they affirm that the same ark, which they order to be brought for their salvation, belongs to the Lord of hosts. And because they think they excel in incomparable knowledge of the same law, while the ark is said to be brought, it is declared to belong to the Lord of hosts who sits upon the cherubim. (Verse 5.) And when the ark had come, all Israel shouted with a great cry.

7. Because indeed, from the fact that they receive the knowledge of the law carnally, they chatter in reproach of the holy Church without any demonstration of reason. For those who are said to have cried out and yet to

have said nothing express precisely what they do, because while they endeavor to speak of spiritual things carnally, they indeed have clamor in their chattering, but they do not have the reason of truth. With their voice they say many things indeed, but, speaking without reason, they harm the elect of the holy Church in nothing; and the Synagogue, speaking within itself, is shaken by vain devotion, because the holy Church is not moved by its words. Whence it is most fittingly reported that only the earth resounded. For Judea is now called "earth," not because it bears fruit for God, but on account of its carnality, because indeed, while it refused to receive faith in the Redeemer, it utterly lost its heavenly manner of life. But while it is shaken by its own outcry, it exults in that estimation by which it considers itself to be terrible to the preachers of the holy Church. (Verse 6.) 'And the Philistines heard the voice of the shouting, and they said: What is this outcry in the camp of the Hebrews?'

8. Indeed the Philistines hear the sound of the land and the shouting of the camps, because those who in the holy Church have been refreshed by the cup of the Holy Spirit recognize both the talkativeness and the vain devotion of Jewish perfidy. And because they hold their estimation in the contempt of derision, it is added: (Vers. 6, 7.) And they recognized that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, and the Philistines were afraid, saying: God has come into the camp, and they groaned. It is said ironically that the ark had come into the camp of the Hebrews, and that those falling by the cup were afraid and groaned, because for the conflict of the holy Church the sacraments of the old law are expounded carnally by the carnal defenders of the Synagogue. For they dispute about that which, if they understood according to the Spirit of God, they could have been truly terrible to their enemies, if they had any. Therefore when those falling by the cup are said to have been terrified and to have groaned, Scripture does not show the passions of minds in the holy preachers, but the mockery of Jewish disputation; which is known to be all the more contemptible and worthy of laughter, inasmuch as the Jewish people received a spiritual law from the Lord for spiritual conduct, and did not attend in the spirit to what they had received by the gift of the spirit. Wherefore, adding also the words of the same Jewish derision, they say: (Vers. 8.) Woe to us, there was not so great an exultation yesterday and the day before. And because they are to be more abundantly derided, they

add saying: (Vers. 8.) Who will deliver us from the hand of these sublime gods?

9. And it should be noted that by the title of "gods," those are mocked who, departing from the faith of the ancient Fathers, trust that they stand in the truth of faith and are counted among the number of the sons of God. They claim that those proclamations of divine praise were spoken concerning themselves, which the Lord pronounces through the Prophet, saying: 'I said, you are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High' (Psalm 81:6). If, therefore, by a false estimation all Israelites according to the flesh are nominally gods, then the "exalted gods," by the same falsehood of Jewish estimation, are the wise men of the Jews. And because the learned men of the Synagogue come into conflict with the holy Church, they themselves are mocked by the voice of the holy preachers, who boast of a power of doctrine that they do not possess. And because they pride themselves on the ancient manner of life of the old Fathers, words of mockery are added. (Verse 8.) 'These are the gods who struck Egypt with every plague in the desert.'

10. For they themselves would be such, if they were to illuminate the nobility which they derive from their fleshly origin with the virtues of right faith. But now, because through fleshly descent they are the children of those whose virtues they do not possess, they are mocked with contrary words for having lost the succession of those same virtues: "These are the gods," they say. As if by open derision the order of our teachers were to rebuke the wise men of the Jews, saying: In the flesh indeed they boast themselves to be the children of great men, but they do not attain the nobility of faith of those in whose lineage they take pride. They themselves, then, are gods by succession of descent, but because they themselves are not so by imitation of virtue, when they are called those who were renowned in virtue, they are mocked rather than praised. And because the teachers of holy Church count their assertions as nothing, there follows: (Ver. 9.) "Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you serve the Hebrews, as they have served you."

11. Against the vain assertions of the Jews, the doctors of holy Church prepare nothing stronger anew, precisely because whatever is falsely asserted by the Jews concerning contempt of the Redeemer they consider as nothing. For they would be strengthened against their encounter and would fight as if with manly courage, if they had feared that the defenses of their assertion were being broken down by wiser and more rationally arguing opponents.

For it is as if he were saying: Against their objections we need not seek out anything strong and sharp, precisely because they themselves raise objections that are by no means subtle and fearsome, but weak and contemptible. But, as I said, the preachers of holy Church, even though they prepare nothing new against the vain words of the Jews, nevertheless by the plain and humble reasoning of our true faith they overcome in every way the assault of the defenders of the Synagogue. Whence he also adds: (Verses 10, 11.) Therefore the Philistines fought, and Israel was turned back, each one to his tent, and there was an exceedingly great slaughter, and the ark of God was captured. The two sons of Eli also died, Hophni and Phinehas.

12. The Philistines, that is, "those falling by the cup," fight when the doctors of the holy Church with the banner of the catholic faith confront the attacking Jews. But Israel is turned back, because in every disputation the cunning of the Jews is overcome. For to be turned back, for him, is to be unable to oppose with equal strength. But he who is turned back while fighting is indeed in battle, but fleeing — although lacking in strength, nevertheless not losing the desire to harm. For so it is with all of Israel when repulsed. He flees, indeed, because he is unable to answer the doctors of the holy Church; but while fleeing he would wish to resist, because, conquered and confounded, he would desire to have at hand the means by which he could oppose the truth by which he is overcome. Well, therefore, when Israel is said to be turned back, it is cautiously added: "Each one to his own tent." For the tent of each Israelite is a heart enclosed by the confines of unbelief. Because therefore, conquered by the preachers of the holy Church, they return to the hiding places of their error, each one fleeing from battle returns to his own tent. And because all this is said concerning the fulfillment of the word of Samuel, namely concerning the denunciation of the early Church, the slaughter is reported to have been exceedingly great — which slaughter indeed, at the reader's discretion, can fittingly be understood both according to a spiritual striking and according to a material one.

13. For concerning their spiritual plague, the Lord says to the disciples sent out for preaching: Whoever does not receive you, as you go out from the house or city, shake the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you: it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that city (Matt. 10:14). Hence He says again: He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be con-

demned (Mark 16:16). He also indicates a great plague according to material striking, when He speaks to Jerusalem, saying: Days shall come upon you, and your enemies shall surround you with a rampart, and hem you in on every side, and dash you and your children to the ground, and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another (Luke 19:43, 44). Hence, as He was setting out toward the condescension of His passion, He speaks to the women who were suffering with Him and weeping, saying: Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep over me, but weep over yourselves and over your children, for behold days shall come upon you in which they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that did not bear, and the breasts that did not nurse. Then they shall begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry (Luke 23:28 ff.)?

By these words, indeed, the death and captivity that was inflicted upon the Jewish people by the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus is signified. For then a great plague was wrought, when with the slaughter of the Jewish people the city was both captured and overthrown, when in vengeance for the divine blood the people fell by the enemy's sword, and whoever was able to escape the blade endured the punishment of eternal captivity. This immensity of the plague is reported as having befallen Israel already turned away, because the Jewish people were first both defeated and rejected by the teachers of the holy Church before they were conquered, slain, and led into captivity by the Roman army. For they were able to be conquered, killed, and led into captivity temporally because they did not accept the security of eternal freedom offered to them by the teachers of the holy Church. But this same plague was also decreed against the old Israel by the deep dispensation of divine goodness, so that the ark of God might be captured by the Gentiles, and the faithful of the holy Church might perceive the understanding of the divine sacraments all the more securely under spiritual explanation, the more they saw that nothing remained in Judea that might serve as a carnal representation.

For by God's will, the old people lost the city, the temple, and the ark of the covenant, so that the new people of the holy Church might recognize all the more fully the mystery of the true and new sacrifice, inasmuch as it observes that among the Jews, with the new things appearing, the old things have utterly failed. The ark of God is therefore said to have been captured by

the Philistines, because, with the practice of the old Scripture destroyed, the sacraments are faithfully received by the Gentiles according to the truth of the Spirit. For he captures the ark of God who comprehends the mysteries of divine knowledge in sacred Scripture through the truth of understanding, with devotion of mind. But when the ark was captured, Eli's two sons immediately die, because indeed priests of both the higher and the lower order nowhere live in the office of the old sacrifice. For they are said to die who have entirely ceased to offer sacred rites. There follows: (Verses 12, 13. And a man of Benjamin, running from the battle line, came to Shiloh on that day, with his garment torn and his head sprinkled with dust. And when he had come, Eli was sitting upon a seat, watching toward the road. But the man, after he had entered, reported the news to the city, and the whole city wailed.

14. What is represented by that man who fled from the battle line, if not that part of the Jewish people which, by coming to the knowledge of the Redeemer, abandoned Jewish faithlessness? For his running was to cease from the depravity of his error with the swiftness of devotion. Because he resolved to act bravely in professing the Redeemer, he was a man. He indeed runs from the battle on the day he was defeated, because by that illumination of faith by which he abandoned the darkness of faithlessness, he came forward to preach the truth he had come to know. Hence he is also said to have come to Shiloh, because he is sent to preach. He tore his garment, because he stripped off the old man; he sprinkled his head with dust, because he did not at all grow proud on account of the splendor of the new man with which he clothed himself. For the torn garment pertains to the beauty of holy conduct, and the sprinkling of dust to the esteem of humility. Because therefore for holy preachers neither purity of life without humility nor humility without holy conduct suffices, the man who came as a type of the teachers to announce the destruction of Israel both tore his garment and sprinkled his head with dust. For was it not with head sprinkled with this dust that he who spoke to the Lord carried himself, saying: "I will speak to my Lord, though I am dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27)? Likewise with head sprinkled the Prophet spoke when he supplicated, saying: "Remember, O Lord, that we are dust" (Ps. 103:15). He had also torn his garment who, confessing, said: "You have torn my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" (Ps. 30:12).

15. But when the humility of the ecclesiastical preacher is commended, the pride of the Jewish teacher is likewise expressed, because Eli is said to sit

upon a seat. In this passage, Eli represents not the priests but the lawyers of the Synagogue. And what does it mean that he sits upon a seat, except that he is proudly exalted because of his learning? And what does it mean that he watches facing the road, except that while he receives the Scriptures proudly, he contradicts the One through whom he ought to have traveled to the eternal homeland? For the way of salvation is the One who declares of Himself, saying: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Therefore he looks not toward the way but against the way, because he does not recognize the Redeemer whom he contradicts. And fittingly, with his sons dead, the father is said to sit upon a seat, because the Synagogue no longer has those who sacrifice in the old manner, and yet still has those who teach in the old manner. And because they were trained for ministry through wise teachers, when the one who sacrificed ceased and the one who taught still remained, the sons are fittingly reported as dead while the father sits upon a seat. But at the announcement of the Redeemer that it heard, the multitude of the Synagogue had not joy but sorrow. Whence, after the man came from the battle and announced the capture of the ark, the whole city is said to have wailed. And because this grief reached even the teachers, there follows: (Verse 14.) "And Eli heard the sound of the crying and said: What is this noise of tumult?"

16. A tumult is the outcry of the people, but a confused one, when indeed without the discipline of listening, with many speaking at once, a great murmuring arises without any showing of reason. When Eli therefore heard the wailing of the city, he said: What is the sound of this tumult? Because indeed the authority of the Synagogue, with its faithless subjects grieving over the preaching of Jesus Christ, when it wished to hear the cause of their grief, did not receive a reasonable response, but a confusion of complaint. But so that he who had come from the circumcision to the ministry of ecclesiastical preaching might not have the excuse of ignorance, the truth of the matter was revealed to him. Whence it is also added: (Verse 14.) But he hastened, and came, and reported to Eli. But because the same Eli received the announcement of the man coming when he was about to die immediately, what kind of hearer he himself is becomes known in what follows: (Verse 15.) Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes had grown dim, and he could not see.

17. For his old age would have been perfect if he had completed the full number of one hundred years in living. Since two years are seen to be lacking from this number, what else does this signify except that he would have been of perfect maturity if he had recognized the twofold mystery in the incarnation of our Redeemer, namely true divinity in his humanity and true humanity in his divinity? But now, because he rightly understands much from the old law and very many things from the heavenly commandments, he is ninety-eight years old. And while he believes in God, and that he could be born of a Virgin in the flesh, yet refuses to accept the nature of his humanity in the divinity, he is not one hundred years old. Hence also, having heard the report of the man, he justly dies, because without faith in the Redeemer the good things he knows and other things profit him nothing. And because by the deep and incomprehensible judgment of God the blindness of ignorance is struck upon his mind, he is recorded to have grown dim and to have been unable to see. There follows: (Verse 16.) And he said to Eli: I am the one who came from the battle, I am the one who fled from the line of battle today.

18. He who said the following recalled as if he had been in battle: 'You have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and tried to destroy it, and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my nation, being more abundantly zealous for the traditions of my fathers' (Gal. 1:13–14). But he who says the following came from battle: 'Who was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly' (1 Tim. 1:13). Therefore, for a Jew to flee from the battle line—what is it other than to be separated from the error of the faithless? And to come from battle—what is it but to announce to others the good of the right faith? For to flee is characteristic of one who fears; to come, of one who wills. In this passage, because "to come from battle" is said before "to flee from the battle line," even though faithlessness is abandoned before truth is preached, this is not surprising. For what he says afterward about having fled from the battle line is not stated according to the order in which it happened, but for the certainty of the statement he put first. This is also demonstrated according to the order of the historical account, because unless he had first fled from the battle line, he could in no way have come from battle.

19. But we who according to the spirit seek spiritual meanings even in the things done carnally among the Jews, let us attend to that man whom we in-

roduced speaking a little above. For the Church had heard that he who once persecuted was now preaching the gospel, as it is written of him already evangelizing: "When he had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, and they all feared him, not believing that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Likewise, the Lord appearing at Damascus to Ananias the disciple said: "Arise, go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul of Tarsus, and lay your hand upon him, that he may receive his sight" (*ibid.*, 11 and 12). And he immediately answered the Lord, saying: "Lord, I have heard from many how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, and he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon your name" (*ibid.*, 13 and 14). Therefore, when he was preaching to the Jews the one whom he had been accustomed to attack with threats and slaughter, he was indeed coming from battle. But since all the disciples feared to join themselves to him as he preached, they doubted whether he had fled from the battle line. He was indeed coming from battle, since it had been said by the calling Lord to him who was cast down to the ground:

"Arise and enter the city, and it will be told to you what you must do" (*ibid.*, 7). But Ananias did not believe he had fled from the battle line, for he reported to the commanding Lord those evils he had done to the saints in Jerusalem and the authority he had received. Therefore, so that the Lord might truly demonstrate that he had come from battle and fled from the battle line, He commanded Ananias, saying: "Go, for this man is a vessel of election for me, to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). And it should be noted that on the very day he was announcing these things, he was declaring that he had come from battle and fled from the battle line. For they flee by day, because, as Truth attests: "He who is in darkness does not know where he goes" (John 12:35). Hence also it is written: "Those who sleep, sleep at night; and those who are drunk, are drunk at night" (1 Thess. 5:7). And since in the example of the blessed apostle Paul we have begun to see a man fleeing from the battle line, let us consider the fact that he flees by day. For it was night when he was marshaling his battle line against the holy Church, when, having received letters from the chief priests to Damascus, breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples, he was hastening (Acts 9:1, 2).

But he who prepared war at night fled by day, because on his journey a light from heaven suddenly shone around him and cast him to the ground, terrified him with unspeakable fear, so that he might recognize the darkness of his immense error and fight in the light of day for the Church whose night he had been attacking. Therefore he fled by day, whom the brightness of the Redeemer shown from heaven illuminated so that he might abandon the night of faithlessness. What then does it mean that on the same day he confesses coming from battle on which he fled from the battle line, unless the intention of right preaching is signified? For some flee from the battle line by day but come from battle on another day, because they abandon their former errors through love of eternal life, but when they are taken up into the ministry of preaching, they seek temporal rewards from the eloquence of their preaching. Therefore they come on a different day than the one on which they fled, because they are indeed upright in their way of life but perverse in the intention of their preaching. The holy preachers, then, who by the grace of our Redeemer believed from among the circumcision, came from battle not on another day but on the same day on which they had fled from the battle line, because they obtained both gifts in the splendor of heavenly love, namely the truth of their way of life together with the preaching of the word.

And because the Jewish teaching establishment, though not with the intention of knowing the truth, yet with the eagerness of curiosity, wished to hear the assertions of the holy preachers, there follows: (Verse 16. He said to him: "What has happened, my son?" 20. For under the description of one he speaks to all, because he saw the men of his nation, whom the teaching of the Law had once instructed. Or perhaps he called him "son" not from the affection of love, but from the flattery of cunning: so that he might the more easily capture him through deception, the more he showed that he loved him with fatherly affection. He therefore calls him "son," from whom he desires to know what had been done: so that the other, in return for the honor of flattery bestowed upon him, would pervert the sequence of truth. The honor of the title, therefore, is not referred to love, but to cunning. But he who rejected the favor of offered praise steadfastly revealed the truth. Whence it is also added: (Verse 17.) And he who brought the news answered and said: Israel has fled before the Philistines, and a great slaughter has oc-

curred among the people. Moreover, your two sons are dead, Hophni and Phinehas. And the ark of God has been captured.

21. For the man who fled announced this, which he learned by experience. What then does he mean by asserting that Israel fled, except that he firmly affirms that, while the Jewish people retain the sense of the Law carnally, they cannot resist the spiritual doctors of Holy Church in disputation? And what does it mean that he proclaims a great slaughter was made among the people, except that he confirms all who from the Jewish people rejected the word of faith have perished by eternal death? And what does it mean that the two sons of Eli are reported dead, except that both orders of the old priesthood are asserted to have failed? And what does it mean that he says the ark of God was captured, except that he asserts the knowledge of the divine sacraments was taken away from the Jews and faithfully apprehended by the Gentiles? For by the Gentiles now, with the grace of God calling them, the faithful come to know the divine mysteries. There follows: (Verse 18.) And when he had named the ark of God, Eli fell from his seat backward beside the door, and with his neck broken, he died.

22. What is it that Eli, upon hearing of Israel's flight, when the ruin of the people was reported to him, when the death of his sons was announced, does not at all fall from his seat: but upon learning of the capture of the ark, both falls from his seat and loses his life? But because we have said that in Eli the wise men and lawyers of the Jews are signified, upon hearing of Israel's flight, he did not fall from his seat: because he considers it a small matter that the simple children of the Synagogue are overcome by the doctors of holy Church in preaching. He does not fall when the ruin of the people is reported to him: because, when he hears that those who die in Judaism are perishing, he is not at all terrified. He does not fall when the death of his sons is announced: because, even when the cessation of both priesthoods is objected to him, he does not cease to be proud. But when the capture of the ark is brought to him, he falls: because, when he sees that the mysteries of his own Scripture are known deeply and spiritually by the preachers and faithful of holy Church, he does not dare to boast of the learning of sacred eloquence which he understands only in a carnal way. He therefore falls from his seat, because, once the spiritual sense is known, he does not presume to boast of his carnal mastery. But because he hears the truth preached sublimely and does not at all believe, while he is confounded and not saved, he falls and

dies. Indeed he falls from his seat, because he ceases to be exalted by his learning. But in falling he dies, because if he is overcome by reason, he nevertheless does not merit, by the judgment of that same reason, to attain to eternal joys.

23. In this matter it must be noted that he who falls and dies, falls beside the door. For what does it mean that he falls beside the door, except that while the blind man wanders, he strikes against the Redeemer? Who indeed declares of Himself, saying: "Whoever falls upon this stone shall be broken; but upon whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44). He Himself also says of Himself: "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture" (John 10:9). Therefore Eli died beside the door, because the authority of the Synagogue perished for this reason: that it stumbled against the Redeemer. For he fell there where he sinned. Who also, in falling, broke his neck. In the neck is signified the swelling of temporal power. Therefore he dies with a broken neck, who is condemned by the greatness of his faithlessness, having lost the power of his kingdom.

24. The letter of Sacred Scripture can also be designated by the door. For just as we are led through a door to the courts of the eternal temple, so through the letter of sacred eloquence we are raised up to allegorical and spiritual understanding. Within, moreover, the king is perceived: because the promised Redeemer of the human race is found in the spiritual understanding of Sacred Scripture. Eli therefore fell dead beside the door: because indeed the teaching authority of the Synagogue perished for this reason, that through the spiritual Scripture it sought Him who had been promised in the spirit as the Redeemer of the human race, not spiritually, but carnally. For he died beside the door: because he perished on account of the fact that he understood the spiritual promise of the Redeemer not according to spiritual understanding, but according to the simple expression of the historical narrative. And because through the zeal of his teaching he presided over Judea for a long time — not loving the one who works good, but fearing to turn aside from evil — there follows: (Verse 18.) For he was old and advanced in years: and he had judged Israel forty years.

25. For he was an old man, and advanced in age by the length of his years. He presided for forty years, through the fear of legal commandments. Indeed, the number forty pertains to sinners. Hence also the season of Lent in

the holy Church is consecrated with the same number of days, so that we may strive to wash away by repenting the sins which we commit. The number forty is completed from the numbers ten and four. And because, by sinning, we transgress the Decalogue of the divine Law, and we contract the very capacity for sinning from the combination of the four elements of which we consist; under the number forty, as long as we exist in sin, we are contained. Therefore Eli judged Israel for forty years, because he displayed the authority of the Synagogue and the stern discipline of the Law for the fear of the subject people: so that he might hold the material of the human condition, fragile through concupiscence, in the state of justice through fear. But now Eli is dead, now he lies with broken neck beside the door; yet the poison of his wicked teaching remains in his seed. For already, whoever among the wise men of the Jews does not believe has been judged; but because in his instruction minds conceive the seeds of depravity, those who are born as sons of his doctrine do not abandon the madness of his faithlessness. Wherefore it is also added: (Verses 19, 20.) Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, and near to delivery: who, having heard the news that the ark was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, bowed herself and gave birth. For sudden pains rushed upon her. And in the very moment of her death, those who stood beside her said to her: Do not fear, for you have borne a son. She did not answer, nor did she pay attention.

26. But who was the daughter-in-law of Eli, if not the people of the Jews, subject to reprobate priests? Because she had received the seeds of unbelief in her mind through their preaching, she was pregnant. And because she was also thinking of pouring forth the malice she had conceived, she is said to have been not only pregnant but also near to giving birth. But what does it mean that, upon hearing of the capture of the ark and the death of her father-in-law and her husband, she is said to have given birth, except that the remnant of the Jewish people, when it recognizes that the spiritual mysteries of the Scriptures have passed over to the instruction of the Gentiles, when it now sees that the wise men of the Synagogue have perished along with both priesthoods, does not cease to pour forth by speaking the seeds of its heresy, which it had conceived? For her to give birth is to disclose to others by speaking the depravity she had conceived. And because she preaches reprobate things, while she is said to give birth, she is recorded as having bent over.

For those who speak of heavenly things give birth, as it were, without bending over, because in the standing posture of faith they raise the hearts of their hearers to the pursuit of good works.

She, therefore, who asserts crooked things gives birth bent over, because indeed by her speaking she brings it about that the more intently she speaks, the more deeply she is cast down into the abyss of her own damnation. Rightly, therefore, while she is bent over in giving birth, she is said to die. For she dies in giving birth, because she is condemned in the guilt of her blasphemy. And because she does not foresee the torments of her death, sudden pains are said to rush upon her. For sudden pains are the unexpected afflictions of death coming without foresight. For pains rush upon her suddenly when the retributions of everlasting punishments confront the Jewish people, which now, set in contempt of the truth, does not fear them. For because she thinks that by dying in observance of ancestral traditions she is passing over to eternal life, she falls into sudden pains when she begins to endure the torments she had not expected. And it should be noted that it is said of the dying woman: "Sudden pains rushed upon her," because evidently while she is driven to the end of life through bodily afflictions, then the scourges of pains begin to rush upon her in time, by which her impiety may be punished with eternal vengeance; and because, with the end drawing near, the reprobate minds of the Jews exhort one another to unbelief. But at the very moment of her death, those who stood near her said to her:

"Do not fear, for you have borne a son. For she bore a son because she trained up a people hardened in wickedness and unconquerable. But what are the women who stand near her, if not minds bound by an equal order of impiety? They stand, indeed, not by the truth and rectitude of faith, but by the presumption and boasting of religion. Therefore they encourage her not to fear, because she has borne a son — so that, namely, she may not fear to die in the old tradition all the more securely, the more she sees that even those whom she knows to have been trained by her teaching are hardened and unconvertible in it. But while she is driven more abundantly by pain within herself, she counts as nothing whatever others have gained from her instruction, whence it is added: "She did not answer, nor did she take heed. For when she begins to experience the bitterness of eternal pain, that which she temporarily held authority over others does not bring delight. Or certainly she does not rejoice over the boy who is born because he who is brought

forth by her instruction is seen to be in captivity. Whence it is also added: (Verses 21, 22. "And she called the boy Ichabod, saying: The glory of the Lord has been taken away, because the ark of God has been captured."

27. The ark indeed is captured: because now, by God's authority, the sacraments of Holy Scripture are retained by true believers with the capacity of true understanding. And the glory of Israel is transferred: because, after it fell from true religion, it ceased to be fragrant through the reputation of good fame. Moreover, the glory of Israel is rightly said not to perish, but to be transferred: because the fame of religion, which it lost, passed over to the Gentiles. For the glory was indeed transferred: because in the holy Church the fragrance of true religion is fragrant, which, established in faith in the Redeemer, holds the gift of the Holy Spirit as a pledge for the certainty of eternal splendor, which it awaits. Therefore she refuses to rejoice over her newborn son: because indeed, while she perceives that past glory has passed over to the Gentiles, she groans that she is giving birth into captivity. She also names her son from the transfer of glory: because indeed she perpetually represents the impiety in which she persists, as if by a name set before her. Moreover, through the fact that a name is given to him by his mother, what we see can be openly understood. For he received his name from her, from whom the merit of impiety came to him. There follows:

CHAPTER 3.3 (1 SAMUEL 5:1-3)

Now the Philistines took the ark, and carried it away from the Stone of Help to Azotus. The Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the temple of Dagon, and the Azotians rose the next day, and found Dagon lying before the ark, face down on the ground. 1. What does it mean that the ark is carried away from the Stone of Help, except that the heralds of truth take away the mysteries of the Scriptures from that Christ whom the Jews await with a false expectation? For while they turn the testimonies of Holy Scripture toward the knowledge of the true Redeemer, they indeed take the ark away from him in whom the Jews had placed the hope of their help. And because the mysteries of faith are entrusted to the Gentiles, the ark of God is brought to Azotus. And indeed the ark is brought into the temple. What then was the temple of Dagon, except every unbelieving soul, once polluted by the superstition of idolatry? What does the image of Dagon signify, except the superstition of all idolatry? What else then was it to impress the mysteries of faith upon the hearts of the Gentiles, than to bring the ark of God into

the temple of Dagon? For it was as if the ark were placed next to Dagon, when the preachers of the holy Church admonished the Gentiles to examine, for the purpose of proving the truth of faith, both the preaching they were hearing and the errors of the idolatry they held. And so rightly on the next day the people of Azotus found Dagon lying face down on the ground before the ark. For Azotus had one day in hearing the preaching of truth, and another in the knowledge of faith.

For on the first day the ark of God is placed next to Dagon, because in hearing the preaching of the Redeemer, they detect the darkness of their ancient error. But rising on the second day, they found Dagon lying face down on the ground before the ark: because in the knowledge of truth, idolatry also lost its standing. Hence also it is well that when Dagon's fall is asserted, he is recorded as lying face down on the ground. He falls before the ark, because he is exposed through the knowledge of the divine mysteries. But he lies face down on the ground, because, with God now as guide, he no longer has the appearance of simulated reason in the sight of the faithful. For he who lies face down on the ground presses his face into the earth. But through the face of the idol, the simulation of reason is expressed. Therefore to lie face down on the ground is to be utterly unable to deceive with the frauds of its simulation those who now know the truth. But nevertheless, so that the Gentiles might know the truth more certainly, they endeavored to examine more and more both the reasoning of our faith that they had heard and the ancient custom of their own superstition. And so fittingly there follows: (Verse 3) They took up Dagon and restored him to his place.

2. That is, in the temple, where the ark of God had been placed. What then does it mean to restore Dagon to his place, if not, in light of the already known truth of spiritual sacraments, to examine the state of idolatry with subtle consideration? And because the more subtly the error of idolatry is examined, the more truly it is condemned, it is added: (Verse 4.) And rising again at dawn, they found Dagon lying on his face before the ark of the Lord. They rise again at dawn: because toward the love of the goodness they have heard, they now raise themselves with the certainty of deliberation. The first day, therefore, is one of testing, the next of recognition, and the third of deliberate certainty and offered profession. And because this day shone upon the enlightened minds of the converted in the splendor of perfect and consummate faith, there follows: (Verse 4.) But the head of Dagon and the

two palms of his hands had been cut off upon the threshold. Moreover, the trunk of Dagon had remained in its place.

3. For what is Dagon, that is, the head of idolatry, other than the devil himself, the very origin of all iniquity? And what are the palms of his hands, if not all the works of idolatry? Dagon therefore lost his head, because through the worship of idols the malignant spirits cease to reign in the hearts of the Gentiles. The palms of his hands were also cut off, because vain sacrifices are nowhere offered to idols. And because his deformity is everywhere beheld by all the faithful, the trunk of Dagon is recorded to have remained in its place. But the head and hands, cut off and placed upon the threshold, are mentioned because indeed whoever enters into the true faith is commanded to repel the beginnings of diabolical persuasion and to renounce all the works of that same Satan. These were therefore placed on the threshold so that they might be trampled upon by those entering, because one truly cannot be faithful who does not resolve both to oppose the wicked counsels of the malignant spirit and to resist his iniquitous works. For he who avoids crushing the head and hands of Dagon, even if he seems to be counted among the number of the faithful, is in a certain way proven to be an idolater. For in the delight of demons, not only outward sacrifices but also iniquitous desires are offered by their worshippers. He therefore who has been received into the knowledge of the true faith and has not been removed from unclean desires and wicked works, because he disdains to crush the head and hands of Dagon, makes an offering to the malignant spirit—whom he disdains in the oblation of ceremonies—through the uncleanness of inward concupiscence and outward life. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 5.) For this reason the priests of Dagon do not tread upon the threshold to this present day.

4. For they present themselves as priests of Dagon, who do not tread upon the threshold. In these words it must be carefully observed that he did not say "the threshold," but "upon the threshold," so that the head and hands of Dagon are taught to be what must be trampled upon, which are reported to have been cut off upon the threshold. The reason, moreover, that the priests do not tread upon the threshold is that they avoid crushing his severed hands and head with their foot. For the priests of Dagon remain even to this day: because those who sacrifice to the ancient enemy through unclean desires still exist. They indeed refuse to tread upon the threshold of the temple: be-

cause they resist neither unclean suggestions nor evil works. Therefore they are priests of Dagon, because even if they do not humble themselves before handmade idols, they nevertheless bow down to the images of their lusts through wicked works. There follows: (Verse 6.) The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people of Ashdod.

5. The hand of the Lord is the power of divine might. And because in the Azotians the beginnings of paganism are signified, what does it mean that the hand of the Lord is said to have been made heavy upon the Azotians? But He made His hand heavy upon Azotus when He moved the hearts of the Gentiles to conversion by the power of His might. For when through inward inspiration He made known to them the force of eternal death, He struck the minds of the Gentiles with wondrous terror over the iniquities they had committed. Therefore, since when the hand of the Lord is said to be made heavy, the Azotians are said to be slain, this heaviness of the hand is understood as the multiplication of the converted. For to die, for the Gentiles, was to be separated from unbelief. Likewise, to be slain by the hand of the Lord is to obtain that same knowledge of the true faith not through the ministry of men but by divine power. The hand of the Lord was therefore light upon Azotus when as yet, through a few ministers of the faith, only a few were abandoning the error of paganism. Hence the Lord also urges the ministers of the word to pray, as if concerning the making heavy of His hand, saying: 'The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few: pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest' (Matt. 9:38). As if He were saying in other words:

He who through a few ministers, as if with a light hand, separates a few from unbelief — pray that He multiply the ministers, so that He may, as it were, make His hand heavy in the multitude of the converted. But the manner of the slaying is also explained: for whoever is said to die by this slaying, while going out to purge his bowels, is said to be bitten by mice in the more hidden part of the buttocks. According to the letter, one single striking is shown here, but in the typological exposition it is doubled. For by the signification of the letter, both the making heavy of the Lord's hand and the biting of the mice pertain to the effect of the same death: because the hand of the Lord is said to be made heavy upon the Azotians for this reason — that they are slain by the biting of the mice.

6. But because through spiritual signification we have recognized two deaths—one, namely, by which sinners die to righteousness by sinning, and the other by which the righteous raise themselves from the sins in which they had lived by repenting; one which enters human hearts at the devil's persuasion, the other which the power of almighty God works—it is therefore necessary that we attend spiritually to both deaths in this passage. The death by which sinners rise from sins through repentance is indicated, because it says: "The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Azotians. But that death by which the Gentiles made themselves servants of uncleanness and iniquity is indicated when they are said to be bitten by mice and killed. For the mouse is an unclean animal, and forbidden by the Law to be eaten (Lev. 11:29). What then is designated by mice, if not demons? And what is it to be bitten by mice, if not to be torn by the punishment of sin? But they were bitten by mice when they went out to purge their bowels. What then is purging the bowels, if not, through the completion of sin, to bring forth the stench of a wretched reputation? He therefore who goes out to purge his bowels is destroyed by the bite of mice: because he who by sinning extends himself to the notice of others through the example of depravity is also held fast unto eternal death by the grave bondage of demons.

For they are reported to have been struck in the more hidden part of their buttocks: because every sinner receives a wound of the soul in that part which he bends toward the pleasure of sin. Therefore when the hand of the Lord is made heavy upon Azotus, it is asserted that they were struck by mice: because when the doctors of eternal life were preaching, and the Gentiles were converted from unbelief, they recognized by what death of sins, through the persuasion of demons, they had been bound. Therefore, for the Azotians to be bitten after the hand of the Lord was made heavy is, after the knowledge of the true faith, not to be subjected to demons, but to perceive through the illumination of faith in what stench of sins they had offered themselves to the punishment of death. For they were bitten, as it were, at that time when they recognized the bites of their own sins. There follows: (Verse 7. "And when the men of Azotus saw this kind of plague, they said: Let not the ark of God remain among us, for his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god."

7. For when they saw temples destroyed, sacrifices ceasing, wives separated from husbands and husbands from wives, sons separated from parents and

fathers from sons, what else could they think but that the hand of the Lord was heavy both upon them and upon their superstition? But what was done next follows: (Verse 8.) And they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and the Gittites answered: Let the ark of God be carried around. 8. Because it is said that the satraps of the Philistines gathered together, but why they gathered is not stated. Yet because the satraps are said to have responded and to have given counsel about carrying the ark around, it is clearly understood that they had been summoned to give counsel regarding that same ark. Who then are the satraps of the Philistines, if not the chosen preachers of the Gentiles? Satraps are indeed called princes. Of these princes it is certainly said through the Psalmist: "The princes of the peoples are gathered together with the God of Abraham" (Psalm 46:10). For by the name "peoples," the Gentiles are designated. He who used the name of peoples and of princes surely designated the satraps of the Philistines, of whom he speaks. These princes of the peoples certainly came together with the God of Abraham when, for the salvation of the Gentiles who were to be converted, the preachers proclaimed in word what almighty God inspired in them through inward desire. For it was as though there were a wonderful agreement between God and the princes in the hearts of their Gentile hearers, since they received simultaneously both the reasoning of right preaching from the holy preachers and the fruit of good will from the Lord. And since those who had said "Let the ark of God not remain among us" are recognized as adversaries, how do the princes gather by sending?

But to send and to gather the princes is to stir up the minds of the holy preachers to urgency in preaching, because preaching was to be carried out more attentively where the hearts of the Gentiles were plunged more deeply into error. Hence it is that the distinguished teacher boasts of having chosen for himself a nobler victory over unconquered enemies, saying: "From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the Gospel of Christ; and so I have preached this Gospel, not where it had already been proclaimed, lest I build upon another's foundation" (Romans 15:19–20). The princes, therefore, were provoked not by the desire but by the error of the unbelievers, since they judged they could gain a greater profit for God from where the darkness of errors was borne aloft more loftily by the blast of pride. Therefore the urgency of holy preaching is also designated when it is added: "And the Gittites answered: Let the ark of God be carried around.

Those say: "Let the ark of God not remain among us," and these say: "Let it be carried around. For what is it to carry the ark of God around, if not to preach publicly the mysteries of the true faith? For the ark remains with those who embrace through love the sacraments of the true faith that they hear. But those who say "Let the ark not remain among us" desire that the preaching of the faith be turned away from them. The satraps therefore say the opposite:

"Let the ark of God be carried around," because they preached divine things more attentively to those whom grave error had inflamed to hatred of the truth. And because through the ministries of the holy preachers, great gains from even such people were brought to the heavenly kingdoms, there follows: (Verse 9. "But as they were carrying it around, the hand of the Lord came upon each city with an exceedingly great slaughter, and it struck the men of every city from the least to the greatest, and their protruding intestines rotted away." 9. For the ark is carried around when the mysteries of the faith are preached openly and without fear. And because in the beginnings of the faith countless people were converted, a very great slaughter is reported to have been made throughout each of the cities. Likewise, because not only the simple but also the wise were converted, the same slaughter is declared to have been made from the least even to the greatest. But through that same striking, the intestines are reported to rot away. For the intestines to rot is for the channels of sin to utterly perish from the outpouring of their accustomed stench. For he is well struck whose protruding intestines rot away, because indeed there are some who, after the cleanness of conversion, are entangled again in the former filth of wickedness. Their protruding intestines certainly do not rot away, because they are bent back to the accustomed flow of sins through wicked works. He indeed rebukes those who are ill-healed from an imperfect striking, who intimates that they have fallen back to their former stench: "The dog returned to its vomit, and the washed sow to wallowing in the mire" (Prov. 26:11; 2 Pet. 2:22). For he was striking, as it were, so that the intestines might rot away, he who, thrusting in the sword of the word, said: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires" (Rom. 6:12).

10. Moreover, by the fact that the Azotites say, "Let the ark not remain among us," the perversity of those from the same Gentiles who both heard the word of faith and, being by no means predestined to eternal life, refused

to believe, can be signified. For the satraps to lead the ark of God around was for the holy preachers to withdraw from them the word of truth and to reveal the mysteries of faith to those who were worthy. The ark was therefore led around, because the sacraments of our faith were removed from the knowledge of some and revealed to others. And so, as it was led around, an exceedingly great slaughter is reported to have occurred in each city, because wherever they brought the word of faith, the grace of conversion was multiplied. And because wherever they preached, among those who believed there were some who were not predestined to eternal life, there follows: (Verses 10, 11.) They sent the ark of God to Ekron. And when the ark of God had come to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying: They have sent the ark of God to us, to kill us and our people. Therefore they sent and gathered together all the satraps of the Philistines, who said: Send away the ark of the Lord to its own place.

11. The satraps, as we have said, are understood as the holy preachers. The Ekronites, who are interpreted as "barren," designate the unconvertible Gentiles. These indeed gave the preachers the counsel of releasing the ark, so that if they refused their own salvation from the divine preaching, they would not stand in the way of the faithful who were journeying toward the eternal homeland with the sacraments of faith. For the place of the ark, that is, of the divine sacraments, is recognized to be there where whatever is now said about almighty God through the mystery of the Scriptures is afterward revealed to us in open knowledge. For he knew the proper place of the ark who said: "We see now through a mirror in an enigma, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also have been known" (1 Cor. 13:12). The counsel of the satraps, therefore, was to allow the ark of God to return to its own place: so that, namely, those who bore no fruit of faith from the preaching of the word would at least release it to those who would prepare for themselves from it a fruit in eternity. Rightly, therefore, those who accept the counsel of sending back the ark are called Ekronites. For the Ekronites are interpreted as "barren. Because indeed from the truth of the faith they had heard, they had produced no fruit of belief or of good work, they were barren.

Therefore the princes gave the counsel of removing the ark, but from barren ones—so that the seed of the word of God, which could not germinate in the worst soil, might be preserved for the best soil, which from this

labor of winter would bring forth a hundredfold fruit of summer in everlasting life. And they immediately show the reason for releasing the ark, when the preachers add: (Verse 11) "Lest it kill us together with our people." 12. The Ekronites cried out: They have sent the ark of God to us, to kill us and our people. The satraps give counsel, saying: Send away the ark of the God of Israel, that it may not kill us with our people. Who is the people about whom the satraps, that is, the princes, say: that it may not kill us with our people? Who is the people, if not the Christian people? The princes therefore say, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, that it may return to its place. As if to say this: What you fear dying from, do not forbid us from exercising for the merit of eternal life. But as for what they add: That it may not kill us with our people, the hearts of the reprobate Gentiles are indeed confounded in their error by this response, since those men affirmed they would escape death from the very thing from which the others trembled to die. The holy preachers also take away the ark of God: because when spiritual things are disclosed to despisers, it leads to the condemnation of the indiscriminate preacher, if those same divine mysteries are abandoned not to be imitated by the faithless, but to be mocked and shut away. For the command to transfer the ark was laid down not so much by the satraps as by the Lord of the satraps, who said:

Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they turn and trample them under their feet (Matt. 7:6). Hence he says again: If they persecute you in one city, flee to another (Matt. 10:23). They therefore take away the ark lest they die: because they hide spiritual things from despisers, lest those who rashly bring them forth be punished for their indiscretion on account of the contempt of those people. But because the ark is commanded to be sent away from the Ekronites, this surely implies what I stated before: that at the time of persecution, the exhortation of the holy preachers was made so that they themselves might believe; but sometimes, so that if they themselves would not receive the word of life, they would not obstruct those who would receive it; and if they themselves, out of fear of torments, would not seize the way of salvation, they would not be an impediment to those who had not ceased hastening toward the heavenly kingdoms despite threats and punishments. There follows: (Verse 12. For there was a fear of death in every city, and the hand of the Lord was exceedingly heavy. How this is to be understood with regard to the outward persecution has been ex-

plained above. There follows: (Verse 12. The men also who had not died were struck in the more secret part of their buttocks: and the wailing of each city ascended to heaven.

13. Concerning the striking of the buttocks indeed, because we spoke of it above, it would not need to be discussed here, if nothing different were said here than was said there. What then is the meaning of what it says: "The men also who had not died were struck"? Were those who had died supposed to be bitten again as punishment for the ark? But also when the cry of the stricken is said to have ascended to heaven, it could be sufficiently shown that this was said of the living, and not of the dead. For the cry of dead men could not ascend to heaven. But because we referred the striking of the buttocks above to the knowledge of sins, there are indeed men who have not died. For they are men who, for the sake of the eternal life which they desire, have resolved to do brave deeds. But the men who have not yet died are those who resolve to do great things, and yet by no means weigh their past evils unto the pain of compunction. They are therefore bitten by mice, so that they may die: because they recall the things in which they wickedly fell, and believe that for their past deeds they deserve the loss of eternal life. Because therefore they are men, they do not despair of God's mercy: and because they are bitten so that they may die, they do not exalt themselves on account of the fact that they begin to be great.

14. Their cry indeed ascended to heaven because almighty God mercifully receives the groans of the converted. And because at the time of the conversion of the Gentiles there was a great rush to the faith, the cry is said to have ascended not from any one city but from many cities. Hence the prophet also pleads in the person of the universal Church, saying: "Attend to my prayer, from the ends of the earth I have cried to you" (Ps. 60:2-3). And showing that the cry of the one crying from the ends of the earth ascended to heaven, he says: "He heard my voice from his holy temple, and my cry came before him into his ears" (Ps. 17:7). When therefore each city is said to have cried to heaven, the universal penitence of conversion is commended. But if the striking is referred to conversion, while the cry is referred to the devotion of divine praise, then we certainly read in the mysteries of the Scriptures what we see. For each city cries out in the praises of almighty God, because the entire world by no means keeps silent about the proclamations of the Redeemer; it does not preach him in secret, but extols him with the jubilation of in-

effable joy. For what else was he doing but urging all cities to cry out, who said: "All nations, clap your hands, shout to God with the voice of exultation, for God is most high and terrible, and a great king over all gods" (Ps. 46:2–3).

Hence again admonishing, he says: "Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps. 99:2). Hence again, he expresses both the plague of the biting mice and the cry of the cities, saying: "Let all the earth be moved before his face; say among the nations that the Lord has reigned" (Ps. 95:9–10). For he had said before: "Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord all the earth" (*ibid.* 1). Indeed the shaking of the earth pertains to the pain of penitence; to sing to the Lord, or to announce among the nations that the Lord has reigned, pertains to the zeal of preaching and to the devotion of divine praise. The cry of each city ascends to heaven, because throughout the whole world both the truth of preaching and the praises of devotion are proclaimed by the faithful of the holy Church, and these are received up to the height of the heavenly hearing through the acceptance of divine favor.

CHAPTER 3.4 (1 SAMUEL 6:1)

So the ark of the Lord was in the region of the Philistines for seven months. 1. What do these seven months signify, if not the entire length of the present life? Although the Azotites and Ekronites cried out, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried around, and let the ark of God not remain among us," nevertheless the truth of the sacred history tells us — that we may recognize in the type of the holy Church — that the ark of God was in the region of the Philistines for seven months. Therefore it was not the will of evil and impious men, but the dispensation of God that was fulfilled in the salvation of the Gentiles. Already indeed the impious have been removed from paganism, already those who persecuted the confessors of Christ have died, and yet the ark of God is not taken away from the region of the Philistines: because the divine sacraments are preserved with zealous care among the Gentiles, who have been made drunk with the cup of the Holy Spirit. And it is rightly said "seven months," because the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures will endure with the faithful of Christ until the end of the world. But whoever grasps the mysteries of that same Holy Scripture through the grace of intimate charity was concerned not about the place where the ark is temporarily left, but about that place where it is eternally established. Therefore it is added: (Verse

2.) And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying: What shall we do with the ark of God? Tell us in what manner we should send it back to its place.

2. Who are those who consult priests and diviners, if not the faithful of the holy Church, who desire to hold the way of eternal salvation without error? And who are understood as the priests and diviners, if not the preachers of the holy Church? They are indeed priests on account of the offering of the sacrament, and diviners by the ministry of preaching. For these two things come together in the person of the pastor, if he possesses both holiness of life and learning of wisdom: because he has been appointed both to purge the sins of those under him and to dispel the darkness of errors by the light of preaching. Therefore, a pastor of the holy Church who has holiness of life but does not have the power of divine preaching is indeed a priest, but not a diviner. Likewise, if he retains eloquence of speech without holiness of life, although he may appear to be a diviner, he is by no means adorned with the honor of the priesthood: because what he preaches sublimely, he tramples underfoot by earthly conduct. But those who inquire about the place of the ark and about sending back the ark of God call upon both priests and diviners: because indeed those who, from knowledge of divine preaching, love the joys of the life to come, seek for the counsel of salvation pastors who are neither carnally wise nor overly simple in their piety. And so they call upon priests and diviners:

because they entrust themselves to those who both show the uprightness of the heavenly way by the sublimity of their knowledge, and are worthy intercessors before almighty God for those under them, through purity of life. Therefore they inquire about sending the ark back to its place: because from that knowledge of the Scriptures which they receive in the mysteries of words, they desire to pass over to the perfect knowledge of God in eternity. For the ark is, as it were, sent back when this small knowledge is fulfilled through the passage of the present life. And we behold the glory of God's ark displayed in its place when, from beneath the lofty coverings of figures, we gaze upon the appearance of the divine majesty with unveiled face. Concerning this return of the ark to its place, it is said through the prophet: "And a man shall no longer teach his neighbor, saying: Know the Lord; for from the least to the greatest they shall know me" (Jeremiah 31:34). Hence John promises, saying: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, because we

shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). But let us now consider what counsel the priests and diviners give to those who inquire about sending back the ark. For there follows: (Verse 3. What did they say?

"If you send back the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it back empty, but render to him what you owe for sin, and then you shall be healed, and you shall know why his hand does not withdraw from you." 3. What is an empty ark, but divine knowledge without good works? For to send back an empty ark is to bear no fruit of good works from the knowledge of spiritual mysteries. The ark is therefore sent back empty when the mind of one coming to the faith already desires to pass over to the eternal contemplation of God, and yet takes no care to labor at good works in this life. By the voice of the preachers, therefore, it is commanded that when the ark is sent away, it not be released empty, so that if anyone who is faithful does not multiply good works, he should not presume to trust that he will pass over to the eternal knowledge of God Almighty. But the ark is not sent away empty if what is owed is rendered to it for sin. What is owed to the ark for sin, but the affliction of devout penance? Here it should be noted that he speaks to those who were bitten by mice. For who are bitten by mice, but those who, placed in the illumination of the catholic faith, recall that they have done wicked things before or after their knowledge of that same faith? For one who committed no crimes before the grace of regeneration, and retained the gift of regeneration through a worthy manner of life, indeed owes something to the ark, but does not owe it anything for sin.

He is compelled to render the fruit of good works through knowledge of the divine Word, but he is not pressed by any debt of satisfaction for penance arising from crimes he rejected. Therefore, let those who are still being bitten pay their debt to the ark for sin, so that for the memory of their crimes they may restore a humble offering of penance to Almighty God. And then indeed they are healed, because the wound of conscience is closed over when the afflicted mind is raised up through penance to the assurance of hoped-for pardon. Then also they know why the hand of the Lord does not withdraw from them, because then they understand the benefit of compunction, that is, the good of afflicted flesh, when they rejoice ineffably in the confidence of divine forgiveness. For what is the pain of penance but the distress of a wound from the striking of demons? For as if in the pain of a wound still sharply stinging, that converted man was sighing when he said: "I was turned

in my anguish while the thorn was fastened in me" (Psalm 31:4). For what does "anguish" suggest but the affliction of penance? But he declares himself turned in that same anguish while he feels the piercing of the thorn. As if to say: While I am stung by the memory of my shameful deed, I do not cease to pay my debt to the ark.

For the thorn is fastened in when, through the dispensation of Almighty God, the soul of the converted is inflamed to tears by the memory of their crimes. And the debt to the ark is paid when the measure of lamentation is now extended according to the gravity of the crime: when after prolonged tears the light of inner consolation is poured into the long-afflicted mind, and by the divine gift it is relieved from the weight of the inward blow; when Almighty God draws near through the grace of His inspiration to the now purified mind, and gladdens it with the confidence of obtained forgiveness, which He supplies to it from the grace of His presence. For the soul is then healed, as it were, from its wound, when through the grace of poured-forth forgiveness the greatness of pain is removed from the afflicted mind of the penitent. 4. Whence also he who was being turned about in distress, while he was being pierced by the thorn, in the same psalm joyfully addresses almighty God as the author of his healing, saying: "You are my refuge from the trouble that has surrounded me, my exultation" (Psalm 31:7). For he calls the very heavy hand of the Lord a pressure. Of which stroke of the most heavy hand Paul also speaks, saying: "For the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings" (Romans 8:26). He who therefore indicates that he has found the Lord's refuge and exultation from pressure, shows that he has been healed from the blow of inward grief by the joy of divine mercy. Hence likewise, still grieving, he confesses, saying: "Against you alone have I sinned, and done evil before you" (Psalm 50:6). But because he presumes upon healing, he adds, saying: "You will give joy and gladness to my hearing, and the humbled bones will exult" (*ibid.*, 7). Therefore the debt is paid to the ark for sin, when sinners are afflicted through the knowledge of Sacred Scripture, and strive by torment to wipe away the faults they contracted through the delight of the flesh. Moreover they are healed when, the measure of affliction now being fulfilled, they are lifted up to confidence in divine mercy through the help of inward consolation. Whence the Psalmist also speaks, saying: "You will feed us with the bread of tears, and give us drink in tears by measure" (Psalm 79:6).

For he gives the drink of tears by measure: because indeed the sinner, even if he is pierced with compunction for his fault by God's inward inspiration, is relieved from the same affliction of compunction by the consolation of that same God. Whence also the Lord says through Moses: "I will kill, and I will make alive: I will strike, and I will heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39). For he strikes and heals: because those whom he wounds through compunction, he cures through the assurance of pardon. Therefore it is rightly said to those now healed: "And you will know why his hand does not withdraw from you. For before he heals, they cannot know why the hand of the Lord does not withdraw from them: because they then understand the good of repentance, when in a now purified heart they recognize the grace of the Holy Spirit, and long for the gifts of divine mercy, over which they rejoice with ineffable exultation. For he had perceived that they knew the reason why the hand of the healing Lord had not withdrawn from their affliction—he who expresses the exultations of those who were struck, speaking to God and saying: "We were filled in the morning with your mercy; we exulted and were delighted for the days in which you humbled us, the years in which we saw evils" (Psalm 89:14–15).

For they had received, as it were, the mourning of repentance in the night, who in the morning—that is, when the brightness of divine favor appeared—rejoiced together that they were filled with mercy; those who declare that they were delighted for the days in which they had been humbled are shown, through the gift of healing, to know the weight of the Lord's hand and why it had not withdrawn from them. But since it is still being said by the leaders through counsel that what is owed for sin should be paid to the ark, and what that which is owed is not yet explained, it is added: (Verses 4–5. They answered and said: "What is it that we ought to render for the offense? They replied: "According to the number of the provinces of the Philistines, you shall make five golden tumors and five mice: because there was one plague upon you and upon your rulers. And you shall make likenesses of your tumors, and likenesses of the mice that have destroyed the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel, if perhaps he may lighten his hand from you, and from your gods, and from your land."

5. What does it mean that five likenesses of tumors, and as many likenesses of mice, according to the number of the provinces, are commanded to be made, and thus the debt to the ark is paid? These things indeed, if

weighed in the Jewish manner according to the lowliness of the letter, are not only to be despised, but not even worthy of hearing. He indeed receives these things worthily who understands that the more lowly they sound by the letter, the more useful they are through their spiritual meaning. For the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration this entire sacred history is written, would never have brought forth such lowly things if He did not signify certain great and very precious mysteries in the hidden depth of this lowliness. Whence the excellent teacher declares, saying: "All these things happened to them in figure; but they were written for our sake, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Therefore, the more base what they say appears in the exposed flesh, as it were, of the letter, the more deeply must they be sought through the spirit. What then are the likenesses of tumors, what are the images of mice? And since we referred these things above both to tempting demons and to the members of sinners exposed to stench, in what sense are the likenesses of tumors and mice gilded? But indeed the debt to the ark for sin is well paid if the likenesses of tumors and mice are fashioned from gold.

For in the likeness of a tumor, the member that emits stench is seen; and yet, because it is a likeness, not the reality, it is no longer stained by any stench. And because it is made of gold, this indeed suggests that by the splendor of beauty the appearance of deformity is transformed. Therefore the converted sinner makes a likeness of a tumor when he brings to memory with what stench of sin he had surrendered his members. Therefore to fashion a likeness of a tumor is to recall with a penitent heart the shame of one's members that recently sinned. And so he fashions not a tumor, but the likeness of a tumor, who both washes his members from the stench of sin and does not fail to recall to which sins he had subjected those same members. And indeed the likeness of a tumor is seen to be made of gold, because the shamefulfulness of sins is worn away unto the prize of eternal salvation. Or perhaps by remembering, the likenesses of tumors are made; by weeping, they are gilded: because by recalling what we have done, we fashion them, and while we mourn our offenses more attentively, we gild our members in the splendor of righteousness. Therefore the likeness, not the reality, of tumors is seen, because then the sinner looks upon the disgrace of his deformity when he not only no longer practices wicked works by committing them, but also vehemently grieves that he committed them in the past.

But five tumors are commanded to be made, because the universal satisfaction of all the Gentiles is commanded. Whence it is also carefully noted: "According to the number of the provinces of the Philistines. For why are there five provinces of the Philistines, unless because the carnal life of the Gentiles is signified? For because they devoted the five senses of the body not to the praise of the Creator but to carnal life, the provinces of the Philistines are expressed by the number five. They are commanded to make five golden tumors so that they may be pricked with compunction in all their senses; and because all have sinned, therefore let them restore to the brightness of the heavenly life all the members which they defiled with every kind of shameful filth through the pleasures of the flesh. For in gold the splendor of heavenly conduct is shown, because through John it is said of the heavenly city: "The city itself was pure gold, like clear glass" (Rev. 21:18). The members are therefore gilded when the body, deformed by the earthly and filthy foulness of lusts, is transformed into the splendor of eternal life: when, namely, that which was defiled by the stench of sins in the appetite for worldly pleasure shines forth through the beauty of holy conduct. For blessed Paul was admonishing his hearers toward this gilding, saying: "As you presented your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so present your members to serve righteousness unto sanctification" (Rom. 6:19).

And as if compelling them to look upon the likenesses of tumors, he added, saying: "What fruit then did you have in those things, of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. Therefore the likenesses of tumors are made for our shame: because indeed we bring the stains of our foulness to memory so that we may be confounded by those same stains. But they are gilded for our security: because indeed while we cover over our deformity with the brightness of the heavenly life, we await the scrutiny of the divine judgment with a certain security. 6. The mice also, which demolished the land, are commanded to be made of gold: because the unclean spirits, who suggest the enticements of corruption to our flesh, are remembered for our justification. For what is it to make likenesses of mice, except to remember those victories which malign spirits have had over us? But the likenesses of mice are also gilded, when we sigh over their broken powers. For while we lament that we were conquered by their deceits, we indeed hold golden likenesses of mice, since we hold the past counsels of demons not in the allurements of their work, but in the contempt of reprobation. Therefore the like-

nesses of mice are made of gold, because the past deceits of demons advance us toward the splendor of a good life. For we are now so much more humble, inasmuch as our members shine through the splendor of heavenly conduct; and we ourselves, who now by the help of almighty God do mighty things, see that we were prostrated by the deceits of unclean spirits. This counsel, because they offer it to many, they also show the reason for it, because they say: "For the plague was one for you and for your rulers." As if they were saying openly: Because you were all subject to sin, it is necessary that you equally prepare your hearts for the pursuit of a better life. Whence Paul also says: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace" (Rom. 3:23).

7. And to commend more attentively the resolution of improving one's life, they repeat by insisting, saying: 'You shall make likenesses of your tumors and of the mice that have destroyed the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel, if perhaps He may lighten His hand from you, from your gods, and from your land.' Once these likenesses that were mentioned have been made, to give glory to God is, out of zeal for good work and out of an estimation of humility, not to glory vainly in oneself, but to devote to the praises of almighty God everything that is done. And because they say: 'If perhaps He may lighten His hand from you' (1 Sam. 6:5)—what else is understood in this word of doubt, except that the reconciliation of sinners is shown to be difficult? Hence also through Jonah it is said: 'Who knows if He may turn and forgive?' (Jonah 3:9). Because, therefore, it is said 'if perhaps He may lighten His hand', we ought to be moved to tears of repentance with great earnestness: for if those who perform severe penance scarcely find confidence of salvation, when can the negligent be saved? This difficulty of reconciliation, if it is held in the estimation of the penitent, is by no means found with almighty God: for even when the Ninevites cast themselves down with heavy penance as if for a difficult reconciliation, they easily merited the mercy of almighty God.

And when the people prostrated themselves before God with bitter lamentation at the voice of the prophet Joel, they brought it about that He who seemed difficult to appease softened His anger. For immediately it is written therein: 'The Lord was zealous for His land and spared His people' (Joel 2:18). The hand, therefore, is lifted when the mind, powerfully pierced with compunction in repentance, is raised up by divine inspiration to the gift of ob-

tained mercy. And because, as I said, in the beginning of the nascent Church, just as there was a general conversion of sinners, so also there was a general reconciliation of the converted: the hand of God, which is declared to be lifted, is said to be lifted both from the hearers, and from their gods, and from the land. For by "gods," sublime and wise men are designated. For the Lord also says to Moses: 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1). And in the commandment of the Law it is also prescribed: 'You shall not speak ill of gods' (Exod. 22:28). By "land," indeed, the life of the simple is expressed: for when they receive the preaching of their superiors, like rain from heaven falling upon them, from the watering of the word they bring forth the fruit of good work.

From the gods, therefore, and from the land, the hand of the Lord is lifted, when both the wise and the simple are brought back to the certainty of divine pardon, either by hidden and spiritual consolation, or by the judgment of preachers. Hence also he who a little earlier had urged that the members be gilded, saying: 'Present your members as servants to righteousness for sanctification' (Rom. 6:19), as if pronouncing the judgment of the Lord's lifted hand, says: 'But now having been freed from sin and having become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life' (Rom. 6:22). Hence again, marveling at the complete splendor of gold in those converted from the deformity of a most wicked life, he says: 'You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord' (Eph. 5:8). Hence the same, praising his own, says: 'In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world' (Phil. 2:15). Therefore, when the likenesses of the tumors and mice have been made from gold and glory has been given to God, the hand of the Lord is lifted: because after the mourning of repentance, after the improvement of life and the humility of estimation, sinners are brought back to the full mercy of almighty God.

And because all these things are still prescribed by counsel—yet some devoutly carry out the counsel of preachers, while others despise it—those who extol the good with praises for the splendor of a good life are inflamed against the proud through the force of rebuke. For there follows: (Verse 6.) 'Why do you harden your hearts, as Egypt and Pharaoh hardened theirs?' 8. For the heart hardens, like Egypt and Pharaoh, when one already understands the wounds of his sins through knowledge of sacred Scripture, and yet does not direct his mind toward the true joys of the future life through the

improvement of his life or through the bitterness of repentance. Rightly, then, is he compared to the Egyptians in hardness of heart. For Egypt means "darkness. What then is understood by the name of Egypt, if not the multitude of angels who fell from the heavenly seats? And what is designated by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, if not the devil himself, the author of darkness? Rightly, then, are those who neglect repentance compared to Egypt and Pharaoh in the hardening of the heart. For the reprobate angels, once fallen from the heavenly places, just as they do not recover the love of their lost blessedness, so too they can never do penance for the pride they committed. Therefore, when the holy preachers attack the shameless sinners with sharp rebuke, they bring forward the likeness of Egypt and Pharaoh, so that their hearers may the more readily rush to make satisfaction, inasmuch as they recognize that by refusing to do penance, they are like the condemned angels. Hence they also urgently compel them to the zeal of fulfilling their counsel, when they add and say: (Verses 7-9. "Take therefore and make one new cart, and two milk cows on which no yoke has been placed, yoke them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home.

And you shall take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart, and the golden objects which you paid to him as a guilt offering you shall put in a box at its side, and send it away that it may go. And you shall watch: if indeed it goes up by the way of its own border toward Beth-shemesh, then he has done us this great evil. But if not, we shall know that it was not his hand that struck us, but that it happened by chance." 9. For what is designated by the name of the cart, if not either the whole holy Church together, or the individual soul of each faithful person? The wheels of this cart are indeed the two Testaments. For while the holy Church, or any chosen mind instructed through the Old and New Testament, presses onward toward eternal life, it is carried aloft to its appointed place as if upon lofty wheels set before it. But the cart is commanded to be made new, so that, namely, whoever desires to arrive at eternal joys may be clothed through the commandment of love with the splendor of the new man. Indeed, the Lord was commanding this cart to be made new when He said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Hence Paul commands, saying: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who was created according to God" (Ephesians 4:23). Hence, addressing the Romans, he says: "Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in strife and jealousy,

not in debauchery and impurity, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:13). Therefore, he makes a new cart who both rightly understands each Testament and, clothed with the splendor of holy conduct, stretches himself upward toward heavenly desires.

10. The wheels by which this cart moves can also designate the twofold desire of each elect person: because whoever, with God's help, already regards the present life as a hardship of pilgrimage, desires to reach future blessedness for this reason — that he may become impassible and immortal: so that through one, he may leave behind the misery he dreads; through the other, he may never lose the blessedness he merits. The cows, moreover, are the holy preachers. Because they are both distinguished by the twofold precept of charity and give birth to the souls of the converted in a new way of life, they are rightly designated both by the number two and by the feminine gender. The calves, however, are earthly desires. When therefore the cows pull the cart, they shut the calves up at home: because while they provide guidance to the faithful elect toward the heavenly homeland, they prevent those desires which suggest a reprobate life to them from coming forth into effect. They shut up the calves, indeed, when they crush proud desires at the very beginning of their suggestion, within the conscience, and do not allow them to advance to the effect of action. Hence also cows upon which no yoke has been placed are said to be sought out for pulling the cart: because preachers must be provided for the faithful elect who are subjected to the dominion of diabolic power by no burdens of crime. Concerning this yoke, indeed, it is said through the prophet:

"The yoke shall decay because of the oil" (Isaiah 10:27). And well does the progression of the meanings agree with the order of the words: because even if they are free from hostile domination, it is necessary that they always be watchful concerning their future conduct. The cows therefore are both without a yoke, and yet their calves are shut up at home: because the holy preachers rule over adversarial spirits by virtue, but they do not withdraw their attention from subduing wicked desires, since they cannot have perpetual security in this life from the holiness with which they see themselves adorned. And because to such persons the grace of divine knowledge is more widely opened, it is fittingly commanded that the Ark of the Lord be taken up and placed upon the cart. Moreover, that the Ark is commanded to be placed upon the cart for the listeners — this indeed suggests that in the holy

Church we find many orders of prelates: because while some are worthier than others by prerogative, they also obtain the authority of commanding at the summit of a higher order. When therefore the Ark of the Lord is commanded to be brought back, it is said to be placed upon a new cart: because he rightly advances toward the eternal homeland with knowledge of spiritual mysteries, who does not abandon what he has learned from Holy Scripture through the beauty of a new way of life.

11. Moreover, it is commanded that the golden vessels, which were rendered to the ark as a guilt offering, be placed at its side. For he calls "golden vessels" what he mentioned above, saying: "You shall make likenesses of your tumors and of your mice. In these vessels, as we had said, the memory of sins and temptations was signified. What does it mean, then, that above he declared them to be likenesses of tumors and mice, but now has called them golden vessels? But there the discussion concerned what had to be paid to the ark for sin, whereas here it concerns the sending away of the ark. What does it mean, then, that these same things are expressed by a more honorable name, except that sins which have not been cleansed by the tears of repentance must be viewed more attentively in their deformity and lamented, while those which have already been washed away by great weeping are not to be gazed upon more attentively or in their deformity, but are to be thought upon from time to time with an estimation of humility? For in the mind of the penitent who grieves bitterly, there is, as it were, a likeness of tumors and mice: when, so that he may mourn more attentively, he sees the accumulated mass of sin which he heaps before the eyes of his mind.

But when, already somewhat secure about the remission of his sins through great and prolonged weeping, he has begun to hasten toward the heavenly homeland by the course of a great conversion, he now beholds, as it were, golden vessels: because he sees his sins not as things by which he saw himself bound, but as things which he may devote to the praises of almighty God. And rightly are those same vessels placed in a box at the side of the ark. For if the ark signifies the secret of divine knowledge, the vessels hang at its side because, while the height of divine knowledge elevates the mind, our past weaknesses must be recalled to memory for the sake of the virtue of humility. They are not, therefore, to be placed before the ark, lest, while we gaze upon our weaknesses too immoderately, we become unable to be raised up to heavenly things. It is clear, then, that they hang from the side: so that

we may both freely behold heavenly things and, when it is fitting, recall the eyes of our mind to our own weaknesses.

12. But what does it mean that they are commanded: "And let it go, that it may depart"? The ark is let go when the learned minds of subjects are permitted by their rulers to live freely: so that they may hasten to their eternal homeland, no longer by the command of a superior, but by the judgment of their own reason. It must therefore be held so that it may be placed on the cart; and once placed, it is also let go: because indeed the freedom to arrange their own life is not to be given to chosen subjects by their prelates before they receive instruction in spiritual doctrine and a firm habit of good conduct. For the freedom of living is rightly granted neither to simple subjects who live well, nor to the learned who are weak. For the former can be deceived by the cunning adversary all the more easily, since they have in no way learned to detect his snares through spiritual instruction; while the latter preserve the good of their instruction with all the more difficulty, in that, though learned, they perceive the snares of the tempter, yet, though learned, they cannot avoid his bonds. Therefore the ark is fittingly let go when the cart on which it must be placed is first constructed, when the golden vessels that are owed for sin are hung from its side:

because indeed the life of a subject living freely can then be secure when he has learned through long practice to preserve the renewal of the inner man; when from the purity of his life he grasps the loftiness of divine instruction, and amid sublime gifts does not neglect to recall for the sake of humility those things which he remembers having once done wrongly. This freedom of living, because it is granted to good subjects solely for the pursuit of heavenly love, fittingly adds the reason for which the same ark is let go: "that it may depart," it says. For it is as if it said in other words: They are to be permitted to live more freely for this sole purpose, that they may journey more swiftly to the heavenly homeland. But because some subjects are perfect in both conduct and knowledge by human judgment, not by divine, it must be provided by the diligence of good rulers that they do not entirely abandon care for them even when those same subjects think themselves released from their care, but with pious shrewdness observe how those live when now free, whose good qualities under obedience they had more fully known. Wherefore it is also added: "And you shall watch, and if indeed it goes up by the way of its own borders toward Beth-shemesh, then he has done us this

great evil. But if not, we shall know that it was not his hand that struck us, but it happened by chance."

13. Bethshemesh, as we have already said, is interpreted as "house of the sun. The preachers observe the released ark to see whether it proceeds on a straight path toward Bethshemesh, because even when subjects are released to their own judgment, prelates must examine whether they convert the good of liberty to the advancement of the heavenly journey. But it must also be carefully noted that the ark rightly ascends toward Bethshemesh when it does not abandon the road of the border territory while traveling. For our neighbors are the elect who came before us; neighbors indeed are those who have properties arranged next to one another. The neighbors of the elect, therefore, are the perpetual co-heirs of the eternal kingdom. For they dwell as if with properties arranged next to one another, those who, called into the same fellowship of the eternal homeland, have received the rights of eternal inheritance from the one and same majesty of the Creator. Or they are called neighbors for this reason: because when the elect arrive from a good manner of life to the joys of everlasting life, those who live rightly in this world are close to the heavenly citizens. What then is the road of the border territory, if not temporal affliction? The Lord Himself demonstrates this road to Bethshemesh, saying: "Narrow is the way that leads to life" (Matt. 7:14). He likewise commends this road when, rebuking the disciples, He says: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe!"

Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer, and so to enter into His glory? (Luke 24:25. Hence Paul says: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21). The ark is therefore directed toward Bethshemesh when it is seen to ascend by the road of the border territory, because in the heavenly manner of life he more truly advances who seeks to reach eternal joys not through worldly pleasures but through afflictions of the flesh and adversities of the world. But because the released ark is said not merely to go but to ascend, a higher road is indicated for subjects released into freedom, because they do not rightly travel the road to Bethshemesh if they do not daily advance from good things to better. For to ascend by the merits of virtues is to advance daily toward better things. But when the ark is rightly directed toward Bethshemesh, they ascribe the great evil they had suffered to the works of almighty God. For they call that great evil the striking about which it is read above: "The hand of the Lord was upon each city with ex-

ceedingly great slaughter. And because we have referred that same slaughter both to the conversion of the Gentiles and to the salutary compunction of sinning believers, when the ark rightly proceeds toward Bethshemesh, that great evil which had occurred is shown to be from God, because indeed the end of each of the elect indicates how the mind of the preacher should recognize their first works.

14. For if they fail in the end, it is openly recognized that their good beginnings were not from the Lord. Whence it is also added: 'But if not, we shall know that it was not at all his hand that struck us, but it happened by chance.' What is the hand of the Lord, if not the Only-begotten of the eternal Father? For they are not touched by the hand of the Lord who are separated from their former way of life not by the inspiration of the divine word, but by a sudden resolution of their own heart. They certainly fall away from their begun goodness all the more quickly, inasmuch as they did not know how to consider beforehand with what fortitude that which they had proposed—to enter by the narrow way to the eternal homeland—was to be carried out. Therefore it was aptly said: 'It happened by chance.' For what happens by chance occurs suddenly and without counsel or foresight. When therefore those who, having been converted, seemed to have departed from the love of the world, or from unbelief, return to the wickedness of their former life, it is openly recognized that they were separated from their former way of life not by the hand of the Lord, as they seemed to have been struck down, but by an accidental chance. There follows:

(Verses 10, 11.) 'They did in this manner, and taking two cows they yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home, and placed the ark of God upon the cart, and the small chest which contained the golden mice and the likenesses of the tumors.' Since these things have been more fully expounded above, let us now see what the journey of the ark itself contains in terms of spiritual instruction. For there follows: (Verse 12.) 'And the cows went straight along the way that leads to Beth-shemesh, and they walked along one path, going and lowing, and they turned aside neither to the right nor to the left.' 15. To go straight along the road that leads to Beth-shemesh is, in the pursuit of heavenly perfection, to maintain affliction of the flesh through the virtue of discretion. For the cows by no means walk in a straight line if discretion is not preserved in the affliction of the flesh. For when the flesh is afflicted beyond measure, that same flesh, utterly spent, is unable to

render aid to the spirit. And if it is not worthily afflicted, while it grows proud, it disdains, as though free and untamed, to serve the mind. Rightly therefore, while the cows are reported to go straight along the road to Beth-shemesh, it is added: "They turned aside neither to the right nor to the left." To turn aside to the right is to press immoderately upon the virtue of abstinence: because through what appears to be a good, we abandon the way, when we so pursue the necessary virtue of abstinence that we withdraw from ourselves the other helps that come from the flesh. To turn aside to the left is to indulge the flesh too abundantly. For through the vice of open laxity we are deflected from the road to Beth-shemesh, when we lead the flesh through delights—we who had known that the way to paradise was appointed in affliction.

16. And because there is no sincerity of a more sparing life if the simplicity of purity in good work does not agree with one's intention, it is carefully expressed: "And they went by one path." For he goes by one path who preserves in right intention the virtue that he displays in good work. On the contrary, it is said of every reprobate: "Woe to the sinner who enters the land by two ways" (Sirach 2:14). For the sinner enters the land by two ways when what he does appears to be of God, but from everything that he outwardly exhibits as religious, he inwardly holds a worldly intention. Moreover, the Lord indicates that His elect go by one path, saying: "If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). Hence Paul says: "Our glory is this: the testimony of our conscience" (2 Corinthians 1:12). Hence David: "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within" (Psalm 44:14). Therefore the cows go by one path toward Beth-shemesh, because the elect, hastening to their eternal homeland, do good works outwardly, but from those same good works they do not seek the rewards of the world.

17. But what is it that is said of these same cows, that they went along the way, lowing as they went? They are said to go forward because holy men do good unceasingly; but they low because they cannot extinguish carnal desires within themselves without great daily tribulation. For to low pertains to the labor of subduing the flesh; but to go forward pertains to the perseverance of good will. For when the flesh is compelled against its nature to suppress carnal motions, it lows, as it were, while it walks, because it is forbidden from fulfilling its own desires. Rightly indeed are these two things described in the progress of the saints, namely, going forward and lowing — because even

though for those hastening to the heavenly homeland there is great urgency of desire, there is nonetheless an unconquerable patience in labor. For of these cows going forward, it is said through Ezekiel: They did not turn back when they went (Ezek. 1:12). Paul also expresses both the lowing of the cows and its cause, saying: I see another law contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive under the law of sin. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:23, 24.) Therefore the cows low, but they go forward, because holy men, even though the temptations they endure are great, nevertheless do not abandon the way of the heavenly homeland. They go forward likewise, but they low, because even though they hasten toward heavenly things with great desires, they do not obtain the progress of the heavenly journey from the quiet of peace, but from the triumph over temptation. There follows: (Verse 12.) But also the satraps of the Philistines followed as far as the borders of Beth-shemesh.

18. What are the boundaries to which it is necessary for prelates to follow the departing ark of God, and beyond which it is not fitting to proceed in the company of the ark of God? If we understand these boundaries as instruction in sacred Scripture and good works, it does not seem contradictory. But these boundaries of Beth-shemesh are indeed the boundaries of the following leaders, when each one in his own measure is perfected over his subjects in the teaching of sacred Scripture and in the practice of good works. For a pastor is made secure regarding this to the degree that he both carefully perceives spiritual things and grasps by the strength of good works what he has discovered through reason. These boundaries are indeed said to be the boundaries of Beth-shemesh: because, when they worthily receive the learned workers of God, they lead them to the contemplation of the heavenly fatherland. For they are boundaries: because they both receive the worthy to contemplation and expel the unworthy. For if the unlearned presume to raise themselves to contemplate heavenly things more subtly, they go astray in error rather than grasp the light of truth. And unless someone sends good works ahead, he certainly brings it about that he never finds that clarity of inner vision which he desires. Hence the Lord also in the Gospel, as if sending lovers of the contemplative life to the boundaries of Beth-shemesh, says: "He who has my words and does them, he it is who loves me;

and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). For he who says that he will

manifest himself only to those who love him, and that he loves those who keep his commandments, openly teaches that he does not grant the light of his hidden vision except as a reward for good works. There follows: (Verse 13. Now the Beth-shemites were reaping wheat in the valley. 19. For who can the Bethshemites be more rightly understood as than those who are already perfect men in the sublimity of contemplation? For they are as if from the house of the sun, who, having despised all earthly things, are illuminated by the splendors of the true light. They are indeed from the house of the sun, who, already buried to the whole world, burn with the flame of wondrous love to see the glory of their Creator. They ascend to their city in two ways: they who are led to the glory of the heavenly homeland both now through contemplation and in the end through the truth of glory. Now they fly to the house of the sun by contemplating; but what they now behold through purity of mind, they will then grasp the truth of eternal recompense through present joy. Therefore the ark of God is brought to Bethshemesh when the chosen mind is raised to eternal joys, either through the height of contemplation or through the reception of recompense. Since therefore we cannot know that eternal and ineffable resting place of the ark, let us hear the things that are said about this one which we know. What then does it mean that the Bethshemites were reaping wheat in the valley, except that those devoted to the contemplative life gather the delights of inner refreshment in the virtue of humility? For indeed in sacred Scripture the valley signifies the lowliness of the humble, as the Psalmist testifies, who speaking of the Lord says:

"Who sends forth springs in the valleys" (Psalm 103:10). For He pours the infusion of heavenly grace into minds disposed through humility. The Bethshemites therefore reap wheat in the valley: because those devoted to contemplation, while they behold heavenly things more clearly on account of the merit of humility, bind sheaves of joys for the sweeter refreshment of their minds. For wheat bread, just as it is whiter in appearance, so also is it more delightful in taste. 20. But perhaps while still placed in this life we do not take bread, but harvest ears of grain; whereas in that heavenly life of blessedness, we eat not ears of grain, but bread. For in this life, when we are raised up to contemplate eternal things, we strive to grasp likenesses of heavenly realities from these lowly and visible things, so that, according to the voice of the distinguished teacher, we may know the invisible things from

the creation of the world through those things which have been made visible (Rom. 1:20). Wherefore also that true Bethshemite, belonging to the household of the Sun of justice, exulting says: "You have delighted me, O Lord, in Your handiwork, and in the works of Your hands I will exult. How magnificent are Your works, O Lord! Exceedingly deep have Your thoughts become" (Psalm 92:5–6). But while we receive the joys of invisible things in visible things, we still hold the wheat, as it were, within the chaff. Then, however, the pure wheat, or bread made from wheat, will be ours. For when death has already been swallowed up, in eternal life, with face unveiled, we shall behold the Redeemer more clearly, and we shall have no need of the coverings of likenesses for the knowledge of Him. Rightly therefore it is said of the Bethshemites that they were harvesting wheat in the valley: because perfect men, even though they receive the loftiness of heavenly contemplation as a reward for humility, cannot attain to contemplating the pure substance of almighty God to such a degree, inasmuch as they still harvest the refreshment of their mind, as it were, among the chaff. And indeed the good of this humility is signified when it is added: (Verse 13) "And lifting up their eyes, they saw the ark of God."

21. For they raise their eyes: because while they do not think lofty things of themselves, they are, in their own estimation, as if on level ground. They raise their eyes: because those whom they see made worthy by divine grace, they contemplate as placed on the lofty summit of merits. But raising their eyes, they see the ark: because the more humbly they cast themselves down in their own estimation, the better they can recognize the good qualities of their neighbors. For that Truth which abandons the hearts of the proud of itself, also hides from them those very gifts which it bestows upon the humble; so that, as if utterly blinded, they do not even see the sun already spread across the earth—they who have ceased to behold the rays of its brightness in heaven. But since we have referred the return of the ark of God to the purpose of the contemplative life, the raising of the eyes can also be fittingly referred to the pursuit of discerning spirits. For the Bethshemites raise their eyes when, in the purpose of a more secluded life, they consider with careful examination the gifts of those flocking to them; when with attentive mind they examine whether those approaching pursue the purpose of a higher life, which they seek by drawing near, with right and strong intention. To raise their eyes, therefore, is for them to consider more deeply the

spirit of the newcomers. But raising their eyes, they behold the ark of God: because while they examine more carefully the conduct of those persons, they discover that they shine with the grace of spiritual virtues. And because through the affection of love they rejoice over the good qualities they have recognized in them, it is fittingly added: (Verse 13.) And they rejoiced when they saw it. There follows: (Verse 14.) And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, and stood there.

22. If Bethshemesh is interpreted as "house of the sun," the house of the sun is the heavenly city. Here Joshua the Bethshemite signifies the Redeemer of the human race not so much by type as by his very name and dignity. For Joshua is called "savior" in our language. And the Lord says of himself: 'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10). Hence it is also that Joseph is promised in a dream through the angel: 'He shall save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21). He also manifests himself to be a Bethshemite, saying: 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven' (John 6:41). Hence John the Baptist says: 'He who comes from heaven is above all' (John 3:31). What then is the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, if not the delight of the contemplative life? For there both the greenness of herbs, and the fragrances of spices, and the diverse beauty of flowers are seen; because indeed the more clearly that heavenly society is beheld—what blooms incorruptibly in the angels, what flourishes unfadingly in the saints, what gives off an inviolable fragrance in virgins—the more graciously it is displayed to the eyes of those who contemplate. And rightly is this same field said to belong to the Savior; because lovers of the contemplative life, the more secretly they dwell, are more pleasing and more familiar to our Redeemer. The cart also comes into the field of Joshua the Bethshemite when the elect mind, separated from worldly concern, attends to heavenly things alone, when it already enjoys the delight of heavenly vision; because it disdains to look back upon earthly things through love. And it should be noted that this cart was said to be new, as was related not far above; because indeed a mind worn out by the oldness of sins does not deserve to be received into such great glory.

23. But the more hidden life has its delights in the pleasantness of vision, and has immense labor in the vigor of struggle; because indeed, just as we obtain divine rewards from triumph, so also we guard them by fighting strenuously. Well therefore is it added concerning the cart of Jesus coming

into the field: 'And it stood there.' For to stand pertains to the guarding of battle, not to the rest of peace. For the cart stood in the field; because even if the mind already inhabits the pleasant regions of that heavenly and ever-green homeland by seeing and loving, nevertheless what it delightfully possesses through the love of vision, it by no means preserves without the anxiety of unceasing care. But indeed the human mind, placed in so great a struggle, would fail, if He who strengthened human weakness in His divinity did not offer it the help of His presence. Therefore, also explaining the reason by which the cart was able to stand in the field, he added, saying: (Verse 14) 'For there was a great stone there.'

24. For by the great stone is understood the Redeemer of the human race. Concerning which stone it is said through the Psalmist: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner' (Ps. 117:22). Hence the distinguished teacher, praising, says: 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone' (Eph. 2:20), 'in whom you also, as living stones, are built up' (1 Pet. 2:5). And He is indeed called a great stone, because He is proclaimed with incomparable strength. When therefore the cart is said to have come and stood still in the field, it was added: 'There was there a great stone'—so that by hidden mysteries it might signify that those devoted to the contemplative life are able to preserve such great gifts for this reason: because they are, through grace, near to Him from whom they received those same gifts. There follows: (Verse 14.) 'And they split the wood of the cart, and laid the cows upon it as a burnt offering to the Lord.'

25. What are the wood pieces of the cart of the Ark of God, if not the statements of Holy Scripture and the examples of the righteous? For the Bethshemites cut up the wood when those set over the more secluded life more subtly open the meanings of the Scriptures to the minds of their subjects, when they bring forth the more excellent examples of the Fathers for their imitation; so that the flame of heavenly love may burn all the more fervently in their hearts, the more quickly they supply the fuel of the fire, like cut-up wood. They are indeed the wood of the cart, because the mind, renewed through the grace of God, retains them through memory. Concerning these pieces of wood the holy lawgiver decrees, saying: "Fire must always be on my altar, which the priest shall feed, adding wood each morning every day" (Lev. 6:12). But because the wood is recorded as having been cut up,

this more openly indicates that for those seeking the purity of the contemplative life, not common things from sacred Scripture, but rather the higher and more excellent things must be laid open; so that they may raise themselves up more powerfully in beholding lofty things, the more the nobler goods they hear please them. Hence it is also well added: "That they placed the cows upon it as a holocaust to the Lord. For a holocaust is called a whole burning. Therefore, when the wood is cut up, holocausts are made with the cows placed upon it:

because those who receive extraordinary things from the Scriptures with a devout mind, the higher they extend themselves into heavenly desires, the more nothing is left in them that is not consumed by the flame of divine love. And then indeed it is necessary for the teacher to take care that his religious subjects contemplate lofty things, and yet do not hold lofty opinions of themselves through their own estimation; lest, the higher they advance by beholding the highest things, the more dangerously they are dashed down by falling through pride. Hence here too it is added: (Verse 15. "But the Levites took down the Ark of God, and the small chest that was beside it, in which were the golden vessels, and they placed them upon the great stone." 26. The Levites are interpreted as "the assumed." Who then are the Levites, except those who are so confirmed by divine grace that they can never be forsaken by the Holy Spirit? Indeed, the Levites set down the ark when perfect preachers admonish their subjects, so that spiritual knowledge may in no way puff them up. They also set down the box with the golden vessels when they likewise address them concerning the splendor of life, so that they may think more humbly of themselves, inasmuch as each of them has learned that our Redeemer attained the reward of His exaltation because He did not vainly think lofty things of Himself. Well therefore is it recorded that the ark was set down and the golden vessels placed upon a great stone: because amid sublime gifts, those can more truly think humbly of themselves who have learned more frequently to recall the greatness and humility of the Redeemer. For he wished to set down the ark of God and place it upon a great stone, who said: 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and found in appearance as a man; He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil. 2:5). But those who

sacrifice to God a victim of love from the hearts of their subjects through the ministry of preaching also present from their own minds far more excellent gifts of offerings. Whence it is also added: (Verse 15) 'And the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices on that day unto the Lord.'

27. On what day, unless on that day on which they placed the cows as a holocaust to the Lord upon the wood of the cart? What then is that day, unless the illumination of divine preaching? For on that day the Bethshemites offer holocausts to the Lord, on that day they immolate victims when they cut the wood, when they place the cows upon it as a holocaust to the Lord; because holy preachers, by that light of the word by which they shine forth to their subjects, also furnish to themselves the office of vision for the rectitude of the heavenly journey, and despising the lowest things, through the force of love they offer themselves to almighty God all the more freely, the more they see their hearers already joined to Him in great intimacy. Because indeed the men of Bethshemesh are reported not only to have offered holocausts but also to have immolated victims, the spiritual oblation of perfect men is signified. For they offer holocausts when through the ascent of contemplation they unite themselves to almighty God with ineffable affection. But they join victims to the holocausts, because indeed they attribute the good of so great a joy not to their own merits but to divine goodness. He indeed offers a holocaust without victims who is already joined to heavenly things in great delight, yet when the movements of hidden pride arise, he by no means overcomes them through the virtue of humility. In the oblations of the perfect, therefore, holocausts and victims are described as having come together, because they are both worthy to enjoy divine sweetness, and in all that by which they already make themselves wholly heavenly, they are ignorant of pride. (Verse 16.) 'And the five lords of the Philistines saw, and returned to Ekron on that day.'

28. The satraps of the Philistines, as I have already said above, are chosen as preachers of the Gentiles. They are indeed contained in the number five, because they preside over those who are either still unlearned in the faith or are carnal, in order to restrain the five senses of the body. They indeed accompany the cart with the ark of God, because, passing over to the pursuit of the spiritual life, they follow their already instructed disciples with the care of their solicitude. But when the cart arrived in the field of Joshua and the

cows were sacrificed, they returned to Ekron: because when they have already considered the perfection of those disciples, they no longer investigate the paths of their way of life any further. They return to Ekron because they turn themselves to converting others. For Ekron in our language means "barren." Barren also are those who either lack faith or a good way of life. And fittingly, when the princes are said to have returned, it was added: "On that day" — because unless they had recognized in them the brightness of so great a perfection, they would not have returned from their solicitude with the certainty of security. There follows: (Verses 17, 18.) These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned as a guilt offering: Ashdod one, Gaza one, Ashkelon one, Gath one, and Ekron one. And the golden mice, according to the number of the cities of the Philistines, of the five provinces, from the fortified city even to the village that was without a wall, and even to the great Abel, upon which they placed the ark of the Lord, which was there to that day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

29. What all these things signify has been set forth at length above. But what does it mean that when the debt owed to the ark is commanded to be paid for sin, five golden hemorrhoids and five mice are named together; yet when what was owed is declared to have already been paid, individual cities are reported to have each paid one separately? But they are named together above because the adornment of all members was being shown together, in the exchange of good works; but here, when the debt paid to the ark is described, it is carefully shown that individual cities offered one golden hemorrhoid each and one mouse each: so that indeed it may be suggested to the converted sinner that he should abandon sins once for all, and not seek again through habitual depravity what he has left behind. For individual cities pay back one hemorrhoid and one mouse each, when converted sinners do not repeat sins once washed away by the tears of repentance. Whence also Sacred Scripture admonishes, saying: "Do not repeat a word in your prayer" (Sirach 7:15). For he repeats a word in prayer who has tried to purge sins by prayers, yet does not cease to commit others for which he must pray. He indeed does not offer one hemorrhoid and one mouse to God for his offense: because even if he is pricked with repentance, he multiplies the foul deeds which, in confessing to God, he presents before Him.

When therefore the cities of the Philistines, or individual provinces, are described as having paid back one hemorrhoid and one mouse, what else

does this signify but the perfection of true conversion? For he is perfectly converted who, once he has lamented what he had done wickedly, does not repeat what he would have to lament again. Therefore he offers one hemorrhoid and one mouse for sin who so mourns past deeds committed that he perfectly guards against future ones. And because this form of conversion must be observed in the holy Church by the wise as much as by the unlearned, by the strong as much as by the weak, the payment of this debt is rightly said to extend from the walled city even to the village without a wall. For no one established within the holy Church is free to sin, for no one is it harmless to commit wicked deeds. Wherefore the Lord threatens through the prophet, saying: "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). For walled cities are minds surrounded by the learning of the Holy Scriptures. But villages without a wall are simple minds. Therefore not only do individual cities pay back one golden hemorrhoid, but also villages; so that whoever is converted to a religious life, by God's guidance, once the stench has been washed away, may not be defiled further.

And because no one is so holy that he does not have in himself something foul to lament, the payment of this debt extends even to Abel the Great, upon which they had placed the ark of God. For Abel is interpreted as "mourning. By which name, of course, the stone on which they had placed the ark of God was called. But this name indeed befits our Redeemer: because, even though He had no sins of His own to weep over, yet He purged our sins by daily prayers and weeping. There are also in the holy Church perfect men, joined to that supreme Stone by the consummation of charity. For he was united to this Stone who said: "No one separates me from the love of Christ" (Romans 8:35); let us hear whether he pays the debt to the ark: "At first," he says, "I was a blasphemer and a persecutor" (1 Timothy 1:13). Then again confessing, he says: "I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9). It should also be noted that the debt of the ark is read to have extended to the stone which is recorded as remaining to that day in the field of Joshua, and upon which the ark of God was placed. In this matter, what else do we hold but what we observe in the holy Church:

that those also make satisfaction to God for their fault who have not only been rescued from sins by the grace of God, but have also been taken up into His tabernacle through the great heights of holy virtues? There follows:

(Verse 19) "But the Lord struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked upon the ark of the Lord, and He struck down seventy men of the people, and fifty thousand of the common folk." 30. Who are the struck-down Beth-shemites, if not heretics deceived by false contemplation? For the Beth-shemites existed not in truth, but in presumption. Therefore, while they presumed to look upon the ark on the stone, they were struck down: because when they, being unworthy, scrutinized the sacraments of our Lord and Redeemer, they were cast down into the snares of eternal damnation through the deceit of their own error. But what does it mean that seventy men of the people, and fifty thousand of the common folk, were struck down? But since under the designation of "people" even the nobles of cities are included, while "the common folk" is the remaining populace without nobles, this can be gathered: that some among the heretics stood out among others as if noble, who perished by error alone while maintaining purity of works; but the rest, as if following the rusticity of the common folk, were darkened with the filth of depraved conduct along with the error of faith. Hence some are expressed by the number fifty, and others by the number seventy: because the latter carried out their conceived crimes through the five senses of the body; while the former, by falsely ascribing to themselves the gifts of the sevenfold Spirit, were buried under the eternal darkness of blindness. And because the true faithful were saddened by their striking down, there follows: (Verse 20. And the men of Beth-shemesh said: Who is able to stand in the sight of the Lord, this holy God?

For it is as though the true faithful, yet simple ones, were saying: If such wise men and philosophers are deceived in the knowledge of the highest truth, when can the unlearned and simple come to the knowledge of Him? But even if they lack confidence in their own measure, nevertheless they do not lack confidence that the gift of divine knowledge is present to the Church. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 20. And to whom shall He go up from us? 31. For the Lord ascends from us when that which is hidden from us concerning the knowledge of Him is preached through the voice of the chosen faithful. For His ascending from us is, as it were, to reveal to lofty hearts through humility what He has hidden from the simpler or weaker ones concerning eternal contemplation. What then does it mean to say, "To whom shall He ascend from us," except to seek a worthy teacher who so preaches divine things that he does not stray from the way of truth? In these

words also, if we seek the historical sense, we clearly recognize that those who died because they looked upon the ark of the Lord were indeed not worthy of that vision. Rightly therefore, those who behold the stricken say: "Who shall be able to stand in the presence of this holy Lord God? For if those who are unworthy die by seeing, how shall those who handle sacred things live? The Bethshemites in the holy Church are dead priests and reprobate ministers of the sacred altar, because they are of the house of the Sun of justice by the dignity of their ministry, not by the virtue and grace of holiness. They are indeed Bethshemites, because through the office of sacred oblation they dwell in the house of God;

but they are to be struck with all the sharper condemnation inasmuch as they dare not only to look upon the sacred mysteries but to handle them, inasmuch as they no longer merely gaze upon the ark of the Old Testament, but—what surpasses all—they unworthily thrust themselves upon the body and blood of the Redeemer; that they are struck down Paul indicates, saying: "He who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). For the truly faithful say: "Who shall be able to stand in the presence of this holy Lord God? For they consider the loftiness of so great a ministry and tremble at the dignity of so great a sacrament. But while they fear to undertake the office of so great a thing, they seek worthier persons who may be able to perform it. Whence it also follows: "And to whom shall He ascend from us? As if, therefore, humbly fleeing the sacred mysteries, they were to say: "Because we are struck down by our weak manner of life, ministers must be sought from a higher life, whom a lofty manner of living raises to the highest sanctification of virtues, so that they may stand before God through the office of so great an oblation. There follows: (Verse 21) "They therefore sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying: The Philistines have sent back the ark of the Lord; come down and bring it up to you."

32. Kiriath-jearim is called their city. What is the city of the saints, if not that Jerusalem which is above? Who then are its inhabitants, if not perfect men separated from the love of the world by their lofty manner of life? Of whom indeed one, more effective than the rest, says: 'Our conversation is in heaven' (Phil. 3:20). To these, of course, messengers must be sent to receive the ark of God: because for the election of priests, holy men must not only be received but also invited. And it should be noted that to these more exal-

ted men it is said through messengers: Come down and bring it back. For they come down because they obey: for they would by no means come down if they refused with a proud mind to render what brotherly love seeks from them. Then indeed they are truly exalted, when they do not withdraw themselves from Christ; when they do not reject what is imposed upon them by the judgment of their brethren. Whence it is fittingly added:

CHAPTER 3.5

The men of Kiriath-jearim therefore came and brought back the ark of the Lord, and they carried it into the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to guard the ark of the Lord. 1. Aminadab is interpreted as "my people, willing"; Gibeah, "lofty. And indeed the ark of God must be entrusted to such persons. For a willing people is one whom good will alone draws to the exercise of virtuous works, whom necessity does not compel to fulfill the commandments of God. Blessed Paul indeed proclaims such persons under a single description, saying: "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). What is the house of the willing people, if not the stronghold of holy love? For one could not be willing in the service of the virtues if one did not build for oneself a dwelling place of love. This house is certainly known to be situated in Gibeah, that is, on a height: because by the loftiness of charity we are raised up to heavenly things. Or indeed the house is on a height because charity is preferred above all virtues. For Paul, indicating the height of this sublimity, says: "I show you a still more excellent way. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not charity, I have become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 12:31; 13:1). But what does it mean that they sanctify Eleazar to guard the ark of God? But this indeed we know from the practice of Holy Church, that a chosen minister first receives the blessing of consecration from the chief men before he undertakes the ministry of offering.

But since Eleazar is said to mean "helper of God," it is clearly shown that the ministers of God must not only be sanctified, but also examined as to what sort of men they are who are to be promoted to the order of this consecration. For who are the helpers of God, if not those who accord with divine grace in ministering, and whom the favor of Almighty God visits inwardly, which they themselves confirm through outward ministry by living well and teaching? Whence also, glorying not in vain with Paul, they say: "For we are God's helpers" (1 Cor. 3:9). These indeed, most strong in their

manner of life, learned in knowledge, fervent in love, robust in constancy, not only do not need the help of others, but wherever they go, they are able to assist others. Rightly therefore it is said: "They sanctified Eleazar, that he might guard the ark. Because those who still need the help of others are not to be promoted to assisting others. Rightly likewise this same Eleazar is said to be the son of Aminadab: because certainly he who is chosen for the ministry of preaching, being set in the imitation of the saints, ought to render all the help he provides out of love.

2. Because we said above that the cart is Sacred Scripture, the ark is its spiritual knowledge, and the chosen cows are elect souls, the fear of the Bethshemites, which we showed to be present in the elect at the offering of the sacrament, can also be referred to the burden of prelacy. For no lesser holiness is fit for instructing souls than for offering the sacred mysteries. And therefore the Bethshemites are said to have been struck down: because many who live well as subjects die as prelates. For the ark of God also has an outward beauty, which if a weak minister looks upon not for spiritual veneration but for worldly desire, he by no means lives. Rightly therefore the cause of their being struck is declared when it is said: "Because they looked upon the ark of God. For what does "they looked" mean, except that by looking they coveted its glory? But now, by God's doing, the glory of holy Church is abundant throughout the whole world. Because this glory is sought in a worldly manner by reprobate priests, the men of Beth-shemesh die by looking upon the ark of God from the outside. For they do not seek its spiritual honor for the sake of the inward glory of virtues, but so that they might seize the splendor of God's ark and bear the radiance of ecclesiastical prelacy in the flower of the world for their own display.

The ark of God is also looked upon wrongly from the outside, to one's destruction, when wicked leaders, overcome by the outward appearance of persons under their charge, are drawn into carnal desire. The men, beholding with fear the vast multitude laid low by the weapon of desire, say: "Who shall be able to stand in the sight of the Lord, this holy God? For he stands in the sight of God who is strong in the order of divine ministry. Indeed, to stand is a matter of fortitude; to minister is a matter of service. He is therefore said to stand in the sight of God who arranges the order of heavenly office at the height of a worthy way of life; who in the ministry he performs is deceived by no appetite for ecclesiastical honor, and is overcome by no carnal

desire. But because such fit ministers are rarely found, they rightly say: "Who shall be able to stand in the sight of the Lord, this holy God? And because the little ones of Christ leave so great a burden to stronger men, they add: "And to whom shall it go up from us? Now, how they sent to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, how they brought the ark of God into the house of Abinadab, and how they sanctified Eleazar, we do not change from what was set forth above. (Verse 2. And it came to pass from the time the ark of God remained in Kiriath-jearim, the days were multiplied.

If we look to the historical sense, the days of the ark's sojourn were multiplied because it was there for a long time. Hence it is also added: (Verse 2. For it was the twentieth year. And to what purpose he introduced this multiplication of days, he adds, saying: (Verse 2. And all Israel rested after the Lord. This rest among that ancient people is to be understood not as one of good works, but of good devotion. For it follows: (Verse 3. And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, saying: If you return to God with your whole heart, put away the foreign gods from among you, Baalim and Ashtaroth; and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve him alone, and he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines. 3. Those who had not removed the foreign gods from their midst, except by good will, how were they resting after the Lord? All of which things, if they are investigated spiritually, the days of the ark's sojourn are multiplied. But when it remains in Gibeah; when it remains in the custody of Eleazar; because when the care of faithful souls is entrusted to devout preachers, the perfection of religion, which is bestowed through lofty doctrine, is fulfilled by the pursuit of good works. Whence also the twentieth year was then reported to be at hand. For if the number ten designates the perfection of the old Law, what does twenty signify, if not the more splendid religion of the new life? For the number twenty is ten doubled. Which number is certainly perfected in the conduct of the elect, when through love they avoid what the Law forbids and fulfill the lofty commandments of the Gospel.

4. But because we have referred the journey of the ark to the perfection of the contemplative life, the ark of God remains in Kiriath-jearim when the learned minds of contemplatives perfect the gift of that same learning of theirs in the delight of the heavenly brightness revealed to them. For the ark of God remains there now for twenty years, because chosen souls, raised to the summit of intimate exaltation, have the number ten in the perfection of

knowledge, and the number twenty in heavenly delight. The multiplication of days can also be referred to the increases of spiritual virtues. Therefore, when the reason why the days are multiplied is stated more expressly, it is said to be the twentieth year: because, namely, the chosen minds of contemplatives, the more abundantly they are nourished by heavenly contemplation, the more fully they are illuminated by the splendors of spiritual virtues.

5. But what does it mean that in the twentieth year all Israel is said to rest after the Lord, except that the sublimity of the perfection of the elect does not consist in the strength of good works, but in the power of contemplation? For to rest after the Lord is to hold fast to the imitation of our Redeemer with invincible love. And whoever has not learned to love strongly by contemplating those ineffable joys of the heavenly city, because he can more frequently be cast down to love of the world, by no means rests after the Lord. When therefore the ark remains in Kiriath-jearim and the days are multiplied, all Israel rests after the Lord: because indeed, while the knowledge of the elect mind is raised to the experience of heavenly delight, while by the light of the glory poured forth the splendors of spiritual virtues are gathered together within it, it can hold fast to the imitation of the Lord all the more perseveringly because, illuminated by immense splendors, it cannot perceive those darknesses by which it might be separated from the true light. Whence also it is well that he who is said to rest after the Lord is declared to be Israel, that is, "seeing God": because the higher the contemplator is caught up into divine things, the less he is overcome by the human things which he powerfully restrains.

6. But since, with God as our guide, we have followed the ark on its journey all the way to the place of its exaltation, let us see with what zeal the preacher keeps watch over the correction of those subject to him. For it continues: 'And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel: If you return to the Lord with your whole heart, remove the foreign gods from your midst.' Now what does Sacred Scripture customarily call foreign gods, if not demons, which dwell in handmade idols? We have said that in Samuel the new preachers of holy Church are signified. Rightly, therefore, he commanded the whole house of Israel to remove the foreign gods from their midst: because among the Gentiles coming to the faith, the order of preachers demanded not only the truth of right progress, but also the condemnation of ancient superstition. For it would profit them nothing to honor the truth by

professing it, or by rendering obedience to it, unless they had first abandoned what is false as worthy of detestation. Whoever even now is placed within holy Church through faith, yet is rebellious against God through wicked conduct, must be admonished to remove the foreign gods from his midst. For even if he detests handmade idols, he is nevertheless subjected to the commands of demons through depraved action. But he casts the foreign gods away from his midst who is so converted to God that he never venerates unclean spirits through evil works.

7. A zeal for a more cautious life can also be indicated through these words of exhortation. For what is in our midst, if not our heart? Yet there are some who are defiled by the weakness of their heart and the habit of depraved thought, even while engaged in the works of the world. They indeed do good things unceasingly, yet they never cease to think wicked thoughts. Since as many demons rest in their hearts as there are impure desires, they are urgently admonished to remove the foreign gods from their midst: so that they may offer to almighty God not only the uprightness of their work, but also the glory of interior purity. Hence it is fittingly added: 'And prepare your hearts for the Lord.' For he prepares his heart for the Lord who not only separates his mind from impure thought, but also illuminates it with the splendors of holy thoughts and virtues: so that, as if the idols had been cast away and crushed, he may make himself a temple of God; since he raises up a seat for divine grace in the very place where he did not permit wicked spirits to remain through the depraved desires subject to them. Rightly, therefore, he first admonishes the Israelites to remove the foreign gods from their midst, and then to prepare their hearts for God, because the proper order of beginning one's religion is that each person should first reject what is wicked, and then draw near to almighty God with the zeal of good intention. Finally, it is necessary that he who has already offered to God the resolve of a good will and the cleanness of a pure heart should set forth in the uprightness of good work what he has inwardly determined by living well. Therefore it is also added: 'And serve God alone.'

8. For he alone serves the Lord who does not mix wicked things with good works. For he who so does good that he does not abandon evil by no means serves God alone, because he shows obedience to the evil spirit whose will he does not fear to carry out. Whence it comes about that even while doing good he does not serve God, because He who is believed to have created

the whole man does not deign to share him in common with the adversary. For hence it is that Truth itself declares through itself, saying: 'No one can serve two masters' (Matt. 6:24). Hence Paul, inquiring, says: 'What participation has righteousness with iniquity, or what fellowship has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever, or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?' (2 Cor. 6:14–15). Therefore we are commanded to serve the Lord alone, so that we who have already begun, by God's inspiration, to do good works for the purpose of obtaining the remission of our sins, may mix no wicked things with those same good works. For we are then loosed from the bond of our sins when the good things which we expend for their absolution are not mixed with evil. For the preacher, speaking to devoted penitents, says: 'If you return to the Lord with your whole heart, put away the foreign gods from your midst, and serve God alone.' As if to say: Then you will be able to be loosed from sins when you do not defile the good things of heart and deed, which you expend before God for your absolution, by other sins coming upon them. Wherefore, also making a promise in return, he says: 'And He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.'

9. Who else are designated by the Philistines in this passage but malignant spirits? They indeed, while intoxicated in an instant by the cup of their own pride, fell from the state of glory by swelling up. What then is the hand of the Philistines, if not that power of demons by which they lead souls dead in sin to eternal torments? From that hand of the Philistines, He alone had been free who said: "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me" (John 14:30). Hence Paul says: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Hence he says again: "We also were children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph. 2:3). O how great a gift is that promise by which it is said: "He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines. For He alone stood free from this hand, who committed no sin. From it, assuredly, we are all delivered contrary to our own merit. Whence Paul also says: "Justified freely by His grace, through the redemption of His righteousness, on account of the redemption of preceding offenses, in the forbearance of God, for the demonstration of His justice in this time, that He Himself might be just, and the justifier of the one who is of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 3:24–26). Hence he likewise says: "By grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:8). It is as if he were saying:

He will deliver you from the power of malignant spirits, so that, as though cruel enemies have been put to flight from the road, when the death of the flesh intervenes, you may more securely reach those eternal joys which you desire. Great things, therefore, did He promise who, by commanding great things, taught, so that the greatness of the gift might incite to the strength of labor. For it is a great thing to serve the Lord alone, namely to do good unceasingly, and not to mix wicked deeds with good actions. But oh, how supremely great it is, in the passage of this life, not to encounter the power of bloodthirsty spirits, to see no terrors on the way, to find no opposing obstacles, to escape eternal punishments, to feel the protection of our Deliverer, to lose the momentary light of this world, but suddenly to find the ineffable brightness of eternity. Let them hear, therefore, let them hear, those who desire to be delivered from the hand of the Philistines: "Prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him alone"—so that here each one may strive to gather for himself that by which there they may not fall into the hands of such great enemies, and may pass securely to life, they who, among the treasures of their salvation which they accumulate here by living well, carry with them no works of death. Moreover, the conduct of the elect is indicated by what follows: (Verse 4.

"Therefore the children of Israel put away from their midst the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and served the Lord alone." 10. For it is the custom of the elect that when they receive the exhortations of divine preaching, they are kindled to zeal for the good works they have heard. For the reprobate frequently hear the words of God, yet from those same words they undertake no good works. They remain sluggish in their actions, because, cast out from the divine light, they do not see by inward contemplation the glory of almighty God whose words they hear. Rightly, therefore, those who obey are called children of Israel, because the more openly they behold His majesty in its manifestation, the more devoutly they are known to obey His commandments. But since he is speaking to those who have been converted, let us hear what he perceives is still lacking in them. For there follows: (Verses 5, 6.) And Samuel said: Gather all Israel to Mizpah, that I may pray to the Lord for you. And they gathered together at Mizpah.

11. Mizpah is interpreted as "watching" or "contemplation." The blessed Paul explains this contemplation when he says: 'For now we see through a glass, darkly' (1 Cor. 13:12). For to watch is, for us, to contemplate eternal

goods from the heights of the Scriptures. For we watch, as it were, what we already know by the truth of faith, yet do not yet see with unveiled face. For converted sinners to gather at Mizpah is to trust, through the attention of the mind, in the mercy of almighty God. But let them so presume upon the mercy of God that they nevertheless do not neglect to wipe away through penance what they recall having done wickedly. Whence it is also suddenly added there: (v. 6) 'And they drew water and poured it out before the Lord.' 12. For what is it to draw water, except to bring forth streams of tears from the deep confusion of a penitent soul? For we draw water, as it were, when, considering how deep the iniquity into which we have fallen, we lament. And indeed we pour out this water in the sight of the Lord, if when we are pierced with compunction through repentance, we do not seek from the weeping of that compunction the favor of the world, but only the fruit of divine appeasement. But also when the mind is pierced with compunction through weeping, it is necessary that the flesh too, which was subject to pleasures, be afflicted. Whence it is also added: (Verse 6.) And they fasted on that day.

13. The day of the sinful soul is the hope of obtaining pardon in the promise of the divine word. Whence the Lord also promises through the prophet, saying: 'I do not desire the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live' (Ezek. 18:32, 33, 11). On that day, therefore, they fast who for this reason wear down the flesh by repenting: because in the light of hope they undoubtingly believe that they will attain pardon. Yet that affliction of penance is only then suitable for destroying sins when it has been commanded by the judgment of a priest, when by him, after the deeds of those confessing have been examined, the burden of affliction is determined for them according to the measure of the offense. Rightly therefore it follows: (Verse 6) 'And they said: We have sinned against you, O Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah.'

14. For the priest judges in Masphath when he follows not human judgment but divine; when in everything that must be decided he raises himself up in lofty contemplation, and in judging his subjects he decides what he recognizes to be just in the heavenly vision. For this is why Moses consults the Lord in the tabernacle of the covenant in nearly every matter (Exod. XXXIII, 8): because indeed the preacher of holy Church ought to look into the innermost contemplation of truth, so that he may be able to order the life of his

subjects outwardly in a blameless manner. For he can more truly both retain sins and remit them when, in the secret place of contemplation, he hears what the Lord speaks. Hence also the Lord, rising from the dead, first breathed upon the face of the disciples, and afterward granted them the authority of remitting and retaining sins (John XX, 21, 23): so that He might clearly show that whoever does not have that contemplation of mind ought not to be a judge of souls. For the Lord's breathing upon the face of the chosen preachers is to reveal to them through the Holy Spirit the inmost and secret ways of spiritual examination. Hence Paul says: "The spiritual man judges all things" (I Cor. II, 15). Hence likewise, commending the bounty of divine grace, he says:

"We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been given to us by God" (Ibid., 12). But whoever has the spirit of this world cannot judge his subjects in Masphath, that is, in contemplation: because while he does not penetrate interior things through the Spirit, in the cases of judgment that he investigates, he errs outwardly by a worldly spirit. Rightly therefore is Samuel said to have judged the children of Israel in Masphath: because indeed holy preachers, in the judgments of their subjects, define nothing outwardly except what is revealed to them inwardly by divine inspiration. But while good subjects submit themselves to the judgment of their superiors, they kindle more fiercely against themselves the wrath of spiritual enemies. Hence it is added: (Verse 7. "And the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel."

15. For when the foreign gods have been removed, the fast completed, and the scrutiny of examination carried out by the preacher, the princes of the Philistines ascend against Israel: because when we advance to a higher life, the malign spirits, who always envy those who act well, are more hostile to us. And because they seek to cast us down from the height of an innocent life, they are said to ascend. For to ascend, for malign spirits, is to raise themselves up to assault the hearts elevated through heavenly desire. Because also against the more perfect soldiers of Christ, battles are stirred up not by any random evil spirits, but by stronger demons, it is not the Philistines who are reported to ascend against Israel, but the satraps of the Philistines. Princes also preside over many. Therefore by this, that the satraps are said to ascend against Israel, it can reasonably be gathered that to test the patience of the

elect, not one evil spirit is assigned to each of the elect, but innumerable ones; so that from their achieved victory, the glory of the faithful may be the more abundant, the heavier the battles that have been inflicted upon them. Yet amid these same battles, the recently converted are accustomed to tremble greatly: for suddenly they find themselves on a field of struggle, beyond the experience of their custom. On one side they behold desires armed against them, which had long served them peaceably; on the other side, heavenly love invites them not to abandon the good things they have begun. On one side the spirit elevates the mind, on the other the flesh weighs it down; and since they cannot know the measure of their end, they are greatly terrified by the uncertainty of their election. Whence it is also fittingly added here: (Verse 7.) When the children of Israel heard this, they were afraid before the face of the Philistines.

16. For they fear the face of the Philistines, so that they do not fear what follows after them. For what is the face of evil spirits, if not worldly desire? For in this appearance, whoever is composed is conformed to their image. But because Israel is said to have feared not the face of the Philistines, but "from the face" of the Philistines, this both reveals the minds of the elect and also, by a hidden reason, reproves the foolishness of the reprobate. For they feared not "the face," but "from the face": because, namely, for holy men, what they behold outwardly is one thing, and what they dread inwardly is another. For even if they sometimes consider the flourishing world with human reason, they suddenly lift the eyes of the mind, drawing them back to those evils that follow the joys of the world, and they tremble, as it were, "from the face," who avoid present delights lest they encounter the punishments that follow. But on the contrary, the reprobate, who by no means fear this face of the Philistines, do not escape the onslaughts of their pursuing ferocity. For while they embrace the vain joys of the world with all their strength, they are seized by perpetual afflictions through the power of demons. Against whom, indeed, the Truth threatens, saying: "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation in your life" (Luke 6:24). Hence also, denouncing them, He says: "Woe to you who laugh, for you shall weep" (*ibid.*, 25).

As if He were saying otherwise: Because you by no means tremble at the face of the Philistines, when their pursuing forces rush upon you, you cannot find the refuge of salvation. Then indeed fear is present, but He who might

help is not present. The punishment of wickedness is given without hope of deliverance; and those who desired the blandishments of the Philistines' face in the love of the world feel how horrible are the Philistines' consequences. Rightly, therefore, it is said of the Israelites, in the type of the elect: "They feared from the face of the Philistines": because, namely, while they skillfully order for themselves a manner of living, they do not resolve to fear eternal evils when they come, but they tremble at temporal desire, on account of which those evils are inflicted. And because they believe they can obtain this not so much by their own merits as by the intercession of their elders, there follows: (Verse 8. "And they said to Samuel: Do not cease to cry out for us to the Lord our God, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

17. But good pastors also confer upon their afflicted subjects not only the aids of prayers, but also of sacrifices. Whence it is added: (Verse 9.) 'And Samuel took a suckling lamb, and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, and Samuel cried out.' What is the cry of Samuel, if not the great power of desire in the supplication of the priest? Whence to Moses, silent on his lips, yet desiring the salvation of his subject people with fervent devotion, it is said by the Lord: 'Why do you cry out to me' (Exod. XIV, 15)? But who is the suckling lamb, if not the one whom his forerunner pointed out, saying: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world' (John I, 29)? And he is called suckling, because in his innocence true humanity is proclaimed. But one lamb is offered, because apart from him, no one is found who might take away the sins of the world. And indeed he offered the lamb whole. For the wholeness of the lamb pertains to the soundness of the catholic profession. For it is as though one divides the lamb, who is separated from the rule of faith by the sword of error. The lamb, therefore, is so called on account of innocence; suckling, on account of the assumption of our nature; one, on account of the singularity of his power; whole, on account of the most firm soundness of our faith.

18. But if anyone wishes to refer these things not to him, but to his imitator, he may do so. For we offer a lamb when, through the good of chastity and innocence, we are conformed to our Redeemer; and when we are fed by the teaching of our innocent Fathers, we suck as it were at the breasts by which we are nourished unto eternal life. We also offer one lamb if, after the beginnings of religious conversion, we are polluted by no stain of wickedness. For he offers one lamb who does not flow away from the purpose of in-

nocence to the stains of a polluted life, from which he would have to return through the repetition of good works. To offer a whole lamb is also to prepare for eternal life not only continence of the flesh but integrity of the mind. He by no means offers a whole lamb to the Lord who consecrates his flesh to God through continence but does not restrain the secrets of his mind from the wantonness of impure thoughts. For he steals away, as it were, a part of the lamb from the sacrifice, who does not join purity of heart to continence of body. Whence the Lamb himself, teaching his disciples to offer a whole one, says: "You have heard that it was said to the ancients: You shall not commit adultery; but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28).

Hence also the foolish virgins are noted in the Gospel, who prepared their lamps but did not prepare oil (Matt. 25:3). For they have lamps prepared who preserve the good of modesty in the body; and they also have oil who maintain the brightness of purity in the watchfulness of their mind. Let it therefore be said of Samuel: "He offered a whole lamb to the Lord," because for the good of modesty to suffice for divine appeasement, it must be preserved not only in the brightness of the body but in the splendor of interior purity. Rightly therefore it is added: (Verse 9.) — "And the Lord heard him." 19. For he who prays for others can be heard by the Lord, who is not in any respect hateful to the Lord to whom he makes supplication. For if he is still weighed down by his own weakness, he is by no means heard for obtaining the strength of his neighbors; and he does not raise his desire to the heights of divine majesty, because he himself does not at all strive to ascend from the depths where he lies through his fall by the effort of more fervent zeal. But the manner of being heard is also set forth, when it is added: (Verses 10–11.) It came to pass, while Samuel was offering the burnt offering, the Philistines began battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great crash on that day upon the Philistines, and terrified them, and they were struck down by the children of Israel. And the children of Israel went forth from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down even to the place that was below Beth-car.

20. When Samuel was offering a holocaust, the Philistines enter battle against Israel: because evil spirits then stir up graver temptations against the faithful subjects when they see Pastors standing more firmly against them. But the Lord thunders upon the Philistines: because when doctors pray and

the faithful subjects pray, divine grace supplies strength. For thunder usually occurs through clouds. And by sublime clouds are understood souls raised up through heavenly desire. Whence also the prophet, marveling at the minds of the elect elevated in the love of heavenly things, said: "Who are these who fly as clouds? (Isa. 60:8). And what are the thunders of the clouds, if not those fervent and heavenly desires of the elect: by which, when their mind is set ablaze through divine grace, they utterly expel from it everything that evil spirits suggest by deception? Rightly therefore it is said: "The Lord thundered upon the Philistines and terrified them. For when through His grace He pours heavenly desires into the minds of the elect, because He also makes them despise all earthly things, He turns to flight even the wicked spirits who suggest that they desire those things. For they flee as if terrified by thunder, when in the minds of the elect, which they had assailed by tempting, they tremble at the immense sound of divine power. Since indeed the Lord is said to have thundered with a great crash, what else does this mean except that the imperfect desires of Christians are not terrible to demons?

For the great crash of thunder is the perfect desire of each one of the elect. When therefore the Lord thunders upon the Philistines with a great crash, then they are slain by the children of Israel: because when perfect devotion raises the mind of the elect to heavenly joys, it utterly cuts off from itself everything that serves the opposing side. Well also are the Philistines recorded as first being terrified and then slain by the children of Israel: for they are terrified by the devotion of the elect, they are slain by their works. And because devotion precedes works, they are rightly said to be first terrified and afterward slain. For we first receive from the Lord the gift of good will, so that we may afterward be able to confute the counsels of evil spirits. Well also is the Lord said to thunder upon the Philistines and terrify them, while the children of Israel are said to slay them: because good desires are supplied to us through divine grace, but we advance the gifts of grace through the effort of free will to the victories of the virtues. The order of heavenly warfare, therefore, is that God be first heard thundering with a great crash, and afterward the soldier advance to cut down the ranks of the enemy:

so that he may first see in himself the gifts of grace, then burst forth more powerfully to the field of battle, and confidently hope for the outcome of victory, he who has been sustained by the powers with which he will be crowned before the time of the engagement. 21. Well indeed, those who slay

the Philistines are said to have gone forth from Mizpah. For in Mizpah, which is called "watching," those dwell who persist in the contemplation of divine things. But they go out to slay the Philistines when, coming forth instructed from the secret of inner meditation, they suppress the forces of hostile domination. For inwardly they secretly arrange how outwardly, in open action, they may break through the battle formations of the enemy. Indeed they wage all the heavier battles against them when they go forth, the more quietly they have lain hidden within themselves while pondering internal things. And because evil spirits must always be suppressed by God's elect, the Philistines are recorded to have been struck down as far as the place below Beth-car. Beth-car indeed is interpreted as "house of the lamb. Isaiah, pointing out this lamb to us, says: "As a lamb he shall be led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearer, without a sound" (Isaiah 53:7). What then was the house of the lamb, if not that sublime and uniquely fortified life of the Redeemer, which, since it was free from fault, stood inaccessible to all wicked spirits? No one can reach Beth-car, that is, the house of the lamb, because whoever advances greatly is still inferior to the holiness of the Redeemer. Hence also the outstanding preacher, pressing upon the praises of the same Redeemer, says: "It was fitting that we should have such a high priest:

holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who has no need, as priests do, first to offer sacrifices for his own sins" (Hebrews 7:26-27). What then is the place below Beth-car, to which we must slay and pursue the Philistines? But if Beth-car signifies the perfection of the Lord's life, the place below Beth-car expresses the common highest sanctity of the Saints, who both humble themselves by obeying the same Redeemer, and draw near to his glory through the pursuit of an innocent life. For the place which is shown to be situated below Beth-car is recognized as both inferior to and near the place beneath which it lies: because holy men, the nearer they are to God through the height of their life, the more they are subject to him in humbler thought. Therefore, while the triumph of new believers is shown under the deeds of the Israelites, the foreigners are said to have been slain as far as the place below the house of the lamb: because indeed through unceasing effort of struggle, we must strive toward the citadel of perfection, where we may be all the more terrible to our enemies, the nearer we are to our Redeemer. For there is already a certain security there

which cannot be disturbed by fear of enemies. For the Lord, pointing out the gifts of granted power to such as these, says: "Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

Hence also he who had reached the place near to the house of the lamb says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger" (Romans 8:35), or other such things? The house of the lamb can also designate the heavenly homeland. Hence John also says: "I saw upon Mount Zion a lamb standing, and with him one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). What then is the place that is below the house of the lamb, if not the boundary of temporal life, from which the elect are taken up to the joys of the heavenly homeland? For we who are led to the boundary appointed for us, which we cannot pass beyond by living, come as it were to a place from which we may be transferred elsewhere. But the boundary of the elect man's life is shown to be situated below the house of the lamb: because from where he is plunged down through the straits of mortality, from there he is raised up to the joys of unfailing life. For even the Lamb himself, who joyfully inhabits his own house amid harpists playing and singing, before he was led to the joy of this house, was below the house. For hence it is that at the time of his sacrifice he says: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34).

Therefore the end of each elect person, while it is indicated by a place, is recorded as being below Beth-car, that is, the house of the lamb; because holy men, when they leave temporal things through the penalty of death, ascend from nearby to the heavenly homeland that stands above them. For Paul, asserting confidently, says: "We know that if our earthly house is dissolved, we have a dwelling from God, not made with hands, in heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:1). Therefore we slay the Philistines as far as the place that is below the house of the lamb, if as long as we are in this life, we triumph over evil spirits. There follows: (Verse 12) "Samuel took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Shen; and he called its name the Stone of Help, and said: 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'" 22. In sacred Scripture, a stone signifies our Lord and Redeemer. A single stone is taken up by Samuel when the strength of the Redeemer is uniquely proclaimed by the preacher of Holy Church. This stone is indeed set up between Mizpah and Sen, because at the

departure of life it protects the elect and crushes the reprobate. For *Sen* means "shaking off. The reprobate have been shaken off, that is, separated from the fellowship of the faithful. Therefore, while the Philistines are said to have been struck down all the way to the place below Beth-car, the stone is declared to have been set up between *Sen* and *Mizpah*: because when God's elect receive the trophy of their victory at the end, they are separated from the company of the wicked by the judgment of the Redeemer. But now, like wheat and chaff together on the threshing floor, we are mixed together; yet when we are brought to the end of life, the elect are divided from the reprobate by the Lord's power, and they have, as it were, a stone placed between them, since the reprobate bear the weight of the Redeemer in the judgment of their condemnation, while the elect hold the palms of eternal glory in his strength. By *Sen*, evil spirits can also be designated. For they have been shaken off, because they were cast out from the heavenly sanctuary through pride.

And because they now wage war against us in this life, fittingly when the time of our victory is declared, the stone is said to be placed between us and them: because when we receive the rewards of our warfare, their battles are never again renewed against us. Moreover, Samuel places this stone in their midst, because the teacher of Holy Church shows us the goodness of our Redeemer. And because everything that is accomplished prosperously by us in all our life is ascribed to divine grace, the stone that is set in the midst is fittingly called by him the Stone of Help. For he himself is the Stone of Help; if he were unwilling to come to our aid, we could be conquered but could never conquer. Of this stone, now placed in their midst, it is said: "Thus far the Lord has helped us," because his protection follows his elect even to the time of eternal recompense. And because, as we have said, once we have been received into eternal rest, no battles are stirred up by our vanquished enemies, there follows: (Verse 13). "And the Philistines were humbled, nor did they come anymore into the territory of Israel."

23. These things indeed so express the deeds of each of the elect, that they indicate both the battle array and the joys of recompense of the holy catholic Church. For blessed Paul showed this victory of the universal Church as yet to come after the glory of our resurrection; who, as though present at the future incorruption, taunted death, saying: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor.

15:54-55). He also saw the Philistines humbled, because, making mention of the apostate angels, he kindled the elect to love of their future dignity, saying: "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3). For then indeed the Philistines are humbled, when the demons are cast into the fires of eternal flame prepared for them from the foundation of the world. And they no longer attempt to come into the borders of Israel, because they do not go out to tempt the hearts of the elect. But what are the borders of Israel, if not the heavens? And how shall the evil spirits come into the borders of Israel, who are so condemned in the depths of hell that they never rise up from the submersion of their punishments? Because, therefore, they are cast down by eternal oppression, it is fittingly added: (Verse 13). "And the hand of the Lord was upon the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

24. For what are the days of the good teacher, if not those springlike rays of shining eternity? These are fittingly said to belong to Samuel: because even though they are common to all the elect, by a certain special grace they shine for the joys of preachers. Or certainly they belong to preachers, because they shine more especially in the minds of those by whose preaching they are now made known to the holy Church. Moreover, the hand of the Lord is said to have been upon the Philistines all the days of Samuel, because the divine power always oppresses evil spirits, which in the glory of eternal brightness never ceases to gladden the elect as well. Then indeed the losses of the angels are repaired, when whatever had been taken away from blessedness out of the order of created spirits by their pride is made up from elect men. Wherefore there follows: (Verse 14.) And the cities which the Philistines had taken were restored to Israel.

25. Those ruined multitudes of angels are the cities that were taken away. But then they are restored, when from the elect human nature is assumed that which may supply what was lost from among the angels. This can also fittingly be understood of the conversion of wicked men. For the cities of the Philistines are taken away when the unity of the faithful is deceived by temptation, and they are subjected to themselves by being plunged into sins. But the cities that were taken away are restored to Israel: because penitents in this life make such satisfaction that in everlasting glory they are presented resplendent for the joy of the elect. And because not only those who neglect to do good, but even those who abundantly commit iniquity, are saved through repentance, it is added: (Verse 14.) From Ekron even unto Gath. 26.

Accaron means "barren," Geth means "winepress." Barren indeed are those who do not perform good works. In the winepress, moreover, the grape is pressed, and wine is brought forth. But what is worldly desire, if not the grape of a reprobate mind? And what is the fervor of sinning, if not the liquor of wine, which makes the sinner's mind forgetful of eternal goods? For when sin is generated from the desire of the heart, it is as though wine is produced from the grape in a winepress. From Accaron therefore all the way to Geth, the cities that had been taken away are restored to Israel: because the minds of those who neglect to do good and who boldly perpetrate evil, which now return to the Lord through repentance, are then shown to be resplendent in the common glory of the elect. For their evils by no means come into God's memory, since they themselves have not forgotten to blot them out through the affliction of repentance. There follows: (Verse 14.) And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

27. What is this peace, except that which the prophet Micah declares, saying: 'And he shall be peace in the land, when he shall come' (Mic. 5:5)? Hence Paul says: 'He himself is our peace, who makes both one' (Eph. 2:14). But what does it mean that peace is shown between Israel and the Amorite? What is designated by the Amorite, except the reprobate portion of mankind? And who are figured by Israel, except the elect? And because the elect will be at the right hand of God, but the reprobate at the left (Matt. 25:33), while peace is declared to exist between both, the glorious blessedness of the saints is demonstrated—who agree with the justice of the Creator with such great equanimity that they are moved by no compassion at the sight of the punishment of the reprobate. Therefore, when peace is shown to exist between Israel and the Amorite, what is demonstrated is not a good that the reprobate have in common with the saints, but one by which the elect are fortified. Whence also, under the figure of Israel, it is promised to the holy Church through the prophet: 'He who has made your borders peace, and fills you with the fat of wheat' (Ps. 147:14). He makes peace the borders of the Church: because while the power of the Redeemer raises her to the height of inmost equity, the misery of the lost does not afflict her through the pain of compassion. But he sets forth by what zeal of pastors good subjects are advanced to such great blessedness, saying: (Verse 15.) 'And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.'

28. What are the days of each teacher's life, if not the splendors of spiritual virtues? For he judges Israel all the days of his life who represents the light of justice—which he proclaims by speaking—through the perfection of good conduct, as an example to his faithful subjects. But he who does not have the light of spiritual virtues, because he takes up teaching from the good conduct of others, surely judges by the days of another's life. Concerning these the Lord says through the prophet: 'Behold, I am against the prophets who steal my words, each one from his neighbor' (Jer. 23:30). For they steal words who do not follow by their deeds the good that they proclaim by teaching, because they take, as it were, secretly from another's property what they by no means make their own by paying the price of their own labor. Therefore, after the future blessedness has been announced, it is shown what kind of man the pastor of the faithful ought to be in the meantime, since Samuel is reported to have judged Israel all the days of his life. For he poorly commends the way of perfection if one, wishing to open the path of light by his voice, grows dark in his actions. For he who had devoted all the days of his life to judging Israel says: 'I do not dare to speak of anything that Christ has not accomplished through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed' (Rom. 15:18).

Let the teacher judge, then, but one who has illustrious days of his life—so that he may first nourish in himself the rays of spiritual virtues by living well, which he dispenses by speaking for the guidance of his subjects' paths. For a lamp is then usefully displayed to those who are in the house if it is first well filled with the light that it is about to spread. There follows: (v. 46) 'And he went around each year to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in the aforesaid places.' 29. Bethel is called the house of God; Gilgal, a wheel; Mizpah, as has already been repeated above, is interpreted as a watchtower. What then does Bethel signify, if not men appointed to the office of the sacred altar, who, while they devote themselves to spiritual pursuits, are as it were intimates and members of the household of almighty God? And what does Gilgal, which is called a wheel, designate, if not the order of married persons? For they go around as if on a wheel, since they cannot be entirely free from the cares of this changing world. And what is expressed by Mizpah, which is interpreted as a watchtower, if not those who, devoting themselves to divine contemplation, burn with desire for heavenly joys alone? What then does it mean that Samuel is said to travel around to

Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and to judge Israel in those same places, if not that the chosen preacher follows the examples of all the orders of the elect, so that he may be a learned judge of the faithful who are subject to him? For he will not be able to render fair judgment if he disdains to take from the examples of the elect who came before him what he decides. But let him also travel through these places each year, so that as a prudent teacher he may examine one by one the perfection of each order: so that the more carefully he has observed the virtues of his predecessors, the more fittingly he may arrange present affairs.

There, therefore, there let him judge Israel, so that the faithful subjects whom he instructs toward the vision of God, he may correct by the righteousness of those whom he undoubtedly believes to have been pleasing to God. Bethel, which is called the house of God, can also designate the entire Church of the elect; and Gilgal, which is interpreted as a wheel, can designate Sacred Scripture. Whatever indeed a teacher brings forth for the advancement of his subjects, he receives either from the example of the elect, or from the teaching of sacred eloquence, or from the revelation of inner and secret contemplation. 30. Samuel therefore goes around Bethel, since the preacher of the Church seeks the authority for arranging his works from the examples of the elders. He goes around Gilgal, that is, the wheel, when he derives the authority of his teaching from the instruction of Holy Scripture. He also goes around Mizpah, when through the meditation of secret contemplation he merits to receive the revelation of truth. For there he judges Israel: because whatever he sets before his subjects as a rule of righteousness, he receives either from the examples of the elect, or from the teaching of sacred eloquence, or from the revelation of interior contemplation. By these words indeed it is shown not only what the perfect teacher does, but also that he is not perfect if he cannot do these things. For if someone knows only the examples of good men, or if someone is even learned in Holy Scripture yet lacks the revelation of contemplation, he will not be a perfect man in the order of preaching. For contemplation is a virtue through which not only is Scripture itself, once composed, recognized, but through which what has not yet been composed would be composed: and through which what has been composed is daily ordered according to the will of God. Rightly therefore it is said: And he judged Israel in the above-mentioned places. For not only in Bethel and Gilgal, but also in Mizpah:

so that he who strives toward the perfection of preaching, while through humility he follows the examples of the elders, while through the study of sacred eloquence he is supported by learning, must take care above all that through purity of mind he may know by contemplation the things that are to be ordered. For he who, having undertaken the office of preaching, desires to teach men, must be teachable by God. Yet let him so trust in that which is imparted through the instruction of secret contemplation, that he neither disdains the Scriptures produced through the Holy Spirit, nor scorns to follow the examples of the elect. For Samuel is described as going around Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah; so that the one is never separated from the other through discord: so that, namely, he both receives the examples that Holy Scripture approves, and recognizes those Holy Scriptures that the elect wrote, and perceives those revelations of contemplation shown to him by God which are at variance neither with the works of the elect nor with the authority of Holy Scripture. But let him also bring back everything he does to the rectitude of heavenly intention. Whence it is also added: (Verse 17. He returned to Ramah: for there he judged Israel, and there was his house.

31. As we have already said far above, Ramah is interpreted as "consummated vision" and signifies that blessed and perfect society of the citizens above, to which Samuel returns lest he be weighed down by the burden of his labor. For Samuel returns to Ramah when the mind of the preacher is refreshed through love of heavenly things. For amid the immense burdens of his office he would collapse, if he did not return to love of heavenly things through the desire of his hope. For to return, for preachers, is to lead the intention of their mind back to the joys of the heavenly fatherland. And there they judge Israel, because they strive by preaching to make their faithful subjects conformable to the beauty of the heavenly fatherland which they retain in their mind. There they judge Israel, because from that already perfect city they draw the pattern they see, which they impress upon the minds of their children by speaking; and whatever they perceive to be unworthy of that beauty, they endeavor to cut away from their minds. And because they rest with complete love in the glory of that blessed fatherland, his house is said to be there. For his house is recognized to be that in which he dwells by loving. Whence also that outstanding preacher boasts, saying: "Our citizenship is in heaven. For he goes around Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and in none of these does he have a house, but in Ramah he has a house:

because the holy doctors of the Church, whatever they now receive from the examples of the elect, whatever from the instruction of the sacred books, whatever from the height of heavenly revelation—they examine these things in passing, having them as an aid for the journey, not as the object of love for their reward. But what they love in the heavenly city they have not for the advancement of the journey, but for the sufficient—indeed, for the abundant—generosity of their reward. And because all good things are gathered there, it follows: (Verse 17). "He also built an altar there to the Lord." 32. For what is the altar of the Lord, if not the heart of the just man? Moreover, by the judgment of Truth it is said: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). But he who does good works out of love for the heavenly homeland, while he ardently desires to arrive at those things which he stores up above, assuredly builds an altar upon which he may kindle the sacrifices of daily desire. And it is well said: "He built there an altar to the Lord," because from the increase of heavenly zeal, just as the flame of good desire grows in the heart, so also, as if by the addition of stones, an altar is built upward where holocausts of love may be offered to God. This can also be fittingly applied to the gaining of souls. For the teacher builds an altar to the Lord in Ramah when he places the merits of his subjects in heaven, and while through his daily zeal chosen souls ascend to the heavenly kingdoms, they are sent, as it were, as stones for the construction of the heavenly altar. Let it therefore be said of Samuel, let it be said: "He built there an altar to the Lord," because surely the zeal of the teacher is altogether idle if through what is done by him on earth the heavenly edifice is not increased.

BOOK FOUR

CHAPTER 4.1

1. The deeds of holy men who came before are often the consolations of the elect who follow. For by a wonderful dispensation of divine counsel, they were raised to the citadel of the highest way of life in such a way that they might do mighty things for themselves and provide right governance for their subjects; yet sometimes so left to themselves that those things which they arranged with right intention would not turn out rightly according to God's providence — so that their weakness might become the strength of the elect who follow: because even though as men they can err in managing the affairs of the holy Church, those ecclesiastical arrangements themselves

are not to be abandoned. For behold it is said: (1 Kings 8:1–3) And it came to pass when Samuel had grown old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. And the name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of the second was Abiah, judges in Beersheba. And his sons did not walk in his ways.

2. Behold, he who had been full of the spirit of prophecy did not know that those whom he was appointing as judges of Israel would afterward turn aside after greed, and accept bribes, and pervert judgment. What wonder, then, if those who do not receive the grace of prophecy can be deceived in arranging appointments—if those who have the spirit of prophecy do not have that same spirit for disposing all things? Who would doubt concerning so great a man that, if he had foreknown the future perversity of his sons, he certainly would not have advanced them to public honors? Those, therefore, who knowingly promote the reprobate can in no way flatter themselves with this example of the prophet, because it is done innocently only when no signs of subsequent iniquity were apparent in them at the time they were promoted. For this reason also, those who were appointed by Samuel as judges of Israel were fittingly called his sons when they were appointed, so that from this they might be believed not only to have been begotten from him according to the flesh, but also adorned with the splendors of his manner of life. For this reason also their names are carefully recorded, so that from the title of the name that form of virtue which was then in them might be recognized. The name of one, he says, was Joel, and of the other Abiah; they were judges in Beersheba.

But also concerning those who are said to have turned aside to greed after receiving their office, it is clearly shown that before they attained the height of that same office, no signs of future depravity were seen in them. But behold, while we attend to the consolations of pastors, we perceive no small dangers for the Lord's flock. For the prophet's sons stood firm as subjects, but fell when placed at the height of authority—so that if, while we are placed under the care of superiors, an unceasing zeal for holy life or the confidence of a great manner of living smiles upon us, we should nevertheless hold the governing of others not in the appetite of desire but in the greatness of fear. But carnal people, while they attend only to visible things, do not deserve to know the spiritual manner of life of the saints. They look upon the eminence of the pastors of holy Church, but they do not know how to consider how unwillingly those pastors bear inwardly the distinction which they hold

outwardly in the splendor of eminence, that they endure the loftiness of honor as the oppression of a great burden, that they flee with great desire what they pursue in outward ministry. For with the outstanding teacher as witness we have learned that the natural man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

Whence also, pursuing carnal things, he errs all the more madly to the degree that through the power of discernment he no longer penetrates any spiritual things. And some such people advance to so great an evil of madness that they do not fear to disturb even the very state of ecclesiastical eminence. Whence it also follows: (Verses 4, 5. Therefore all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Ramah, and said to him: Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Appoint a king over us, to judge us as all the nations have. 3. But for those who were living under spiritual governance, to ask for a king—what else is it than to eagerly desire to transform that same spiritual leadership into secular domination? Yet when holy men see that they are despised by their subjects, what displeases them is not so much that they are despised, but that those who despise them do not please God. For by the contempt shown to them, they see that increases are given to their own interior glory; but they groan that their merits are increased by the failings of their subjects, whom they would rather have advance in merits, so that in the eternal reward of merits they might have been able to have with them those over whom they preside. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 6) The word was displeasing in the eyes of Samuel, because they had said: Give us a king, to judge us.

4. For what displeased him was that through which he judged those who were speaking to be displeasing to God. But because it is not simply said, "the matter displeased Samuel," but "in the eyes of Samuel," and immediately it is added: (Verse 6. "And Samuel prayed to the Lord for the people," we ought to consider these things somewhat more carefully. Holy men, who greatly fear displeasing Almighty God, are not hasty in their judgments, but first arrange all things rationally within themselves, so that they may dispose of them outwardly in action without reproach. For they accept no choice of judgment unless it is approved by the contemplation of reason. The Lord indeed wished to open these eyes of the prophet when He said: "See with your eyes, and hear with your ears" (Ezek. 40:4). Hence in the Gospel He said to the disciples: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see" (Luke 10:23). For the eyes of the

saints are the understanding of reason, opened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And therefore they are said to be Samuel's, because all carnal people, even if they seem rational through human wisdom, are all the more blind to this light of reason, inasmuch as they see only with those eyes which the serpent opened. For if they could behold the splendor of spiritual virtues, they would surely desire to possess it as the adornment of their mind.

So great indeed is the beauty of these virtues that their sight can never fail to be desired with longing by the one who sees them. Therefore the wise of this world, when they suppose themselves to possess the eyes of reason, can recognize from this how madly they rage: because not to be attracted by the beauty of holy virtues is surely not only not to perceive their glory, but not even to dream of it. Therefore holy men, who are already bound by the love of interior things through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, have the eyes of their mind all the clearer for seeing the glory of inward brightness, the more they have no desire for anything from the darkness of the world; and they can discern carnal things all the more rightly, the further they have been raised up from carnal things and have advanced more deeply into the grace of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Apostle Paul also, from the experience of so great a vision, pronounced the sentence, saying: "The spiritual man judges all things" (1 Cor. 2:15). Rightly therefore it is said: "The matter displeased in the eyes of Samuel. Because by spiritual men nothing is despised before it is judged to be worthy of contempt through the spiritual insight of the mind. And because the more abundantly they are filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the less they presume upon the loftiness of their own virtue, there follows: "And Samuel prayed to the Lord.

For what did he pray to the Lord, if not that He would deign to show him whether he ought to give assent to the petition of the tumultuous people? (Verses 7, 8. "And the Lord said to Samuel: Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them, according to all their works which they have done from the day when I brought them out of Egypt even to this day." 5. Because it is said to the prophet as he prays, "Set a king over them," it is clearly shown that he asked for it to be revealed to him whether this should be done. And because He adds, saying, "They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them," it is fittingly shown how displeasing to Him was the request which is reported to have been displeasing in the eyes of

Samuel. This harmony of judgment arises in the saints from the power of charity: because while they love the Creator with their whole mind and devoutly strive to obey His will, they receive as a reward of heavenly recompense that they do not diverge in their thinking from that same will of almighty God, which they always hold fast in good works. For it is written: "He who clings to God is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). For he clings to the Lord who always strives to carry out the commands of His will. But he becomes one spirit with Him: because through long devotion of pious work he is raised to such a degree of grace of divine knowledge that he can no longer dissent from the fairness of His inner judgment through the error of a worldly spirit. But it is very difficult to answer if it is asked why almighty God both complains that He was rejected in the request for a king, and yet decrees that what was requested should come to pass;

and again, if royal dignity was to be established, why it was permitted as though by an offended divine majesty; and when a foreseen king is decreed to be chosen, why one who would be rejected is chosen. What else can we answer to these things except what the apostle Paul would answer to those daring to search the ineffable abyss of God's judgments: "O man," he says, "who are you to answer back to God? (Rom. 9:20). But if we cannot resolve this effectively, we can touch upon it by inquiring. Perhaps He complains that He was rejected in the request for a king? On account of the reprobate will of the people asking wrongly, the requested king is granted as a punishment. If this is said reasonably, since He put forward both things, He showed both the fault and the retribution together. For he who is shown to have rejected the Creator by his asking is convicted of having made an unjust demand out of a reprobate will. Therefore the penalty of strict justice followed upon the fault of the wicked request. For great indeed is the punishment that proceeds from the severity of the inner examination, when a reprobate mind is so cast away that it is permitted to carry out what it wrongly decides.

Those, therefore, who were convicted of having rejected the Lord in asking for a king—since they were permitted to do that by which they would cast the Lord away from themselves—there was no heavier punishment with which they ought to have been struck here. 6. In this place it should be noted that the Lord makes the rejection of the prophet His own. For He does not simply say, "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them," but rather, "They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over

them. So as to clearly show that in the person of the chosen bishop, He Himself presides over His subjects; and when a carnal ruler is raised to the spiritual summit of the elect, He Himself is seen to be rejected whose precepts are cast aside. Therefore, how worthy of reverence the best pastors of the holy Church are is plain. For behold, while they faithfully serve God, they are joined to Him by so great a bond of love that whatever is inflicted upon them is ascribed as an injury to God. Whence also in the Gospel He says to the first pastors of the Church: "He who despises you despises me" (Luke 10:16). Where something even graver is perceived: because when He complains that the pastor has been rejected, all the sins of those who reject him are recalled, and even the evils of their forefathers are mentioned. "According to all their works," He says, "which they have done from the day when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. For the supreme crime is recognized, for whose examination all past sins are brought back into the memory of God.

And so the Lord complains that He has been rejected, and yet grants that one to be ordained in whom He is rejected: because when He executes the power of His strict justice, the desires of carnal men are by no means prevented from being fulfilled through His mercy. But also that dignity which could have been granted as a punishment ought not to have been granted with the tranquil majesty of divinity, but as if with indignation. However, we do not assert that the indignant majesty of God is indignant in itself, which is not subject to passion: but because when He examines faults, He speaks words of indignation through the Scriptures. Likewise, because a king is taken up as a type of carnal prelates, a king destined for rejection is chosen, not an elect one. Or perhaps a reprobate king is chosen for this reason, that his elect successor, King David, might learn from him what he ought to have guarded against. Thus indeed we also read concerning that court of angels, because of the first apostate angel it is written: "He is the beginning of the ways of God" (Job 40:14); but he who was created before all things fell through pride, and in his ruin the holy angels learned by what virtue they could have stood firm. Which indeed, whoever can behold with the open eyes of right faith equally observes: that Almighty God bestows the gifts of great mercy even when He inflicts punishment;

because while He punishes the reprobate, He instructs the saints, so that from where those fall, these may be aided in their progress. 7. By strict judg-

ment indeed He permits evils to be done, but mercifully He provides from those evils which He inflicts through judgment, things which He arranges to make into good. For what greater fault is there than that by which we all die? And what greater goodness than that by which we are freed from death? And indeed, if Adam had not sinned, it would not have been necessary for our Redeemer to take on our flesh. For He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). If therefore He came for sinners, if sins were lacking, it would not have been necessary for Him to come. If the sins, which He is believed to have come to destroy, are understood to have been permitted by the justice of God: since God was to be born as man for sinners, almighty God had foreseen that from that evil by which they were to die, He would bring about a good that would overcome that evil. The greatness of this good—what faithful person does not see how wonderfully it excels? Great indeed are the evils we suffer through the desert of the first sin, but what elect person would not prefer to endure worse things rather than not have so great a Redeemer? Let a king therefore be chosen—but one to be rejected; let him be chosen as if by the indignation, not the will, of God.

Let there then follow a king after God's own heart, so that from the severity of His judgment the evil of vengeance may proceed against the reprobate, and the good which He was to bring about from evil may, through the bounty of divine grace, overflow upon the pious, while those others are permitted to fall into the evil they desire. But from what those men cast themselves down, it is brought about that others may not fall at all. But since by these words the judgment of divine severity is affirmed, let us now see how great a dispensation He employs, lest those deliberating wrongly do that for which they would be punished. For there follows: (Verse 9) Now therefore hear their voice; yet solemnly warn them, and declare to them the right of the king who shall reign over them. 8. As if by an open display of clemency He says: So hear their voices, yet let them first hear concerning the right of the king whom they seek, something that will make them tremble; and let them then abandon what was badly begun, when the thing they were seeking is recognized to be how burdensome it is. There follows: (Verses 10-17.) So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who had asked him for a king, and said: This will be the right of the king who is to rule over you. He will take your sons and place them in his chariots, and will make them his horsemen and runners before his chariots; and he will appoint for him-

self tribunes and centurions, and plowmen of his fields, and reapers of his harvests, and makers of his weapons and chariots. Your daughters also he will make his perfumers, cooks, and bakers. He will also take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his servants. Moreover, he will take a tenth of your grain crops and the produce of your vineyards, to give to his eunuchs and servants. He will also take your male servants and female servants, your best young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will also take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will be his slaves.

9. When subjection is sought by carnal men, assuredly whatever is commanded them is burdensome, even if it is not difficult: because since they have it from the swelling of pride that they follow the judgment of their own will, whatever opposes their deliberation they consider most grievous. But indeed when harsh and contrary things are commanded, what a weight of burden is that! What swelling of heart! When they could scarcely bear even pleasant and light things unwillingly—things which, if they had been willing, they would have borne most easily. Let us therefore see how the pious dispensation of the Creator worthily answers the foolish audacity of man. The laws of men are set before those who despise the laws of God; and upon those who had spurned the mild and salutary counsels of the Divinity, the harsh and unbearable burdens of human servitude are proclaimed: so that from these things they might reckon with themselves how intolerable the commands of man would be for those who had refused to obey the counsels of God—who was not so much commanding as advising them not to seek this. But the hearts of carnal men possess recklessness from the increase of audacity, and hardness from the nature of pretense. From recklessness indeed they deliberate upon things easy to do; but because they do not understand what they wrongly propose, they cannot be helped by the counsels of those who are wiser. Wherefore here too it is added: (Verse 19.) The people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel. And they said: By no means: for a king shall be over us, and we also shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us, and shall go out before us, and shall fight our battles for us.

10. It was indeed a matter of great rashness to ask for a king against God's will; of great hardness, to be unable to be overcome by the counsels of the prophet. It was of great rashness to put forth arguments to him whom they knew, by the Lord's revelation, to know beforehand all that he was about to do. Of great hardness, not to yield to him whom they knew to command

only those things which he had learned by the Lord's revelation. For what is it that they say in response: "By no means, but a king shall be over us"? But those who say "By no means" surely deny what they hear. It is therefore openly shown by this word that the prophet set forth the heavy right of the king for this purpose: that he should by no means be requested. But they hear the right of the king, and they detest the very purpose for which it is set forth—so that the progress of reprobate hearts is expressed, in which there is the consummation of an evil purpose and the unconvertibility of the will. But we blame ancient times, we who do not care to see our own. Which times, indeed, the more aged they are as the world grows old, the more lax they become in many things through the fault of time and negligence.

For so much the more boldly do we now propose evil things, inasmuch as already, with the vigorous youth of the age, the strength of the human condition has withered; so much the more difficultly do we recall what has been badly proposed, inasmuch as from the loosened vigor of the spirit, our mind becomes carnal. For such are human failings, that what is lacking in spiritual virtue is strengthened in carnal life. All these things indeed, according to the voice of the excellent teacher: "These things happened to them in figure, but they were written for our sake" (1 Cor. 10:11). Already indeed we openly recognize the audacity of these Israelites, which the judgments of divine indignation followed; and yet we do not fear to propose courses of action against the will of God, against the counsel of the prelates of Holy Church. When rebuked in an evil purpose, we also resist, and we attempt to overcome the salutary counsels of our superiors by the unconquerable evil of obstinacy. We see how great an increase of evil it is to behold those who perish, and not to fear to follow their footsteps to perdition; to see those running into the penal snares of death, and by no means to dread being entangled in the same snares. And they indeed asked for a king against the Lord's will; but from the royal dignity it afterward came about that the people, who had cast God aside, worshipped idols and adored images.

We therefore see how worthy of reverence the counsels of our elders are, if we carefully consider this: that those who dared to despise them did not foresee that they were doing that by which they could be plunged into so deep a sea of error. Rightly therefore does the Lord complain that He was rejected in the petition for a king; rightly does He grant the royal dignity in anger. So great indeed was the iniquity of those asking, that when they sought that

through which they would depart from God, it could be permitted by God's judgment but could not be prohibited. But since we have said these things according to the letter, let us also see what those things which are contained in the right of the king signify spiritually.

CHAPTER 4.2

1. For when Samuel was rejected, a king was sought: when the reprobate multitude of the people despises a spiritual pastor and seeks a carnal one to rule over them. With such people it is often dealt by the severity of divine justice, so that by the very fact that they despise the chosen preacher, they are permitted to be subject to a reprobate, from whose imitation they perish all the more grievously, the more boldly they despised with greater pride that by which they could have lived forever. When therefore the right of the king is foretold, clearly it is shown in the conduct of one carnal ruler what the other carnal ones will do through tyranny, not what the elect ought to imitate. For in the same history of Kings it is read that when King Ahab took away Naboth's vineyard, he incurred the wrath of almighty God. But here, when the right of the king is foretold, fields, vineyards, and the best olive groves are mentioned as things to be seized (1 Kings 21:2 ff.). When therefore what was committed and punished there is foretold here, it shows that it is not commanded by divine judgment. Wherefore also the chosen King David, when he sought the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite for building an altar to the Lord, did not wish to use that royal right of tyrants (1 Chronicles 21:24), since he would by no means consent to receive it unless he had first given a worthy price for it.

2. Since, therefore, the things contained in the law of the king are declared to be avoided rather than imitated, they must be considered all the more carefully inasmuch as they cannot be avoided if they are not known. He says, then: 'He will take your sons and place them in his chariots.' The sons of the elect are those who imitate their virtues. The chariots of carnal prelates, moreover, are the pomp of worldly pride. For while they glory in being more exalted than others, they stride through the heights as if carried on chariots. The sons of the faithful are therefore placed in chariots when they follow reprobate pastors through the desire for worldly glory — when, abandoning spiritual pursuits, they seek the advantages of a carnal life, and, laying aside that lofty intention directed toward heavenly things, they strive to attain the heights of the world. Fittingly, then, the sons of the Israelites

are said to be placed not in a chariot but in chariots, because from everything that excels at the summit of carnal prelates, they advance in pride, and they raise themselves on high by as many lofty chariots, so to speak, as the lofty things they behold by which they consider themselves superior to others. The king, therefore, places the sons of the good in his chariots when a carnal ruler drags the imitators of the elect by the example of his own depravity into the vices of pride — so that they set aside heavenly things, seek earthly things, and rejoice in this alone: that by reason of what is temporally exalted, they are preferred above others.

3. And because against the lesser they are not only raised up but also strong, there follows: "And he will make for himself horsemen." For they rage as if on horses, who are both exalted in rank and fierce in power. They are horsemen also because, while they direct the fierce impulses of their heart against the powerless, they are swift toward everything that they desire to carry out through tyranny. They pant with violence, they foam with rage, and those whom they attack in the course of their tyranny, they crush. But while among wicked pastors some emulate the pride of worldly arrogance, and others by their example oppress those whom they can: there are even some who, to carry out the evils that they cannot inflict upon the good by themselves, bring in others more wicked than themselves. Whence there also follows: "And the forerunners of his chariots."

4. For what are the chariots of the king, if not the perverse minds of wicked subjects, in whose counsels the reprobate prelate finds his rest? For chariots are what carry kings: since through the wicked counsels of the depraved, the deeds of rulers are aided. In them, as it were, the king is carried on high, since through those who favor them for the sake of temporal honors, whatever carnal superiors desire from the loftiness of the world they carry out. These are rightly designated by the name of chariots. For a chariot stands firm on the very thing by which it turns: because the reprobate mind has as the end of its intention the fickleness of the world. Indeed, it finds rest in the very thing from which, through innumerable cares of a revolving mind, it does not cease to fan the affairs of the world. Therefore they are chariots of kings, since through everything lofty they think of by turning it over, they carry upon themselves the commands of carnal superiors. But those who hold a place of familiarity alongside carnal prelates have subordinates whom they may command. They themselves, therefore, are like the

chariots of the king, while the others are the forerunners of the chariots; because in the same way that they convey the carnal superior to oppress the humble, they themselves too are led through the service of others to harm whomever they can.

For he is, as it were, a forerunner of the chariots, who by the wicked cunning of his mind devises a stratagem by which he may introduce that one to inflict evils upon the meek. But if, as many manuscripts have it, we read not "forerunners" but "pursuers" of the chariots, they are certainly those who imitate the reprobate as they rush toward evil. A chariot is also customarily used to carry kings as a mark of honor. Therefore the king is, as it were, stationed in a chariot, when a carnal ruler glories in the flatteries of the great men who appear to be near him. But whoever precedes or follows these men in their praises is a forerunner or pursuer of the chariots, because these men utter either after or before the same flatteries that those others have scattered in the ears of the people by going ahead or following behind.

5. There follows: 'And he will appoint for himself tribunes and centurions.' Tribunes and centurions are made when they come to such an advance in evil that, for carrying out the tyrant's commands, they take command over impious attendants, when they arrange the battle lines of worldly forces, which they lead forth to wars against the innocent. Tribunes indeed are those who, through many supporters allied to them, lay ambushes against those living uprightly. Centurions, however, are those who omit no kind of harm. For they obtain the perfection of iniquity from this: that they always strive to inflict the many and enormous evils that they can. For the centurion is named from the number one hundred. And because the number one hundred signifies perfection, it is fulfilled in an evil sense when the summit of wickedness is reached by the impious. They are indeed smooth in cunning and violent in terror. They sweetly flatter some, so that with their help they may fiercely terrify others. And so there rightly follows: 'And the plowmen of his fields, and the reapers of his harvests.'

6. The fields of the carnal ruler are the minds of his subjects; and the plowmen of these fields are those who, by the craft of worldly cunning, persuade them to acts of wickedness. For they open up, as it were, the firmness of the fields by speaking, those who through wicked counsels corrupt the hearts of the simple. And they reap the crops when, by the seed of evil counsel, the deceived hearts of the lesser ones yield the fruit of wicked works. Which

works are indeed designated by the name of crops: because the perversity of the wicked subject, when it is joyfully received by carnal rulers, is, as it were, the choice food of their mind. In which perversity, because they advance little by little, there follows: "And makers of his weapons and of his chariots." What are the weapons and chariots of tyrants, if not all those instruments of harm that are prepared for overthrowing the hearts of the lesser ones? But because by the chariot one arrives where one may strike with weapons, they become makers of the king's weapons and chariots when, by the most wicked machination of their hearts, they devise both the evils they should commit and the manner in which to inflict those same devised evils. For to forge weapons is to gather up kinds of harm with a wicked mind. And to forge chariots is to find the craft by which they can approach to inflict those same evils.

7. There follows: He will also make your daughters perfumers, and cooks, and bakers. By the name of daughters, the weak minds placed within holy Church are designated. These become the king's perfumers: because when they behold carnal rulers in the height of passing glory, they endeavor to soothe them with flatteries. The Psalmist, indeed rejecting the use of these ointments, says: Let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head (Psalm 141:5). The daughters therefore become perfumers: because when the weak fear to displease carnal rulers, they soften with blandishment the ferocity to which they are subject through fear. And it should be noted that the sons are said first to be taken by the king, and then made horsemen and centurions or makers of arms: but the daughters are not said to be taken, but simply to be made perfumers and bakers. For to be taken implies violence. The sons therefore are taken, because the strong are overthrown with difficulty. When therefore the daughters are said not to be taken but to be made perfumers, what else does this mean except that those who are weak in goodness are easily scattered by the examples of the wicked? They also become the king's cooks and bakers: because those who serve tyrants by flattering them, while they please them by showing favor, offer them food as it were. For the cooks are those who cook at the hearth what kings eat. They are therefore cooks who, through services of favor, kindle the swelling of pride in the carnal ruler's heart: so that he receives flatteries all the more boldly, inasmuch as they prepare for him, as it were, more delicate foods by the fire of aroused de-

votion. They also become bakers: because when they praise a reprobate life, they strengthen the carnal mind of the tyrant to practice wickedness.

8. There follows: "He will also take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. What are the fields of good men, if not the devoted minds of their subjects? For while they willingly hear their words, they yield an abundant fruit of good works. And what are their vineyards, if not the minds of those who so advance by imitating the proficient that they even offer the word of life to others, and those whom they set ablaze by speaking into love of the Creator, they make drunk, as it were, by giving them drink? And what are the olive groves, if not the hearts of listeners who, by the example and exhortation of good men, advance in the work of mercy? But when a king is established, the fields are taken away: because when carnal men reach the height of governance, some of the good listeners take up examples of wickedness. The fields are therefore taken away when recently devoted hearts are led astray, when from the seed of wickedness they yield fruit in evil conduct. The olive groves and vineyards are taken away when, by the example of a wicked superior, works of mercy and the words of holy preaching that ought to be displayed and spoken are abandoned. And rightly it is recorded that the taken fields, vineyards, and olive groves are given to the king's servants. For servants are those who, always subject to the authority of their masters, cannot escape the yoke of domination.

The servants of the king, therefore, are those who through abundant iniquity so bind themselves to the wills of tyrants that they no longer depart from them. The servants therefore receive the taken fields, vineyards, and olive groves: because the reprobate supporters of carnal prelates, when they transfer deceived hearts to the purpose of wicked work, impose the title of tyrannical power, as it were, upon the fields, vineyards, and olive groves of the elect. There follows: "But he will also tithe your crops and the revenues of your vineyards, to give to his eunuchs and his servants. When the wicked are in charge, it is very difficult that one who is subject to them should suffer no losses to his religion. For the minds of some perish entirely: but those whom they cannot completely pervert, while they unceasingly observe their wicked words and deeds, are stained with some sort of defilement. Rightly therefore it is said: "He will tithe your crops and the revenues of your vineyards. As if to say: Under a reprobate pastor, even the goods of the elect are not whole. But what is taken from the good is given to the eunuchs and servants of the king.

The eunuchs and servants of carnal prelates are their hypocritical listeners. They are eunuchs indeed because they show themselves to have cast off worldly pleasure: but they are the king's servants because through everything they pretend to have of virtues, they bear upon themselves the yoke of their reprobate superiors.

And rightly the tithe of the crops and vineyards is said to belong to the eunuchs: because the poison of hypocrites is not easily recognized. Inasmuch as even holy men can be deceived in this, what they lose is ascribed to those by whose fraud they are captured. There follows: "He will also take your male servants and female servants, and your best young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. The male and female servants of the saints are those who supply them with temporal necessities. They are male and female servants because, while they provide them with bodily necessities, in this same work of mercy some are stronger than others. And the best young men: because both those who can do much and those who can do little, when they expend all that they are able in the work of mercy, like chosen young men, they powerfully carry out divine services. The donkeys of the elect are also those upon whom the burdens of obedience to be borne are imposed, so that they may help their frailty by bearing with them what they could by no means bear without them. But what does it mean that they are foretold to be put to the king's work? Those who are put to the king's work fulfill on appointed days the debt of compulsory labor owed to the authority of the public power.

What then does it mean that the male and female servants and the best young men are foretold to be put to the king's work, except that when carnal men are in authority, both the ministers of the elect and the hearts of those who devoutly obey are frequently stained? For while they unceasingly behold their reprobate life, they gradually decline so far as to imitate something of their deeds. Through long custom indeed they serve the elect; but since they often see the eminence of their high position, they sometimes desire to be served by others through the impulse of pride. They also give their own possessions mercifully, but often by the example of tyrants they take what belongs to others. But because they are servants of the saints, they cannot depart from their authority. They can indeed be abandoned for a time, but from the error into which they fall, they are easily raised up through divine mercy. Because therefore those who quickly come to their senses fall through

the examples of the wicked, they are put to the king's work as if by compulsory labor: in which they do not long remain through continuous servitude.

9. There follows: "He will also tithe your flocks, and you shall be his servants. As if to say: When a carnal pastor is placed over you, plunder of virtues is inflicted not only upon your possessions, but also upon yourselves. For the flocks of the elect are the multitudes of spiritual virtues. But since these very spiritual virtues are scattered by the example of the wicked, the king takes tithes of the flock when he who rules carnally destroys certain virtues in the hearts of the saints. He takes tithes: because while he scatters the integrity of the mind, he leaves the number of virtues incomplete. For perfection is signified by the number ten. Hence also, when the Lord showed the losses of our fallen humanity by an open comparison, He brought forward the woman who had lost one of ten drachmas (Luke 15:4 ff.); so that by this, because the number ten is shown to have been diminished, that heavenly fellowship which remained in the angels at the number nine might be taught to be imperfect without the restoration of our condition. And because tithes are exacted each year, those who do not cease to offer tithes are fittingly said to be servants of the king. For they serve each year those by whose example they often become worse. It can also be shown through this—that after the tithes are given, this servitude is asserted—as an evil progression. For those who gradually fail act daily in such a way that they are led to the depths of iniquity.

He says therefore: "He will tithe your flocks, and you shall be his servants. As if to say: By the example of the wicked you will gradually fall away, but in falling you act so that you never withdraw from imitating them. For it is written: "By whom a person is overcome, of him he is made a servant" (2 Peter 2:19). Because indeed through imitating a reprobate pastor they fall into the servitude of sin, they cannot be freed from his yoke even when they wish. Hence it is also added: (Verse 18. "And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day: because you asked for yourselves a king." 10. As if to say, you are gradually slipping into the knowledge of his wicked imitation; but the examples of his wickedness, to which you willingly submit yourselves, you are utterly unable to willingly abandon. For everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34). Those, therefore, over whom sins hold dominion cannot be freed from their yoke by themselves. For often

they come to the Lord with prayers, they ask to be freed, but they cannot be heard. For by divine judgment it is dealt with them such that those who were unwilling to avoid evils when they could, are unable to avoid them when they will; and those who willingly rushed into evils foreknown cannot flee from them once experienced. Therefore, also indicating the reason why they are prevented from being heard, he says: "Because you asked for yourselves a king." As if he were openly saying: Because you demanded that be given to you in which, by my foretelling, you knew all these things would come to pass. These things, as I said above, are foretold in the type of carnal prelates concerning the future conduct of the king: so that they might desist from petitioning for him in whom they had recognized such great evils. But it is the nature of the hearts of the reprobate that they quickly propose evil and do not more quickly come to their senses from an evil purpose. Therefore it is also added: (Verses 19, 20.) But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said: "By no means! For a king shall be over us, and we also shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us, and shall go out before us, and shall fight our battles for us."

11. By these words indeed the morals of carnal subjects are openly described: because while they seek after outward things, they do not attend to inner losses even when these are set before them. But those who rule carnally, by the very display of temporal power, give their lesser subjects great hope of protection. Therefore when they say, "A king shall be over us, and he shall fight our battles for us," what else do they suggest but the morals of reprobate subjects, who despise humble and spiritual preachers in order to be helped temporally by carnal men? This they would certainly never do, had they not first lost the light of the heart. For if they outwardly despise the humility of spiritual men, they do not deserve to discern by what sublimity of power these inwardly excel; in those others too they see the outward tyranny of power, but they do not see by what weakness he is inwardly oppressed. The former, because they cling to God, are powerful even in outward things when they wish; the latter, who depart from the Lord, cannot fulfill by strength of action the hope they promise from secular power. For, to take examples from nearby, Saul was chosen as king for those requesting one to fight their battles — strong and powerful, so that, as this sacred history testifies (1 Kings 9:2), he stood above all the people from the shoulder and upward.

Chosen therefore by God to govern the kingdom, when he was good and no one among the sons of Israel was better than he, nevertheless, when so great and such a man was left to carnal strength, he lost the battles he had undertaken to fight, and lost his life as well (1 Kings 31:1). But Samuel, who was not exalted by the power of the world, who humbly ministered not only to God but also to men, powerfully displayed trophies from outward wars as well. For was it not said of him just above: "Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, and Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him. And it came to pass, while Samuel was offering the burnt offering to the Lord, the Philistines began battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great crash on that day upon the Philistines and terrified them, and the Philistines were struck down by the sons of Israel" (1 Kings 7:9, 10). Let him therefore say: "The people refused to hear the voice of Samuel," so that in their disobedience the hearts of the proud may be designated, so cast off by the judgment of divine equity that great evils threaten which they are about to incur — yet they cannot see them. There follows: (Verse 21. "And Samuel heard all the words of the people."

12. Samuel indeed heard what the people had spoken, but the people themselves did not hear him. For the reprobate people to speak and not to hear was to utter words against the will of God, yet not at all to foresee the punishment for their wicked speech. But Samuel heard the words of the people, because spiritual men, when they hear the voices of proud speech, recognize the future desert of divine vengeance upon them. Let him say therefore: Samuel heard all the words of the people, because holy and spiritual men, whatever carnal people proudly sound forth outwardly, weigh inwardly what it amounts to in the divine judgment. But because, when they discover the damnable life of their carnal subjects, they intercede for the blotting out of their crimes, there follows: (Verse 21. And he spoke them in the ears of the Lord. We speak in the ears of those with whom we have the grace of great intimacy. But holy men, because they are joined to almighty God in the bond of great love, speak in His ears, because they seek the hearing of His divine propitiation with all the more confidence, the more sublimely they have received a place of obtaining favor before His mercy. They speak the sins of the people indeed for the humility of confession, but they speak in the ears of

the Lord, because with great affection they knock at the door of the Lord's propitiation through prayer.

But perhaps he is said to speak in the ears of the Lord because, when holy men beseech on behalf of sinners, they do not reveal to men the prayers they offer to God for them. Whence also in the Gospel the Lord forbids the disciples, saying: When you pray, do not be like the sad hypocrites, who love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, so that they may be seen by men (Matt. 6:5). They speak therefore the words or deeds of the people, when they set before the Lord the offenses of speech and action that must be blotted out by prayers. But they speak these things in the ears of the Lord, so that while they flee the testimony of men when praying, they may be heard more swiftly by Him who regards what is hidden. Therefore, when Samuel is reported to speak in the ears of the Lord, he surely suggests the manner by which one may deserve the hearing of divine favor. For a prayer can by no means reach God which is brought forth with the intention of being recognized by men. Whence also he who is declared to have spoken in the ears of the Lord is reported to have received His answers as well. For there follows: (Verse 22. And the Lord said to Samuel: Listen to the voice of the people, and establish a king over them.

13. In this matter it should be noted that Samuel spoke the words of the people, by which they had asked for a king, in the ears of the Lord; and the Lord declares Himself rejected in the fact that the people ask for a king. Therefore, when He responds to the one praying and commands the one praying to make a king, what else does He indicate except that the devout prayer of a chosen man is never fruitless? For if he did not obtain the correction of the people, he obtained the good of his own instruction, since he recognized the people as rejected for their evil request, and yet nonetheless knew what he himself ought to do for those who were cast off. The prophet, therefore, was able to be heard and not heard: because through praying he learned what he ought to be, but from the people demanding reprobate things, he did not remove the hardness of heart. But this he was able to obtain—he who spoke in the ears of the Lord—because holy men, by the very fact that they devoutly beseech the Lord on behalf of sinners, are fortified by the help of divine favor, so that they are in no way polluted by the crimes of those whose filth they cannot wash away by their prayers. But what does it

mean that the Lord says, "Listen to their voices," when it was said above, "Samuel heard all the words of the people"?

He had heard the words of the people so as to know what was being said, not so as to grant what was being asked. Therefore, when the Lord says to him, "Listen to the voice of the people, and set a king over them," He commanded the prophet to comply with the will of the people. And behold, as is plainly seen, the prophet praying is not heard, while the people rejecting God and asking for a king are heard. What shall we say this means, except that by the wondrous and fearful judgment of divine incomprehensibility, holy men praying on behalf of the reprobate cannot be heard, while in the fulfillment of their own depravities, the reprobate sinners themselves can be heard—so that for the latter, unbridled iniquity may increase the merit of eternal punishment, and for the former, the reward of perpetual recompense may grow from the affection of compassion? And immediately, beginning to show the order by which the appointment of that same king was reached, he says: (Verse 22. And Samuel said to all the sons of Israel: Let each one go to his own city.

14. When we wish to examine spiritual matters, it is necessary that we remove carnal things from our attention: because the inner mind does not penetrate what the dust of outward actions blinds. Therefore, when the prophet of the Lord commands all the people to depart to their own places, he drives from himself the tumult of carnal concerns: so that he may see more clearly the spiritual matters that must be arranged, insofar as the intention of earthly actions does not obscure the keenness of his mind. But indicating what sort of person is foreseen by divine judgment, he says:

CHAPTER 4.3 (1 SAMUEL 9:1-2)

There was a man of Benjamin, named Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of a man of Gemini, strong in might. And he had a son named Saul, chosen and good, and there was no man among the children of Israel better than he: from the shoulder and upward he stood taller than all the people. 1. When the person of the king to be appointed is set forth, why are the names of his fathers described, unless so that his kingdom might be perceived as not enduring? For concerning the kingdom which Moses had foreseen would come, he said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a ruler from his thigh, until he comes who is to be sent; and he shall be the expectation of the nations" (Gen. 49:10). Because therefore the

tribe of Judah had been foreseen for the lasting duration of the kingdom, the lineage of Kish is mentioned, so that the royal dignity which was being established in his son might be openly known to be dispensatory, not permanent. But he who begets the carnal king, Kish—that is, "hard" as it is rendered in our language—is also proclaimed strong in might. Now also many carnal people are within the holy Church who seem to do great things; yet they are carnal because they do not have the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are therefore strong in might because everything which they seem to do greatly is bodily. For Kish the father of Saul is called strong in might so that he might be understood to have possessed great bodily strength. He who is strong in might, therefore, is hard, because he who displays great things carnally does not have a heart softened through compassion in fraternal charity.

He acts powerfully in things which men outwardly cannot imitate, but inwardly he does not know how to be joined to fraternal minds through the affection of love. He does mighty things which God rejects, and he does not care to display the affection of charity which God approves. He is therefore hard, because while he does bodily things with a proud heart, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not soften his mind. Against this the holy man glories, saying: "God has softened my heart, and the Almighty has troubled me" (Job 23:16). And often those who imitate the ways of such people become rulers by the judgment of God. Whence also Saul is fittingly recorded to have been the son of Kish. 2. But it must be asked why the same Saul is said to be chosen and good, who is declared to be the son of a harsh man. But he is called chosen not according to grace, but according to judgment. He is also called good so that the disposition of divine equity may be commended. For even the evils that we often suffer on account of our sins, because they are inflicted on us through divine justice, are good. Whatever is just is certainly good. For by the justice of God, reprobate pastors are permitted to ascend to the governance of the holy Church; but those who are evil through iniquity are good by divine disposition; and those who are now chosen by the hidden ordering of God will ultimately be condemned at the universal judgment. Therefore, let the reprobate pastor be called chosen, because it is decreed by God's indignation that he should exist; and let him be called good, because he is justly permitted. Likewise, because he is provided as more useful than others for carrying out divine judgments, no one among the sons of Israel is

said to be better than he. He is also recorded as standing out above all the people from the shoulder and upward, because he who follows the ways of carnal men in his manner of living strives mightily to do what another cannot do. For the carnal ruler stands out above the entire people from the shoulder and upward, since in external matters he is strong beyond comparison.

3. All these words can also be understood as words of praise, by which, while the person of the king to be appointed is commended, the intention of those requesting a king is confounded. For they say: "A king shall be over us, and he shall judge us, and he shall fight our battles for us" (1 Sam. 8). He is called chosen and good, and that there was no one better than he among the sons of Israel, so that all good qualities might excel in the person of the requested king; but when he proves insufficient for what the people had proposed, human presumption is confounded, so that it wastes away in defeat. And indeed, as I said above, the king who is chosen to go before the people and fight their battles, when he is abandoned by divine help, perished overwhelmed in battle, and for the people whom he had led into those same battles, he became a cause not of salvation but of death. What, then, would the people attribute to God if he who had been chosen as king by God's judgment had not proven so suitable for carrying out what the people wanted? He can also be understood as chosen and good, as he is described, not as he was foreseen to be in the future. He is therefore called chosen and good, so that he is understood to have been chosen as such by the Lord—he who through disobedience was later rejected. For this reason, logic itself demands that what is said about him as chosen and good up to the time of his rejection, we should understand in a favorable sense.

CHAPTER 4.4

1. Therefore, repeating all things in summary, let us see what edification they contain in themselves according to another meaning. Because we said that in Samuel the new priesthood is signified, what does it mean that he grew old, except that while the holy Church is led through the passing spans of time, the beauty of conduct grows old in some priests? Now Samuel grew old because the vigor of authority withered. For Samuel was as if young when the order of priests, yearning only for heavenly desires, while seeking nothing earthly, the more effectively it could preach heavenly things, the more it nonetheless kindled the souls of those subject to them toward those things

by words and examples. For he was strong in vigor and radiated with youthful beauty, while he displayed the power of the heavenly word in the splendor of holy conduct: because whatever he could powerfully preach by speaking, he strove also to show by living sublimely. For he both gave life to dead souls by the word; but shining forth with the wondrous flower of youth, he raised dead bodies by his command. Since he both gave sight to the blind, walking to the lame, and healing to all infirmities, and he so radiated with the beauty of most holy conduct, that it was of greater virtue to be able to live in this manner than to aid others in that way.

Therefore Samuel flourished as if in youth, when in the order of priests there equally shone forth both the wonderful virtue of works and such immense beauty of holy conduct. But it has already been a long time since Samuel grew old. For many ages have elapsed, during which many of those by whose virtue the joys of the world should have been driven from the hearts of others follow the love of the world. Yet we do not say this as though the holy Church has no religious men: but that few are those who at the height of preaching have perfectly known how to despise the world and cling to the highest desires. Therefore it is aptly said that Samuel is both old and prophesies. He is indeed old, because he has lost the rigor of austere conduct in many: yet he does not cease to prophesy, because while he has some spiritual strength, he powerfully displays the virtue of the provident spirit. This can fittingly be understood of one and the same preacher. They are indeed old and prophesy, who are so dissolved through negligence that they teach well but live badly. They set their sons as judges when they establish in the dignity of the priesthood those who look upon the times of their more lax life. Yet the young are ordained by the old: because those who come to be promoted promise strong things. Indeed they pledge the strongest profession of the priestly life, whose virtue they do not possess in their future conduct.

Therefore the young are promoted: because those who ordain them do not raise them to the height of so great an order before they receive from them a profession of virtue. For first they instruct them both how sublimely they should live and how carefully they should teach: that they ought to live sublimely for this reason, that they may be able to preach profitably, that they should always direct the purpose of their life toward heavenly things, that they should not seek temporal rewards from the labor of preaching, that they should not show partiality in judgment, but arrange all things with

the just balance of equity: so that they may hear the difficulties of the ways of God, and say whether they are willing to undergo their labors. 2. Indeed, most people profess that they walk difficult paths while they seek after sacred orders; but when they arrive at what they sought, they neglect to maintain the steadfastness of their promise. Hence the sons of Samuel are fittingly reported not to have walked in his ways, but to have accepted bribes and perverted judgment. For the ways of Samuel are so called because they are set forth by the office of a preacher. His sons, therefore, do not walk in the ways of their father when those who ambitiously attain to sacred orders abandon the arduous paths of religious life shown to them by their elders, and by their perverse intention are plunged ever deeper into the desire for earthly things. Hence they are openly declared, after avarice, to have turned aside, accepted bribes, and perverted judgment. For those who neglect to labor for heavenly things must necessarily be bound more tightly in the desire for earthly ones. To turn aside after avarice is to be wholly carried away in intention by ambition for earthly things. For there are some who seek earthly gains through avarice, yet do not turn aside after avarice, because although they desire temporal things, they avoid incurring guilt in their pursuit of them. Those, therefore, turn aside after avarice who, for the sake of the earthly things they ardently seek, have no fear whatsoever of incurring guilt. They consider their own soul to be of less worth than anything they can covet. Hence comes violent plunder, hence secret thefts arise:

because those over whom the avaricious have power they oppress by violence, and upon those whose goods they cannot assault by force, they contrive to inflict theft. Often, too, those whom they cannot overpower by theft of hands, they ensnare by the falsehood of words. Hence the sons of Samuel, in an orderly progression, are marked out in the disordered confusion of avarice, when it is said: (1 Kings 8:3) "They turned aside after avarice, accepted bribes, and perverted judgment." 3. For those who perverted judgment in order to receive gifts did not seek the darkness of night to commit the theft of a coveted thing, but the darkness of reason. And it should be noted that the burning of avarice is the cause of accepting gifts, and the acceptance of gifts is the cause of perverting judgment: so that by the prophet's narration the depravity of this vice may be shown, not only how it advances in the hearts of the reprobate, but how it can be utterly uprooted from the minds of the saints. For if this perversity of judgment is born from the acceptance of gifts,

he who does not accept gifts does not pervert judgment, and he easily rejects offered gifts who has thoroughly uprooted the root of avarice from his heart. But we gather this fault of the sons of Samuel more fully by seeing than by speaking. For if we look at the desolate places of the Churches, where the father grows old, the sons incur the mark of avarice, of accepted gifts, and of perverted judgment: because where the person of the ruler is dissolved through shameful gains, the hearts of the subject flock are easily scattered, so that they live wickedly in themselves and offer examples of depravity to others. But it is pleasing to greatly admire in these things the judgments of almighty God.

For the sons of Samuel, while they turn aside after avarice, while they accept gifts for the purpose of perverting judgment, bestow examples of depravity upon the people over whom they preside. But the people themselves, when they ask for a king, cast down the prophet's sons from the height of power. But almighty God both receives the prayers of those asking for a king, and is angered that one is asked for. By these things we can certainly be disturbed, if we do not carefully examine their rationale. For what is more just than that he should fall by the judgment of the people, who so pursued the reprobate judgment of his own mind that the people following him would perish? But nevertheless, when priests live badly, they are not to be judged by laypeople. Therefore they worthily receive one more unworthy, who presumed to unworthily cast out one who was unworthy. For of the sons of Samuel it is said: "They accepted gifts and perverted judgments. But concerning that king whom the children of Israel request, very terrible threats are uttered, for it is said: "He will take your fields and olive groves, and give them to his servants" (1 Kings 8:14). And what wise person would not observe that it is more wicked to seize fields and vineyards by public violence than to exchange judgment under the pretext of truth in order to receive gifts? This fault is covered by a certain modesty, overshadowed by shame.

But that fault is seen as so much more wicked, the more openly and more atrociously it is perpetrated. But we have not yet arrived at discussing those times of the kingdom, in which these evils are described as happening even according to the letter: therefore while we speak according to our purpose about the chosen one and what is good, it seems useful that we also carefully examine how the law of the king, which is foretold, can be received in a good sense. For if it did not show something good spiritually, it would by no

means be said in this sacred history: "Samuel spoke to the people the law of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book and placed it before the Lord" (1 Kings 10:15). 4. What does it mean that the sons of the Israelites are said to be placed in the king's chariots? The chariots of the prelates of holy Church are their devout desires. For while they fervently seek heavenly joys, they are carried aloft as if in chariots. Hence Elijah is said to have been raised to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:1), because indeed one who does not seek heavenly joys through lofty and fervent desires cannot be raised to them. When, therefore, good hearers begin through the examples of preachers to despise earthly things and to love eternal things, the sons of the Israelites are indeed placed in the kings' chariots. And it should be noted that they are said both to be taken up and to be placed in chariots, because they must first be drawn away from carnal desires so that they may be properly inflamed by the fires of heavenly love. Because these earthly desires are not easily abandoned, the sons are said to be taken up. For it must happen through great violence that the chosen hearer completely abandons earthly desires and raises himself on high to heavenly things. Concerning this violence the Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent seize it" (Matt. 11:12). Concerning this Paul says: "No one will be crowned unless he has competed lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). This is also shown covertly by these words, because the sons who are taken up are said to be placed not on seats but in chariots.

The ancients were indeed accustomed to fight in chariots. And he who is carried in a chariot is borne lofty and terrible against the enemy. For chosen men are all the more lofty and terrible to hidden enemies the higher they have advanced in the sublimity of interior love. They are indeed lofty because the suggestion of evil spirits does not reach up to their intention. They are also terrible because they can reject the counsels of evil spirits all the more easily the more firmly they stand in the contemplation of heavenly joy through the vigor of their innermost affection. Indeed whenever this is said to those who are still carnal, the goodness of holy warnings is shown to them. This is as if he were saying: Because you seek the role of virtue, under its discipline you cannot be free for the leisure of life. Therefore they are also said to become the king's horsemen and pursuers of the royal chariots, tribunes and centurions. All these indeed belong to earthly warfare. Therefore when they are declared to become horsemen, pursuers of chariots, tribunes, and centurions, they are summoned to every exercise of war. They

are indeed horsemen when by the power of the spirit the flowing pleasures of their flesh are restrained and they rule with great power over all enticing impulses.

For he rides aloft as if on a horse who, set above his flesh through the good of chastity, free and swift, is able both to flee the enemy when he disdains him and to attack when he deigns to. Indeed through the fact that he has learned to rule well, he has received such increases of virtue that the enemy cannot withstand the charge as of a rushing horseman. And because in the strength of their virtue they follow the examples of the chosen Fathers, they are pursuers of the royal chariots. For the chariots of the king are the good examples of the chosen preacher. In them indeed he is shown both fighting and triumphing, because when we behold the holy works of the preacher, we indeed see him exalted both in the struggle of contest and in the power of triumph. But those oppressed by carnal desires can see him in his chariots but cannot pursue his chariots. For like foot soldiers on level ground they are sluggish in running, weak in battle. Therefore, that they may be able to pursue the royal chariots, let them first become horsemen, trample earthly desires, rule over their flesh, and glow white with the armor of chastity. Then indeed we can run after the chosen Fathers in spiritual battle all the more fittingly the more powerfully we strike the ranks of hidden enemies through that by which we laudably govern ourselves.

But if, as many manuscripts have it, we read not "pursuers" but "forerunners," it is not without a good meaning. A forerunner of the royal chariots is one who praises with his word the examples of the just. He certainly ought to be a horseman, because he is a worthless praiser who proclaims the lofty life and teaching of the saints which he by no means takes care to imitate with a lofty purpose. But he who knows how to set forth the life and teaching of others for the imitation of others already begins to be a master of spiritual warfare. Therefore it is well added: (1 Sam. 8:12) "And he will appoint for himself tribunes and centurions." 5. They are tribunes when they begin; centurions when they are perfected in spiritual teaching. For indeed, as we said above, a centurion is so called from the number one hundred. Tribunes can also be understood as spiritual men, simple in knowledge, but inflamed with love of God and neighbor. Although they do not know how to speak of lofty and spiritual things, nevertheless through the examples of the elect, which they know, they strive to kindle those whom they can to the love of the Cre-

ator. A tribe is indeed called a kinship, or an assembly. If therefore tribunes are so called from "tribe," those who bring forth the examples of the saints for the advancement of their neighbors are named tribunes. They come as an assembly, as it were, to destroy our rusticity, when they set before us those things by which holy men pleased almighty God. And when they set forth the particular virtues of very many saints, they open to us, as it were, the nobility of spiritual kinships. Centurions, therefore, can be understood as more perfect men, who, while they advance well under the teaching of preachers, become their hearers and co-workers. Concerning whom the Lord indeed says in the Gospel: 'Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder, who brings forth from his treasure things new and old' (Matt. 13:52). Such men indeed are not only outstanding in action, but also learned in the knowledge of God's word.

Hence they can exhort their neighbors to the struggle of spiritual warfare all the more usefully, inasmuch as they demonstrate in the work of virtue the lofty things which they know how to preach. They have words in their learning, and they have works as examples for the simple: so that the wise may understand the lofty things they speak, and those who do not perceive the secrets of words in their depths may imitate the works which they see outwardly. They are therefore appointed centurions when, by the perfection of virtue, they obtain the summit of dignity: so that they may live sublimely, and the more loftily they live, the more usefully they may teach. 6. But those who are centurions, when they have arranged the times of war, ought to advance: so that they may be recognized as bearing fruit in peacetime as well. After the tribunes, therefore, the centurions become plowers of fields and reapers of crops; so that they may open the hearts of the now-victorious with the plowshare of exhortation, from which they may reap more abundantly the wheat of good works. As if now indeed plowing in peace, they rouse to the practice of works of piety those hearts that had conquered spiritual assaults. And they reap the harvests when they rejoice that chosen works have sprung forth from the seed of the divine word which they had scattered in the hearts of their hearers. For just as they reap wheat from a field with sickles, so through the embrace of charity they receive from heavenly conversation that by which they may be satisfied with inner devotion.

7. But as long as we live in this life, we possess nothing in peace. For since the ancient enemy always opposes those who act well, it is necessary that we

always defend the things we do well. Wherefore they are also rightly said to become, after being plowers of fields and reapers of crops, makers of arms and chariots of the king. They make arms and chariots so that they may defend those very fields which they cultivate and those crops which they reap. They make a chariot so that they may be swift to meet adversaries, and arms so that they may be powerful. They mount the chariot so that with great force they may crush the camps of demons, and they carry arms so that they may destroy those whom they attack. In this lofty height of the chariot stood he who said: "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Whence also, now secure, he who appeared superior to all his enemies, affirming, said: "No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:39). But he who had mounted the chariot held arms; whence he also explains, saying: "But I so run, not as uncertainly; so I fight, not as one beating the air, but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. 9:26, 27). What then is more rightly expressed by this chariot than the loftiness of right intention? To make a chariot, therefore, is to raise up the height of right intention in the minds of hearers.

For those who obtain the ministry of preaching through the examples of their betters make chariots after the labor of plowing and reaping, when they teach their well-doing subjects that from all the good works they do, they should await only the rewards of eternal recompense. Indeed, to despise earthly things, to desire nothing transitory, to love eternal things, and to hasten toward them with great desires, is already to preside over a lofty chariot. Of which chariots indeed it is said through the Psalmist: "The chariot of God is multiplied ten thousandfold, thousands of those rejoicing; the Lord ascends in them" (Ps. 67:18). But their arms are keen counsels, by which they strike their enemies the more powerfully as they more quickly detect their cunning. Whence also that powerful one spoke as if armed: "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). He was also making arms when he said: "And the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:16, 17). The elect, placed in those chariots and arms, are indeed swift and powerful. Swift indeed, because while they desire spiritual things, they detect spiritual wickedness in a moment. And they are powerful, because while they more ardently

desire the highest things, whatever is suggested to them from the lowest love of the world, they count as nothing;

and like chariots carried by their weight, they have great force against enemies, who, filled with holy virtues and keen counsels, destroy in a moment all the temptations that are brought against them. Nor is it without meaning in this regard that a chariot, while it rolls along the ground, both lifts the lower part upward and brings the upper part downward. So indeed also the right intention of holy men, while from the earthly things it does it expects heavenly things, as it were directs upward the part that it drags along the ground. And because it humbles itself before the Creator both for its good work and for its expectation of eternal recompense, it as it were plunges toward the earth the part that it lifts upward. Our chariot indeed revolves unceasingly on its wheels, if from good work we always aim at eternal things, and from every height of our advancement we take care to be humble. These arms and chariots are indeed the king's when they are seen to differ in no way from the pattern and teaching of the preachers of holy Church. The elect preachers therefore make chariots and arms when they teach their hearers to hasten toward the heavenly homeland, both by the rectitude of intention and by the fortification of virtue. But there is nothing to prevent us from understanding all these things, which we have shown in the advancement of one person, as distributed individually among many.

We have shown indeed that the elect, advancing through the degrees of virtues, are first placed in chariots, then appointed as horsemen and runners before the royal chariots, established as tribunes, centurions, plowers, and reapers, and finally become makers of arms. But because holy Church makes use of the diverse ministries of the elect, whoever wishes may attribute individual gifts of graces to individual orders, so that each of these may be proper to those who are more closely joined to their respective dispositions. 8. What then is the meaning of what he adds: that the daughters of the Israelites would become perfumers, cooks, and bakers? But by the term "daughters" sometimes weakness is signified, sometimes fruitfulness. Who then are the daughters of the Israelites, if not chosen souls, prepared for the conception of the divine Word? They become the king's perfumers: because as they advance through the instruction of their preacher, they receive within themselves the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, through which they can wholesomely heal the brokenhearted. They also become cooks: because while they are

filled with the fervor of the Holy Spirit, by their example they kindle the hearts of their neighbors to love of the Creator. They become bakers, when they restore chosen souls with the nourishment of the Word of God. The daughters therefore become perfumers when they heal the wounds of sinners. Cooks, when they set ablaze hearts purged from the filth of sins toward the pursuit of good works by the example of their virtue. And they are bakers when, to those advancing through their examples, they no longer set forth examples, but bring forth words of deep knowledge; so that, fed as it were with solid food, they may act all the more strongly, inasmuch as, now spiritually instructed, they more fervently desire eternal things. There follows: (Verse 14.) "And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants."

9. What are the fields, what are the vineyards, what are the olive groves that are taken from us by the right of rulers? But the holy preachers, when they speak for the correction of sinners, rebuke the pleasures of the flesh, the lusts of the mind, and the pretenses of good works. For if the pleasures of the flesh were not the fields of wicked possession, the Apostle would never say: "He who sows in the flesh, from the flesh shall reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8). To sow in the flesh, indeed, is to bury the purpose of the mind in the pleasures of the body. And they truly reap corruption from the flesh, because in the resurrection of the elect they shall in no way receive the renewal of eternal incorruption. By the name of vineyards, the lusts of the mind are also rightly represented, because they intoxicate the hearts of the reprobate and estrange them from the knowledge of truth. Criticizing the fruit of this vine, Moses says: "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the suburbs of Gomorrah; their grape is a grape of gall, and their cluster most bitter" (Deut. 32:32). For he draws his vine from the vineyard of Sodom and his shoot from Gomorrah, who fills his mind with the most abominable lusts. For he makes, as it were, a vineyard, who thereby forgets eternal things, by which he is also intoxicated through lusts;

and he who refreshes himself as if under the shade of a vineyard and the pleasantness of depraved delight, prepares for himself the retribution of eternal fire. Hence, most fittingly setting forth the fruit of that same vineyard, he called it a grape of gall and a cluster of bitterness. For the grape is pleasing to the sight but gall to the taste — delighting the eye, embittering the palate — because indeed what it lusts after greatly pleases the reprobate

mind, but in eternal punishment what is now sweet to it turns bitter. The king, therefore, takes away our fields when the chosen preacher by his words removes the joyful impulses of our flesh in its delight. He takes away the vineyards when he utterly cuts off the intoxicating lusts from our heart. He also takes away the olive groves when he rebukes the works of false mercy, when by rightly exhorting he suggests that there is no merit in a work unless it proceeds from the purpose of a good intention.

10. But it must be earnestly inquired why these things are said to be given to the servants of the king. For if these things are justly taken from us, who will there be to whom they may not be unworthily assigned? Yet if we examine this more carefully, we find that our holy preachers are great in their dominions. Who then are these servants, if not those of whose head the Lord says to blessed Job: "Will you take him as a servant forever? (Job 40:23) For evil spirits are the servants of holy men — in this life perpetual servants, and in the next life eternal servants. For daily they bring about that by which holy men are crowned. For since from the battle of this life the victory of eternal glory is granted to us, those who renew against us those wars by which we are led to eternal rest assuredly render us great services. They are also the servants of the victors, as the Truth testifies: "By whom a man is overcome, of the same he is made a servant" (2 Peter 2:19). For while they stir up battles against those who will be victorious, they serve those who are thereby crowned, inasmuch as these for a time valiantly withstand their attacks. But because what advances the glory of the saints increases for evil spirits as an addition to their damnation, the fields, vineyards, and olive groves that are taken away are assigned to the servants.

Indeed, demons will be punished with eternal punishment for all their wickedness. In the encounter of the hidden contest, when the elect conquer, they assign the evils which they repel to their enemies: because the former are tested as gold in the furnace (Wisdom 3:6), while the latter are punished for their wicked suggestion. Therefore the servants receive the fields, vineyards, and olive groves: because when sinners return to life through the preaching of teachers, this also contributes to the heap of damnation for the demons — that the penitent were held so long in past sin by their deceit. These things are also given to the servants when sinners, converted to the Lord through the office of the preacher, recognize that they were held in love of their past crimes by the deceit of demons. 11. But what does it mean

that the crops and the returns of the vineyards are said to be tithed and given to the eunuchs and servants of the king? The crops of the elect are tithed when we gather their most excellent works so that we may bring them forth as an example for the faithful. For there was only one who had in himself the fullness of all virtues, into whom all the fullness of the Godhead poured itself bodily (Col. 1:19). But we, because we have all received from his fullness, possess the gifts of graces in divided portions. Hence Paul says: "To one indeed is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of speeches, to another faith in the same Spirit, to another the working of powers, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:8). By the number ten, because it is perfect, we tithe the virtues when we gather the gifts of individual elect persons for the lesser ones to imitate. For it is written of Moses: "He was the meekest of all men on earth" (Num. 12:3). Of Abraham also it is said: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). When therefore we wish to imitate gentleness together with faith, it is necessary that from the example of Moses and Abraham, as from choice crops, food be tithed for the refreshment of our mind.

Just so, just so indeed, preachers bring forth the chastity of Joseph (Gen. 39:8), the patience of Job (Job 1:21), the zeal of Phinehas (Num. 25:7) as an example for us: because when they display the virtues of the perfect, they gather, as it were, the tithes of choice harvests, which they may set before those who are making good progress. Hence also it is rightly said that these same tithes of the fruits are given to the eunuchs and servants. Eunuchs, indeed, are those who by strength of soul have crushed in themselves all the fuel of lust. Of whom the Lord certainly says in the Gospel: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12). Servants are those who still serve under another's care in the pursuits of the active life and cannot yet go forth free to the heights of charity. These are also found in Moses to owe six years of service to their masters (Exod. 21:2), so that in the seventh they may go forth free: because indeed they must first be perfected in works so that they may be able to go forth in due order into the summit of contemplation. The teacher therefore assigns the tithes of the harvests to the eunuch-servants when those who obey him in the splendor of chastity follow the chosen works of the great ones.

He also assigns the tithes of the vineyards when he shows them with what wondrous charity our Fathers loved God and neighbor, so that they too may strive to be filled with the same abundance of charity, and as though inebriated and forgetful of things past, may love only the things to come, and not fail to run fervently toward them. 12. After all these things, the servants and maidservants of the Israelites, the best young men, are declared to be taken away and put to the king's work. Who are the servants of the carnal, except those who, by the example of the wicked, have been so corrupted by long habit that they seem to have perpetually subjected the necks of their minds under the yoke of most wicked imitation? Their servants, therefore, are taken away when, by the zeal of chosen preachers, even those abandon their sins who seemed to be vehemently subjected to the reprobate imitation of the carnal. They are also called the best young men. They are young, indeed, because they are strong in evil; they are also called the best because they are more wicked than the rest of sinners. To whom, of course, it is said through the prophet: "Woe to you who are mighty at drinking wine, and men of strength at mixing drunkenness" (Isaiah 5:22). They drink wine, indeed, who by deliberation of mind recklessly take in the heat of concupiscence, and they mix drunkenness, because while they are inflamed by the fires of their lusts, they know not how to return to the ways of righteousness, their reason being lost. They are mighty and strong both at drinking and at mixing drunkenness, so that on account of their fervent devotion to evil they are shown to be, as it were, the best servants. These best young men the divine word likewise points out when it describes the greed of the devil, saying: "His food is choice" (Habakkuk 1:16). For the ancient enemy is greatly refreshed by the wickedness of those who are more wicked than the most wicked.

13. By the name of maidservants, that most wicked condition of sinners is designated—those who through iniquity are exceedingly depraved and furnish examples of wickedness to others. For like maidservants they bear slaves, since they are not only workers of great iniquity but also mothers of it. But because through the preaching of the saints even such people are converted, who afterward render great services to almighty God, the servants and maidservants are fittingly said to be taken away and placed in the work of the king. Did not the King of kings then take a maidservant when He said of that great sinful woman: "Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much" (Luke 7:47)? And He placed her in His work when He entered the vil-

lage and she received Him in her house (Luke 10:38). He also placed her in His work because, rising from the dead, He entrusted to her the proclamation of His resurrection (Mark 16:7). He also took a servant when He called Matthew from the profit of the tax booth to follow Him. He placed him too in His work, because Matthew provided a banquet for Him in his house and He made him a preacher to Ethiopia, an Evangelist of the converted world (Matt. 9:9; Mark 1:14; Luke 5:27). Therefore, because through the ministry of preachers even those return to the Lord of whose salvation human thought could have despaired, the servants and maidservants and finest young men are fittingly described as being placed in the work of the king.

14. By the name of male and female servants, the movements of the heart and its affections can be understood. For when they suggest wicked things to us, they are male servants; when the affections of the mind desire to submit themselves to the suggestions of depraved impulses, they are female servants. Then indeed it is necessary that we master both through the rigor of our resolve. Preachers take away our male and female servants when they instruct the movements of our hearts and affections as to how they should be directed toward the service of God. They place them in the work of the king when we now exercise that very service of almighty God which we learned through their instruction. Moreover, what is more fittingly represented by donkeys than the lustful movements of the soul? They are placed in the work of the king when that mind which was accustomed to be moved to lasciviousness by depraved thoughts profits from the preaching of the teacher and directs its affections toward the desire of imitating chastity. By the name of male servants, female servants, and donkeys can be designated those who vigorously render bodily service to worldly men. But they are placed in the work of the king, because once converted to the service of almighty God, they endure spiritual labors all the more devoutly for eternal recompense, the more clearly they recognize that they had been enduring great things without fruit.

The king is also said to tithe the flocks, because whoever desires to please almighty God must be clean through innocence and intent upon the pursuit of good works. By the former he is a good tree; by the latter he also bears fruit. Since indeed we employ many things in order to preserve innocence and to be able to perform good works, these very crowds of innocent thoughts are our flocks. What then does it mean that they are tithed, except

that the subtlety of thoughts is not easily discerned? For often we think we are thinking good things which, when carefully examined, are not good. Therefore the flocks must be tithed, so that only what is contained in the number ten belongs to the king's right. This is rightly accomplished in us when, through the instruction of our preachers, we learn to be perfect not only in the performance of works but also in the examination of thought. Finally it is said: (Verse 17. And you shall be his servants.

15. So that, namely, they may know themselves to be subject to his authority in such a way that they dare not transgress his commands. The Lord indeed wished to establish this royal dominion when He said: "Whatever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). This power also He demanded from His subjects, who said: "If anyone shall preach to you a gospel other than what I have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8). Likewise the Lord, sending His disciples to preach, says: "He who hears you, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me" (Luke 10:16). Hence concerning the preachers of Judea the Lord says to those same disciples: "Whatever they shall tell you, do" (Matt. 23:3). We are therefore servants of our kings, when we are so subjected to the authority of our prelates that we presume to do nothing apart from their authority. Since, therefore, those who strengthen their virtues in the power of obedience are set over them, at the end of the royal law it is said: "And you shall be his servants" — so that faithful subjects may then also recognize that they ought to be subject to the command of their preachers, when through the advancement of virtues they are led to the heights of perfection. The Truth itself also taught this to the disciples in these very words, saying: "When you have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10). Nevertheless, because He was speaking these things to carnal men, He added, saying (v. 18): "And you will cry out on that day before the face of the king, and the Lord will not hear you on that day, because you asked for yourselves a king."

16. Those who had asked for a king cry out from the face of the king, when those who had vowed to lead a spiritual life under a good ruler attempt to abandon the labors of that same life. Indeed, all are recognized by their face. Therefore the face of the king is the known manner of life and teaching of a good preacher. Because they do hard and harsh things for the sake of eternal life and command hard things, their carnal subjects strive not to im-

itate but to flee from their life and doctrine. For those who had asked for a king, whose appearance they did not know, then see the face of the king; because they consider how laborious is the strictness of the heavenly journey in their superior, which they had desired as if it were an easy thing before they knew it. Then those who had asked for a king cry out from the face of the king; because while they are unwilling to abandon the habit of carnal life, they strive to escape the praiseworthy imitation of the excellent pastor whom they had wanted to be set over them. And because with a blind heart they cannot see the light, they cry out to the Lord, that is, they beseech the Lord that they might escape the spiritual yoke of God. But the Lord does not hear them on that day. What is that day on which the reprobate subjects beseech the Lord, if not the pursuit of vain prosperity? They are not heard; because indeed it never happens through divine grace that subjection once promised to good rulers can freely go out to the pleasures of the world. Therefore he also added the reason, saying: (Verse 18.) Because you asked for yourselves a king.

17. As if to say: The promised subjection to spiritual pastors is indissoluble. You ask for a king easily enough, but because royal authority is burdensome, you cannot easily escape their power. Because we say this with regard to the historical sense, we think it should be noted that almighty God, while foretelling the rights of a king, bestows upon religious superiors a pattern of governance. Why? So that those who command the most strict way of life should not easily grant entrance to newcomers. For this reason also the best teacher of that most strict life, a disciple well-trained by the highest Truth, commands, saying: "Test the spirits, whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). And likewise: "Let the hard and difficult things through which one goes to God be announced to him, so that he may know what he is entering into. The Lord therefore proclaims the rights of a king — let him speak, let him know all things, what sort of carnal persons will exist under his rule — and so that the weak may not easily approach the life of virtue, strong superiors should by no means easily accept the weak. For swiftness of conversion most often arises from rashness of counsel, not from growth of devotion. For when the weak promise strong things, it is not a proven strength of soul but a confusion of discernment. The wise man admonishes all such persons under a single designation when he says: "Do not lift a burden above yourself.

Therefore those who preside over others in the strong resolution of the regular life ought to receive converts to that same life with all the more discernment, inasmuch as it is all the more useful to know beforehand whether the petition of those approaching comes from strength of soul or from rashness of will. For those who are fickle in their actions are accustomed to eagerly desire the harshness of the spiritual life, so that they may appear to desire what they seek with great strength of soul. (Verses 19–20. But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said: "By no means! Rather, a king shall be over us, and we too shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us, and he shall go out before us, and he shall fight our battles for us. Because this has been expounded at length above, we are detained needlessly in examining it further. There follows: (Verse 21. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he spoke them in the ears of the Lord.

18. To hear the voice of the people is to recognize outwardly what those seeking the habit of holy life say. For we hear, as it were, only the voice of those approaching, when we know what they assert outwardly; but what kind of people they will be amid the assertions of their promise, we do not see. Therefore we ought to speak these things in the ears of the Lord, so that He Himself may receive the words of their promise: He who, while hearing the words, examines the hearts, and from the course of their progress, demands the returns of vigorous work. Let the minds of our novices hear this and tremble: because indeed what they say to us, we speak in the ears of the Lord. For what they promise before us, we offer to God, so that He Himself may now hold from our hands what He will demand an account of. This freedom of the superior is indeed the obligation of the subject: because he is subjected to a stricter judgment in proportion as he can more clearly know that he must render an account to almighty God for what he answers. Therefore, when we offer to God the things that novices promise, we give to Him, as it were, the written bond that they make to us. And because this is done in secret, Samuel is said to have spoken in the ears of the Lord the things that the people had said. For we speak in the ears of friends when we conceal from outsiders what we say. There follows: (Verse 21.) And the Lord said to Samuel: Hear their voice, and establish a king over them.

19. Above, the prophet, foreseeing the future, said: 'You will cry out to the Lord, and He will not hear you, because you asked for a king for yourselves.'

But now the Lord says: 'Listen to their voice, and appoint a king over them' (1 Kings 8:18). What is shown to us through this, except that it is often divinely inspired in the good rulers of holy Church to subject to the pursuits of the heavenly life those who are afterward not devout under the discipline of the same profession? These will indeed afterward cry out from before the face of their king, and yet by divine command they receive a king: because those are divinely inspired to approach the service of God devoutly whom the anxious care of pastors, involving great labor, must restrain under the bond of that same service for the increase of their eternal reward. They are said to cry out to the Lord from before the face of their king; but let the kings themselves hear what the prophet sent by the Lord responds, so that they may know what they ought to do amid those very outcries. 'He will not hear you', he says. Therefore neither should they themselves give ear. For those who are lukewarm in holy monasteries must be healed, as though sick; they are not to be cast out, as though dead. For if they have been sent by the Lord, they will come to their senses amid the applications of spiritual ointments.

Let the Lord therefore say: 'Appoint a king over them': because indeed many come devoutly to the service of God who are then permitted to grow cold, but through the zeal of pastors—to whose authority they had submitted themselves by divine inspiration—they are rekindled to the love of the heavenly homeland. But now he sets forth what kind of pastor is fit for these things, saying: (1 Kings 9:1–2) 'There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a man of Jemini, mighty in strength. And he had a son whose name was Saul, chosen and good, and there was no man of Israel better than he; from the shoulder and upward he stood above all the people.' 20. What does it mean that when the king to be appointed is shown, the names of the fathers are proclaimed, unless that he is unworthily taken up to the leadership of the holy Church who does not maintain the nobility of the holy Fathers in his conduct? Moreover, six names of fathers are assigned, so that the perfection of their holy way of life in good action might be designated. For the world was created in six days and is completed in six ages. Therefore there are six fathers who are named in the order of the genealogy of the chosen pastors of the holy Church: because indeed those who obtain the summit of perfection in the pattern of those who follow are sons by imitation. But the father of the king, Kish, is said to mean "hard": because

surely those whom the holy preachers imitate are not lax in life and zeal. For they are hard because they do not speak soft things to sinners; they are also hard because, in order to correct others well, they demonstrate in their own conduct the hard things they prescribe to them. For he seemed hard who rebuked the Jews, saying: "O generation of vipers, who has shown you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth worthy fruits of repentance" (Matt. 3:7). But he who was hard to others was not lenient with himself. For to show that he maintained the harshness of penance that he preached, the Evangelist says:

"He had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt around his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6). To Ezekiel also it is said: "Behold, I have made your forehead harder than their foreheads; I have made your face like diamond and flint" (Ezek. 3:8). But he who came so hard against those hard in evil, to show that he was about to speak the hard things that were coming, wept for seven days in their midst before he spoke. For thus he says: "And I sat where they sat, and I remained seven days mourning in their midst. Therefore, because the holy preachers are not gentle and meek toward obstinate sinners, and because they practice what they preach harshly, Saul is rightly called the son of a hard man. For the chosen preacher ought to imitate those who both preach sharp things and observe what they say. Whence also concerning the same father of the king it is added: "strong in might. There are some within the holy Church who are strong in pride and arrogance. For they do great things; but when people cease to praise the things they do, they themselves cease to do those great things. Therefore he is strong in might who has from the Holy Spirit the virtue that he displays in good work. Concerning this might, Anna prophesied above (1 Sam. 2:4) in her canticle, saying: "The weak have been girded with strength. Concerning this the Lord promises the disciples, saying:

"Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In this might he walked strongly, of whom it is written: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). He therefore who is called hard is declared strong in might: because chosen men, while they preach the highest things, demonstrate mighty deeds; and everything lofty they prescribe and everything great they do, they accomplish in the power of the Holy Spirit. Concerning whom it is fittingly added: "And he had a son whose name was Saul, chosen and good. For he who is an imitator of such

men is useful not only for the labor of ministry but fit for the fruit of inheritance. Indeed, Judas too was chosen for ministry; but because he was not good, he lost the right of succession. Who then are signified by Saul, still chosen and good, if not the chosen imitators of the holy Fathers, who are useful to others through teaching and to themselves through their way of life; who are able so to govern others that they by no means cease to provide for themselves? For they are chosen and good because they so seek the gain of others that they suffer no losses of their own. For they are full in themselves, overflowing to others, and from their own abundance they so give to others that they lose nothing of their own fullness.

They have what they may offer to others, yet having what can suffice for themselves, they offer to no one at their own expense. They strive so to supply oil to others that the fuel of their light is not taken from them: so that while they illuminate others, they do not extinguish themselves. Rightly therefore he is called chosen and good: because certainly he who takes up the governance of the holy Church ought to be rich, adorned with spiritual gifts and the fullness of merits. And because those who excel must be chosen from the common order, it follows: "And there was not among the children of Israel a better man than he. His excellence is indeed commended when it is added: "From the shoulder and upward he stood above all the people. By this bodily appearance, in the person of the bishop to be ordained, the deeds of virtue are prefigured. For what is designated by the shoulder if not strength? But he who from the shoulder and upward stood above all the people was of such lofty stature that he who was tallest among the people reached only to the shoulder of the king; while the future king surpassed the height of all by his neck and head. But what are the heads if not the minds of the subject people?

When they are greatly stretched, they reach up to the shoulder of the king to be ordained, because he who is sought for the summit of governing the holy Church ought to be of such perfection that whatever the people wish to set before themselves as good works, he ought to demonstrate in his own conduct. For the heads of the people touch, as it were, the shoulder of the king when their hearts find in their pastor whatever virtue they seek. But the king excels by his neck, and excels by his head. For what is designated by the neck if not speech, and what by the head if not the contemplation of the mind? Therefore he surpasses the heads of all his subjects by head and neck if

he is admirable in the height of contemplation and in the sublimity of teaching. For he is, as it were, lofty by his head when he contemplates those things about the heavenly secrets that others cannot contemplate. He also has his neck above others, who, admirable in the height of his speech, cannot be equaled by others. For he had, as it were, raised his head on high who said: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows" (2 Cor. 12:1-2). But as a chosen and good king, to show that his neck also rose above all heads, he said:

"He heard secret words which it is not lawful for a man to speak" (2 Cor. 12:4). But why do we marvel at his neck, as it were towering, in those things he kept silent? Let us equal him, if we can, in those things he said. From the neck of the apostle Paul proceeded his epistles, and although wise men have been expounding them since that time, they still strive to better understand what he said. And though they daily advance in learning from him, as if straining toward the summit of his neck, they can by no means reach it. Let the king therefore stand out by his neck, stand out by his head, be lofty by his shoulder: so that he may be perfect in conduct, admirable in speech, above all others exalted on the heights of contemplation. But he who is great in conduct, preeminent in speech, raised above all in contemplation, before he arrives at the summit of governance, ought to have outward signs of fraternal charity: that is, he should have such concern for his neighbors that he seeks the gain of souls for eternal life. Rightly therefore it is added in the type of these men: (Verses 3-4) "Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost; and Kish said to Saul his son: Take with you one of the servants, and arise, go and seek the donkeys.

And when they had passed through Mount Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha and had not found them, they also passed through the land of Shaalim and they were not there, and through the land of Benjamin and did not find them." 21. Kish, who is called harsh, signifies not only his elect, but also the Redeemer himself. For no one was harsher toward himself than he. For the prophet, indicating the severity of this harshness, says: "Truly he himself bore our infirmities, and he himself carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). For to die is not to suffer for mortals, who are subject to the suffering of a condemned nature. He therefore was exceedingly harsh toward himself, who had nothing in himself by which he might suffer; but in order to free us by

suffering, he graciously assumed that by which he might be harsh toward himself and be able to suffer. The donkeys of Kish are sinful souls (1 Sam. 10). Because even though they have been regenerated in the faith of the Redeemer, they are called stubborn; and lost donkeys, because through uncleanness they have been separated from his service. Hence it is that, as he was heading toward his passion, he sat upon a loosed donkey and her colt (Matt. 21:7), to show openly that he had come to suffer for this purpose: to come to the aid of sinners. For he acknowledged that he was seeking lost donkeys when he said: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). These donkeys he both sought by himself, and still sends preachers to seek them.

Therefore Kish tells his son to seek the donkeys, when the Redeemer commands the hearts of the elect by spiritual inspiration to go forth into the ministry of preaching. But those going forth in the office of preaching, because they ought to bring with them only spiritual understanding, are commanded to take one of the servants. For he takes one servant who, while going forth to provide others a pattern of living, is spiritual in everything he does. For he took one of the servants, of whom it was foretold: "He himself will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). He had taken one servant with him, who says: "We have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God" (1 Cor. 2:12). Hence he says again: "We have the mind of Christ" (ibid., 16). Hence through Ezekiel it is said of the holy living creatures: "Where the impulse of the spirit was, there they went" (Ezek. 1:12). Therefore, when seeking the donkeys, he takes one of the servants: when he who newly begins to seek the gain of souls arranges to do all things spiritually, whatever he thinks to do. But to find the donkeys is to behold sinners converted in the light of holiness. For like lost donkeys they are not found, when in the darkness of sins, reprobate hearts bury themselves.

22. And because through the five senses of the body they fall into those same darkneses of sins, they are sought in five regions where they cannot be found, namely Mount Ephraim, the land of Shalisha, and Shaalim, and the land of the Benjaminites, and Zuph. For everyone is hidden where he is cast down through sin; and as one who is lost, it is not known where he is, when he abandons the light of justice in which God placed him. Hence it is that in paradise after the sin, He seeks the first man, saying: "Adam, where are you?"

(Gen. 3:9). As if to say: Because I do not find you in the light in which I placed you, show yourself where you have placed yourself. Hence He inquires about the dead Lazarus, saying: "Where have you laid him? (John 11:34). But the one whom He sought as lost, He commanded to come forth that He might find him, saying: "Lazarus, come out. Therefore man is lost when he sins; he is found when, now repenting, he declares his sin against himself. For since through the sacred Scriptures the sinner is commanded: "Declare your iniquities first, that you may be justified" (Isa. 43:26, according to the LXX), when the one who has sinned begins to be justified by confessing, he is now seen in the light, where he is now found to be placed. Now Saul, who seeking the donkeys did not find them, represents the character of a learned preacher, but one newly beginning.

Almighty God indeed does not allow him to bear the fruit of preaching, lest he esteem the conversion of sinners as a cheap thing, since he can easily convert them to the Lord. The conversion is therefore delayed, so that the converted may be cherished all the more; and the preacher loves them all the more greatly, the more clearly he sees that he cannot quickly win them over. But while holy men cannot convert others through their preaching, they begin to fear intensely for themselves—lest they displease Almighty God in the very thing by which they thought they were greatly pleasing Him. And it often happens that the hearts of new preachers are so frightened that they now resolve to abandon the office of preaching itself and to devote themselves to God through silence. For this reason it is added: (Verse 5. "When he had come to the land of Zuph and had not found them, Saul said to his servant: Come, let us return, lest perhaps my father has stopped thinking about the donkeys and is anxious for us."

23. He deliberates about returning to his father who, having set aside the intention of preaching, desires to be free for God in the secret of silence. He is said to return who is reported to have been sent before. For the sons are, as it were, in the presence of their father when chosen men linger in the secret contemplation of the Redeemer. They return, therefore, when from the public work of holy preaching they come to search out the joys of eternal brightness. But because holy men do nothing without counsel, Saul consulted the boy about the return to his father. For we consult the boy when with attentive mind we take care that what we attempt to arrange should not differ from spiritual understanding. Indeed, he had resolved to return to his

father who said: "I said, I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue. I set a guard over my mouth, when the sinner stood against me" (Psalm 38:1-2). The sinner stands against the preachers when, in response to their preaching, he does not abandon the state of his iniquity. And because the preacher then proposes to be silent toward him and to be free for God, so that he may return to the Father, he becomes mute. But because through silence he better learned the will of God, his heart grew warm, and with the fire of inward meditation blazing forth, he spoke. This is shown also in this passage, because the boy, when consulted, bestows counsel upon the one consulting him, saying: (Verse 6) "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, a noble man; everything he says comes to pass without ambiguity. Now therefore let us go there; perhaps he will show us our way for which we have come."

24. He calls Samuel a man of God, in whom we have already said that the preachers of Holy Church are designated. He is indeed called a man out of reverence for his holy manner of life, and everything he speaks is declared to come without ambiguity: because whatever he threatens concerning eternal punishments, whatever he promises to the just concerning eternal joy, comes to pass just as he announces it, and the impious shall go away to punishment and the elect to glory. He is also said to be in the city: because a chosen pastor is known to be always vigilant in the common guardianship of the people subject to him. The pastor is in the city, because while he guards others, he is fortified in himself. Whence also through the prophet, in the praises of all men of God, it is said under the description of one: "He shall dwell on high; the fortifications of rocks shall be his loftiness" (Isa. 33:16). For the higher he is raised up in the vision of the eternal citizens, the stronger he is found to be in himself, and the more useful to his neighbors.

25. He is also called noble: because he is conspicuous for his heavenly manner of life, and has nothing of the rusticity of worldly life. For he is seen to be noble from the same source whence he is a citizen. For secular men, because there is no composure of morals in them, are rustic, as though nurtured in outlying places. For from their habitual dishonesty of mind, they produce unseemly movements of body; and like those who are very degenerate, they do not know the bearing of urbane custom, while through everything they do, they cover the appearance of their life with the vileness of earthly obscurity. On the contrary, the men of God are noble, who while

they vigorously pursue the things that are divine, shine with heavenly light in all their work: and they have nothing of degeneracy, who in the great light of all their conduct display the rays of their celestial origin. To this end, therefore, Saul is led by the boy, that he may be instructed: because those who are to be placed on the height of prelacy are admonished to submit themselves to the spiritual understanding of perfect preachers through their teaching. He who says this admonishes us to be led by this boy: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18). But it must be asked why it is said with hesitation: "If perhaps he may show us our way, on account of which we have come.

But because he desires to learn spiritual things, because he longs to receive great gifts, he cannot know whether he is worthy of those same gifts. Therefore he begins to doubt, who does not presume that he merits such great things by his own merits. Which doubt indeed arises in the elect from the virtue of humility. Wherefore also in the voice of the accompanying boy it is said to Saul: "If perhaps he may show us our way. Because indeed the spiritual sense suggests that we should not think lofty things of ourselves, not presume boldly concerning almighty God, but seek His gifts with the utmost reverence of holy fear. Rightly therefore he is called a boy, who is proclaimed as always teaching humble things. Therefore when he says, "Let us go there," and suddenly adds, "If perhaps he may show us our way," he openly indicates that the Spirit of God works in the understanding of the elect, while He both makes them approach devoutly to seek spiritual gifts, and makes them fear with great reverence the omnipotence of the Giver. Whence also he who is led by the spirit is said to look upon the poverty of his own merits, when it is added: (Verse 7. "And Saul said to his boy: Behold, we shall go, but what shall we bring to the man? The bread has failed in our bags, and we have no small basket to give to the man of God, nor anything else."

26. The minds of the humble have this characteristic: that they possess spiritual gifts, but do not regard themselves in those things which they possess. For because they receive the gifts of virtues from the Holy Spirit, therefore the Holy Spirit, who bestows the gifts, removes them from their own estimation, so that they may have these things in the virtue of their conduct, but not have them in the swelling of pride. Rightly therefore it is said of Saul: 'From the shoulder and upward he was taller than all the people.' And he said to his servant: 'The bread has failed in our bags, and we have no bas-

ket'—because chosen men, fit for governing the summit of holy Church, even regard themselves as small through humility in that very thing in which they are great through virtue. And indeed they have bread for the refreshment of the souls of the faithful in the wisdom of the word, and the basket in the memory of inner meditation. For when they preserve in memory for the instruction of the faithful those things which they gather in secret meditation, they store bread, as it were, in a basket. For concerning these baskets it is said in the Gospel: 'They filled seven baskets with the fragments' (Matt. 15:37; Mark 8:8).

When loaves abound on the Lord's table, the baskets are commanded to be filled—because when the soul of the elect is refreshed in the heavenly contemplation of the Redeemer, it is instructed in that same contemplation of the truth, so that the nourishment of the word, which is seen to grow abundantly in itself, may be stored in the memory for the instruction of the faithful. They also abundantly have something else besides bread and a basket—those who, along with the virtue of contemplation and the teaching of the word, abound in a wealth of holy works. Therefore, so that the humility of the saints may resound in the speech of the king about to be appointed, he says: 'The bread has failed in our bags, and we have no basket to give to the man of God, nor anything else'—because the Holy Spirit makes those who are being prepared for the governance of the ecclesiastical summit great in the virtue of their inner gift, but altogether small in the regard of their own estimation. Let the servant therefore say: 'Let us go there, if perhaps he may show us about our way.' But let Saul look upon himself as empty—because the Holy Spirit, while he instructs the senses of those living uprightly, makes them now bold, now timid. Bold indeed, so that they may venture forth; timid, lest they become proud. He impels them to seek what is necessary; he holds them back, lest by presuming too much they fall into the vice of rashness.

And because those whom he makes fearful he raises up to venture forth through the strength of confidence, it is suddenly added: 'And so the servant of Saul answered again and said:' (Verse 8) 'Behold, there is found in my hand a fourth part of a silver stater; let us give it to the man of God, and he will show us about our way.' 27. As it were, the boy speaks the good understanding of the chosen man, when he is impelled to speak by the direction of the Holy Spirit. What then is it that he says: "There is found in my hand a fourth

part of a stater of silver"? What is this part of a stater of silver? But because by the name of silver the divine words are signified, silver in the hand of the boy is the divine word in the power of knowing. Indeed, it is one thing to be able to speak the word, and another to be able to feel it. For even the reprobate speak the divine words, but none except the elect can truly feel them. For that thing is truly felt whose power is recognized. For the sick also eat fish, but the force of their sickness takes from them the experience of taste, so that what they seem to eat, they are prevented from also tasting. Just so indeed, all carnal persons, when they speak of heavenly things which they do not love, like the sick make use of things which they are prevented from tasting. Therefore silver is found in the hand of the boy, when through the merit of humility holy men receive the heavenly things they speak of with great affection of charity, so that it is very sweet for them to speak of heavenly things, because they are sweetly, and indeed very sweetly, satisfied through love. Whence also it is written:

"The poor shall eat and be satisfied" (Psalm 21:27). For because the food of the soul is the word of God, the poor eat and are satisfied, but the rich cannot be satisfied; because indeed the elect, who love heavenly things, as often as they hear these things, are more fervently inflamed toward them; while the reprobate speak and hear heavenly things, which they receive with no sweetness for the refreshment of their mind. But a fourth part of a stater of silver is said on account of the quality of the time. For that we may see the other parts of this stater, we must consider the prophets, apostles, and martyrs. For because according to the quality of the time the sound of preaching has been distributed to each order, each as it were held a fourth part of the stater. The prophets therefore presented their fourth part of the stater when they promised the coming of the Redeemer to the Synagogue. The apostles gave their part when they preached to the Jews that he who had been promised had now come. The martyrs also contributed their part when they brought unbelievers to faith in the Redeemer. Therefore the fourth part of the stater is known to have remained, because through the bishops and doctors of the holy Church the word of faith is presented to the elect faithful until the end of the world.

But the word of faith is well preached by those to whom it is supplied through the hand of the boy, because indeed those ought to preach heavenly things who in the sweetness of their mind have merited to know their pleas-

antness. For this part of the stater is given so that one may more fully merit to know the way of right preaching, because the chief doctors of the holy Church commit the authority of preaching to none others except those whom they know to love the heavenly things they speak of. By these words the simpler folk are to be admonished according to the letter, that they should not dare to suspect the depravity of avarice in the man of God on account of what is said: "That we may give to the man of God, and he may show us our way. For if the prophet had his word for sale, he would not be a man of God, and could in no way possess the spirit of prophecy itself. Therefore when this is said, it is not the character of the man of God that is set forth, but the devotion of the one approaching him, because Saul held him in great veneration, and was ashamed to appear empty-handed in his sight. And because a celebrated fame invited them to veneration of this same man of God, he adds: (Verse 9) "For he was called the Seer."

28. For to be called is to be spoken of by public report. But a Seer is one who looks upon even inward things, which the mind of carnal men does not attend to. Whence it is also said of the holy living creatures: "Round about and within they were full of eyes." They are watchful in outward things and provident inwardly. Against which presumption of carnal teachers the Lord rebukes in the Gospel, saying: "If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). A Seer is also called one to whom distant and absent things are present. This well befits holy preachers, who through knowledge are as present to spiritual things as they disdain to fix their attention on outward things. For they hold hidden things as open and distant things as present, who always understand those things which carnal men cannot know. For such ought the pastor of the holy Church to be, because he is placed on the way of the heavenly homeland to provide light to those under him. Therefore let him always scatter rays of light, so that the faithful subjects, from the experience of his illumination, may draw others to illumination. There follows, and he says: (Verse 9.) "Formerly in Israel everyone going to consult God spoke thus: Come, let us go to the Seer."

29. We go to consult the Lord when we proceed to learned preachers, so that we may find counsel for our salvation. But because there is now such a rarity of perfect men, while we consider the flower of religion in ancient times, let us bewail its decline in the present time. Struck with compunction over the misery and calamity of the present time, let us sigh that the flower

of the past age has withered together with the beauty of holiness. Therefore, when we see the pastors of the Churches clinging to earthly things, seeking what is passing away, displaying no marks of the spiritual life, when no light from our prelates is poured upon us, remembering those things which have passed away unto the labor of compunction, let us say: "Formerly everyone in Israel who went to consult the Lord used to speak thus: Come, let us go to the Seer." Israel means "seeing God," or "in whom God is." This name is certainly fittingly applied to the holy Church, whose people it is said to be. For in the Gospel it is also said: "Behold, I am with you even to the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Since she indeed had in former times pastors flourishing in spiritual conduct, learned in great knowledge, who with great contempt despised earthly things and contemplated heavenly ones, the people could exhort one another toward the light which they saw in them, saying: "Let us go to the Seer." If therefore we must go to those who see, we must equally turn away from the blind, because we ought not to imitate but flee the examples of reprobate prelates; but from those who through the merit of their conduct know spiritual things, we should always seek instruction for our edification. And because none but spiritual men do this, there follows: (Verse 10.) And Saul said to his servant: "Your word is excellent; come, let us go."

30. The best speech is that than which no better can be heard. Therefore, whenever counsels of our salvation are spiritually suggested to us, a speech is made within us than which no better can be found. We praise the speech of the boy, therefore, whenever we are pleased with ourselves in the purpose of our spiritual understanding. And we promise to go with him when we consent to spiritual thoughts. But because a good thought is then fruitful when it is perfected in action, there follows: (Verses 10, 11.) And they came into the city in which the man of God was. And as they were going up the slope of the city, they found young women coming out to draw water, and they said to them: Is the Seer here? 31. Those who seek the man of God come into the city, because it often happens that the life and teaching of a prelate is sought in the conduct of his subjects. So indeed trees too are often examined, whose beauty is found not in their leaves but in their fruit. Often, however, undergrowth that has sprung up is mingled with great trees, and its fruits falsely claim to be the fruits of those trees with which they are mixed. Therefore, whoever wishes to discern the fruit must first discern the branches as well, so

that he may recognize from which tree the fruit comes. So indeed it is in the conduct of the faithful: because in the chosen people of a good preacher, while many wicked ones are mixed in, thorns spring up as if among good trees. Therefore the conduct of the chosen preacher is not to be examined in all his subjects, but only in the elect. Then indeed we separate, as it were, the branches of a good tree with discernment, when among the people we imitate those rulers like choice fruits who advance by the example of their master, and we flee from those like thorns who are condemned by the deceit of the ancient enemy.

Well therefore is it said of Saul and his servant that they came into the city and ascended the slope of that same city, because indeed when the perfection of holy men is sought in their subjects, it is not the imperfect members but the chosen and perfect ones that must be sought out. For artisans too first begin their works, then adorn them. A painter too, when he desires to apply beautiful colors or gold, first lays down a baser color. Therefore, whoever wishes to judge the skill of artisans should look not at their unfinished works but at the completed ones. Let him therefore ascend the slope of the city, so that he who desires to find the Seer may discover him. For the slope is a low and sunken place. In that part of the city, indeed, those are represented who have not yet advanced to a higher manner of life. We therefore ascend the slope when we avoid setting before ourselves as an example the level ground of weak hearers.

32. And then indeed we find the girls going out to draw water: because we behold the beauty of holy minds in a more perfect way of life. The girls are indeed the minds of the elect, pure through innocence, beautiful through the splendor of virtues. And because they preserve their beauty in a more hidden life, they cannot be seen unless they go out to draw water. The girls draw water when chosen souls, from the deep sorrow of their present exile, pour forth streams of tears. They are said to draw water because, while they remember themselves cast down in this valley of tears, mourning, they send, as it were, the rope of thought into the deep, from which they draw the waters of tears with labor. Then also they are seen going out: because although what they are like within remains hidden, they nevertheless appear in their eyes; and how much they love their Creator is shown by those who endure life amid such great sorrow of the present age. From these, therefore, one must ask: Where is the Seer? Because the dwelling place of the perfect is then well

known when it is shown to us by those who, through the progress of their life, are close to their way of living. But preachers have different places. For they have one place for themselves, another for their subjects: because indeed in themselves they dwell in the loftiest contemplation, but for their subjects they descend to the mountain of teaching.

Through contemplation they are as if in heaven; and because what they teach is lofty, they both descend when they teach and yet keep themselves on high while speaking sublime things. The more perfect hearers, therefore, are close to their ruler not when he is in the highest contemplation, but on the lower mountain of teaching. Wherefore the girls also answer and say: (Verse 12. He is here, behold, before you: for today he has come into the city. 33. As if they were saying: We can point out his place because he comes there where we used to see him. For if he remained in the citadel of his own loftiness, no one could show him to you. For a teacher is in the city when he lingers in the instruction of the people subject to him through the ministry of preaching. A teacher is in the city when he leaves his own affairs to arrange what is common to all. For since the people, fortified and made strong through the exhortation of a good preacher, are protected when he lingers in their ministry, he is known to be in the city. Likewise, because among the multitude of the subject people some are simple and others are wise, the young women add: (Verses 12, 13.) Make haste now, today he has come into the city, because there is a sacrifice of the people on the high place. As soon as you enter, you will find him immediately, before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he himself will bless the offering, and then those who have been invited will eat.

34. When Samuel came to the city, he went up to the high place: because the chosen preacher, in the instruction of his subjects, sometimes utters plain words, sometimes lofty ones. Therefore, when he commands plain and intelligible things, he is in the city; when sublime things, and those which are scarcely understood, he is in the high place. He is in the city when he sets forth examples for the simple; but he is in the high place when he utters to the perfect the lofty things of spiritual words. For he was, as it were, in the city, who said: "I judged not myself to know anything among you, except Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Likewise, he was in the city when he showed remedies to the weak, saying: "Because of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (*ibid.*, 7).

But he went up to the high place, because not long after he adds: "But concerning virgins I have no commandment, yet I give counsel. I would that all men were even as myself" (*ibid.*, 8). He also confesses that he often ascends to the high place of words, because he says: "We speak wisdom among the perfect" (*ibid.*, 6).

35. What then is the meaning of what the maidens say: "Hurry now, today he comes into the city," unless that he was rarely seen in the city, namely coming late and departing quickly? By this teaching indeed the doctor of the holy Church is instructed to be rarely in public and frequently in secret, so that the more slowly he is seen, the more devoutly he is revered. Then indeed he is received as though heavenly, because the more he has hidden himself in the secret of contemplation, the richer the treasures of the Word of God he brings to those who await him. For he is able to speak many good things about the lowest matters to whom it is granted through the secret gaze of the mind to see the highest things. And because those things which are spoken seem sweeter, the maidens say: "Hurry." As if they were saying: if he has completed that for which he came into the city, you will not be able to see him hidden away in his secret place.

36. Which statement indeed is now not to be taken literally, but is an example for religious persons. For the holy man was of such strictness that he had appointed days and hours in which whoever desired could see him. They say therefore: "Make haste." As if they were saying: If the appointed time passes, during the hours of his rest, he does not attend to words or actions. We therefore who have taken up the rule of a secluded life ought to observe this more attentively. Hours of ministry must be appointed for us, so that we may persist briefly in work and be able to return hastily to the citadel of contemplation. Moreover, the periods of our secret silence must be guarded with such a strict rule that even those who are accustomed to approach may know that they do not have access to us contrary to our purpose.

37. But since we have begun to explain these things spiritually, this can fittingly be understood as spoken concerning the simple. For in the city, one who appears a stranger is thought to be able to address Samuel, but on the high place he is not thought so: because those whom we believe to be simple, we consider to need plain, not lofty instruction. Therefore they ought to hear the holy preachers when they speak plain things to the simple, which they understand: not when they say lofty things, which they can in no way

understand. They say therefore: "Hurry now, today he has come to the city, because there is a sacrifice of the people on the high place. Which is as if one were to say: Because there are many who desire to hear the highest things, now you ought to hurry, when he appears to be instructing the simple like yourself. The sacrifice of the people is indeed the devotion of the chosen people. Which devotion, assuredly, because it is aroused in the hearts of the elect by the word of preaching, is as it were accomplished by Samuel. But the sacrifice of the people is on the high place when the hearts of faithful subjects eagerly desire to hear devoutly the lofty words of holy preaching. Whence it is also aptly said: "Because the people do not eat unless Samuel first blesses the sacrifice":

because the more perfect hearers, while they desire to attain the summit of the perfection of virtues, await with great longing the word of knowledge, through which they may arrive at what they desire. In this passage it should be noted that the sacrifice had not yet been offered, and yet it says: "There is a sacrifice of the people on the high place. For if a sacrifice does not exist before it begins to be offered, how was there a sacrifice that did not exist? But because we are pursuing spiritual meanings, the sacrifice did not yet exist, and yet it did: because when the faithful elect desire to be instructed in loftier things, they already indeed have a great devotion for hearing, which, after the preaching has been heard, they have much greater. The sacrifice has therefore not yet been offered: because that greatness of devotion which is born in the heart of the elect from the word of preaching does not exist in the heart before the preacher's word. And yet the sacrifice is indeed on the high place: because from the expectation of the word, there is already a great force of devotion in the heart of one who wishes to hear. Wherefore it is also well said: "Because the people do not eat until he blesses the sacrifice. For because they eagerly love the highest things, they do not rest until they receive those same highest things.

For if the sacrifice of the mind is its devotion, the sacrifice is blessed when it is sanctified by the voice of preaching, so that the purer it becomes, the more acceptable it may be held for divine reception. For what is blessed in God's sacrifice is indeed clean when it is offered, and material: but once offered it is so much cleaner, inasmuch as it is not only material but spiritual, inasmuch as it is not only clean but also cleansing. For who would doubt that sins are cleansed by the offerings of sacrifices? For so, so it is with the devo-

tion of the mind: for when it longs to hear good things, it is clean; but when it has been received and blessed by the hands of holy preaching, it is rendered so much more ardent and sacred, the more clearly it has learned whom it can love more sweetly once known. It was indeed clean before, like a preparation of the sacrifice, which desired to know the good, and yet it was a material arrangement: because it did not yet know what it desired to learn. But it is very clean and spiritual when, now sanctified by the words of doctrine, it no longer desires to hear what it may know, but delights to experience through what it has heard the things it loves. Then also the sacrifice is not only clean but cleansing:

because the more fervent the love of heavenly things by which it is kindled, the more powerfully the darkness of carnal negligence is driven away from it. For it is written: "Because charity covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8); because assuredly we destroy our carnal things when we are lifted up to heavenly things by ardent devotion. 38. And because it is added: 'And then those who have been called will eat.' What else does this signify, except that the affection of devotion is food for the mind? For we will eat then, when the sacrifice is blessed: because when our devotion is raised up to the love of the Creator at the voice of the preachers, the soul that has arrived at the sweetness of the Creator already has its food. Therefore those eat then who were unwilling to eat before the blessing of the sacrifice. For those who prepare themselves with the highest expectation of intention for the perception of divine sweetness, while they receive no evil desires through appetite, are, as though fasting, filled more eagerly with the refreshment of devotion. For they wait, as it were, for the blessing of the sacrifice for their refreshment, who flee all unlawful desires, so that they may be satisfied by the vision of interior glory through devotion. For indeed it is written: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8). For he who does not admit foolish things into his heart, while he desires heavenly things, is pure in heart: and while he is led through the good of preaching to the sweetness of divine contemplation, he has, as it were, the blessing of the sacrifice in the satisfaction of his soul.

Therefore he says: 'Then those who have been called will eat.' For those who are fasting are called to the meal, while the preacher speaks outwardly, who guard their mind from wicked desires, and are drawn through the grace of the Holy Spirit to the experience of interior sweetness. For those who had

been called were the invited ones who had come. Therefore the called who are fasting then eat, when those are fed with the devotion of spiritual grace who have prepared themselves to receive it by great watchfulness of their mind. But what does it mean that they say: (Verse 13) 'Go up, for today you will find him'? 39. But while the elect praise the good deeds of preachers, they illuminate the hearts of their hearers with great light. For that heavenly manner of life of the good teacher, which they proclaim, is a day. Let them say therefore: "Today you will find him." For the preacher is found on that day when his life is not less than his reputation: when he is praised by the voice of the elect, but those who hear the praises find and recognize in his praiseworthy manner of life everything that they hear. Against this, the Lord rebuking the Pharisees says: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, who are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful to men, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones" (Matt. 23:27). Hence again He compares the vainglorious to unbelievers, saying: "How can you believe, you who receive glory from men?" (John 5:44). Those who are of this kind are indeed praised in the day, but they are not found on that day: because those who hear their praises gaze, as it were, at the whiteness of the tomb from the outside; but when they seek the virtues that were praised, they find within the night of sins, like the grim and rotting bones of the dead. Let them say therefore, to signify the true glory of the righteous: "Today you will find him": because when the righteous are praised, they possess in the truth of their manner of life whatever shines forth brightly about them through the voice of praise. And because such a great man must be sought with eager devotion, there follows: (Verse 14.) "And they went up into the city. And as they were walking in the midst of the city, Samuel appeared, coming out to meet them, to go up to the high place."

40. When we hear the praises of holy men, we ascend in the city, because we seek them where they descend, not where they are. But, as I said above, the place which preachers have for themselves is the secret contemplation of divinity, while the place for their subjects is preaching. Sometimes indeed they speak plain things, sometimes lofty things. They have therefore a common place for all, they have a sublime and special one for some, and they have a secret one for themselves. These three spiritual places are surely signified, because Samuel is said to go out, and to appear in the midst of the city, and to ascend to the high place. For he who went out in order to appear was

somewhere where, before he appeared, he had been hidden. Priests therefore go out when they come from the secret of meditation to preaching. They appear in the city when they speak plainer things, that is, things for doing or for understanding. They ascend to the high place when they either command the wise to perform mighty works, or reveal the depths of mystery. Our ordered ascent is therefore shown by the fact that Saul is reported to ascend in the city. For the places of our Pastors, in which they are accustomed to pray or to be in seclusion, are to be venerated by us, not approached. This we can know not only by example but also by divine exhortation. In the Song of Songs indeed the bridegroom declares, saying:

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not cause the beloved to awaken until she herself wishes" (Song 3:5). For the minds of the perfect are brides, because while they place themselves in the secret of divine love as if in a bridal chamber, there through vision they find the one to whom they are joined by ineffable love. When therefore the bride sleeps in the bridal chamber, she is joined to the bridegroom, because while the chosen soul of the preacher is hidden away in secret contemplation, it is placed as it were in the bridegroom's chamber. Whoever therefore rouses her takes her from the bridegroom, because indeed the rest of the chosen soul is not only its own delight but also the delight of the bridegroom. Whence also it is said through the prophet: "The bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride" (Isa. 62:5). Rightly therefore the bridegroom adjures the daughters of Jerusalem that the bride not be awakened by them as long as she wishes to sleep, lest while she rises from the quiet of the chamber, he himself lose the enjoyment of love. Let the going forth of Samuel therefore be awaited, because holy men are to be venerated in the secret of their silence, not to be disturbed. Therefore one must ascend in the city, because the chosen teacher in the common place of teaching appears as so great a gain to his people, inasmuch as he is known to go out in order to be of benefit.

In this place it should be noted that it is not said of Samuel, "Today he ascended in the city," but "today he came into the city"; but of Saul and the boy it is not said "they came," but "they ascended. For he came as if on level ground, while the other climbed as if to heights. What else is shown to us by this, except that the plain things which preachers speak are not plain to us? In the city therefore we do not come but ascend, when we either look with difficulty upon the plain things of preaching, or bear with labor the small

things that are commanded to us. But because to stand in the city is to be fortified, therefore we ascend, because when great men teach us to do small goods, they vehemently forbid us from yielding to the counsels of evil spirits. And because it is very laborious to overcome all temptations, we strive to reach the words of the teachers who command this of us, as if through the labor of ascending. But because it is written that "each one shall receive his reward according to his own labor" (which indeed is understood not only of eternal retribution but also of the present), almighty God, according to the merit of the work, grants to his elect increases of virtue (1 Cor. 3:8). For also to Abraham, who did not spare his son, it is said: "By myself I have sworn:

because you have done this thing and have not spared your son for my sake, I will bless you and multiply your offspring" (Gen. 22:16). For often those who labor faithfully in doing the things they know deserve through divine grace to know greater things to do. As a figure of these, Saul is rightly said first to ascend in the city, and afterward is reported to be led by Samuel to the high place. But to come to meet someone is to encounter the one coming by the same road. When therefore we wish to learn the way of salvation from holy preachers, they indeed come to meet us when they encounter us with the word of salvation that we seek. For they come as if by the same road when they hasten to teach us what we have resolved to learn. This indeed is the moral sense for all; but if we investigate what pertains spiritually to certain individuals, he comes to meet him because he foreknows that the king who is to be anointed is coming to him. But from where he knows this is added: (Verses 15, 16. But the Lord had revealed to Samuel's ear one day before Saul came, saying: "At this very hour which now is, tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him as leader over my people Israel, and he shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines."

41. He went out therefore to meet him, in order to lead him to the high place: because he who is sought for the governance of the holy Church must both be shown forth by divine gift and called to a lofty manner of life. The ear of Samuel, because it is said in the diminutive, what does it signify if not the humble understanding of the spiritual teacher? The ear therefore is opened by the Lord, when the humble understanding of the preacher is instructed by the Holy Spirit, so that he may hear what he is to do, and arrange what he has heard. But we must carefully consider what is said: "The day be-

fore. For the day is the life of the just, as Paul attests when he says: "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). When the life of the chosen one is revealed, the hidden day is made known. For man sees the outward show of good works, but God sees the light of the heart. Because therefore both the elect and the reprobate are hidden as regards the intention of the heart, the Lord makes known the coming king the day before; when through his grace the holy preachers recognize in those who are to be promoted that the testimony of good works is preceded by purity of intention. For there is no light of works that is not preceded by rightness of intention.

Rightly therefore the king who is to be appointed is recognized the day before. But they do not perceive the following day unless it is born from the preceding one: so that they may consider the day before the day, that is, the intention before the action, and may perceive as sent by God in the light of holy works the one whom divine grace shows to shine through the purpose of the heart. And because at the very hour when he is promised, he is presented: what does this give us to understand, if not that he who is chosen must be perfect, not only in body but in mind? For when God speaks to holy men, it is the full light of day. For a day has its beginning, and it has its end. At the end he reproves sinners, saying: "Adam, where are you? (Gen. 3:9). And because neither those who merely begin good things, nor those who grow sluggish in good works, are to be promoted, the preacher is sent at the hour of perfect speech, when such a one is presented who shines with the full light of good works and gleams with the full splendor of truth. He is also described as a man coming from the land of Benjamin. He is called a man on account of the strength of his works; from the land of Benjamin, on account of his right confession of faith. Benjamin indeed means "son of the right hand.

Who then is called this son of the right hand, if not he of whom it is written: "He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father" (Mark 16:19)? The land of Benjamin therefore is the holy Church. Because therefore the heretics have been expelled from this land, the king comes from the land of Benjamin, when one who is not polluted by any heresy but is catholic in faith receives the primacy of the holy Church. He enjoys the title of "man" if he is firm in faith and strong in action. He indeed is commanded to be anointed as leader over the people of the Lord: because the

outward sacraments profit those priests who are not unworthy of the gifts of those same sacraments. Or priests are anointed when through the ministry of those who ordain them they receive an increase of spiritual graces. Whence it also follows: "He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. As anointed ones they can save others, because they have received spiritual graces more abundantly. For those who save the people are anointed over the people: because those who are appointed by the Lord to govern others receive the spiritual gifts of charisms by which they can benefit them; and they are superior in merits also to those whom they precede in rank. And because often a good pastor is chosen on the merit of a good people, it is well added: (v. 16) "Because I have looked upon my people.

Likewise, because a good pastor must be sought from the Lord with great prayers, it is added: (v. 16) "Their cry has come to me." 42. But perhaps some are troubled, because what is said here and what was said above seem contradictory. For there he says: 'They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them, according to all their works which they have done from the day I led them out of the land of Egypt even to this day' (1 Kings 8:7). But now he says: 'You shall anoint him leader over my people Israel, and he shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines, for I have looked upon my people, for their cry has come to me.' Above, a king is permitted to be appointed as if by one who is angry; now he is appointed as if by one who is merciful and kind. And who does not see how much these words of kindness differ from that sentence which was pronounced upon him by Samuel? 'Because,' he says, 'you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king' (1 Kings 15:26). This we certainly resolve quickly if we examine carefully the force of the words themselves. For all these words of divine kindness are ascribed to the merits of the people: 'He shall save my people;' and, 'I have looked upon my people;' and, 'their cry has come to me.' Therefore a king is decreed to be appointed for those whose cry is heard.

For even though Saul was to be cast from the kingdom for his future wickedness, nevertheless he had in himself, as long as he reigned, that by which he could benefit the people subject to him. He was certainly to be valiant in war, yet proud in mind. He would have that by which he would fall for himself, and that by which he would stand for others. Therefore, foreseeing that by which he could benefit his subjects, the Lord says: 'He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines;' and, 'their cry has come to me.' Yet

still it seems very contradictory that he should be believed to hear the cry of that people who are rebuked for having rejected him. To which it must be answered: that in that people there were both the reprobate and the elect. There, then, the reprobate are accused of having rejected the Lord; here the desires of the elect reach the ears of almighty God. From which what is to be gathered, except that it is often good for the elect that wicked rulers are appointed? It is therefore not surprising if God is angered, as it were, at his own rejection, and yet appoints a king: because the very office of the future king was both bad and good. Bad, indeed, because proud; but good, because vigorous in the defense of his subjects. And we see all of this happening now in the holy Church:

because very often the one who receives her primacy is one who is useful to others in word, yet swollen with pride in his own mind. By preaching virtues, he destroys vices as if by standing firm, but by thinking highly of himself, he falls. Thus by preaching he saves the people of God, but by swelling with pride he casts himself down headlong. Like a mighty king, by his word he crushes the hidden adversaries of God's people, but through pride he falls from the height of the kingdom. Therefore a king is not appointed for his own sake, but only for the people; when one is permitted to preside in the holy Church who tramples upon the good things he preaches, either by being proud or by living wickedly. 43. In this passage it must be noted that when a pastor is chosen in the holy Church, sometimes he is ordained for himself and for the people; sometimes neither for the people nor for himself; sometimes for himself, not for the people; and sometimes indeed for the people, not for himself. For himself and the people, when a chosen preacher is given to chosen subjects: because from the very thing by which the multitude of subjects is led to the eternal homeland, gifts of merits are heaped upon the good pastor. A pastor is given neither for himself nor for the people when a reprobate populace is permitted to have a reprobate pastor, since he presides in such a way and they obey in such a way that neither he who teaches nor those who are taught deserve to arrive at eternal goods. Of whom the Lord says through Hosea: "I will give them kings in my wrath" (Hosea 13:11). For a king is given in the wrath of God when one worse than the wicked is appointed to preside over them. Such a pastor is given when such a people is taken on to be governed, who may equally be condemned by eternal punishment. A pastor is given for himself, not for the people, when a good

man is placed over the wicked; as the Lord says to Ezekiel: "I am sending you to the children of Israel, to an apostate nation that has departed from me" (Ezekiel 3:3).

A pastor is given for himself indeed, not for the people, when even if a chosen preacher cannot convert his hearers to God, he himself nevertheless does not lose the eternal rewards of his labor. But for the people, not for himself: when a pastor is granted to good subjects who possesses gifts by which he benefits them but does not benefit himself. Such indeed were those about whom the Lord commands the disciples, saying: "What they say, do; but what they do, do not do" (Matthew 23:3). As if He were saying: What they have received that is useful for you, take from them as though it were yours; and leave in them as though it were theirs what they possess not for your gain but for their own destruction. Saul, therefore, with the Lord rejected, is chosen, and yet is declared to be one who will free the people of the Lord from the hand of the Philistines, because Almighty God often benefits His good faithful ones through those prelates who do not please Him in the exercise of that same prelacy. There follows: (Verse 17. And when Samuel looked upon Saul, the Lord said: "Behold the man of whom I spoke to you; this one shall rule over my people.")

44. For this was done on the following day, which the Lord had promised on the preceding day, saying: "Tomorrow at this same hour I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him over my people Israel." He is therefore seen on the second day, who was promised on the first: because the preachers of holy Church search out the virtues of the elect in their hidden life. For those who are to be promoted, when they bring forth good things, promise something great from themselves. On the first day, therefore, a king is promised; because preachers behold the great works of the elect, and, as if the Lord were speaking, they recognize inwardly those whom they wish to appoint as rulers of holy Church. Samuel therefore sees on the following day, when the preacher beholds the one who is to be promoted in the great light of his manner of life. And then indeed, as if by the Lord's indication, he recognizes the one who must be appointed king: because the one who stands preeminent on the lofty height of holiness, he sees as worthy to be set above others. And because those who are great in merits are small through humility, there follows: (Verse 18.) Saul approached Samuel

in the middle of the gate, saying: "Tell me, I pray, where is the house of the Seer."

45. If a preacher is in the city when he speaks plain and common things that are understood, what is the gate of this city if not humility? For the knowledge of the divine word is hidden from the proud and revealed to the humble. Hence also in the Gospel he speaks to the Father, saying: "I confess to you, Father, King of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11:25). By the wise he meant the proud and those who think highly of themselves, but by the little ones he meant the humble. Of these another Scripture certainly makes mention, saying: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). For he resists the proud, lest they understand eternal goods, but he gives grace to the little ones, so that they may know those same eternal goods through his own revealing. The elect, therefore, because they come to spiritual understanding through humility, go to hear the preachers as if through a gate. The chosen preacher also, because he speaks spiritual things humbly, Samuel meets Saul at that same gate. For it is as though both are at the gate when the things that the chosen preacher speaks are humbly heard by another who is chosen.

46. But he who had newly arrived had found the one he was seeking, and did not know it. Therefore Saul himself says to Samuel: "Tell me, I pray, where is the house of the Seer. For this is characteristic of great men, that they are recognized with difficulty by the least. In the flesh indeed they are despised, but in mind they are exalted. They desire to appear contemptible outwardly, but they do not cease to do venerable things. Because, therefore, those who greatly desire to advance through their examples admire them not only in outward matters, but in their inmost qualities. They see in them outwardly what can be despised by carnal people, but they equally observe that inwardly, spiritual men ought to be venerated with great admiration. When they hear that these men are exalted by fame, they desire to know them in the loftiness of their way of life. According to the historical sense, therefore, Saul was seeing Samuel and did not recognize him, so that what was happening to them in figure might signify spiritual things for us. For when we are little ones, we as it were see perfect men when we hear of their virtues from those who report them; but those whom we see, we do not recognize, because

we cannot know through experience what we perceive by hearing and hold in the eyes of the heart.

When therefore we seek from them the secrets of their way of life for imitation, we are indeed asking them as it were about their own home. For their home is their way of life. This home the disciple of John wished to know, when he asked the Lord, saying: "Master, where do you dwell? (John 1:38). He indeed, because he was to be led to intimacy with Him as one of the household, heard: "Come, and see. This home Philip had seen but did not recognize, to whom He says: "I have been with you so long a time, and you have not known me. Philip, he who sees me sees also my Father" (John 14:9). Of the Lord also it is written that He spoke to Moses as with His friend; but the same Moses, seeing and not recognizing, was asking, saying: "If I have found grace in your sight, show me your face" (Exodus 33:13). But the spiritual way of life of the saints, because it is revealed to none but the devout and the suppliant, Saul similarly begs that the house of Samuel be shown to him. Holy preachers also, when they hear great things about themselves, cast themselves down through humility; they do not become puffed up. They know how to show to those who ask great things which they may imitate; they know how, among the great things which they show, not to appear great through boasting. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 19) "And Samuel answered Saul, saying: I am the Seer.

But go up before me to the high place today, that you may eat with me, and I will send you away in the morning." 47. What does it mean to say, "I am the Seer," except to show himself humble, as he appeared to their eyes? As if to say: In your estimation, the one you seek is great, but the one you see is small. For in this word, "Seer," it is not a title of praise, but "I am. As if to say: That Seer is I—not what you suppose, but what you behold. But he who knew how to humble himself knew how to give gifts not as one who is lowly, but as one who is exalted. For this reason he also commands him to go up before him to the high place, so that he might eat with him. He ascends to the high place who raises his mind to know higher things. Indeed, to ascend to the high place is to prepare the heart for understanding lofty matters. Hence Peter too is taken up on the mountain, so that he might deserve to see the glory of the transfigured Redeemer (Matt. 17:1). For in that ascent of the mountain, the lofty preparation of the mind is expressed: because he who does not fix his mind on high things through earnest attention will not be

able to see exalted things. Since, therefore, we better understand sublime things when we are prepared, Saul is commanded to go up to the high place before Samuel.

For we ascend, as it were, to the high place before the preacher when we first direct our mind to know lofty things, and they afterwards speak to us of those very things to which we have directed our attention. But what does it mean when he says, "That you may eat with me today"? When holy preachers speak of heavenly things, they refresh the hearts of their chosen hearers: for as the Truth attests, the food of the soul is the word of God: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). For bread is the nourishment of the body; the word is the nourishment of the mind. But those who refresh the body without the mind are dead in mind, alive in flesh. Hence Paul also says of the self-indulgent widow: "She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives" (1 Tim. 5:6). For the widow would not die through the delights of food if she satisfied her soul with the food of God's word, since Paul himself says: "Nothing is unclean that is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). But the living widow dies when she nourishes the body with food and kills the soul with hunger (Matt. 4). Therefore man does not live by bread alone: because since man consists of soul and body, just as he lives in one way through the body, so it is necessary that each part be nourished by different foods.

Therefore we ascend with the prophet in order to eat, when we raise our mind to the heights of the divine word, so that we may be satisfied by its heavenly flavor through devotion. 48. And because the preachers themselves greatly love the heavenly things of which they speak, we eat together, as it were, when they devoutly bring forth in speaking what we devoutly place in the belly of the soul by hearing. For we eat together, because we hear the Word of God equally. For Truth says to the preachers: "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt. 10:20). Which Paul also proves when he questions his hearers, saying: "Do you seek proof of Christ who dwells in me? (2 Cor. 13:3). Since, therefore, Christ and His Spirit speak in the holy preachers, the preachers themselves hear the One speaking all the more clearly inasmuch as they are nearer to Him whose seat they deserve to be. Therefore they can be more fully refreshed by the nourishment of the word, inasmuch as they already have within themselves the chamber of refreshment. For they are friends of the bridegroom, and they stand and

rejoice with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom. When, therefore, the holy preachers speak divine things, they hear; but because they know by certain experience when the Spirit speaks in them, they hear themselves, yet not in themselves, because they themselves also speak, but having spoken in themselves, they venerate another who speaks. In this, therefore—that they hear and speak—they both refresh and are refreshed. They refresh their hearers when they bring forth the word with their own voice;

they themselves are refreshed when the word they bring forth is brought forth to them by divine revelation. Yet those are more devoutly satisfied who have experienced the delights of the mind in the speaking of the Spirit. Is not the experience of the speaking Spirit this: to perceive themselves unprepared and unpremeditated, and suddenly to be prepared and ready? To know what they had not known; to have what they had not had; to lose the torpor of the mind; to suddenly burn with wondrous devotion; to be wondrously filled at once and in a moment with fullness of knowledge; to bring forth with wondrous eloquence of speech the things they have understood? The elect preachers, therefore, have experience of the Spirit speaking in them in the sudden revelation of truth; they have the sudden ardor of charity; they have it in the fullness of knowledge; they have it in the most eloquent preaching of the word. For they are suddenly instructed, and at once they grow fervent, and in a moment they are filled, and they are enriched with a wondrous power of speech. For concerning that sudden experience the Lord says: "It will be given to you in that hour what you should speak" (Matt. 10:19). Concerning that sudden fervor of charity, Cleopas says: "Was not our heart burning within us on the way, while He spoke and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). Concerning the experience of being filled and of eloquence, Luke also recalls, saying:

"Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty spirit, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). For in that same Spirit they were both filled and spoke, so as to signify what we assert: that namely, by speaking they feed others, who are themselves fed by hearing what they say. And because they recognize the sound of the mighty Spirit as ardor, or as speech, or as filling, they feast all the more sweetly on spiritual gifts inasmuch as they have been more worthily taken up to His table. He says, therefore: "Come up, that you may eat with me today"; because the good teacher, when he sweetly receives in the devotion of his mind the things he

speaks, feeds both himself and those who hear him at the same time. 49. On the other hand, reprobate teachers, because they do not love what they say, fast while they feed others with their word. For since the Lord said that the word of God is the refreshment of the soul, and the word of God in a full mind is complete learning and complete devotion, those who do not devoutly hear what they speak are not fed by the word of God. Indeed the Apostle, as if already filled with that sweetness of the word, says: "Of his fullness we have all received" (John 1:16). The fullness of the word is one thing, the fullness of a book is another. From the fullness of the word, only the elect can receive; but from the fullness of Scripture, even the reprobate can receive. For the book of the blessed apostle John and the book of the blessed apostle Paul are indeed fullnesses, which are contained in them. Paul or John wrote their words, to be sure, but what each one wrote, the Word speaking in them inspired. Therefore, whoever receives the word of Scripture not in love but in knowledge receives from the fullness not of the word but of the book. And because he receives a dead thing, he himself does not live in its reception. But what am I saying—that Scripture is dead? It is not only dead but killing. For it is written: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). Indeed every divine letter does this.

For the letter is the body, and the life of this body is the spirit. He who reads the letter and refreshes his mind in the love of understanding receives a body that has been vivified and is vivifying. Therefore the reprobate, who search the Scriptures they do not love, who boldly speak outwardly of that whose savor they do not inwardly understand—while others perceive with devout mind the refreshment of the Scriptures they expound, it is as though others are filled from what they themselves give, but not they themselves. Let Samuel therefore say: "Come up, that you may eat with me today," because from what the elect teachers bestow upon their subjects from the word, they both hear together and are filled together. For behold, this is demonstrated in the very word we are speaking. For who doubts that Samuel wrote this Scripture we are expounding? And yet he who wrote it says this: "Samuel answered"—so as to show clearly that what he himself was writing, another was imparting. Therefore, because the Holy Spirit, who speaks through him, says through him about him: "Samuel answered Saul: Go up before me to the high place, that you may eat with me today. He says what he hears, and he simultaneously hears and says. Therefore, while the elect preacher hears and

speaks with great veneration of love, and good hearers receive with great devotion what is said, Saul and Samuel are said to eat together at the high place.

Likewise, because preachers are worthier and more fervent than their hearers in the refreshment of the same word, it is not Samuel who is said to be about to eat with Saul, but Saul with Samuel. But also because such splendid instruction of the mind exists in the great light of the spiritual life, he does not say: "That you may eat with me this night," but "today. He also dismisses him in the morning. "Morning" means the beginning of the following day. The following day is the serene light of holy conduct. He therefore says: (Verse 19. "I will send you away in the morning." 50. He is indeed sent forth in the morning from the height, who, when he advances to the light of higher knowledge, proposes to dwell in the great light of good work. Or he is sent forth in the morning, who intends to preach to others the word of great knowledge which he learned from the mouth of a preacher. For when we propose good things, we are as it were in the morning at the beginning of the day, because we have already begun to behold the brightness of good which we may follow. But this morning grows into full day when he who has proposed to do great goods or to preach the lofty joys of eternity displays what he has proposed in the great light of virtue. In the morning, therefore, Saul is sent forth from the height, because the hearers of good preachers do not delay to practice sublimely what they hear as sublime from them. But the elect know both how to hide and how to manifest the goods they possess. They hide them indeed, lest they perish through pride; but they manifest them, lest they remain unfruitful. While they hide them, they guard them; but while they manifest them, they bring forth fruit. For there follows: (Ver. 19, 20.) 'And all things that are in your heart I will show to you; and as for the donkeys which you lost three days ago, do not be anxious, for they have been found.'

51. How preachers strive to conceal themselves is shown above in the word of Samuel, where it is said: "I am the Seer. But now, because he says, "All things that are in your mind, I will declare to you," what else do we understand except that holy men often both hide and bring forth the virtues which they have? But, as I said, they hide them lest they appear great on account of their great virtues; they bring them forth so that the elect may imitate them. And so they declare that they excel in the word of wisdom or the spirit of prophecy, not that they may be venerated, but that they may be

heard. Wherefore also the Psalmist, intimating that he possesses the grace of the word, says: "I have understood more than all my teachers" (Ps. 118:99). Therefore, certain of the skill of the spirit, he confidently invites us, saying: "Come, children, hear me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 33:11). For Micah was affirming himself to be a prophet when he said: "Would that I were not a man having the spirit, and that I rather spoke a lie" (Mic. 2:11). Hence Elisha says concerning Naaman the Syrian: "Let him come to me, and let him know that there is a prophet in Israel" (4 Kings 5:8). Hence Paul says: "They are Hebrews, so am I; they are the seed of Abraham, so am I;

they are ministers of Christ, so am I—I speak as one less wise—I am more so" (2 Cor. 11:22–23). But on the other hand, Amos says: "I am not a prophet, but a herdsman plucking sycamores" (Amos 7:14). Hence also Paul, when he wishes to hide himself for the sake of safeguarding, says: "I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). Hence John the Baptist, when questioned, said: "I am not a prophet" (John 1:21). For he was not a prophet unto self-exaltation, but he was a prophet and more than a prophet unto ministry. Samuel therefore, in order to guard himself, says: "I am the Seer"; and in order to present himself for the profit of others, says: "I will declare all things to you. And if anyone wishes, he can understand it in the same way: that when he says, "I am the Seer," if he declares himself to be a seer, he says this so that he may share the good that he has with the elect. Therefore, in order to prove what he asserts, he subsequently adds: "I will declare all things to you. This is what the doctors of holy Church do; for while they behold the virtues and vices of minds, they clearly know how to heal vices and to promote virtues.

He therefore declares all things that are in the heart when he deigns to set forth by the instruction of manifest teaching the way of virtue which the good hearer desires to hold. And if he is great and has resolved not only to do good things but also to preach them, preachers declare all things that are in his heart when they open to their minds whatever they desire concerning doctrine. But because he signifies to the one to whom he speaks the one who strives for the gains of preaching, he adds and says: "And as for the donkeys which you lost three days ago, do not be anxious, for they have been found." 52. This was explained above in the person of Saul, how it applies to inexperienced preachers. For he lost the donkeys, because he by no means drew to repentance the sinners to whom he offered the word of life. He would indeed

have found them, if those who had hidden themselves in the night of wickedness had returned to the light of justice, in which they could have been found as men. Why then does he say, "They have been found," unless because often the great men of salvation consider that good can easily be found in those about whose life the unlearned despair? For even skilled physicians of bodies often presume to cure those whose health the unskilled cannot presume to restore. So indeed, sinners are often drawn to repentance and satisfaction by learned teachers who could not be drawn by unlearned and inexperienced ones. Since therefore, both by the preaching and by the example of the perfect, those return to the Lord through repentance who could not be converted through the ministry of others, Samuel rightly says that the donkeys have been found which Saul could not find. This saying can also be understood with respect to the advancement of the ruler being ordained. As if to say: As you advance in learning and life, you will also be able to win for the Lord those whom you have not yet been able to win. So certain indeed is the virtue of advancement that its fruits, which do not yet stand firm in reality, stand firm in the certainty of hope. And because by these words he is invited to endure the labors of holy preaching, he explains what rewards of gain he should expect, saying: (Verse 20.) And for whom shall be all the best things of Israel? Shall they not be for you and for all your father's house?

53. Israel, which is interpreted "seeing God" — whom does it more fittingly signify in this place than that blessed society of eternal citizens who, from the toil of this life, have arrived at the eternal vision of almighty God? What then are the best things of Israel, if not the gifts of eternal recompense? Paul indeed says: "Each one shall receive his reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. 3:8). Likewise he says: "There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and of the stars. For star differs from star in brightness" (1 Cor. 15:41). Therefore the recompenses and rewards of all the faithful are the good things of Israel. But because the reward of the elect preachers is the highest, theirs are the best things of Israel. Concerning these best things of Israel the Lord promises to his faithful servant, saying: "Amen I say to you, he will set him over all his goods" (Matt. 24:47). For he who is set not among all things but over all things is declared to possess not merely the good things of Israel, but even the best. Let Samuel therefore say: "To whom shall all the best things of Israel belong, if not to you and to all the house of your

father? As if to say: Even if the labor of preaching is great, it ought to be borne with all the more devotion, the greater the gains of its reward.

The teacher of holy Church ought therefore to weigh with anxious mind that not only the good things but even the best things of Israel are his, so that he who awaits things so supreme and excellent may always do what is greater and more excellent. For indeed those supreme rewards are owed not to the supreme rank, but to supreme labor. For the distinguished teacher did not say: "Each one shall receive his reward according to his dignity," but "according to his labor. When therefore the best things of eternal life are assigned to preachers, great toil in this life is enjoined upon them: because surely he who does not strive to be better than the rest cannot prevail in having better things than the rest. And because this is common to all preachers of holy Church, the best things of Israel are said to belong not only to Saul, but to the whole house of his father. For as sons are born from a father, so in the order of preachers new ones are successively raised up in place of others, resplendent with the same nobility of holiness. The house of the preacher is also his spiritual manner of life. Therefore the best things of Israel belong to the whole house of his father: because wherever there is a priestly manner of life, there assuredly it is, and it is so exalted that from the loftiness of its merit, its rewards in eternal life are the very best. In this, therefore, let preachers examine themselves carefully:

because the best things of Israel will belong not only to themselves but to his whole house — because if they depart from the house, they will not have the best things. For if they hold only the eminence of preaching, they will not have the best things, because they do not maintain the loftiness of life. But every elect person, when he hears great things about himself, brings his own weaknesses to mind, so that he may guard himself against pride, lest he lose the good things he has. Hence it is added: (Verse 21. Saul answered and said: "Am I not a son of Gemini, of the least tribe of Israel, and is not my kindred the last among all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken this word to me?" 54. As if he were saying: Why do you ascribe such great things to me, when I am nothing? For he is a son of Gemini who imitates the negligent in the care of himself and in the example of his neighbor. He is indeed a twin, because while he neglects the care of himself, he does not bestow examples of good work upon others. Therefore whoever imitates such people is called a son of Gemini. He is said to be from the

smallest tribe of Israel, because the last order of the holy Church is that of converted sinners. Rightly therefore, he who confesses himself to be a sinner is said to be from the smallest tribe of Israel. His family is also reported to be the last among the others, because according to the voice of Truth: "Whoever breaks the least commandment shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). For Benjamin means "son of the right hand. By this name indeed the people of the holy Church are designated, who, while being born in the faith of the Redeemer, are prepared through good works for the goods of the heavenly fatherland. The right hand of God is indeed that strength of eternal life. The families of the tribe of Benjamin are the diverse ways of life of the elect. For just as diverse families come from one principle of generation, so from the one origin of orthodox faith, many ways of life of the faithful arise.

Therefore holy men, when they cast themselves down through humility, because they confess themselves to be sinners, and yet rightly believe in God, assert themselves to be, as it were, both sons of Gemini and of the last family of Israel. But because the more they humble themselves, according to the voice of Truth, the more they are exalted (Luke 14:10–11), there follows: (Verse 22. So Samuel, taking Saul and his servant, brought them into the dining hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited. 55. Samuel takes up Saul when the preacher of holy Church opens the heights of his preaching to a chosen hearer. For a subject is taken up when he is elevated to the knowledge of heavenly things through the word of a teacher. And because he desires to know spiritual things not with carnal intention, he took up not only Saul himself but also his servant. For it was as though he had remained below without a servant, he who said: "My heart has forsaken me" (Ps. 37:11). For our heart forsakes us when we are so overcome by carnal desires that we place the intention of our heart on earthly, carnal, and bodily things, and not on heavenly and spiritual ones. He had found this lost servant, who said: "Your servant has found his heart" (2 Kings 7:27). For we find our heart when we seek spiritual things through the intention of the heart; when we tear it away from earthly things so that we may direct it toward heavenly ones. The chosen preacher, therefore, to those who are still carnal, neither commands difficult things nor reveals spiritual ones. For Paul also says to the Corinthians: "I could not speak to you as to spiritual people,

but as to carnal ones, as to little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:1). As if by these words he were saying:

I therefore did not lead you to the heights, because you did not have a spiritual sense with you, as Saul did not have his servant. Wherefore, also indicating the reason, he says: "For you are still carnal. Rightly, therefore, Samuel is said to have taken up Saul and his servant, because the teachers of holy Church command difficult things and reveal lofty ones to those whom they consider to be spiritual. They are also led into a dining hall, because the breadth of charity is shown to them. For one is placed as it were in a dining hall who, through what he has learned on high, dwells in the breadth of charity. Or certainly our entrance into the dining hall is love; the dining hall is the beauty of the spiritual life. Whence John says: "He who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14). For if he who does not love remains in death, then he who loves remains in life. We are therefore led into the dining hall when we rise to the affection of heavenly conversation through the affection of charity. In this breadth of dwelling, holy preachers indeed hold the higher place, because blessed John the Evangelist says: "And around the throne were twenty-four seats, and upon the seats twenty-four elders" (Rev. 4:4).

For the elders are holy preachers, mature in understanding, grave in character, who surround the throne of God with seats placed nearby, because those who love the Creator above all others rest closer to him through the loftiest manner of life. Rightly therefore Saul with his servant receives a place at the head of those who had been invited, because in them the type of pastors to be chosen is shown. The ruler is indeed placed at the head when, through the force of great love, he receives the singular resolve of the heavenly life; while he holds the catholic faith in common with the rest, he possesses a sublime virtue above the rest. Whence it also follows: (Verse 22. "For there were about thirty men." 56. Three times ten makes thirty. The number three suggests faith in the holy and undivided Trinity. The number ten, through the ten commandments of the law, signifies the perfection of good works. The number thirty, therefore, designates those who hold that faith which works through love. Saul is placed at the head of these, because through divine grace he who is to be the future shepherd of the Church is made more exalted in merit than those over whom he ought to be superior in dignity. Samuel bestows this exalted place upon him, because he who de-

serves such greatness of life advances to it through the instruction of his elders. And since great things, and not small ones, are now shown to him to accomplish, it is added: (Vers. 23, 24.) Samuel said to the cook: Give the portion which I gave to you, and which I commanded you to set aside with you. So the cook took up the shoulder and placed it before Saul. And Samuel said: Behold what remains, set it before you and eat, because it was purposely kept for you when I called the people. And Saul ate with Samuel on that day.

57. What is signified by the shoulder of the breast, if not the strength of action? This is bestowed by Samuel's cook, when it is demonstrated to lesser ones by the greatest preachers. For the cooks are priests, because while they speak to the chosen faithful in the fervor of the spirit, they cook the foods of the mind, as it were through fire. But the portion that is given is said to have been set apart, because the strength of good work in a preacher ought to be singular. Saul places this before him, when he commands the one to be ordained as pastor of holy Church to consider how great a strength he ought to possess. But concerning what the cook had set aside, Samuel says to Saul: 'Behold that which is left, set it before you.' It remained indeed, because Christ did not fulfill all things that are ours; through His cross He indeed redeemed all, but something remained, so that whoever strives to be redeemed and to reign with Him must be crucified. He who said the following had surely seen this remainder: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him' (2 Tim. 2:12). As if to say: What Christ fulfilled avails nothing unless one also fulfills that which remained. Hence the blessed apostle Peter says: 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps' (1 Pet. 2:21). Hence Paul says: 'I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh' (Col. 1:24).

58. But it should be noted that the cook placed the shoulder before Saul, and yet Samuel instructed Saul to place it before himself. What does this mean? A steward usually places a dish on the table before those reclining; and when the one reclining draws it toward himself, he places closer before himself what was a little farther away. The cook, therefore, places the shoulder before Saul; Samuel instructs Saul to place it before himself: because what is enjoined upon a new preacher concerning the strength of good work, he ought to draw closer to himself, as it were, through the zeal of contemplation. And after he has drawn it to himself, he eats it: because what he has long contemplated, he resolves to carry out. Indeed, to eat the shoulder is to

store away inwardly through purpose of mind what is outwardly commanded concerning strong action. For it was as if urging every chosen one to place the shoulder before himself and eat it, he who said: "If you sit down at the table of a mighty man, wisely consider what is set before you, for you must prepare similar things" (Prov. 23:1). At the table of the mighty one, he indicated the strength of the shoulder. And when he said, "Wisely consider what is set before you," he taught the one to whom he spoke to place the shoulder before himself. But he suggested that he ought to eat it, because he said, "You must prepare similar things. For by preparing similar things, we eat;

because when we resolve to perform the mighty deeds we hear, we store away the food of life, as it were eating, in the stomach of the heart. But the vessel of election commands even the highest teachers under the instruction of a single disciple, saying: "Lay hands hastily on no one" (1 Tim. 5:22). For since those who are to be raised to the heights must be chosen with great deliberation of counsel, what follows is fittingly added: "Because it was kept for you by design, when I called the people. As if to say: Place before yourself what, before it was set out, I placed before myself; consider what I considered. For the portion of the shoulder is kept by design, because the strongest action of a preacher is rightly entrusted to the one who is judged worthy of so great a ministry by the highest men with great consideration. This portion was kept by design when the people are called, because when faithful subjects come to undertake the ministry of preaching, what is enjoined upon good preachers is not weak things upon the weak, but strong things upon the strong. But those who progress well strive above all to maintain the good of obedience in their lofty way of life. Therefore what follows is fittingly added: "And Saul ate with Samuel on that day. As I have already said, for a teacher being advanced, to eat is to prepare himself to do what is commanded him concerning virtue.

And he is rightly said to have eaten with Samuel, because when those who newly arrive resolve to do great things, the highest men become more fervent in the strength of good work. In this eating can also be signified that of which he promised above, saying: "Go up before me, that you may eat with me today. Saul therefore eats with Samuel, because when the preacher inwardly hears the heavenly sweetness of the word of God, what the subjects outwardly hear as he speaks, they are both assuredly satisfied from the divine refreshment. There follows: (Verse 25. "And they went down from the high

place into the town, and Samuel spoke with Saul on the rooftop. And Saul made his bed on the rooftop, and slept." 59. Whoever is raised to the height of pastoral care must have in that very sublimity of his office both loftiness in his own life and compassion for the weakness of others. Therefore let Saul ascend with Samuel, and let him descend into the town. Let the ruler know how to conduct lofty matters; let him know how to arrange common ones. Let him say with Paul: "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20); let him say with us: "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? I see another law contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive under the law of sin" (Rom. 7:24). The ruler is on the height when he speaks wisdom among the perfect. When he arranges carnal matters, he descends into the town, saying: "On account of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband; let the husband render to his wife what is owed, and the wife likewise to her husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). He is on the height when he says: "No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:39). But he descends into the town, for speaking, he says: "I became weak to the weak, that I might gain the weak; I became all things to all men, that I might save all" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Samuel therefore brought Saul up to the high place and set him down in the town, because great men, when they appoint someone to the summit of holy Church, teach those whom they place on that summit to live sublimely, to preach plainly, to be strict with themselves but temperate with their subjects — to attend so to their own salvation that they can yet be weak with the weak. I say "be weak" through the affection of the mind, not through the languor of inner sickness. For if the teacher lies prostrate through languor of mind, he cannot heal the sick or raise up those who are fallen. It is well, therefore, that Saul is reported to have descended with Samuel into the town and to have spoken with him on the rooftop. For the town is on the plain, but the rooftop is on high. Compared to the high place, the rooftop is on the plain; compared to the town, it is not on the plain but elevated. So indeed, when chosen preachers show compassion to lesser members, they seem to leave the height behind; but descending into the town, they are on the rooftop, because they come down from the height, yet they take on the weakness of their subjects by pitying and counseling them, not by acting out and sharing in that weakness. For though they show compassion to the weak

and command them to take wives, they themselves do not take wives by becoming weak.

Therefore, descending into the town, they are on the rooftop, because even though they command plain things, they do not retain what is weak in themselves. And since Samuel is said not merely to be on the rooftop but to speak with Saul there, this surely signifies that the future teacher must be taught to show compassion to his weak subjects in such a way that he himself nevertheless maintains the height of his way of life. 60. And because the new preacher needs much consideration for carrying out these things, Saul is said to have made a bed for himself and to have slept. For the new preacher to sleep on the rooftop is to arrange in his lofty contemplation how he ought to bear the burdens of those subject to him. For if he stays awake for worldly pursuits, he assuredly brings it about that he does not seek so great a good of discernment in his inmost depths. He ought therefore to sleep, so that he thinks of no worldly things, because one who is weighed down by secular concerns can never order spiritual matters. But neither can he sleep who does not make a bed for himself, because indeed if he does not reflect on the examples or sayings of good men, it is impossible for him to find rest from outward things. We lay soft things beneath ourselves, as it were, when we reflect on the teaching or life of the elect. We also sleep upon those same coverings, because we can then rest well in contemplation when we are occupied with spiritual matters. Let him therefore say, "Because Saul made a bed for himself and slept," to suggest to the chosen soul that if she carelessly occupies herself with outward things, she will not acquire the grace of inward rest. But he who wishes to arrange spiritual matters well through contemplation, until he has perfectly ordered them within, ought not to awake to those things which are outside. Fittingly, therefore, there is added: (Verse 26.) And when they had risen in the morning, and it was now growing light, Samuel called to Saul on the rooftop, saying: "Arise, and I will send you on your way."

61. Indeed, morning dawns when the splendor of truth opens itself to the quiet mind. For the human mind becomes dark through ignorance and bright through the illumination of truth. Therefore, one who is ignorant is in night; when illuminated, in day. Moreover, one rises in the morning who sleeps at night: when he rouses himself to carry out those things which he arranged through deliberation. And because the business of ordaining the king was being conducted, both are said to have risen. The supreme preacher

rises in order to ordain his hearer for the ministry of that same preaching. He who is to be ordained rises, so that he may not presume that so sublime an order is to be received with anything less than the deepest affection of the heart. Indeed they rise together, because a sublime office is given and is received as sublime. In this passage another thing must be noted: that both first rose, and then Samuel called Saul, saying: "Arise, and I will send you on your way. But according to the historical sense, if both rose, Saul is admonished to prepare himself for the work, because he is commanded to rise from sleep. Because indeed both the high priests and he who is taken up into the order of preaching attentively consider the burden of so great a ministry, they sleep as it were together and rise together. But he who is newly to be ordained, rising from sleep, is commanded to rise again for the work:

because although he has striven to weigh the height of the order by meditating, he must nevertheless attain it through the merit of his way of life. Therefore, having risen, he is commanded to rise, so that he may resolve to match with his merits the sublime order which he deliberates to undertake. Hence he is also called on the rooftop: because he is commanded to strive for lofty things. He also says: "And I will send you on your way. He rises, of course, so that he may be sent forth: because that man will be able to be free in the ministry of preaching who has grown in the height of a great way of life. Indeed, he who had already risen rose again: because he who by contemplation had learned the height of the dignity took care to raise himself up in that same height of dignity through the sublimity of his life. Hence it is added: (Verse 26. "And Saul rose. Then it is added: (Verse 26. "And they both went out; he, namely, and Samuel."

62. The pastor goes out when he comes from the secret of meditation to the public sphere of action. For when he arranges what he wishes to do, he is within; but when he outwardly carries out what he has thought, he as it were goes out. Saul also went out, because in the outward dignity, the one who is promoted undertakes that which he had long considered whether it should be undertaken. Both therefore are said to have gone out, because both had been within: while the one with anxious mind foresaw what he should give and to whom; the other likewise more attentively considered what manner of man he was who would receive such high things. Because therefore the ministry of holy preaching must be bestowed and received with the utmost discernment, while the king of Israel is anointed, both the king and the

prophet about to anoint him are reported to have gone out. However, many manuscripts have: "And when they had risen early in the morning, before dawn," which can indeed be fittingly understood. It is morning, before dawn, when in a certain way the day begins to breathe, and yet the full light of day has not arrived. Now when the holy preachers of the Church consider the good manner of life of those whom they intend to ordain, it is as it were morning. But because they cannot know their future, it is morning, but before dawn.

This is fittingly said in the ordination of him who is afterwards recorded to have displeased almighty God. For as it were at morning, before dawn, the prophet saw this man who appeared to him in the light of good conduct. But the full brightness of day had not yet come, because he could not see through the present light of knowledge the future darkness in him. This indeed happens in the holy Church as often as those who are chosen are good in the present but will not persevere in the same goodness. For he as it were goes out at morning and before the light, who displays the present light of good works but conceals the darkness of his future life. But what was done next follows: (Verses 27ff. "And as they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul: Tell the servant to go ahead of us and pass on; but you stand still for a moment, that I may make known to you the word of the Lord. Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him."

63. For what does it mean that the king is led to the farthest part of the city and anointed? But the farthest part of the city is the lowest part of the subject people. Those who therefore hold the last place in the holy Church are, as it were, in the farthest part of the city. Moreover, in the lowest part of the Church itself, converted sinners appear to be. For all the righteous are in the upper or first part. Or perhaps virginity holds the first place, continence the second, the married life the third, and the conversion of sinners the last. In the farthest part of the city, therefore, the king is anointed: because the ruler of the holy Church is ordained for sinners, not for the righteous. For hence Truth says of Himself: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Matt. 9:13). Hence again He says: 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick' (ibid., 12).

64. But we have said that the boy of Saul designates the spiritual sense. What then does it mean that Samuel commands him to go ahead and pass

on? The boy goes ahead when what is done is what the spiritual sense suggests to us, not what the carnal impulse commands. But he goes ahead of some and passes by, while he goes ahead of others and does not pass by. Indeed the boy going ahead does not pass by the arrogant, but passes by the humble: for while the arrogant do great and spiritual things, they are great in their own eyes. They have the boy with them, as it were, whom they follow, who glory in being spiritual in the spiritual things they do. To these the prophet surely reproaches, saying: "Woe to you who are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight" (Isa. 5:21). The elect therefore, in all that they do, take care to be spiritual, yet avoid considering themselves spiritual. They are indeed great in merit, but humble in self-estimation: because they always do great things, yet in those same great things they never regard themselves as great. They make the boy whom they send ahead pass on, as it were, when they have the spiritual sense present in their work, but far from their self-estimation. But what does it mean that he is commanded to stand still for a moment, so that the word of the Lord might be shown to him?

He stands still for a moment, having sent the boy ahead, who for the time withdraws himself from his own judgment and does another's will. Therefore he makes the boy pass on and stands still for a moment, who at the command of his superior abandons even those things he considers spiritual: he abandons them so that he may be able to carry out fittingly what is enjoined upon him. This certainly befits the one being ordained as a preacher: for when he considers the weight of pastoral care and his own weakness, the spirit going before him says this to himself: that being so weak, he unworthily takes up so great a burden. Let him therefore not only send the boy ahead, but make him pass on: so that he does not follow his own judgment, but accepts what is determined for him by the provision of one who is better. And about him standing still, it is immediately added.

CHAPTER 4.5 (1 SAMUEL 10:1)

Then Samuel took a small flask of oil and poured it upon his head. 1. This indeed is expressed by this anointing, which even now is materially displayed in the holy Church: because he who is placed in a position of authority receives the sacrament of anointing. Because indeed the anointing itself is a sacrament, he who is promoted is well anointed outwardly if he is strengthened inwardly by the power of the sacrament. Let us therefore first consider more attentively the very properties of oil. Oil indeed rises above

other liquids, oil nourishes fire, oil is accustomed to heal wounds. By the first property, therefore, it signifies the good of mercy, because it is written of the Lord: His mercies are above all his works (Ps. 144:9). Because it nourishes fire, it designates the grace of preaching, which illuminates the minds of the elect. Because indeed wounds are healed by oil, this surely suggests that the wounds of sins must be cleansed. Let the head of the king therefore be anointed, because the mind of the teacher must be filled with spiritual grace. Let him have oil in his anointing, let him have abundant mercy, which is to be preferred above the other virtues. Let him have oil, so that while he nourishes within himself the ardor of the Holy Spirit, he may shine forth powerfully to others through the word. Let him likewise have the oil of medicine, so that he may wisely arrange how to cleanse the stench of sins and restore sick minds to health.

But Saul is anointed with a small flask, not to prefigure doctrine, but to express things to come. A small flask indeed is a small vessel: what then does it mean that Saul is anointed with a small flask of oil, except that in the end he is rejected? For because he afterward refused to obey God, he heard from Samuel: Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king (1 Kings 15:26). For as it were he had but a small flask of oil, he who received spiritual grace only to be cast away. This is fittingly understood also of the rulers of the holy Church. For very often those receive the height of prelacy who are not perfected in the love of God and neighbor. For they have a certain affection of charity, but they do not have its fullness. What then is that rough and imperfect affection of the mind but a small flask of oil? For while it anoints the head, it does not fill it: it is indeed all poured out, but it provides little. On the contrary, however, when the chosen king is commanded to be anointed, the Lord says to the same prophet: Fill your horn with oil, and come, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided myself a king among his sons (1 Kings 16:1). Hence it is that the same chosen king, ascribing the fullness of his anointing to the praises of God, says:

You have anointed my head with oil, and my inebriating cup, how excellent it is (Ps. 22:5). He therefore who received the grace of anointing without being destined to persevere, by God's dispensation, is anointed with the liquid of that vessel by which the failure of the anointed one would be signified. There follows: (Verse 1. And he kissed him and said: Behold, God has

anointed you over his inheritance as prince, and you shall deliver his people from the hand of their enemies who are round about them. 2. The ruler is led to the height of holy Church so that he may hold this office by which he establishes peace between God and men. For by sinning, we incur the enmity of our Creator. Therefore, when a ruler is appointed for the correction of sinners, he removes from our midst that which has made us enemies of God. Rightly, then, Samuel is reported to have kissed Saul on the head. For that one bears the prophet's kiss fixed upon his head who bears in his mind the support of our reconciliation: namely, when he who strives in his mind to restore the discordant to peace cherishes in himself no fuel for divine discord. Therefore, after the prince has been kissed, it is said: "God has anointed you as prince over His inheritance. As if he were admonishing him by these things, saying: You who know yourself appointed for this purpose—that you ought to dissolve the enmities of sin—what you destroy in others you must not retain in yourself. For some are indeed anointed yet do not receive the kiss; they busy themselves with liberating the people of the Lord, but do not shrink from subjecting themselves to the yoke of His enemies. For he who preaches to others the good things he does not practice gives, as it were, a kiss that he does not receive. For he seeks to make others friends of God, yet he himself does not cease to be His enemy.

He builds up in himself the enmities of sin that he attempts to destroy in others by his word. Since, therefore, only he rules with benefit who is a friend of God through the disposition of great charity, Samuel is said to have kissed the head of the king. Hence Truth itself first kisses those whom it appoints, and then sends them to set others free. "You are my friends," He says; then He added, saying: "I have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:14). Hence also, rising from the dead, He says: "Peace be with you"; then He adds: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). So that He might, as it were, fix the kiss of peace in the minds of those whom He had commanded to loose the hatreds of sin. The king, therefore, having been kissed, is established over the inheritance of the Lord, because the chosen teacher is selected so that he may stand pre-eminent in dignity over the faithful committed to him, yet from his position of authority he may seek not his own gain but the Lord's. For this reason he is declared appointed for this purpose: that those who are under him may be

freed from the hands of their enemies. The inheritance of the Lord is the multitude of the faithful.

Therefore every worldly intention is set aside when the king is declared anointed over the inheritance of the Lord. The fruit of anointing, then, is the cultivation of the divine inheritance. He therefore fulfills the office of his anointing who seeks only the gain of souls. He who remembers that he was anointed as prince over the inheritance of the Lord seeks from his earthly dignity only what Christ sought through His own ministry. By this word, therefore, the intention of negligent rulers is condemned. 3. For they hear that they have been anointed over the inheritance of the Lord: that the Lord seeks from the earth none but the elect; they know that He calls not the breadth of land, not abundance of gold, not the overflow of riches, but His faithful ones His inheritance, and yet they do not cease to seek earthly things and to gather what perishes. They direct all their care toward that which the Lord does not seek; and what He alone seeks, they neglect to seek. Therefore it is said, so that the negligent may see themselves in it; it is said, so that the good may become better: God has anointed you, he says, as prince over His inheritance. As if to say: He has made His inheritance yours; see that you do not rule in it otherwise. You shall therefore deliver the people from the hand of the enemies who are round about them. A great labor is enjoined upon the preacher by this, that the enemies are said to be round about. For the battle would be grave enough if they endured the fury of evil spirits on one side alone. Hence, declaring through the prophet, He says: The wicked walk round about (Psalm 11:9). Hence blessed Peter, exhorting, says: Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; resist him, steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:8). Our enemies therefore are round about us, because unclean spirits always lie in wait against our thought, word, and deed.

For when they seek to suggest evil things to us, they are on one side; when they drag us toward evil, we are struck by their assault from another side; when they invite us to evil works, they stir up war from yet another side. We therefore have enemies round about us, since in everything that we think, speak, and do, we suffer the wars of evil spirits. But because it is said not to free the people from war, but from the hands of the enemies, great marks of virtue are ascribed to preachers: because they ought not only to protect the free lest they be captured, but also to free the captives from their servitude.

This moreover is accomplished by our kings when those who through the boldness of transgression have been subjected to the yoke of diabolical power come to their senses through their preaching. Which indeed only those preachers can accomplish who arrive at the summit of governance by divine appointment. For those whom almighty God appoints, He sends to endure the battles of the ancient enemy, but He does not abandon them amid those very wars, because He protects His soldiers and makes them victorious. But when holy men are raised to the primacy of the holy Church, they greatly tremble lest the burden of so great an office has been imposed upon them by the judgment of men, not by the appointment of the Creator.

Therefore, for the strengthening of the humble, signs are given by which they may know that they have been chosen by God, not by men. Wherefore Samuel also, adding, says: (Verse 2. And this shall be a sign to you, that God has anointed you as prince. When you shall have departed from me today, you shall find two men by the tomb of Rachel, in the borders of Benjamin, in the south, leaping over great pits, and they shall say to you: The donkeys which you went to seek have been found, and your father, having set aside the matter of the donkeys, is anxious about you and says: What shall I do about my son? 4. For it is as if He says to the humble shepherd, trembling at so great a ministry: You tremble for this reason, because you do not know whether what has been done concerning you is from God; but because you can know this, you ought not to tremble. Therefore this shall be a sign to you that not man, but God has anointed you as ruler: namely, those two men will say to you: The donkeys which you went to seek have been found. As if He were saying: If you find those two men, and they tell you this, know that God, not I, has appointed you as ruler. What then do these two men signify to us, except certain perfect preachers of holy Church? They are two, because they are perfect in both precepts of charity; men, because they are strong in holy conduct. They are said to be found near the tomb of Rachel, because through devotion to the contemplative life they are separated from worldly pursuits; and while they seek the gain of souls, they are not buried. For it is the undoubted opinion of the venerable fathers that Rachel signifies the beauty of the contemplative life. Therefore the men stand near the tomb of Rachel, because perfect teachers so devote themselves to heavenly contemplation that they also bear the care of holy Church.

They stand near the tomb of Rachel, because they direct the course of good works through the power of contemplation, and because they do nothing in action except what they arrange through contemplation. And because in the very height of heavenly contemplation they strive to maintain not their own presumption but the rule of holy Church, the tomb of Rachel is described as being in the borders of Benjamin. As I have already said, in Benjamin, who is called the son of the right hand, the Redeemer of the human race is signified. The borders of Benjamin, therefore, are the rules of the Holy Scriptures, concerning which borders it is written: Do not transgress the boundaries which your fathers have set (Prov. 22:28). Because, therefore, the holy preachers, when they see the highest things through contemplation, do not depart from the rule of faith, the tomb near which they stand is rightly said to be in the borders of Benjamin. These men indeed leap over great pits at midday, because through the fervor of perfect charity, in which they have been taken up, they despise all the heights of the world that are seen. For whatever is perceived as lofty in this world is not true height, but a pit, which deposits into hell all whom it receives in its ambition. Therefore the heights of the world are to be avoided by spiritual men, not sought after, because they open up from a hidden place, and lead down to hell those whom they swallow up and receive.

Spiritual men, therefore, leap over pits, because while they raise themselves up through heavenly desire, they despise earthly things. For they give a leap as if over pits they have seen, when in order to despise earthly things they raise themselves to desire eternal goods. They leap over pits at midday, therefore, because only those who possess the full light and ardor of heavenly charity can despise the world. Then let Saul understand that he has been anointed by the Lord as ruler, when these men say to him: The donkeys which you were seeking have been found. For they tell Saul that the donkeys have been found when they perceive him fit for gathering the gain of souls. As if He were saying otherwise: Do not believe from men that you have been chosen by God for the ministry of preaching, if those men declare this concerning you who, being full of the Spirit of God, are perceived to say things not human but divine. Because, therefore, concerning ourselves we must believe not ourselves but those better than us, fittingly Saul recognizes that he has been anointed by the Lord as ruler through men who leap over great pits at midday. But one is he by whom he is anointed, and others are those who

attest that this anointing is from the Lord; because every affair of holy Church, just as it is more fully proved by the consultation of the holy fathers, so also is it more firmly established.

5. For blessed Paul sought this as a sign of his anointing when he came to Jerusalem to see Peter, and compared his Gospel with him and the other apostles. For he had received his apostleship not from man nor through man, but from heaven, at the call of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 1); and yet he proved the ministry of his anointing through the consultation of his fellow apostles. For he says of himself: "I compared my Gospel with them, lest I should run or had run in vain" (Gal. 2:2). The Precursor of the Redeemer had also anointed his disciples, but so that they might recognize the signs of his anointing, he sent them as if to leap over great ditches, saying: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we expect another? (Matt. 11:3). For John knew the one whom he had preached, whom he had baptized; but he sent his disciples so that, having seen the signs, they might believe more firmly and hold more securely the proofs of their election. Those, therefore, who are found suitable for the office of preaching recognize, as a sign of their election, that the souls of sinners which they seek have been found. And because almighty God rejoices not only in the preaching but also in the conduct of the chosen teacher, he adds and says: "And your father, having left the donkeys, is anxious about you, and says: What shall I do about my son?"

We said that Kish, the father of Saul, who in our language is called "hard," designates those who teach by word and example to despise earthly things and to hasten to the heavenly homeland through a hard and rough manner of life. We have also recognized this hardness of the heavenly life both in the word and in the life of our Redeemer. If, therefore, we look to the summit of our instruction, we are children of the Redeemer. Our father, therefore, having dismissed the donkeys, is anxious about us; because our Redeemer wills that we seek the salvation of others in such a way that we do not neglect our own. He wills that sinners be called to repentance, but he does not will that those who call those very sinners should perish. He wills that the converted sinner should have the righteousness which he did not have; but he does not will that the righteous person should lose the palm of righteousness which he has. Having left the donkeys, therefore, he is anxious about his son, because he wills his preachers to rest for a time from the anxious attention to others, so that they may better provide for themselves through quiet. And

because that very solicitude of the holy Church must be taken up again by a good ruler, our rest is interrupted; because a prior solicitude precedes it, and a later one follows. The chosen preacher, therefore, should devote himself to the benefit of his subjects and devote himself to his own;

but let him so have care for his own that he immediately returns to the care of others which he left behind; because then our Creator loves us as sons, when we both love our subjects as brothers and love him as a father, since through the affection of solicitude we are joined to them, and through our rest, which he loves, we hasten to him as to a father. For this love of our rest is expressed in what is said: "What shall I do about my son? This indeed a father says who loves his son tenderly. This therefore is not said about a present son, but an absent one. But because he seeks the lost donkeys of his father, he is greatly beloved by him; because whoever strives by preaching to convert the souls of sinners is already joined to our Redeemer in great love. He who through solicitude for others is, as it were, far from him, is near through the quiet of contemplation and the affection of prayer. Because, therefore, he desires that we be close to him both through contemplation and prayer, like a loving father he says: "What shall I do about my son? As if to say: How shall I make that absent one present to me? But because the great men of holy Church praise the solicitude of our preaching but blame excessive solicitude, those who say the father's donkeys have been found assert that the father is anxious about his son.

The elect, therefore, can recognize the sign of their anointing; because indeed they are then led by God to the summit of the holy Church, when through words and examples they are suitable for the salvation of others, and through quiet they are zealous for their own; and when they seek sinners for heaven, they do not abandon themselves to the world. There follows: (Verses 3, 4. "When you have departed from there and have gone further, and have come to the oak of Tabor, three men going up to God at Bethel will find you there, one carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread, and another a bottle of wine. And when they have greeted you, they will give you two loaves, and you shall receive them from their hand." 6. When we wish to make good progress in holy conduct, it is necessary for us to gather for ourselves the examples of very many of the elect; for bees too cannot produce honey if they do not gather it from various flowers. Well therefore does Saul pass from some men to others, because the more abundantly we observe the

examples of the saints, the better we are instructed. Indeed the flowers of eternal fruits are the works of the saints, which, when they are drenched with the dew of heavenly love, from them we gather that by which we may be filled for our own instruction and for the benefit of others. For Saul goes from there and passes on beyond, when the untrained preacher advances through the examples of the elect, and from the observed virtue of one, goes to explore the conduct of another. Often it delights him to admire in some the labor of preaching, often in others the strength of good works; he venerates those who speak and strives to imitate those who act. He looks at some to see with what beauty they shine outwardly, while the splendor of others he examines not in their outward conduct but in their innermost being. Hence it is also well said that when he passes on, he is reported to come to the oak of Tabor. For the oak is a shady and strong tree. In this tree indeed the more hidden conduct of the saints is expressed.

For the men of this manner of life, since they do not go out to the exterior works of the active life, are as if in shadow, because they cannot feel the fires of temptations. For since they rest in heavenly desire, the farther removed they are from the love of the world, the more peacefully they remain in the shadow of refreshment. But this shadow is of a strong tree, because the conduct of the saints despises earthly things all the more powerfully as it rises more purely into the love of heavenly things. It is also strong, because those who love only the heavenly things which they see powerfully endure the adversities of the world. And because those who disdain to look upon earthly things through love are in the great light of interior splendor, the oak itself is said to be of Tabor. For Tabor is interpreted as "coming light. For light comes when the inner brightness of the Creator opens itself to the chosen mind. Therefore it is called the oak of Tabor, because hidden conduct, by despising earthly things, acts so that it may more clearly behold the intimate light of the Creator. For we are hidden when we guard our senses in the fear of God. And then indeed we perceive the coming light, because when the members of the body are well governed, the grace of the Creator is poured back into our mind.

And it should be noted that he who knew that the father was anxious for him on account of those who were leaping into the pits is said to come to the oak of Tabor. For the preachers of the holy Church frequently praise virtues to which they themselves cannot devote themselves. They preach indeed the

secret of the contemplative life; but since they are anxious for the care of their subjects, they avoid clinging to the secrets of that life. As if Samuel were to say: Those men praise the pursuit of contemplation to you; but since they cannot hold what they praise, it must be sought in others. Therefore we pass on to the oak of Tabor when from the holy preachers we learn that the pursuit of the contemplative life is praiseworthy; but we seek its perfection in those who devote themselves to it spiritually. The three men, therefore, who find the anointed king at the oak of Tabor designate those who are perfect in the pursuit of the contemplative life. They are rightly said not to be found by the king, but to find the king there. For they are not found, because they are hidden. But they themselves find us, because they open to us the light of their hidden conduct when they deign to do so. They are not found, because they withdraw their life from every testimony of men. But they find us, because through the affection of charity they show us something of their light for imitation.

They likewise do not bring forth their virtues for imitation except to those who desire with great longing to obtain and practice them. Therefore it is necessary for us first to come to the oak of Tabor, so that we may be able to be found by those three men. For we are already as if in the shadow of the coming light when we are inflamed with great desires for the highest contemplation. 7. Then therefore three men appear to us: because those who deign to show themselves to us who desire them are strong in the guard of speech, thought, and deed. For they cannot be persons of a more hidden life if they had kept open the doors of their eyes, heart, and mouth. Because therefore they guard the heart from foolish thought, the mouth from idle talk, and the whole body from wicked action, they are three; but they are men, because they observe that same guard most bravely. Three men therefore appear to us: because when we behold such persons, we perceive in them the strength of virtue. They are certainly in the shadow of the coming light; because they can see the inner light of the Creator all the more clearly, the more zealously they guard a pure heart from the defilement of the world. To such persons indeed the Lord appeared rising from the dead; such persons the Holy Spirit filled. For concerning that secret place it is said: "When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). And again: "After eight days his disciples were again within, and Thomas with them; Jesus came, the doors

being shut, and stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you. Concerning another secret place likewise it is written:

"When the days of Pentecost were being fulfilled, all the disciples were together in the same place, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound of a rushing mighty spirit, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1). Those indeed have closed doors who, against the negligence of human falling, keep the functions of the body restrained under a strong guard. They are also within, because they rest in the inward love of the heavenly life. To these assuredly the risen Lord appears, because they behold his glory all the more clearly, the more strictly they follow the mystery of his passion through contempt of the world. These also can be filled with the Holy Spirit, as though in a house; because those receive abundantly the gifts of his graces who have prepared themselves to receive them by despising visible things.

8. Who are rightly said to ascend to the Lord in Bethel. For Bethel means "house of God. And what is the house of God, if not that house which the inaccessible light inhabits? The inaccessible light is also the revelation of His divinity. It is light, indeed, because it can be seen in some manner by pure hearts. In its fullness it fills all things, yet abundantly filling all things, it is not grasped. It is grasped, indeed, so that it may fill, but in filling it is not grasped, for though it fills all things, it is not exhausted. The revelation of the Creator, therefore, because it is so great an immensity of light that it illumines all things and is confined in nothing — since it is seen and yet not comprehended — is inaccessible light. These three men, then, ascend to the Lord, because those who guard themselves in a more hidden life are raised up to the contemplation of the divine light. But because they cannot yet attain to the very appearance of God Almighty, they are said to ascend in Bethel. For whatever the human mind can think about Almighty God is not God. But when by thinking it transcends all things, when it considers that whatever it can fashion for itself of inmost light, whatever of inner sweetness and delight, whatever of spiritual pleasure, is believed to be less than that reality, it nevertheless arrives at a certain light which is not God but which God inhabits.

And because then the soul of the elect is wonderfully inflamed, wonderfully refreshed, and enjoys ineffable delight, it is compelled to consider how

ineffable must be the light, the sweetness, and the delight which is God Himself, if so immense is that light which He inhabits and which is not He Himself. Moses had indeed ascended to the Lord in Bethel when he was speaking with Him on the mountain. But he who had arrived at the light which God inhabits was seeking the light which was God Himself, saying: "Show me Your face" (Exod. 33:13). Of whom it is also written: "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face" (ibid.). What does it mean that Moses speaks with the Lord face to face, and yet entreats the Lord to show him His face? But the face of God is the knowledge of Him. Now God is known through a mirror, and He is known through Himself. Through a mirror here, through Himself in heaven. The mirror is that light which God inhabits; but He Himself is that light which He is (1 Cor. 13:12). And Moses, who is said to see God face to face and yet asks to see His face (Exod. 33:13) — what does he more rightly signify than the perfection of the elect, who already gaze upon the mirror of that supreme light, yet ardently desire to attain to the very truth of that light? This knowledge of the light does not satisfy the desires of the elect but rather arouses them;

that other knowledge, however, both satisfies and arouses. For it is so delightful a thing that it is ineffably desired, and so full that those who have always beheld it with great longing are always satisfied with ineffable fullness. The men, therefore, who ascend to the Lord are said to ascend in Bethel, because however much we advance in this life, we can see the very light of the Creator through a mirror, but we are by no means able to see it in itself. 9. And because only the humble are exalted to this sublime vision, it is well said of these same men: 'That one was carrying three kids, another three cakes of bread.' For he carries three kids who, in penitence, considers that he has sinned by mouth, heart, and deed. For since sinners are signified by kids, those who at the final judgment are to be placed at the left hand of the eternal Judge are expressed by the name of kids. Therefore he carries three kids to the Lord who does not cease to consider in penitence the sins of deed, word, and thought. And he is indeed a man, and yet he carries kids; because he strongly guards against sinning, but does not cease to make satisfaction as though he were a sinner. For he was a man and was carrying kids, who said: 'In many things we all offend' (James 3:2). And because they strive to blot out by penitence the sins they confess, one carries three kids and another carries three cakes of bread. For we referred the cakes of bread above to the afflic-

tion of penitence; because if bread sometimes signifies the pleasure of the present life, bread is twisted when we are tormented for the past pleasure of the flesh. Hence King Hezekiah too, when he is pierced with penitence, promises that he will twist the royal pleasures, saying: 'I will recount all my years in the bitterness of my soul' (Isaiah 38:15).

For when the carnal mind dissolves into the pleasures of sin, it has, as it were, its day; because it joyfully beholds what it does. Therefore the days of the reprobate mind are evil pleasures. Therefore the sinner recounts all his days; because when he comes to his senses through divine grace, he does not cease to make satisfaction for all his evils. For first one is said to carry three kids, then another three cakes of bread; so that the virtue of each elect person may appear, who is strong in good work, humble in self-estimation, afflicted through the contrition of penitence. And because they cannot be of such great perfection unless, out of love for eternal goods, they have forgotten temporal things, the third is said to carry a flask of wine. For he carries a flask of wine who has filled his mind with the warmth of the Holy Spirit, by which he both eagerly strives after the things ahead by running forward, and leaves behind the things that are past, as if in the great forgetfulness of intoxication. For he was carrying kids who said: 'Christ came to call sinners, of whom I am the chief' (1 Timothy 1:15). And because he was also carrying a cake of bread, he says: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection' (1 Corinthians 9:27).

But as though drunk with the wine of a flask, he says: 'Forgetting what is behind and stretching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:13). Therefore three men ascend to the Lord and bring three kids, three cakes of bread, and a flask of wine: because those devoted to the pursuits of a more secluded life rise to the contemplation of the true light by the merit of humility. But what they are in themselves and what they are to others, he sets forth, saying: 'And when they have greeted you, they will give you three cakes of bread, and you shall receive them from their hand.' Holy men greet us when they announce to us the eternal goods of salvation. Those who greet us in the body incline their head to show reverence to the one greeted. But for spiritual men to incline the head is to bring down their mind from the highest contemplation. For if they do not incline the head, they cannot greet; because they do not instruct us with salutary teaching if they do not

bring down their mind from the highest contemplation of heavenly things. For then they show us great reverence: because they do not consider those to be small for whose sake they deign to descend from their lofty summit.

10. But while the future king is greeted, two loaves of bread are given to him. For two loaves are given to the preacher being ordained, when he is taught to weep for sins not only his own, but those of others. He has, therefore, one twisted loaf when he is afflicted for his own sins; he has the other when he strives to lament the sins of his subjects. But the Psalmist, more clearly suggesting this bread, says: "Rise up after you have sat down, you who eat the bread of sorrow" (Psalm 126:2). Hence he confesses to the Lord, saying: "You will feed us with the bread of tears, and you will give us drink in tears with measure" (Psalm 79:9). The twisted loaf, therefore, is the bread of sorrow and the bread of tears. And perhaps for this reason that one man carried three twisted loaves: because there were three who were going together, so that when they divided them among themselves, each would have one loaf apiece. This can also fittingly be understood of the goats. In this matter, what is to be noted except that men of a more secluded life, while they maintain a solitary way of living, do not have care for others? They therefore have one goat and one loaf, who are pricked with compunction only for their own sins and are not burdened by those of others through pastoral office.

And because those who are of the same perfect way of life emulate in themselves the affliction of the flesh, fittingly one carries three loaves, another three goats, and a third a flask of wine. For it is as though one carries what all are about to offer or eat; and all eat or offer what one carries, when each one, kindled by pious emulation of them, has in himself good examples for others and does not neglect to imitate the good things that others have. And because the twisted loaves of bread are spoken of in the feminine gender, this surely suggests that for him who is pricked with compunction by habit, from some tears still more tears arise. For the affliction of the penitent is, as it were, fruitful as in the feminine sex; because the more often one is pricked with compunction, the more abundant streams of tears are supplied to him. To Saul, therefore, not one loaf but two are given, because it is not enough for the preacher to weep for himself alone. Let him therefore receive two loaves from the hands of the men, so that he may learn to weep by the example of the perfect, but may recognize that weeping is necessary both

for himself and for his subjects. And because by the hand power is sometimes understood, the men have three loaves in hand; because those who have advanced to the heights of contemplation possess weeping in the strength of their power.

For because they do not wish to be dissolved in vain joy when they could be, they are rightly able to weep when they wish. We indeed, being weak and negligent of the guard of our mind, even when we wish to be moved to compunction and to weep for our sins, are unable to do so. For since spiritual tears are produced from a great fervor of the spirit, we who are bound by the cold of our negligence are prevented from quickly growing warm unto tears. Rightly, therefore, those who are said to appear to the future king at the oak of Tabor are said to have loaves in their hands; because those who are perfect in the contemplation of the secluded life possess what is profitable for their subjects through the observance of virtues. 11. And it should be noted that Samuel commands the anointed king, saying: "And you shall receive from their hand." What better meaning can be gathered from this phrase than what is plainly seen: namely, that we do not willingly imitate the affliction found in holy men? For those who seek the honor of prelacy and its dignity are innumerable, but those who desire the labor of ministry and the affliction of the flesh that comes with that same prelacy are few. We gladly wish to be exalted above others, but we avoid mourning their sins. For we see the loaves offered to us, but we refuse to receive them from the hands of those offering, because we observe the affliction in chosen men that we do not imitate. Therefore let the prophet command, saying: "You shall receive from their hand." So that whoever desires to be a fit ruler of the Church should by no means refuse to take up what has been spoken. It is also fitting that Saul is first led to men leaping over great ditches, and then to those who carry loaves, young goats, and wine: so that the untrained preacher may learn from some to despise the heights of the world, and from others to offer the affliction of the flesh and the sacrifices of tears to almighty God on behalf of himself and those under his care. But the prophet, further conveying the summit of his progress, adds, saying: (Verses 5, 6.) "After this you shall come to the hill of the Lord, where there is a garrison of the Philistines, and when you have entered the city, you shall meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, and before them a psaltery, and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp, and they themselves prophesying. And the Spirit of the

Lord shall come upon you, and you shall prophesy with them, and you shall be changed into another man."

12. A hill is the height of a mountain. What is more rightly understood by this hill than the holy intent of the Scriptures? It is indeed the height of a mountain, because it does not lie on the plain of the letter, but is exceedingly elevated in the sublimity of spiritual meanings. The untrained preacher therefore sets out on the right path of virtues if, after he has seen the public preachers and the secluded anchorites, he sees and recognizes the height of Scripture. In this matter it should be noted that we said Saul, in that he stood out above all the people from his shoulders and upward, signified a learned man of great conduct. Why then does he ascend to the hill of the Lord, so that he may come to the height of the Scriptures, which he already knows? But in a similar way it could have been asked about him why he went to see the men leaping over great ditches, when he was said to be a man of great conduct. To which it must be said: because he was shown to represent great men in conduct, but untrained in the ministry of preaching. He who can advance through the examples of better men both in the purity of contemplation and in the office of preaching ought to return to the height of the Scriptures, because the higher the life by which he advances, the more keenly he attends to the sublimity of sacred speech. Let the prophet therefore say: "After these things you will come to the hill of the Lord." As if to say: When you grasp the perfection of holy men through perfect imitation, you will advance into so great an understanding of Sacred Scripture that what you once thought you perceived in it sublimely will now seem plain.

13. There is the garrison of the Philistines: because those who fell from heaven through the drink of pride mock the Jews and heretics through the Scriptures. They stand therefore on the hill: because the hearts they possess they deceive in the Scriptures by the falseness of understanding. Therefore, as often as the Jews presume to ascend to the hill of the Lord, they are captured by the Philistines standing there. For while they think they understand the meaning of Scripture in a lofty way, demons meet them in their ascent and, deceiving them, slay them. Rightly, therefore, Saul is commanded to go to the hill of the Lord not immediately, but first, after seeing those leaping over pits and carrying bread and wine: because faithful men are fortified by the great protection of the teaching and examples of their betters. Hence it is also said to the same Saul: "You will meet a company of prophets coming

from the high place. As if to say: You will be able to fear the garrison of the Philistines so much less, the more you will have prophets meeting you for your security. And because a company of prophets is mentioned, a great multitude of our defenders is signified. Let the Jew therefore be afraid: because when he ascends alone, he perishes. For what do those same prophets coming to meet us say? "Woe to him who is alone, for if he falls, there is no one to lift him up" (Eccl. 4:10). For he is alone who is abandoned by God.

Certainly no one lifts up this one when he falls, because no saint takes up one abandoned by God. Therefore every elect person ascends securely: because he is not alone. For He who speaks through us is with us. For He also promises, saying: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Indeed he was not alone who said: "I am not alone, but He who sent me is with me" (John 8:16). Likewise he was not alone who demanded, saying: "Do you seek proof of Christ who speaks in me? (2 Cor. 13:3). This can fittingly be understood not only of the Lord's spiritual presence, but also of the material teaching of the elect. Holy preachers indeed ascend to the hill of the Lord, where the garrison of the Philistines is: but because they have the company of prophets meeting them, they in no way fear the Philistines themselves. But who are these prophets, if not the great preachers of holy Church? For the ministry of prophets is to reveal hidden things and to predict the future. Moreover, the teachers of holy Church, when they draw the hidden meanings of the Scriptures to common knowledge, open secrets that are unknown: and when they preach eternal joys, they reveal things to come. Prophets therefore come to meet us: because the teachers of holy Church show us the truth of holy Scripture.

For when they tell us what we wish to know from sacred eloquence, they meet those going along the way that leads to the hill of the Lord. There, therefore, through the meeting of the prophets, we are secure where the Philistines are: because through the authority of holy preachers we recognize the understanding of Scripture, in which the Jews and heretics are slain by demons with the sword of their own errors. Behold, for if we have recourse to the Law of Moses, we certainly find the hill of the Lord. There surely we read of the tabernacle, there of the high priest, there of the blood of goats and calves together, and of the Paschal Lamb. The Jews understand these things according to the letter by their own spirit, and because they have no prophet with them in this, they die. If I wish to ascend to this mountain, I first see

the prophets descending, and I ascend securely. And to leave aside the new ones for the moment, Isaiah first meets me as I ascend, saying: "Like a sheep he will be led to slaughter, and like a lamb before his shearer, he will not open his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Hence Paul says: "Christ, appearing as high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, nor through the blood of goats or calves, but through his own blood, entered once into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12).

But if we wish to have more on this hill, we find all the prophets by seeking them: because what the old teachers had promised, the new preachers demonstrate to have been fulfilled in our Redeemer. 14. Wherefore the Redeemer of the human race can also fittingly be designated by the name of a hill. Whence Isaiah, prophesying, says: 'In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains' (Isa. 2:2). He is called a hill on account of the sublimity of His holiness, and of the Lord, because He is the Son of the most high Father. On this hill indeed the garrison of the Philistines is said to be, because He was born as a sign to be contradicted. The garrison of the Philistines is the opposition of heretics. For as though standing on the hill, they lie in ambush against those ascending to the hill; and while they pervert the Holy Scriptures by expounding them wrongly, they destroy those who are carelessly ascending to know the Redeemer. Therefore let the elect not be alarmed; ascending, he meets a company of prophets, because all the preachers of the Old and New Testament announce to him the Redeemer Himself. They come indeed from on high, because what they preach on earth, they see in heaven. Whence also to John, as though truly from the chosen company of prophets, it is said from heaven: 'Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this' (Rev. 4:1). Who, when he had ascended, beheld and recognized the Lamb—whom Moses had prefigured as to be slain, and whom he himself had seen offered on the cross—now reigning; and he learned how great were the thanksgivings rendered to Him by those for whom He had been slain. Therefore the preachers come from on high, because what they preach to those beneath them, they have learned in heavenly contemplation.

15. Well also is the company of prophets said to have met Saul at the entrance of the city; because we can see the great preachers of Holy Church where they descend, not where they are exalted. For the things which they

say to us little ones, we hear; but the things which they see in heavenly places, how they see them, or how sweetly they love them, we do not see. For the apostle Paul was caught up into paradise and was taken up to the third heaven, and he heard secret words which it is not lawful for a man to speak (2 Cor. 12:4). Who then could find so great a preacher caught up into paradise, or taken up to the third heaven? But blessed Paul said these things about himself under compulsion. Whence also at the end of the sublimity he had set forth, humbling himself, he says: "I have become a fool; you compelled me" (2 Cor. 12:11). How great then were those things which he was unwilling to tell, if he came to reveal even these under compulsion? For he who heard things which it is not lawful for a man to speak also saw things which it is not lawful for a man to know. You might perhaps say:

Even if he wished, how could he express in human speech the beauty of that third heaven, the light of that innermost brightness, the indescribable splendor of the angels, and the inaccessible glory — how sweetly all those elect and blessed eternal citizens receive from the fullness of that One, how eagerly they partake, how completely they are filled, how pleasantly they taste the sweetness of divine goodness, with what delightful fullness they are satisfied: what the splendors are for each one from that one ineffable light of the Creator, what the beauty of all together is from that one glory: by what excellence of dignity some surpass others, and by what means the good are subject to the better in the ineffable delight of justice? 16. We cannot, therefore, follow the lofty Paul to that height, but we enter the city, in which, as if descending from on high, he comes to meet us. For we who cannot perceive the lofty things that the preachers see must reverently hear the plain things that they teach. But when they descend, they carry before them the psaltery, the timbrel, the flute, and the harp. They have the psaltery because they announce the kingdom of heaven; they have the timbrel because they preach the mortification of the flesh; they have the flute because they command their subjects to weep for the acquisition of eternal joy; and they also have the harp because they teach the devout to rejoice in the certainty of eternal goods. The psaltery indeed, which resonates from the upper part, also signifies the proclamation of eternal joys, because when it urges us to love heavenly things, it sends forth the sound of its sweetness, as it were, from the upper part. The timbrel, because it is stretched over the hide of a dead animal, fittingly represents the mortification of our flesh. That the flute is cus-

tomarily present at the funeral rites of the dead, we have learned from the Gospel, for when the Lord wished to raise the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, He cast the flute players out of the house and drove away the tumultuous crowd (Matt. 9:25). What then is expressed by the flute, if not the mourning of the saints?

For when they see themselves cast out from that eternal life which they desire, they lament over themselves as though they were dead. The harp, however, is a very joyful musical instrument. By this instrument the word of consolation for the elect is fittingly represented, because just as we are gladdened by the sound of the harp, so the elect preachers console us amid the hardships of our present exile. The psaltery, therefore, is placed first in the procession of the preachers, because above all else the glory of the heavenly kingdom must be proclaimed, so that when we recognize the good that we should love, we may desire to labor for the attainment of that same good. Hence it is that when Matthew in the Gospel was setting forth the beginnings of the Lord's Incarnation, he said: John began to preach and to say: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17). But because when we know heavenly things, if we wish to reach them, it is necessary that we mortify the passions of the flesh, the preachers of holy Church produce, as it were after the psaltery, the sound of the timbrel. And what is this mortification of the body other than a preparation for eternal blessedness? We learn to love the preparation of heavenly things, and we are commanded to seek them with the most ardent weeping. For we mourn the dead, as it were with a flute, when we grieve vehemently that we do not yet live in that eternal life.

After the timbrel, therefore, our preachers have the flute, because they teach us both to mortify our members and to groan for love of eternal life. They also bring the harp after the flute, because they command us so to bewail the hardships of our present exile that we may rejoice in the promise of our eternal inheritance. For the great prophet sounded the psaltery when he said: My sheep hear my voice, and I give them eternal life (John 10:27). Again striking the psaltery, he says: The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (John 3:14). He sounded the timbrel who said: Mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil desire (Col. 3:5). He sounded the flute who said: Be afflicted, mourn; let your laughter be turned to

mourning, and your joy to sorrow (James 4:9). He sounded the timbrel who said: For your sake we are put to death all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter (Ps. 43:22). He holds the flute before him who likewise speaks to God, saying: You will feed us with the bread of tears, and give us drink in full measure (Ps. 79:6). The Lord held the flute before Him when He said: Amen I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful (John 16:20). But as if adding the sound of the harp, He says:

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy (*ibid.*). He sounded the harp for us, as it were, who said: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men; the Lord is near (Phil. 4:4). He sounds the harp for us who, announcing the good things of our city, says: Joy and gladness shall be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of praise (Isa. 51:3). Because, therefore, the preachers of holy Church announce the heavenly kingdom, and for the attainment of that same kingdom command us to mortify the flesh, to bewail our captivity, and to exult in hope of future blessedness, the prophets descending from the height are said to carry before them the psaltery, the timbrel, the flute, and the harp. And they are called a company of prophets, because the pastors of holy Church are many, yet they have one pastor, the Lord Jesus Christ.

17. And it should be noted that the prophets are said to have the psaltery, drum, flute, and harp before them, so that the pattern of the elect preachers might be seen. For the reprobate have what they preach behind them, because they say and do not do; they neglect to do the good things that they know. Whence also to King Saul, already despising the Lord's commands, it is said: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23). Hence the Lord complains through the prophet concerning the Jews, saying: "They have cast me behind their back" (1 Kings 14:9). Therefore the holy teachers, because they maintain the path of heavenly conduct that they preach by the continual course of good works, in their figure it is said that the prophets had the psaltery, drum, flute, and harp before them as they descended. For these instruments can be referred to the preaching of the Redeemer. And because not far above we said that the hill of the Lord is the Redeemer himself, let us consider the fittingness of the instruments. He who names him king of the eternal kingdom surely sounds the psaltery for us. And he who affirms the discipline of our

mortification in him strikes, as it were, the drum. He sounds the flute who proclaims the Redeemer dead for the salvation of the world. He strikes the harp who declares that he rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.

But we are made glad at the delight of such great instruments if we hear the very flock of prophets sounding forth. For David says: "His going forth is from the highest heaven, and his circuit reaches to the highest" (Psalm 18:7). Hence he likewise says: "All kings of the earth shall worship him, all nations shall serve him" (Psalm 71:11). For he held, as it were, the psaltery in praise of the Redeemer, who obtained the higher part of praise and preached the coming of the Redeemer from the highest heaven. Isaiah touched the drum of his mortification, saying: "And we saw him, and there was no beauty, and we desired him, despised and the lowest of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and his face was as it were hidden and despised, whence we did not esteem him" (Isaiah 53:3). Likewise sounding the flute of his death, he says: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb he was silent" (Isaiah 53:7). David, striking the harp of the resurrection, says: "Let the whole earth be moved before his face; say among the nations that the Lord has reigned from the wood; for he has established the world, which shall not be moved" (Psalm 95:10). Also touching the harp of the ascension, he said: "O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, who ascends above the heaven of heavens to the east" (Psalm 67:33-34).

Therefore the prophets descend from on high when the holy preachers announce to us those mysteries which they have learned by lofty contemplation. And they sound the psaltery, flute, and harp, because they declare our Redeemer to be Lord of the eternal kingdom, both humbled through the human condition, and that by his death he redeems the world, and by rising again he restores heavenly things. Which instruments of praise they surely have before them, because they understand what they say. On the contrary, Caiaphas is said to prophesy (John 11) and yet to be ignorant of what he said, since the flute of the Lord's death that he touched he did not have before him as an elect prophet would, but behind him. Well then is it added concerning the elect prophets: "And them prophesying. Because while they see what they say, they have, as it were, the instruments that they play before them; and while they preach, they bring forth what they have known by foreseeing. Therefore Saul comes to the hill of the Lord when the chosen yet unformed preacher advances in spiritual knowledge and recognizes the Re-

deemer of the human race not on the level plain of his humanity, but in the lofty majesty of his divinity. Then indeed he hears the choirs of the prophets singing together, because he perfectly understands all the Scriptures that concern him.

He therefore who saw the men leaping over great pits, who beheld those carrying kids, and loaves of bread, and a flask of wine, arrives at the hill of the Lord—when he who is known to have advanced through the examples of the elect is raised to the summit of knowledge, and knowing the Redeemer sublimely, loves him ineffably, from whom, as a familiar friend, he may obtain what he further desires to know about him. 18. It is well added: "And the Spirit of the Lord will leap upon you, and you will prophesy with them. The Spirit of the Lord is said to leap because the hearts of the elect are suddenly filled with His gifts. They immediately begin to prophesy, because those who are full of the divine Spirit cannot remain silent about the mighty works of God. Or he is declared about to prophesy, to whom Samuel promises the grace of the divine word. This is as if he were saying: You who now cannot speak in that abundance of the Spirit coming upon you—when that fullness has poured itself into you, you will abound with a wealth of speech. Indeed, the Lord, promising this leaping Spirit to the disciples, says: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will teach you all truth, and will announce to you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). The Spirit indeed leaps upon those whose hearts He illuminated by coming suddenly (Acts 2:2). And once illuminated, they prophesied, because they proclaimed the Redeemer of the human race in every tongue. This we certainly see happening even now in the holy Church, because often those who desire to speak divine things are suddenly taught by that same Spirit, and they are also able to speak most excellently things they had learned by no prior meditation. For in return for keeping the commandments of God, they receive the grace of the word in the sublime revelation of the Redeemer.

For what wonder is it if those who through purity of life are always the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit can suddenly receive the light of knowledge? But what kind of gift of the Holy Spirit would it be if it gave knowledge and did not give the affection of great charity? For those who are filled with that Spirit preach heavenly things, but they love what they speak. Therefore it is fittingly added: "And you will be changed into another man. What is the love of the elect mind other than a transformation of the old

nature? For our nature was so condemned through the fall of the first man that it daily declines by slipping and grows old by declining. But we who fail in ourselves, when that Spirit leaps into us, are renewed, because we are immediately made what we were not. Someone was lukewarm, but suddenly visited by the Spirit, he is made fervent. He begins to burn with devotion, to exercise himself vigorously in good work. He has therefore been changed into another man, because he began to be what, before the Spirit leaped into him, he could not be. Someone is already of good conduct, loves heavenly things, despises earthly things, but he cannot manage to weep for the things he loves above or for the things he hates below. Often indeed he desires to weep and cannot, though he recalls having committed many things for which he ought to weep;

but when that Spirit suddenly leaps in, he bursts forth into fountains of tears. He is therefore changed into another man, who receives the grace of compunction through the coming Spirit, which he did not have before the coming of that same Spirit. Someone desires to obtain purity of heart, to think on heavenly things, to be hindered by no encounters with worldly cares; but he cannot rise up to what he desires through devotion by means of the affection of purity. But suddenly, caught up in the power of the coming Spirit, he ceases to be carnal, powerfully casts aside the cares of the world, and rises to the contemplation of eternal things with wonderful purity. He then marvels that he is what he was not; he then marvels that he was not what he is. For when he sees himself to be such in spiritual things, he who is such marvels that he could not have been such before. He is therefore changed into another man, who sees himself to be what he was not, and not to be what he had been. Well therefore concerning Saul: "You will be changed into another man. Because when the preachers of the holy Church receive the grace of divine preaching, they do not receive only the knowledge of the word, but the power of love—so that through the word they may be able to benefit others, and through love of the word they themselves may become better.

For when they speak, they are changed into another man, because when the Spirit speaks through them, they themselves are joined to that same Spirit by wondrous charity, and they no longer dissent from His will in either word or deed. For sacred Scripture, praising such a man, says: "He who clings to God is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17). For we cling to God when we

abundantly receive the grace of the Holy Spirit; and we are made one spirit with Him when we are in harmony with the divine will in mind, mouth, and deed. Well therefore did the prophet Samuel add, saying: (Verse 7) "For when all these signs have come to you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for the Lord is with you." 19. These indeed are the signs by which a preacher may recognize himself, and then let him dare to undertake everything he plans to do, when he has learned by certain experience that he has received the power of the Holy Spirit in great abundance of charity. But the preacher ought to teach those things which he does, just as Luke says of the Lord: "That Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which, commanding the apostles through the Holy Spirit whom He had chosen, He was taken up" (Acts 1:1-2). Hence Paul says: "I dare not speak of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed" (Rom. 15:18). And so Samuel commands the anointed king, saying: "Do whatever your hand finds to do." As if to say: When you see yourself filled with divine grace, teach others whatever you do, because from the divine grace presiding over you, you have the ability both to live excellently and to preach profitably. But nevertheless, he adds what he ought to observe before all these things, saying: (Verse 8.) "And you shall go down before me to Gilgal. For I will surely come down to you, to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait for me, until I come and show you what you should do."

20. What does it mean that he first says: "Do whatever your hand finds," and then adds: "You shall wait seven days for me, until I come and show you what you are to do"? But he who had received the signs by which he would know himself anointed king by the Lord was to be tested as to whether he would recognize those very signs. This indeed suits a spiritual rather than a historical explanation. For we have said that coming to the hill of the Lord pertains to the perfect knowledge and love of the Redeemer, and being filled with the gift of prophecy pertains to the power of the Holy Spirit. He says therefore: "When all these signs have come upon you, do whatever your hand finds. Because whoever is certain of the intimate inspiration of the Holy Spirit can be confident both in the purpose of good work and in the ordering of preaching. He likewise said: "You shall wait seven days for me, until I come; and I will show you what you are to do. Because the chief pastors of the holy Church, while they are uncertain about the progress of those beneath them,

are very anxious to recognize it in them by sure indications. But what are the indications of the Spirit, if not the surpassing gifts of humility? For the Holy Spirit, the greater the light of virtues with which He illuminates the hearts of the elect, the more abundantly He enriches them with the gift of humility.

For the loftier they are in merits, the lowlier they are through the virtue of humility. He therefore who is commanded to go down to Gilgal before the prophet and to wait, is clearly given the burden of obedience for the purpose of testing his humility. It is also the right order of a chosen way of life that one should not impose obedience on others which he himself has not taken care to render to others. He is therefore commanded to wait, so that it may be recognized whether he is truly humble. If, then, the sign of a perfect preacher is the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and the virtue of humility is the sign of that fullness, what is said in praise of humility except that its gifts are the signs of signs? 21. But because the king who is about to sacrifice is commanded to be preceded by the prophet, we discern better the things that are said if they are examined in order. Gilgal is indeed interpreted as "wheel. But what does the wheel signify in this place, if not the life of the obedient? A wheel indeed advances by turning, and now seeks the heights, now the depths. So indeed is the life of the obedient, because it does below what draws it upward, and sees above what it performs below, as if it is raised to the heights and set down to the depths. For what the obedient do below, they lift upward; because when they obey the commands of their superiors, the things they perform are earthly, but from the earthly things they do, they await heavenly rewards. Likewise, what they hold above, they bend toward the earth, because in order to perform earthly things well, they contemplate heavenly things, and they do only that which they perceive to be fitting to that supreme happiness. Indeed, commanding Moses to turn this wheel, the Lord said: "Make all things according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain" (Exod. 25:40). For he who saw on the heights what he made in the depths surely bent the upper part of the wheel toward the earth. He had also raised the lower part to the heights, who said: "The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand" (3 Kings 17:1).

He stood indeed in the lowest place through the humility of obedience, while he rebuked the faithless king; but he raised the level ground of his work to the height of divine contemplation, so that he might turn the run-

ning wheel most excellently, while in his earthly work he looked to what heavenly reward he might merit. This indeed is the pattern of chosen obedience: that in everything we do outwardly, we look to the power of the Creator present everywhere. Thus indeed in the submission of our obedience we can have both uprightness of work and growth in devotion. We are indeed upright in work then, because we exert ourselves in the labor of obedience for him whom we behold. We are also devout, because we believe we please him whom we regard as the observer of our labors and the bestower of eternal recompense. And because the commands of superiors must be observed with perfect humility, it is well said to Saul: "You shall wait seven days. For the number seven stands for the gifts of the sevenfold Spirit. We wait seven days for the teachers of the Church when, through the power of the sevenfold Spirit, we receive such great clarity of inward devotion that we in no way neglect their precepts. In this place it should be noted that he did not say: "You shall be in Gilgal for seven days," but: "You shall wait for me seven days, after you have gone down before me.

We go down before the preacher when we do what is commanded us by his judgment. Then indeed we are said to descend, because we subject our minds to their authority. But to wait seven days is to fulfill the good of obedience with every light of the heart. Which we certainly do when we pass over neither the hard nor the easy commands of our superiors. For the Lord wanted no day to be devoid of this light, when he said: "Whoever breaks one of these least commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). And because the perfect obedience that we render to men is a gift of the Creator, he who waits seven days is said to offer an oblation and to sacrifice peace offerings. The oblation is indeed the Lord's because it is offered to men for God's sake, but what is offered to men is received by God. The victims are the services of the obedient, because when we submit to men for God's sake, we overcome the proud spirits. By other virtues we indeed assail the demons; through obedience we conquer them. Therefore those who obey are victors, because while they perfectly subject their own will to others, they themselves through obedience exercise dominion over the fallen angels.

22. But it should be noted that Samuel commanded Saul to go down before him to Gilgal, yet did not want him to offer oblation and sacrifices without him. For he said: "I indeed will come down to you so that you may

offer oblation and sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait for me, until I come to you, and I will show you what you should do. What is this but that we ought both to be wisely ignorant of our own good deeds, and sometimes to know them usefully? They should indeed be left unknown, lest they furnish occasion for pride to us who are weak; but they should be known by the more perfect, so that they may grow through devotion. Hence it is also fittingly said in the Gospel concerning the pregnant Elizabeth: "And she hid herself for five months" (Luke 1:24). For those who cannot yet be spiritual and strong are designated by the number five. But she who has newly conceived hides herself for five months: because she does good through the bodily senses; but because she is not yet spiritual and strong in this good work, she wisely conceals what she does. He therefore offers sacrifices to God, he offers oblation, who waiting seven days receives the coming prophet: because then what he offers is worthy of God, when the one offering is righteous by the virtue of obedience and filled with fear by the consideration of divine immensity;

when he does not believe himself to be anything other than what he knows by the approval of his superiors. For it is as if we offer in the presence of the prophet, when we believe only those works of ours to be worthy of divine acceptance which are approved by the judgment of holy preachers. And because he is said to sacrifice in the presence of the prophet, this assuredly signifies that in our works we ought to trust wise and spiritual men. Because likewise Saul waits seven days, the preacher of the holy Church ought to wisely order the virtue of his subject, so that he does not praise his good deeds before him except when he can despise the favor of his own praise. Hence also the same oblation and sacrifices are declared to be offered by Saul to God, and not to himself. For he offers sacrifices to God who is not vainly puffed up about the virtue he possesses, but attributes everything he accomplishes to the grace of the Creator. This also, because we learn by the teaching of doctors, Samuel fittingly says in concluding his speech: "And I will show you what you should do. He indeed shows the one who waits what he should do: when the one who is known to obey perfectly is taught how he ought to command others. But this is not yet shown to Saul, but is promised. For he is not sent to sacrifice, but to wait.

And because we advance by conversation with the saints, it is fittingly added: (Verse 9. And so, when he had turned his shoulder to go away from

Samuel, God changed for him another heart. 23. For the heart is changed to another when it is directed toward desiring better things; the heart is also changed when it is abandoned to evil. But in the case of Saul, who was first good and afterward evil, how this ought rather to be understood literally is not very clear. But if it is said with reference to his advancement, he had a changed heart, because he who had been searching for donkeys was now thinking about the governance of a kingdom. If, however, he is understood to have then received an evil heart, he was humble before the prophet; but as he began to depart, he likewise began also to grow proud. In his mind he was already thinking of himself not as a little one but as a king. He was not yet exalted in rank, but he was exalted in his own estimation. But since throughout this sacred history nothing is yet openly said about his pride, we too act more rightly if for the time being we pass over in silence what might seem unfavorable about him. What can still support his remaining innocence is said in what follows: That Saul was a child of one year when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel (1 Sam. 13:1). For if he was a humble king for two years, the changed heart is asserted of him on account of the vigor of his purpose, not on account of a new swelling of pride.

Therefore, in that Saul is said to have had a changed heart, he is likened to new preachers of the holy Church, who when they receive the office of preaching become better through divine grace. For Samuel anointed Saul as prince, but God changed his heart to another, because we receive the sacraments of holy orders outwardly from the teachers of the Church, but we are strengthened inwardly by the power of the sacraments from Almighty God. The power of the sacrament, however, is the grace of the sevenfold Spirit. Those who receive this grace are surely changed as if having received another heart, because those whom the Holy Spirit strengthens by his grace, he immediately makes to be what they were not. So indeed the disciples of the Redeemer also formerly were afraid; but when through the coming of the Holy Spirit another heart was changed in them, they preached the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). For God changed their heart to another, to whom he granted knowledge of all languages (Acts 2:6). For he changed their heart to another whom he clothed with wondrous love and illuminated with the splendors of all virtues. And it should be noted that God changed his heart to another at the time when he turned his shoulder to go away from the prophet. For he turns his shoulder, as it were, to go away, when he who re-

ceives the office of preaching resolves to carry out what is commanded him concerning the pastoral office.

He resolves indeed, but does not prevail, if God does not change his heart to another, because the highest place is not well governed unless the mind of the ruler is filled with the supreme grace of the divine gift. Moreover, because these things are promised to him for the future, it is added: (Verse 10. And all these signs came to him on that day. 24. For what else is the teaching of a chosen preacher than the day of an instructed disciple? For he who walks in the day sees both the level ground on which to walk and the precipices to avoid. So indeed, while we are illuminated by the teachings of holy preachers, we openly perceive what must be done and what must be avoided. In that day, therefore, in which the prophet preaches, a good hearer perceives the signs of his election—he who beholds in himself those gifts of virtues which his preacher previously showed would come to him. They are indeed signs, because through these those who are advanced to the order of preaching understand themselves to be chosen by God. Therefore, let no one consider himself anointed for the leadership of the Church who has not seen the signs of that day present in the power of perfection. Let him therefore first attentively observe the first sign, namely whether, by the example of men, he already knows how to leap over great pits. Let him also recognize the following sign: whether at the oak of Tabor he met three men whom he saw carrying young goats and loaves of bread to Bethel, to the house of the Lord; whether he received two loaves from their hands. Let him likewise see the third: whether he came to the hill of the Lord, whether he beheld the bands prophesying, whether the Spirit of the Lord leaped upon him and he can already prophesy in their midst.

And indeed he saw men leaping over pits if, by the example of the perfect, he has already learned to despise all things of the world. He came to the oak of Tabor if he already knows how to experience the strength and pleasantness of the contemplative life. There he also beheld those carrying young goats and loaves of bread and wine to the Lord, because from the lovers of the contemplative life he has already learned both to acknowledge himself unceasingly as a sinner, and to afflict the flesh for those same sins, and to offer the pain of his affliction gratefully to almighty God. He came to the hill of the Lord if, by advancing, he has ascended to the revealed intimate glory of the Redeemer or to the sublime understanding of the Scriptures. He met the

band of prophets if he has understood the harmonious knowledge of the preachers of the holy Church. In their midst he felt the Spirit of the Lord leaping upon him; in that ineffable sweetness of inner experience he recognized in himself the gift of divinity coming upon him, and by speaking he poured forth the abundance of the grace he had come to know. As often as holy preachers show these things to us who are imperfect, through the teaching by which they illuminate us, they produce, as it were, a most brilliant day. And indeed all these things preachers who have already been advanced know, as their ordainers have set them forth.

25. Since therefore they have the day of signs, let them profitably consider whether they already see the promised signs. For he who has not yet learned to despise the glory of the world was able to hear the first sign promised, but did not see it displayed. If he does not know the strength and sweetness of the contemplative life, he has not deserved to see the good of the following sign. If he has not ascended to the height of the Scriptures through the knowledge of intimate learning, he has not yet come to the hill of the Lord. If he does not yet have the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon him, he cannot prophesy. For without that Spirit a pastor is carnal, and what he speaks cannot be attributed to the dignity of preaching, but to the boldness of rashness. With what dread, then, can we wretches be terrified? For behold, we have undertaken the leadership of others, we who do not possess the power of the governance we have assumed. We have heard the signs of spiritual prelacy which we do not see in ourselves through the light of experience. We desire earthly things, we are occupied with outward cares, and we are driven the further from heavenly contemplation the more we are weighed down by anxiety over earthly affairs. Pressed down also by this burden of earthly life, when can we attain that splendor of the intimate glory of the Redeemer, when can we arrive at the loftiest meanings of the holy Scriptures?

But neither can we speak of heavenly things, which we do not know, as though they were known. And we who are unwilling to devote ourselves through quiet to the love of the interior life do not feel the Spirit of the Lord leaping upon us. Therefore let the signs that are known but not possessed terrify us, so that when we are pricked with compunction for the immensity of our negligence, we may seek the power of the order we have assumed through weeping and lamentation. Hence the Psalmist laments with

the voice of the weak, saying: "We have not seen our signs, there is no longer a prophet" (Psalm 73:9). For one is a prophet when these aforementioned signs of prophecy are foreseen to be present in him. If therefore he is raised to the summit of prelacy, let him not measure himself by the height of his office, but by the power of his perfection. Let him therefore say: "We have not seen our signs, there is no longer a prophet. As if to say: I would call myself a prophet now, if I could discern the gifts of the Spirit with which the person of a prophet ought to shine. He therefore who has heard of the perfection of the pastoral order he has assumed, which he has not deserved to obtain in himself by his manner of living, is not a fit teacher of holy Church. In the first king, therefore, the advancement of all pastors of holy Church is shown, when it is said:

"All these signs came to him on that day. And because this same advancement of the chosen preachers is wondrous, there follows: (Verse 11. But those who had known him yesterday and the day before, seeing that he was with the prophets and was prophesying, said to one another: "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" 26. What is it that they say, "What is this thing that has happened," except to marvel greatly at what could not be comprehended by them? They had known the man, a son of man; they saw him joined to the prophets. They had known him as carnal; they saw him as spiritual. They had known him as simple; they saw him as a prophet. They say therefore: "What has happened to the son of Kish? They were able to know what he had been; what he now was, and how he could be so, they did not know. This indeed is the spiritual progress of the preacher: that he who was once known in ordinary life should possess something in a higher order that is beyond understanding. Three degrees of perfection are shown, because he says: "Yesterday and the day before. In two days indeed the preacher is recognized; on the third he possesses something that even those who knew him cannot comprehend. For the first day belongs to hearers, the second to companions, the third is that of preaching. For the pastor had his first day when as a disciple he obeyed his superiors. For he who is devoted in the virtue of obedience is seen as if in a great light. He had his second day when he began to be an assistant to his betters. For this brightness of a great way of life, in the example of the elect, makes the greatest day. The Lord, indicating this day, said:

"So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). But the third day is that of the rushing Spirit and of prophecy. For on the third day the pastor is beheld, when he matches the sublimity of his dignity with the splendor of his conduct, when, clothed with heavenly power, he shines upon his subjects with such life and such teaching that he can be seen by them but cannot be examined and judged. Such indeed was Moses when he descended from the mountain with a most radiant face, whose subjects saw the brightness but could not fix their gaze upon the shining splendor (Exod. 34:35; 2 Cor. 3:7). Such was he who gloried, saying: "But we, beholding the glory of God with unveiled face, are transformed into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Such indeed were those whom the Holy Spirit had filled. Whence also those who had gathered in Jerusalem say in amazement: "Are not all these who speak Galileans? (Acts 2:7). For they were asking in order to understand what they were hearing, and they could not understand it. But those who had known Saul ask in wonder about the thing that happened to him;

because we sometimes see those who are humble and despised in a lower order of holy Church, whom, when the Holy Spirit takes them up to the order of preaching, He clothes with the splendors of His graces and shows them to be wondrous in those same splendors. But we rightly admire the virtues of the saints when we ascribe them to the goodness of the Creator. Wherefore Moses also, praising the Lord, said: "Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, glorious among the saints, wonderful in majesty, working wonders? (Exod. 15:11). Hence the Psalmist says: "God is wonderful in His saints; He Himself will give power and strength to His people" (Ps. 67:36). Rightly there follows: (Verse 12) "One answered another, saying: And who is their father?" 27. What is it that up to this point it was said of Saul alone: "What has happened to the son of Kish? And now, as if concerning many, the answer is given: "And who is their father? But if this is understood according to history, it can in no way stand. It remains therefore that the meaning which is taken from the letter must be sought in spiritual signification. When therefore it is said: "Who is their father? not only Saul prophesying is considered, but that entire company of prophets. For indeed all those prophets, because they were greatly spiritual, were reckoned not from carnal descent but from heavenly origin. The Father of the prophets is

He who inquires through Malachi, saying: "If I am the Lord, where is my fear? And if I am a father, where is my love? (Mal. 1:6). For because they are joined to almighty God in great love, they are called sons of Him whom they love as a father. This applies all the more fittingly to the preachers of the new Church, inasmuch as He raised them higher into heavenly nobility, who revealed to them the glory of so great a lineage in the form of a prayer. "Thus," He says, "you shall pray: Our Father, who art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Which is as if to say: The holy preachers would be worthy of admiration if the wonders they perform they accomplished by their own power;

but now what is seen is not a wonder, because He works this through them for whom nothing seems difficult. Let one therefore say to another: "And who is their father? As if to say: What wonder is it if they teach marvelously, since it is not they themselves who speak, but the Spirit of their Father who speaks in them? Therefore it is not said: "Who is his father? (John 6:42), lest what belongs to many sons be attributed to one alone. For only He who is Son by nature dares to say: "My Father works until now" (John 5:17). And likewise: "The Lord said to me: You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (Ps. 2:7). For in order to bring forth the difference between each dignity, He speaks to Mary Magdalene, saying: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). As often therefore as one preacher is seen to be distinguished by a wondrous life or preaching, in his heavenly generation he is seen not alone but with innumerable others; because almighty God, who is shown to be wonderful in one, produces far greater admiration among people when innumerable others are considered who possessed that which they marvel at in one. This, however, can fittingly be referred to the detraction of carnal people: for when they try to diminish the reputation of spiritual men, they search out their carnal circumstances which they may bring forward for disparagement.

And very often in holy Church those have a wondrous reputation for holiness who have no worldly eminence at all. When therefore carnal people find fault with either the fleshly origin or the poverty in those who by divine generation are already great and rich, they inquire about the father of the prophets as if in mockery. And because they consider it a very strange thing that lowly men of the world can appear so great, there is added: (Ibid. "Therefore it was turned into a proverb: Is Saul also among the prophets?" 28. Which indeed, if they were to examine with the eyes of the heart, they would

not regard as a new thing. For the Holy Spirit acts according to His own custom when He raises the poor, the humble, and the simple to the summit of virtues. For of Him it is written: "Who sets the humble on high, and lifts up the mourning to safety" (Job 5:11). Hence the almighty Father says of His same almighty Spirit through the prophet: "Upon whom does my spirit rest, if not upon the humble, and the quiet, and the one who trembles at my words? (Isaiah 66:2). Hence Paul says: "Not many wise according to the flesh, not many noble, but God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the strong; and God chose the ignoble things of the world, to destroy the things that are; so that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Corinthians 1:26, etc.). Which proverb can certainly be ascribed to the elect as well. For no less amazement was held concerning the blessed apostle Paul, when it was heard by the Church that he who used to assault the Church by threatening and slaughtering was now evangelizing and defending it by preaching. Then indeed those who heard could say: "Is Saul among the apostles? Does he who used to persecute Jesus now preach Jesus? But this has now been turned into a proverb of the elect. A proverb indeed is when in what is said, something else is concealed.

But the conversion of the blessed apostle Paul has become a proverb for the sinner. Let every sinner therefore hear of the conversion of blessed Paul, and not despair on account of the multitude of his crimes. For Saul, breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, was afflicting the elect everywhere; he was guarding the garments of those who stoned the protomartyr Stephen, and was as it were stoning with the hands of all, since he made them all free to stone (Acts 9:1 ff.). But he who was such while persecuting Christ, upon being converted to Christ, was made the head of the nations, because he obtained the leadership of the whole Church. While we behold so great a sinner converted and honored by the Lord with so sublime a dignity, let us presume that we too can find forgiveness for our sins. Our proverb therefore is this: that a persecutor is taken up for evangelizing, which contains this mystery—that the converted sinner may not only hope for pardon from the Lord, but that by fighting manfully he may be able to attain to the crown. But this is the usual difference between carnal and spiritual preachers: that carnal preachers, after the lofty words of preaching, descend to the depths of wicked works, while spiritual preachers, after the sublime things they speak, raise themselves up to even higher desires for the heavenly

homeland. Whence it is also added: (Verse 13) "But he ceased to prophesy, and came to the high place."

29. He comes to a high place after the ministry of prophecy, who raises his mind to the heavenly joys which he preaches, and lifts himself up by loving those things which he displays by speaking. Teachers indeed preach plain things with those of lesser rank; when they are with those whom they teach, they are, as it were, on level ground. And because after the words of preaching they prepare themselves by good works to merit the things they preach, they are said to come to a high place. Those who are certainly sublime in word and deed are not so in thoughts of pride. They always do great things, but never desire to appear great. Therefore it is well added: (Verses 14, 15, and 16.) And Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant: Where did you go? He answered: To seek the donkeys, and when we had not found them, we came to Samuel. And his uncle said to him: Tell me, what did Samuel say to you. And Saul said to his uncle: He told us that the donkeys had been found. But the matter of the kingship, which Samuel had spoken to him, he did not reveal to him.

30. The word of the kingdom is the honorable dignity of the pastor. For by its very display it speaks: because he is no mere uncle who is elevated by so great an order. Therefore the king does not reveal the word of the kingdom: because the pastor of the Church speaks with the great splendor of divinity, but does not speak with pride. He who indeed does not reveal the word conceals what he speaks. For the word always speaks to him for whom it is a word; otherwise it is not a word. Therefore he possesses the word of the kingdom who shines with that manner of life which, as if by speaking, provides to others examples of the heavenly journey. Therefore he does not reveal the word who does not disclose the greatness of his holiness through vainglory. He indeed has what he might reveal, but what is shown through itself he does not wish to proclaim. For he who shines with great dignity and great holiness shows many things by living which he does not say by speaking. The Lord surely wished the preacher to have this word of the kingdom when He commanded that bells be placed on the garment of the high priest (Exod. 28:34). The garment of the high priest is the display of a good manner of life. It is furnished, as it were, with many bells when it multiplies the good works that cry out as an example to the lesser ones.

But the king does not dare to reveal the word of the kingdom: because it is commanded of priests that they bear the beauty of their garment before the Lord. He bears the beauty of his garment before the Lord who both shows forth good things and, from the display of good works, seeks to please not men outwardly through vanity, but God inwardly through love. Then certainly the priest is silent, but as he walks, what he wears cries out; because the chosen preacher does not proclaim himself by boasting, but never ceases to speak by living well. Let it therefore be said of Saul that he did not reveal to his uncle the word of the kingdom: because chosen men, when they receive the splendor of dignity or the growth of a good life, put themselves forward by examples, but conceal themselves in silence. And because they believe themselves to be lesser in merits than other chosen ones, he to whom he does not reveal the word is called his uncle. For an uncle is called the brother of the father. Moreover, the Redeemer of the human race makes as many sons unto the unfading glory of the eternal inheritance as He instructs in the sacraments of His faith and doctrine. For those who are instructed in the Church are, as it were, still little children. But he who now meets Him as a perfect man through great merits is a brother of the Redeemer. The blessed Apostle Paul, praising such men indeed, says:

Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Because therefore perfect preachers regard other chosen and perfect ones as such and themselves as imperfect, the one who is reported to have questioned him about the word of the kingdom is called the uncle of Saul. Moreover, Samuel had spoken to Saul this same word of the kingdom: because chosen men have learned the spiritual manner of life which they possess from the speech of their elders. But the king who had been initiated through anointing had not yet been chosen by the people. Whence it also follows: (Verse 17. Samuel called the people to the Lord at Mizpah. 31. Mizpah, as I said, is interpreted as "watchtower." In the ordination of the king, the people are called to Mizpah, because those who come together to ordain a pastor of holy Church are taught to attend to his spiritual qualities, not his carnal ones. To watch, indeed, is to recognize the preacher to be ordained through the standard of sacred Scripture. For sacred Scripture is the mirror of the elect. A pastor is known as if through a mirror, when he is shown by his conduct to be such as is proclaimed in sacred eloquence. Rightly, therefore, Samuel convokes the people at Mizpah, so that the election of a good bishop may not rest on hu-

man judgment, but on divine: since there is elected not such a one as can be determined by the will of men, but such as is declared in sacred eloquence. Because this is a gift of God, it is necessary that the people, who are known to expect such great things from God, be purged of their guilt through the satisfaction of penance. Moreover, the very recognition of sin is a preparation for the divine gift, because often when we believe ourselves unworthy of the divine gift, we merit it through humility. Hence Samuel also strives to turn those who had gathered to receive the king first to the consideration of their sins, because it is added: (Verses 18, 19.) And Samuel said to the children of Israel: Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I brought Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of all the kings who were afflicting you. But today you have rejected the Lord your God, who alone saved you from all your evils and tribulations, and you said: By no means, but a king shall be over us.

32. Indeed, he carefully showed them both the good things which the Lord had bestowed upon them and the evil things which they themselves had done against the Lord, so that they might recognize that they had sinned all the more gravely, inasmuch as they had dared by sinning to offend him from whom they had received such great blessings. But what it means to reject the Lord, and how it ought to be understood according to the literal and the spiritual sense, has been explained at length above (Above in the exposition of verse 7, chapter VIII), where the Lord says to Samuel: "They have not rejected you, but me, according to all their works which they have done from the day when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." But because holy preachers instruct by teaching those whom they pierce by rebuking, he added, saying: (Verse 19) "Now therefore, stand before the Lord by your tribes and by your families."

33. We are indeed commanded to stand before the Lord when we prepare our hearts to know His commandments at the instruction of our elders. Or the elect stand before the Lord when they are considered by great men with respect to their spiritual virtues, so that whoever is seen to be better among them may be preferred over the rest through pastoral care. And because there are many orders of the faithful, they are commanded to stand before the Lord by tribes and families. Pursuing this indeed more broadly, he adds saying: (Verses 20, 21.) And Samuel brought near all the tribes of Israel, and the lot fell upon the tribe of Benjamin, and he brought near the tribe of Benjamin and its families, and the family of Matri was taken, and it came down

to the son of Kish. 34. He made them all stand by tribes and families, so that he might consider them all, and having considered all, might choose the more suitable one. But since he himself had already known the king by the Lord's revelation, and had anointed him as ruler at His command, why is it that he is still sought out as one to be chosen through tribes and families? But the king had been found by the prophet alone. Therefore, the one already found is sought, so that he who had not been found by the people might be found by them. He is also sought by lot, so that the people could not doubt that the one whom the prophet chose had been provided by divine dispensation. What then is signified in this event, if not that the rulers of the holy Church must be chosen with great deliberation? For the highest preachers, from the interior grace of the Holy Spirit which they possess, are full of the great light of providence. And because they are deeply humble, they do not presume upon the greatness of their inner illumination. Therefore, what they rightly determine within themselves, they also test before others. For the prophet alone knows the future king, when the supreme ruler of the holy Church perceives the character and merits of the one to be ordained as ruler. He also anoints him as ruler when he declares him to be full of spiritual gifts.

Nevertheless, he still convenes the people, divides them by tribes and kindreds, casts lots, and finds, as if by a method, the one whom he already knows. The tribes and families stand, as it were, divided, when in the state of virtues the diverse orders of the holy Church are examined. For when we behold the many perfections of the elect—when we see the purity of virgins, the strength of the continent, the honorable ministries of clerics, the devotion of monks—we observe, as it were, tribes standing before us. And because there is great variety among these in the service of God, when we likewise observe the varieties that exist within each order, we see standing before us not only tribes, as it were, but also kindreds. And the lot falls upon a tribe, because better men are often found in one order than in another. For a tribe receives, as it were, the lot, when those who are more perfect than others are seen to be suited for the ministry of preaching. But the lot does not yet fall upon a person, but upon a tribe, when there are many among whom a worthy person lies hidden. Thus there still remains something for the highest men to investigate.

Rightly, therefore, the lot is said to have fallen upon the tribe of Benjamin, and Samuel is said to have brought forward that tribe and its kindreds and to have arrived at the son of Kish, because the elect and highest men of the holy Church do not cease to consider the virtues of each individual until they arrive at the one who is found worthy of the lot of pastoral ministry. But those who are worthy are vehemently terrified to take up the burden of so great an office. Whence it also follows: (Verse 21, 22. They sought him therefore, and he was not found; and they inquired of the Lord further, whether the man would come there. And the Lord answered: Behold, he has hidden himself at home. 35. For they hide themselves so as not to be found, because they flee from undertaking a dignity whose burden they judge themselves unequal to bear. For spiritual leadership has the outward glory of dignity, and it also has the greatness of its inward labor. For a ruler is both honored by his subjects and bears those by whom he is honored. When therefore from the beginning of honor a cause of burden arises, because from the very source whence honor is received by the ruler, he takes on that by which he is weighed down. Although honor of dignity is in itself a great burden upon the mind, because it ought to be despised, and yet it pleases. It ought indeed to be despised lest it lift up the mind through pride; and it ought to be accepted, so that subjects may reverence the heavenly things which the teacher speaks. A heavier burden therefore arises from honor, because the chosen pastor can bear it only by great strength of soul—namely, to despise in himself what he receives in himself for God's sake, so that he may be such a one for God yet not be such for himself, and may deny himself yet not deny himself; so that what he is, he may be for God, and what he is for himself, he may not be. And so the honor offered by a subject is accepted, so that preaching may be commended.

The preacher also despises the honor offered, because he is not puffed up by being honored, but rejoices that the ministry of the word of God is commended. But how difficult this is to accomplish is better grasped by thinking than by speaking. For it is impossible for weak minds to bear bravely the burden of others and to manage by strength of mind the reverence of honor offered to them—so that amid the attentions of that same honor, one may know how to rejoice in the progress of subjects and not know how to swell with pride on account of the reverence shown to oneself. Because therefore chosen men do not wish to displease God, when called they flee from under-

taking the office of leadership. But they hold that very flight from ministry as a virtue of humility, not as a boast of dignity. For they flee as much as they can; but if they have been appointed by the Lord, they can by no means remain hidden. For the same reason Saul is hidden at home, but at the Lord's revealing he is shown forth, because chosen men withdraw themselves from the outward ministries of holy Church, yet by the Lord's dispensation they are brought forward to administer outward ministries. But because now in holy Church those who withdraw themselves from such great honors are few, while those who thrust themselves forward are many, those who thrust themselves forward ought to note this:

that he who is said by the prophet to have been hidden at home was being sought not for the spiritual dignity of the Church, but for the secular glory of a kingdom. For they were not seeking to make him a pontiff, but they wanted to make him king. Let the priest therefore see with what disposition the summit of holy Church ought to be fled from, if kings so cautiously flee from ascending the summit of the world. But because holy men, the more earnestly they refuse to accept the rank of leadership, are the more devoutly sought after by devoted peoples, there follows: (Verse 23.) 'They ran and brought him from there.' After this it is also added: (Ibid.) 'And he stood in the midst of the people.' 36. The prelate stands in the midst of the people when his strength is observed by all his subjects. For to stand is a mark of virtue. He who does good works steadfastly, therefore, stands. And because good works provide an example to those of lesser rank, he is seen to stand in the midst of the people, not in solitude. This is also fittingly understood as referring to the uprightness of intention. For he who stands with uprightness of body raises his head on high. But he who does good publicly does not stand with the strength of his work if he does not possess uprightness of intention. The king is therefore said to stand in the midst of the people so that the model of the holy prelates of the Church may be shown; because they ought to display good works as an example to their subjects, yet they should avoid receiving the glory of the world for that same good work. But he adds how great he ought to appear, and says: (Ibid.) And he was taller than all the people from his shoulder and upward.

37. We have shown at length above (Book IV, chapter 4, number 20) that the outstanding greatness of body in holy preachers signifies the increase of perfection. Therefore he is seen as exalted in the midst of the people, who,

placed at the summit of virtues, is not unknown by his subjects. Indeed the right order for a chosen preacher is that before the loftiness of ecclesiastical eminence, he ascend the summit of virtue, that for the honor of God he obtain the summit of glory, but shine with greater loftiness through the revealed perfection of virtues. Such a Pastor indeed is greatly to be proclaimed by perfect men, and to be desired and loved by the lesser ones. Well therefore is it added: 'And he said to all the people: Surely you see whom the Lord has chosen, that there is none like him among all the people.' (Verse 23.) 'And all the people cried out: Long live the king.' There follows: (Verse 24.) 'Samuel spoke to the people the law of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and placed it before the Lord.'

38. Concerning the law of kingship, because we spoke at length about it above (Book IV, ch. 4, no. 4 ff.), we recall only this about it: that in the historical narrative it is not prescribed but rather shown what wicked kings will do and what good kings should avoid. Kings are indeed to defend their subjects, not to strip them of their own goods. They ought to provide help to those under them, not to seize their fields, vineyards, and olive groves. But if anyone should wish to argue that these things were written not as things to be avoided but as things to be done, then the law of tyrants is written on behalf of that king who is demanded after the Lord has been rejected. The cruel law of the kingdom, therefore, is the punishment of a people that rejects the Lord. For it was not unjust that he should lose his fields and vineyards who willingly cast off the Lord reigning over him. Therefore we perceive that all the things contained in this law of kingship that seem contrary to equity are in fact equitable, if we consider what the people had sinned in asking for a king. For what great burden of law is it in the judgment of divine equity, if they should unwillingly place their sons and daughters in the service of the king, when they had willingly removed them from the liberty of God?

And what is seen to be unfitting if, as the final consequence, those who rejected God reigning over them should themselves become the servants of men? Therefore, when the law of the kingdom is written, a punishment is handed down to perpetual memory by which the presumptuous may be chastised; and because it had been issued through the justice of the Lord, it is said to have been deposited before the Lord. But perhaps that right was something other than this law that is written. If that is true, then Samuel speaks

this law before the king to the people, so that the king may know what to require from the people, and the people may know what they ought to render to their kings. This law is written in a book so that it may be preserved for the memory of those to come. It is placed before the Lord so that it may be held in reverence. We, however, have said that the kings of the Churches are the holy preachers, and we have shown that all the things contained in the law of kingship plainly apply to them. Samuel therefore speaks this law to the people when a chosen teacher instructs the faithful of holy Church with what humility they ought to submit to their superiors. It is also written in a book when he firmly implants these things in their minds.

For he who speaks in such a way that his hearers forget what they have heard tells the law to the people but does not write it in a book. Therefore, for a teacher to write in a book the words he speaks is to commend them attentively to the minds of his hearers. The Lord was, as it were, wishing to write what He had said when He declared: "Remember the word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his lord" (John 15:20). Hence Paul, inscribing the spoken law of the kingdom in a book, says: "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7). But if anyone here wishes to understand that another law is prefigured, let him look to the one that blessed Paul sets forth, saying: "Let him who preaches the gospel live by the gospel, and let him who serves the altar live by the altar" (1 Cor. 9:14). For the Lord was speaking this law of the kingdom to the people when He said: "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt. 10:41). And so that He might inscribe this more firmly in the book, strengthening His word from the lesser case, He said:

"Whoever gives one of these least of mine only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:40). There follows: (Verses 25, 26, 27. Samuel dismissed all the people, each one to his own house. But Saul went to his house in Gibeah, and there went with him a portion of the army whose hearts God had touched. But the sons of Belial said: "Can this man possibly save us? And they despised him. 39. If a plain historical narrative is sought, what could ever have been stated more clearly? But if we attend to the force of each individual word, great things are enclosed

within this simplicity of words. For the people are said to have been dismissed to their home, but the king is reported not to have been dismissed to his home, but to have gone away. Separately also it speaks of the homes of the people and of the home of the king: because the people are reported as dismissed to their home, and the king as having gone away to his own. Yet the people were dismissed before the king went away. Concerning the departing people it is also carefully indicated that they did not go all at once, but each one is reported to have gone away to his own home. But concerning those who followed the king it does not say: "A part of the army went away, each one after the king," but: "A part of the army went with him. Finally, those who follow the king are reported to have had their hearts touched by God; those who despise the king are called sons of Belial. This manner of speaking is certainly not simple, but is very subtle for one who knows how to consider not what merely sounds on the surface, but what is wisely intimated within. What does it mean, then, that the king is said to go away to his home, but the people to be dismissed?

We have shown that the king designates the pastor of the Church, and the people designate his subjects. Now to go is the act of one who is free; to be dismissed belongs to one who can be held back. The king is therefore said to go away so that in the person of the preacher, freedom of spirit may be proclaimed. Teachers can indeed go when they wish and return, because they are strong in good work and wise in their inner disposition. They come, indeed, when they go out to their subjects either by the example of good work or by the word of preaching. They go away when they return to the secret place of the mind and inwardly arrange what they are about to do outwardly. Inasmuch as they remain daily in this contemplation, they are, as it were, hidden within their home. The king is therefore said to go away to his home because the preacher, proven by the work of eternal life and secure in the teaching of wisdom, is free to go out to his labors and to enter into the counsels of the mind.

40. But the people is sent to its own house, because faithful subjects are not free to arrange what they wish, but only what is commanded. They are sent away as if held under constraint, while they are directed to do what is ordered and to avoid presuming what is not ordered. And because they are sent to diverse works, each one of them is sent to his own house. For in order that we may well accomplish those things which they command us, before

we appear in the work, we are hidden within in internal consideration. Therefore our kings send each of us to our own house, because they command us to go to those things which they enjoin upon us through the secret disposition of the mind. They indeed command well, but if we neglect to foresee the manner of our action, we scatter with an inconsiderate mind what has been well commanded. Therefore each one returns to his own house, when every faithful subject anticipates by arranging through the counsel of the mind the work of obedience that he sets before himself. But because after the king was chosen the people was sent to its own house before the king is said to have departed, something else can be signified in this. For those who receive the king go to their own house when each subject prepares himself by considering, so that he may render faithful obedience to him whom he has asked to be set over him.

In this place, therefore, the point is not to consider things already commanded, but to subject oneself with the lowest disposition to things about to be commanded. And for the king to go to his own house is to consider how he may command with discretion those who are prepared. Therefore the house of the king is one thing, and that of the subject people another; because the former consider with a lofty mind the journeys of subjects that must be arranged, while the latter prepare to carry out the commands of their superiors through the strength of their inmost purpose. Whence also the house of the king is reported to be situated in Gibeah. For Gibeah means "lofty. Therefore the house of the king is shown to be in Gibeah, because the chosen teacher strives not to dwell by thinking on low and earthly things, but to meditate on high and heavenly things. Whence also it is well said that a part of the army goes with him to Gibeah, because those who are strong against the devil follow their chosen pastor to the heights of virtues. Therefore a part of the army is said to go with the king, because in the holy Church very many are faithful who know how to humbly obey their superiors but do not know how to think lofty thoughts. They know indeed how to carry out what is commanded, but they do not know how to foresee what should be commanded to others.

For Paul was, as it were, commemorating the soldiers of this part when he wrote to the Colossians, saying: "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas, and John who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these alone are my helpers in the kingdom of God" (Col.

4:10). Likewise, addressing the Romans, he says: "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my helpers" (Rom. 16:5). And a little later: "Timothy my helper greets you, and Lucas, and Jason" (ibid. 21). He called his disciples helpers, because they were lesser in rank but sharers of the labor; they were subject to the Apostle by the humility of obedience, but while they preached with him the glory of the eternal kingdom, equally defended the truth with him, resisted the unbelievers, and bravely endured the persecutions inflicted upon them, they were, as it were, soldiers of the king in the war of God. A part of the army is said to go with the king to Gibeah, because perfect disciples are co-helpers of their teachers in the lofty governance of the holy Church; they bring what aid they can through the height of virtue, but they serve through humility those whom they help.

41. And because only those can do this who have been prevented by the grace of the Holy Spirit, when part of the army is said to go with the king, it is added: 'Whose hearts God had touched.' For since we are accustomed to touch with a finger, God touches the hearts of the Saints when He bestows upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit. And they feel His touch: because, having received the gift of inward virtue, they are stirred from the weakness of their carnality. They immediately become soldiers of the heavenly army, because through the power of the Holy Spirit they abandon what is weak and are prepared for undertaking mighty deeds in the warfare of Christ. But because within the holy Church certain persons do not fear to despise their prelates, let them hear that those who despise the king are called sons of Belial. Through the vice of pride, indeed, they are begotten in imitation of him of whom it is written: 'He beholds every high thing, and he himself is king over all the children of pride' (Job 41:25). They aptly reveal the ways of the proud, because they say: 'Can this man save us?' For holy men, because they despise present things and seek eternal things, bring forth even in their outward conduct the contempt for the world which they hold in their mind; inwardly they are venerable, outwardly they appear contemptible.

The proud, therefore, because they look only at what can be despised outwardly in the Saints, and do not deserve to perceive what is truly worthy of great veneration, say: 'Can this man save us?' As if they were asking scornfully: Are such great things to be hoped for from one so small? Are we to believe that one so lowly can save us who are so great, one so weak can save us who are so strong? For what else is the meaning of what they say — 'this

man' and 'us' — except that the proud and arrogant, looking upon others, always believe them to be small and weak, but themselves to be great, strong, and wise? Rightly, therefore, they are called sons of Belial, because while they exalt themselves through pride, they conform themselves to him who is said to have fallen from heaven in the same manner. Of these same despisers of the king it is also said: (Ibid.) 'And they brought him no gifts.'

42. If we examine these things according to the letter, they surely suggest that both lords of the lands and spiritual prelates of holy Church are to be honored with outward services. Hence the blessed Apostle Paul also addresses the proud Romans, saying: "Render to all what is owed; to whom tribute, tribute; to whom tax, tax" (Rom. 13:7). Hence the prince of the Apostles, exhorting, says: "Be subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether to the king as preeminent, or to governors as sent by him" (1 Pet. 2:13). We offer spiritual gifts to our rulers when we present to them the due reverence of honor and keep what they command with great devotion. For reverence of honor and humility of subjection are great gifts; because when we are both inwardly subject to our rulers through humility and outwardly display the reverence of honor through external services, we offer them one gift from the body, another from the heart. Therefore, to suggest the arrogance of the proud, the prophet does not say: "They did not bring him a gift," but "they did not bring him gifts"; because when they despise the chosen preachers, they disdain to offer them both honor from the body and humility from the heart. But when the chosen preachers recognize the fault of their subjects, sometimes they eagerly hasten to correct it at once by rebuking, and sometimes they pretend not to know of it, so that they may seek a fitting time to remove it. Hence concerning that same despised king it is immediately added: (Ibid.) "But he pretended not to hear."

43. He who knows indeed hears the wickedness of his subjects; but he hears and does not respond, nay rather he pretends not to hear: because very often, when the situation demands it, the known pride of subjects is left uncorrected, so that at a more opportune time it may be struck as though just discovered. We rightly recognize this discretion of ecclesiastical censure in this very king of Israel, if we consider the different times and deeds of his reign. For while still inexperienced and newly appointed, he is said to have pretended not to hear the words of those who despised him, but once his kingdom over Israel was established, he is reported to have fought to the

right and to the left, and to have prevailed wherever he turned. Therefore a fault which cannot be struck with fitting severity must be overlooked, not exposed, because subjects sin more boldly if the weakness of their superiors is recognized. Let these things discussed in the fourth book of this work suffice, so that through a fresh beginning of discourse we may renew our zeal for expounding what remains.

BOOK FIVE

CHAPTER 5.1

1. When I wished to assert the profundity of this sacred history in the preface of this work, I maintained that it could be seen especially in the fact that it was written by prophets. They indeed were accustomed to speak mystical things not only in words but also in deeds — to set forth plain things, yet to signify deep things. For since the Holy Spirit spoke through them, what they themselves said, as mere men, was plain, but it was profound and mystical, because the supreme and uncircumscribed Spirit was supplying the speech to men. Since, therefore, we are expounding the prophet Samuel as he speaks, we need all the greater diligence, inasmuch as he himself, sublimely taken up in the grace of the Holy Spirit, spoke outward things but saw inward things. He generally set forth carnal matters, but signified the innermost and spiritual realities. But since it is impossible by human effort to arrive at divine things, we must not trust in our own powers, but in the condescension of the Holy Spirit who, sent by the Redeemer, "has filled the whole world, and that which contains all things already has knowledge of every voice" (Wisdom 1:7). Let us hear, then, what the same prophet now relates concerning the undertakings of the Israelites. (1 Kings chapter 11, verses 1–2.) "And it came to pass," he says, "about a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and began to fight against Jabesh-gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash: 'Accept us as allies, and we will serve you.' And Nahash the Ammonite answered them: 'On this condition I will make a covenant with you: that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you, and make you a reproach in all Israel.'"

2. If one seeks the historical sense, nothing can be stated more plainly, nothing understood more easily. But if we wish to follow the spiritual sense, let us first hear Paul speaking, who, looking upon the old things, says: "All these things happened to them in figure, but they were written for our sake,

upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). He also indicates that there are spiritual wars, saying: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, when Nahash is said to go up and fight against Jabesh-Gilead, the inner battles against vices are signified. By these words the course of sacred history is shown, so that new wars would be waged against the new king; and by bringing these to a successful conclusion, he would demonstrate the glory of his valor. Who then is this Nahash the Ammonite? What is Jabesh-Gilead? Now, Nahash is interpreted as "serpent," and Jabesh as "dried out. Concerning the serpent it is said in Genesis: "Because he was more cunning than all living creatures" (Gen. 3:1). If we seek the likeness of this serpent among the vices, what do we find more similar than the violent impulse of gastrimargia, that is, the movement of gluttony?

Indeed, the movement of lust, the crime of theft, the appetite for base gain, the assault of anger, the bitterness of worldly sorrow, the sluggishness of sloth, the desire for vainglory, and the swelling of pride are openly detestable; but the vice of gluttony is all the more deceitful the more hidden it is, because it suggests food to the body as though it were necessary, yet while it abundantly nourishes the flesh, it plunges the sword of lust into the mind. It persuades that what is not a sin, but from the very fact that eating is accepted as though it were no sin, the soul is thereby subjected to the sin of lust. Hence in paradise the serpent is shown to have come to the woman to deceive her through the vice of gluttony—one who would suggest one thing but obtain another, so that while he displayed what should be eaten, he would administer an unforeseen death. This serpent therefore designates the greed of gluttony, because it both creeps under the guise of just necessity and spreads the poison of unholy pleasure. Rightly too is he called an Ammonite, which people is interpreted as "of sorrow," because what he urges seems pleasant, but it will be deeply mournful in eternal damnation. He is called a "people" because all gluttons, on account of their concern for the belly, are weighed down by a throng of innumerable cares.

He goes up against Jabesh-Gilead because he strives to cast down to the craving for food the bodies of the just, which are established in the lofty virtue of abstinence. Rightly indeed is flesh called "dried out" that is not weighed down by the moisture of fatness. Nahash goes up against those

whom he sees are dried out, because the spirit of gluttony wages more grievous wars against those whom he recognizes as worn thin by fasting. Rightly too is Nahash said to have begun to fight, because holy men do not hold the suggestion of gluttony in a pact of friendship but in the opposition of battle. For those who practice abstinence fight, as it were, against the serpent when they suppress the appetite of gluttony with great virtue, so that they may not be infected by the poison of lust. Indeed, the warfare of gluttony is to provoke the hungry bodies of the abstinent to a disordered filling of the belly.

3. But the appetite of gluttony can tempt perfect men, though it cannot overcome them. Rightly, therefore, he is said to have begun to fight against the dried-up woman, not to have conquered her, because chosen men feel the assault of carnal desires, but they know how to resist those same desires by the strength of the mind; they know how to provide for necessities through discretion. They know indeed how to suppress the fiercely rising assault of gluttony; they know how to furnish just nourishment for the body's need. For hence the outstanding Doctor says: "I know how to eat and to hunger" (Phil. 4:12). He indeed knows how to eat and to hunger who both moderately refreshes his body and does not consent to the vice of gluttony urging immoderate intake of food. Wherefore also, responding to Nahash, they say: "Have us as allies, and we will serve you. For they seek a treaty from gluttony who would wish to refresh the flesh according to their desire, if they could feel no incitements to lust in the flesh. As if they were saying: We will give you what is just for you, so that you do not inflict upon us what is not just. It is indeed just that the body be refreshed, but it is very unjust that the refreshed flesh be aroused through the burning of lust to the disgrace of the spirit.

We therefore seek a treaty when we wish to so favor the flesh for the intake of food that we feel no evils of lust from the flesh. But this we can indeed wish for, yet we cannot obtain it, because surely we offer just refreshment as a kind of tribute to the flesh, but no goods of peace are promised to us by the flesh. For when we rightly direct the hearing of the mind to the responses of the vices, we recognize this indeed in the voice of gluttony: that if we fatten the flesh, we are struck with blindness of heart through growing concupiscence. Wherefore the same Nahash also says: "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes. Our right eye is the gaze upon eternal brightness, but the left eye is carnal concupis-

cence. The right eye is therefore gouged out when the mind is struck with such blindness that it is no longer opened to see heavenly things. Indeed the eye is gouged out when the light is so torn away from the reprobate mind that no root remains from which a revived light might break forth. Nahash therefore gouges out the right eyes of his treaty-partners, when gluttony so prevails over the conquered abstinent that they desire only carnal things and no longer attend to what they used to love. And because whoever is cast down in this life is condemned in the future before the angels and the elect, there is added:

"And I will make you a reproach in all Israel. For then the reprobate are made a reproach in all Israel, when at the final judgment they blush before all the elect for the iniquities they have committed. Or they are made a reproach in this life, because while they themselves with blinded heart boldly perpetrate evils, holy men blush for their faults. But let those who disdain to appear shameful, with their right eyes torn out, attend to what follows: (Verse 3) "And the inhabitants of Jabesh said to him: Grant us seven days, that we may send messengers to the borders of Israel; and if there is no one to defend us, we will come out to you." 4. Who are the inhabitants of Jabesh, that is, of "the dried," except those who maintain the discipline of an emaciated flesh through long practice of virtue? For many begin to resist gluttony, but when they start to grow weary from the labor of abstinence, they incline themselves back to the habit of their accustomed greediness. They desire, as it were, to enter the city of Jabesh and become its citizens, but since they cannot endure the torment of dried and hungering flesh, they can by no means become its inhabitants. Therefore those inhabit Jabesh who hold the attenuation of the body through strength of mind as a right of possession, and are surrounded, as it were, by the walls of dryness, since through the very fact that they emaciate the body they are protected from the fiery darts of lust. When they are wearied by the most powerful rising stings of gluttony, they seek a truce of seven days, during which, if help does not come, they will go out to Nahash. But we explain this war of the Ammonites better if we observe in it the weakness of the flesh caught out and the sagacity of the trained mind. We see this more clearly too if we attend more closely to the opposite case in the foolish and weak. For certain people within holy Church are devout in desire, but slack through their habitual weakness of vices.

They can indeed propose good things, but because they are unable to carry out what they propose, they are both overcome by present concupiscence and trust that they can recover in the near future the good which they abandon in the present. Often indeed they resolve to fast, but when they are conquered by habitual gluttony, they judge that they must eat on that day and fast on days to come. And since the ferocity of gluttony is always present to them, and present too is the desire for future goodness, it is brought about by the serpent's deceit that the good which is proposed is never found. For "tomorrow," which is always promised, is never reached. But since this is done by those whose mind is weak and flesh strong, let us see how those whose mind is strong but flesh weak make a mockery of the serpent. For concerning this same serpent the Psalmist says to the Lord: "This dragon, which you formed, to make sport of him" (Ps. 103:27). For he is never more fittingly conquered than when his cunning is overcome by a holy deception. Hence also the Redeemer, reproaching blessed Job with the cleverness of His own wisdom, says: "In his eyes, as with a hook, you shall catch him" (Job 40:10). For He caught the serpent, as it were with a hook before his eyes, who displayed to him flesh but concealed divinity; and while the serpent seized what he desired, he was caught and destroyed by what he did not see.

5. Holy men, therefore, in order to mock the enemy, maintain the rigor of their way of life in present virtue; as a deception of weakness, they promise the flesh a certain comfort in the future. For the things they do are often enormous, but on account of the weakness of the flesh, they do not presume to always do hard things and to promise austere things. Indeed they endure these same hardships all the more easily, inasmuch as they do not see the burdens of them as binding upon themselves in a perpetual commitment. But while they live most excellently, and strive daily to advance and not to fall back, that permitted indulgence of the flesh, which they cannot despair of, they always promise to the flesh in a future reckoning; yet they by no means cease to inflict upon it the pain of the affliction already begun. Therefore, through the fact that hope is left to the flesh in its desire, the spirit, as it were, promises the presence of its coming for the future good of that same flesh. But because it does not abandon by failing the accustomed rigor of self-restraint, the flesh has the promise of pleasure in the future, and the chosen mind has the strength of virtue in the present. Here it should be

noted that they promise to go out to Nahash under a condition, but they are fortified by the walls of the city without condition:

because those who practice abstinence, even in that in which they are weak according to the flesh, trust to be strengthened through divine mercy. And because they are eager to overthrow the vice of gluttony by deceiving it, they say: "Grant us seven days. For it is as if time is granted by gluttony, when it is restrained with the expectation that its desires will at some point be served. During which space of days, Nahash indeed awaits the coming out to him of the besieged citizens, but the citizens of Jabesh await reinforcements: because indeed the appetite of gluttony desires to be refreshed from the weak flesh, but the chosen mind desires to be strengthened in the virtue of abstinence. In seven days reinforcements are sought, when against the darkness of temptations we are raised up by every light of the heart, when against wicked counsels we find whatever we can by our own reason, and we are fortified by the rays of light which we do not perceive in ourselves from the instruction of others. For while we look to the ways of life of the perfect for the strengthening of our virtue, we find, as it were, through seven days the aids of defense. We indeed seek a truce, because we fight with Nahash, that is, the serpent, whose poisons are so hidden that we must seek all the more subtle counsels. Hence they also promise that they will send messengers into all the borders of Israel:

because chosen men, for the benefit of their own edification, are aided by the examples of all who see God. But in what is said, "If there is no one who defends, we will come out to you," in the voice of the elect, not doubt of reinforcements but certainty is shown. As if mocking the adversary who persuades with cunning words, they bring forth words by which they grant him hope and by no means take away their own confidence. For those who say, "If there is no one who defends, we will come out to you," grant a certain hope of their coming out. But because those who say this are certain of help, they deceive their enemies by promising. But where these same reinforcements are now to be found, he explains saying: (Verses 4 and 5. Therefore the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, and they spoke these words in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voice and wept. And behold, Saul was coming in the morning, following the oxen from the field, and he saw the people weeping, and said: "What is the matter with the people, that they weep?"

6. Gibeah, as we have already said above, is interpreted as "lofty. And because the height of merits is not equal among all the elect, messengers are said to have come to Saul at Gibeah, so that we may be taught by spiritual meaning that when we are driven by powerful temptations, we should have recourse to the counsels of our preachers. But we are also instructed by the affliction of the weeping people, so that we may be joined to the needs of our brothers by inward compassion of mind. Now Saul saw the people weeping and asked for what reason they wept, because the chosen teacher makes the need of his subjects his own through compassion, and desires to relieve it. Indeed, he came from the field, because he goes forth from the secret place of his fertile heart. He came from the field in the morning, because in the rising splendor of the true light he inquires into the concerns of his subjects. And he follows the oxen, because strong affections of charity go before him. For he has, as it were, two oxen before him, because he is both joined to his neighbors through love and inflamed with divine charity, and therefore loves his neighbor in right order, because the love of God powerfully kindles him. Wherefore the Lord also says through Moses: "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together" (Deut. 22:10). For the donkey is carnal love, because he who carries those he loves is like a strong animal;

and because he loves the same ones inordinately, not for God's sake, it is a wanton one. Therefore one cannot plow with an ox and a donkey, because the soul is not cultivated with the fruit of eternal reward if the purity of love by which it is joined to God is defiled by disordered love of neighbor. Saul, then, coming from the field, follows the oxen, because the chosen teacher retains both affections of charity whole in his fruitful heart, from which he can prepare for himself abundant fruits of eternal recompense. And he comes in the morning, because when he goes out to his subjects, he opens the day of his virtue. But now, having learned the needs of the people, let us hear what he did. For the text continues: (Ibid., and verses 6, 7. And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was kindled exceedingly. And taking both oxen, he cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the borders of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying: Whoever does not come out and follow Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen.

7. What do we say in these words, except that the weaknesses of the saints, and those things which seem carnal, are not weak and carnal, but spiritual

and mighty? For we are accustomed to rebuke excessive anger in religious men, but behold, before Saul could become exceedingly angry, the Spirit of the Lord first rushed upon him. How fearful, then, the anger of the saints must be, we perceive, if we consider the Spirit of the Lord rushing upon them—if, while we observe them outwardly angry, we equally attend to the Spirit stirring them within. Therefore, as often as we are corrected by the zeal of our superiors, we may rightly tremble greatly under their indignation, if we believe their impulse to be a movement of the Holy Spirit. And because Saul cut both oxen into pieces, sent them throughout all the borders of Israel, and put forth threats that thus it would be done to the oxen of all who refused to follow him and Samuel—what else does this suggest, except that those who are more sluggish in providing aid to their neighbors must not only be invited, but compelled? Whence it is also immediately added: (Verse 7.) 'Therefore the fear of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.'

8. For since we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, we offer them assistance in right order when we are not compelled by fear to render these services, but are prompted by love. But when we lose the effect of this owed love, it pertains to the zeal of our preachers that we rise up to help our brothers out of fear. Therefore it is well said: "The fear of the Lord fell upon the people, and they went out as one man," because we are often lukewarm in love of our neighbors; but we are raised up to a state of devotion by the threats of our prelates, and we undertake a good work out of fear, yet from the beginning of fear we are led to the bond of great charity. Hence it is well said that fear fell upon the people, yet all are reported to have gone out as one man. For many cannot go out as one man unless they ascend to an equal unity of love. For hence it is also said of the perfect disciples of the Redeemer: "They were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). There follows: (Verse 8.) And he numbered them in Bezek; and the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

9. First the children of Israel are said to have gone out, then to have been mustered by Saul, because the chosen preacher, when he attempts to move the soldiery of his subjects against hidden enemies, first observes their brave resolve, then places them in the number of warriors. For we are, as it were, inside and cannot be mustered, as long as the virtue of our mind is hidden from our pastors. And when we go out we are mustered, because when we re-

veal to them the fortitude of our minds, they trust that they now have companions in the spiritual fight. But when they desire to raise weak minds to the resolve of good work, they strive not only to instruct us with the teachings of the greater ones, but also to kindle us with the examples of the lesser elect. Rightly therefore it is reported that three hundred thousand of the children of Israel, but thirty thousand of the men of Judah, were mustered. For the number thirty pertains to the rectitude of faith and the zeal of good works, because the precepts of the law are nothing if they do not tend toward the contemplation of the supreme Trinity. Fittingly therefore they are called men of Judah who are contained in thirty thousand, because they have the confession of right faith and the strength of good works.

Our fathers, however, were of the same faith and works, but in the contemplation of divinity, inasmuch as they had advanced far higher than we, they also displayed stronger works of faith. Wherefore also three hundred thousand of the children of Israel are mustered. Thirty indeed comes from three and ten, and ten goes into thirty, but in the number thirty both the ten and the three are simple; but in order to count up to three hundred, we multiply ten by thirty and thirty by ten, because even if the contemplation is great and the works of the subject people are great, nevertheless those which preceded in our fathers were incomparable. For it is as if our number ten is gathered tenfold in their perfection, since our achievements are greatly subordinated to their perfection. Therefore thirty thousand men of Judah and three hundred thousand children of Israel, mustered with us, lead preachers to fight against Nahash — if, when they wish to help tempted and abstinent subjects, they set before them both the outstanding deeds of the strongest fathers and those of the lesser ones. Israel indeed is interpreted as "Seeing God," or "in whom God is"; which name certainly does not suit one who is still weak or unskilled. As many perfect men as we bring forth in the affliction of the flesh and the contemplation of the mind, with that many armed men we strike down the serpent Nahash. But let us now hear with what words the army of the king encourages the besieged. (Verse 9.)

And they said to those who had come: "Thus shall you say to the men who are in Jabesh-Gilead: Tomorrow there shall be deliverance for you, when the sun grows hot." 10. Such perhaps is what is said to us by the counsel of that wise man: "If the spirit of one having power rises up against you, do not quickly abandon your place" (Eccles. 10:4). The place of each elect person is

the position of a good way of life. But when it is permitted, the attacking spirit can have power, because he could in no way assault the hearts of the elect unless the divine dispensation permitted it. He therefore commands that we not abandon our place, because if we are strong amid the brief darkness of temptations, the divine light will quickly be present, at whose coming the power of darkness vanishes. Well therefore is it said: "For tomorrow, when the sun has grown hot, there will be salvation for you. The exhortation of holy preachers is day, because when it touches the tempted hearts of the lesser ones, it raises them to the hope of victory. But night follows this, because even if divine aids are withdrawn, still the rushing darkness of carnal desires does not depart. What then is the morrow but the coming of divine visitation? For it is called the morrow because the splendor of divine help is very near to the tempted elect. Whence also through the prophet the Lord says: "I am a God nearby, and not a God from afar" (Jer. 23:23). Hence the Psalmist says: "The Lord is near to all who call upon him in truth" (Ps. 144:18). Hence likewise the Lord himself promises, saying:

"Before you call upon me, I will say: Behold, I am here" (Isa. 58:9). The first day, then, is the light of preaching; the morrow is that of divine grace. But it should be noted that he said: "When the sun has grown hot," so that the brightness of day might illuminate the obscurity of understanding, and the heat of the sun might kindle the love of the heart; so that the mind might see through light the good that it desires, and might long through the heat of the mind for what it sees. For this twofold remedy of the mind is presented against the double warfare of the devil. For the malign spirit, in order to overcome the minds of the elect by tempting them, first casts before them the darkness of evil thoughts, then kindles the flames of concupiscences, because unless he has first blinded the mind, he does not drive it to the depravity of concupiscence. But when the elect mind is permitted to be tempted, its state is disturbed in both respects, because it can feel the troubles of concupiscences to the extent that, with God permitting, it cannot cast away from itself the darkness of evil thoughts. But because it is permitted by God to be tempted, at the coming of his grace it is relieved from both evils: since against the darkness it receives light, and through the heat of the arriving Spirit, it casts off the coldness of mind.

For the one who was unable to raise the mind from carnal things begins to see heavenly things, and what he looks upon lovingly he desires ardently.

Well therefore is it said: "Tomorrow there will be salvation for you, when the sun has grown hot," because if we manfully bear the powerful assaults of the ancient enemy, we are raised up by the swiftness of divine grace to the light of the heart and the power of great charity. And because the elect hearts of subjects gratefully receive this counsel of the holy preachers, there follows: (Verse 9. "Therefore the messengers came and announced to the men of Jabesh. And they rejoiced. But let us also hear what they reply to the Ammonites, even though help has been promised to them. For there follows: (Verse 10. "And they said: Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you shall do to us whatever pleases you."

11. This indeed is because those who are already secure from nearby help grant a certain hope to the enemies whom they deceive by promising. In voice indeed they simulate weakness, but inwardly they preserve the strength of the promised help. Therefore they promise one thing, but believe another. For those who said: "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you shall do to us all that pleases you," were giving the enemies to believe that they would so deliver themselves into their hands that they could do to them whatever they wished. But those who knew that the king was coming the following day to their aid were thinking of going out with him not to the enemies' hands, but to their slaughter. According to the spiritual sense, however, to the serpent Nahash, that is, to the concupiscence of gluttony, we promise our going out on his day, but on our day we defeat his battle lines. His day indeed is the delight of bodily satiety. For he who proposes to fill his belly according to his desire, as it were, dedicates the first day to concupiscence, and yet is still inside, because he has set before himself a certain light of delight which he has not yet seen by carrying it out. Tomorrow, therefore, he went out, who both by carrying out and by delighting exhibited that pleasant thing which he promised to the flesh. But holy men, as I said above, mock gluttony;

because since they cannot despair of its appetite in perpetuity, what they promise and do not take, they as it were defer to a future light of delight. They are indeed compelled outwardly by the excessive frailty of the flesh, and inwardly clothed with the strength of great charity. By the former indeed, since they cannot renounce their appetites, they as it were promise with an outward voice what they do not hold in their intention. By the latter, because they are secure concerning divine aid, they propose to do something other than what they speak with the voice of weakness. On his day, there-

fore, they go out to Nahash, because they advance to combat the concupiscence of gluttony through the light of heavenly help, and visited by heavenly grace, they are now strong against every assault of the flesh, who, abandoned for a little while, had feared its attacks. And because this splendor of divine grace is sometimes poured into the lesser members of holy Church through the mouths of preachers, there follows: (Verse 11. And it came to pass, when the next day had come, Saul arranged the people in three companies, and entered the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and struck Ammon until the sun grew hot.

12. The people are indeed divided into parts, so that we may strike the serpent Nahash not with a single battle line. And indeed they are divided into three parts, so that the fruit and dignity of sacred abstinence may be shown: because through fasting we are called back to that contemplation of the Holy Trinity which we lose by eating. For hence it is that the fasts of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel are commended. For Moses, that he might deserve to receive the Law, fasted twice for a period of forty days (Exod. 34:28). Elijah, that he might escape the hands of Jezebel, in forty days by the strength of a single meal arrived at Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kings 19:8). Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, fasting for forty days in the wilderness, took no food whatsoever (Matt. 4:2). Therefore Saul divides the people into three parts: because as an example for those who practice abstinence, the fasts of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel are set forth. And when the next day comes, the teacher enters the midst of the camp: because divine grace, which illuminates the hearts of preachers for teaching, also irradiates the minds of the hearers and powerfully raises them to the hope of victory. On the next day, therefore, the teacher, about to triumph, enters the camp of the enemies and lays it open, and in it powerfully strikes the battle lines of concupiscence.

And because the minds of the subjects themselves advance by hearing, the king is said to enter the camp of the Ammonites in the morning watch and to continue in their slaughter until the day grew hot. The morning watch is indeed in God's inspiration; the heat of the sun is in its fullness. For as it were the morning light rises for us when, weighed down by the darkness of temptations, we begin to see from the mouth of preachers the light of virtue, that we may follow it. And the sun grows hot for us when through their words our mind is kindled and, as if refined by the heat of a burning sun, is

inflamed with holy desires. Then indeed Ammon is violently struck down: because the people of vices is driven from our senses. Therefore the ruler who enters the camp of the Ammonites in the morning watch should not sheathe his sword from slaughter until the day grows hot, because he ought to persist in the instruction of his subjects for so long as it takes until he sees them inflamed with the great heats of the inner light. In this place it should be noted that Nahash, that is, "serpent," is said to be king of the Ammonites; but the people Ammon itself is interpreted as "sorrow. And because we have said that the vice of gluttony is signified by this serpent, when Nahash is struck, the people of sorrow is conquered:

because from the one vice of gluttony, innumerable hosts of vices are brought forth to wage war against the soul. And when that same vice of gluttony is cut away, we subjugate many other vices to ourselves. The vice of gluttony is indeed one, but the stings of lust are innumerable, which follow that one going before them as if he were their king. They indeed suggest pleasant things, but lead to the laments of eternal weeping. When Nahash therefore is fought against, the people of sorrow is slain: because when we tame gluttony, the incitements of lust are destroyed. Whence it is rightly asserted that not Nahash himself, but Ammon subject to him—that is, the people—is slain: because the appetite for eating is to be restrained, not extinguished. But it is never well restrained if the people of sorrow that follows—that is, the shameful motions of lust—are not put to death. Against Nahash, therefore, our principal struggle lies: because when he is overcome, Ammon is slain; because lust is then well struck down if its principal origin is subjugated. But how far the progress of chastity advances is secretly shown through what follows. For it says: (Verse 11) "But the rest were scattered, so that not even two were left together."

13. The proof of true abstinence is not in the weakening of the body, but in the perfection of chastity. For the serpent is well worn down if gluttony is so restrained that all the violence of lustful bodily movements is diminished. For the illicit movement of the flesh, as long as the flesh itself exists, cannot be removed, but the violence of its movement can be removed. Indeed, it cannot be taken from the flesh that the law of the flesh should not move its members; yet the violence of the movement can be taken from the flesh, so that the movement remains, but all the obscenity of pleasure is taken away from that same movement, and that movement becomes simple, in which

no remaining baseness of lust exists. Well, therefore, are others said to have been turned to flight, because when divine grace perfectly rewards those who are abstinent, it removes from their bodily movements all the stings of obscenities; but it leaves them their natural movements, so that they may always be tempted but never be conquered; since it leaves behind what greatly displeases them, yet so weakens what it leaves behind that it does not permit it to prevail over the victors. He had indeed struck the Ammonites who said: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest while preaching to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). Yet even after others were slain, he could not slay the fugitives, because he laments, saying:

"I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7:23). Likewise, because he saw that those who remained were weakened, he says: "No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom. 8:39). What then does it mean that he laments that a law dwells in his members warring against the law of his mind, if after some were destroyed, others were turned to flight—unless it is because perfect men grieve vehemently over this very thing, that they endure simple movements of the flesh against their will? For they would wish so to remain in the flesh that they would endure nothing from the flesh against the will of the mind. And because this is impossible, he said beforehand: "To will is present with me, but to accomplish I find not. For the good that I will, I do not; but the evil that I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:18–19). As if he were saying: I would wish to be in the flesh, not with that perfection by which one perfected in the flesh is perfect, but as the angels of God in heaven. But this power I find not, because as long as the death of sin has not been swallowed up in the future resurrection, that which is sin dwelling in me moves me against myself. But what cannot be extinguished can be put to flight. For the movement of the flesh is, as it were, turned to flight when it is well chastised by fasting.

For it rises against the spirit all the more rarely and with greater difficulty, the more the presiding spirit subjects it to itself through mortification, since it so tames it that it is slow to rebel and quick to be stilled. 14. But it must be subtly observed what is said: "So that two were not left together. Two indeed remain, but they do not remain together. For there are two things: impure thought and the natural movement of the flesh. In the struggle of the saints, sometimes an impure thought comes first, and sometimes they feel the law of the flesh rising against the law of the mind; but those who are

already victors do not fear enemies turned to flight if they return again to battle, because they cannot fight against them simultaneously. For when a wicked thought presents itself, they cast it away before the flesh is moved by its suggestion. And when the law of the flesh stirs the members, the law of the mind in no way nourishes the shameful movement by thinking shameful things; and while it casts away the one, it by no means feels the attack of the other. Rightly, therefore, it is said of the perfect victory of the elect that "the others were scattered, so that two of them were not left together": because through the mortification of the body they advance to such a height of perfection that whatever is brought against them from the flesh or from the mind is easily overcome, since these are not permitted to join together in battle. And indeed the elect attain this victory over all the senses of the body, those who can subject the besieging Nahash to themselves through the power of abstinence.

For the flesh, when nourished and fattened, is prone to the fall of the tongue, the eyes, the hearing, smell, and touch. Therefore, when the illicit movements of the bodily senses are drawn from the vice of gluttony into warfare against the mind, it is as if the Ammonite people accompany King Nahash to the siege of the Israelites. But when Nahash is perfectly conquered, Ammon is both partly destroyed and partly put to flight in such a way that two of them are not found together; because when we wear down the body through abstinence, we weaken the countless illicit movements of our senses; and those we cannot entirely uproot, we put to flight as though enfeebled. Of these, two do not remain together against us in battle, because in the pleasure of any bodily sense, we do not join the sense of the mind to it. For often we see with our eyes, often we hear with our ears, often we perceive by touch, often by smell, things that can draw the carnal soul to illicit love; but by perfectly mortifying our flesh we are victors, because we do not see two of the conquered adversaries together. We may indeed behold desirable things, but we avoid joining the appetite of the soul to the movements of the eyes. Often too an illicit thought presents itself to the heart, but the victor over the serpent finds only its fleeting movement, which he observes, alone.

For regarding those things which the heart thinks about accidentally, he by no means raises any of the bodily senses toward them through illicit movement. Such indeed are those whom the prophet marvels at, saying: "Who are these that fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows? (Isaiah

60:8). For they are like doves at their windows who receive desirable things but do not lose the simplicity of a pure heart by desiring them; because they see things they might crave, but they avoid illicitly craving what they behold. Because we advance toward this victory through the exhortation of our preachers, it is fittingly recorded that the Ammonite people were defeated and slain by Saul. Their wars, indeed, are not uniform but diverse. For sometimes they powerfully crush hidden adversaries, and sometimes they wisely endure false brethren. The former they subdue within by great virtue; the latter they tolerate without by wondrous patience. Within, through immense struggles, they are distinguished by the glory of great triumphs; but without, they are adorned with the incomparable honors of such great meekness. We who have learned the account of their inner victory, let us now hear how they also conquer outwardly. For it follows: "And the people said to Samuel: 'Who is it that said: Shall Saul reign over us? Give us the men, and we will kill them.' And Saul said: 'No one shall be killed on this day, because the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel.'"

15. For the Lord had said above to Samuel: They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not reign over them (1 Kings VIII, 7). But of Saul it was said a little before: Because they despised him, and did not bring him gifts (Ibid., X, 27). But he who was rejected, and he who was despised, after the enemies had been slain and victory obtained, heard the people crying out: Give us the men, and we will kill them. Indeed, each of them could have taken vengeance on their enemies, not by killing, but by consenting; but even because the prophet had been rejected, he speaks, and the king who had been despised supports the one who says: No one shall be killed on this day, because our holy preachers are crowned with a greater victory when they endure the adversities of their neighbors than when they overcome enemies abroad. Whence also true wisdom speaks in Solomon, saying: The patient man is better than the mighty (Prov. XVI, 32). But it should be noted what is said: On this day. On the day of his victory, he seeks to kill who inflames those whom he draws to the love of God by the brightness of his virtues to harm others. Or he kills on the day of victory, because by that light of glory by which one is brought to veneration of the preacher, one is stirred up to hatred against those who detract from that same teacher.

For whoever hates his brother is a murderer (1 John III, 15). For since through the teaching of a good pastor the good are to be helped in such a

way that the wicked are tolerated, the reason why no one should be killed is well added: Because, he says, today the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel. There follows: And Samuel said to the people: Come, let us go to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord. 16. If therefore we apply all things in the manner in which they occur above in the ordaining of the king to the custom of the holy Church, her rulers are ordained with great subtlety. For first the king to be chosen was shown to the prophet, then he was sought as though unknown; afterward he was even found by lot, hidden at home, revealed by the Lord, raised up by the people, and received by all into royal dignity. What then is it that they still proceed to Gilgal, so that there the kingdom might be renewed? But with great discernment the king is sought and found, because the affairs of the Churches are most lofty, which if the weak and unskilled undertake, they are crushed by the very magnitude of the matters. Therefore with attention and most subtle investigation one is sought out who may be placed over so great an eminence. He who is truly to be greatly commended is not established by the judgment of those seeking, but when he is found vigorous in the very exercise of the highest ministry. Well therefore, with the king now triumphant and established, it is said: 'They went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord': because when the preacher's strength is recognized, he is honored in the minds of his hearers. Indeed we go to Gilgal, that is "the wheel," when through sacred eloquence we examine the work of our teacher, and there we make him king before the Lord:

because him whom we perceive to be worthy of approval, we judge to be worthy of so great an eminence. Therefore Saul is said first to have been chosen by the people, and at last established as king in Gilgal before the Lord: because although a pastor may be chosen in the holy Church with much gravity of counsel, whether he is by merit what he is by rank is not known unless it is made manifest by the strength of his works. Let it therefore be said not of another, but of that one [perhaps "another" is superfluous] who shone forth with a great victory: 'All the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord', so that the dignity of the supreme pontiff may not consist in the ambition of high office, but in the summit of virtue. And indeed they go to Gilgal, so that he may not dare to judge from the highest place, to whom the hidden precepts of Sacred Scrip-

ture are unknown. And the king is established before the Lord: because then the teacher is honored by the devotion of his subjects, when they themselves acknowledge his acceptable life to the almighty Lord. Moreover, concerning this knowledge of the life and teaching of their pastor:

because often one trusts not oneself but those who are better, it is well said that the people established a king in Gilgal before the Lord, but that the same people went to Gilgal at Samuel's urging. 'Let us go', he said, 'to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there.' For the kingdom is renewed: because while the chosen preacher is seen in great virtue, the hearts of his hearers are submitted to him with new and fresh devotion. Whence, as though by the king's displayed victory the kingdom is renewed, when the great manner of life of the teacher becomes known, the very hearts of his subjects receive the splendor of a new devotion, and are stirred by his example to the pursuit of great virtue. But now, we who have beheld triumphs in one battle of inward struggles, let us now behold in another the times of peace run through with wondrous fairness.

CHAPTER 5.2 (1 SAMUEL 12:1-3)

And Samuel said to all Israel: Behold, I have listened to your voice according to all that you spoke to me, and I have appointed a king over you: and now the king walks before you. But I have grown old and turned gray. Moreover, my sons are with you. And so, having conducted myself before you from my youth even to this day, behold, I am present. Speak concerning me before the Lord and before His anointed, whether I have taken anyone's ox, or donkey. If I have falsely accused anyone, if I have oppressed anyone, if I have received a gift from anyone's hand, I will despise it today and will restore it to you. 1. When wicked pastors are in charge, their principal aim is the plundering of their subjects. For because they know not how to look upon the abundance of eternal goods, the more ardently they desire present things, the more greedily they receive what is offered, and what is not offered they seize by violence. They lay snares for the innocent, oppress the weak, accept bribes, and pervert justice. Concerning these pastors, the Lord reproaches Judea through the prophet, saying: "Your pastors are evening wolves, leaving nothing for the morning" (Zeph. 3:3). He likewise strikes the slanderers of the innocent and the oppressors of the weak, saying: "If anyone does not put something into their mouths, they declare holy war against him. Therefore night shall be to them instead of vision, and darkness instead of divination" (Mic. 3:5-

6). For while they recognize the iniquity they commit, through the audacity of their most wicked work they fall into blindness of heart, so that through love of present things they no longer see the light of truth, by which they might recover from their wickedness. Likewise Isaiah rebukes the acceptance of bribes, saying: "They all love bribes, they pursue rewards" (Isa. 1:23). The holy man therefore, while he shows the simplicity of his innocence, appeared exalted by the height of his merits. This commendation of virtue is indeed shown in him alone, so that the same conformity of goodness may be shown to all chosen teachers.

2. We have innocence of life for ourselves, but we ascend the height of prelacy for others, not for ourselves. Through the good of innocence we press toward the eternal homeland; through the height of prelacy we keep watch in the guardianship of others. In that virtue we are secure, but this eminence we hold with great fear: because we who greatly tremble to render an account of our own works must render an account to God for that over which we preside over others. If therefore chosen men, by God's will, ascend even the height of prelacy unwillingly, by God's will they also leave that same height with devotion. The holy man therefore says: 'Behold, I have heard your voice, and I have set a king over you; and now the king walks before you. But I have grown old and gray-haired. Moreover, my sons are with you.' As if he were saying in other words: Because I presided not for myself but for you, the dignity which I held I gladly gave to another. I have already grown old in that same dignity, and yet the long habit of preeminence which I held did not keep me bound in ambition for it. What then does it mean that he says: 'My sons are with you', except that in holy men there is a great power of spiritual love, by which, when sons are born to the height of office, they take away from them the right of succession?

But he who so peacefully leaves the summit of office shows what kind of man he was while he remained at that same height. For because he did not practice the violence of plunder, he says: 'Speak concerning me before the Lord and before His Christ, whether I have taken anyone's ox or donkey.' Likewise, because he sought no occasion of harming anyone, he added, saying: 'If I have falsely accused anyone.' Likewise, because he was not burdensome to the weak, he says: 'If I have oppressed anyone.' Likewise, because from his prelacy he sought not earthly things but heavenly, he says: 'If I have received a gift from anyone's hand, I will despise it today and restore it to

you.' Because indeed he had been known by all for such great contempt of worldly things, there follows: (Verses 4–6.) 'And they said: You have not falsely accused us, nor oppressed us, nor taken anything from anyone's hand. And he said to them: The Lord is witness against you, and His Christ is witness on this day, that you will not find anything in my hand. And they said: He is witness.' But he himself further adds, saying: 'The Lord, who made Moses and Aaron, and who brought our fathers out of the land of Egypt, He Himself is witness.'

3. In this passage it should be noted that the holy man did not speak of the good things he had done, but rather set forth the evil things he had not done; so that by keeping silent he might preserve his good deeds for eternal rewards, and by speaking he might not lose the fragrance of his good reputation. Paul indeed speaks, saying: "We are the good fragrance of Christ in every place" (II Cor. 2:15). He also, rebuking certain people, says: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom. 2:24). Likewise he admonishes his disciple, saying: "A bishop must also have a good testimony from those who are outside" (I Tim. 3:7). Therefore, when he so carefully affirmed that he had avoided evil, and kept silent about the great good deeds he had performed, the blessed man openly showed on what a summit of virtues he stood, since by condemning evil he preserved the fragrance of good reputation as an example for the elect, and by concealing his works of virtue, he safeguarded the rewards of eternal recompense. But it should be noted that when he called the Lord as witness of his innocence, he said that the Lord himself had made Moses and Aaron. What else does this mean, except that he both displayed the height of his virtue, yet did not wish to appear alone at so great a height? As if saying with hidden meaning:

"I am not to be admired for such great virtue of soul, because I am not alone in it. I possess contempt for worldly things as a gift of virtue, but I do not hold this with any intention of vain praise; in this regard I perceive others far better and more exalted than myself. And because he affirmed that the Lord himself had made Moses and Aaron, it is as if he were saying: "That I was able to guard so strongly against evil ought to be ascribed to the grace of him who made Moses and Aaron what they were. But the holy man shows why he said these things first, for he added, saying: (Verse 7. "Now therefore stand still, and I will contend with you in judgment before the Lord concerning all the mercies which he has done for you and for your fathers." 4. It

is the order of the highest reason that he who does not take care to do good things should by no means reprove evils in others. The holy man therefore first carefully asserted that he had avoided evils himself, and then proceeded to the reproof of others; so as to suggest the character of a chosen preacher, who cannot effectively bear the fruit of preaching unless he also demonstrates by the splendor of his conduct what he preaches as luminous concerning eternity. He says therefore: "Now stand, and I will plead with you in judgment before the Lord concerning all the mercies of the Lord." For the hearers to stand is to raise the attention of the mind to the word of the preacher. Rightly therefore they are commanded to stand, because a teacher accomplishes nothing by exhortation if the hearer does not direct his mind to the things he speaks. Enumerating these same mercies, he says: (Verses 8–11.) "How Jacob entered into Egypt, and our fathers cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, and He brought our fathers out of Egypt, and settled them in this place. And because they forgot the Lord their God, He delivered them into the hand of Sisera, the commander of the army of Asshur, and into the hands of the Philistines, and of the king of Moab, and they fought against you. Afterward they cried out to the Lord and said: 'We have sinned, because we forsook the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtaroth. Now therefore deliver us from the hand of the Philistines, and we will serve You.' And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Barak, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and He delivered you from the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelt in safety."

5. He commemorates these acts of mercy performed according to history for this reason: so that, in the matter of having asked for a king, the people might recognize themselves as guilty before the Lord. For he who had the Lord present to remove all dangers had no need of a human king over himself. Moreover, he shows the very presence of the Lord through the mercies bestowed, since he declared that they were delivered from the hand of the Egyptians through Moses and Aaron, and from the hand of Sisera and the Philistines, and from the hand of the king of Moab through Jerubbaal, Barak, and Jephthah, and by Samuel. In this passage it must be carefully inquired why the petition by which a king is requested is so strictly reproved, and yet the very aids of divine mercy are taught to have been bestowed upon the people of God through human leaders set over them. To this matter, what must be answered except that the governance of kings is vastly different

from the governance of judges? The latter preside as equals, while the former display the arrogance of domination in their power of preeminence. The latter commend the testimony of their innocence before the Lord and all the people, because they neither oppress anyone nor take anything belonging to another for their own use; the former, however, not only take away from their subjects what belongs to them, but even press down the very persons of their subjects under the burden of servitude. Therefore, he adds and says: (Verse 12.) "But when you saw that Nahash was coming up and would fight against you, you said: 'By no means,' but rather, 'A king shall reign over us'—even though the Lord was reigning over you."

6. As if he were saying: For this purpose you have chosen a man for yourselves, for which you used to have God. If we wish to examine this passage spiritually, the following is gathered from it: that those who desire a carnal ruler to be set over them drive away divine grace from themselves. For while they live by the example of humble teachers, they are, as it were, freed from Egypt, because they flee the darkness of worldly love with all their desire. Because they also escape the tyranny of all vices through the teaching of those men, they are freed, as it were, from the hand of Sisera, the Philistines, and the king of Moab, by leaders sent to them. In these God alone, the Almighty, now reigns, because while they outwardly imitate humble pastors, they gratefully receive the love of the divinity reigning among them. Let the prophet therefore say: "You said to me: 'By no means, but a king shall be over us,' when the Lord was reigning over you" — to show that those who subject themselves by imitating carnal men lose the dignity of divine grace. It should also be noted that the prophet Samuel, through the virtue of humility, everywhere presented himself to the elect as a model of uprightness. For when he was recounting the liberation of the Israelite people, he did not say, "The Lord sent Jephthah and me," but "Jephthah and Samuel, and He delivered you from the hand of your enemies."

He named himself as though speaking of another, so that the power of liberation would not be ascribed to the person sent, but to the grace of God who sent him. "The Lord sent Samuel," he says, "and delivered you. As if to say: He sent whom He willed, and through whom He willed, He acted. And perhaps he speaks of himself as of another because it is not he himself who speaks through himself, but the Holy Spirit. And because, by God's permission, with a king now established, the man of God was saying these things,

he was saying them for this purpose: to direct the king and the people toward the worship of God, not to abolish the royal dignity itself. Hence, adding further, he says: (Verses 13–15. "Now therefore, your king is here, whom you have chosen and requested. Behold, your God has given you a king. If you will fear God and serve Him and hear His voice and not provoke the mouth of the Lord, then both you and the king who rules over you will continue following the Lord your God. But if you will not hear the voice of the Lord, but provoke His words, the hand of the Lord will be against you and against your fathers."

7. These things are certainly not mystical but historical in every respect. For where both prelates and subjects lead a reprobate life, they equally undergo the punishment of divine vengeance. But because good things are spoken of separately and evil things separately, those things for which the hand of the Lord is foretold as coming upon them must be considered more carefully. What then does it mean when he says: "If you will fear the Lord and serve Him," unless that many dread the judgments of divine severity and yet do not cease to do wicked things? With a trembling heart indeed they think upon future judgments, but conquered by present pleasure, they by no means avoid committing evil. Rightly therefore after the fear of the Lord, service to Him is mentioned: because that fear alone is worthy of approval which, while it shakes the mind, draws it to the pursuit of good works. Likewise, because there are some who through the fear of the Lord reject certain evils and do some good things, and yet neither fully abandon evil nor sufficiently perform good, it is added: "And you will hear His voice. He who hears the voice of the Lord both fully does good and utterly abandons evil. But these same good works must be held in the delight of sweetness, not in the estimation of harshness. For those to whom the things commanded by the Lord always seem hard and harsh gradually fall away and fail. For this reason Truth says through Himself:

"For My yoke is sweet and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). For this reason John says: "His commandments are not heavy" (1 John 5:3). They are indeed not heavy for the elect: because while they seek the glory of eternal life with great desire, they gladly bear the precepts of the Gospel. The mouth of the Lord can also be understood as the preaching of perfect charity. For He wished, as it were, to show the endearments of His mouth when He said: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved

you" (John 15:12). This indeed is the Lord's commandment, this is the yoke of divine sweetness. For what is borne more lightly, or ever more gladly, than love? What heavy thing, moreover, does one who loves not bear lightly? For whatever is loved is carried with great devotion. Therefore, because the bond of perfection is the charity of God and neighbor, rightly in the last place the prophet declares, saying: "If you will not provoke the mouth of the Lord, both you and the king who rules over you will be followers of the Lord your God. As if to say: Then you rightly fulfill the divine will, if you ground both the contempt of wickedness and the pursuit of good works in divine charity. Then you rightly run after the Redeemer toward the highest blessedness of eternal life, if you carry out with joy to the end of life those precepts of charity which are harsh to the carnal.

8. But because he was speaking to the weak and carnal, he continued by declaring: If you will not hear the voice of the Lord, but will provoke His word, the hand of the Lord will be upon you and upon your fathers. The hand of the Lord is the severity of divine vengeance. This hand is indeed stretched out over sons and fathers when, by the merit of divine contempt, both reprobate prelates and subjects are punished. This same hand is also stretched out for vengeance when the voice of the Lord is not heard, when His words are provoked: because those who reject the divine commandments as harsh and unbearable are weighed down by an intolerable burden of punishment in the future. For it is the foolish audacity of man that, where he refuses to undergo for a short time those things that seem harsh to him, he thereby subjects himself to harsher things for eternity. For if he were wisely wise, he would persuade himself of this very thing that displeases him: that through the hard and harsh things of this very brief time, he might escape the hard and harsh things of future damnation. Indeed, the hardened hearts of the carnal hear these things quickly, but they cannot easily be softened by salutary counsel. Therefore it is well added: (Verses 16, 17.) But now also stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that you have done a great evil for yourselves in the sight of the Lord, in asking for a king over you.

9. Because the petition of the king is reproved so attentively and so many times, this suggests to the elect that those who advance carnal men to the height of the holy Church are held by a most grave obligation of sin. For

other sins obtain the merit of a single punishment, but he who appoints a carnal leader incurs as many merits of punishment as that man provides examples of depravity to the faithful subjects. But the heavy weight of crime cannot be set down except by the severity of great compunction. Yet the grace of compunction is not poured into the mind unless the magnitude of the sin is first shown to it. Therefore the prophet of the Lord, in order to provoke the sinning people to the fruit of fitting penance, suggests to them the great sin of transgression through a wondrous disturbance of the air. Now in that region, rains and thunders do not occur during the wheat harvest. And it is well added subsequently: (Verses 18, 19.) Samuel cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain on that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel: Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die. For we have added to all our sins this evil, that we should ask for ourselves a king.

10. If we bring this down to our own times, in order that the people may come to the knowledge of their sins, preachers cry out to God on their behalf, because they seek the salvation of the faithful with great desires. For preachers to cry out is to petition for the salvation of the elect with great devotion. At their cry the Lord gives His voice, because He stirs the hearts of sinners so that they may recognize the wickedness of their depravity. He gives rains, because He aids their stirred hearts through the infusion of heavenly grace, so that each one may not only abandon the evil deeds he has committed, but also courageously perform the good works he desires. But this is said to happen on the day of the wheat harvest, so that the power of the miracle may be indicated. The transformation of the heart is indeed no less a miracle than the disturbance of the air. It is no less a miracle for parched hearts to come back to life than for rains to flood down in an unusual manner during the heat of summer. It is surely a greater miracle to shake an insensible mind with an inward thunder than for thunder to resound when clouds collide in the wind. But the right order of conversion is shown in the ordered arrangement of the words.

For he says: 'The Lord gave thunder and rain, and all the people feared the Lord and Samuel exceedingly.' In the most orderly conversion, when evil is abandoned, good is propagated in the mind; when the converted mind nourishes good seed as if through rain, it submits itself to God and to men through the virtue of obedience. Rightly, therefore, it is said: 'All the people

feared the Lord and Samuel,' because whoever receives the coming of the Supreme Spirit both abandons evil and lays hold of good, and is so subjected to God that for God's sake he also submits himself to men. And because they have no presumption in this very virtue of obedience, they say: 'Pray for your servants to the Lord, that we may not die.' When the spirit of life pours itself into the mind, it immediately raises it to the dread of death, because the teaching of that same spirit is that the mind should act in fear so as not to encounter what it fears. But holy men praying for them can be heard, who also reveal the hidden sins of the heart through the humility of confession. Hence it is also added: 'For we have added to all our sins this evil, that we should ask for ourselves a king.' But since these matters have already been sufficiently discussed in our exposition, let us look at what follows. (Verse 20.) 'And Samuel said: Do not fear. You have done all this evil. Nevertheless, do not turn aside from following the Lord.'

11. The mind of the penitent is then rightly directed if it fears the divine judgments and trusts in the mercy of almighty God. Fear without hope indeed casts one headlong into despair, but when it is joined with hope, it works the salvation of the mind. Therefore the excellent teacher must watch with the utmost zeal to terrify the one who sins, and to lead the one who has been terrified back to the hope of pardon: so that through fear he may cease to sin, and through hope of obtaining forgiveness, he may seek the harbor of divine mercy. Samuel, therefore, raising his terrified subjects to the virtue of hope, says: "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord. As if to say: If you cease to sin, you can more quickly arrive at obtaining pardon for what you have committed. Do not therefore turn aside from following the Lord. Concerning the praise of the just, it is promised: "For you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76). Hence Elijah says: "The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand" (1 Kings 17:1). Hence the Psalmist says: "Let the just exult in the sight of God" (Psalm 68:4). To stand in the sight of the Lord, or before the Lord, is to presume upon the love of the Creator by the testimony of a good conscience.

Those indeed stand in His sight who, by the merit of great action, are secure in the heavenly grace of their Creator. But sinners, when they commit evil, flee from the face of the Lord; yet when they resolve to return through penance, they are, as it were, behind the Lord's back: because they neither wish to depart further, and yet cannot presume upon God as friends. Hence it

is that the sinful woman is said to have stood behind Him, so that she might deserve to kiss the Lord's feet (Luke 7:38). Behind Him also stood that woman who touched the hem of His garment and deserved to be healed of her flow of blood (Matthew 9:20). She stands behind indeed out of shame for her sin, but she touches through the power of hope. Because, therefore, we must always blush for the iniquities we have committed, and avoid those things in which we are confounded, Samuel commands sinners not to turn aside from following the Lord. But because it is not sufficient for the conversion of a sinner that he merely not commit sins, he subsequently added: (Verse 20. "And serve the Lord with all your heart."

12. For we can merit pardon when we cease to sin and devote ourselves to good works. To serve the Lord with the whole heart is to retain no intention of sinning in the heart. The whole heart is bent to the service of the Creator when we so perform good deeds that we hold fast to no evil by deliberate purpose. This the prophet of the Lord, Samuel, also openly suggests when he adds: (Verse 21.) "And do not turn aside after vain things, which will not profit you, nor deliver you, because they are vain." 13. Literally, he calls vain things the images of demons. But for us, those vain things are to be understood here as what the preacher shows, saying: Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. For in comparison with eternal goods, all things are vain, even temporal goods. For whatever in this age is seen as joyful, delightful, exalted, or prosperous is assuredly vain, because it is held with difficulty and quickly lost. Indeed, the lofty things of the age suddenly collapse, beautiful things pass away, joyful and prosperous things vanish. For when the flattering world is seen to stand in its flowers, it is disturbed by sudden fortune, or is concluded by hasty death that overturns all things. Therefore the joys of the age are vain, which flatter as though they were lasting, but deceive their lovers by quickly passing away. Therefore let the prophet Samuel say: Do not turn aside after vain things, which will not profit you. As if to say: The goods of the age are foolishly desired, since they cannot be held for long by those who desire them. And it should be noted that it is said in the future tense: They will not profit you — because indeed they are now seen to profit; but when in the future people begin to be punished on account of them, they profit nothing at all. Whence it is also fittingly added: Nor will they rescue you, because they are vain. As if to say:

They do not help you then, because they fail with the world and are not possessed after this age. The goods of the age last a long time indeed if they accompany their lover all the way to the end of life. Therefore after this age those things do not profit which cannot pass beyond the end of life. In this life indeed they bind their lovers with sins; but then they will not rescue them, where they are present by merit but not by assistance. In this matter it must be carefully noted that temporal goods will not profit those who are said to turn aside after them. For to turn aside after temporal goods is to flow down into desire for them, to prefer love of them to divine love. Rightly, therefore, vain things will not profit them, because they were unwilling to possess them in the order in which they were created. But the fruit by which vain things are despised is suggested when it is added: (Verse 22. And the Lord will not forsake his people for the sake of his great name, because the Lord has sworn to make them a people for himself.

14. These vain things inflict a great evil upon those who turn aside after them: because while they pursue earthly things in a disordered way, they are abandoned by the supreme and omnipotent God to endure future torments. Therefore, to those who are forbidden to turn aside after vain things, the prophet rightly makes a promise, saying: The Lord will not forsake His people for the sake of His great name. Because those who despise vain things for the love of Him are rescued from true evils, and by faith in the promise they receive the reward of an eternal inheritance. Indeed, the Lord makes them His people whom He raises up to the joys of eternal blessedness. For there, with the glory of His majesty revealed, He presides over those whom in the world He holds, taken up from the love of vanity by His hidden grace. To swear to the Lord is to make a promise and to make Him one's people; the Lord swears to the one who does not turn aside after vain things: because earthly things must be despised so that we may deserve to obtain the goods of an eternal inheritance. Yet let no one believe that he can be brought to those things by his own merits; because here it is strictly expressed: For the sake of His great name. For it is not by our goodness, but by God's, that an earthly man enjoys heavenly goods. For it is the gift of God, not from ourselves. There follows: (Verse 23.) But as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.

15. He speaks these things, to whom the Lord said above concerning those to whom he speaks: "They have not rejected you, but me, that I should not

reign over them." Behold, the prophet is rejected, and he speaks to those who reject him, saying: "Far be it from me that I should commit this sin against the Lord, that I should cease to pray for you." Indeed, if this is examined according to the precept of the Law, it would not be a sin if he did not pray for those who rejected him. For the Law of Moses commands, saying: "You shall love your neighbor, and you shall hate your enemy" (Lev. 19:18). But those who were rejecting the prophet had proven themselves not friends, but enemies. What then does it mean that he says: "Far be from me this sin," unless that the holy man, raised to the summit of charity, not only loved his friends, but also embraced his very enemies? Instructed indeed by the commandment of the old Law, but illuminated by the splendors of the new grace, he reproveth the license of the old dispensation with evangelical perfection. By which deed, indeed, we are compelled to reckon with ourselves. For hence it is commanded through the Gospel: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:44). How much then must enemies now be loved, when we are commanded to do so, if they could be loved even then when they were commanded to be hated? And because he strove not only to pray for them, but also to instruct them, he adds, saying: "And I will teach you the good and right way."

16. For why does he call the way of divine service good, and right: since it is not good if it is not right, nor right if it is not good? But the way was good, because the people went up from Egypt to the promised land, and yet while they wandered through the wilderness, it was not right. Therefore the way is good by which one strives toward the heavenly homeland; right, by which one easily arrives. The way, therefore, is both good and right when we are converted to the religious life, and we carry out divine services with the pressing fervor of great devotion. Whence Samuel also well explains this same way, saying: (Verse 24.) Therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth, and with your whole heart. 17. This way is indeed good and right: because it leads to eternal life and arrives there swiftly. Through the fear of the Lord, evils are avoided; by serving him, his commandments are fulfilled. We truly serve him in truth when we carry out his precepts for the sake of heavenly reward alone. For whoever seeks a temporal reward for a good work does not truly serve God, whom he does not love in his work because of a false intention. But those who desire to serve God in truth are commanded to place their whole heart in divine service, so that they may carry out the things of

God in such a way that they retain nothing in their mind that is contrary to God. This way is assuredly not only good but right: because it leads to salvation and swiftly brings its follower to perfection. For it is shown as another way to the promised land — good, because it leads there; right, because it avoids detours. Through this way, each person arrives at the summit of virtues all the better, the less he turns aside through circuits of negligence. This right way is expressed in that way by which the Lord is said to have wished to lead the children of Israel to the promised land. He wished to entrust the labors of the desert to them, so that for us who walk in the footsteps of his Only-Begotten, he might smooth the course of so great a journey. For they could not yet hear:

"If you wish to be perfect, sell what you have and give to the poor, and follow me; and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:21). For while the ancient people ran about through various things with license over temporal possessions, they could not, as it were, be led quickly to the promised land through the circuit of toil. Therefore, so that the prophet might introduce to us the way of the new life, he says that the way is good and right: to fear God and to serve him in truth and with the whole heart — because those who do not cease to seek the almighty God both through good works and through fervent desires quickly arrive at the height of divine grace. And because he had made that same people attentive to hearing the words of his preaching through a miracle, he adds: (Verse 24. "For you have seen the magnificent things that the Lord has done among you."

18. As if he were saying: From those things which you have seen, gather how terribly you ought to fear almighty God, and how devoutly you ought always to serve Him. Which words indeed, if we wish to apply them to ourselves, we must fear God all the more reverently and serve Him all the more devoutly, the more wonderful things we have perceived in our Redeemer. But because what the good hear, the wicked boldly despise, he added, saying: But if you persist in wickedness, both you and your king alike shall perish.

CHAPTER 5.3 (1 SAMUEL 13:1)

Saul was a son of one year when he began to reign: and he reigned over Israel for two years. 1. Above, when the matter of ordaining a king was being discussed, it was said of him who by divine judgment was to be preferred over the rest, that he was chosen and good. Likewise, concerning him already

chosen for the kingdom and set in the midst of the people, Samuel said: "Surely you see whom the Lord has chosen, for there is none like him among all the people" (1 Sam. 9:24). Of this same king it is now said: "Saul was a son of one year"; so that while he is attentively praised, it may be understood that he was chosen by the Lord as good. Why then is he said to have been one year old when he began to reign, unless to proclaim his innocence? For taken literally, how could he have been a son of one year, he who stood above the entire people from the shoulder upward? What therefore cannot be understood according to the letter must be understood through the reasoning of interior understanding. The king is thus described as being one year old, so that the gift of childhood in the person of the king might signify the good of innocence. Hence it is also commanded to the children of the eternal kingdom: "Do not become children in understanding, but in malice be little ones" (1 Cor. 14:20). And certainly the Truth itself warns this to the pastors of the churches, saying: "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

Of the king, therefore, who was first good and afterward became wicked, it is said that he was one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years. For although he reigned many years, he is said to have reigned only in those years in which he is reported to have been innocent and humble. For afterward, proud and disobedient, he heard: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king" (1 Sam. 15:26). He knew indeed that he had been cast from the kingdom, and yet, cast out, he did not fear to reign. How many things he did boldly afterward! But behold, all those times were not reckoned to him as his reign. Let us therefore rejoice that we have lived only in that time in which we lived innocently and humbly. For those times that we consumed in the vanity of the world and the fleeting life of the flesh are scarcely remembered, as though lost. There are moreover still those who thrust themselves forward to seize the summit of holy Church, about whom the Lord complains through the prophet, saying: "They have reigned, but not from me; they became princes, and I did not know it" (Hos. 8:4). These men, when they do certain things boldly, suppose that the plunder of the summit they have seized is consigned to oblivion by God. They count their own works in their favor, and what they do apart from God they think will be rewarded by God.

Let them, so that they may more rightly reckon the things they do, count up the many bold deeds of rejected Saul, which the divine reckoning by no means holds. Let Saul therefore say: "He reigned two years over Israel," so that concerning all it may be understood that what we live for ourselves is emptied of reward; and to rule wickedly is not the truth of preeminence, but the recklessness of presumption deserving punishment. But now let us hear what the king of one year did. And Saul chose three thousand men from Israel, and two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel; but one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. 2. The number one thousand, which is produced from one hundred collected ten times, suggests the highest perfection. When indeed it is repeated three times, the various perfections of the elect are designated by it. Saul therefore chose three thousand men from Israel: because the preacher of truth leads to the defense of the holy Church not the weak and feeble, but strong and valiant warriors. They are said to be three thousand: because at the height of perfection, they bring forth virgins; alongside whom they place both the continent and the defenders of truth. For while by the example of virgins they kindle others to the highest incorruption, while by the life of the continent they draw others away from the corruptions of the world, while they defend the weakness of the humble through the aid of the powerful, good teachers come against the enemies of the holy Church as if with three thousand chosen men. They are called men on account of their fortitude, and are said to be from Israel on account of divine contemplation. For he cannot be contained in the highest number of perfection who lacks either the virtue of great work or the knowledge of inward vision. What does it mean that some of the chosen men are said to be with Saul, and others with Jonathan? But even the very names of the places in which they are said to be should not be believed to be devoid of mysteries.

Jonathan, who is described as the son of the king and has a portion of the warriors, clearly signifies those who are helpers of teachers in the ministry of preaching. For they are their sons: because they ardently love those by whose ministry they are begotten for God. But they preside over a portion of the warriors: because they bear the care of the holy Church, and advance some by example and others by exhortations to the love of virtues. For as a great king had sent his son into the army, he who was speaking to the Corinthians said: "Therefore I have sent to you Timothy, who is my most dear and faith-

ful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ Jesus, as I teach in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 4:17). Hence he likewise says: "When Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear: for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1 Cor. 16:10).

3. Now Jonathan is said to be with a thousand men in Gibeah of Benjamin, while Saul is with two thousand in Michmash and on the mountain of Bethel. Gibeah, as we have often already said, is interpreted as "lofty"; Michmash, "humility"; Bethel, "house of God"; Saul, "petition"; Jonathan is said to mean "gift of the dove. The three thousand chosen men of Israel we have referred to virgins, the continent, and defenders of truth. Therefore, since Jonathan is called "gift of the dove," and a thousand men are said to be with him in Gibeah, that is, on the height — what else does this suggest but those who, by the most radiant example of virginity, provide to others a standard of the same modesty? Rightly is the instructor of virgins called "gift of the dove," because it is by the incomparable grace of the Holy Spirit that corruption of the flesh remains unknown to those who dwell in the flesh. Rightly too are virgins said to be on the height, because what surpasses human nature is situated at the loftiest summit of virtues. Hence also that virgin beloved of Jesus, indicating the place of virgins, says: "I saw upon Mount Zion a Lamb standing, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). He also indicates them from the light of their own manner of life, saying:

"These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (*ibid.*, 4). They are said indeed to be on the mountain with the Lamb, because through the merit of incorruption, by which they separate themselves from earthly and carnal pleasures, they are exalted in the heavenly glory of the Redeemer. With Saul, however, two thousand are said to be in Michmash and on the mountain of Bethel. Michmash, which is interpreted as "humility" — what else does it signify but the blush of the continent? For when they recall the past pleasures of the flesh, they blush with shame. But because they are strong men, they are reported to be with Saul; and while they despise the experienced enticements of the world, by the example of their virtue they draw countless others to contempt of that same world. Yet they dwell in Michmash, because while they recall what they were in the world, they cannot grow proud over the

fact that they see themselves to be great in God. Rightly are they reported to be with Saul, who is called "petition. For a preacher of truth ought to be of such great charity that through urgent desire he is felt to be not merely a petitioner, but the very petition itself. He ought to seek the salvation of the faithful so urgently that, from the habitual exercise of inward taste, he directs every movement of the heart into the disposition of supplication.

With him are a thousand men, because the more perfect hearers join with chosen teachers in charity and together beseech the almighty Lord for the salvation of the faithful. They are therefore with the king in Michmash, because they cultivate humility on their own behalf so that they may deserve to be heard on behalf of others. But while the chosen teacher profitably presides over all his subjects, he advances the virtues of all toward the crowns of victory. For with the humble he supplicates, with the strong he fights, with those set apart he perseveres in prayers, and with those placed as defenders of the Church he protects the weak and the infirm. Rightly therefore they are said to be not only in Michmash but also on the mountain of Bethel with Saul among thousands of warriors, because just as the preacher of the Church stands above the diverse orders of the elect, so he ought to be their cooperator. For they guard Bethel, that is, the house of God, who by the authority of the word defend the holy Church. When they confront any tyrants with the voice of free authority, when they rise up against the powers of this world, when they oppose the powers of this world in defense of the humble — they guard Bethel, the house of God, like warriors of the king. They are certainly reported to be with Saul, because in the defense of the Church they are coadjutors of the great teachers. Rightly moreover it is said of the rest:

(Verse 2. "But the remaining people he sent away, each one to his own tents." 4. Moreover, he calls the people whom the number of a thousand does not encompass. Each one is sent back to his own tent, because the weak and imperfect are not to be brought forth for the highest and most demanding works. For neither the continent, nor virgins, nor martyrs can the feeble become. For the former, lest the past pleasures of the flesh return to them; for the latter, lest they despise the untried enticements of the flesh; for the others, lest they fear the adversities of the world—the greatest fortitude is necessary. The rest of the common people, therefore, are sent back to their tents, lest they be condemned for the rashness of a higher life, and perish in battle as weak and infirm, while pledging faith to a lofty way of life for which they

do not have the strength of lofty virtue. For the blessed apostle Paul was, as it were, sending each one back to his own tent when he said: "Because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). For like a skilled master of the interior warfare, considering both the crowns of victory and the gravity of the struggle, he was weighing the soldiers' strength against the burden of war, judging it best for the weak to live in the cities lest they perish in bitter combat. Therefore, likewise separating them from the camp of the strong, he says: "Return together again, lest Satan tempt you because of your incontinence" (*ibid.*, 5). But with the weak removed, what is accomplished in the most valiant battle line of virgins is set forth, when it is added: (Verse 3.) "And Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines that was in Gibeah."

5. Just as the battle line of the bridegroom excels in rank, so also it was the first to receive the titles of victory. For Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines: because chosen virginity, exalted by the citadel of continence over the flesh, extinguishes shameful impulses. And rightly it is called the garrison of the Philistines: because in the virginal body, carnal impulses do not have the rest of delight, but the standing of battle. They stand indeed: because they attack, but they cannot rest: because they do not in the least delight the holy mind. The garrison of the Philistines in Gibeah is therefore struck, when the desires of the flesh are thoroughly weakened by chosen virgins, and they obtain the peace of triumph, while they no longer have the accustomed wars. Toward which victory indeed, because they often advance by the exhortation of their elders, a thousand men are in Gibeah with Jonathan: but Jonathan is reported to have struck the camp of the Philistines. And because by the example of others, others are often stirred to the emulation of virtue, there follows: (Verses 3, 4.) And Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines, which was in Gibeah. When the Philistines had heard this, Saul sounded the trumpet throughout all the land, saying: Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard this report: Saul has struck the garrison of the Philistines, and Israel rose up against the Philistines. Therefore the people cried out after Saul in Gilgal.

6. When the garrison of the Philistines was struck, Saul sounds the trumpet, and after Saul the people shout: because holy preachers proclaim the heard virtues of the elect, and inflame the hearts of their subjects to the example of good work. To sound the trumpet is both to announce victory and

to rouse the minds of others by the example of the victors to the purpose of spiritual warfare. For the people to shout after Saul is to undertake the daring of great devotion from having heard the preaching. At this point it should be noted that Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines, but Saul, sounding the trumpet, claimed that he himself had struck that same garrison. Because indeed the triumphs of the elect preachers are credited with the fact that hidden adversaries are overcome by their subjects. But as often as we conquer some enemies, it is necessary that we prepare ourselves for the struggles of overcoming others. For Almighty God, because He rewards His elect more abundantly, always wills them to stand in battle, so that they themselves may always be able to prepare for themselves the goods of an eternal reward. For this reason also, when the people are said to have shouted after Saul, it is added: (Verse 5.) And the Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and the rest of the common people like the sand which is on the seashore in great multitude.

7. Above, King Saul is described as having chosen three thousand men for himself. If, therefore, we wish to compare the forces of each army, against each one of Saul's men, ten chariots and two horsemen of the Philistines are assigned. For ten times three thousand is thirty thousand. In the number six as well, three is doubled. By this battle, indeed, both the multitude and the ferocity of hidden enemies is signified. They come against us in chariots and on horses, because they strive to present now evil thoughts to the hearts of the elect, now harmful enticements of visible things to their bodily senses. For horses are swift in running and strong in assault. To these, indeed, evil thoughts are fittingly compared, which come swiftly to the heart and pierce it forcefully. Horsemen come against us in battle when malign spirits both quickly arouse evil thoughts in us and powerfully assail us through them. But two horsemen come against each one of the faithful, because if we gather up the hidden ambushes of reprobate spirits into a general consideration, their special aim is this: namely, to strike at our principal virtue and to utterly extinguish the love of God and of neighbor. One horse is seen to rage when, by a reprobate thought, the malign spirit suggests to us that our neighbor should be held in hatred. But the horse that appears alone is not alone, because no one who hates his brother loves God (1 John 4:20).

Likewise, since divine charity agrees with no principal vice in the mind, whenever a spiritual vice is suggested to us by the fraud of demons, we must beware the excessive speed and violent ferocity of raging horsemen. In comparison with a horseman, the blow of an archer or foot soldier is altogether feeble. But the charge of a horseman is violent with the strength of the horse, because indeed the power of the malign spirit is nothing in the contest of the elect if he is not permitted to sit upon an evil thought. Because, therefore, our enemies are exceedingly strong in battle when they are permitted to mount upon interior thoughts, a throng of horsemen is counted in the Philistine army. Ten chariots, moreover, are assigned against each elect one in battle. For we have five bodily senses through which we receive the experience of pleasure. But malign spirits, when they eagerly seek to deceive the mind through the enticements of the flesh, display to the bodily senses the appearances of things that the flesh craves, and through the appearances of those same things suggest that the mind should desire what is presented. For the adversary, as it were, raises his chariot upon its wheels when on one side he offers the enticements of things and on the other holds back the thoughts;

he extends the former, he sends in the latter, and as if rolling forward he lifts himself high to assault the soul, when the malign spirit raises himself against the elect both through the enticements of things and through the craft of suggestions. There are ten chariots, therefore, because against each of our bodily senses they have the appearances of visible enticements, and against just as many senses of the soul they have the deceptive arts of persuasion. 8. But what does it mean that the remaining common crowd is said to be as numerous as the sand on the seashore, except that under the leadership of evil spirits, an innumerable throng of vices rages against us? For like a subject crowd, it follows the chariots and horsemen, when the snares of demons assail the mind by striking first: so that it may be devastated by the vices that follow, as if by the multitude of an irrational mob. And rightly in the spiritual battle of the saints, first the chariots and horsemen are described, then the multitude of the common crowd: because indeed there is no multitude, no strength of vices, if the throng of evil spirits does not precede them by arousing and sending them forth. By these words it is also suggested how cautious and circumspect the life of the saints must always be. For if the remaining crowd is compared to the abundant sand of the sea, the multitude

of darts is innumerable and nearly unavoidable. For although all vices are known to the experienced faithful, yet by how many impulses they strike the heart, in what ways, or for what reasons they always come to the heart, they cannot fully know. Indeed they powerfully cast off the open darkness of temptations; but often in lighter matters they do not escape the fog of ignorance, like the fine grains of sand. They always display the strength of good works, but those who overcome great armies of horsemen with great virtue do not entirely restrain their tongue from all superfluous speech. With continual practice they direct their body in the service of almighty God; but their mind, which outwardly orders the members perfectly, sometimes by no means avoids superfluous thoughts. For what else do they then experience but the troublesome multitude of the common crowd — they who have laid low the chariots and horsemen with great virtue?

9. But the excellent doctor says: 'For those who love God, all things work together for good' (Rom. 8:28). God indeed permits His elect to be assailed by great temptations, so that they may be crowned most magnificently in the heavenly kingdom; but He permits great battles, which they may win, and stirs up light ones, in which they may fall—so that the victory of the strong may be great, and the fall harmless; so that those who fall may easily raise themselves up, and the great battles in which they stood as victors may not puff them up. For if we conquer chariots and horsemen, we ought not to be puffed up by the victory, because innumerable are the sins we commit by thinking, speaking, living, tasting, hearing, and doing. For even he could not avoid the weapons of this innumerable crowd, who said: 'In many things we all offend' (James 3:2). Hence likewise the beloved of Jesus speaks, saying: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (1 John 1:8). Who then would dare to be puffed up as a victor, if such great men reveal that they cannot altogether escape the weapons of sins? But since these things are described in spiritual warfare, we ought not now to consider what we suffer, but how we may weaken the assault of our enemies.

The multitude of the Philistines is compared to the sand, which is most abundant on the seashore, because all the power and number of vices is increased by the disturbances of the world. For the sea signifies this present age, because while it is driven by the great variety of things and times, it is disturbed as if by raging winds. But on the shore, when the driven water of the sea is poured back, innumerable tiny grains of sand are gathered together.

What then is the seashore, if not the heart of each person who is negligent in spiritual life? For through the order of religious life, he is seen to stand as if on solid ground; but while he does not restrain worldly thoughts, he receives, as it were, the breaking waves of the sea upon himself, and heaps of sand; and from the very place where he does not fear to draw near to the sea, he can be driven by waves and buried in sand—because if he were to restrain worldly thoughts by the contemplation of spiritual things, he would not feel the vices of mind and body which worldly preoccupation brings in like sand and waves. Why then is the multitude of enemies said to be like sand, except because evil spirits attack the chosen athletes of Christ with the same vices by which they overcome the negligent? They come with a crowd of worldly clamor against those who have learned with their whole mind to despise the world in its pleasures.

They fashion the pomp of visible things; by feigning attraction, they renew the love of the world already held in contempt, so that they may drag hearts burning with heavenly love toward harmful pleasures. But holy men, because they consider that this innumerable crowd of wicked thoughts comes forth from the deep of the world, by fleeing the world with their whole mind, avoid becoming the shores of the sea, and no longer fear so great a multitude of enemies—because while they keep themselves in inward contemplation, the crowd of vices cannot gain access to them. There follows: (Verse 5.) 'And going up, they encamped at Michmash, to the east of Bethaven.' 10. For malign spirits to ascend is to strive for lofty things through heavenly desire in order to deceive the hearts of the saints. And it is well said: "They encamped at Magmas," because they dwell in those hearts which, elevated in the lofty love of heavenly things, do not see them. For Magmas is interpreted as "humility. But to be humbled in sacred speech is often taken as a failing of virtue. Whence also in this same history of the Kings, Tamar, daughter of King David, whom her brother Amnon is recorded to have violated, is said to have been humbled. She was indeed humbled by being corrupted, because she had stood sublime as a virgin, and when she lost the lofty summit of virginal honor, she came as it were from a high place to a flat and lowly place (2 Kings 13). Concerning the future abasement of the proud it is also said: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled" (Luke 14:11), because at the examination of the heavenly Judge, those fall who vainly glory in the eminence of this world. Rightly therefore are the Philistines said to

pitch camp at Magmas, because through wicked counsels demons dwell in those who do not care to hold the lofty summits of virtue. For while they seek earthly things, they inhabit, as it were, flat and lowly places, where invisible enemies can easily pitch their camps. Of these enemies, indeed, it is said through the prophet: "They say to your soul:

Bow down, that we may pass over" (Isaiah 51:23). For the soul standing upright is sublime, bowed down it is lowly, because through the height of virtues and through heavenly desire it is raised to lofty things; but when it falls away to vices or to love of the world, it falls to that place where the enemy, rushing in, easily tramples it. They say therefore to your soul, "Bow down, that we may pass over," because if they do not humble it to doing or thinking earthly things, they neither penetrate it with malign persuasions nor disturb it with the warfare of vices. 11. From this, therefore, we can gather how far we ought to distance ourselves from the world in deed, word, and thought. For our words, thoughts, and works are level and lowly when they are worldly. Through these indeed we are where the camps of hidden enemies are freely pitched, where we can be captured all the more easily as we are raised up by no citadel of fortification. For what faithful person is now unaware that they collect the faults of our words, thoughts, and works, and preserve them for our accusation at the coming of the future Judge? Whence also the Lord, suggesting that this lowly and despised place of Machmas must be fled by us, says: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). The place of the enemies is therefore called lowly, so that it may indeed suggest to us that we ought always to be exalted in word, thought, and deed. And because while the reprobate are captured in the lowly place of their more lax life, they display examples of depravity that are set forth for others to imitate, Machmas is said to be east of Beth-aven. From the east indeed we see the light of the sun rise. But the life of the reprobate, although it possesses the reality of darkness—those who nevertheless always pursue it for the vain delight of the world are indeed deceived as if by the splendor of a false light.

Whence also it is said through blessed Job: "Their light shall be taken from the wicked" (Job 38:15). For now indeed the flattery of the world pleases them as something bright; but when they depart from the world, they will enter into perpetual darkness, which they believed to be light. Then they will see that it was not light, when prosperity is changed into adversity, light into

darkness, laughter into grief, sweetness into the worm, beauty into deformity, honor into disgrace, flatteries into punishments and eternal torments. Because the hearts of the wicked do not now feel these things, they refuse to imitate the ways of the good; and by the example of the lost, they in no way fear to take up whatever pleases them from the world, because they imitate those who through a reprobate life have become dwelling-places of demons. Whence also they are rightly called a useless house, because they often receive the preaching of the saints, but they in no way allow the word which they hear from their mouth to dwell in them through love. They are therefore a useless house, because they do not make in themselves a fitting dwelling for God. Truth itself designates this useless house in the Gospel, saying: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). Hence again it is written: "The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful, and will not dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wis. 1:5).

Well therefore is the useless house said to have Machmas on its eastern side, because those who spurn the preaching of the saints rejoice in the example of the reprobate who seek the lowest and earthly things, as if in the rising of a great light. But while the conduct of the wicked is demonstrated through the mysteries of sacred history speaking, how cautious the life of the saints is, is subsequently shown. For there follows: (Verse 6) "When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, the people were afflicted, and they hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, in rocks also, and in dens, and in cisterns." 12. We are indeed in a narrow place when we are tempted inwardly by unclean spirits and outwardly behold the examples of evil men. Against the internal temptation of evil spirits, therefore, it is well said: "The people were afflicted," and against the outward examples of ungodly men: "They hid themselves. Because the cunning adversary suggests to us pleasant and joyful things to be desired, and he is never better conquered than if, when tempted, we run to the laments of devout prayer. And we can more quickly avoid the examples of the wicked if we judge that they are not even to be looked upon. Therefore, for the saints to hide is to disdain to look upon reprobate things. And because they guard the five senses of the body from the imitation of the reprobate, five kinds of hiding places are also described: namely caves, hidden places, rocks, caverns, and cisterns. Caves are indeed the hidden recesses of mountains: because the hearts of the saints are truly lofty in heavenly de-

sire, and are closed and inaccessible to malignant spirits. We enter caves, therefore, when we retreat to the secrets of our minds, lest with wandering eyes we see things to be desired outside. We are hidden in secret places when we keep the hidden silence of a closed mouth. We ascend rocks when we place the activity of the body in vigorous work. Whence also concerning these hiding places, it is said through the prophet under one designation:

"He who closes his eyes lest he see evil, and stops his ears lest he hear of blood, and shakes his hands free from every bribe: he shall dwell on high, the fortifications of rocks shall be his lofty refuge" (Isa. 33:15). We enter caverns and cisterns when we guard both our sense of smell from the obscenities of the world and our ears from hearing vain talk. For cisterns of water are the words of the Holy Scriptures. We are therefore hidden in cisterns when we enter into the waters of sacred speech, so that through the service of our ears we may water the meadows of our minds. And rightly are hiding places mentioned in the type of Israel as the elect: because whoever does not protect the senses of the body from the defilement of carnal pleasures does not escape the sword of hidden enemies. Let him therefore proclaim the victory of that hidden encounter, let him say: "The people were afflicted. Let him openly proclaim the triumphs of the outward conflict set before them: "They hid themselves. For the affliction of the elect mind is the deadly sword-point against every diabolical temptation. For while it is deeply pierced with compunction, it is raised up to the love of heavenly joy; and the more fervently it already loves the heavenly things to which it ascends through weeping, the more strongly it now rejects the offered pleasures of the world. For the illustrious teacher says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21).

This entrance into the heavenly kingdom is certainly hoped for at the end of time in such a way that it is also experienced in the daily life of the saints. Our tribulation, therefore, is the entrance to heavenly joy. Rightly, therefore, as often as the elect mind is pierced with compunction in the lament of its affliction, by afflicting itself it obtains this: that it enters into the contemplation of that heavenly kingdom, in which it may ineffably rejoice. And while holy men flee from seeing the lovers of the world in the flower of passing joy, while they hide their bodily senses from the imitation of them, what is seen in their case is not flight but glorious victory. They flee indeed from earthly activities, but they attain heavenly ones; they seem to

hide from the world, but they are revealed to heavenly glory. Therefore, by fleeing from harmful things, they more powerfully pursue their enemies, and they triumph far more nobly, since they so hasten toward heavenly things that the polluted savagery of their adversaries does not touch them. There follows: (Verse 7. "But the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead."

13. If indeed we first wish to understand this according to the letter, these Hebrews are understood to have been both terrified with fear and to have fled to their enemies. For not long after, in Jonathan's open victory, it is written: 'The Hebrews who had been with the Philistines yesterday and the day before and had gone up with them into the camp turned back to be with Israel, who were with Saul and Jonathan' (1 Sam. 14:21). But what is signified by this event, except what we observe happening daily in the holy Church: that the life of the good is safe and most cautious, while that of the negligent is reckless impatience? They are indeed weak yet bold, eager for the affairs of the world, but feeble for enduring the war of temptation. And if we examine our own affairs in this regard, very many such people are found in monasteries. They dwell indeed in the calm of the harbor, but they by no means consider the storms of the open sea and the whirlwinds of tempests. And when they esteem themselves to be acting as mighty men outside, they go out readily to the most grievous battles of temptations—powerless against strong adversaries. Improvident indeed in reason, weak in strength: just as they do not understand the deceits of cunning temptation, so also they do not escape the open snares of enticements. They therefore cross the Jordan, because they are bent toward committing the shameful deeds of the flesh. Jordan is indeed interpreted as "their descent."

Those therefore who abandon justice fall from the high mountain of virtues. Because therefore each of the weak willingly desires the enticements of the world which they see, in their type the Hebrews are said not to have been carried across the Jordan, but to cross the Jordan. To cross over is indeed the act of one who wills it. Therefore those cross the Jordan who are turned toward carnal pleasures by voluntary and hasty deliberation. Moreover, those can be understood to cross the Jordan who newly begin to sin, but by sinning surpass the wickedness of other sinful men. For they would reach the level of their descent by stopping there, not by crossing beyond, if they committed evils equal to others and did not surpass them by daring. And because they

find their equals even in a more wicked life, they are rightly said to arrive at the land of Gad and Gilead, across the Jordan. For they dwell as it were across the Jordan who through the habit of sinning become worse than the wicked. To raise up sinners from this descent of guilt, he had come of whom it is written: 'He came into all the region of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' (Luke 3:3). He who had come to preach repentance for all sins is declared to have come into all the regions of descent. There follows: (Verses 7–9.) 'And while Saul was still in Gilgal, all the people who followed him were terrified.

He waited seven days according to the appointment with Samuel, and Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people slipped away from him. Therefore Saul said: Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.' 14. Up to this point, because the divine word has spoken about Saul as chosen and good, as was said above, it seemed reasonable that what was said about him should be taken in a good sense, both historically and morally. But now, because we have come to the place of his transgression, it is certainly necessary that we also see in him the things that are to be avoided. But what ought ever to have seemed more carefully to be avoided by all the elect than the evil of pride and disobedience? For this cast down the sublimity of the first angel; this laid low the glory of the lost spirits. This took away happiness from the first man; this brought on the perpetual miseries of human captivity. And behold, to the first angel and the first man, the first king of the chosen people is joined through disobedience, so that while the great fall, the least may be raised up. For we are rightly raised up if we both observe their falls and avoid them. Therefore, where Saul fell must be carefully considered. For Samuel had said to him above: "You shall go down before me to Gilgal. I indeed will come down to you, so that you may offer a holocaust and an oblation, and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you, and I will show you what you are to do" (1 Kings 10:20). He fell through disobedience, therefore, because he did not wait the full seven days, as he had been commanded. For in the same place it is immediately added: (Verse 10.) "And when he had finished offering the holocaust, behold, Samuel was arriving."

15. In this passage it must be considered with a trembling heart how, by neglecting to wait for the briefest time, he was rejected. "When he had completed the burnt offering," it says, "behold, Samuel was coming. If therefore

he had waited for him only for the very briefest interval of time during which he offered the burnt offering, he could have securely obtained the strength of his kingdom. And so if the punishment is so great when a prophet is despised, what do we think is incurred from that ocean of divine judgment when the divine precepts themselves are disregarded? And because the delight of the flesh passes in a moment, and every commission of sins, and indeed the hour of transgression is brief, yet the punishment for the crime is not brief; because while we raise up the kingdom of sin in ourselves for a moment, we lose those kingdoms of all ages. For immediately after sin the prophetic word comes to rebuke — which would have been present, had we not sinned, to strengthen us in good. Indeed a polluted conscience now has the divine word against it; which, if it had avoided being polluted, aided by it and upheld, would have stood firm by its own strength. For what else does it spiritually signify to us when it is said: "And when he had completed offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel was coming"? Even if he had not offered the burnt offering, Samuel would have come nonetheless.

So indeed when we are tempted, divine grace is near to help those who endure; near also is divine justice to condemn those who fail. Whence Sacred Scripture, exhorting us to wait, says: "If the spirit of one having power rises against you, do not quickly abandon your place" (Eccles. 10:4). Hence the prophet, testifying, says: "The Lord is my helper, and therefore I am not confounded" (Isa. 50:7). Hence the Psalmist, looking to those same nearby aids, says: "I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be moved" (Ps. 15:8). But let us now hear what the prophet says to the one who did not wait, and what he who was unwilling to wait answers: (Verse 11. And Samuel spoke to him: "What have you done?" 16. The prophet indeed knew what he had done, but by asking, he was reproving the act of disobedience. Hence also to Adam sinning in paradise, the Lord says: "Adam, where are you? (Gen. 3:9). The magnitude of the guilt can also be conveyed through this question — as if he were saying openly: Does it seem a small thing to you that you sinned by disobeying? Rather, by sinning you fell from the lofty summit of your glory. Now therefore, many within the holy Church bury themselves in shameful deeds, and are unconcerned, as though they were losing nothing or only trifles. Let it therefore be said to the one who has fallen, let it be said: "What have you done? Does it seem a small thing to you that you have defiled yourself with the filth of sin, since you pay no attention to

the glory of eternity you have lost or the punishment of hell you have deserved? The sinner is indeed asked what he has done, so that he may be led back to his heart through lamentation, so that he may know he has brought great things upon himself and may not grieve too little. But because the very fault of disobedience is born from the root of pride, the disobedient are accustomed to hear the magnitude of their guilt from rebuking teachers, but not to make satisfaction by humbly confessing. For since they desire to appear exalted, they disdain to reveal their falls;

and therefore they bring forth excuses and put forward claims of righteousness, because they are ashamed to appear as sinners. Therefore what follows is fittingly added: (Verses 11–12. Saul answered: "Because I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and you had not come within the appointed days, and moreover the Philistines had gathered at Michmash, I said: Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the face of the Lord. Compelled by necessity, I offered the burnt offering." 17. Behold, he who is accused of the recklessness of a great transgression is not afraid to assert great reasons of justice. "I saw," he says, "that the people were slipping away from me." Here he asserts that he was abandoned by the people. "Furthermore, you had not come within the appointed days." Here he shows himself cheated of the prophet's promise. "Furthermore, the Philistines had gathered at Michmash." Here he likewise brings up the imminent danger of battle. Therefore, drawing a conclusion from his own action, he says: "Compelled by necessity, I offered the burnt offering." As if to say: You accuse me of a great offense, when the offense is so much lighter inasmuch as it was committed not from recklessness but from necessity. But what the prophet recognizes him to be—he who was unwilling to recognize himself—he adds, saying: (Verse 13.) "You have acted foolishly, and you have not kept the commandments of the Lord your God."

18. All the proud, because through their swelling they consider themselves to be above other men, are fittingly rebuked when the divine will is set before them, which they offend. Saul therefore is rebuked in the manner of the proud, who is said to have despised the commandments of the Lord his God. This is as if one should frighten the proud and contemptuous man, saying: Even if you despise men, now it is not the counsel of men, but the commandments of the Lord your God that you have scattered. Rightly therefore do you weigh your guilt, if you consider with a trembling heart Him whom

you despise. And it should be noted that he does not say: "You have not kept the commandments of your God," or "the commandments of your Lord," but: "You have not kept the commandments of the Lord your God." As if he were openly saying: It would be a daring of great transgression if He whose commandments you despise were only your Lord and not also your God. How great then is what is committed when the commandments of God and Lord are neglected? Because likewise he did not say "of the Lord my God" or "of the Lord our God," he convicts him of having offended the grace of divine intimacy. As if he were saying: You have despised the precepts of Him who, when He raised you up from the lowest place, when He set you over others, when He made you king, through the bestowal of such great gifts, was, as it were, specially yours. Still further it is added, from which his audacity of transgression is shown to be even greater: (Verse 13.) "Which," he says, "He commanded to you."

19. Finally, certain commandments of God are common to all, not special to some. Therefore, in order to convict the bold defendant of his recklessness by an open accusation, he demonstrates that he despised not the common commandments, but his own and particular ones. "Which," he says, "he commanded to you." As if to say: You despised those commandments of your God and Lord which you ought to have observed not as common to all, but as your own, and entrusted singularly to you alone. But he sets forth what he deserves, saying: (Verses 13, 14.) "For if you had not done this, the Lord would have already established your kingdom over Israel forever, but it shall by no means rise again." 20. Behold how great were the things he lost, who, as he supposed, despised nothing. Behold, for seven days he waited for the prophet; but when he ceased to await him at the end of the day, he lost the glory of so great a dignity. Whence it is also said through the prophet: 'Woe to those who have lost patience' (Sirach 2:16). Indeed, those lose patience who do not bring to completion the good things they have begun. To whom assuredly woe is pronounced: because they not only lose the reward of the labor they began, but are also struck with the punishment of their apostasy. Moreover, the punishment of the proud and disobedient king is declared when it is said: 'If you had not done this, the Lord would already have prepared your kingdom over Israel from now and forever; but it shall not stand.' From now and forever the kingdom is prepared for the elect: because those who rightly order temporal things prepare for themselves the

height of eternal glory. Indeed, the kingdom of the elect is prepared now, when through divine grace their ministries are rightly administered. Which advances from now and forever: because from the lofty action of this present time, they merit that still loftier glory of eternity in heaven. And so finally it is said to the reprobate king: 'Your kingdom shall by no means stand any longer.' As if to say: Since he falls short of temporal righteousness, he does not attain to the height of eternity.

Or for this reason it is said literally that it shall not stand: because it fell with him, and after him it did not remain in his sons. But, so that he may be struck with the punishment of envy, he is compelled to hear not only his own rejection, but also the election of another. For the prophet, continuing, says: (Verse 14) 'The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and has commanded him to be leader over His people Israel.' 21. By all these words the proud man is struck down: "He sought," it says, "a man after His own heart." As if to say: He sought him for that reason, because you were unwilling to be according to His heart. As if to say: He appointed such a man as leader of His people, one who would carry out the command of divine counsel with the virtue of devotion. For since we are accustomed to deliberate in our heart about the things we wish to do, when by the usage of our speech the heart of God is spoken of in sacred Scripture, His inmost will is signified by it, which is then recognized by us outwardly when the commands of disobedience are revealed. But we are close to it when we both recognize it through understanding and guard it through love. Rightly, therefore, the prophet Samuel says of the Lord: "He sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and He commanded him to be a leader over His people." Because he profitably commands others who already knows how to obey God perfectly; who commands only that which proceeds from the counsel of the inmost truth.

22. But what does it mean that it is said as if of the past: "The Lord sought for Himself a man, and commanded him to be a leader," when he had not yet been sought, nor had it been enjoined upon him to preside over His people? For after Saul struck Amalek, the Lord said to that same prophet: "Fill your horn with oil, and come, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite" (1 Sam. 16:1). But this question is easily resolved if the foreknowledge and predestination of Almighty God are considered. For to Him, to predestine is to do, and those things which have been preordained by Him to be

done are already done in His sight. Whence it is also written of Him: "He has done the things that are to come" (Isa. 45:11, according to the LXX). But God is said to have sought a man so that a pattern for choosing bishops might be set before men. For we are accustomed to seek things that we either do not recognize when present or do not see when absent. But God, from whom nothing is absent, nothing hidden, is not said to have sought a man as one absent or concealed; rather, He is said to have sought so that it might be taught that everyone who is chosen for the summit of the holy Church must be examined by men.

But he must be sought according to God's heart, so that he may not only understand the divine will but also demonstrate it through good works. Because likewise chosen men do not come to the honor of primacy out of ambition but are led to it under compulsion, it is well said: "And He commanded him to be a leader. As if to say: He did not enter the honor of prelate through ambition but ascended under compulsion. "Man" can also be understood as referring to fortitude, and "according to God's heart" as referring to interior charity. Therefore, when necessity demands, let a man be sought for the care of the holy Church who is strong in his manner of life; let him be sought according to God's heart, so that through the effect of great love he may be, as it were, united to the divine will; let him be commanded to be a leader, so that he may not aspire to ascend the rank of high office out of desire but may fear it out of humility — and thus, humble, may fear for himself, so that he may more devoutly recognize that he must submit to the command of God. But because with these words the prophet had rebuked the life of the fallen king, there follows: (Verse 15. "And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.")

23. As if from a height to level ground, the teacher of holy Church comes when he rebukes the faults of sinners, and bends the loftiness of his station when he humbles himself through the affection of charity to examine the crimes of the wicked. Rightly therefore it is said of him who had reproved the sinner: 'He arose, and went up.' For the chosen preacher rises when he raises himself by intention to the height of his spiritual way of life; and he ascends when he arrives at the lofty eminence of that same life through habitual practice. Heavenly desires, spiritual virtues, and good works are on high; earthly affections, worldly lusts, vices, and sins are in the depths below. But the teacher, in order to properly correct the fallen, first discovers their

faults by examining them, then strikes those he has found. Therefore, so that he may clearly and openly see what he is to strike, he bends the eyes of his mind to see the deep wounds of sinners. But he does not strike what he has perceived unless he descends to touch those things in the depths. Therefore the prophet is said to rise and ascend, because the chosen teachers so come down to see and amend our lowly state that they never forget to return at once to the heights of their way of life. By these words also the freedom of the priestly spirit is affirmed. For many rebuke others while they disturb themselves with a most violent war of anger.

But after having rebuked faults, they are unable to rise and ascend, because being troubled within themselves, they are by no means permitted to advance to the heights of inner peace. Some hear about the shameful deeds of others that must be restrained; but when they have descended to contemplate the depths, they are defiled by a harmful delight in them. Weak indeed and unequal to so great a ministry, while they eagerly seek to loose the knots of others below, they do not free them but bind themselves. What then does it signify that it is said of Samuel, 'He arose, and went up', except what we observe in more perfect men, who so look upon our defilements that they are in no way soiled by them; who so grow angry with us that they can quickly ascend to the heights of their inner secret peace? For they are strong and powerful, and those who bear their own great and mighty burdens lightly are not weighed down by our weaknesses. And because in our correction they bring forth the testimonies of holy Scripture, they are said to rise from Gilgal and ascend. Gilgal indeed, as I have already said many times, is translated as "wheel. But the testimonies of the Scriptures, because they revolve through various senses in our instruction, are like wheels. And because when holy preachers leave behind the care of their subjects, they are elevated in the contemplation of eternal life, Samuel is said to ascend to Gibeah of Benjamin.

Gibeah of Benjamin is interpreted as "the hill of the son of the right hand. Who then is the son of the right hand, except Him whom the holy Gospels confess ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father? The hill of the son of the right hand, therefore, is the eternal loftiness of the Redeemer. For when holy preachers leave behind our lowly state, they rise by intention to those lofty divine heights of the Redeemer, and ascend by contemplation. 24. This which is said, "He arose and went up," can

also be understood more simply according to the historical sense: namely, that he did not find in the king whom he had rebuked the humility of repentance by which he might have been compelled to remain. Nevertheless, the same king is left in his office so that he might be corrected by the prophet's very separation from him; because very often those whom the words of a preacher do not correct are struck with fear at being separated from the fellowship of preachers or from the unity of Holy Church. In the presence of preachers they are hard, but once separated they come to their senses; and those who sinned by disobeying now humbly prepare to obey God. Hence, not long after, King Saul is commanded to destroy the Amalekites, so that if he carried out the Lord's command in the slaughter of that nation, he might untie the knot of his former disobedience (1 Kings 15). Separated indeed from the prophet, he was seen to have done such things that he might be commanded to do others. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 15.) And the rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the people who were fighting against them, going from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.

25. Some fall into sin in such a way that they are held fast by no good work; but some, when they recall that they have committed evils, strive more earnestly to do good works. For by doing good, they cover the evils they leave behind, lest these be judged when uncovered by the eternal Judge. Indeed, if we interpret this deed of Saul in a favorable sense, we find this: that he who previously in the matter of the sacrifice, out of fear, despised the prophet's commands, afterward hastened to crush the adversaries of God's people, those whom he had feared. In this passage it should also be noted that he whom the prophet abandoned went up from Gilgal to face the wars of the enemies. For the just severity of preachers casts off many sinners, whom nevertheless the divine remembrance does not abandon. They lose the consolations and exhortations of their rulers on account of their faults, but they consult the sacred Scriptures, they resume their purpose; and those who had lain as if fallen through the evil of disobedience, raised up through the fervor of obedience, advance to the wars against hidden enemies. Rightly therefore they are recorded as coming from Gilgal, that is, from "wheels": because from the holy Scriptures they receive that by which they can powerfully crush the warfare of the opposing side. But because they strive by conquering to recover the height of their lost way of life, they are said to ascend to Gibeah of Benjamin.

Because likewise some had shut themselves in hiding places, others had fled to the enemies, the remaining people are those who were terrified by no fear, but hasten with their king to the place of assembly. This we see even now in the Church: because indeed many, as if little ones, propose to advance through the pursuit of the private life, while many who are strong are bold even in the open combats of the malignant enemy, so that they openly see the allurements of the world, which might attract them, but they despise what they have seen and refuse to desire it. These indeed stand not in hiding places, but on the field of open combat, exposed to battle, strong for triumph, who are able to fight and cannot be overcome. Whence they are also designated by a perfect number, when it is added: (Verse 15) "And Saul numbered the people who were found with him, about six hundred men."

26. For the week is completed in seven days, but one of them is forbidden for work, while six are granted for the pursuit of good work. Moreover, the number one hundred contains the sum total of numbers. In six hundred men, therefore, who else are designated but those who are strong in work and in the deliberation of the heart? For some propose mighty things, but because they do not do what they propose, they do not reach the number of six hundred men. In six hundred men, therefore, the strong workers of Holy Church are designated, because they propose great things, and they fulfill the rigor of their resolution with the strength of good action. They are rightly said to have been found with the king, because they agree with the pastors of Holy Church in good will and in pious action. For they are with those from whom they differ neither in will nor disagree in action. They are said to agree in such a way that the dignity of preachers is felt to excel; because even if subjects will and do the same good as preachers, nevertheless those are preeminent in that same good whose virtue of soul is more ardent and whose effort of action is more robust, just as their rank is higher. For this reason it is said separately of the king and his son: (Verse 16.) And Saul, and Jonathan. For why are the king and his son named separately, unless because the action of a good bishop is clearly singular? And because there is not a uniform equality among all faithful subjects, there follows: (Verse 16.) And the people who were found in Gibeah of Benjamin.

27. It has been sufficiently repeated that Gibeah is interpreted as "hill. A hill, however, is not the summit itself, but an elevation of the mountains near to the summit. What is understood by this hill, if not the high and per-

fect life of faithful subjects? This life, although it may not be equal to the loftiness of preachers, is nevertheless clearly seen to be sublime far above the merits of others. Hence also concerning certain chief elect ones it is read in the Apocalypse: "No one could sing the canticle except those one hundred forty-four thousand" (Rev. 14:3). And demonstrating more clearly who they are, he says: "These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins, and they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Therefore, when spiritual battles are described, the people found in Gibeah of Benjamin are specifically recounted, because the choir of virgins is all the more violent against the ferocity of unclean spirits, the more they are wounded by none of their blows and polluted by no filth of their suggestion. Free indeed and whole, they are ready for the encounter, strong for the strike. Are not those on the hill the sons of the right hand, whom the beloved of Jesus regards for the merit of their integrity, saying: "I saw upon Mount Zion the Lamb standing, and with him one hundred forty-four thousand"? (Rev. 14:1. But unless they were exceedingly strong, they could by no means ascend, wearied, to such a height.

Likewise, unless they were free from all thoughts, they would be unable to run everywhere after the Lamb. Therefore, because every virgin is admirable in the triumph of hidden combat, when the order of battle is described, under the type of the people of Gibeah, the special dignity of virginity is commemorated. There follows: (Verses 16–18. Now the Philistines had gone up to Michmash. And three companies went out from the camp of the Philistines to plunder: one company was heading toward the road of Ephraim, to the land of Shual; another was entering by the road of Beth-horon; and the third turned toward the road of the border in the land of Sheba, overlooking the valley of Zeboim, toward the desert. 28. What does it mean that the Philistines form three companies, except that evil spirits strive to introduce wicked things into our heart, tongue, and deed? For since every sin is committed by thinking, or speaking, or doing, the three companies of the Philistines signify this: that evil spirits are eager to drive souls to sin through negligence of the heart, unbridledness of the mouth, and boldness of perverse deed. Hence the first company is said to advance against the way of Ephraim, because they begin by assaulting innocence from the heart. For the way of Ephraim, that is, of the fruitful heart, is good thought. Against the way of Ephraim, therefore, the first company of the Philistines advances, be-

cause the hidden adversaries, if they do not first remove the practice of good thought from the mind, cannot succeed in uprooting the fruits of its virtues. They come therefore against the way of Ephraim when they lay ambush against good thought, by which way it is said to lead to the land of Saul. For what else is the mind of the chosen disciple but the very fruitful land of the teacher? Hence the Lord also, explaining the parable of the seeds in the Gospel, says: "That which fell on good ground, these are they who receive the word in a good and excellent heart, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

It is said therefore of the first company of the Philistines, "They advanced against the way of Ephraim," so that while we grasp the spiritual sense of the text, we may block the entrance of evil spirits to our thoughts. But while we fortify the heart, we are compelled equally to restrain the tongue from superfluous speech. Hence the second company is said to enter by the way of Beth-horon; for Beth-horon is interpreted as "house of wrath. The house of wrath is the mind that serves the use of a quarrelsome tongue. This house that wise man certainly suggests, who says: "Anger rests in the bosom of a fool" (Ecclesiastes 7:9). Through this indeed enemies enter the heart of the fool, because evil spirits, while they loose the tongue to unbridled words, kindle wrath and strike at the mutual charity of the faithful. He therefore who has learned to guard against harmful thoughts, if he does not know how to keep watch over his mouth, has overcome the assault of one company but has not escaped that of another. The third company turned itself toward the way of the border. What is the end of thought and word, except the completion of good work? For we think and speak good things for this reason, that we may bring them to the completion of good work. But when the ancient enemy cannot prevail in harming through words and thoughts, he stretches his snares toward the end, and seeks to nullify or hinder the good work of the faithful.

What is the way of the border, except the pursuit of good work? Because therefore evil spirits strive with many ambushes so that the pursuit of good work may be abandoned, the third company is said to turn toward the way of the border. In this border the end of our life can also be understood. The company turns toward the way of the border because the enemy strives to interrupt good work, lest it be carried through to the end of life. Hence the Psalmist also, expressing in himself the weeping of those who have fallen, says: "They have spread cords as a snare for my feet; beside the way they have

set stumbling blocks for me" (Psalm 139:6). A stumbling block is indeed placed beside the way, so that the good works of the elect may be abandoned before the completion of this life. 29. But what does he mean when he says: "In the land of Sheba, overlooking the valley of Zeboim toward the desert"? These names of places are set down to designate the position of the boundary he had mentioned. Now Sheba in our language means "captive," and Zeboim means "gazelles. But what is this captive, if not human nature, which was placed in paradise and is now bound to this world to endure the hardships of this mortality? And what is the land of this captive, if not the pilgrimage of temporal life? Rightly, therefore, when the wedge is said to turn, the land of the captive is mentioned: because malign spirits can wage war against us in this land of our pilgrimage, but in that other life of ours they cannot. But although the present manner of life of the elect is placed in this exile of captivity, if it perfectly keeps the path of the boundary, after the straits of this boundary it arrives at the height of immortality. Hence the boundaries of this land are said to overlook the valley of Zeboim, that is, of the gazelles. For the valley of the gazelles is the precious death of the saints: because from where they are laid low by dying, from there they are raised up to eternal joys. Who does not know that gazelles are swift animals and make great leaps?

Rightly, therefore, do gazelles designate the dignity of holy souls, which in death abandon their bodies but, as if making great leaps, ascend through immense merits to the kingdoms above. Let him say, therefore, that the boundary of the land of the captive overlooks the valley of Zeboim: because even though the human condition is condemned, it is nevertheless so exalted in the Son of God that when it is led to the boundary of temporal life, it is given over in death so that it may be raised to the height of eternal life. Let him say, therefore: "The third wedge turned itself toward the path of the boundary in the land of the captive, which overlooks the valley of the gazelles"—so that he may assert that malign spirits strive to pervert these final goods of the elect, so that they may not ascend to the joys above. This valley is also said to be situated opposite the desert. What is understood by the name of desert in this place, if not hell? For it is rightly understood as a desert where none of the elect is found. It is also called a desert because no consolations from hardships are felt there. Therefore the valley of the gazelles is said to be situated opposite the desert: because the death of the

saints is entirely different from the deserts of hell, and has nothing fitting or worthy of the punishments of hell. There follows: (Verses 20, 21. Furthermore, no blacksmith was found in all the land of Israel.

For the Philistines had taken precaution lest the Hebrews should make a sword or a lance. Therefore all Israel went down to the Philistines, so that each one might sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. 30. All these things are indeed described so that the manner of the victory that followed might be made clear. For armed men were conquered by the unarmed, so that everything that is overcome might be attributed to the praises of Almighty God. But if we pursue these things spiritually in our customary manner, we will not find them devoid of mysteries. What then does it mean when it says: "No blacksmith was found in Israel," except that for spiritual battles we are instructed not through secular letters but through divine ones? For no blacksmith is found in Israel because the faithful who see the Lord do not fight against malign spirits by the art of secular knowledge. For they would conquer aided by the blacksmith's art if they prevailed against hidden enemies by the weapons of secular eloquence. And indeed this learning of secular books, even if by itself it does not benefit the spiritual conflict of the saints, when it is joined to divine Scripture, one is more subtly instructed in the knowledge of that same Scripture. Liberal arts are to be learned for this purpose alone: that through instruction in them the divine utterances may be understood more subtly. From the hearts of some, malign spirits remove the desire for learning, so that they neither know secular things nor reach the heights of spiritual things. Therefore it is rightly said: "The Philistines had taken care lest the Hebrews should make sword or spear.

The demons clearly know that when we are instructed in secular letters, we are aided in spiritual matters. When therefore they dissuade us from learning these things, what else do they guard against except that we might make a spear or sword? Let the prophet therefore declare the history and make known the zeal of the elect, and let him explain: "Israel went down to the Philistines so that each might sharpen his plowshare or his hoe. We go down to the Philistines when we incline our mind to learning secular books. And it is called a descent because Christian simplicity is on high. But what does it mean that secular letters are said to be on the plain, yet their manner of teaching is lofty? Because although they narrate nothing heavenly, they unfold what they set forth in a marvelous order of speech, and they are elev-

ated by their narration, yet brought low by speaking of carnal things. Whoever desires to know this manner of speaking or understanding, let him go down to the Philistines, let him sharpen plowshare and hoe, so that he who strives to be thoroughly instructed by their eloquence may be brought low even to hearing the carnal things of the secular writers. Almighty God indeed set this secular knowledge on the plain before us so that it might make for us a step of ascent that ought to lift us to the heights of divine Scripture.

For this reason He willed it to come first, so that in it He might instruct us to pass over to spiritual things. Hence Moses, who gave us the beginnings of the divine utterances, did not first learn divine things, but so that he might be able to grasp or express divine things, he first formed his untrained mind in all the knowledge of the Egyptians. Isaiah also proved more eloquent than the other prophets, because he was not, like Jeremiah, from Anathoth, nor, like Amos, a herdsman, but was nobly educated and urbane. Paul too, the vessel of election, was first instructed at the feet of Gamaliel before he was caught up into paradise or raised to the height of the third heaven (Acts 22). And perhaps for this reason he excelled the other apostles in teaching: because he who was destined for heavenly things first diligently learned earthly ones.

31. But now, as I think, the properties of rural implements must be examined spiritually. What then is indicated by the plowshare, which is drawn by oxen going before, if not the affection of twofold charity? And what is shown by the hoe, with which each person alone labors in the cultivation of a field, if not the pursuit of the private life? For certain wealthy and strong farmers plow with oxen: because they both love the Lord mightily and, through brotherly love, attend more diligently to the gain of souls. They therefore sharpen the plowshare at the smiths of the Philistines: because they compose the pursuit of holy preaching from secular learning. But some, being poor, use the hoe: because those who judge themselves unable to suffice for winning the souls of others do not cease to prepare for themselves alone what they can regarding eternity. Each of them uses, as it were, a hoe: because they do not cease to prepare the field of their mind for divine worship. And because in this pursuit of the private life secular learning is also greatly profitable to them, one sharpens the hoe while being taught: because a learned person in the pursuit of his own life attends to everything more keenly. With the axe, however, we do not dig the earth but cut off the

branches of trees. What then does the axe signify, if not the zeal of good emulation?

For when we are kindled to imitate the examples of better persons, we cut branches for ourselves, as it were, with which to feed a fire for driving away the chills of our negligence. The Apostle Paul commands us to hold this axe, saying: "Be zealous for good in all things" (Gal. 4:18). This axe is indeed sharpened: because learned believers, just as they better recognize the examples of the faithful, so also they more fervently desire to imitate them. The weeding-fork or trident digs the earth more finely, so that it is understood not so much to dig as to scrape and break up clods. What is expressed by this three-pronged weeding-fork, if not the virtue of discernment? By which, certainly, when we examine things done or to be done with subtle consideration, we level the clods of our land, as it were, into fine dust for sowing. This weeding-fork is indeed declared to be three-pronged, because the power of discernment arranges not only what is to be done, but also what is to be thought and spoken. It clears away all harmful things from the hand, the heart, and the tongue, so that the seed which we commit to the soil of our mind may bear abundant fruit. Fittingly therefore it is said: "All Israel went down to the Philistines, so that each might sharpen his plowshare, his hoe, his axe, and his weeding-fork": because the affection of twofold charity, the pursuit of the private life, and the examples of another's perfection we read in sacred eloquence;

but we who are ignorant of secular knowledge are unable to penetrate the depth of that same sacred eloquence. Whence also, adding reasonably, he says: (Verse 21. "Therefore the edges of the plowshares, and hoes, and axes, and tridents were blunted, until the goad needed correcting." 32. The edges are not said to be bent back or worn down, but blunted. For if they were bent back or worn down, they would cut nothing at all. But a blunted edge, even if it does not quickly cut through everything, does cut certain things placed before it with the delay of labor. So indeed are the hearts of the simple, which, if they do not subtly understand spiritual things, yet because they slowly understand certain things, possess a sharpness of mind that is not keen but blunted. For often they wish to examine obscure matters; but while they scarcely arrive, even at those things which are plain, by long thinking, they cut as if with a blunted edge by lingering. This is certainly shown not only in the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures, but also in the concealed suggestions

of demons. For they cannot drive the enemy from themselves whom they cannot quickly recognize. Therefore, while with great delay of thought they expel the snares of evil suggestion, they cut as if with a blunted edge what they could have severed more swiftly through keenness of mind. But what does it mean when it says: "To the sharpening of the goad"? The goad is called the rebuke of prelates. Whence it is also written: "The words of the wise are as goads" (Eccl. 12:11). The goad is indeed called a rebuke, because while it reproves faults, it pricks the mind.

But the goad is blunted when the understanding of the prelate is weak, so that he neither discovers the faults of his subjects by recognizing them nor rebukes them upon finding them. Rightly therefore is the rebuke of a ruler declared to be a goad, because it cannot prevail to prick the swellings of vices if his mind, educated through knowledge, does not see what ought to be pricked. Whence also, in the type of learned prelates, it is fittingly added: (Verse 22. "And when the day of battle had come, there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of all the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, except for Saul and Jonathan his son." 33. What is understood by the lance, if not the keen foresight of the holy preachers? And what is shown by the sword, if not the subtlety of their understanding? For by the lance we pierce through things set before us at a distance. But by the sword, enemies near and almost joined to us are slain. Rightly therefore in the lance the foresight of the elect is shown, by which they strike hidden enemies before they suffer their nearby assault. For while they anticipate by guarding against the future ambushes of demons, they strike as if with a lance from afar those whose nearby blows they are unwilling to receive. Whence also the blessed apostle Paul, when he discerned the armed spirits of fornication from afar, held conjugal chastity as a lance and did not permit them to approach nearer, saying: 'Because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. Let the husband render to the wife her due, and likewise the wife to the husband' (1 Cor. 7:2). And again: 'Come together again, lest Satan tempt you because of your incontinence' (ibid. 5). Hence also concerning himself he says: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest preaching to others, I myself should become a castaway' (1 Cor. 9:27). For he who had chastised his body lest he become a castaway was surely piercing with a lance his enemies positioned at some distance before him.

The foresight of abstinence for taming the lust of the flesh is therefore taken as a lance, by which approaching enemies are struck. Rightly also understanding is expressed by the sword, because whoever recognizes and rejects the wicked suggestions of the evil spirit in the present time strikes, as it were, an enemy nearby and placed right next to him. He also cuts as if with a sword sharpened on both edges, because he condemns both false goods and true evils. But what does it mean that the sword is said to be in the hand of Saul and Jonathan? They are not in the hand of those who keenly understand things near and present and foresee future things, yet do not exercise their strength to destroy them. They openly know that the ancient enemy casts down the greatest part of the human race through the power of the flesh into fornication, yet they do not take care to chastise the flesh through abstinence. So also some clearly see present evils but make no effort whatsoever to avoid them. These indeed have sword and lance, but do not have them in hand. Rightly therefore on the day of battle the sword and lance are found in the hand of Saul and Jonathan, because only the elect are those who both understand present and future evils and more ardently desire to overcome them with the intention of the heart.

Yet this is said in this place so that the people may be shown to have held nothing in hand, who are shown to hold plowshares, hoes, axes, and weeding hooks. For by these words the elect are not distinguished from the reprobate, but the dull from the skilled. But since we have now shown the armed men, let us explain the manner of the contest. There follows:

CHAPTER 5.4 (1 SAMUEL 14:1)

The garrison of the Philistines went out to go up to Machmas, and it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man his armor-bearer: Come, and let us cross over to the garrison of the Philistines, which is beyond that place. 1. The station of the Philistines goes forth when the throng of evil spirits is revealed to the minds of the elect through harmful suggestions. It is indeed called a station for this reason: because the wars of the elect are being described. For to stand, for malignant spirits, is to exert great forces in the battle of the elect. For anyone can strive to accomplish something more powerfully by standing than by sitting. Therefore the station of the Philistines is said to have gone forth, so that the effort of the demons in our war may be openly understood. And because they think of crushing the faithful as though they were inferior and lesser than them-

selves, going forth they prepare to ascend to Machmas. Or they eagerly desire to ascend to Machmas when they strive by tempting to deceive the hearts of the little ones. But the elect preachers, when they perceive the tempted hearts of their subjects, do not delay in bringing aid. They place some as it were in safety, and lead others with them to endure the dangers of wars. What does it mean that the armor-bearer is led to battle, except that subjects instructed through knowledge are to be advanced to victory in interior conflicts? For some know the art of medicine who lack the experience of healing: so indeed in the holy Church there are some who have learned the art of interior combat, but have not yet been brought to the pressing necessities of actual conflicts.

They hear of great men fighting, but the battles which the great endure magnificently they know by hearing, not by proven strength. Such indeed are those who are invited to imitate the footsteps of the Redeemer. "Whoever wishes," he says, "to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Now the arms of Jonathan are the exhortations of the teacher. The armor-bearer carries arms with which not he himself but another fights. So indeed are those who are newly instructed in the holy Church. For while they hear from the teachers about the virtues with which the teachers themselves fight against the cunning of evil spirits, they indeed have on their lips what they do not yet have in the practice of virtue. Therefore Jonathan said to his armor-bearer: "Come, let us cross over to the station of the Philistines," because the elect teachers teach their subjects not only the art by which they may fight, but also draw them to battle so that they may triumph.

2. And because lax pastors do not at all take care to undertake the battles that are urged upon them, he does not say: "Go, and cross over to the garrison of the Philistines," but: "Come, let us cross over. They indeed provoke others to the contest, but they themselves attempt those same contests first. But what does it mean when he says: "Which is across that place"? There is a certain place in the holy Church which, enclosed by great battles, is not exposed. Indeed, to possess the goods of the world, to take a wife, to beget children, to offer the pleasures of all lawful things to the body — this is to remain fortified against the enemy in such a way that nothing burdensome is imposed on those placed in that order. But if anyone, kindled by the desire for a better life, strives to cross beyond this place, it is necessary that he be

prepared for the gravest battles. For those who despise riches, who embrace the poverty of Christ, who spurn marriage, must always embrace the love of chastity. The former immediately have the most grievous battles of the flesh rising against them, the latter the assault upon the heart: because neither is poverty borne lightly, nor are bodies subjected to chastity without great struggles. Hence it is well said by a certain wise man: "Son, when you come to the service of God, stand in fear, and prepare your soul for temptation" (Sirach 2:1). As if to say:

Because you wished to go out from the place of protection, it is necessary that you now fortify yourself in open war against the strongest camps of the enemies. Therefore, when he says "across that place," not "this place," Jonathan signifies the virtue of teachers who, through the singular purpose of their religious life, are always in the open field of combat. And because in all that they bravely fight, in all that they nobly triumph over, they flee the vice of boasting and pride, there follows: (Verse 1. "But he did not tell his father this same thing." 3. Indeed, the virtues of the elect should be kept silent, lest they be spoken of through boasting, yet sometimes to manifest them for the glory of God is no fault. Because we have represented great preachers in Saul, this fact—that Jonathan conceals the beginning of battle from his father—suggests this: that the great things we do, we sometimes laudably conceal on account of humility. Indeed, through corruption we have already become such that we can never appear good even to those who are set over us without pride. Therefore, when a hidden evil arises from what is manifest, the good is wisely concealed, lest it be stained by the evil that comes upon it. But amid these things it must be known that those can conceal their virtues from their superiors out of this necessity who know how to rightly recognize the good that they do. For if they are too simple, what they consider to be good is often not good; and while they fail to reveal a vice as though it were a virtue, they carry a hidden enemy within themselves. Hence Jonathan, who concealed the plan of war from his father, is declared to be so great that a portion of the army is reported to have been led forth under his command. There were, it says, two thousand men with Saul in Michmash and on the hill of Bethel, and a thousand with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin (1 Kings 13:2). Let it therefore be said of Jonathan:

"But he did not reveal this very thing to his father"—because learned men, when they fear incurring the vice of pride from their great works, hide

those works from the very ones by whom they could have been helped. We learn better what these aids of the preacher are if we see them in the place of their perfection. For it follows: (Verse 2. Now Saul was staying in the outermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree, which was in Migron. 4. Gibeah, as we said, is interpreted as "hill"; Migron is said to mean "from the throat. Now holy preachers are very exalted, not only in works, but also in contemplation. The outer part of this loftiness, therefore, is that of works, while the inner part is that of contemplation. Through this outer part of their exaltedness, they are seen by us as an example; but through the inner part, they are joined to the Creator in great love. The prophet shows them to us as worthy of admiration through the outer part of their loftiness, when he says: "Who are these who fly like clouds, and like doves to their windows? (Isaiah 60:8). They fly indeed like clouds: because they are light from the weight of sin, and swift in good works by the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are like doves at their windows, because through good works they extend themselves to us as an example, as if through openings, yet they are by no means caught by the desire for praise on account of the purity of life they have displayed. But the king also sits under the pomegranate tree; because the preacher has rest in the shadow of the Redeemer. He is indeed wearied by great labor, but he is refreshed by the consolation of the Lord's words. Hence the same tree is said to remain in that place which is called "from the throat. For what is more fittingly signified by "from the throat" in this place than the sweetness of the holy Gospel?

For thus we can now remain in the shadow of the Redeemer, if namely we receive his words for consolation from the meditation of the Gospels. But preachers can rest more quietly in this, who the more deeply and closely they receive that word of the divine mouth, the more sweetly they are nourished. This is also the reason why King Saul is said not to stand, nor to sit, but to remain under the pomegranate tree in Migron; because the perfect teacher is teachable by God: and while he strives to feed others with food, he himself is satisfied with the sweetness of manifold spiritual delights. For while he gazes uniquely upon the delights of the Redeemer, he rises to a wondrous contemplation of virtues: and as if from one rind he gathers very many seeds, while through all those things which he recalls concerning the Redeemer, he gladly leads his mind into delight. In this delight of the Redeemer the bride glories that she has rested, she who says: "I sat under his shadow, whom I had

desired" (Song of Songs 2:3). To sit in his shadow is indeed to rest in contemplation of him. His contemplation is certainly a shadow, because in the vision of him we are protected, lest we be darkened by diabolical temptation as if by the burning heat of the sun. Those therefore who rest so loftily can usefully bring assistance to those who consult them.

But nevertheless some chosen subordinates, while they fear their own weakness, while they seek God alone as the witness of their struggle, flee the judgments of such great men, so that they may be seen by God alone in their good action. Therefore it is well said both that Saul remained in the outermost part of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree, and that Jonathan did not indicate to him his purpose of battle: because as long as we cannot perfectly guard against pride, the good from which it can arise ought to be hidden from all. There follows: (Verse 2) "The people with him were about six hundred men." 5. We said above that by this number strong men are designated in good work, who are reported to be with the king: because through their zeal for good work, they are in harmony with the life of their teacher. But the preachers of the Church have under them not only those who do great things, but also fellow ministers of the word who teach the highest truths. They have leaders who strengthen those burning for battle, they have those who run boldly, they have those who protect powerfully. Therefore it is well added: (Verse 3.) Ahiah the son of Ahitub, brother of Ichabod, the son of Phinehas, who had been born from Eli the priest of the Lord in Shiloh. He was wearing the Ephod.

6. For Achias in our language means "shade" [umbraculum]. But what is designated by "shade" in this place, if not protection? Those therefore who in holy Church protect any of the lesser ones from hidden adversaries are rightly designated by the shade. But one who sits under a shade cannot feel the heat of the sun. Why indeed are shades spoken of in sacred eloquence, unless because they also point to a wicked sun, by which the freshness of the mind is scorched? Of this sun indeed the Truth speaks in the division of the seeds: 'When the sun rose, they withered' (Matt. 13:6). For the burning heat of desire is a sun, which gleams as if with light, but which scorches the mind upon which it shines. Therefore, when by the exhortations of our superiors we reject the enticements of all desires, where else are we sheltered but under a pleasant shade, where we may escape the fires of temptations? But diminutively the minister of the Church is called a shade, so that no one may be

compared to the Redeemer. For of His protection the bride glories in the Canticles, saying: 'Under the shadow of him whom I had desired, I sat' (Song of Sol. 2:3). And the Psalmist entreating says: 'Under the shadow of your wings protect me' (Ps. 16:9). But whence this great Achias comes forth is explained, because he is recorded as the son of Achitob. Achitob means "my brother is good. Who then is understood as this good brother, if not our Redeemer?

A brother indeed, because He is a partaker of our nature; but good, because He freed our nature, which He assumed, from eternal death. Or good, because we are all evil, as He Himself says: 'If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children' (Matt. 7:11). Achias therefore is called the son of Achitob, so that those who are powerful in the Church may be understood to possess their power solely from the imitation of the Redeemer. Moreover, the same Achitob is declared the brother of Ichabod, because he is named after the translation of glory. For our Redeemer according to the flesh was born of the Jewish people. Since from that people all the ornament of the temple, all the rites of sacrifices, all the mysteries of the Scriptures passed over to the Gentile people, the translation of glory is rightly recalled in the brother of Achitob. This same Achitob is also said to have been the son of Phinehas, because the Jewish people, in the perfidy of its error in which it plunged itself, had teachers of its own nation far more wicked than itself. Hence the same Phinehas is interpreted as "silent mouth" or "sparing the mouth. He is called a mouth, because through that people the Lord spoke. But his mouth is now known to be silent, because when it rejected the Redeemer, it likewise lost the Spirit who once spoke through it.

He is also rightly called "sparing the mouth," because he fell once into the guilt of so great blood that he can in no way be converted to Him through penitence and confession. He is therefore called "sparing the mouth," because he disdains to blush in pious confession. Against which blessed Job, in the person of the converted, promises, saying: 'I will not spare my mouth; I will speak in the tribulation of my spirit' (Job 7:11). But because that people likewise had the dignity of religion in its patriarchs and prophets, the same Phinehas is declared to have been born of Eli, priest of the Lord. For Eli means "my God," and Shiloh means "sent. But sometimes in holy Scripture the elect preachers are understood as "gods. Whence also the Lord says to Moses: 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1). And in the law He

commands, saying: 'You shall not speak ill of the gods' (Exod. 22:28). Therefore the father of Phinehas is called "my God," because indeed the Jewish people imitates according to the letter the Scriptures of those who merited both to perceive the word of God with a revealed mind and to conceal it, as it were, in the container of the letter. Indeed the Truth showed these through Himself, when He expounded the words of the Psalmist, saying: 'He called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken' (John 10:35).

Moreover, he is declared to have been born in Shiloh, because the Jewish people, though carnally, is still nevertheless instructed in the spiritual Scriptures. Since therefore every chosen and wise person in holy Church follows through teaching the Lord born of the Jewish people, Achias, who is called "shade," is said to be the son of Achitob, brother of Ichabod, son of Phinehas, son of Eli. He is also described as wearing the ephod, so that it may be openly shown that one who does not shine with the beauty of a good way of life and with light can in no way protect others. There follows: (Verse 3.) 'But the people did not know where Jonathan had gone.' 7. What does it mean that the people did not know where Jonathan went, except that the chosen teacher strives to conceal through humility the things he intends to do? Hence in the Gospel the Lord also says: "Let not your left hand know what your right hand does" (Matt. 6:3). For if eternal things are figured by the right hand, and the present life by the left, we have men on the left and angels on the right. When, however, through good works we strive toward the fellowship of the citizens above, our right hand is said to be at work. And our left hand does not know the works of the right, if we have our co-workers — namely, the faithful of holy Church — as helpers in the work, yet refuse to have them as praisers leading to pride. Rightly, therefore, it is said: "The people did not know where Jonathan had gone," because we strive to do great things well only when we avoid displaying what we do for the sake of show. But since we bring these things forward as an example of the elect, we ought to examine attentively not only where he goes, but also by what way he goes. There follows: (Verse 4.) "Between the passes by which Jonathan sought to cross over to the garrison of the Philistines, there were prominent rocks on either side, and steep crags jutting out on both sides like teeth: the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh."

8. Since the life of the elect is lofty in merits, while the condition of malignant spirits is lowly, what does it mean that there is said to be an ascent by

which Jonathan tries to reach the garrison of the Philistines? For concerning these same Philistines as a type of demons, it was said not far above: "Going up, they encamped at Michmash" (1 Kings 13:5). But they are said to be above us insofar as we appear lesser in strength. They are also known to be above us in that which we cannot penetrate through understanding. Therefore, as often as we resolve to contend with reprobate spirits, we must prepare our strength for the ascent, because as men we strive to fight against angels. Hence also that vigorous athlete, powerfully encouraging his fellow soldiers, says: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). For because he had foreknown that he would fight against the spiritual wickedness of principalities and powers, he was certainly preparing the strength of his mind for the ascent to the heights. When wicked spirits subject the hearts of sinners to themselves, they indeed dominate them through manifold vices. If therefore we strive to overcome them there as well, it is very necessary for us to ascend, so that we may be able to powerfully strike their ranks. For the lustful must be saved in one way, the slothful in another; the vainglorious in one way, the proud in another. But in order that the chosen teacher may be equal to all these things, because he raises his mind through the keen counsels of constant meditation, he strengthens himself as if for the ascent to the Philistines.

9. Well indeed, not one ascent is affirmed, but many ascents are said to exist, because innumerable enemies must be met by many paths. This is done well when fitting and proper remedies are applied to individual vices. For, to touch briefly on some of them, the spirit of fornication is driven away by the virtue of continence; but it is more easily overcome if the flesh diminishes its assault through abstinence, lest, conquered, it submit itself to worldly desire. Gluttony is broken by abstinence; but he who does not fill his mind with spiritual food cannot maintain abstinence from bodily food. For he powerfully weakens the body who inflames his heart with love of heavenly things, because while he strongly loves spiritual things, he forcefully suppresses the desires of the flesh. Against the vice of avarice the good of voluntary poverty is opposed, but he who does not yet know how to love eternal treasures cannot be poor in spirit. Thus indeed anger is conquered if, through love of heavenly things, all earthly things are perfectly despised, because he who does not fear temporal loss no longer has reason to be angry. Thus also the vice of

sloth, that is, weariness of heart, is driven away if heavenly goods are always contemplated. Indeed, the mind that joyfully beholds such pleasant goods can in no way grow weary. The distressing evil of sadness is also swallowed up by the broad field of spiritual joy;

but that spiritual joy does not pour itself into the mind that does not know how to transcend the distresses of temporal life through contemplation. Sadness is indeed well conquered if the rewards of temporal labors are seen, because from the very thing by which the chosen mind considers itself afflicted temporally, it hopes to rejoice eternally in the heavenly homeland. Because, therefore, the preacher uses a great diversity of counsel for curing the various diseases of souls, and because that same counsel is grasped by deep consideration of the mind, well are the places where Jonathan desired to cross over to the garrison of the Philistines said to be ascents. And because many difficulties stand in the way of driving out evil spirits from the hearts of sinners, rocks are mentioned as being among the ascents. For what is signified by these two rocks, namely Boses and Seneh, except desire and sin? For Boses is said to mean "primacy," and Seneh "sun" or "hearing. Well does the name "primacy" suit desire, because it first occupies the mind before the mind submits itself to sin. By the name "sun" the delight of sin is also rightly figured, because it closes the eyes of the mind from the sight of truth and opens them to vanity. Whence also to the first humans it is said by the seducing spirit through the serpent: "On whatever day you eat from the tree that is in the midst of paradise, your eyes shall be opened" (Genesis 3).

In that eating, indeed, the eyes of the transgressors were opened by sinning, so that they perceived the rays of false light in the experience of transgression, and grew dim from the lofty contemplation of heavenly brightness. Indeed, the Psalmist, fleeing from opening his eyes to this light, beseeches the Lord, saying: "Turn away my eyes, lest they see vanity" (Psalm 118:37). Blessed Job, despising this with a lofty mind, longing to be counted among the merits of the perfect, said: "For now I would be sleeping in silence, and I would rest in my sleep; or, like a hidden miscarriage, I would not exist; or like those who, having been conceived, did not see the light" (Job 3:13). Who are these, except those who strongly guarded themselves from sinning? One crag, therefore, is called Boses, the other Seneh, because if desire claims a place for itself in the mind, it lifts the eyes of that same mind toward the pleasing allurements of sin, as if toward seeing the light of the

sun. Well also are they called rocks, because these two things attach themselves to the minds of the wicked, so that they no longer easily allow preachers to lead them back to themselves. But they are also called crags, because on this side and that, namely both in mind and body, they maintain the steep habit of wickedness. For while they are made firm by no integrity of character and no integrity of works, they are, in the manner of a crag, steep on every side.

And because they are said to be in the shape of teeth, what does this give us to understand except what we often see — that those who despise the exhortations of preachers attempt to bite their lives with slander? But concerning the same crags it is added: (Verse 5) "One jutting out to the north, opposite Michmash, and the other to the south, opposite Gibeah." 10. The first rock juts out to the North, the other to the South, because through concupiscence the fervor of charity is extinguished, and through sin the ardor of concupiscence is increased. For the reprobate mind, while it is subjected to concupiscence, is stripped of charity, and while it does not fear to sin, it kindles in itself ever more fierce desires for sinning. For as if placed at the highest altitude and heat of its day, in the flood of sin it both rejoices immoderately and is dissolved ardently. Therefore he badly strives to cure the disease of concupiscence who thinks to fulfill his desires more greedily by sinning so that he might find rest. Indeed, concupiscence after sin will be all the greater, the more the delight of sin begins to be pleasing to itself. But the first rock is said to be situated opposite Magmas, the other to jut out facing Gabaa. Magmas, as we have already sufficiently explained, means humility; Gabaa is interpreted as hill. Concupiscence stands directly opposite to humility, while the enticement of sin stands against heavenly conduct. For everyone who desires what is forbidden, while he despises the one who commands, is proud. Therefore he stands opposite to humility, which he does not retain in the devotion of obedience. But he who is also dissolved in the fervor of sin, as if by the noonday brightness, juts out against Gabaa, that is, the hill, because while he opposes heavenly things, he is prepared for the punishments of hell. But since such people are also led to eternal life by the preaching of the Saints, let us consider the zeal of those preachers in the deed of Jonathan. For there follows: (Verse 6.) Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf, for it is not difficult for the Lord to save, whether by many or by few.

11. What is the garrison of the Philistines, if not the strength of malignant spirits? For holy men, when they prepare themselves for the correction of sinners, openly know that they fight against angels fallen from heaven. This battle, therefore, since it is between angels and men, is fought by the strong against the weak, by the cunning against the simple. For he had received an assault from these strong ones, who said: "The strong have rushed upon me, though neither my iniquity nor my sin, O Lord" (Psalm 58:4). Paul also, perceiving the cunning of the fallen angel, says: "We are not ignorant of his cunning" (2 Cor. 2:11). Against the cunning, therefore, the way of cautious reasoning must be sought; against the strong, however, divine help must be sought. So that it may be understood that preaching must be carried out with great caution, Jonathan is said to have invited his armor-bearer to cross over with him. And so that in driving out the enemies, confidence may be placed in God's mercy, he speaks saying: "Because it is not difficult for God to save, whether by many or by few." And because the conversion of the wicked is not easy, he says: "Perhaps God will act for us." He says "perhaps" because he does not yet fully presume upon the complete salvation of sinners. But the chosen subordinate shows the pattern of the virtue of humility, because he adds: (Verse 7.) And his armor-bearer said to him: "Do all that pleases your heart. Go where you wish, and I will be with you wherever you desire."

12. Some subjects, while neglecting the measure of their own order, confuse that same measure in such a way that they share in the decision-making of their superiors, yet refuse to obey their commands. They easily dare to correct the words of their superiors, but do not strive to easily fulfill what they command. What then is shown to us in the voice of this armor-bearer, except that free decision-making must be left to those in authority, and the virtue of obedience must be held by subjects without slackening? For, to assign free authority of decision-making to preachers, he says: "Do all things that please your heart." And to show the ready willingness of subjects for every service, he adds: "Go where you desire, and I will be with you wherever you wish." Nor indeed did he say there: "Do some things that are in your heart, and do not do some things, or do them differently"; nor here: "Go there, and I will be with you, but there I will not be with you." "Do all things," he says, because all things are to be arranged by the decision of superiors. "I will likewise be with you," he says, "wherever you wish"; because

one who is subject to any command of obedience ought not to be absent from it. There follows: (Verses 8-10.) And Jonathan said: "Behold, we will cross over to those men, and when we have appeared to them, if they speak to us in this manner: 'Wait until we come to you,' let us stand in our place and not go up to them. But if they say: 'Come up to us,' let us go up, because the Lord has delivered them into our hands."

13. It is the certain and undoubted judgment of the holy Church that chosen preachers must consider not only what, how much, and when they speak, but also to whom they speak. Hence the Lord too, concealing the word from the knowledge of certain people, forbids the disciples, saying: "Do not cast your pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6). Likewise Scripture forbids the word to be poured out uselessly, and says: "Where there is no hearing, do not pour out speech" (Ecclus. 32:6). What then does it mean that Jonathan says: "If they say: Wait until we come to you, let us stand in our place; but if they say: Come up to us, let us go up, because the Lord has delivered them into our hands" — unless that the chosen preacher must attentively discern to whom he ought to bring forth the word of life? But because this now seems to be shown in the literal sense, let us express it more subtly. Preachers cross over to sinners when they please those to whom they present words not only by word but also by life. Who then are those who say: "Come up to us," unless those who bring forth signs of devotion, because they both reverently hear the word of salvation and earnestly desire to retain it? Therefore one must ascend to these, in whom, even if there is great labor in the work of ministry, there are also great gains of salvation.

On the contrary, sinners eagerly desire to cross over to the teachers when they are plunged into such profound blindness that they strive to convert even the preachers themselves to the example of imitating their own depravity. For they are prone to evil, impenitent in heart, and they do not shrink from staining others with the leprosy of sin which they have put on. Of whom the wise man speaks, saying: "They rejoice when they have done evil, and exult in the worst things" (Prov. 2:14). And likewise the Prophet, prophesying about these, says: "They have proclaimed their sin like Sodom" (Isa. 3:9). What then does it mean when he says: "Let us stand in our place"? It is as if he were saying: If we cannot win them over, let us preserve ourselves in good conduct. For our place is good conduct, about which place it is written elsewhere: "If the spirit of one having power rises against you, do not leave

your place" (Eccl. 10:4). Indeed this place must be guarded not only from the spirit but also from man, because that spirit not only confronts us by himself but also fights against us through man. But if our place is the Lord, when evil people set themselves against us, let us persist in our place, because when the incorrigible do not receive the warnings of preachers, the preachers themselves must carefully watch that no examples of those people may reach them. There follows: (Verses 11, 12.

And so they appeared to the garrison of the Philistines, and the Philistines said: "Behold, the Hebrews are coming out of the caves in which they had been hidden. And the men of the garrison of the Philistines spoke to Jonathan and to his armor-bearer: "Come up to us, and we will show you something." 14. What is the meaning of Jonathan being said to appear to the Philistines with his armor-bearer, if not that the teacher himself must first display the good that he strives to teach others? For he cannot be received with reverence in preaching if he does not first exhibit the honor of his ministry through the light of a good life. Hence the outstanding preacher confidently declares, saying: "As long as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I will honor my ministry" (Rom. 11:13). The teacher therefore appears, not so much when he speaks a word as when he is reverently demonstrated through his life and conduct. When the prophet, then, was showing the conduct of preachers through the types of sacred history, he reasonably added, saying: "So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. As if to say: Because he resolved to teach, he first showed his life to those to whom he had arranged to speak. But what does it mean that the Philistines despise those who appear and yet say to them, "Come up to us," unless that very often even those who will run to the laments of repentance through the preachers' preaching despise the preachers' excellent life? And while they criticize them for abandoning the pursuit of a more secluded life, they declare that they have come out of their caves. As if they were saying: Those who seemed to have fled the world with all their intent are now going out into the world under the pretense of preaching.

But many who accuse righteous preachers suspect that the evils they charge against them actually exist in them. Yet by the very fact that they condemn evil, they give hope to the preachers, because they can more easily be drawn to carry out the good that they defend. Therefore, while with good intention they censure false evils in the righteous, they are indeed mad in

voice, but even in their madness they pledge to the preachers the fruit of their salvation. And since the ascent was discussed above, it remains to inquire what it means that they say: "We will show you a thing. But this literally signifies threats. It is as if they were saying: If you come up here, you will feel by suffering how strong we are. In the conversion of the wicked, likewise, it is easy to gather how much harm they are accustomed to inflicting when they drive out the righteous. But since, with God as our guide, we have led the carnal sense of the history to a spiritual understanding, when holy teachers observe the conversion of sinners through certain emerging signs, a "thing" is also promised by them, because they promise to return to true being. For a "thing" has some being, but sin has no being at all. Hence Paul also says to the Corinthians: "We know that an idol is nothing in the world" (1 Cor. 8:4).

But the sinner, because by sinning he tends toward nothing, when he abandons that nothing to which he clung, returns as it were to being. He can therefore show a "thing" in himself, that is, something that has being, because he now holds works of virtue through divine grace. They say therefore: "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. As if by a certain sign sinners were promising and saying: If you propose to labor so in us by the word, what you labor at will not be without great profit. Therefore concerning the certainty of others it is added: (Verse 12. "And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer: Let us go up, follow me, for the Lord has delivered them into the hands of Israel." 15. Whoever strives to accomplish great things knows how to weigh these matters well, if he has always been zealous to attribute them to divine praises. Rightly therefore Jonathan, trusting in the attainment of victory, declared that the enemies would be delivered not into his own hands, but into the hands of Israel, so that he might show the triumph and at the same time designate what kind of person the triumphant one ought to be. For Israel is interpreted as "seeing God." He into whose hands the enemies are delivered is therefore called "seeing God," so that he may be taught not to attend to those things which have been given into his hand, but while holding what has been given, to lift up his heart to the bestower of gifts. For he holds one thing in his hands and sees another with his eyes, so that he may firmly hold the palm of triumph, but the retained palm of victory may not puff up the one who sees God. But since he speaks these things in confidence, not yet in possession, let us hear how he comes to possess them. There follows: (Verse

13.) Jonathan climbed up crawling on his hands, and his armor-bearer after him.

16. What is crawling on the hands, if not to curve the whole body, to leave nothing lofty in oneself, to bend the upper limbs to perform the duties of the lower? And what is suggested to us by this action, if not that the conversion of sinners requires great compassion from preachers? For what else did our Redeemer appear to do but crawl on his hands, when he became a friend of tax collectors, and received sinners, and ate with them? Indeed, he was crawling on his hands when he said: "The healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matt. 9:12). Hence he says again: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. This bending down of crawling is also designated in sacred Scripture by the term "camel. For the Savior willed to humble himself down to our lowest condition, so that he might raise us up to the heights of his divinity. Paul, indicating that he followed this one who crawled on his hands, says: "I became all things to all people, that I might save all" (1 Cor. 9:22). But also, because hands usually signify works, the pastor crawls on his hands when he sets forth to sinners the way that the converted ought to follow, not by the wisdom of speech, but by the example of his manner of life. Indeed, the Lord was teaching his preachers to crawl on their hands when he said:

"So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). And fittingly, the one crawling is said to climb up to the outpost of the Philistines, because that teacher can arrive at the destruction of the vices of sinners who soothes the sinners themselves by a great display of humility and a great affection of charity. For while he extends the agreeableness of grace outwardly, he inwardly sends in the hand to cut away the sickness of the mind. Whence it is also fittingly added: (v. 13) "And when they saw Jonathan's face, some fell before Jonathan, and others his armor-bearer slew." 17. The face of Jonathan is seen when those who hear the word of the preacher recognize also the charity of his mind; when, namely, they hear him both preaching heavenly things and loving with wonderful charity those to whom he opens those heavenly things. And they are rightly said to fall before his face, because while they recognize the good things that are in the mind of the preacher, they abandon the state of wickedness. But also, while many come to the remedy of penance, some take refuge in the examples of the great, others in

those of the lesser. Fittingly therefore it was said: "His armor-bearer was killing others." To be deprived of a reprobate life is indeed to be slain; and whoever abandons evil by someone's example or admonitions falls before his feet as if slain. For James, setting forth the victories of individuals in a general statement, says: "He who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). There follows: (Verse 14) "And the first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made was of about twenty men, in half the area of a yoke of land which a pair of oxen was accustomed to plow in a day."

18. This is called the first plague, because the saints are described as striking the wicked even afterward, at the last judgment. Hence Paul also rouses the Corinthians, saying: "Do you not know that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3). Hence the Psalmist, prophesying, says: "The saints shall exult in glory, they shall rejoice upon their beds, the praises of God in their throats, to execute vengeance upon the nations, rebukes among the peoples" (Ps. 149:5-6). This first plague belongs to conversion, the second to damnation, because now the saints ask us to be converted to the Lord, but then they condemn more harshly those who have not been converted. In this event twenty men are reported killed, so that the mystery of the number five may be commended. For five repeated four times, or four times five, make twenty. And because through the vigor of the five senses every period of sin is accomplished, and in the books of the four Evangelists we find the remedies of our salvation, by the figure of the twenty men all sinners who are to be saved are represented. They are said to have been killed in half the area of a field, which a yoke of oxen was accustomed to plow in a day. The oxen are the preachers of the Church, who plow when they preach, who, when they open the hearts of their hearers with heavenly words, scatter seed as it were in good soil. But the oxen plow by day, because the Lord threatens, saying:

"The night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). Likewise two oxen plow, namely Jonathan and his armor-bearer. By these oxen, indeed, either the wise and the simple are to be understood, or priests of lesser and of higher rank. Moreover, in the two oxen all the preachers of the holy Church can generally be understood, because they are filled with the grace of the twofold love, and they do not love themselves with selfish love. Therefore the half of the field is this present life. This part, tempered for cultivation, is softened by the rains of winter; that other part is scorched to barrenness by

the heats of summer for the sluggish. The oxen can plow this part of the field, but not that other part, because in this life good works are to be sown, but in that other life works are not to be sown, but rather the reward of works is to be reaped. Rightly, then, twenty men are reported killed in half a field, because sinners can be profitably converted only here, where the magnitude of their guilt is believed to be purged through the laments of conversion. But some marvel at the sudden conversion of sinners, because on account of their habitual preoccupation with outward cares, the daily wonders that God performs have become cheap to them. Hence it is added: (Verse 15. And there was a miracle in the camps throughout the fields.

19. All who are perfect do not cease to marvel at the power and wisdom of almighty God in all things that have been made or are being made. Hence the Psalmist too, pressing on with divine praises, says: "God is wonderful in His saints; the God of Israel Himself will give power and strength to His people; blessed be God" (Ps. 67:36). Hence Moses confesses to the same Lord, saying: "Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, glorious among the saints, wonderful in majesty, working wonders?" (Exod. 15:11). He is indeed called wonderful in His saints because the more loftily they behold divine things, the more wondrously they are struck with amazement, for assuredly in the highest contemplation they see things at which they marvel, not things they can comprehend by reason. Therefore, whenever certain new things occur beyond ordinary experience that carnal and simple people wonder at, a miracle is said to happen among the fields. For in comparison with the saints, they are like rustic people who do not know how to marvel at so many ancient works of the Creator, so many arrangements of times, and so many orders of creatures. Rightly, then, all are generally included under that same dullness of rusticity, when it is added: (Verse 15.) "But also all the people of their garrison who had gone out to plunder were struck with astonishment."

20. What garrison do they call, if not that of the Philistines? What is it then that the Philistines marvel at, except that sometimes other sinners, astonished, behold the conversion of sinners, and while they recognize the goodness of God in their visitation, they are kindled to a similar resolve of conversion? For the people of the garrison go out to plunder when they do not fear to act perversely. For what anyone dares to do while God forbids it, while the Scriptures threaten, while teachers oppose it, he strives as if by viol-

ence to seize for his own uses. If anyone wishes to understand demons by this people, he may, because they go out to plunder when they bring violent temptations and lead captive the souls of sinners. This people is certainly said to be astonished, because they do not understand by what grace converted sinners receive a penitent heart, which demons cannot possess. But while sinners come to their senses, they benefit both themselves and others, because many are corrected by their example. Whence it is also added: (Verse 15.) And the earth was shaken.

21. While common men behold new wonders, the earth is disturbed, because it often happens that while some are converted through outward miracles, the hardness of others is moved by certain incentives toward the purpose of good work. For the earth is badly tranquil when the life of carnal men lies secure in the pleasures of the world, when the perishable things which it ardently desires sweetly delight it. But the earth is truly disturbed when the carnal mind is shaken from its evil firmness, and begins to think in a wavering manner, between the evils which it rejects and the goods which it loves. For to be disturbed is then for the mind to cloud over the serenity of evil pleasure with the purpose of Christian religion. But carnal affection is shaken so that spiritual life may be revealed. Whence it is also added: (Ver. 15.) And it happens as a miracle from God.

22. For when the mind of man is weighed down by carnal delight, its vision is certainly dulled, so that it deserves to remain ignorant of spiritual goods. But when it begins to grow weak in its carnal things, it gradually grows strong in spiritual things, so that by advancing it sees heavenly things, and by forgetting it leaves behind what is weak. Indeed, the progress of a converted mind is shown, because first the earth is said to be disturbed, then the miracle is recorded as having come about as if from God. A miracle truly from God is what God does without man. For when the Lord rained manna in the desert for the children of Israel (Exod. 16), when He provided birds to those who desired them (Exod. 14), God certainly performed a miracle without man; but when He wished to divide the sea, He commanded Moses to touch it with a rod, so that He might display a miracle which He would demonstrate to the people through a man. So indeed the rock is struck with a rod so that streams of water might be brought forth (Num. 20), because the miracle He wished to display He performed through a man, not by Him-

self, so that by rendering the man venerable, the Israelite people would have been bound to submit humbly to him and obey devoutly.

What then does it mean that the miracle is asserted to have come about as if from God after the earth is disturbed, unless that when the Holy Spirit moves the mind to conversion, He introduces to the stirred mind the examples of the elect, which it may both regard with reverence and devoutly desire to imitate? This miracle is indeed understood according to the historical sense as meaning that many were slain. But now in the holy Church sinners are converted to the religious life, and others follow them as examples of virtue. The Holy Spirit indeed draws them, and because they are drawn He shows them to others, so that He may draw those who have been drawn, and insert those who see into the company of the drawn, so that through the generosity of His grace He may encompass both. For when He works this in the hearts of the faithful without man, by Himself, the miracle certainly does not come about as if from God, but from God. But when He accomplishes this through the preaching of doctors of eternal life, the miracle is as if from God, because He displays His wondrous ministers so that those who behold them may be able to imitate them devoutly. But because we said above that Saul signifies the chief priests, and Jonathan his son represents the subordinate persons of preachers, if we attend to what follows, we find in the chief pontiffs the apostolic solicitude which they maintain. About which blessed Paul indeed speaks, saying:

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire? Besides those things which are external, my daily urgency, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:29). He who indeed bore the care of all the churches was vigilant not only over the little ones but also in examining the deeds of the greater ones. Hence it is also added here: (Verses 16–17. "And the watchmen of Saul who were in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was overthrown and fleeing this way and that. And Saul said to the people who were with him: Search and see who has gone from us. And it was found that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not present." 23. The watchmen of Saul observe the battle of Jonathan, because the supreme pontiffs not only examine the deeds of their subjects, but also the doctrine of their prelates. The former indeed they investigate, whether they act well; but the latter, whether they teach rightly. Often they hear of the conduct of others, but they fear lest they not be well instructed. For what else is meant by the in-

quiry into where someone has gone, except that he who is sent to preach ought to be such that the burden of ministry may be safely imposed upon him; so that the mind of the one sending may waver with no doubt that he teaches rightly, and that he demonstrates the words of doctrine through his works. And because the prelates of the churches are innumerable, Jonathan is observed by the watchmen, because the supreme height of the universal Church so appoints preachers throughout the world that it has ministers around itself, through whom it may examine their doctrine and diligently investigate their works. But those who carry out the ministry and legation of the supreme height are elevated to a lofty seat of life and knowledge. Whence also it is well recorded that those same watchmen were in Gibeah of Benjamin. For Gibeah of Benjamin is called the hill of the son of the right hand. On the hill of the son of the right hand indeed are those who, through their sublime life and through their lofty knowledge, seem already to attain to conformity with the Redeemer.

These indeed behold the deeds of the victors from on high, because they merit, from the loftiness of their life and the perfect learning of the highest knowledge, to approve the life of the good and to examine the wicked. They find that Jonathan is not present, because they consider the gains of preaching to be best when they approve the praiseworthy person of the preacher. There follows: (Verse 18. And Saul said to Ahijah: Bring the ark of God. 24. Why does Saul command Ahijah the priest to bring the ark near, unless because they hear the manner of the battle from the scouts? And indeed this is rightly done in a spiritual sense by the chief priests, when they do not judge the things they hear from reporters until they seek their reasoning in the counsel of inward meditation. And, because they often follow the counsels even of another's mind, Ahijah is commanded to bring the ark near. For the priest has the ark who does not have a mind empty of spiritual knowledge. Therefore Saul commands Ahijah to bring the ark near, when the chief teacher seeks counsel from his lesser and learned ones. For counsel is to be sought there where the grace of spiritual knowledge shines forth. Whence it is also added: (Verse 18.) For the ark of God was on that day with the children of Israel.

25. As if to say: He commanded to apply what he knew to exist. To seek the counsel of religion from the irreligious, or wisdom from fools, is not to receive counsel but to rush headlong. Therefore it is well said: "For the ark of

God was there," because in doubtful matters we ought to consult those whom we openly know not to lack spiritual gifts. But there are certain things that are improved through counsel, and certain things that are improved through aid. For where the necessity is open and undoubted, there the delay of counsel is not fitting, but rather the swiftness of assistance. Doubtful and obscure matters we handle better by consulting, but open and known matters we relieve by assisting and hastening. Whence it is added: (Verses 19, 20.) "And while Saul spoke to the priest, a great tumult arose in the camp of the Philistines, and it grew little by little, and resounded more clearly. And Saul said to the priest: Withdraw your hand." Saul cried out, and all the people who were with him, and they came to the place of battle.

26. For what else does it signify that Saul first sought to bring the ark near, then commanded the priest to withdraw his hand, except that we ought to arrange obscure matters by consulting, and fulfill with haste those things that become more clearly known? But for the preacher to hear the tumult gradually increasing is to recognize the devotion of converted sinners. It is said to increase gradually, because while the Spirit directs our mind toward good works, he gently leads it toward better things through daily progress. But what does it mean that Saul and all the people who are with him shout, except that they join themselves to the warriors? And they come even to the place of battle. The place of battle is the heart of the one hearing the word of God. It is called the place of battle because the word that is received wars against one's former way of life. For the heavenly things he hears now please him, but old habit rises up and suggests that he despise what he has heard. The fight becomes still fiercer, because what the preacher praises, the malignant spirits disparage by dissuading, and they raise themselves up as if in battle against the saints, while by warring they destroy what is proclaimed by the voice of the latter. What then is it to come to the place of battle, except to arrive through the approach of inquiry at the secrets of the hearer's heart, where one may swiftly find the enemies and powerfully strike them down?

For those who do not know how to examine interior things cannot reach the place of battle. Or the place of battle is where the frequent fame of great religion exists. For when countless people hasten there—those who desire both to put off the old life and to put on the new—it is rightly called the place of battle, because daily the army of spiritual virtues fights there against

the multitude of vices. There indeed, the greater the battles, the more glorious the victories. There, the more frequent the assaults of the enemies, the more praiseworthy the number of triumphs: where not only is the lofty virtue of the great exalted, but the common valor of all is displayed in a wondrous demonstration of fortitude. Whence it also follows: (Verse 20. And behold, the sword of each one had been turned against his neighbor, and the slaughter was very great.

27. What is this sword, if not the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God? For those who in innumerable places have been converted to the service of almighty God, because they cling inseparably to the word of God, each one holds a sword, as it were, close at hand. Therefore the sword of each one is turned against his neighbor, when those who have been converted in monasteries pierce one another in turn with the word of God and utterly slay the carnality within themselves. For they are killed, as it were, by mutual wounds, when one strikes another with the word of God and extinguishes whatever lives carnally within him. Because they had recently been converted and had fallen away from secular life, they were signified by the type of the Philistines. Or the sword of one is turned against his neighbor when, through the exhortation of the converted, sinners not yet converted are turned to the Lord; when not only those who are in authority profit others by the word of preaching, but the multitude of subjects strive to instruct as many as they can by words and examples, and endeavor to draw them away from the desires of the present life as though slain, and to present them alive to eternal life. Indeed, we see these gains from the slain now spread throughout the whole Church across the entire world, because whoever now lives to God through divine grace appears dead to this world by the blade of mutual charity.

For the sword of each one is turned against his neighbor, because all the elect strengthen one another in turn within the holy Church and inflame one another toward the heavenly homeland by the zeal of mutual preaching. And because an innumerable people is daily won for God, it is rightly added there: 'And the slaughter was exceedingly great.' What is exceedingly great is that which can somehow be recognized in its magnitude, but whose excellence cannot be comprehended. He had raised his eyes to this exceedingly great slaughter who said: 'But to me your friends are exceedingly honored, O God; their rule is exceedingly strengthened; I shall count them, and they

shall be multiplied beyond the sand' (Ps. 138:17). The exceedingly great slaughter can also be understood to mean not only that many were slain, but that they were slain well. This is indeed seen to happen in the conversion of sinners, when they so abandon their past that they never come back to life for those same pleasures. For sinners to be slain is merely to be separated from a shameful life for a time. To be slain vehemently, therefore, or exceedingly, is to abandon perfectly the enticements of temporal life and to long eagerly for the joys of the future life. But because there is great diversity among those who are converted, there follows:

(Verse 21.) 'But the Hebrews also who had been with the Philistines yesterday and the day before, and had gone up with them into the camp, turned back to be with Israel and with those who were with Saul and Jonathan.' 28. Who are the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines, if not sinners who have fallen from a religious way of life? Of whom it was said not far above: "The Hebrews crossed the Jordan." They are Hebrews indeed by the order of religion, but they are with the Philistines, and they go up with them, as long as they are deceived by harmful suggestions and advance in wicked conduct. They are with the evil spirits by the intention and will of sin, but they go up with them, because, driven by those spirits, they raise themselves to the boldness of iniquitous action. Or they are with them when they carry out their sins to completion by their deeds; but they go up with them when they do not fear to set forth the examples of their wickedness for others to imitate. What does it mean, then, that they are said to return and be with Israel, except that such people also very often come to their senses? For to return is to take up again the love of the religious life. And to be with Israel is to persist within the holy Church in the unity of charity. One must return to this end: that being with Israel may be proposed as the goal, because there is no conversion of a sinner if, once converted, he lacks perseverance in good works and unity of charity. There follows: (Verse 22.) "Likewise all the Israelites who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim, hearing that the Philistines had fled, joined with their own people in the battle."

29. This indeed happens as often as those devoted to the more remote life deign to turn their zeal toward seeking the profit of souls. For they join themselves with their own in battle when they preach the true joys of eternal life together with the doctors of Holy Church, and equally drive malign spirits from the hearts of sinners. But it must be carefully asked how it is said:

"Hearing that the Philistines had fled. A glorious victory is certainly not to pursue those who flee, but to put to flight those who resist. What then does it mean when it says: "Hearing that the Philistines had fled, they joined themselves with their own in battle," unless that by these words the fitting gains of that same remote life are signified? For it is the custom of those men to offer their word rather to those consulting them than to those opposing them, because unless they recognize a devout heart in the listener, they disdain to send forth their preaching as though it would perish in vain. Therefore, before they join themselves with their own in battle, they hear that the Philistines have fled: because they are not so much intent on converting the wicked as on raising up the converted to the heights of a more perfect life. Moreover, because the very sublimity of the more perfect life is usually urged with the great labors of exhortation, those who hear that the Philistines have fled are rightly said to fight.

And so the enemies flee, but those recently hidden now fight, because men of the remote life do not deign to speak except to devout listeners, yet even when speaking, they can scarcely persuade by the great combat of words and examples the loftiness of the life which they themselves hold. And because the weak and imperfect cannot gather the great gains of preaching, there follows: (Verse 22. "There were with Saul about ten thousand men. He does not say ten thousand, but "about ten thousand. The complete perfection of this number is not found on earth, but in heaven. For since there are nine orders of angels, and that multitude of chosen men is raised up to fellowship with them, those ten thousand men are those who rejoice in the holy angels and the elect among men in that seat of eternal glory. Therefore "about ten thousand men" are those who, still placed in the exile of this present age, have taken on in their conduct the form of that blessed fellowship. Because likewise through love of that heavenly life the darkness of sins is abandoned, there follows: (Verse 23. "And the Lord saved Israel on that day. The contemplation of the inner light is indeed a splendid and most brilliant day, on which the Lord saves Israel, because those whose hearts he irradiates with the light of inward splendor, he raises to the height of perpetual salvation.

For the Lord is said to save on that day, because no one is kindled to the love of eternal life from whom the splendor of the inner light is hidden. To this grace of salvation not only the chosen things of the world arrive, but even those that seem despised. Whence it is added: (Verse 23. "And the battle

passed beyond Beth-aven." 30. Bethaven means "house of uselessness." Indeed, the Lord, showing this uselessness in the parables, introduces a king commanding a servant at the wedding feast, saying: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, the blind and the lame" (Luke 14:21). The poor are those who do not at all store up the treasures of God's word in their heart. The maimed are those who cannot labor sufficiently for eternal life. The blind designate the ignorant and simple, because while they in no way see heavenly things, they lack the light of the mind. The lame are those who have lost the step of good works. But "the battle reached as far as Bethaven," because often useless persons, when they are captured by the warfare of God's word, are reduced into His service and become useful. Indeed, battle is waged with the blind so that they may see, with the lame so that they may stand firm, with the poor so that they may receive the treasures of good conduct, with the maimed so that they may grow strong for the vigor of good works. Therefore the battle is carried as far as Bethaven, when those are captured by the preaching of the saints who seemed to possess no usefulness necessary to anyone. Whence it is also added: (Verse 24.) "And every man of Israel was joined together on that day."

31. Indeed every man is joined to the preacher when no condition of men is left from which those who are converted are not led to a good way of life. But those who are joined to Saul are called men, because whatever we may be in the world, we are admonished to be strong in the service of almighty God. For unless they are men, they are by no means joined to the preachers, because they do not agree with them unless they themselves do the brave deeds which those preachers praise in their teaching. But now that the enemies have been defeated, now that the strong have been joined to him, what the king does must be carefully considered. There follows: (Verse 24.) And Saul adjured the people, saying: Cursed be the man who eats until evening, until I am avenged of my enemies. 32. The enemies of preachers are those about whom the Psalmist pleads, saying: "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God, and free me from those who rise up against me" (Psalm 58:1). The enemies of the saints are rightly called unclean spirits, because the saints detest with great zeal embracing the enticements of the world which those spirits suggest. For whoever still finds something pleasing in the counsels of the evil spirit is certainly not his enemy, because he has not yet learned to hate one

whose enticements he does not reject. They are also called enemies of the saints, as is revealed from sacred Scripture. For through everything they suggest, through everything by which they flatter, they strive to destroy those souls whom they pleasingly favor. What then does it mean that he adjures the people not to eat until evening, until he takes vengeance on his enemies? But it should be noted that he was saying these things when the enemies had already been defeated. What indeed is eating for the victors, except to delightfully receive the food of vain praise from a completed work of virtue? "Cursed," he says, "is everyone who eats before evening," because whoever now gladly receives vain praises then loses the eternal praises of the Creator. Therefore the people are adjured not to eat, because they are bound by the precept of the teachers never to glory vainly in a good work.

Let one do mighty deeds by living well, but as long as one lives, let one beware of seeking praises for strength, so as not to lose being praised eternally after death. For he who forbade the people to eat before evening certainly granted that they should eat at evening. And because evening is the end of the day, those who can abstain before evening eat at evening, because whoever now disdains being praised for a great deed, when brought to the end of life, is found worthy of eternal praises. This is what the Lord promises He will give to the elect in the Gospel, saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because you were faithful in a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:23). Hence again, coming to judgment, He says: "Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Then indeed we take vengeance on our enemies, because all diabolical temptations then vanish. For since the snares of demons no longer harm by tempting, when we die in the flesh we take vengeance on our enemies, whom we no longer fear at all, as though they were slain. Therefore we defer our eating until evening, if we reserve the proclamations of our praise at the end for the coming Judge.

Then indeed we must eat, because He who then comes as Judge now as the leader of our army promises His fellow soldiers, saying: "He will make them recline at table, and passing by He will serve them" (Luke 12:37). Then indeed the victors recline at table, because received in the lofty seat of inner rest, they are delighted by the praises of everlasting life, when while they themselves are silent the proclamations of all their good works resound to-

gether, and those things are brought forth to glory which here were borne to battle with great virtue. There follows: (Verses 25, 26) "And all the common people of the land came into a forest, in which there was honey upon the surface of the field. And so the people entered the forest, and flowing honey appeared, and no one put his hand to his mouth." 33. A forest is a wooded and hilly place. By this name, indeed, the hearts of worldly people are fittingly designated, because while they serve external cares with all their attention, like wooded places, they are not cultivated for the fruit of good work by the plowshare of preaching. And who are signified by the name of the common people in this passage, if not religious and simple men? Indeed, they are called the common people of the earth: because they are great in good work, yet they are not great in the loftiest contemplation. Noble indeed in action, but common people in comparison with the highest men. What then does it mean that the common people of the earth came into the forest, except that religious and simple men, through the examples of their good works, are often brought to the notice of worldly people? There honey appears in the field, because from the example of good work among worldly people they find both the breadth of devotion and the fruit of reverence. For what is a field in a forest, if not devotion in the uncultivated and unpurged heart of worldly people? And what is honey upon the surface of the field, if not the sweetness of favor?

This is rightly said to appear after the entrance of the common people, because indeed the rough hearts of worldly people, if they do not first see the examples of religious men, are unable either to stretch themselves out in the breadth of devotion or to proclaim the glory of another's holiness. Before the entrance, there is only a forest, having neither a field nor flowing honey. But after the entrance, it has both the breadth of a field and the sweetness of honey, because often those who love the world receive the examples of the saints with fervent love, so that the good they see not only pleases them, but they also ardently desire to proclaim it. Yet the life of the saints is to be praised, and that praise must in no way be seized by them to whom it belongs through vainglory. It ought only to be seen, not received, so that one may rejoice that God is glorified in his work, but may scorn to be exalted on account of God's grace. Hence it is carefully expressed that flowing honey appeared upon the surface of the field, and yet no one brought his hand with the honey to his mouth. The honey flows, because the sweet fame of the

saints runs sweetly and swiftly. But no one brings his hand to his mouth, because he does not receive the sweetness of praise for his good work. To bring one's hand with honey to the mouth is to receive with pleasure the praise of one's own work.

Let the honey therefore flow, and let no one bring his hand to his mouth, so that the fame of the saints may flow sweetly, and may not exalt those from whom it flows. Let it flow so that it may satisfy others, but let it not be consumed, lest it serve up death. Hence it is added: (Verse 26. For the people feared the oath. The oath of the King is: Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled (Luke 18:14). Likewise the oath of the King is what he pronounces against hypocrites, saying: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward (Matthew 6:16). Therefore the people fear the oath, because lest they lose eternal rewards, they take care not to receive temporal praises. There follows: (Verse 27. But Jonathan had not heard when his father adjured the people, and he stretched out the tip of the staff that he had in his hand, and dipped it in the honeycomb, and brought his hand back to his mouth, and his eyes were brightened.

34. Whom does Jonathan represent in this place, if not those who are great in word and deed, yet are not great in the zeal of circumspection? They preach lofty things indeed, they perform mighty works, but they do not manfully hold themselves in the circumspection of humility. For what does it mean that he holds a rod in his hand, except that the discipline by which he forbids others from sinning does not restrain himself? Indeed, the rod by which little ones are accustomed to be corrected can fittingly signify the word of correction. Therefore preaching and good work are the rod and the hand. What then is it to extend the rod and bring back the hand to the mouth with honey, except to receive the taste of vain favor both from the word of preaching and from the zeal of good work? But because he sins in the manner of the elect, he is said to take up honey not with the rod, but with the tip of the rod. For they turn the rod and hand full of honey to their mouth who, according to the voice of Truth: "Do all their works to be seen by men" (Matt. 23:5). For while they are sated with their own praises, they have honey not as a thin taste at the tip of the rod, but either in the whole rod or in the hand for a full meal. Such certainly were those whom the Lord reproaches in the Gospel, saying:

"How can you believe, receiving glory from one another? (John 5:44). What then is this tip of the rod, except that for the most part they both wish to glorify the Lord in their work and do not shrink from appearing praiseworthy themselves? Rightly therefore Jonathan is said not to have heard the voice of the father by which he bound the people under oath, because he does not hear the words of God or of His preacher who neglects to fulfill them. But what does it mean that Jonathan's eyes were enlightened from the taste of honey, except that those who receive the breeze of vain favor are strengthened by the same to perform mighty deeds? In this place indeed the eyes are not said to have been opened, so that they might be understood to have been closed, but so that with the vigor of the body restored, they might be understood as restored both for seeing and for destroying enemies. Which assuredly entirely befits the proud, who perform greater and mightier deeds in proportion as they see their praiseworthy works being exalted. But often a lesser one, kindled with the zeal of charity, endeavors to bring back great men who are transgressing to the remembrance of the Scriptures. Whence it also follows: (Verse 28) And one of the people answered and said: "Your father bound the people with an oath, saying: Cursed is the man who eats bread today."

35. For he reported that the father had adjured the people and pronounced a curse, because when a lesser person wishes to correct an erring superior, he ought not to rebuke harshly, but sweetly and humbly bring him back to remembering the ordinances of his elders. Whence he says: 'Your father bound the people with an oath.' For in order to gently admonish the one who bound the people with an oath, he declared him to be his father. As if he were saying in other words: You ought to preserve the ordinances of your elders with all the more devotion, the more highly you see yourself holding their place through the dignity of succession. The people are also declared to have been bound by the oath of the father, so that attention may be given not to the lowliness of the person speaking, but to the authority of the one pointed out: so that if the rank of the one making the suggestion is despised, the loftiness of the one who is indicated may be feared. Yet he declares him a father, so that the precepts of elders ought to inspire both fear and love. Let him therefore say: 'Your father bound the people with an oath, saying: Cursed is he who eats bread today.' Which is as if he were saying: I want you to be mindful of those things which are yours, not mine, because while

you hold the high position of your elders, you ought to keep their laws as if by hereditary right.

Now by the name of bread, the favor of flatterers is rightly expressed, because it both satisfies and strengthens a mind intent on vanity, while it renders it more vigorous for doing things that ought to be praised. This indeed is seen to apply greatly to the arrogant, who are encouraged to speak by praises offered to them. And because the arrogant preacher has subjects like himself who are desirous of praise, there follows: (Verse 28) 'Now the people had fainted.' 36. What is it literally to fail, except to grow weary? For those who seek passing praises from the preaching of the word fail when they are praised, because they bring forth with no vigor the words which they see are not praised. For as though growing weary, they fail when, being despised, they fall silent. But also when they do not eat, they seem to fail, because if they had the lawful food of favor, as though refreshed and strong, they would attack vices through the preaching of the word. Hence the figure of the arrogant preacher is also shown through what is added next: (Verses 29, 30.) And Jonathan said: My father has troubled the land. You yourselves have seen that my eyes were enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey; how much more if the people had eaten of the spoil of their enemies which they found, would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater?

37. For what does it mean that he rebukes the father for having troubled the land, except that he reproves the leaders for having confused their own decrees through ignorance? By the name "land," the humility of subjects is designated, which is indeed seen to be troubled when, through the erring judgment of pastors, it seems to abandon the order of tranquil truth. And because while they eagerly seek the favors of arrogant men and try to assert that this is lawful, they bring forward their own accomplishments as testimony. "For you have seen," he says, "that my eyes were enlightened because I tasted a little of this honey. As if to say: I grew from the praise of my subjects while I strove not to be less than praises. For it is also the custom of chosen preachers that when they observe themselves being praised, they strive with all their strength to be what they hear about themselves from without. And therefore Jonathan reported that he had eaten a little honey: because the arrogant person thinks he freely receives the favors of the tongue for the advancement of life, not for the pursuit of vanity. But it is one thing entirely to

strive to match the proclamations of praise with one's conduct, and another to seek praises in order to find advancement of life in those same praises. Indeed, those who strive to equal praises with their conduct are those who despise those very praises, who never wish to be praised by men.

Certainly, as far as it lies in them, they vehemently flee from being praised, but because they cannot entirely escape being praised, they strive to be what they hear. But some, having displayed good works, wish to be praised for this reason: that once praised, they may ascend to a greater work of virtue. In this estimation of their presumption they are surely deceived, because whoever seeks praises in small matters, when he has done greater works, seeks praises more ardently and far more eagerly. And perhaps for this reason Jonathan was not able to reign after his father, because he signified those who, while they vainly exalt themselves, truly fail. He also added by way of reasoning, and says: "How much more if the people had eaten of the spoil of their enemies, would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater? To taste a little honey on the tip of the rod is to glory in some way in the eloquence of doctrine. But to eat the spoil of enemies is to recall the works of virtue through memory and to rejoice in recollecting them. For one makes, as it were, the spoil of enemies when one brings to memory those things in which one prevailed against hidden foes. And one eats these to satiety who, as if he had done these things by his own virtue, vainly and vehemently exalts himself. Therefore he says:

"How much more if the people had eaten of the spoil of their enemies, would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater? As if to say: Since from a brief taste of favor there has been so great an advancement, what would chosen warriors do if they had full and lawful and just praises for their works? There follows: (Verse 31. "Therefore they struck the Philistines on that day from Michmash to Aijalon." 38. The day of the mind is the splendor of instruction. But those whom the arrogant teach, because they are inflamed by the ambition of temporal glory, receive a semblance of light, not the truth. When therefore that day is spoken of, what else is signified, except that often by the aim of temporal glory, mighty deeds seemed to be accomplished? For in that day, that is, by the teaching or example of the proud, they strike, because they serve in the ministry of preaching for this purpose: to obtain the splendor of temporal glory. And because they desire to become known to all, it says: From Magmas to Aion. Magmas, as has already

been sufficiently stated, is interpreted as "humility," while Aion is interpreted as "my mourning brother. By the humble in this place, the little ones and simple people in the holy Church are designated. And the mourning brother—whom else does he suggest, except those whom the Lord praises in the Gospel, saying: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:5)? For he who has already learned to despise all temporal things and to long for eternal things with great desires, while he dreads being held in the body and groans that he is not yet in that joy of eternal life, is rightly called "my mourning brother. Brother indeed, because he has already begun to be a co-heir of Christ, for whose most blessed and most joyful inheritance he groans with all his desires.

He is called mourning, so that the unspeakable grief of the perfect may be designated. To mourn, moreover, is not to weep in just any manner, but to weep most deeply. For because they are filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they have reached that abundance of tears which the distinguished teacher affirms, saying: The Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings (Rom. 8:26). He is also called mourning brother because the perfect are joined to the Redeemer in great intimacy. For he whom the Redeemer loves singularly, whom he nourishes with singular dignity for the possession of the perpetual inheritance, when he is called his brother, is designated in the singular number. Whence he also says to Moses as to a singular friend: I know you by name (Exod. 33:12). Hence it is that it is said of John in the Gospel: This is that disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20). For he who greatly loved all his disciples, when he is said to love this one, the brother is indicated in the singular number. In that day from Magmas to Aion they strike the arrogant Philistines, because in order to receive the light of worldly glory, they preach not only small things to the little ones, but lofty things that the more perfect may recognize.

And because while they harm themselves through the perversity of their intention and some little ones in Christ, they benefit many who are more perfect by their speaking, they are said not to fight but to strike from Magmas to Aion. To strike the Philistines indeed is to destroy the snares of demons or the tyranny of vices from the heart of the elect. But often proud teachers benefit others through their word, and receive none of the praises for that same word which they desire. Whence it also frequently happens that while they do not see themselves being praised and exalted, they fall si-

lent as if wearied by great labors. Therefore it is also added: (Verse 31) But the people were exceedingly weary. It is also the custom of the proud that when another's tongue is silent from their praises, their own self-estimation is not silent. While others indeed are silent, they cry out, because they carry the proclamations of their own self-estimation in their heart. Well therefore it is added concerning the same people: (Verse 32) And the people turned to the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground, and the people ate with the blood.

39. He carries off the sheep who recalls the manifold causes of his innocence for the purpose of pride. He carries off the oxen as plunder when he thinks about the labors of his preaching and, by remembering, heaps together whatever he has accomplished by speaking to others, as if by cultivating the earth. He carries off the calves when he is puffed up over the fact that suppressed impulses of lust are brought back to mind. For since two precepts are given in the great praise of the just — namely, the splendor of charity together with the light of good works — when anyone arrogant in his own estimation is puffed up, he is said to carry off both sheep and calves: sheep indeed in the innocence of good works, and calves in the mortification of bodily passions. Among these he has inserted the oxen, because one is not perfectly puffed up who regards himself as weak and powerless in some part. He is already great in his own eyes by the estimation of his chastity and good works, but he raises himself to the height of a greater pride when he recalls that he is perfect in the labor of preaching. But to what end all these things are brought is set forth in what follows: 'And they slaughtered them on the ground.' To slaughter sheep, oxen, and calves on the ground is to exult with base and carnal joy over the consciousness of virtues.

Whence also through Hosea it is said of the proud and arrogant: 'They sank their victims into the deep' (Hos. 5:2). They plunge their victims into the deep who do not raise the heavenly offerings of virtues to heaven through thanksgiving, but bend them down to earth through the desire for vain praise. Whence it is also well added: 'And the people ate with the blood.' The food of the mind is its interior joy. What then is eating with the blood, if not never removing the intention of vain favor from the inner appetite of the mind? For the blood is, as it were, cast away when the mind removes the intention of vanity from the joy of good works. For a mind of this kind knows how to rejoice in good works, because it rejoices that it draws near to

heavenly things through good works, and for the time being it shrinks from being seen in those same works. Therefore, to eat with the blood is to take the joy of good works mixed with the intention of vanity. And indeed, when this is offered by others, it is simple food for the proud; but when no one is praising them, the conscience of the proud swells up, and they seize violently as if by plunder what no one freely gives. There follows: (Vv. 33, 34.) 'And they reported to Saul, saying that the people had sinned against the Lord, eating with the blood. He said: You have transgressed. Roll a great stone to me now.

And Saul said: Disperse among the common people and tell them that each one should bring his own ox and ram, and slaughter them upon this stone, and eat, and you will not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.' 40. It is proper to the preachers of the holy Church both to rebuke committed faults and to show how those rebuked faults ought to be avoided. Once rebuked, they become known, but if people do not know how to avoid them, once exposed they are repeated. What is shown in this eating of blood, if not the hidden poison of pride? But hidden vices are not cured unless they are exposed. Therefore, to suggest the manner of preachers, Saul first declares that the people have transgressed, then commands that the animals they are to eat be slain upon a stone. But we know who the rock or stone is, because Paul showed this, saying: "And the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). The stone is rolled before the preacher when the examples of the Redeemer are recalled in his presence. It is also said to be rolled over, so that it may be seen from every side. It is called great because through Daniel it is reported to grow and fill the whole face of the earth (Dan. 2). Therefore it is not viewed carelessly, but turned from both sides, so that God may be beheld by the arrogant, and their arrogance may be crushed. Let the arrogant one see, then, how powerful in might, how sublime in majesty, how humble in power our Redeemer appeared. For while giving sight to the blind and healing the sick (Matt. 9), he commanded that what he had done powerfully should be told to no one.

On the mountain he shone in splendor, the Father brought forth testimony of his divinity, and yet he said to his disciples: "Tell no one of this vision, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9). And perhaps for this reason, when the Lord was now rising, an angel appeared at the tomb who rolled the stone away from its entrance. For then the stone had to be rolled away, because Christ, true man and mighty God, was to be recog-

nized after the glory of the resurrection. If therefore the proud man has looked at one side of the stone, let him roll the stone and see the other side. Let him not view the stone in just any way, for Christ is not dead, but let him see it rolled away by an angel, because he rose from the dead. Let him behold from one side the eloquence of preaching, and turn it, and marvel from the other side at the splendor of humility. Let him see from this side the power of signs, and from that side let him see that he who shone with the power of might concealed that same might by a command of silence. But while he sees the humble side, let him see the sublime side as well. Behold, the humble side of the stone is perceived, for it says: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:8). But if that side is turned, the other is revealed, for it continues:

"Therefore God exalted him, and gave him a name that is above every name. We roll the stone before the preacher, therefore, when in his presence we recall both the power and the humility of our Redeemer; when we observe him humble in his works, and from his humility exalted in heaven. Upon this stone let the ox and the ram be slain, so that in every class of men the vice of pride may be slaughtered through contemplation of Christ. There indeed all blood is poured out, because whoever is instructed by the example of Christ does great things, but does not exalt himself on account of those great works. He is indeed nourished by the joy of good work, but his food is not stained with the blood of vain praise. For if that stone is turned in words, it says: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin" (John 15:24). But because he did not swell with pride at his words, turning himself, he says: "I do not seek my own glory" (John 8:50). The ox and the ram are therefore slain upon the stone when by the example of the Redeemer all horned pride is condemned; when any chosen one both acts well and teaches excellently, but neither does his own life lift him up nor his instruction of others. For in the ram the strength of one's own innocence is expressed, but in the ox the labor and strength of preaching.

These are slain upon the rock, so that they may refresh the chosen mind with joy in such a way that they do not impart to it blood mixed with their flesh. This indeed the chosen preacher not only speaks but also persuades. Whence it is also added: (Verse 34) "And all the people brought each one his ox in his hand until night, and they slew them there." 41. To lead a bull by hand is to destroy the sin of pride through the affliction of penance. For

while by laboring one destroys what one committed through pride, one leads the bull to be slaughtered on the stone by hand. But what does it mean when he says: "Until night," unless that it is not permitted to sin, but it is permitted to destroy sins up until death? Therefore bulls are to be slaughtered until night, not in the night, because while we live, we can destroy sins by repenting, but after death we are unable to perform fruitful penance. And well is it added in the same place: (Verse 35.) And Saul built an altar to the Lord.

41. For when sinners are converted, a heavenly edifice is, as it were, constructed from stones. And since many manuscripts have: "And then Saul first began to build," the name of altar can be understood as compunction of heart. For when compunction of heart is raised up through the word of a teacher, an altar is surely built to the Lord. And it is said to have been built first, because there is a compunction of love. Hence in the tabernacle of the covenant, two altars were commanded by the Lord to be made: one, namely, for burning incense, and another for burning flesh (Exod. XXVII, XXXVII). The first altar was outside; the second was within the Holy of Holies. The first altar, therefore, is the compunction of fear; the second altar is the compunction of love. The former belongs to those who mourn their sins; the latter to those who yearn with all their desires for eternal joys. The stones of the former are recollections of sins; the stones of the latter are meditations on everlasting joys. Therefore the teacher builds the first altar when he sets forth the faults which the sinner, when he beholds them in himself, groans over. Rightly also is compunction called an altar, because it offers incense. But when each person is pricked with compunction for a long time over his sins, he advances through repentance to the practice of confidence.

For after the times of affliction, he begins to burn for eternal life, and he who formerly wept from dread of punishment now begins to weep even more abundantly over the delay of his reward. Therefore, since the first compunction of the elect is born from fear, while through the figure of the king and the people, preachers and their recently converted subjects are signified, Saul is said to have then first built an altar. But from the progress of some, a teacher is often inflamed to pursue the gains of others. Hence it is added: (Verse 36. And Saul said: "Let us rush upon the Philistines by night and lay waste to them until the morning light, and let us not leave a single man among them." 42. This has been sufficiently explained above, but because he

desires to strike the Philistines in the night until the day dawns, this surely suggests that, lest demons be able to cause harm in the future, they must now be driven out and destroyed from the hearts of sinners. Indeed, this life is called night when it is compared to eternal life. For whoever has been able to worthily contemplate that life, in comparison with it, whatever appears bright here is judged to be the darkness of night. But that day dawns when, at the end of this life, it opens itself to the souls of the elect. For at its departure from the body, the elect soul sees eternity dawning upon it, because it did not gaze upon the light of the present age, regarding it as darkness.

43. But what does it mean when it is said: "And let us not leave of them a man"? But every Philistine man must be destroyed; every little one cannot be destroyed at all. For no one is without sin, except God alone. Therefore the "men" are capital crimes and principal vices. But they are designated by the name of men, that is, of strong ones, when they subject the hearts of sinners to themselves. Rightly therefore it is said: "Let us not leave of them a man," because converted sinners, by the counsel of holy preachers, abandon all their strong sins and vices, but they cannot have no sin or vice at all. They can guard against crimes, but they cannot avoid all sins. They can extinguish vices, but they are unable to prevent themselves from being in some way struck by any of them. He says therefore: "Let us not leave of them a man," because the preachers of holy Church command us to uproot our vices; but while they slay the strong and principal ones in us, they are unable to bring it about that certain of them do not in some way live through a faint stirring. And adding concerning the obedience of the people, he says: (Verse 36.) "The people said: Do whatever is good in your eyes."

44. The eyes of preachers are the gaze of reason. He who is entrusted to the judgment of a teacher is therefore rightly said to say to him: "Do whatever is good in your eyes." As if to say: We who distrust the illumination of our own reason entrust to the light of your reason what we judge to be lacking in ourselves. But what Saul said, "Let us rush upon the Philistines," can be understood to mean that he did not put forward a deliberated decision, but by saying this, he was consulting whether they should rush upon the Philistines. But the fact that the people quickly gave their assent suggests what we observe, that some within the holy Church approve the words of their superiors before they understand them. For it is immediately added: (Verses 36, 37.) "And the Priest said: Let us draw near here to the Lord. And

Saul consulted the Lord, saying: Shall I pursue the Philistines? And the Lord did not answer him on that day."

45. What does it mean that the words of the consulting king, which the people praise, the priest declares must be brought before the Lord, except that obscure and great matters, which escape the simple, are never rightly ordered if we do not seek their outcome in the sanctuary of the mind through careful meditation? For to approach the Lord is to know His will through secret contemplation. And it is rightly called an approach, because we move from external things to internal ones when we try to know the outcome of our work in the divine will. For he who seeks hidden and inward things yet does not leave behind external things does not find those things which he does not know how to reach. Therefore, when counsel is sought from us concerning hidden matters, let us approach the Lord, so that what must be done is set forth only when it is known in the divine will. For many things seem to be good and are not. Many things indeed must be done, but they are done more profitably if they are reserved for the fitting time. Some things, moreover, certain people ought to do, while others ought not. If any chosen one neglects to see these things in the secret place of meditation, he certainly does not arrange them in right order. But on the contrary, he who is accustomed to examine these things or to act upon them through meditation knows not only what must be done but also what must be avoided. Whence it is also rightly said: (Ver. 37.) Saul consulted the Lord, and the Lord did not answer him on that day.

46. The day is a thought of the mind which is considered good and is not recognized for what it truly is. For while it pretends to be good, it carries, as it were, light. In that day, therefore, the Lord did not answer the one consulting him, because the word of God cannot agree with evil deliberation. Indeed, through the answer of a word we are accustomed to reveal the sense of our innermost will. In that day, therefore, the Lord does not answer, because almighty God is not discerned in the feigned light of thought — he who is always found in the brightness of truth. And it should be noted that he who gave the counsel of approaching the Lord was a priest. For what is holier than the counsel of approaching God? We are therefore priests as often as we minister good counsels to our brothers. For nothing more sacred can be given than that by which each person ought to go to the Creator. But

since we are describing the order of spiritual warfare, we ought to connect what came before with what follows.

47. The word of Saul was indeed such that he would so devastate the Philistines that he would not leave a single man among them. This can also be understood as follows: because he wished to destroy the Philistines in such a way that none of them would be able to wage war any further. Great indeed is this day of the mind, in which eternal things are so sought that no temporal enemy is left alive from the slaughter. But because it is granted to no one to conquer so completely in time that he need not fight at all times, it is rightly said: "The Lord did not answer him on that day. The answering of God pertains not only to His intimate word, but also to His grace and gift. For when He graciously grants what is piously requested, He is said to answer. Therefore the Lord does not answer on that day, because He indeed permits the elect to conquer, but He leaves their enemies, as it were, alive, so that they may find those against whom they must always fight. Yet if this is said because Jonathan's fault is being concealed, a great fear is struck into those who hold authority. The son sins, and He denies a response to his father. One man is also found to have transgressed, yet on account of the fault of one, all are afraid to pursue their enemies.

What is signified by this event, except that the sins of subjects harm not only themselves, but also their superiors and those living in community with them? But since this hidden fault is investigated by the king, let us now see with what loftiness all hidden things are sought out. For there follows: (Verses 38, 39. "Bring near all the corners of the people, and know and see through whom this sin has occurred today. As the Lord lives, the Savior of Israel, even if it was done through Jonathan, he shall die without reconsideration." 48. By these words he clearly demonstrated the well-ordered procedure of judgment, because the fault must first be discovered, and then the punishment imposed. For the order of judgment is thrown into confusion if punishment is pronounced before the examination of the discovered fault. For lest he strike before the examination, he says: "Bring here all the corners of the people, and see, and know through whom this sin has occurred today." And because once the fault is known it must be struck more severely, he swears, saying: "As the Lord lives, even if it was done through Jonathan my son, he shall die without reconsideration." The matter must indeed be deliberated upon at length so that the fault may be found, but after it has been

found, no one should be left alive in it. He is destroyed without reconsideration who, as soon as his sin becomes known, is forbidden to live in it. But this "without reconsideration"—that is, to destroy—is itself not without reconsideration, because the pastor exercises much deliberation so that the fault, which he discovers through careful examination, may be struck without reconsideration and extinguished swiftly.

49. But if according to the historical sense we consider the weight of this paternal oath, and equally observe the fervor of that time and the lukewarmness of this one. For the ancient fathers, in order to please God, did not spare even their sons from death. But we do not dare to pursue even with a mild harshness of words those whom we love according to the flesh. Behold, he who was raising his son for the kingdom says: "Because if the sin was committed through him, he shall die without reconsideration. We see sinners, and we either refuse or fear to rebuke the sinning. Why then do we do this, unless because we by no means love God as they did? For Moses, in order to properly punish the sin of idolatry, ordered the Levites to kill twenty-three thousand men. In carrying out which slaughter he indeed said: "If anyone is the Lord's, let him join me. Let every man put his sword upon his thigh. Go and return from gate to gate, and let each one kill his brother, and his friend, and his neighbor" (Exod. 32:26–27). As if to say: In this each one will show that he is the Lord's, if for love of Him he does not spare brother, neighbor, or friend. Saul therefore says of his son: "He shall die without resistance," because for us who now live under the grace of the Redeemer, even if bodily death is not decreed, the life of sin ought not to be prolonged.

Indeed, a ruler slays without reconsideration when he does not regard the affection of the flesh, but when he finds a crime, strikes swiftly. He reconsiders, however, who, lest he sharply sting the wicked one, thinks of the services rendered to him by that person, or of the affection of kinship. In this matter it should be noted that not all faults are to be struck sharply. For light stains of dust are better removed by shaking off than by washing or applying fire. Even serious faults are not to be pursued with equal severity in all cases, because wounds of bodies require the strength of medicine in proportion to the nature and strength of the bodies themselves. Most often, however, prelates of the Church, when they hear of faults, grow more heated than is just; and while they measure out punishment, they regard neither the nature of the wounds nor the strength of the offending persons. They indeed are to be

tolerated when they threaten, but are to be calmed from vengeance by the counsel of good men. Whence it is also added here: (Verse 39) "To which no one contradicted him from all the people. For because the threats of superiors are to be humbly endured, it says: "No one contradicted him. And because their excess is to be restrained by the wholesome counsel of the devout, not much further on, when the king attempts to inflict the same death on his son, all the people cry out: "Shall Jonathan then die, who accomplished this salvation in Israel?

Therefore the people delivered Jonathan so that he would not die. But because he strives not to strike a fault not yet found, but to discover the hidden one, it follows: (Verse 40) "And he said to all Israel: 'Separate yourselves on one side, and I with Jonathan my son will be on the other side.'" 50. What does it mean that by the king's command the people are separated from the king and his son, except that when a hidden and suspected fault is sought, both the higher and lower persons must be examined? Indeed, often the people sin, and often their ruler sins; and sometimes the very fault of the subjects is ascribed to the prelate, by whose negligence it is said to be brought about. Therefore, when, after the signs shown above, it is recognized that a fault lies hidden among the people, and it is not known in whom it is concealed, let the king join himself in, so that the pastor may know whether the fault is his own or the people's. Indeed, King Saul was not conscious of the fault, which he had committed neither by consent nor by deed, and yet he is mixed in to be examined, so that if the fault also lies hidden in him, it may be found. For he was, as it were, searching himself as one unaware of sin, who said: "For I am not conscious of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this; the one who judges me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:4). As if to say: I do not cease to search myself and to find myself, because if I am hidden from myself, I will not be hidden from him to whom all things are naked. Therefore let the king, not conscious of that sin which was being investigated, say:

"I with my son Jonathan will be on one side"; because chosen teachers, when they rage against others through zeal for righteousness, by no means spare themselves and their own close associates. For they, as it were, separate the people on one side and do not separate themselves, who examine the faults of their subjects but do not care to investigate so as to find themselves. Great indeed is the ocean of human ignorance. For if we can scarcely or never search ourselves and find what we are, when can we search others? For

what is it that the Prophet laments, saying: "My heart has forsaken me" (Ps. 39:13)? What is it that Sacred Scripture declares: "Man does not know whether he is worthy of love or hatred" (Eccl. 9:2)? Likewise, the Prophet declares the fruit of his searching, saying: "Your servant has found his heart" (2 Kings 7:27). If the saints can scarcely find their heart, with what recklessness do we cease from searching ourselves? But perhaps not even the Prophet could, because he added: "That he may fear you. He would surely have found his heart if he had fully known whether he was worthy of hatred or love. He who therefore did not find it so as to be secure before God, surely found it so as to fear. But we cannot easily do even this, because while we neglect to find our sins and to weigh them once found, we are, as it were, secure with a lost heart.

Therefore these are placed on one side, those on the other, so that the hidden things of each may be considered, and once the fault is found, it may be struck with a fitting punishment. Because this is greatly to be praised and not to be discouraged, there follows: (Verse 40. "The people answered Saul: Do what is good in your eyes." 51. But what does it mean that Saul commands the people to separate themselves to one side, and the people ask the king to do what he commands, except that simple people do not know how to examine themselves, even when they are commanded to? Therefore he says: "Do what is good in your eyes." As if to say: You will be able to manage our affairs better, you who have received the light of the heart not only for yourself, but also for foreseeing our paths. But the ruler is praised for the interior illumination which he has through grace, yet does not possess through his own estimation. He is praised, indeed, because he is able to know the secrets of others, but he himself lacks confidence that he can know himself. Because, therefore, he does not ascribe to himself the light of so great a grace, he does not neglect to seek it from God through prayers. Whence it also follows: (Verse 41.) And he said to the Lord God of Israel: "Give a sign. Why have you not answered your servant today? If this iniquity is in me or in my son Jonathan, give a revelation; or if this iniquity is in your people, give holiness."

52. We therefore ask that a sign be given when we demand that hidden things be revealed to us. But we must ask what such great diversity of words means. For regarding himself and his son he asks that a manifestation be given, but if the iniquity is in the people, holiness. This however can be

stated briefly: because chosen teachers know their own strength and know the weakness of the subject people. For themselves, therefore, they ask only the manifestation of the fault, because they know they are accustomed to pursue it with the severity of penance. But for the people they seek holiness, because they do not desire merely to know the faults of their subjects; but those whom they find doing evil, they urge to arrive at pardon through lamentation. For what does it mean to say, "Give holiness," except, "Sanctify those whom you reveal"? You uncover their hidden things to me, but nothing is accomplished by the uncovering if you do not work upon those whom you reveal by pouring back grace. But because often subjects stand firm while prelates fall, there follows: (Verse 41.) And Jonathan and Saul were taken. And because it is not easily recognized by whom the fault itself was committed, there follows: (Verse 42.) And Saul said: Cast the lot between me and my son. And Jonathan was taken.

53. Those who cast lots often discover hidden things through conjectures drawn from visible things. Thus indeed Jonah is identified while fleeing (Jon. 1); thus Matthias the Apostle is found worthy of apostolic eminence (Acts 1). We therefore cast spiritual lots when, through the outward signs of works, we arrive at knowledge of hidden things. For the lot of each person is his own manner of life. Hence in Wisdom the wicked say: "Let us crown ourselves with roses before they wither; let no meadow be left untouched by our luxury; let us leave signs of our merriment everywhere, for this is our portion and this is our lot" (Wis. 2:8). But on the contrary, the Psalmist prays, saying: "Let my portion, O Lord, be in the land of the living" (Ps. 141:6). Paul also declares the same, saying: "Our manner of life is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The teacher therefore holds, as it were, the lots of each individual when he observes the manner of life of each one. And when the fault is known but the person of the guilty one is not known, he casts lots, as it were, when he compares the nature of the crime to the person of the negligent one. And perhaps he discovers the fault when, by a certain sign of conjecture, he arrives at the evident truth of the crime. He who does not know both the strength and the weakness of the faithful committed to him presides negligently indeed.

For he ought to know the strong among his subjects — for which virtues they are suited, and by which vices the weak are prone through the negligence of their neighbor. He ought to know what devotion to virtues stirs

these, and what character of vices disturbs the negligence of those. He therefore holds, as it were, the lots of each in outward things, when he foresees by which vices the latter can be overwhelmed and by which virtues the former can be exalted. Therefore, once the cause is known, he imprints marks upon the lots, as it were, when we ascribe the stain of an evident fault to the manner of life of the one who, through negligence, previously appeared inclined and close to perpetrating that very crime. But let this conjecture be held for the purpose of investigating the truth, not for the certainty of an established case, because there it is immediately added: (Verse 43. "And Saul said to Jonathan: Tell me what you have done.")

54. For what is it that the captive is interrogated, except because faults which seem to have been detected by signs or conjectures are not yet to be struck? For it is as though the wound is already held, but it is still covered. Let it therefore be uncovered, so that it may be able to be healed and cured. He must indeed be compelled or admonished to confess the fault which is already perceived as if openly. He therefore says: "Show me what you have done," because a crime which is known by certain open indications is not to be judged before it is most openly demonstrated. And because it belongs to the elect to sin and come to their senses, to commit faults and to uncover those committed by confessing them, there follows: (Verse 43.) And Jonathan showed him and said: "Tasting I tasted a little honey with the tip of the rod that was in my hand, and behold I die."

55. What does it mean that he says: "Tasting I tasted"? Why did he not say above: "Tasting I tasted a little of this honey," when he said: "You have seen that my eyes were enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey"? But certain people, when they confess their sins, diminish them with certain words, while they show that they did not commit them with their whole heart. On the contrary, however, when the elect accuse themselves of the smallest things, they pronounce them not as small, but as great. What does it mean to say: "Tasting I tasted," except: I carried out the sin outwardly, I fulfilled it with a great burning of desire? And what does it mean to say after the confession of sin, "I die," except to drive death away from oneself by repenting and confessing, and to fear it once driven away? This indeed is properly characteristic of the elect, who abandon their sins and yet fear them as though they were not abandoned. And indeed they blot them out with pure confessions and the harsh torments of penance, but they vehemently fear

them as though they were not blotted out. But what does it mean that he says: "On the tip of the rod"? — except that when we pursue our sins by confessing, we ought not to bring forth falsehood against ourselves. Sin indeed must be revealed in confession, but it must not be enlarged by lying. It ought to be such in confession as it was in deed.

Therefore, so that the burning of desire may be well revealed, he says: "Tasting I tasted"; and so that its quality may appear, it is added: "On the tip of the rod," as if to say: Boldly inflamed I did it, but this is what I did. And because it is the son of the king who confesses, he says: "Which was in my hand. The rod of Jonathan signifies the teaching and discipline of the preacher. It is held in the hand when one not only teaches, but practices by doing what one teaches. What then does it mean that he says: "Which was," not "Which is in my hand"? — except that he suggests the estimation of the elect, who even when they commit evil deeds, judge themselves unworthy of the ministry of preaching. He says therefore: "On the tip of the rod, which was in my hand. As if to say: I sinned in pride over that very thing by which, in sinning, I made myself unworthy. It was therefore in my hand, and is not, because even if I once practiced what I taught, what I held by practicing I lost by being proud. Now therefore, struck with fear, he says: "Behold, I die. And because that same fear is sometimes struck into the mind by divine inspiration, sometimes by the threats of teachers, it is added: (Verse 44. And Saul said: "May God do this to me and add this, because you shall surely die, Jonathan. There follows: (Verse 45.

And the people said to Saul: "Shall Jonathan then die, who has accomplished this great salvation in Israel? This is abominable. As the Lord lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day. Therefore the people delivered Jonathan, so that he would not die. 56. What then is the meaning of what is said, "Shall Jonathan then die," unless that another would have died for the same fault? By these words of the people there is surely shown to us the power of great discernment, because in the judgment of the elect, not only must the causes of faults be weighed, but also the merits of persons. This is openly shown by these words, because Jonathan is declared not to die not because he was the son of the king, but because he had wrought great salvation in Israel. When therefore great men fall, they are not to be handed over to the common judgment, because their prior works deserve that the gravity of their later faults be lightened. But this

lightening of fault itself is not to be determined by respect of persons, but by regard for their prior life, because for his absolution the gains of Holy Church must be weighed, not carnal affection admitted. But what wonder if one's own merits avail for the absolution of a sinner, when from the authority of sacred Scripture we learn that some have been delivered for the sake of others? Indeed, by the good work of some, others are helped, as is said by the Lord to the sinning King Solomon: "Because you have not kept my commandments, I will surely tear your kingdom apart and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, in your days I will not do it, for the sake of David your father;

but from the hand of your son I will tear it away" (1 Kings 11:11). Hence it is that not only do the works of fathers benefit their children, but we have also recognized that citizens are to be delivered for the sake of fellow citizens. Indeed the Lord promised to spare Sodom, which was to be overthrown, if He found in it only ten righteous persons (Gen. 18). Jerusalem also is said to be looked upon mercifully, because some good works were found in it. Hence it is that Eli, righteous in his own life but negligent in pastoral authority, heard from the man of God: "A great part of your house shall die when they reach manhood; nevertheless I will not utterly take away from you a man from my altar" (1 Sam. 2:33), so that sacred Scripture might here openly show that he was both struck for his laxity and regarded for his past manner of life. But he could perhaps be struck in part, because he had some impurity of life. Of Jonathan therefore it is well said: "Shall Jonathan then die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel? Far be it! As the Lord lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day. As if to say: He who has done great works has worthily deserved to be absolved entirely.

Because therefore in ecclesiastical judgment, even if there is no respect of persons, there is nevertheless a discernment of merits, he fittingly concluded the sentence, saying: "So the people delivered Jonathan, that he should not die." 57. In this passage it should be noted that the king twice uttered an oath above concerning the killing of Jonathan, whom nevertheless, overcome by the insistence of the people, he did not kill. What does it mean that he swore, and by no means kept the assertion of his oath? But from this matter two lessons come to us, namely that we ought to be both cautious and discerning. Cautious indeed, lest we swear; discerning, if we swear to do perverse

things. For he who takes care not to swear cannot possibly commit perjury. But when one swears wrongly, it is more just that the oath be abandoned than that the crimes which are sworn be carried out. Therefore let everyone be cautious before he swears, so that either he does not swear at all, or does not swear that he will do evil things. That we should indeed be cautious, the Lord teaches, saying: "Let your speech be: Yes, yes; no, no. Do not swear by heaven, nor by the earth" (Matt. 5:37). On the other hand, the reprobate are both incautious and lacking in discernment. For they often promise that they will do evil things, and do not trouble themselves to revoke their promises, as though they would incur perjury. Hence it is that Herod swore incautiously, and fulfilled the wicked oath he had uttered in the death of the Lord's forerunner (Mark 6). We ought therefore to be cautious in our decisions, but if we neglect to be cautious, our resolutions must be abandoned, not fulfilled. For to desist from a resolution in this way is not the vice of fickleness, but the virtue of discernment. Nevertheless, swearing things that must be revoked and detested is absolutely to be avoided and greatly dreaded, because when such an oath is not fulfilled, guilt is not entirely avoided, but the lesser evil is chosen. There follows: (Verse 46.) And Saul departed, and did not pursue the Philistines.

58. When Jonathan's fault is discovered, when the king is found not to have fulfilled his oath, he is said to cease pursuing the Philistines, because when pastors are weighed down by their own weakness, they cannot vigorously seek the gains of others. For to cease pursuing the Philistines is to stop for a time pursuing the vices of others by preaching. For they judge that they must first attend to their own purification, and then, once purified, be watchful for the salvation of others, because while they are silent they prepare themselves, so that through their own penance, as it were, they may rise up vigorously to gain others. And because often, while the teacher, conscious of his own guilt, is silent, evil spirits are not silent toward some of his subjects, suggesting impious things to them. There follows: (Verse 46.) Moreover, the Philistines went away to their own places.

59. When the teachers are silent, the demons depart to their own places; because through the silence of the pastors, none perish except those who are not predestined to eternal life. For the places of demons are those who are not foreordained by divine foreknowledge as a dwelling of God. Hence it is said, when the first teachers were preaching: "As many as were predestined to

eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Hence Paul says: "Whom He foreknew, He also predestined, and whom He predestined, He also called" (Rom. 8:30). Hence it is that when the apostles wished to cross into Asia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16). Therefore those who are not predestined, whether they hear the words of the teachers or do not hear them, cannot be called into the dwelling of God, because through the wickedness in which they were foreknown before the foundation of the world, they have prepared a place within themselves for malign spirits. Rightly therefore, when the pursuit of the Philistines is said to have ceased, the demons are reported to have gone away to their own places, because sometimes by God's dispensation the teachers are silent, so that while they are silent, those who are not the Lord's may be reclaimed by evil spirits. But, as I said, when after their fault the pastors are silent, they humble themselves, so that, purified, they may rise powerfully to the ministry of preaching. While they are silent, they weigh their own weakness, but by examining themselves, they strengthen themselves more vigorously against hidden enemies. Whence it is also fittingly added: (Verse 47.) "But Saul, having established his kingdom over Israel, fought on every side against his enemies."

60. The kingdom is indeed weakened when pastors fall into certain faults. But the weakened kingdom is strengthened when through the satisfaction of penance they are raised up to the work of great virtue. And it is said to be strengthened over Israel, because as one advances to the height of life, he surpasses by his conduct those whom he exceeds in rank. He is set over those who see God, but he is raised above those who see God when he is taken up beyond all others in divine contemplation. Rightly therefore it is said: "He fought against all his enemies, and wherever he turned he prevailed," because he who contemplates eternal things more deeply easily crushes whatever comes against him from below to fight. For since no earthly things now please him who reigns through great charity over Israel, that is, in heavenly things, wherever he turns, he prevails. For what can the malignant spirit suggest to him who considers no earthly things, who no longer loves any joys of the world? The teacher fights when he preaches, but he prevails, because what he prohibits in preaching from touching worldly delight, he persuades by the virtue of his conduct. And because he is said to fight on every side against his enemies, his victory is shown to be one of great praise. He teaches that the teacher is perfect on every side who has the strongest enemies on every side.

Therefore when he is said to turn and prevail everywhere, how great is the glory proclaimed of him?

What then does it mean that he is said to have enemies on every side, except that malignant spirits lie in ambush against all our senses? For they deceive some through speech, others through sight. Some they mislead through hearing, others through taste or smell. Still others they strive to drag into impurities through the snares of enticing delight or thought. To some they outwardly present obscene things, which they may then pursue by deliberation of the mind. But to show this encirclement more accurately: when they drag one toward pleasant things, they set their ambush as if on the right. When they cast another down through adversity, they press in as if from the left. When they invite us to past pleasures, they thrust us down as if from behind. They meet others as if from the front, because they often show to the minds of the weak the length of a strict way of life, as though giving counsel. For they come from the front because they do not allow souls to advance toward heaven. Therefore we have enemies on every side, because before, behind, on the right and on the left we endure the battle of malignant spirits. Hence the blessed apostle Peter also exhorts us, saying: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8).

61. But now we know the circuit of war; let us see how kings conquer by going around. They indeed conquer in the circuit who guard their tongue, and mouth, and eyes, and all the members of the body from unlawful action. For while they perfectly fortify the tongue through silence, they are, as it were, victors on one side; and while they see with their eyes things which they disdain to covet, they become victors on another side. Often too they hear evil things and repel them, and because they reject what is harmful, they triumph by rejecting it. Therefore they are victors in all their senses who refuse to be subjected to malign spirits through any one of them. But also when an unfit thought is presented to the heart, the enemy who is rejected is crushed. For he who casts away whatever is harmful powerfully presses down the enemy. And because he likewise despises pleasant things and does not fear adverse things, does not return to the perverse things he once left behind, and fervently runs toward heavenly things, he is shown to overcome the enemies whom he suffers round about. Among these adversaries indeed, because the ambushes set against the five bodily senses are signified, they are

fittingly expressed by the number five. (Verse 47) 'Against Moab', he says, 'and the sons of Ammon, and Edom, and the king of Zobah, and the Philistines.'

62. For he who named the five nations designated the deceits of demons opposed to the five senses of the body. But because a teacher fights not only by living but also by teaching, when he disputes against all vices, when he slays them with the sword of the word in the minds of his hearers, he is surely seen to fight on every side, and wherever he turns, to overcome. But certain ones are specially named which principally stand against him: Against Moab, he says, and the sons of Ammon, Edom, and the king of Zobah, and the Philistines. Moab is interpreted "from the father," Ammon "people of sorrow," Edom "red," Zobah "burning" or "converting," Philistine "falling by the cup. For what is expressed by these names but the stages of the worst life? In Moab indeed, who is called "from the father," concupiscence is designated. In the reprobate mind, because it is planted by the devil, it is as though begotten from a father. But what is shown by Ammon, who is interpreted "people of sorrow," except the frequency of evil works? For because they are many, they are called a people, and because they lead each reprobate to the bitterness of eternal mourning, they are rightly named the people of sorrow. But Edom, who is called "red," what does he suggest but the excessive fervor of sinning?

For first one becomes accustomed to sin, then through the habit of sinning advances to an increase of fervor, so that he dares to sin more often, and what he redoubles by daring, he always desires to repeat more ardently. By this ardor of sinning it comes about that in the reprobate mind whatever of virtue or good work had flourished is burned up. Therefore "burning" is described after Edom in the spiritual war, because such is the fall of the lost mind that when it fervently strives to heap up evils, it is despoiled of all goods as though consumed by fire and reduced to nothing. Zobah is also called "converting," because fervent sin both removes the image of God from the reprobate mind and reshapes it into the likeness of the apostate angel. Of which it is already said by divine sentence: When the wicked comes into the depth of evils, he despises (Prov. 18:3). The proud mind now scorns the divine commandments and subjects itself to carnal desires. Who then is the king of Zobah, except he of whom it is said to blessed Job by the Lord: He is king over all the children of pride (Job 41:2)? But the Philistines, who fall by the

cup, who are they except those who are drunk with all the above-mentioned evils? Who so forget heavenly things that they seem to awaken to them either scarcely or never. By Moab, therefore, the concupiscence of the flesh is expressed; by Ammon, the frequent practice of evil operation;

by Edom, the burning desire of sinning; by Zobah, the devastation and burning of virtues; by the Philistines, the forgetfulness of heavenly things. When therefore the chosen teacher seeks to lead someone out from the midst of so many snares, what a great contest of virtue does he undertake! And because from every stage of this perdition they return to repentance through the labor of teachers, wherever he turns he is said to overcome. For by preaching he sometimes slays concupiscence in someone's heart, sometimes the habit of wicked operation. Now he draws those who had passed into the habit of sinning, now those who, with their virtues burned up and reduced to nothing, were serving their king the devil as though set ablaze. And because by preaching he recalls heavenly things to mind, he rouses those falling by the cup and forgetful of heavenly things to the pursuit of the spiritual life, and inflames them ardently through love. Rightly therefore it is said: (Verse 47. Wherever he turned, he overcame.

63. Because while He draws sinners of every kind to life, He is recognized as triumphing everywhere. The Lord was indeed commanding His soldiers, His princes, to carry out these triumphs when He said: "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). He commands the Gospel to be preached to every creature, because He willed that all kinds of men be led to the faith, so that while He displayed the noble triumphs of His kings, He might show them conquering everywhere. Hence it is written: "Who wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Indeed He wills all men to be saved, because from every kind of men He chooses those whom He draws to the joy of eternal salvation. But he sets forth what he accomplished by special fortitude, because it says: (Verse 48.) "And having gathered an army, he struck Amalek, and delivered Israel from the hand of its plunderers."

64. Amalek is interpreted as "a people licking. What then is designated by Amalek, except the spirits of fornication? For their licking is to soothe the mind toward sinning by the flattery of the flesh. They seek to lick as if by the touch of a tongue when they touch the mind with light suggestions. What does it mean that he is said to have fought and conquered against Moab and

Ammon, against Edom and the king of Zobah, yet did not gather an army, but to defeat Amalek he gathered an army? What does it mean that he gathered an army, except that to extinguish the spirit of fornication, a single virtue does not suffice? Abstinence from food is indeed very strong against this vice, but alone it does not prevail; for it is like a soldier who can fight but cannot overcome, because Amalek is not conquered unless an army is gathered. Therefore whoever desires to strike down fornication, let him add to bodily abstinence the virtue of humility. For if the mind disdains to submit humbly to God, it does not suppress the desires of its flesh by mastering and ruling over them. But it is still necessary to gather more, because the army is small. Therefore to the virtue of humility and bodily abstinence let there be added a frequent number of prayers. Indeed the affections of a heart intent on heavenly things are strong soldiers against the war of the flesh.

Now therefore in the frequent assiduity of prayers he has a battle line, but an army has not just one battle line but several. Therefore he does not yet have a complete army, and he is by no means able to strike Amalek. Does it profit him that he wears himself down by fasting, that he is pierced with compunction for a time by praying, if the slippery mind thinks impure thoughts and carries within itself the phantasms of wantonness? But he who does not have honorable thoughts within himself cannot prevail in avoiding base ones. For since we are always thinking, good things must be sought out by us, lest we think evil ones. What indeed are all the crowds of good thoughts, except innumerable battle lines of the mind? For while they surround the mind and diminish its weakness, they do not permit the most base enemies to approach it. And because by thinking we are kindled to the desire of great purity, our soldiers are clothed with powerful weapons, by which they both turn the assaults of fornication to flight by repelling them and destroy them by reducing them to nothing. For impure thoughts have no way by which they might enter the soul, which is adorned on every side, as if by the strongest soldier, with the honor of good thoughts. Now therefore let the soul that wishes to destroy Amalek gather an army, and free the seeing spirit from the hand of its ravagers.

Let it sit in their midst, so that surrounded on all sides by the examples of chosen strong ones, girded about with the teachings of the Scriptures, it may have no part of itself empty through which the enemy might break in. Because therefore innumerable are the examples of the faithful, because many

are the teachings of the Scriptures, the army is great and strong, but it is not difficult to gather. Well therefore it is said of the king of Israel: "Having gathered his army, he struck Amalek," because the spirit of fornication is not conquered before the body is worn down through abstinence, and all the baseness of obscene thought is put to flight by good things filling the mind. Then indeed the "people licking" cannot lick him, that is, soothe him by delighting, because with the flesh tamed by fasts, the mind endowed with the citadel of humility, girded with the weapons of prayer, intent on heavenly teachings, fortified by examples, it cannot prevail to offer an opening to impious suggestion by consenting. This gathering of an army indeed well befits kings, that is, the teachers of the Church, because whoever strives to instruct chosen subjects for extinguishing the madness of fornication, these many columns of auxiliaries must be gathered for him by the word.

65. Well is it also said that Israel was rescued from the hand of his destroyers. To be rescued is indeed said to be uprooted. And what is uprooted is understood to have sunk deep roots into the depths. The hand of the destroyers is the power of evil spirits. Whence it is also written: "By whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). What then is gathered from this, except that when fornicators consent to the desires of the flesh, they are subjected to the power of evil spirits? Because likewise the enticement of fornication is deep, when the soul is plunged into it through desire, it is held as if by roots in the deep. To be rescued therefore from the hand of the destroyers is to be freed from the abyss of fornication, which is in the power of demons. Well also are the assaults of fornication called destroyers, because concerning the vice of lust it is said through blessed Job: "It is a fire that consumes to destruction, and uproots all increase" (Job 31:12). The spirit of fornication is indeed called a destroyer, because whomever it invades, it surely leaves him no gifts of virtue. For the labor of ministry he can indeed possess some goods, but for the merit of salvation he cannot possess them. He is therefore said to be laid waste for whom, having lost chastity, no other goods avail unto life. The tender things of gardens are also said to be laid waste.

For what are the gardens of the heavenly Bridegroom, if not the hearts of the saints, fortified by watchfulness and flowering with the fragrance of chastity? For while they admit no shameful impulses, they are adorned with the white flower of modesty. Whence also it is said to the bride in the Song

of Songs in praise of the bridegroom: "You who dwell in the gardens, make me hear your voice" (Song of Songs 8:13). And again: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride" (Song of Songs 4:12). A garden indeed, because flowering with the virtue of extraordinary chastity; but enclosed, because fortified by continence. Hence the bride explains what delights the bridegroom, saying: "My beloved is mine, and I am his, who feeds among the lilies, until the day breathes and the shadows decline" (Song of Songs 2:16). Unclean spirits therefore are destroyers, because if they deceive chaste hearts, the deceived hearts lose the tender flowers of so great a virtue. Those therefore who return from impurities to chastity, because they escape the dreadful powers of demons and ascend from the depth of perdition, are fittingly said to be rescued from the hand of the destroyers. But let us see what kind of helpers the king who is said to rescue the people has. For there follows: (Verse 49) Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua; and the names of his two daughters: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger Michal.

66. The sons of Saul, who are born not to any ordinary inheritance but to a kingdom, represent those of whom it is said to the holy Church through the Psalmist: "Instead of your fathers, sons have been born to you; you shall make them princes over all the earth" (Psalm 44:17). We recognize that they are three, because they defend the faith of the holy Trinity by preaching it. But since the sons of the king are named after Amalek was struck down, let us refer their number to the merits of the virtues. Mortification of the body, watchfulness of the mind, and simplicity of intention—these are three. Because, therefore, the teachers of the holy Church are strong in repressing the lust of the flesh, wise in guarding the heart, and lofty in lifting the intention of the heart toward heaven, Saul's sons are said to be three. There are also three things: strength of action, the virtue of charity, and the most abundant grace of preaching. Since the teachers of the holy Church are exalted in their great manner of life, fervent in great charity, and eloquent in great wisdom of the word, they are fittingly signified by the number three. Their names certainly correspond to their virtues, for Jonathan means "gift of the dove"; Ishvi means "plain" or "my desire"; and Malchishua means "my king is salvation. Because the teachers possess the surpassing gifts of the Holy Spirit, they are rightly called "gift of the dove.

Likewise, because amid their lofty gifts they are humble, they are called "plain. Because they ardently seek eternal things on behalf of the faithful entrusted to them, they are said to be "my desire. This voice is recognized as belonging to the little ones who are subject to them, but the power of so great a name belongs to the prelates. For we who are still small and cold, lying in our negligences, do not burn with ardent desires for the heavenly homeland. But what we cannot ardently demand for ourselves, one who pants with great desires for that homeland which they long for us to obtain intercedes on our behalf. Therefore, on account of the excellence of his charity, the king's son is not called "one who desires" but "desire" itself, so that the fire of love may be shown to blaze particularly in the teacher's mind. Hence it is also said of the Lord through the Psalmist: "Who makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a burning fire" (Psalm 103:4). For this reason also Daniel is called "a man of desires" (Daniel 9), because he is said to have sought the prosperity of his people with great prayers. Malchishua means "my king is salvation. The preacher is called "king" because he holds the height of his order and the dignity of a great manner of life. He is likewise called "king" because he holds the summit of eminence and the vigor of authority.

He is also called "salvation," so that it may be understood that by his integrity the sickness of the people can be driven away. For the teacher must act daily through the merit of his life and devout prayer, so that each one subject to him may be able to attain salvation. But the teacher must note again that when he is named by his subjects, he is not called "our king" but "my king. What then does "my king" mean, except that he ought to be so familiar to all that he is felt through love to belong to each one individually? But he who is called "mine" is named "king," because the humble and approachable preacher does not seem to hold his preeminence as his own exclusively, but as the special possession of each individual, since he strives to be so accessible through grace that his eminence appears to be the personal possession of each one. Moreover, the weight of the word is expressed when he is called "my salvation," by which indeed the diligent zeal and solicitude of the preacher is commended, because he ought to attend to all collectively in such a way that he seeks and pursues the particular concerns of each individual. For he is called "my salvation" by each one if he takes up the care of each sick person and leads that person to the blessings of eternal salvation.

67. What are Saul's daughters, if not the qualities of the elect subject to the preacher? For some serve the pursuits of the active life, while others are hidden in the retreats of the contemplative life. They are called daughters on account of their fruitfulness. The one indeed brings forth a multitude of good works, while the other brings forth the fullness of interior joys. Rightly therefore they are called the king's daughters, because when they conceive from the word of God, they bring forth heavenly fruits. Whence Merab is fittingly said to mean "from the multitude. For the active life, because it is perfected through many good works, is rightly named "from the multitude. Or she is said to mean "from the multitude" because those who please God through the active life are many. For since those who yearn for heavenly joys through the contemplative life are fewer in number, in comparison with them he calls those who serve the active life "many. They are indeed many in number, divided in ministry, because even though they seek one heavenly homeland through good works, they nevertheless serve through various works of piety. Of these, certainly some advance so far in love of the Creator that they even abandon good works themselves, and desire to pass over to the sweetness of the contemplative life and to be free for God in it. Whence Michal is fittingly said to mean in our language "from all.

She comes "from all" indeed, because no one is perfect in contemplation who has not arrived at the heights of that same contemplation from the labor of good works. Whence the Lord also says in the Gospel: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Then the one who labors is called, when the desire of eternity is poured into doing good. And they come to the one calling them when they arrive at the rest of the contemplative life. In this indeed the laborers are refreshed, because they abundantly receive the joys of love from divine contemplation. He himself refreshes those who come, who shows himself to pure minds. In his revelation, because they find many joys of contemplation, they are satisfied as if with sweetness of every kind of delight, not by another, but by him himself. Michal therefore is said to mean "from all," because no one seeks the secret of the contemplative life who has not first been engaged in some good work. She is therefore called the younger sister, not because she is inferior in dignity, but because she comes later in time. But if anyone wishes, he can understand the contemplative life through the firstborn daughter and the active life through the younger. And then indeed Merab is said to mean "from

the multitude," because she leaves behind the crowds of the multitude and comes to the rarer number of the perfect in contemplation.

She is therefore said to be not "the multitude" but "from the multitude," so that not those with whom she is, but whence she came, may be recognized. But Michal is said to mean "from all," so that in the active life the universal life of the holy Church may be designated. For in the active life even those are first who afterward pass over to the secret of contemplation, but in the retreat of contemplation they are not burdened with the anxiety of the exterior life. The former therefore can be said to be "from the multitude," but the latter "from all," because the active life contains all, while the contemplative life withdraws from the sight of all, so that it may join itself, by the gaze of the mind, to heavenly things. How then are they called Saul's daughters, unless because both lives are shown forth by the zeal of a good ruler? For those who teach us to do good, to be devoted to the pursuits of eternal life, are begotten for us by him through whose instruction they are learned in our hearts. This indeed, because it is evident concerning the works of the active life, seems remarkable concerning the contemplative life, which is described through Mary, the sister of Martha, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his word (Luke 10). But it is easily answered that while Mary sits, she signifies the perfect in contemplation.

Yet she is rightly called Saul's daughter Merab, because even though sitting at the Lord's feet she hears and learns from him what she wishes, she must nevertheless first learn how she can sit. Since this is surely learned through the instruction of a wise and learned teacher, Merab is rightly recalled as being Saul's daughter (1 Sam. 18). He promised indeed to give her in marriage to David, but gave him the younger, because some love the beauty of the contemplative life, yet are by no means permitted to approach its embrace. For because they are necessary outside for ruling the faithful flocks, the supreme King so ordains that they receive Michal the younger and never grasp Merab the elder. But many receive the elder after the younger, because after devoted works of charity they are received into the love of the inmost secret; which Jacob well suggests, who loved Rachel but first received Leah, and thus afterward took Rachel in marriage (Gen. 29). What is this, that Jacob was permitted to have both sisters, but David did not attain the chamber of the elder, unless because David was a king, but Jacob was not a king? Therefore he who takes up the governance of souls, ecclesiastical discipline

does not allow him to abandon the flock he has received and to devote himself to the leisure of a remote life. But Merab is promised to David and never given;

Michal alone is given, because some, when they take up the care of souls, think that they can bear the responsibility for others in such a way as to be free for themselves through that same responsibility; and yet they never find the rest they seek in their office of leadership; and it happens that while they cannot obtain from the Lord the grace of such great purity, they grow fearful as though they had incurred the Lord's anger. As though the king were angry, therefore, they lose the firstborn promised to them, because they cannot embrace the love of inward rest which they thought they would have in their position of authority. But we have said these things briefly by way of digression; let us now return to what we had set aside. 68. Both are therefore called daughters of Saul, but they receive different names, because they both differ and agree. They agree indeed, because they strive through love toward the eternal life which they love. Likewise they agree, because the good works by which the one is ceaselessly extended, the other performs in whatever way she can. Because, therefore, both love the eternal things they see, and both desire to attain them through good works, they agree in whatever way; but they differ, because one does more, the other sees more. For Leah is not said to have been blind, but blear-eyed. And Rachel, if she did not bear as many children, nevertheless did not remain entirely barren. For if one life surpasses the other in contemplating or in working, yet from neither is the clarity of vision taken away, from neither is the glory of fruitfulness denied. Yet they differ in seeing and doing, because the active life has vision in passing, but work as its purpose; the contemplative life, however, has work on the journey, but its purpose in rest. Whence the evangelist Mark well says, when under the figure of those three women he showed the love of the contemplative life: "They bought spices, so that coming they might anoint Jesus" (Mark 16:1). As if to say: They stood in work, so that they might be able to run to contemplation. To buy spices is, through the labor of good work, to spread the fragrance of good repute all around.

And to anoint Jesus in the tomb is, through the mortification of the flesh, to attain the richness of intimate devotion. For he is anointed as if in the tomb when, by those buried together with him, the joy of his intimate brightness is most devoutly reached. They have work in passing, therefore,

because even if they sometimes work, they abandon it as if running, since they are driven to the place of beloved solitude by a great impulse of the spirit. For because they rest with all their desires in the love of eternal things, they desire to see rather than to serve. They are therefore seldom in public work, constant in the secret of contemplation; they linger little outside, sufficiently within. For they are accustomed to judge it fornication to depart even for a moment from the contemplation of Christ. 69. On the contrary, the active life, which busies itself frequently about service, is rarely in the secret of contemplation. For she who has resolved to prepare eternal things for herself not by sitting and listening, but by busying herself and ministering, considers it not a loss but a waste if, being free for herself and seeking her own things and not those of others, she should rest from the customary offering of services. Therefore she labors more by working and prays less. Hence Martha too, who was busy about frequent service, stood and spoke (Luke 10:40). For she who stood was surely not permitted to sit, because if she had sat down to listen, she would perhaps have rendered her service unprepared and insufficient. And it should be noted that Martha saw the Lord in passing, yet she speaks not in passing but standing still. For the evangelist carefully expressed it, saying: "She stood and said" (*ibid.*). By this example we are surely instructed that we who render services to our brothers, if we cannot sit at the Redeemer's feet for a long time, ought at least to stand before the Redeemer for a little while. But we stand well before him if we see him while passing by and serving. But what is it to see the Lord in passing, if not to direct the intention of the heart toward him in all our good work? For we pass by when we minister to the Lord in his members by running here and there.

But we see the Lord in passing if through everything we do we contemplate him, whom we desire to please, as present to us. At this point it should be noted that Martha speaks confidently, saying: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? (Luke 10:40). This certainly befits certain perfect workers of the holy Church, who offer prayers to almighty God with all the more confidence as they remember having ministered to him more laboriously in his members. But because even in those who serve the active life excessive anxiety must be restrained, Martha is rebuked, who is said to be so anxious that she is troubled about many things. The fervor of action is rightly ordered when we so persist in our work that with a tranquil heart we

see him to whom we strive to consecrate our works. What then is excessive anxiety, if not the confusion of heavenly intention? Because while it divides itself among many things, once divided it no longer rises to the contemplation of heavenly things. For since the soul scarcely grasps that eternal and simple good of eternal vision when it is united, it surely does not raise itself to it when divided. Therefore the orderer and receiver of our works says: "One thing is necessary," lest the mind divide itself among many things, so that, united through tranquility, it may powerfully rise to the contemplation of the highest good.

The two daughters of Saul, therefore, although they are equally daughters of a king, differ in their names, because the active and contemplative lives are noble in the generosity of religion, but they are not equal on account of the diversity of their office. But since we have shown their father, let us likewise point out their mother. There follows: (Verse 50) "And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz." 70. For what is the wife of the preacher, if not good will? For he who is joined through love to good will, from her as from a noble spouse children are born to him. For when we wish to bring forth the fruit of good works, it is necessary that we first sow them in good will. Hence Ahinoam is fittingly interpreted as "brother's rest. For that brother of ours is He who, rising from the dead, spoke to Mary Magdalene saying: "Go, and tell my brothers: I ascend to my Father and your Father" (John 20:17). Hence Paul, asserting the nobility of the elect, says: "Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). What is meant by "brother's rest," except that the Redeemer of the human race rests in the good will of His co-heirs? And because good will is bestowed upon us by Him by whom it is inhabited, she is said to be the daughter of Ahimaaz. For Ahimaaz is interpreted as "brother's beauty," or "brother who is beauty. For our Redeemer is called both brother and beauty, because human nature lost the vigor of its dignity through the sin of the first man, but in the person of the Redeemer it shone forth with increased splendor. He is indeed our beauty, because all who shine with the brightness of virtues in the holy Church receive from the fullness of His light. Hence Paul says: "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Therefore, when the prophet Samuel regards the good will of our preachers, he expresses what he has seen through types, saying: "Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz," because indeed the beauty of good will is great, but it

is born from the infusion of the Redeemer. For she ought to be loved as a wife, but if one looks to the father, she is loved all the more on account of her nobility. (Verse 50. "And the name of his captain was Abner, the son of Ner, his uncle." 71. Abner is said to mean "my father is a lamp," and Ner is also said to mean "lamp. What then is Ner understood to be, except the word of the Scriptures? Indeed, the letter of holy Scripture is like the clay vessel of this lamp, while the spiritual understanding is the brightness of its light, and its oil is the devotion of love. Therefore, he is a son of the lamp who willingly hears the words of the Scriptures, and wisely understands them, and what he gathers through understanding, he grasps through the affection of charity. Why then is he called a son of the lamp, unless because what is born from light is light? For what is sin, if not darkness? And likewise, what is a good work, if not light? For when holy men direct the steps of their works according to the guidance of the Scriptures, they receive, as it were, light from light through spiritual instruction. Indeed, John, expressing this light from light, says: 'Everyone who is born of God does not sin, because the heavenly birth preserves him' (1 John 5:18). What is it to be born of God, except to love His will as it is known in the holy Scriptures? And what is it not to sin, except to stand always in the light of justice?

For the blessed apostle Peter wished, as it were, to make us light from light, when he said: 'You have the prophetic word, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts' (2 Peter 1:19). Rightly therefore Abner is called "my father is a lamp," and his own father is also named "lamp," because those in the holy Church can shine for others by their examples who have received both the brightness of light and the oil of perfect charity from the instruction of the Scriptures. But through John it is said "does not sin," so as to suggest the strength of preachers, who extend their hand to sinners in such a way that they themselves are not stained by the darkness of sins. But what does it mean that he is called a cousin of Saul? A cousin is one who is born from the brother of one's father. Hence here too it is added: (Verse 51.) 'Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.'

72. And when a king to be chosen was sought, it was said: "And there was a man named Kish, the son of Abiel" (1 Samuel 9:1). Since we have more fully explained what these names of the royal lineage signify, let us only set forth

how Abner is said to be Saul's cousin. Now Saul is known to be the son of Kish, that is, of "the hard one"; Abner also is said to be the son of "a lamp." We have shown that "the hard one" designates men of excessively austere manner of life, and that Ner is interpreted as "lamp." What then does it mean that "lamp" and "the hard one" are said to be sons of the same father, except that both what Holy Scripture commands as austere and the outward strength of a hard manner of life come from God? For "the hard one" is the brother of "the lamp," because the grace of fulfilling the law comes from Him from whom the law itself has its origin. Hence the Psalmist also confidently promises, saying: "For He who gave the law will also give a blessing" (Psalm 84:7). For to give the law is to set forth the precepts of life to the elect, and to give a blessing is to bestow the grace of fulfilling the law. Since therefore both the light of Scripture and the harshness of our life come from One, Kish and Ner are said to be sons of one father.

Therefore Abner, the son of Ner, is rightly said to be the cousin of King Saul, because he who is chosen for the care of souls is judged as needing to be of a hard and austere life. But those who desire to be helpers of preachers never accomplish what they desire if they do not bring to completion the light of Holy Scripture, in which they were conceived through knowledge, in good works and holy preaching, as if by being born. But since the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is ascribed more to the chief teachers than to their subordinate helpers, and following examples of conduct seems to befit the lesser rather than the greater, what does it mean that the king is called the son of "the hard one," while the prince of the king is called the son of "the lamp"? But by these words it does not signify what the chief teachers and their helpers possess, but, passing over what they possess, it sets forth what each must do. For the king, that is, the supreme and chosen preacher, because he already possesses the light of Scripture through the knowledge of the highest learning, should not so trust in his knowledge as to fail to follow the examples of others.

Likewise the prince, that is, the helper of the great teacher, because he is subject to the examples of his own superior, should lean toward the light, so that he who follows examples may be born, as it were, into the learning of higher doctrine, as into the great light of a lamp. He therefore who, being learned, is brought back through humility to the examples of his elders, and who, instructed by examples, is raised up through learning to the splendor of

the Scriptures, is rightly said to be a king, the son of "the hard one," and a prince, the son of "the lamp. Such men, because they profitably stand over the chosen faithful, because they mightily advance their subjects to victories of virtues, it follows: (Verse 52. "And there was fierce war against the Philistines all the days of Saul." 73. The war of those teachers is weak and altogether feeble who have neither the light of divine knowledge nor the strength of good work. Therefore war is called powerful when harsh sons rule over the chosen peoples, because he is able to speak good things profitably to others who has been accustomed to precede his words with great deeds. But we must also subtly consider what is said in a more complex way: 'All the days of Saul'. What are the days of Saul, if not works of light? What is the war of a teacher other than what is waged by the tongue? Therefore he fights all his days who teaches others many things, yet puts forth nothing in his teaching except what first shines forth in his own work. For he fights in his own day who draws the words of preaching from the light of his own virtue. He therefore wishes to fight in another's day who strives to oppose wicked spirits not by speaking what he does, but by preaching what he knows. But he fights all his days, because he displays all the commandments of God in the light of his work, which he then wishes to set forth through the care of preaching. Rightly therefore is the war called powerful in which one fights with every kind of light of virtues and works. It can also be that by the statement that he fights all his days, the urgency of spiritual combat is signified.

For he who leads a life full of virtues lives in days. Therefore the powerful war of the chosen teacher is recognized in all his days, because he is always seen to overcome evil spirits who is never separated from the light of virtues. But chosen men have the virtue of fighting and also the humility of fear. Through virtue they triumph, but through fear they do not cease to gather reinforcements. Hence they fight all the more bravely, the more they do not stop gathering forces for the conflict. Rightly therefore the cause of the powerful war is added: (Verse 52.) 'For whomever Saul saw to be a strong man and fit for battle, he joined him to himself.' 74. As if to say: He was able to wage war powerfully for this reason, because he did not cease to gather an army. But since he is said to have allied to himself not only strong men but also those fit for battle, the prudent teacher is shown in choosing Christ's soldiers. For some are strong for bearing burdens, not for waging battles, be-

cause when they do not know how to fight from their own strength, they are utterly unable to do so. Therefore men who are strong and fit for battle are those who know how to fight and are willing. By their will they are indeed strong, and by their knowledge they are fit for fighting. The recklessness of some is therefore repelled from Christ's war, since those chosen are remembered as both fit and strong. For some know how to fight against the devil but are unwilling. They are indeed wise to do evil, but they do not know how to do good (Jer. 4:22). These wish to serve the ancient enemy; they refuse to resist him. For what would a teacher accomplish if he allied such men, fit for battle, to himself? Such men are more able to destroy others by their examples than the teacher himself is able to build up by his word. For often such men even dare to teach, yet they do not maintain the power of teaching by their practice.

When they speak with us, they rush against the enemies, but through their deeds they suddenly turn their weapons into our own bowels. Like certain traitors in an army, they put on the armor of Christian doctrine, and by their examples they suddenly strike the little ones of Christ whom we thought they wished to protect by their speaking. Therefore strong men who are not fit must be repelled, not allied to us, because through wise but reprobate men our strength is destroyed, not increased. Who then are those who are strong but not fit, except those whom we see bearing the burdens of the world bravely, yet not knowing how to transfer their strength into the service of their Creator? For they bear the yoke of men and the great labors of the world bravely, but they are afraid to approach the service of God as though they were weak. What then are these, if not strong yet not fit — those who accomplish great things of the world yet cannot perform the light and gentle tasks of Christ? Often they are even converted in monasteries, and those who had bravely borne the burdens of the world sweat over the small tasks they perform as though amid great labors. What then is shown by these words, except that we should ally men to Christ's service with great discernment, and not grant entrance to those approaching before we know them to be both fit through knowledge and strong through good will?

Moreover, the reason they can be called men strong and fit for battle is that they follow up the wars against Amalek, that is, the wars against lusts. For those who cannot extinguish carnal desires are not strong men. And those who are not fit for fighting on behalf of chastity do not appear fit for

battle. Let the teacher therefore choose Christ's soldiers; let him choose strong men, so that while they bravely subdue the flesh, they may powerfully conquer the unclean spirits. Let him therefore choose men fit for battle, so that while they do not grow proud amid the gifts of their strength, they may be exalted in heavenly places by the glory of triumph.

BOOK SIX

CHAPTER 6.1 (1 SAMUEL 15:1-3)

And Samuel said to Saul: The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people Israel. Now therefore hear the voice of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: I have reviewed all that Amalek did to Israel, how he opposed him on the way, when he was coming up from Egypt. Now therefore go, and strike Amalek, and destroy all that belongs to him. 1. We said above that Amalek designates the vice of lust, which as it were licks, since it suggests pleasure by flattering. Progress in the way of life is therefore shown, in that above he is declared to have been struck by Saul, and now he is not simply commanded to be struck, but all his possessions to be destroyed. First indeed the teacher strikes him, when through his word it is brought about that chastity is maintained in the hearts and bodies of the converted. For lust is as it were struck when the flesh has been in some manner subdued by the weapons of chastity, yet has not been perfectly subdued. For he who already abandons the defilements of lust, but still feels shameful impulses rising from himself against himself, no longer practices the wicked deed, yet nevertheless cannot drive it from his thought. Often unwillingly and unguardedly he is dragged to impure thoughts, and those things which he carelessly thinks within stir the flesh outwardly, so that it rises to the shameful impulses of pleasure. What then does it mean that Amalek, already struck, is commanded to be struck again and destroyed, except that the preacher must advance those whom he instructs for a chaste life toward the perfection of virtue? Amalek is therefore commanded to be struck again, because not yet well slain he still lives.

Amalek is struck again when by the words of the teacher even those impulses that assail the flesh are crushed, when the teacher instructs his subjects to be crowned for this purpose: that they should so tame the body that it in no way rises to enticing impulses. But because the flesh is never restrained in this way if the mind slips into impure thinking, after the striking, Amalek is

commanded to be demolished. He is therefore struck in the body and demolished in the heart, while the flesh is worthily worn down through abstinence and the mind is restrained from all impure thoughts. In this passage the preceding words must also be considered, which Samuel speaks in the person of the Lord, saying: "I have reviewed all that Amalek did to Israel, how he opposed him on the way when he was going up from Egypt." 2. What is meant by the deeds of the Amalekites being recounted, except that the defilements of lust are greatly hateful to God? Whence the blessed apostle Paul says: 'Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body' (1 Cor. 6:18). Likewise he says: 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge' (Heb. 13:4). Hence also, rebuking more sharply and separating them from the kingdom of God, he says: 'Neither shall the unclean possess the kingdom of God' (Eph. 5:5). Why is lust recounted, except because the sinner is cast out by the justice of God, when he bends himself to perpetrate its defilements? He who is recounted, therefore, so as to fall, is sometimes recounted so as to perish, and sometimes recounted so as to rise again. And because the deeds of Amalek are recalled after such great spans of time, it is in some way suggested to us that such people sometimes come to their senses after long periods. Moreover, his deeds are described when it is said: 'How he withstood him on the way when he was going up out of Egypt.' Israel means "seeing God." Because he is said to go up out of Egypt, this signifies the newly converted, who abandon the darkness and depths of sins, draw near to the light of truth, and ascend the mountain of good works.

3. But Amalek opposed Israel on the way, because lust hurls the weapons of pleasure against those striving toward the summit of perfection, and strikes with the sword of impure suggestion whatever hearts it can. And because the battle of fornication is exceedingly strong and violent, Amalek is said not merely to have confronted Israel in some ordinary way, but to have resisted him. To resist indeed is to press upon someone with a fierce assault. That Israelite who was ascending surely saw these resisting Amalekites when he said: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. 7:23). Whence also, looking to his helper, he says: "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:24). Amalek is therefore said to resist because, as long as we are in the flesh, we endure the fierce wars of lust. But why

is he said to resist those ascending from Egypt? Behold, he who had been caught up to the secrets of the third heaven still had the resisting motions of the flesh. Rightly therefore Israel ascending from Egypt represents not only novices but also those endowed with great virtue. By the name of Egypt, the darkness of this world is signified. And Israel ascends from Egypt because all the elect, as they advance by living holy lives, strive to reach the heavenly homeland.

And because as long as they are in the flesh, they have the law of the flesh contrary to the law of the mind, they see Amalek resisting them through powerful impulses. For the violence of this passion is shown when the very wars of Amalek that are recounted are described. For while Israel fought, when Moses raised his hands, Amalek was overcome; and Amalek prevailed when Moses lowered his hands (Exod. 17). But what does it mean that against others Moses fought with arms alone, yet against Amalek not with arms alone but also with the power of prayer? And what power and urgency of supplication was then necessary, where if he lowered his hands, he would give the honor of victory to Amalek? But truly the great struggle against fornication is shown, which is overcome with such great effort and such great difficulty. Therefore the most intense prayer of the army is a necessary weapon. Arms indeed are necessary, because those who wish to fight against fornication cannot conquer unless they are fortified with the other virtues. The army, as we showed above, represents the examples of the Fathers and the precepts of the Scriptures, which indeed everyone ought also to consider, and so occupy the mind with them that one does not gaze upon the defilements of wantonness. But though instructed by examples and teachings, one can by no means trust in oneself.

Let him therefore lift up his hands, let him lift up his mind, so that he may shine with good work and devotion, who attempts to cut off perfectly from himself the war of lust. 4. What furthermore does it mean that when the hands are lowered he is conquered, except that often through the boldness of wicked work, even the very beauty of chastity is taken away? Often it is not taken away entirely, but it is weakened along with weakening works. Indeed, amid spiritual works and labors, we are strong against the goads of the flesh; but if, as though weary, we grow sluggish or soft from the rigor of our accustomed way of life, while we gradually grow negligent, the stings of the flesh rise up, which, as though Moses' hands were lowered, conquer Israel

(Exod. XVII). Therefore, lest the hands grow weary, let Aaron and Hur place a stone beneath them, and by no means allow Moses' heavy hands to be lowered. Aaron indeed is called "mountain of strength," and Hur is called "fire." For when we grow weary, we are strengthened by contemplating heavenly things. What then is the mountain of strength, if not the height of heavenly contemplation? Which indeed, because it does not exist in a chosen heart without great charity, the mountain of strength is rightly said to stand beside Moses. They indeed place a stone beneath and support his hands, because he who ardently looks upon the highest rewards of heaven takes up great strength, and does not cease both to work well and to beseech the Creator. Because therefore the wars of the flesh are strong and altogether violent, Amalek is fittingly said to have resisted Israel as it ascended. Therefore the Prophet commands the king, saying: Hear the voice of the Lord. I have reviewed all that Amalek did to Israel.

5. What does it mean when he says: "Hear the voice of the Lord," unless that those who wish to live chastely must keep subtle watch against the deceits of the spirit of fornication? As if to say: Do not cease to consider with how many snares he prepares to subject the elect to himself. And therefore he did not say: "I have recounted how he resisted Israel," but: "Hear the voice of the Lord. I have recounted how he resisted Israel. As if to say: If you recognize the manner of his snares, you will more easily be able to overcome the enemy. Rightly therefore he added, saying: "Now therefore go, and strike Amalek, and demolish all that is his. As if to say: Because you know how you ought to go: Go, and demolish all that is his, and so destroy him that nothing of him may live any longer. But who could so subject the flesh to himself, who could ever so restrain his own mind, who could so remain in the flesh as to endure no shameful movements from the flesh? Who could so curb thought that no darkness of impurities would reach it through thinking? But if the shameful stirring of motion is not removed from the flesh, nevertheless the strength of that shamefulfulness is weakened, when there is indeed a simple movement in the flesh, but in that movement there is no itch of lust. This movement is not Amalekite, because it does not entice the mind that it cannot delight.

It cannot be removed from the mind that it should in no way see unclean things, but it is led to a wonderful exercise of purity, so that seeing unclean things, it is stained by no taint of pleasure. Whoever therefore so governs the

flesh, whoever so rules the mind, governs for this reason, rules for this reason: because he was able to demolish all of Amalek with strength. But now he explains in what follows what all his possessions are, saying: (Verse 3. "Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of his; but slay from man to woman, both child and nursing infant, and ox and donkey, and sheep and camel." 6. Who is this one who spares Amalek, if not he who retains something of wantonness either in thought, or in speech, or in the flesh? For many do not practice works of shameful conduct, yet do not restrain their tongue from shameful speech. Many avoid luxury through their actions, but do not avoid it through their thoughts. Some do nothing shameful, yet what they flee from in deed they desire in their heart. He therefore spares Amalek who holds onto the enticements of wantonness, either in speech, or through intention, or through thought. And so He says: "Do not spare him," because from so wicked a vice nothing ought to be kindled in the mind, nothing permitted to burn in deed. Let Him therefore say: "Do not spare him," so that all lustful impulses, all obscene utterances may be utterly destroyed in the body. He therefore says: "You shall not covet anything of his," so that it may be thoroughly uprooted from thought. For what is lust, if not fire? And what are the virtues arising from the flesh and mind, if not flowers? What likewise are shameful thoughts, if not straw? Who does not know that if fire is carelessly extinguished among straw, from the small spark that remains, all the straw is set ablaze? He therefore who does not wish to burn up the flowers of virtues in his mind must so extinguish the fire of lust that it can never blaze up again through even a faint spark. Let him also remove the stubble of carnal thoughts, lest while the natural heat, which cannot be extinguished, is kindled, the green growth of virtues, which cannot catch fire by itself, is burned up as if through straw mixed in with it.

7. What then is the meaning of: "Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of his," unless that all luxury in the flesh must be perfectly subdued, and torn out from the mind by the roots? It can also be understood: "Do not spare him, and do not covet anything from him," because men and women, children and nursing infants are commanded to be killed. For women could be coveted, and children and nursing infants could provoke pity. Who then are the men to be killed, who are the women, who the children, who the oxen, who the sheep, who the camels, who the donkeys — this must be carefully considered. For who are the Amalekite men, if not the persuading im-

pulses of shameful conduct? They are indeed men, because they suggest violently and pour seeds of depravity into corrupted minds. The women are the desires of the mind, which submit themselves to the aforesaid impulses for impious offspring. But who are the children and nursing infants, if not those who are generated from the mingling of Amalekite men and women? For if the impulse of evil suggestion is received in the mind like an adulterer, desire is impregnated like a harlot. Therefore, if that desire is allowed to pour forth its wicked offspring, the impulses of lust are then generated not only in the mind but also in the flesh. When these are born, they are children, because they do not yet inflict violence upon the flesh by their stirring.

They are nursing infants when they are nourished by slight and negligent thought. For he who now refreshes shameful impulses in the flesh by free thought no longer gives milk to little ones but food to adults. Therefore the milk of the little Amalekites is the slight thought of impurity, because if the shameful impulse is not fed through thought, the little ones are killed as if denied their milk. This milk the harlot mother offers, because while the heat of desire seizes the mind, it is stirred as if from the worst abundance of the heart, so that the worse offspring of impulses may be nourished in the flesh. What is understood by the ox, if not deceitful counsel, which by the example of the ancients suggests the pleasure of the flesh — those who pleased almighty God amid the works of the flesh? For it seems to split the earth with the plowshare of discernment, as it were; but if it is taken up through deliberation, it ensnares the neck of the wretched mind under the yoke of shameful conduct, which it bears through pretense.

8. By the name of sheep, the life of the innocent is signified. Whence all the elect are called sheep by the voice of our Redeemer, when He says: 'My sheep hear My voice' (John 10:27). What then is the sheep of Amalek, if not the pretense of innocence? For some, when they consider both the very form of the human body and the properties of each sex, when they consider the desire implanted in their members, think they can freely use this as though it were a natural good. It is therefore like a sheep of the Amalekite, when something is suggested to the continent as though it were good, which is clearly proven not to be truly good. What also is signified by the camel? But the camel chews the cud and does not divide the hoof at all. What then is signified by the camel, if not a certain thought of lust, which seems to begin from reason but is not completed through discernment? For while one

thinks, the camel as it were ruminates within, but while what one thinks is not ordered by truth, its hoof does not appear to be divided. For some indeed, having professed continence, when they are overcome by the desire of the flesh, trust that they can be saved in married life.

And some, when they hear the Apostle's permission: 'Let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband' (1 Cor. 7:2), declare that all without distinction of persons are included in this precept, and that men of sacred orders can make use of conjugal union. For a sentiment of this kind is an Amalekite camel, because it seems to begin from reason but drags one to an irrational life. What then is the donkey understood to be, if not the open wickedness of fornication? For the devil drives some into the open abyss of fornication, and deceives others through fraud. The donkey is also accustomed to carry the burdens of others. But the Teacher of the Gentiles, when he taught that the husband does not have power over his own body, but the wife does, and likewise: 'Nor does the wife have power over her own body, but the husband' (ibid., 4), what else did he command them than to carry one another's burdens? Therefore by the name of the donkey the strength of conjugal union is designated, because chosen spouses bravely bear one another's burdens, lest through the weakness of the flesh they fall more loosely into the pit of fornication. Therefore the donkey must be killed, but the Amalekite one, because conjugal union must be strengthened in the honor of the marriage bed, but must be destroyed in its baseness. Indeed spouses ought to render to each other their due, but they ought not to come together in a shameful manner.

Therefore the donkey of Amalek is killed when in good spouses the love of honorable union is maintained, but all obscenity is avoided in shameful conjunction. Therefore all things of Amalek are commanded to be destroyed, because those who purpose to live chastely ought not to retain in themselves anything of the enticement of the flesh. They must indeed be in the flesh, so that they may do good things through the flesh, but they ought so to depart from the pleasure of the flesh through the loftiness of the mind that they do not tolerate insults from the flesh. Indeed the Apostle wished those to whom he was speaking to be such, saying: 'But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit' (Rom. 8:9). But let us consider with what helpers he who is commanded to destroy Amalek may suffice for these things. For it

follows: (Verse 4.) 'Saul commanded the people, and numbered them as lambs.'

9. By the name of lambs, men of great prudence are usually designated. Hence through John it is said: "I saw upon Mount Sion a Lamb standing, and with him a hundred forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). For those who had taken up the name of the Lamb were called lambs. Explaining who they are, he also says: "These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. What then does it mean that when Amalek is commanded to be destroyed, the soldiers of the king are counted as it were lambs, unless that when we wish to destroy the spirit of fornication by preaching, we ought to bring forth the examples of the perfect? For however many men distinguished by the glory of chastity we present to the worldly who are to be converted, we bring as it were so many soldiers, like lambs mustered, to the wars against Amalek. Moreover, by the name of those mustered, the ministers of divine preaching themselves can be understood. They are therefore as it were lambs, because through the glory of perfect chastity they are now made like those virgins rejoicing with Christ in the kingdom.

By these words it is surely shown that those who undertake the ministry of preaching must first be adorned with the outstanding splendor of chastity, because if they fall away through incontinence, they can in no way make others continent, and those who do not have the rays of that light in the splendor of their own manner of life cannot prevail in calling others to the good of so great a light. Rightly therefore it is said: "He mustered them as lambs," because those who ought to drive out the spirit of fornication through the power of the office they have received must necessarily be very chaste. Hence the Lord says to them in the Gospel: "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning in your hands" (Luke 12:35), so that their subjects may hear the word of preaching, but the examples of a most luminous manner of life may draw them to the good of chastity that they hear. Hence they are fittingly designated by a perfect number, when it is added: (Verse 3. "Two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah."

10. By the name of footsoldiers the elect are figured, not when they preach lofty things, but when through good examples they demonstrate to others the straightness of the heavenly journey. Footsoldiers indeed run with their steps to where they wish to bring their arms. But what are examples of

chastity, if not the footprints of heavenly soldiers impressed upon the earth? For in order to strike the vices of lust in slippery places, they hasten with the light of good examples toward the darkness of their hearts, and as if arriving by footstep, they slay the enemies—those who, after they are recognized through their works, draw the hearts of sinners to the good of chastity. When therefore through examples of chastity they destroy the darkness of impurities in the hearts of sinners, they are rightly called footsoldiers. And because they are splendid not only with the outward show of bodily purity but also with the light of the heart, they are said to be two hundred thousand. For in the number one hundred and one thousand, the entire sum of the Decalogue is contained. Perfect men therefore are contained in two hundred thousand, because through divine grace they have arrived at the highest citadel of chastity by both continence of body and integrity of mind. For they have perfection of purpose both in body and in mind. Or because they serve God through chastity not loosely or negligently, they have the hundred of work, and because they do not cease to serve Him, they have the thousand of multiplication.

But they are strong and constant in continence of body, perfect and persistent in watchfulness of heart through perfection of virtue. Indeed the Apostle, commanding that a widow also be such, says: "That she may be holy in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. 7:34). For she is holy in body and spirit if by the perfection of chastity by which she shines in body, she also shines in mind. But if widows are such, what kind must virgins be commanded to be? For concerning those many, under the description of one it was said: "The queen stood at your right hand in gilded clothing" (Psalm 44:10). In the same psalm (verse 14) the same queen is praised when it is said: "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within, clothed about with golden fringes in varieties. For what is the golden garment, if not the beauty and honor of the virginal body? It is called a garment because it shines outwardly in the body, but golden because it excels in dignity. But every kind of metal is inferior to gold. So indeed no other form of chastity can be compared to virginal beauty. What then does it mean when it says, "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within," if the glory of the golden garment is proclaimed to be outward? For if there is some great glory of the golden garment outwardly, all glory cannot be seen to be within.

What then does it mean that all glory is said to be within, except that even that glory which is outward is recognized to be within along with innumerable others? For virginity is not golden if it exists outwardly but not inwardly. Because therefore it is both within and without, because the same shines in the body and the same gleams in the mind, all the glory of the king's daughter can fittingly be understood to be within. All glory is within, because it is not outward alone nor inward alone. For because many are the splendors of virtues in the mind of the virgin, virginal radiance is so affirmed that all glory is proclaimed to be within. This indeed is what follows: "Clothed about with golden fringes in varieties. For the golden fringes are splendors never failing from the mind. Fringes indeed are the final parts of a garment. They are therefore praised in the beauty of Christ's bride, because there is no glory of virtues if it ceases to shine before the completion of life. The queen therefore is spoken of with love, in the golden garment virginity is proclaimed. But all glory is declared to be within, and in golden fringes, and clothed about with variety, so that integrity joined with innumerable virtues may be understood to endure even to the end.

Rightly therefore are two hundred thousand footsoldiers counted against Amalek, because those are fit for conquering unclean spirits through examples of chastity who have learned to maintain it both in the light of works and in the splendor of watchfulness. 11. Because likewise they are instructed and perfected by the word of God, this is shown by the number of ten thousand men of Judah. For they are men by fortitude, and of Judah by proclamation. For Judah is interpreted as "confessing. But they are designated by the number ten, because they have attained the perfection of doctrine through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Whence also to Moses the ten precepts of the law are given, which were written by the finger of God (Exod. XXXI). For what is the finger of God, if not the Holy Spirit? Who, when He wrote the law, set it forth precisely in ten precepts, because even if He brought forth something carnal outwardly in it, inwardly He sealed the perfection of spiritual understanding. Therefore ten thousand men of Judah are to be led forth against Amalek, so that the spirit of fornication may be overcome by those fit in strength. For he laps by suggestion, because he counsels light and flattering things, but the things he counsels by lapping he displays through phantasms of thoughts. Therefore, so that the mind may not see the obscene things shown to it by demons, the examples of the elect must be revealed.

And so that the unclean spirit cannot soothe it with foul suggestions, the tongue of preachers ought to be touched through the praise of chastity. Let the preacher lap it, so that the malignant spirit can by no means lap it.

And let him delight it with words, lest, for one who lacks heavenly things, the devil tear it apart through the delights of suggestions. Therefore against the twofold battle of the heart, because a twofold good of assistance is necessary, rightly both foot soldiers and men of Judah are said to be prepared against Amalek. But if anyone wishes to understand some as the foot soldiers and others as the men of Judah, the meaning of plain truth is evident: that the greatest doctors have those who, though they do not know how to teach by preaching, are nevertheless able to benefit by their works. But now, having been mustered for such great battles, let us hear by what strategy they fight next. There follows: (Verse 5. And when Saul had come to the city of Amalek, he set an ambush at the torrent. 12. What is this torrent, if not that of which it is said through the Psalmist: "He shall drink of the torrent in the way" (Psalm 109:7)? For a torrent designates the course of our mortality. Saul therefore sets an ambush in the torrent, when a preacher of the Church inserts the consideration of our mortality into the eternal rewards. For in order to catch slippery souls as if by guile, he begins by speaking of heavenly things, but suddenly turns to setting forth the bitterness of eternal punishments, so that minds secure in the pleasure of the flesh may be terrified. For he leads them out as if by guile, he strikes them through ambush, since by speaking pleasant things he provokes them to listen, and then inserts the sorrows of death, so that the wayward may hear what will make them tremble. Saul therefore comes to the city of Amalek, when the teacher draws the hearts of sinners, fortified by illicit love, with the sweetness of eternal delight. But he hides an ambush for him in the torrent, because he introduces the consideration of death, so that the sinner may see, as it were, a soldier bursting forth against him from ambush, and while he considers that he will soon die, he may fear to extend the delay of sin any further. There follows: (Verse 6.) "And Saul said to the Kenite: Depart, withdraw from the Amalekites, lest perhaps I destroy you together with him. For you showed mercy to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt."

13. Who is the Kenite, who is known to dwell with Amalek, and who is compelled to depart, lest he be equally entangled with him? But perhaps this is the one about whom the Apostle says: "Let the husband render to his wife

what is due, and likewise the wife to her husband" (1 Cor. 7:3). The name also fits him, because "Kenite" is said to mean "possessing. These married persons, because they are bound by marriage, are not compelled to abandon everything. What then does it mean when it is said to the Kenite, "Depart from Amalek," unless that by these words all the foulness of obscenity among married persons is condemned? Indeed, those who are joined in the manner of harlots are united with Amalek. The teacher commands them to depart from Amalek when he strives to recall them to marital decency. As if to say: If you cannot contain yourselves from one another, let marriage be honorable for you, and the bed undefiled. Therefore, to depart from Amalek is for spouses to use one another not for the foulness of harlot-like obscenity, but for the temperance of decency and for the fruit of offspring. Hence the same excellent teacher says of the widow who cannot remain so according to his counsel: "But if she cannot contain herself, let her marry, only in the Lord" (ibid., 9). Not in Amalek, but in the Lord; so that she who cannot prevail to abstain from marriage may avoid obscene acts within the covenant of marriage. He also threatens, saying:

"Lest I entangle you with him. To be entangled with sinners is to be condemned to eternal punishment. Hence the Lord also says of the wicked servant in the Gospel: "Bind his feet and hands, and cast him into outer darkness" (Matt. 22:13). Now therefore, preachers do not entangle reprobate hearers, because even if they despise the word, they can still return to repentance as long as they live, when they wish. Therefore, marital decency must be urgently commanded to married persons, because with a stern penalty it is said: "Go, depart without harm. Depart from Amalek, lest I entangle you with him. Without harm indeed one departs now, but not then, because those who are made entirely like the foul will not be free from their harm. He is also said to have shown mercy to the children of Israel when they were ascending from Egypt, because the weak children of holy Church, since they cannot preserve the good of perpetual continence, are received through the compassion of marriage. Indeed they ascend from Egypt, because they abandon the darkness of luxury and fornication. And they receive mercy from the Kenite, because they obtain the indulgence of marriage. Hence the teacher of the nations also says: "I say this by way of indulgence, not by way of command" (1 Cor. 7:6). And because holy Church persuades her chosen

subjects of the good things she sets forth by speaking, there follows: (Verse 6. And the Kenite departed from the midst of Amalek.

14. The spouse departs from the midst of Amalek, but cannot depart from the part, because even if one avoids the act of shameful conduct, one cannot avoid the inclination toward pleasure. For married couples can temper the fire through honorable conduct. They go out, therefore, from the midst of Amalek, because even if they cannot be entirely free from carnal desires, they nevertheless moderate the very dominion of the flesh under the bond of the precept of honorable conduct. There follows: (Verse 7.) And Saul struck Amalek from Havilah until you come to Shur, which is opposite Egypt. 15. Havilah is interpreted as "one who gives birth," Shur as "anguish," Egypt as "darkness." But concupiscence gives birth to sin. Rightly, therefore, concupiscence is designated by the name of "one who gives birth." The Prophet also, fearing to fall into the anguish of an impenitent heart, beseeches, saying: "Let not the deep swallow me up, neither let the pit shut its mouth upon me" (Psalm 68:16). The teacher, therefore, strikes Amalek from Havilah to Shur when he suppresses in the hearts of his hearers the vices of conceived delight and the resolve of deliberate choice. He also strikes Shur when he appears to draw to the love of chastity those minds which had purposed to end their life in the stench of lust. For those who, already captured, are bound by the snare of evil habit are in anguish. And it should be noted that Shur is shown to be opposite Egypt, because he who resolves to end his life in lust is even now enclosed in interior darkness, from which he will be led to exterior darkness. But let this book also be closed, so that we may come through silence to the consideration of what follows.

CHAPTER 6.2

1. King Saul, who had good beginnings but by no means persevered in the good things he had begun, is presented through the text of sacred History, so that in him we may see what is to be imitated and what is to be avoided. Thus indeed we also pick from badly cultivated fields, which rise up to harvest mixed with thorns. He truly knows how to gather well from them, who takes care to pick the ears of grain while striving to avoid the thorns. So when the care of a garden is neglected, along with the vegetable that refreshes there grows the weed that pricks. For it was as if the Lord was instructing His disciples to enter badly cultivated fields cautiously, when He said: "The princes and Pharisees have sat upon the seat of Moses. Whatever

they tell you, do; but what they do, do not do" (Matt. 23:2). As if to say: Because the deeds and words of the wicked are mixed together, they must be used in such a way that what gives life is taken from them, and what kills is avoided. Hence again, foretelling, He says: "They will come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Up to this point, then, we have gladly attended to King Saul vigorously carrying out the care of the kingdom; now let us carefully examine in what respect he, as a despiser of the Lord's command, ought to be avoided and rejected. For the text continues: (Verses 8, 9.) "He captured Agag, king of Amalek, alive, but all the common people he slew with the edge of the sword. And Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best flocks of sheep, and of the herds, and the garments, and the rams, and all that was beautiful, and they were unwilling to destroy them. But whatever was vile and worthless, this they destroyed."

2. The Word of the Lord came: Now go, and strike Amalek, and destroy all that belongs to him. Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of theirs. He therefore plainly stood forth as a transgressor through disobedience, because he refused through pride to fulfill the command of the Lord. The Lord indeed commanded the prophet, saying: Do not spare him, and do not covet anything of his possessions. But this man is shown both to have spared and to have coveted all his choicest things: so that, while the manner of the transgression is shown, it might be demonstrated how detestable is the fault of disobedience. 3. But if we describe the wars of the flesh, we find that the falls of kings are great. Hence the Lord also says in the Gospel: "If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? (Matt. 5:13). The kings of the Church are her preachers, as has already been shown above. Who then is Agag, king of Amalek, if not the carnal sense? For since we possess from the soul both rationality and sensuality, rationality is ascribed to the mind, sensuality to the flesh; and through the former we share kinship with the angels, through the latter with brute animals. In the former, the higher we are raised, the closer we draw to the heavenly citizens. But through the latter, the more we slide toward the enticements of the flesh, the more carnal, so to speak, we are found to be. Hence, when the daughters of men had already been seen and desired, and pleasures had already been fulfilled in luxury, concerning those who by the merit of purity were called sons of God, the Lord threatens in Genesis, saying: "My spirit shall not remain in man forever, because he is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). For man becomes flesh when reason is

subjugated to the carnal sense. The king of Amalek, therefore, is the vigor of the carnal sense, which commands through base impulses so as to drag captive reason toward the allurements of obscenity. And fittingly does the name of the Amalekite king suit the carnal sense. For Agag is interpreted as "meditating" or "speaking."

To meditate, for him, is to gather the phantasms of wantonness through inner meditation. And to speak, for him, is to arouse the flesh through base impulses to lust. For he has, as it were, a great cry of speech, because by striking the flesh he stirs it more ardently. For by meditating he gathers what he sets forth by speaking: because everyone who is subject to the carnal sense, the more freely he beholds the images of wantonness within, the more powerful the motions of baseness he feels outwardly. He meditates, therefore, through the inner vision of baseness, but he speaks through the outward motion of pleasure. The king of Amalek is therefore called "speaking and meditating," because he can arouse the slippery enticements of the flesh in those whom he deceives through base thoughts, and whom he instructs through the experience of alluring sensation. But it should be noted that the more freely he meditates, the more freely he also speaks: because he stirs the flesh more powerfully the more he holds the causes of his agitation impressed within through thought. For in the manner of fire, the more attentively it is blown upon, the more it is kindled: because if the breath of impure thought is absent, the heat of lustful agitation cannot be present. The king of Israel therefore fights against the king of Amalek when a teacher of the Church argues against fornication. He captures the defeated one when he receives sinners converted to pardon not only as penitents but also as confessors.

He therefore holds the king of Amalek already bound, as it were, who sees the carnal sense in converted sinners already subjected to reason through the love of chastity. But what does it mean that the bound one lives, except that there are some who are not moved by their own passions, but upon hearing of the obscenities of others, are moved? They are strong in fighting, but as victors they fall. For he who kept the conquered king alive clearly found pleasure in the person of the captured king in the triumph of that very war. 4. But what else do those do who receive the confession of sins from others? For while they think about what those confessing have done, they burn with desire toward the crimes they hear; for often while they hear the enticements with which others had overwhelmed themselves, they them-

selves begin to love what those others, now dying to such things through their exhortation, confess. Already therefore Agag has been defeated and captured in his own city, but he is preserved by the victor, when what is detested by the subjects is loved by the prelates: because carnal sense begins to flourish in those in whom it had lost the vigor of its wicked dominion among the others. And because while the pastors rush toward the precipice, the subjects follow along, the king is said to have taken Agag alive, but the same king, and the people subject to the same king, are recorded to have spared the best things of Amalek. For to spare is characteristic of an affected mind, out of love for that which it spares. This certainly befits the vice of lust: because as soon as it begins to please, it draws the mind into love of itself. Because its force is also vehement, it does not know how to remain stationary: because assuredly it quickly accomplishes its work, if the wakening mind does not quickly expel it from itself. For when it invades the mind, it spreads itself through innumerable thoughts of shameful things.

Hence also both Saul and the people are rightly recorded to have spared the best of the flocks and herds. The thoughts of lusts are indeed called flocks and herds: because they are both innumerable and are fed in the reprobate heart by the contemplation of uncleanness. They are also the best, not by proof of goodness, but by the appetite of the one choosing them. For in the reprobate heart, because nothing is loved more dearly, they are called the best flocks, to which no others are compared. But they are called the best on account of the blindness of heart, and herds on account of the guilt of transgression. For to reprobate minds it is no great thing to think unclean thoughts; but before God it is no small thing to store unclean things in the temple of God, that is, in the regenerate spirit. He spares therefore not only the sheep, but also the herds: because he who through the love of lust regards the faults of uncleanness as though they were small, spares them as though they were small, but does not find the deserved punishments to be small. Moreover, by the name of sheep the lighter thoughts of lust can be understood, and by herds the stronger and more troublesome ones. The king and the people certainly spare these, when the reprobate teacher and his subjects are subjected to the vexations of unclean thought, both light and strong.

But what is it to spare the garments, except for the already condemned mind to deliberate upon unclean things? For if the golden garment is the glory of the virgin bride, what are the garments of Amalek, except the foul

defilements of lust? But they are called garments: because by their covering both soul and body are stained. For because the perpetration of lust defiles both soul and body, they are called not a garment, but garments. But, as I said, to spare is to deliberate, and to love unclean things through the affection of the mind. But the unhappy soul thus captured, thus ensnared, because it is driven by wondrous impulses to perpetrate its deliberated depravity, is rightly recorded, after the sheep, herds, and garments, to have spared also the rams. For as it were the horns of rams please it in the gentle blows of lusts, since it strives to retain in itself that one thing by which it may be pierced through to the death of uncleanness. He therefore spares the rams, who gladly receives the blows of his own headlong fall. For he is pricked, that he may serve the desires of his flesh; but that which pricks him sharply, delights him lightly. Because likewise lust entices the mind through innumerable modes of obscenity, they are recorded to have spared not only these named things, but all things that were beautiful. All things which the unclean soul is seen to fashion gladly for itself from the pleasure of lust are called the beautiful things of Amalek.

For it could in no way desire these things, if their appearance did not violently please it. 5. But because the fall of the victors is asserted, it is said: 'Nor did they wish to destroy them.' As if to say: They could have destroyed them, if they had wished. For nothing is conquered more easily than lust, if every impure thought is avoided. Therefore it can be destroyed all the more easily, the more each person is able to think of things other than the pleasures of the flesh. For since we cannot imagine two things at the same time, while we think of something else, whatever it may be, we cannot think impure thoughts. Swift and easy, therefore, is the victory over lust through the watchfulness of thought: if, as often as carnal things present themselves, we turn to anything at all that is not an enticement of lust. This I would call easy for those who are standing, not easy for those who have fallen: because he who is made a slave of the impure spirit through the commission of sin can neither freely avoid thoughts of the flesh nor quickly turn to other thoughts. Therefore it is said of the victors: 'They did not wish to destroy them, though they could have,' because before the fall, sins are easily avoided by the free; but if they refuse to avoid them when they can, afterward they cannot even if they wish, because they cannot perfectly will it. To whom in-

deed Truth Himself says: 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed' (John 8:36). As if to say:

Because you willingly ceased to be free, you no longer have in yourselves the power to attain freedom. But what does it mean that it is said: 'But whatever was vile and worthless, this they destroyed,' except that some, through the practice of greater pleasures, disdain the lesser ones? What is worthless and vile to them is what they despise by choosing those things that please them more. For because they seek more refined sins, they reject certain ones; and because they approve more precious sins, they consider the lesser ones cheap and small. Rightly therefore it is said: 'Whatever was vile and worthless, this they destroyed.' Because they choose more refined sins, and those that please them less they reject as unfit and despise as cheap. 6. All these things, understood morally, signify the battles and victories over lusts; but according to the historical sense, they designate the swelling pride of the arrogant and disobedient. For the command had been given to Saul by the Lord that he should so destroy Amalek that he would spare none of them and covet nothing. He who is therefore declared to have spared the king of Amalek and all the best things is openly shown to be proud and disobedient. But perhaps he despised the command because he heard it from the prophet, not from the Lord. Yet he certainly ought to have listened to the prophet in such a way as to heed the authority that the prophet set forth beforehand. For the prophet, about to command that he strike the king of Amalek, prefaced it by saying: "Thus says the Lord," so that Saul would not dare to despise the command he had heard through a man, as though it were merely a man's. Lest again the exalted king should treat his ministry with contempt, the prophet likewise prefaced it by saying: "The Lord sent me to anoint you as king." As if to say: The Lord commands you in your royal ministry through the same one through whom He raised you to the dignity of kingship. Therefore he ought to have obeyed all the more humbly, the more clearly he recognized that this man had been sent by God. But while he despised the prophet who was sent, he equally despised the Lord who sent him. Whence it adds: (Verses 10, 11.) "The word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying: I regret that I made Saul king, because he has abandoned me and has not fulfilled my words in deed."

7. He believed that he did not hear the words of the prophet, but the Lord complains that He has been abandoned, when He shows that His words have

not been fulfilled in deed. Now the Lord speaks to the Church, saying: "He who hears you, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me" (Luke 10:16). Therefore, those who through disobedience depart from the word of preachers abandon the Lord, because they withdraw from those through whose ministry they are made present to the divine will. They do not then fulfill the words of the Lord in deed, because outwardly men speak, but inwardly God speaks in men. Therefore it is not they who speak, but the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:20). In preachers, therefore, the outward lowliness of the flesh is not to be despised, whose minds the sublimity of the Godhead so graciously inhabits. What then does it mean that the Lord is said to repent, when He is not believed to be changed by emotions? But because supreme immutability speaks with mutable beings, after the manner of those with whom He speaks, when He is said to repent, it is indicated that the recklessness of the proud displeases Him. For we are accustomed to repent when those to whom we recall having bestowed honors or gifts repay us with evils. Because, therefore, almighty God complains after our manner about the ingratitude of the proud king, He is said to repent of having conferred royal dignity upon him.

This is certainly said to the great increase of damnation for the proud: because what they are, they now are not for merit but for punishment, because they are not in the will of God. Therefore, for God to repent is to not have His will in the reprobate, when He remembers the honors He bestowed, but recognizes that those upon whom He conferred good things make evil use of the good things He conferred. Indeed, God intimates this repentance of His to the Jews in other words through the prophet Malachi, saying: "I have no pleasure in you, and I will not accept an offering from your hand" (Mal. 1:10). How greatly, therefore, we see the fault of disobedience must be guarded against, if we attend to how severely it is struck by these words of the Lord. 8. Now, in the war of Amalek we have described the battle against fornication, which is commanded through the sacred Scriptures to be utterly destroyed by us. Rightly, therefore, what the Lord complains of can be understood concerning teachers who have fallen in the war of the flesh, when He says: "It repents me that I have made Saul king, because he has forsaken me and has not fulfilled my words in deed. For His word is the commandment given to preachers: "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning in your hands" (Luke 12:35). He, therefore, who has the word in preaching but does not have it in the girding of chastity is seen to be God's by speaking, but is

proved to forsake God by his conduct. Outwardly he carries out divine things, but secretly, while he dissolves in the pleasure of the flesh, he is shown not to fulfill the Lord's words in deed. For he has forsaken the Lord by setting forth evil things; he does not fulfill His words by presuming to do what is forbidden. Rightly, therefore, it is said: "It repents me that I have made Saul king. As if He were saying: Him whom I then wished to rule over others, I now do not wish, because him whom I preferred when he was humble, I now see as a proud, haughty transgressor. This, indeed, is not said of any who have fallen whatsoever, but of those whose fall is manifest and whose repentance is in no way foreseen.

For concerning the fall of the righteous it is written: "The righteous man falls seven times a day and rises again" (Proverbs 24:16). Their fall is in a certain way their standing, because they are sometimes permitted to fall so that they may always be able to stand more firmly. They are permitted to stumble into evils lest they lose the highest gifts of virtues through pride. These, indeed, even if they sometimes do not fulfill the Lord's words, do not depart from the Lord, because they are abandoned for a time so that they may be held eternally; and they are foolish in a small matter, but after a little while they come to their senses. When, therefore, Saul is reprov'd not only for not fulfilling the Lord's words in deed but for having forsaken the Lord Himself, whom does he signify better than those who have fallen and are impenitent? Of whom, indeed, it is said through the prophet: "They have struck a covenant with death and with hell" (Isaiah 28:15). To strike a covenant with death is to perpetrate evils boldly and to promise to do them always. For they commit evils unceasingly, but by loving what they do, they pledge themselves, as it were, never to withdraw from friendship with death. The more insensible these become in their covenant with death, the more sharply the heart of mother Church is shaken with compassion. Whence it is well added: (Verse 11. "And Samuel was grieved, and he cried out to the Lord all night long."

9. Samuel indeed is saddened, because the chief preacher is afflicted over the perdition of his subject. And he cries out to the Lord all night, because he beseeches the divine mercy with devoted prayers for the restoration of the fallen one. For the teacher to cry out is to implore the mercy of almighty God with great longings for the sins of his subjects. He who cries out all night takes upon himself through compassion the entire darkness of that sin, and makes satisfaction to God as a penitent for it, as though for his own

crime. Therefore, for the preacher to cry out all night is to take up the entire cause of his subject and to strive to destroy all the darkness of that sin through the affection of devout compunction. But what does it mean that he is said to have cried out and the Lord not to have answered, except that the darkness of an impenitent heart, which I have mentioned, is signified in the fault of Saul, for whom he cries out? The Lord would indeed have answered if He had heard the voice of the one crying out. There follows: (Verse 12.) And when Samuel had risen in the night to go to Saul in the morning, it was reported to Samuel that Saul had come to Carmel and had erected for himself a triumphal arch.

10. What is the life of a sinner, if not night? And what is the light of the just, other than day? Whence also through Paul it is said to converted sinners: 'You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord' (Eph. 5:8). But for the preacher to rise by night is to raise up the affection of the mind from the taking on of another's fault. For the teacher lies, as it were, in the night when he mourns the darkness of another's sin, because he is brought down from the lofty security of his own innocence, so that in the depths the darkness of sins in the consideration of another may be destroyed. He therefore rises by night when he raises himself from affliction, and arranges to come to the guilty one in the morning, because he laments secretly through compassion and strikes with open rebuke through zeal. The teacher also mourns by night, but comes in the morning to reprove, because inwardly he loves the sinning subject, but is by no means ashamed to reprove the one erring openly. For it is as though morning dawns when the teacher begins to lay open the crime that lies hidden. What then does it mean that the one to whom he came is said to have come to Carmel and to have erected a triumphal arch for himself, except that the advance of evil is clearly proclaimed?

Indeed, after the fault of disobedience, to erect a triumphal arch or structure is to do evil deeds and to take pride in the perpetration of those same evils. For they raise, as it were, triumphal signs when with a certain ostentation they bring forth those things by which they think they excel others. This certainly applies to teachers who are arrogant as well as to those who are dissolute. The former indeed, while they speak great things, raise themselves to the height of esteem, and what they see themselves to be within, they make known outwardly through boasting and ostentation. And when they

draw even that which others accomplish on their own to the favor of their own praise, what else do they seem to do but display a lofty sign of victory with a notable inscription? But some both live shamefully and speak most honorably; they consider the dignity of their words, yet do not reckon the baseness of their own life. When therefore they desire to appear not by the substance of works but by the splendor of words, they assuredly construct a triumphal arch in which they exalt themselves as if victors. And because by the word of the shameful, many other shameful ones come to their senses, after Amalek has been conquered, for them to come to Carmel and erect a triumphal arch is to glory vainly before the simple over the lust that has been extinguished in their subjects. Carmel indeed is interpreted as "soft" or "tender."

For who are understood by this name of "tender," except those who are unformed in holy conduct? And who are called "soft," except those who have not yet been made firm in their begun goodness through the practice of virtue? Therefore in Carmel they raise a sign of victory, because they display themselves to the unformed and weak, lest they be found out by the experienced and strong for what they truly are. 11. For these men seek the splendor of victory not in words but in works, because they judge trees not by the beauty of their leaves but test them by the flavor of their fruits. Whence the Lord also, teaching, says: 'By their fruits you shall know them' (Matt. 7:20). Because, therefore, they desire to be praised in vain, because they flee the judgments of the most proven men, and to the unskilled and weak they falsely represent themselves as being other than what they are, Saul is said to have come to Carmel and to have erected a triumphal arch for himself. But what does it mean that he passes on to Gilgal, except that in the same manner in which he displays himself to the simple and religious, he desires to become known among the religious and learned? For Gilgal, as I have already said many times, means "wheel." But some within the holy Church are learned in Sacred Scripture yet are not religious, because they do not possess the power of Scripture, namely charity. When these hear eloquent and carnal men speaking, they admire the words they recognize. But they cannot examine their hidden qualities, which they do not know. Rightly therefore Saul is said to pass on to Gilgal, because those who seek favor from eloquent speech find what they desire not among the learned and religious, but among the simple and unskilled, or among the irreligious wise. But great men, when

the reprobate teach good things, fear all the more for the elect subject to them—lest those whom they build up by their tongue, they corrupt by their hand, that is, by their conduct. Because, therefore, slippery teachers are not to be left long in the ministry of preaching, it is fittingly added: (Verse 12.) 'Samuel therefore came to Saul, and Saul was offering a burnt offering to the Lord, the first-fruits of the spoils which he had brought from Amalek.'

12. He came indeed to Saul, to cast down the proud man whom he had raised up as a humble man to the height of the kingdom. He found him as he truly was, not as he had shown himself by the signs of his pride. What then does it mean that he offers the firstfruits of Amalek as a holocaust to the Lord, except that some both live wickedly and think they please God through the advancement of others? And because they believe that what they offer pleases God in no small measure, they are said to offer not a sacrifice or a victim, but a holocaust. They are called the firstfruits of the spoils so that in Samuel the watchful zeal of the highest and chosen priest may be indicated, by whom the beginnings of evils are swiftly suppressed. As if to say: He came in great haste, in whose absence not even the beginning of the holocausts could be freely undertaken. The firstfruits of the spoils can be understood as the choicest things from the plunder. These the slippery offer with open mouth but struck with hidden blindness, when they believe they please God by destroying in their hearers what they allow to live in themselves. As if more openly reproving one who offers indiscriminately, he says: He was offering alive what he would have offered better slain. For if according to the words of the Lord he had destroyed all the spoil in Amalek, he would have offered a wholly acceptable holocaust to almighty God.

So indeed the slippery teacher too, if he rejected by willing all the enticements of the flesh that he condemns by speaking, would burn a holocaust that could not be rejected. What then does it mean that it says he was offering the firstfruits of the spoils that he had brought from Amalek, except that the darkness of a blind heart is condemned, because it so esteems what benefits others that it neglects to see what harms itself? As if to say: He rejoiced over that as a victor—a victor in others—which he carried alive and unconquered in himself. And because for the most part they rage so madly that they even attempt to offer a pretext of virtue to the very elect and highest preachers. There follows: (Verse 13. And when Samuel had come to Saul, Saul said: Blessed are you by the Lord; I have fulfilled the word of the Lord.

13. The word of the Lord was that he should have destroyed Amalek. But what does it mean that he says, "I have fulfilled the word of the Lord," unless that the sin of fornication, the more shameful it is perceived to be, the more carefully it is concealed by the reprobate? Because therefore those who are subject to this same vice of fornication always desire to remain hidden, in their type Saul both disdained to demolish Amalek and said to Samuel: "I have fulfilled the word of the Lord." As if to say: Both in other matters I have subdued lust, and in myself I have destroyed its enticements. And because he strives to bend the mind of the great man with flattering adulation, he first said: "Blessed are you by the Lord." As if to say: This indeed I have done, but I was able to do it not by my own strength, but by your merits and intercessions. But perfect men can hear their own praises, yet cannot be bent from the rigor of justice. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 14.) And Samuel said: "And what is this voice of flocks that resounds in my ears, and of herds, which I hear?"

14. The voice of the flocks and herds of Amalek is the report of shameful deeds. When anyone is defamed for lesser sins of indulgence, the voice of the flocks is said to resound. When likewise one is accused of more criminal and more obscene things, it is the voice of the herds. As if he lays bare what was hidden under the pretense of his false virtue, saying: You justify yourself with your own mouth, but the crowds of your uncleannesses cry out through the mouths of all. But now let us see by what defenses he who has begun to put forward excuses may escape the charge of the infamy brought against him. There follows: (Verse 15.) They brought them from Amalek. The people spared the best sheep and herds, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; the rest we have slain. 15. What does it mean that he says: "They brought them from Amalek," and did not say, "We brought them"? But when the reprobate are accused, they sometimes conceal their faults by denying them, and sometimes transfer them to others. They conceal them by denying, when they can remain hidden; but when they are caught, as it were, in the open, what they cannot deny they ascribe to others. Indeed, Saul, displaying the ways of such people, says: "They brought them from Amalek. The people spared the best of the sheep and the herds. As if to say: The evil that is heard of should be weighed against the frailty of the people, not against the virtue of the pastor. Indeed, the sins of subjects should be disregarded in comparison with those of prelates. He says therefore: "They brought them from Amalek. As if to say:

What resounds about a shameful life is true, but nevertheless that same shamefulness flourished among the little ones, not among the great. Again, still softening the same fault, he says: "The people spared the best of the sheep and the herds, to sacrifice them to the Lord your God. As if to say: The people truly sinned, but not unto death; because the sins of their deeds they now strive, at my exhortation, to blot out through the humility of confession. For the flocks and herds of Amalek are sacrificed to the Lord when the wayward and incontinent come to confession and hasten to blot out by repentance what they have wickedly done.

He says therefore: "The people spared"; that is, indulged in sin. "But they brought them to be sacrificed"; because in those matters in which the people recall having fallen, they are now pierced with compunction through confessing and doing penance. The better flocks and herds, as above, designate the choicer sins of lust. As if to say: Even if the people sinned gravely, we ought not to be reproached, because in proportion to the magnitude of the crime they have lamentations of compunction. What does it mean that he says: "To sacrifice them to the Lord your God"? But by this the habit of the deceitful is shown, who, when they seek to hide from great men, resort to flattery. For what does it mean that he claims God is singularly his, except that he shows him to be a familiar friend of God? "To the Lord," he says, "your God. Not mine, but yours; because I am a sinner, you are singularly holy. But with a marvelous practice of fraud, the deceitful so conceal themselves as to reveal, and so justify as to accuse. They also temper the manner of accusation so that by accusing they appear just, lest by excusing they become known. For when he calls God his, he indeed exalts him and diminishes himself. But when he asserts that what was brought from Amalek is to be sacrificed to the Lord, he tacitly brings forth not that for which he ought to be reproached, but praised. And still adding more, he says:

"But the rest we destroyed. Indeed, sins that are forgiven are slain. Living sins are those that either still reign in the mind through concupiscence, or those that, though despised through conversion, have not yet been blotted out through penance. The former still live for pleasure, the latter live for punishment; because even if we have now ceased to sin, unless we bewail what we have committed, we are held bound by the obligation of what was committed. But he attributes the greater sins to the lesser people, and the lighter sins to the greater. For what does it mean when he says, "The rest we des-

troyed," except that there are very small sins among the greater ones, which are washed away by confession alone? These the teachers destroy when, to those who humbly confess, they remit them by apostolic authority. To all these words—because the deceitful strive to conceal themselves, not to expose themselves—there is added the authority of the elect preachers by which they are reproved: (Verse 16. For Samuel said to Saul: "Allow me, and I will tell you what the Lord has spoken to me this night."

16. What does it mean when he says: "Let me alone, and I will tell you," unless that while deceitful men persist in verbosity, they do not grant their examining superiors an opportunity to speak? As if to say: While you do not cease from verbosity, you do not permit me to say the things you ought to hear. By this word the intention of the flatterer can also be mocked; for while he believes he is pleasing through the blandishment of praise, he supposes that those whom he praises are, as it were, held fast by those same praises. It is therefore as if the chosen leader were to mock his praiser with honorable gravity, saying: You who praise me—I cannot speak harsh things to you. Let me alone, therefore, that is, permit me to speak, and understand the things I am about to say. And because, as I said, flatterers believe they are pleasing by praising, they by no means expect to hear harsh things from those whom they praise. Therefore, as if about to hear joyful and favorable things, Saul follows up, saying: "Speak. But chosen men, when they hear their own praises, do not grow soft from the rigor of justice amid the encouragements of praise. For those who despise the deeds of the reprobate can by no means accept their words. Because, therefore, they cannot be bent by praises, they both examine dishonest flatterers with subtle reasoning and pursue them with stern judgments. Whence it follows: (Verses 17–19. And Samuel said:

"When you were little in your own eyes, were you not made the head among the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel; and the Lord sent you on a mission and said: Go, slay the sinners of Amalek, and you shall fight against them until their utter destruction. Why then did you not listen to the voice of the Lord, but turned to the spoil and did evil in the eyes of the Lord?" 17. By these words, the disobedience of the proud king is subtly examined: because he first sets before him the gifts that were bestowed, then strikes at the audacity of his transgression through a careful investigation of that same fault. For it is a subtle examination when a crafty

sinner is so scrutinized that no excuse for his guilt is left to him, so that God's sentence holds him bound, as it were, to the death of his crime, since no refuge from sin remains for him. Therefore, so that every way of escape may be blocked for the deceitful and proud, both the loftiness of his dignity and the manner of his ministry are recalled to him, when he says: 'Were you not, when you were little in your own eyes, made the head among the tribes of Israel? And the Lord said to you: Destroy the sinners of Amalek.' And so that, now surrounded and besieged by these arguments, he might catch him, he lays upon him the hand of guilt, saying: 'Why then did you not hear the voice of the Lord, but turned to the spoil and did evil in the sight of the Lord?' As if to say: Behold what you were, what you were made, what you ought to have done; behold what you have done; behold how far you have departed from what you ought to have carried out. Therefore, when he pressed further, saying: 'Why did you do evil in the eyes of the Lord?' he seized the deceitful defendant, as it were, by surrounding him on every side.

18. But in this passage it should be noted that, while the proud king is rebuked, the times of his election are recalled, so that the swelling of his heart may be perceived not to have been present at his choosing, but to have grown from the eminence of his office. He was indeed chosen as a good man by the Lord, but while he grew from his high position, he declined through pride. Therefore He says: 'When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel'; now, turned to plunder, 'you have done evil in the eyes of the Lord.' As if to say: Through the truth of humility you merited the kingdom, but now, humble in pretense yet swollen in truth, you are losing the kingdom. For what are the eyes of the heart, if not the gaze of reason? For he who has unimpaired sight of reason is perfectly illuminated. He is therefore humble in his own eyes who perfectly examines himself and recognizes himself as humble with perfect vision. By these words, then, not only the past humility of the fallen king is commended, but also the keenness of his reason: because he was so great in reason that he knew himself perfectly, and so great in virtue that, examining himself closely, he truly saw himself as humble. Since, therefore, when he is rebuked his past qualities are recalled, what else is described but that he lacks the things he once had?

For none can become proud unless they first lose the eyes of the heart. Concerning the lustful, the matter is even more plainly evident: they would

never plunge themselves into the abyss of fornication if they had not first grown dim to the light of inward glory. Because they despise the lofty precepts of chastity, they are also convicted of pride. He who had come to depose the king from his office therefore says: 'When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel; now you have done evil in the eyes of the Lord.' As if to say: Proud now and blind, you are justly deposed, you who formerly, seeing and humble, deserved to obtain the kingdom. For the proud Pharisees too are called blind by the Truth itself, who says to the disciples: 'Let them alone; they are blind, and leaders of the blind' (Matt. 15:14). This blindness is especially ascribed to the lustful, because there are no vices that cast thicker darkness upon the mind than lust. But now you may see many who stood firm as clerics fall once they became priests. To these, certainly, through the command of Samuel it is said: 'When you were little in your own eyes, you were made head among the tribes of Israel.' As if to say: When in a lesser rank you kept the precepts of chastity with an illuminated heart; now, having lost your eyes, you have fallen into the abyss of fornication.

You have turned to plunder, because you have broken the divine precepts by violent presumption. For since they burst in to violate the sanctuary of chastity while God forbids, and stands armed, as it were, with threats and blocking the way, they lead, as if through the plunder of spoil, Amalek's chosen things into the Lord's land. And because the unchaste hide themselves from preachers as much as they can, Saul is rebuked for having done evil in the sight of the Lord. As if a preacher, threatening and terrifying one who has fallen into carnal pleasure, should say: The crime of impurity is indeed hidden from men, but it is not concealed from Him who sees all things. When the impenitent hear these and similar words, they can by no means be terrified. Hence, even though they are already caught by reasoning, like serpents they strive to slip away through their slipperiness from the hands of those who hold them. They put forth the tail and hide the head: because the outward results of their deeds are now visible, but the true quality of those same actions is concealed. Whence it also follows: (Verse 20.) 'And Saul said to Samuel: On the contrary, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and I have walked in the way by which the Lord sent me, and I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have destroyed Amalek.'

19. For as if concealing his own hidden faults while bringing forth the exposed faults of others, the slippery teacher commends himself on the success of his preaching, saying: I ought not to be rebuked for the fault of my subjects, but rather praised, since I have destroyed it in the offenders by preaching. I struck Amalek: because the spirit of fornication fell by the sword of my tongue in the hearts of my hearers. The king, even if he lives, has been brought captive: because even if the sense of the flesh, as long as we are in the flesh, cannot be entirely destroyed, it has been captured, as it could be captured, because it cannot prevail over reason. Eager to show that his subjects themselves have been corrected and are confessing their sins, he added, saying: (Verse 21.) But the people took from the spoil sheep and oxen, the firstfruits of those things which were slain, to sacrifice to the Lord their God in Gilgal.

20. When something belonging to someone is taken away by the violence of armed men, it is called plunder. But the vices of the flesh and soul, because they are propagated at the devil's suggestion, are as it were his own property. Whoever therefore, recently lax within himself but now violent, destroys vices, takes plunder; because he powerfully seizes what belongs to another. And it should be noted that both slaughter and plunder are mentioned, so that it may be taught that some things are left behind dead while others are carried away alive. Indeed, the pleasures of lust are slain when they are driven from the heart by the power of heavenly intention and cut away from the body by contrition of spirit. But they are brought alive for sacrifice; because even if by the conversion of the sinner the delight of the flesh or mind is abandoned, the punishment of past delight is not entirely destroyed. Let vices therefore be slain, and let the living firstfruits by no means be kept from sacrifice: so that he who powerfully destroys the force of sin in contempt of pleasures may fear that the punishment of delight remains alive for him to sacrifice. What then are the firstfruits of the slain, if not the delights of sins? He is said to offer these who confesses before God to the priests. And the offerings are sacrificed when their punishment is destroyed through repentance. For they are, as it were, offered slain as firstfruits, yet live on through what follows:

when someone confesses sins but does not strive to sacrifice them, that is, to slay them before God, through repentance. Therefore, when the firstfruits of the slain are said to be reserved for sacrifice, the error of certain people is

confounded—those who abandon sins but do not nevertheless bewail them. Because therefore sins must not only be confessed but also destroyed by the severity of penance, while Saul feigns the figure of a good teacher, he asserts that his subjects brought the firstfruits of the slain to be sacrificed. Because the measure of penance must also be determined by the reasoning of the Scriptures, the firstfruits to be sacrificed are brought to Gilgal. Moreover, not only oxen but also sheep are kept for sacrifice: so that those who are concerned about their salvation may strive to destroy great sins through repentance in such a way that they do not neglect to bewail lesser ones. But concerning the proud it is clear: because, while they always desire to appear great, they are ashamed to be marked as sinners. Even when caught they resist, and they desire to appear just even in those things which they do. What then does it mean that he says: "Indeed, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord"? But Samuel says: "Let me alone, and I will tell you what the Lord spoke to me in the night. And after a little: "Why have you turned to the plunder, and done evil before the eyes of the Lord?"

It is clear therefore how wondrously swollen with pride is he who seeks to justify himself at the very time when he recognizes that the Lord is rebuking him for sin. 21. But if he is believed to have responded thus because he thought the words were the prophet's, not the Lord's, but the prophet's, we still see imitators of Saul who, while trusting in their own learning, both despise through pride the commands of their superiors that they hear, and believe they can improve them by changing them. What then does he mean when he says: "Indeed I heard the voice of the Lord, and I brought Agag the king of Amalek"? But it is as if he were saying: Both what was commanded I strove to fulfill, and what was lacking I supplied. It was necessary that Amalek be struck down; but because, with God's help, he is conquered, it was fitting to supplement this by preserving what could be offered in sacrifice to Him. This clearly appears in the proud: because when they cannot conceal open fault, they attempt to alter or diminish it. As if to say: Even if you judge the open faults of the deed, the hidden simplicity of intention ought to be considered. It would indeed be a fault to bring anything from Amalek, unless what was brought ought to be sacrificed to God. This indeed often happens in monasteries, when any overly devout subject presumes to add to the commands of spiritual superiors; when he despises the common regular life and follows the judgment of his own will.

For while he strives to improve his life by choosing rather than by obeying, what else is shown but that he colors open disobedience with the appearance of virtue? Indeed, not only subjects but also superiors ought to examine this matter carefully. Subjects ought to note carefully that Saul displeased God because he attempted to sacrifice to God contrary to the prophet's command. Let superiors note carefully that the prophet gave the king the command to destroy Amalek. For thus a teacher ought to praise the common life without despising the particular gifts of individuals. That common life indeed is praised which is joined by charity and is not darkened by intervening vices. The Apostle's judgment is: "Each one has his own gift from God, one indeed in this way, another in that way" (1 Cor. 7:7). Those, therefore, whose food and table are common ought to attend not only to the common good of refreshment but to the particular nature of their struggle: so that they eat together, but do not equally contend to fight against the stings of fornication through abstinence. For his flesh must be subdued more whose thorn of the flesh is more troublesome. Therefore the common life is no longer merely to be stirred up where the community of meals is observed, but each is said to fight individually against his individual battle. Nor does a teacher command well if he does not command that by which Amalek is struck down, but rather that by which he lives.

Therefore let the teacher command, but so that the spirit of fornication may be overcome. Let subjects not refuse to obey, but only where the crime of pride is incurred, not where the abyss of death is avoided. But the disobedient, while with swelling heart they fail to carry out the commands of their superiors, when they attempt to improve what is enjoined upon them, while they desire to offer their own works to God, they destroy themselves. For through other virtues we render Him what is ours; through obedience we offer Him ourselves. Therefore Samuel adds, saying: (Verse 22. "Does God desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed?" 22. For what are the good works of the elect but sacrifices and burnt offerings? Since therefore the Lord had commanded burnt offerings and sacrifices to be offered through the law, what does it mean that the Lord is said not to want burnt offerings and sacrifices, yet promises that He wants to be obeyed, unless that those things which are done apart from obedience are not burnt offerings and sacrifices? As if to say: Good works are then good when they do not disagree with the judgment of those set over them. But if

this is said in order to commend the virtue of obedience, it is clear how sublime a good it is, which surpasses sacrifices and offerings. What then does it mean that He wills obedience to the voice of the Lord, unless that all good works must be set below those goods which are commanded? For when superiors rightly command, the goods which subjects choose of their own judgment are set below the commands of their superiors. Those very works set below them are called burnt offerings and sacrifices, so that not only may the small works of inferiors be perceived as not to be compared with the commands of superiors, but the greatest burnt offerings indeed belong to those who wish to withdraw themselves entirely from public work, so as to offer themselves wholly consumed by love to God in the secret of contemplation.

Sacrifices belong to those who by no means separate themselves from the common public life, but act with singular virtue, so as to surpass the virtues of others by living more strictly. These things indeed, and things of this kind, when they are done with the permission of good rulers, are sacrifices and burnt offerings which God approves; but when they are done in such a way that through them the commands of superiors are neglected, let those who offer hear what the prophet sent by the Lord says to the disobedient king: Does God desire burnt offerings and sacrifices, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed? As if to terrify those who despise the commands of their fathers as lesser things, and present their own as greater, saying: Because you think you do something great, you despise what is small and lowly; but if you see clearly, through this you do not please the Lord. And rightly, while the work of the proud is examined, the prophet keenly inquires, saying: Does God desire burnt offerings and sacrifices, and not rather that the voice of the Lord be obeyed? He inquires indeed so that the swelling of pride may be struck by pastoral authority. He says: Does God desire burnt offerings and sacrifices? Because those who choose to follow their own will think they please God; but God by no means approves their works, even when they are great and mighty. But now he added with what praises obedience ought to be proclaimed, and said:

(Verse 22. For obedience is better than sacrifices, and to hearken is more than to offer the fat of rams. 23. For since he said above: "Does God desire holocausts and victims? does he not subject both to the praises of obedience, so that when he set forth victims and the fat of rams, he understood the

holocaust in the fat? Whatever is better is certainly better than something good. But those holocausts and victims which God does not want are by no means good. What, then, does it mean when it is said in praise of obedience, "Obedience is better than victims, and to hearken than to offer the fat of rams," unless that obedience is then better when the holocaust and victim is not evil? As if, therefore, he brings back the proud and disobedient to the consideration of so great a good, saying: Even if nothing were done by you through presumption, the virtue of obedience would be better than the works you choose. It is clear, therefore, on what summit it is placed, which the prophet saw as higher than divine oblations. But if, as above, we follow the spiritual sense, victims are to be referred to the austerity of a great way of life, and holocausts to the compunction of a more secluded life. For obedience is better than victims, and to hearken is more than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is of far higher merit always to subject one's own will to another's will than to wear down the body with great fasts, or to slay oneself through compunction in a more secret sacrifice.

For what is the fat of rams but the rich and interior devotion of the elect? He therefore offers the fat of rams who, in the pursuit of a secret way of life, possesses the affection of devout prayer. Nevertheless, obedience is better than victims, and than to offer the fat of rams. Because he who has perfectly learned to fulfill the will of his superior excels in the heavenly kingdom both those who abstain and those who weep. Certainly, because he says this against one who is proud and openly contemning the Lord's commandments, he does not compare the good that he did with the good that he despised; but he destroys the pretense of good by showing the truth of a better good. As if he were saying: Even if you were seeking an excellent good for the more excellent glory of virtues, you ought rather to have chosen the good of obedience, which excels even excellent things. Speaking thus, he indeed destroys the pretense of good by argumentation; but by adding what follows, he openly confounds the parent evil of disobedience, saying: (Verse 23. "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as the wickedness of idolatry."

24. What is it that those who resist and refuse to comply are likened by the prophet to diviners and idolaters, except that diviners strove to know divine things and to divine hidden matters, while idolaters subjected themselves to figments by venerating them? But those who resist the commands of

their superiors resist precisely because they judge that they know the divine will better. To resist is therefore like the sin of divination: because, as if despising the divine altar, they receive responses at the altars of demons, when they trust in the deceitful and proud inventions of their own heart, and oppose by contrary thinking the salutary counsels of their superiors. To refuse to comply, moreover, is said to be like the crime of idolatry; because surely no one would persist in the obstinacy of his disobedience if he did not carry in his heart the figment of his own purpose as though it were an idol. For when he conceives in his heart what he intends to do, he makes, as it were, an idol, and when he resolves that he will carry out the purpose conceived in his mind, he bows down, as it were, to adore a graven image. To refuse to comply is therefore like the crime of idolatry: because whoever is obstinate in his own resolve is raised up outwardly in contempt of his superiors precisely because inwardly he is bowed down to the graven images of his own purpose which he has established by his own devising.

But it must be carefully asked why resisting is compared to the sin of divination, and refusing to comply to the crime of idolatry. For "crime" is used only of a great sin, while "sin" is the term used even for what is slight; but if diviners were so called from "altar," because they were accustomed to receive responses by consulting, the sin of idolatry was a crime in comparison with it, because it was more insane to worship stones than to receive false responses about how to live well under the guise of divine things. Why then is resisting said by comparison to be a sin, while refusing to comply is called a crime? But to resist is to dissent from the will of one who commands. Many indeed seem to resist for a time, when they do not immediately accept the commands of their superiors, yet after a little while they comply with those same commands. But to refuse to comply—what is it but both to resist an enjoined obedience and to persist in the obstinacy of that very resistance? For those do not comply who are unconquerable in their heart's resolve and who omit nothing of what they determine to do on account of anyone's authority. Rightly therefore, in comparison with resisting, refusing to comply is called a crime, because it appears to be a far greater and more horrible sin. Because, then, those who are of this sort are not overcome by reasoning, the prophet added what punishment should restrain them, saying: (Verse 23.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king. 25. For what does it mean that Saul is cast off, except that

he is judged incorrigible? It is as if He were saying: Because you reject all counsels of salvation, for the guilt of obstinacy you ought no longer to be corrected by words, but condemned with the punishment of rejection. How greatly the guilt of disobedience ought to be feared is shown, if one considers attentively that on account of it even kings are deposed. What does it mean when he says: "Because you have cast away the word of the Lord, the Lord has cast you away"? But the word is cast away when it is not reverently preserved in its sublimity; for to cast away is to let something slip from the hand to the ground, whether through negligence or through violent throwing. Now the word of the Lord, because it speaks salutary things, is heavenly or sublime; it is negligently cast to the ground when through sloth it is not fulfilled. But it is cast away through contempt when the proud and disobedient repel it with swelling heart and disdain to observe it with the hand of action. But because he is reprov'd not for casting away but for rejecting the word, this signifies that while the proud follow their own will, they become far from the Lord. For to reject is to repel something far away.

For those who worthily undertake the guidance of others are not only near to God through obedience, but also make those near to Him who through vices and crimes are far from Him. It is therefore as if He were saying: You are expelled far from the order of dignity, because you were unwilling to be present to the merit of that same dignity. For the merit of dignity is the observance of the divine word. When this is rejected, because the merit of dignity is lost, the dignity itself is also removed. It is fitting, then, to observe how much the proud lose through disobedience, and how much the humble gain. The former, while they rejoice in fulfilling the judgment of their own will, offer God great labors of works, yet have no rewards for their labors; the latter, while they abandon themselves, while they follow the judgment of another's will, earn the glory of eternal sublimity; whence also through the most blessed Mary, Mother of the Lord our Redeemer, it is said: "He has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the humble" (Luke 1:52). Indeed the Lord puts down the mighty from their seat when He casts off the disobedient proud, and He exalts the humble, because He glorifies the obedient with eternal glory. But words do not correct the proud; rather, only while they tremble at losing their honors do they feign the humility they do not possess, lest they lose the summit of glory; whence it is added: (Verse 24.

And Saul said to Samuel: "I have sinned, because I have transgressed the words of the Lord and your words." 26. What does it mean that Saul is rebuked by the prophet for not having heard the voice of the Lord and for having done evil in His eyes, and yet he does not at all confess that he has sinned; but when he sees himself rejected from the kingdom, he confesses that he has sinned and transgressed the word of the Lord and His commands? It is because the proud are bold in despising the words of the humble, yet they cannot, in the manner of the elect, despise the honors they covet. They are indeed bold enough to scorn the commands of their superiors, but they are not prepared to relinquish high positions. On the contrary, the humble are ready to obey the commands of their superiors and secure in losing high positions. For since they desire not earthly but heavenly things, they despise the heights of earthly exaltation, they strive to labor for heavenly things; they willingly submit, and they shrink from being placed above others. Saul, therefore, refusing to obey God yet fearing to lose the kingdom—what else does he show us but the character of the proud, who, when they prevail, avoid being seen as lowly or as sinners, but when they are compelled, feign the virtue of humility? But when, under compulsion, they confess, they diminish by their words the sin they accuse.

For although he declared that he had sinned by transgressing the word of the Lord, he recalled that he had incurred that same transgression by necessity rather than by will, saying: 'I feared the people and obeyed their voice.' As if to say: The sin for which I am rebuked ought to be struck with a lighter punishment, inasmuch as it was committed not through malice but through weakness. Now, to sin by deliberate purpose and will is a great transgression; but to sin through weakness is the more tolerable, the more the one who lies subject to the sin is unequal to the forces of that same sin. And because by the same craftiness of their heart they suppose themselves to prevail over the humility of simple teachers, he added, as if already having persuaded: (Verse 25) 'But now, I pray, bear my sin and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.'

27. Correctable sins are indeed borne, because after they depart from the will of the one who committed them, they can be wholesomely purged through satisfaction. But the sins of those in whose minds they have become ingrained through impenitence are not borne. Whence John also says: "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that one should pray for that" (1 John

5:16). A sin unto death is that which is committed by one who can never come to his senses. This sin is assuredly not borne by superiors, because it is not wiped away by the prayers or offerings of priests. But Saul, representing in all things the proud and obstinate, does not cease to swell with pride, and yet begs that his sin be borne; he heaps up an unbearable burden, and asks that it be carried as though it were light. This indeed happens as often in the Church as those who willingly commit great crimes fail to consider their magnitude. They gather up unbearable things, and reckon them to be trivial and of no weight. They hide their sins from their superiors, and so that they can scarcely be discovered and rebuked, they minimize those same sins as much as they can, lest those who preside over them recognize their enormity. They are also strong for sinning, but weak for weeping over their sins; they want to be dissolved in the pleasures of sin, but they refuse to be purged by the bitterness of penance.

What then does it mean when he says, "Bear my sin," except that they receive the sweetness of sins in themselves, but want to burden their prelates with the weight of those same sins? Some even come voluntarily to confess, but they themselves do not mourn for the things of which they accuse themselves; instead they beg others to do penance, they think they are saved by faith alone, and they do not care to return through penance once they have been cast down. Whence Saul also adds, saying: "And return with me, that I may worship the Lord. For the preacher is, as it were, departing when he rejects the shameless; therefore he says: "Return with me, that I may worship the Lord. He thinks that he is not divided from the communion of the elect solely because he preserves the common faith; or certainly, to worship the Lord is to submit oneself to the discipline of faith and the keeping of good works. But because Saul represents feigning hypocrites, there follows: (Verse 26. Samuel said to Saul: "I will not return with you, because you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king."

28. What then does it mean that the prophet refused to bear the sin of the penitent king, except that he saw him not truly penitent? To whom he first responded with those words of rejection, because he recognized that the king would by no means be changed. By this steadfastness of the prophet, certain overly lenient priests of this present time are reproved, who are weak in their conduct yet bold in their recklessness. They can scarcely sustain themselves, yet dare to take up the burdens of others to be carried; they do not bear their

own light burdens, yet subject themselves to unbearable ones. Behold, the mighty prophet fled from taking up the burden of the king's sin, so that the priest of the Church may fear and dread to undergo the weight of unbearable sins. For the most part, however, let him so take up the sins of others that he nevertheless permits the one by whom they were committed to weep over those sins he undertakes to expiate. Hence Samuel by no means promised to bear the king's sin, yet he mourned for him whom he had declared rejected. For concerning him it is written shortly after: 'Samuel mourned for Saul, because the Lord repented that He had made him king over Israel.' He did not indeed promise to bear the king's sin, so that the king would strive to weep over it himself. But nevertheless he wept for the one he had declared rejected, so that he might render the Lord favorable toward him.

In the literal sense, indeed, when the prophet repeats the sentence, he shows the irrevocable sentence of divine justice by which the sinner is so cast away that he is never permitted to return to the hand of divine mercy. It can also be understood in another way, that he asks the prophet to return with him to worship the Lord. For holy men who do not abandon the Lord by sinning have no need to return to Him through repentance. For to return belongs to one who has departed. This indeed befits sinners who withdraw from the Lord through sin; it does not befit the just who remain steadfast. What then does it mean that the just Samuel is asked to return with Saul the sinner, except that chosen preachers are afflicted like penitents on behalf of their fallen subjects, and come as if returning, when they accompany fallen subjects with fatherly affliction? They therefore return with them, when the sins of their subjects are equally mourned both by the subjects who sinned and by the prelates who stood firm. It is therefore as if he were saying: I have now recognized through the rebuke of preaching that you cling to me with fatherly affection, you whom I did not leave to sin further. Since therefore I have come to my senses through your reproach, I ask you to return with me, because by my own strength I am by no means sufficient to blot out so great a magnitude of wickedness.

But such prayers of affection would deserve to be received if they proceeded from truth of heart; fittingly therefore it was answered to the hypocrite: 'I will not return with you.' As if to say: I do not know how to sacrifice to God on your behalf, since I do not perceive you to be subject to God in the truth of humility; and repeating the earlier words, he says: 'Because you have

rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king; and because the crafty must be rejected and abandoned, there follows: (v. 27) 'And Samuel turned to depart.' In this departure of the elders, indeed, hypocrites fear the loss of temporal honor more than the loss of their eternal inheritance. Hence even when abandoned they cannot be at rest, but what they dare not accomplish by themselves, they strive to obtain through the intervention of others. Fittingly therefore it is added: (v. 27) 'But he seized the edge of his cloak, and it was torn.'

29. What are the garments of a teacher, if not to teach the qualities of the subjects adhering to him? Concerning these garments, indeed, a promise is made to the great shepherd through the prophet: 'As I live, says the Lord, you shall clothe yourself with all these as with a garment' (Isa. 49:18). And through the Psalmist it is sung: 'The Lord has reigned, He has put on beauty; the Lord has put on strength' (Ps. 93:1). For He put on beauty, who joined to Himself the splendid minds of the faithful, as it were garments. Saul therefore seized Samuel's cloak, when any proud and rejected person seeks the honor of high office to be conferred upon himself by great men through those dear ones and intimates who cling to him; and because no one intercedes on behalf of the reprobate among perfect hearers, he is said to have seized not the cloak, but the edge of the cloak, that is, the extremity; but that edge is torn, because he who suggests useless things is rejected. For when a lesser person making an indiscriminate request is repelled, it is as though the edge of the garment is said to be torn. For it was as though a part of the great prophet's cloak was torn, when He answered Peter who was making a bad suggestion, saying: 'Get behind me, Satan, for you do not savor the things that are of God, but the things that are of men' (Matt. 16:23).

Hence He likewise commands, saying: 'If your hand or your foot scandalizes you, cut it off and cast it from you; likewise, if your eye scandalizes you, pluck it out and cast it from you' (Matt. 5:30). By these words, assuredly, not only the edge of the cloak but even the middle portion is designated as needing to be cut away: because when they suggest evil things, even perfect hearers must be disregarded. For this is why the sons of Zebedee together with their mother ask that one sit at the right hand and the other at the left of the Redeemer; but as though ignorant of what constitutes a good request, they are repelled (Matt. 20). For it was as though the Lord tore a part of the cloak, when He rebuked and confuted those members who were causing

scandal. And it should be noted that the whole cloak is not torn, but a part of the cloak is torn: because when a good person suggests evil things, he ought to be repelled in that which he suggests wrongly, and in that in which he is otherwise good, he ought to be retained out of love.

30. By the garment, the conduct of the ruler is also signified, as the Psalmist attests, who says: "Let your priests be clothed with justice" (Ps. 131:9). The edge of the cloak is therefore seized when the teacher is praised for great holiness, when that which displays outward beauty is spoken in his praise. But because the good qualities of the just that lie hidden are more numerous, only the edge of the cloak can be grasped: because what is seen of the chosen teacher's justice is little, while much indeed is concealed. But that very little which is known, when it is grasped, is torn: because the just are not held by their own praises. For because they despise them in a moment, they cannot be held, as it were, by the tearing of the cloak. The torn part of the garment is indeed held, but the prophet is not held: because what is said in praise of the just person is true, and yet the just, while they despise what they hear, leave, as it were, the torn piece in the hands of the one holding it. Of the greater ones, therefore, because certain things can be known, a part is, as it were, grasped. But when all that is done is known by the little ones, if it is praised, it must nonetheless be cast aside; because nothing of good works should be held onto through vanity.

For hence it is that while John, still a youth, follows the Lord already seized, and is held by his garment, he is described as having fled naked, leaving the garment behind (Mark 14). For the youth is caught by the garment when he is praised for the beginning of his good conduct; but he who despises the praises he hears flees naked, leaving the linen cloth behind. For to flee naked is to have a praiseworthy life, but to despise the praise of a chosen life. For he flees as if naked who ascribes nothing to himself through vain-glory from the adornment of virtues. He can also be understood to have fled naked for this reason: because he who is said to have been caught by part of the linen cloth is reported to have left the cloth behind; because it frequently happens in the conscience of the elect that, through the fact that they are praised in part, they suspect that they have lost not a part of their merits, but all the merit of a good life. Samuel's cloak is therefore torn, because chosen teachers despise their own praises. And because they are not swayed by praises,

he repeats the severity of the former sentence, saying: (v. 28) "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from your hand this day."

31. For perfect men, because they are softened by no praise from the rigor of justice, are the same before as after the testimony of their praise, and they confirm by repeating afterward the same things they had said before. But we must ask what this signifies, that which is said: 'Today'. For if the life of the reprobate is night, what does it mean that Saul's kingdom is torn away in the day? But if the life of a reprobate pastor is night, when his kingdom is torn away, it makes day. For day does not come unless night departs. He says, therefore, 'Today', because the darkness of the disobedient one is declared to be condemned. Whence also, when Judas went out, the Lord says: 'Now is the Son of Man glorified' (John 13:31); because He saw the night of that man's life depart, and the pure light of justice remain in the other disciples. It is also said 'Today', because with the proud one removed, the kingdom was being handed over to the humble king. Whence it is also added: (Verse 28) 'And He has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.' When therefore "today" is said, nothing bright is seen in the rejected king, but the glory of his successor is proclaimed, who from the height of the kingdom was to shine with the splendor of great virtue. And asserting the immutability of the divine sentence, he adds, saying: (Verse 29) 'Moreover, the Triumphant One of Israel will not spare, and will not be moved by repentance.'

32. For who is to be understood by the name of this triumphant one, except the Creator of the human race? For whoever overcomes hidden adversaries conquers by His power, who bestows upon him the grace of overcoming temptation. What does it mean that the triumphant one is said not to spare, when Samuel is being entreated? Because when preachers grow angry at sinning subjects, when they strike the proud or the dissolute with divine judgment, they do not act by the impulse of their own fury, but carry out the decision of the divine will. As if he were clearly saying: I indeed pronounced not my own sentence, but His, whose decree, once issued, cannot be revoked. Therefore He does not spare, and is not moved by repentance—but toward those who can neither cease from their sins nor repent of the sins they love. And adding the reason, he says: (Verse 29. "For He is not a man, that He should repent. As if to say: His very being belongs to Him in whom there is no changeableness. By the name of the triumphant one, the perfection of the substitute king can also be designated, who was destined to have

the glory of many triumphs and who would not dare to spare anyone against the will of the Creator. Whence also in this very same book it is written of him: "And David struck the whole land, and left alive neither man nor woman" (1 Kings 27:9). Of him also it is said:

"For He is not a man, that He should repent. For what is designated in this place by "man," except one subject to carnal passions? As if he were still stinging the proud one, saying: You now repent of your sins when you receive the sentence upon your boldness; but he will not repent who, being a man, is not subject to disobedience and pride. And Saul still confesses with his mouth, saying: (Verse 30. "I have sinned. But he reveals the quality of that confession, because he added, saying: (Verse 30. "But now honor me before the elders of my people, and before Israel." 33. It is clear what kind of repentance he bears who still desires to be honored. For if he truly repented of his sin, he would have desired to be dishonored rather than honored. It is fitting, therefore, to marvel at the hardness of his cast-off heart. As the man of God, carrying out the command of the Creator, says: "The Lord has cast you off, that you should not be king," on the contrary, he who receives the sentence of rejection seeks honors through the desire for exaltation. What does it mean, then, that he says: "I have sinned"? Indeed, confession of sin should be followed not by honor or glory, but by profit and self-contempt. For what does it profit to confess sins if the affliction of repentance does not follow the voice of confession? For three things must be considered in everyone who truly repents, namely: conversion of the mind, confession of the mouth, and punishment for sin. For he who is not converted in heart, what does it profit him if he confesses his sins? A sin that is loved is by no means erased by confessing it. Indeed, there are some who reveal their sins by confessing but, by not converting, in no way detest them. These indeed accomplish nothing by confessing, because what they cast out by speaking, they bring back in by loving. Whence Scripture also suggests to those wishing to confess profitably, saying: "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

What is it to believe with the heart unto righteousness, except to direct the will toward faith working through love? Therefore, when someone directs the intention of the heart toward righteousness through love, through the beginning of good will he has the fruit of good conversion. This one certainly now confesses unto salvation, because by speaking he casts out from

the wound more than conversion has pierced. The third kind, therefore, that is punishment, is like a necessary medicine, so that the abscess of guilt, which is lanced by conversion, may be purged by confessing and healed by the medicine of affliction. Therefore, he who does not believe in his heart unto righteousness by no means makes confession unto salvation, because he displays, as it were, the leaves of a bad tree whose deep roots he fixes in his heart. The sign of true confession, therefore, is not in the confession of the mouth but in the affliction of repentance. For then we perceive a sinner to be well converted when he strives to blot out with worthy severity of affliction what he confesses by speaking. Whence John the Baptist, rebuking the badly converted Jews flocking to him, says: "O generation of vipers, who has shown you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:7). Therefore, repentance is to be recognized in fruit, not in leaves or branches. For good will is, as it were, a tree. What then are the words of confession other than leaves?

Therefore, leaves are not to be sought by us for their own sake but for the sake of fruit, because every confession of sins is received for this reason: that the fruit of repentance may follow. Whence also the Lord cursed the tree adorned with leaves but barren of fruit (Mark 11), because he does not accept the ornament of confession without the fruit of affliction. Therefore Saul, who confesses and wishes to be honored, not afflicted and humbled—what does he signify except those who have a sterile confession and bear no fruit, who display the beauty of confession with humble words but pursue the greenness of words, not the humility of repentance? 34. But why do we look to the ancients, when now we see such a great multitude of fallen rulers? For now they rush headlong into disgraceful deeds in droves—not only the weak who are subject to authority, but also negligent prelates and priests. Those who by the rank of their ministry have been assigned to heavenly sacraments act with slippery sinfulness. But many of them, when they somehow come to their senses, confess that they have erred. Yet they wish to bring forth their sins against themselves in such a way that they still desire to be honored on account of their sacred office; in secret they declare themselves shameful, but outwardly they blush to appear humble beyond the dignity of their rank. What then are these men but those who see themselves as cast down, and yet dare to wish to be honored? Often, moreover, they do not come of their own accord, but are seized against their will; they receive the commands of their

own abjection, and yet they ask to be honored. They wish indeed to do unclean things, yet dare to cling to the sacred altars. Behold how many Sauls we observe, how many fallen rulers we contemplate from the height of Holy Church. To each of them individually it must surely be said: 'Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king'—so that those whom earthly disgraces do not cease to defile may not perform the heavenly ministry.

But this indeed we can say, yet we cannot persuade slippery ministers of it. For Saul both heard that he was rejected and continued to reign; because unclean priests recognize that they have been cast down from the priestly summit through the defilements of luxury, and yet they do not cease to handle the sacred mysteries against God's will. But a king reigning against the Lord's will was not a king but a tyrant; because an unworthy priest, who is rightly cast out on account of his defilement, when he presumes to minister, ascends to the summit of so great a glory only to be condemned. Hence also that great senator of heaven, wishing to terrify such tyrants, says: 'Whoever eats the bread and drinks the blood of the Lord unworthily, eats and drinks judgment upon himself' (1 Cor. 11:27). Often, however, it happens through urgent confession that those who confess are also believed to have undergone a conversion of heart. Sometimes the chosen preachers accept the false humility of the reprobate, so that by their example others may be led to salvation. For they recognize two things in hypocrites: one within, the other without. Within, indeed, pure evil; without, a pretense of good. They detest both, but they often feign approval of the outward show of good in them, so that those who see the good on the outside and do not know the evil within may follow the examples of good that they behold. Rightly therefore it is added:

(Verse 31.) 'So Samuel turned back and followed Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord.' 35. For on account of the evil that lay hidden within, he deserved to hear: "The Lord has cast you off from being king." But so that under the pretext of good he might draw others to the truth of that same good, Samuel wished to follow Saul, and saw him worship the Lord. Sometimes even the evils of kings and the great ones of the earth must be tolerated, lest being provoked they slip into worse things. For the children of Israel often worshiped the gods of the nations. Whence also it was said above concerning those converted by Samuel: "The children of Israel removed from their midst

the Baals and the Ashtaroth" (1 Sam. 7:4). And perhaps if the rejected king did not see the prophet returning with him to worship the Lord, he would worship the images of demons. And so he casts him off, yet returns with him; because in the powerful of this age, iniquity must be condemned in such a way that the good they possess is not lost through provocation. For often they are evil in secret, and the good that is seen, others imitate more devoutly. Certainly the evils of the powerful of the age are great evils for them; but the good things they put forth benefit the example of the faithful more than the good deeds of others. Rightly therefore Samuel returns with the rejected king; because the elect preachers both strike the powerful of the age for their iniquity, and permit them to do certain good things for the sake of example. Whence it also follows: (Verse 32.) And Samuel said: "Bring here Agag, king of Amalek." And Agag was brought to him, very fat and trembling.

36. Kings adore the Lord when the proud and scornful humble themselves to carry out the Lord's commands. The unchaste adore when they are subjected to God through the obedience of chastity. But sometimes they pretend to adore, because some have a pretext of humility or chastity, yet while they are believed to truly possess the good, others through the good they believe them to have lose the practice of good works. Therefore they hand over King Agag to Samuel, because by confessing they bring forth the vigor of their sensuality. For when they confess the sins of lust which they committed through the vigor of the flesh, what else do they do but offer the king of Amalek to the prophets to be slain? But what does it mean that Agag is called very fat, when the vigor of sensuality is fat in some and lean in others? What then does it mean that he is offered fat, except that he was led forth by the subjects of the reprobate king? For subjects are often negligent; but when they behold the examples of their chosen pastor, they groan amid the evils they commit. Through the frailty of the flesh they fall into impurities; but struck by the examples of their superiors, they cannot fully rejoice amid the pleasures of impurity. In whom then is Agag fattest, if not in those of whom it is said: "They rejoice when they have done evil, and exult in the worst things" (Prov. 2:14)?

For the subjects of a lustful teacher sin all the more boldly, the fewer examples of their superiors they have placed before them to see. But they cast themselves down far more madly when they do not see in their pastors a

good that they might follow, and they do see an evil by whose example they perish. In these indeed Agag grows fat, because joyfully, securely, and freely the vigor of the flesh is stretched out in the pleasure of lust, which, with nothing standing in the way, is not deprived of the practice of allurements. Therefore the fattest is offered to be slain when those are converted who greatly rejoiced in the pleasure of lust; for the king is, as it were, handed over when the carnal sense which ruled the mind is revealed to the priests of Christ through confession. Fat also customarily nourishes fire. Rightly therefore this is ascribed to the Amalekite king, because while the spirit of fornication possesses the mind, the more sweetly and frequently it feeds there through shameful thoughts, the more abundant fuel is supplied to it for increasing the fire of concupiscence. But he is said to be trembling, because the carnal sense, when it is handed over to spiritual men through confession, is weakened. Therefore trembling gives a sign that it does not have the strength of its members. When therefore the vigor of sensuality begins to be weakened, what else trembles but the king of the Amalekites?

Or he is said to tremble because many, when they begin to be converted, are terrified by the rigor of penance. And because all carnal people cannot abandon the customary pleasures of the flesh without grief, there follows: (Verse 32) And he said: "Does bitter death thus separate?" 37. For to say this to the carnal sense is to strike the mind with the turning of sorrow over the loss of accustomed pleasure. For because the recently converted suffer great darts of bitterness, the king whom they had served, as it were, complains about death: because in them carnality is by no means slain without great tribulation. Therefore to ask the carnal sense about the separation of death is to strike the still-sorrowful mind of the converted person over the loss of past delight. But also the manner of separation is inquired about, when he says: "Is it so?" For as though, having seen the austerities to which it must be subjected, his sensuality says to the mind: "Do you spurn joyful things for such sorrowful ones?" Samuel certainly hears this voice: because the chosen preacher recognizes the tempted heart of his subject by certain signs. But what does it profit to recognize, if he himself says nothing against that which rages within in the heart of the subject? Therefore there follows: (Verse 33) And Samuel said: As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.

38. What is the mother of carnal sense, if not original sin? For since before the sin of the first man no lust was present in the members, the Amalekite king did not exist. There was indeed the sense of the flesh, but it was not shameful and lustful; but as soon as he fell into sin, he felt the itching of his members, because he could not have obedient movement of the flesh when he himself was disobedient to God. Original sin, therefore, is rightly understood as the mother of the shameful sense of the flesh, because from it there comes forth by birth that which began to exist from it. Whence also the Apostle, as if abhorring the law of carnal sense as that of a most severe tyrant, showed not only the king himself but the mother, saying: "Therefore it is no longer I who work that, but sin which dwells in me" (Rom. 7:20). For the sin which he declared he did not work, he understood as the movement of the flesh; but the sin dwelling in him, as original sin. Because therefore from original sin comes the sin of the movement of the flesh, when we consider the carnal sense as king, we rightly name his mother as the first sin. Moreover, the children of this mother are all concupiscences, sins, and vices. The mother is surely made without children when every fault from the flesh and every fault from the mind now seems merely to remain.

For she is then without children, because even if no shameful thing now comes from the flesh, if no concupiscence now reigns in the mind, nevertheless that sin remaining in us cannot now be destroyed by the power of a teacher. For what does the Apostle mean when he says: "It is no longer I who work that, but sin which dwells in me"? From that sin indeed, which we contract from the corrupt root of our nature, we have the capacity to be corrupted by the passions of vices. The disordered law of the members, therefore, when it moves the members contrary to our will—we do not work this, but sin which dwells in us. The will indeed is then present with us, but we do not yet find the ability; since we would wish that nothing could be moved in us against our will. And these are perhaps the conceptions of the worst mother, by which that sin is impregnated; if they are allowed to pour forth into shameful and obscene acts, they are said to be, as it were, nourished. The children, therefore, are the movements which are not only naturally within, but which are manifested in shameful and obscene works. The mother of Agag is therefore made without children when original sin is so restrained

that it is not permitted to produce any acts or movements. Or perhaps she is made without children because she once had children.

When, therefore, converted sinners cease to be shameful both in act and in the gestures of luxury, the fault dwelling in them, as a mother, is as it were bereft of children. 39. And it should be noted that the mother is said to be made without children by way of comparison. As he says, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." The virtues of the mind, from which good works proceed, are mothers; but the sword of Agag is called the weapon of lust, which indeed makes women childless, because lust destroys all good works. Or certainly the women are understood as the minds of the faithful, while the children of holy minds are good thoughts, virtues, and good works. But the sword of Agag made mothers childless, because the delight of lust, if it is allowed to be unsheathed like a sword, slays from them indeed all good thoughts, all virtues, and good works. For the sharp pleasure of this pestilence, if it is received into the mind, while it delights one to gaze more intently upon what is impure, can think of nothing clean and holy; and while it ardently drags one toward the fulfillment of wicked deeds, it permits one to do nothing of virtue. And because through its burning all things perish, not only the children of Agag but all the children of the women are slaughtered. Therefore it makes mothers childless, because the delight of lust, like a sword, while it strikes the fruits of minds, by no means allows thoughts of virtue or the good of work to live. Just as therefore it made mothers childless, so also his own mother is made childless, when the sinner is so converted that, apart from the guilt naturally implanted in us, nothing of obscene works or impulses appears to remain in those who are converted. Whence it is also fittingly added: (Verse 33.) And Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

40. That he is cut into pieces means that, once dead, he is divided into small parts. For Agag is slain when the vigor of the flesh is so crushed by fasting, vigils, and spiritual meditations that nothing wanton, nothing lustful is felt to stir. For to slay him is to render the flesh unable to move shamefully. But the corpse of the slain one remains whole when its movement remains. Lust does not remain when it weighs down the mind by its mere heaviness alone; that is, when a simple and natural motion of the flesh resides in the members, but has nothing of lustful ardor. But because the minds of the elect bear this very thing with difficulty, they carry, as it were, the whole

corpse of a dead king. But what does it mean that he is cut into pieces, except that they do not wish to leave even that natural motion its strength? He is therefore cut into pieces, because each time it strikes, it is slain. Therefore, while the alternating movements are not allowed to come together, the corpse of Agag is, as it were, cut into pieces. Or perhaps this Agag is of such a nature that he cannot die unless cut into pieces. For as I said above, lust is kindled after the manner of fire; and if it is extinguished carelessly, the nearby stubble is quickly set ablaze. A great fire, too, can often be better extinguished when dispersed.

For when many coals come together into one, they make an enormous mass of embers. Lest therefore the one extinguishing it be burned, the mass of embers is first wisely scattered, so that it may be quickly extinguished through the individual pieces of coals. For what are thoughts of luxury, what are lustful motions of the body, but coals of fire? Which indeed, if they come together in the heart or in the flesh, can quickly burn, but can never easily be extinguished. Let the fire therefore be scattered, let Agag be cut into pieces, and let the mind be guarded so that it disperses unclean thoughts and does not allow one to cling to another. For since one cannot bring it about that one never thinks harmful things, let one do what one can: immediately cast out the thought that carelessly enters the mind. Thus indeed one divides a very great fire quickly into individual coals and swiftly extinguishes it, if one separates all the flames of thoughts in such a way as not to allow them to be joined together in the mind, neither through negligence nor through desire. Thus indeed the vigor of the mind also represses the motions of the body, when it does not allow them to come together with one another. For an enticing motion of the flesh, if it is not at all nourished by thought, does not seem to come together with another. For the glue of enticing motions is unclean thought:

because whoever willingly looks upon unclean things immediately moves the flesh violently toward the things loved by lusting after them; the more willingly and lingeringly one thinks, the more, as coals to coals, one binds shameful motions to even more shameful ones. Let him therefore maintain a strong guard over his soul who wishes to powerfully scatter the motions of the flesh. For within, Agag is first divided, so that outwardly he may likewise be divided into pieces; because for one who does not allow evil thoughts to come together, the shameful motions of the flesh are also, as it were, divided

into pieces. Thus indeed the very fat Agag is slain, if he is divided into pieces; because we powerfully extinguish the sense of the flesh along with its unclean motions, both in the body and in the soul, if we keep watch against each of its individual snares with singular attention. Hence that Wise Man also carefully admonishes, saying: "With all watchfulness keep your heart, because from it life proceeds, and from one that is neglected, death comes forth" (Proverbs 4:23). For life proceeds when the heart is guarded, because when all uncleanness is repelled, the spirit of the converted is enlivened toward virtues. Therefore Agag is cut into pieces by the prophet when, through the counsel of teachers, individual particles of uncleanness are destroyed both in the body and in the mind of the hearers. Moreover, it is rightly said that he was cut to pieces both before the Lord and in Gilgal;

because those who know how to think wisely both about almighty God and about the Holy Scriptures can powerfully divide the minute particles of enticing thoughts and shameful motions. But, as I said, teachers often tolerate the feigned good deeds of the wicked not for their own sake, but for the sake of others; because what they do in pretense benefits not the pretenders, but the onlookers. Indeed, the elect often see the feigned good deeds of the wicked; but because they do not know their hearts, they imitate the good that appears to shine outwardly. Saul asked Samuel to return with him to worship the Lord; but he, having returned, cut Agag into pieces, because elect teachers, through the works that the reprobate perform, turn the elect toward the pursuit of living well. But because they do this very thing by way of dispensation, that is, for the sake of something else, when the necessity of the dispensation passes, they abandon those very reprobate whom they had, as it were, followed toward good works, once they have lapsed into the impenitence of a reprobate heart. And so it is well added: (Verses 34, 35. And Samuel went away to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house in Gibeah, and Samuel did not see him again until the day of his death.

41. What is the house of the transgressor, if not the habit of wicked work? For whoever is enclosed in a perverse habit dwells, as it were, in a house. Saul therefore ascended to his house, when any reprobate, after the rebuke of teachers, returns to the practice of evil work. For he descended, as it were, to the plains when he feigned humility in order to learn the commands of his superiors. But what does it mean that Samuel is said to have departed before Saul ascended to his house? Yet, as I said, when there is no need on behalf of

others, the chosen preacher cannot remain with the crafty man; and because the pretender advances in the absence of the teacher, Saul did not go away to his house, but ascended. For to ascend, for the reprobate, is to advance from bad to worse. Likewise, when the proud man is said to descend, he is declared to ascend. For to ascend to his house, for the proud man, is to exalt himself through pride up to the measure by which he is to be condemned. For the house of the proud man is the measure of his own wickedness. For when they are permitted, through the prosperities of this world, to exercise tyranny, to disturb the earth, to oppress the good, and to afflict the innocent, what else do the proud appear to do but ascend?

But because it is predetermined by God how much they may harm, how much they may rage, how much they may exalt themselves through tyranny, they are permitted to ascend only up to their house. For their house is the measure of wickedness in which they will always remain: because when they have arrived at the fullness of their crimes, they are snatched away by death and punished with eternal torments. For he remains, as it were, in his house, who can never escape from the punishments of his way of life. This can fittingly be understood not only of the proud, but also of the lustful and all the reprobate. For they were still in the ascent and not yet in their house, those of whom it is said: 'The iniquities of the Amorites are not yet full' (Gen. 15:16). Hence likewise the blessed apostle Paul says: 'To fill up their sins' (1 Thess. 2:16). Therefore they ascend to their house when, by the advancement of evil, they advance to more wicked works, for which they will endure eternal torments.

42. Moreover, Samuel is said to depart to Ramah. For teachers separated from the reprobate do not merely go, but depart. They go when they leave those who are to be corrected, because those whom they dismiss as if in anger, they afterward return to, invited by their good amendment. Therefore, for a teacher to depart is to abandon the impenitent wicked with perpetual condemnation. For they so abandon those who work sins unto death through impenitence that they are not compelled to return to them any further. Well therefore it says: 'Saul did not see Samuel again until the day of his death.' And because they perceive that this must be done in the contemplation of the highest truth, he is recorded as departing to Ramah. For a consummated vision is the perfected understanding of innermost truth. Lest therefore the severity of preachers be judged excessive by the carnal-minded

when they separate the reprobate from the communion of the Church in perpetuity, let them hear that after Samuel came to Ramah, he saw Saul no more—because the teacher eternally separates the one whom he does not recognize as belonging to the number of the elect. But this is believed with confidence if in the figure of Samuel the affection of charity among the preachers of the holy Church is perceived alongside their severity. For the zeal of severity is shown in that it is recorded he did not see Saul until the day of his death. But concerning the affection of charity, it is added: (Verse 35) 'Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul, because the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.'

43. For what is it that he mourns for one whom he disdains to look upon, except that even with their zeal for righteousness, the holy teachers possess a disposition of great charity, and the very greatness of that charity is shown by the fact that he is said to weep for the rejected king? With what affection, then, do they weep for the sins of their elect subjects, who have learned to weep so tenderly even for the cast-off reprobate? For the urgency of the mourning is shown by what is added next:

CHAPTER 6.3 (1 SAMUEL 16:1)

The Lord said to Samuel: How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him, so that he should not reign over Israel? 1. For when it is said to him: "How long will you mourn?" it is shown that he was mourning persistently. Great, therefore, is the affection of the saints, even when they outwardly bring forth the severity of punishment. For on the outside they rage, but inwardly they melt with love. In the manner of mothers they strike their little ones, yet they groan with the affection of the little ones whom they chastise. But what does it mean that the Lord says: "How long will you mourn for Saul?" Can a mother see her son dying and not weep at all through the rending of her heart? She who dies endures the dead without grief, but is weakened. What does it mean that He says: "How long will you mourn for Saul?" Unless it is because the lost are not to be mourned excessively? For often a teacher is vehemently afflicted over the perdition of his subject, but is consoled by regard for the supreme justice. What, therefore, does this saying of God to the prophet mean, except to relieve the preacher's mind from affliction through inward consolation? And because, when prelates have fallen, the elect are substituted through divine mercy, the Lord adds, saying: (Verse 1.) "Fill your horn with oil, and come: I will send you to

Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided among his sons a king for myself."

2. For as if consoling one who mourns, he says: Why is the casting off of one person lamented, when a better one is substituted? Hence Saul is shown as not foreseen, but David as foreseen. How great, therefore, and of what quality he was, let it be weighed with prompt consideration—he who is determined by the judgment and choice of Almighty God. But what does it mean that God foresees and the prophet is sent to anoint, except that the spiritual customs of the holy Church are being described, which is seen to appoint no one except those whom it contemplates God to have chosen beforehand and preordained? "Come," he says, "I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have foreseen among his sons a king. As if to say: Presume nothing on your own part, but by ordaining you will follow him whom I have foreseen. Hence also a little later he adds, saying: "And you shall anoint the one I shall point out to you. What is this, except that those who wish to ordain others to the summit of the Church ought to be prophets? For they can recognize what has been foreseen by God, if they consult the sacred Scriptures to find the person of the bishop to be chosen. For it is as though God is shown speaking when such a Pastor is chosen as is commended through sacred eloquence.

In the literal sense, however, Samuel is told to come from the Lord so that he might be called back from compassion for the reprobate and rejected king. But if by continual weeping he was seeking the restoration of the fallen one, for him to come was to cease from such an intention. And he filled his horn with oil, because he tempered pastoral sublimity in anointing the king with the splendor of praise. For with a harsh horn he assailed Saul, because he struck down the sinner as if with a great assault, saying: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king" (1 Kings 15:23). What does it mean, then, that the horn is commanded to be filled with oil, except that the justice of the king to be anointed is commended? As if to say: The king who is now anointed will not need to be struck with rebuke, but proclaimed with the favor of wondrous praise—he needs not to be assailed, but to be favored. He is sent to Jesse the Bethlehemite, so that the king who is chosen might be taught to be one who would endure. For through the patriarch Jacob, the condition of the kingdom that would endure was shown long before, because he said: "The scepter shall not depart

from Judah, nor a ruler from his loins, until he comes who is to be sent" (Genesis 49:10).

Therefore the king foreseen among the sons of Jesse is declared, so that the king who is commanded to be anointed might be taught to be not one who would depart like Saul, but one who would be lasting. As if he rouses the prophet wasting away in anguish over the rejected one, saying: Why is the one rejected for his fault lamented, when one worthy of praise is substituted? 3. We have touched upon these things according to the literal sense; now let us consider the election of our prelates beneath the literal narrative. What does it mean that the horn is commanded to be filled with oil, except that such a pastor is to be chosen in the holy Church who ought not to be accused as a transgressor, but commended to the example of others with wondrous praises? For the horn is the weapon of animals. And what else are the authority and rebuke of the chief bishop but weapons? Indeed horns strike when their sharp points are applied to sinners through rebuke. For to strike with the horn is to reprove sinners sharply. The horn is filled with oil when the sublimity of the preacher does not have the harshness of threats, but the gentleness of favors. Or the horn is filled with oil when to the chosen pastor there is given at once both the exaltation of the summit and the power of anointing—when the lofty rank is ascended, yet he who is raised to the heights is filled with the abundance of merits. Therefore priests are anointed from a full horn who attain to the highest rank with the fullness of graces. Because indeed fire is kindled by oil, the oil is the love of the teacher's heart—in which fire is kindled, because in the richness of the mouth the power and grace of the Holy Spirit burns.

Because therefore the teacher ought to have the richness of great charity, the king who is commanded to be anointed is said to be anointed from a full horn. The fullness of the horn is also spoken of in terms of the perseverance of graces; for those who fail before the end do not merit to be anointed with the fullness of the horn. Still more must be said about the fullness of this horn: it is commanded for this reason, because he who must fill others from his own fullness needs a great anointing. Whence Moses too is said to have been so full that the Lord is shown to have taken from his spirit and given it to others (Num. 11). Or the horn of the prophet is filled when the pontifical sublimity is prepared for teaching more perfect things. For when the princes of the Church are ordained, the things they ought to do must not be

preached to them in half-measure. Therefore the bishops fill the horn when they set forth full and perfect virtues, which the chosen princes of the Church may imitate. Because indeed those who anoint ought themselves to be spiritual, they are commanded to fill the horn. The horn is indeed from the flesh, but it is not enclosed in the flesh. Therefore the horn is the spiritual manner of life of the teacher. The horn pours out oil when he preaches lofty things who demonstrates these things by his lofty manner of life.

Therefore to fill the horn with oil is to take up the preaching of great virtues in a lofty manner of life. And he pours it on the head when he imprints it on the mind of him who comes newly to the highest order. Therefore when the elect are promoted, they are anointed from a full horn, because they advance to the height of their order by the power of perfection. 4. But the prophet is sent to Jesse of Bethlehem, a king is foreseen among his sons, because that shepherd is chosen who has been instructed in ecclesiastical devotion. Bethlehem, therefore, which is called "house of bread," what else does it designate but each and every house of religion? For by the name of bread the teaching of perfection is shown, as Paul attests, who, rousing the weak to conversion, says: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food. For you were not yet able, nor are you yet able" (1 Cor. 3:2). For if milk belongs to little ones, bread belongs to none but the perfect. Whence also it is said of the strength of the perfect man: "He shall dwell on high, the fortifications of rocks shall be his loftiness, bread has been given to him" (Isa. 33:16). Therefore in the house of bread a king is sought for anointing, because those are profitably advanced who are nourished in the order of perfect conduct. For he is able to make others strong who has not been nourished in lax and negligent conduct. Therefore he is sought in the house of bread, because in promoting a bishop, strength of conduct must be sought. From a weak congregation a person of virtue is almost never taken. Whence rightly the search is made among the sons of Jesse, who is named "salvation of the Lord," or certainly "salvation" absolutely. Indeed, a prelate is rightly called salvation. For what are sins and vices, if not diseases of souls?

But a chosen preacher, through the integrity of sound doctrine, through the solidity of innocence, through the splendor of an elect life, is rightly named the salvation of the Lord. There are indeed other teachers whose speech creeps like a cancer. From the family of these a king is not taken, because he does not lead sick minds to health, but kills them. And it should be

noted that Jesse is called by another name, Isai. He has indeed a twofold name, because a good teacher is not always at peace. In time of peace he is called the salvation of the Lord, so that the wounds of wars may be taught to be healed, as it were, within the secure vestibules of his house. But in war he has the name Jesse, because he both fortifies himself bravely and protects others valiantly. For Jesse is said to mean "relief of the island. But by the name of island, what is understood if not minds surrounded by the waves of temptations? They are indeed islands, because even if they endure great conflicts, they are not moved. Whence also the Psalmist, proclaiming the victory of the elect, says: "The Lord has reigned, let the earth exult, let many islands rejoice" (Ps. 97:1). The Lord indeed reigns when no storm of enemies disturbs his throne, namely the elect minds; but the earth rejoices, because the solid hearts of teachers are glad. The islands rejoice, because when they overcome temptations by his grace, the hearers of their superiors are gladdened.

The earth indeed is the strong mind and the firm tongue of the teacher. But the island is said to be the strong heart of the subject, which is still assailed by temptations, yet is not moved. What then does it mean that Jesse is called the relief of the island, except that through the strength of teachers the hearts of the lesser are uplifted? For amid so many waves of temptations they would collapse, if their hearts were not raised to the desire of the lofty life by the strength of their superiors. Therefore a king is described as hidden among the sons of Isai and Jesse, because those profitably come to the summit of the Church who have learned under the instruction of the elect both to guard peace and to arrange or wage spiritual wars. Therefore it is well said: "For I have provided among his sons a king for myself. For among these and not among others is a king foreseen, because through divine grace none attain to the summit of the Church who do not follow the instruction of the elect through all the successive periods of time. There follows: (Verses 2-3. And Samuel said: "How shall I go? For Saul will hear of it and will kill me. And the Lord said: "You shall take a calf from the herd in your hand, and you shall say: I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. And you shall call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you are to do."

5. What is shown by these words, except that the cunning and cruelty of tyrants must sometimes be eluded by pious deception? For by the Lord's command a calf is taken from the herd, a sacrifice is simulated, and the royal anointing is reached, because when tyrants desire to do harm, certain things

which they may believe must be set before them, so that they find no opening to do harm. Thus tyrants must be eluded in such a way that the guilt of lying is avoided. This is well accomplished when what is asserted actually takes place, but what takes place is stated in such a way that it is concealed, because it is partly spoken and partly kept silent. For the prophet Samuel is commanded to go to anoint the king, and to declare that he is going to sacrifice to the Lord, not that he is going to anoint a king; so that in sacrificing he speaks the truth, and in concealing the anointing he eludes the tyrant's cruelty while speaking the truth. For that he went to sacrifice, he shortly afterward clearly sets forth, where it says: 'He therefore sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.'

6. But now it is better handled if we consider what these things signify spiritually. What does it mean, then, that the prophet takes a calf in his hand, and so arrives to anoint the king? But what is the calf, if not the splendor of the image of the Redeemer? For since he strives to make the one he chooses conformed to the Redeemer, when he preaches the very form of the Redeemer, he carries, as it were, a calf in his hand. And because he demonstrates the splendor of the Lord's manner of life, which he preaches, in the power of his works, he leads by hand the calf he takes from the herd. For to take up a calf in hand is to preserve the preaching of the Lord's manner of life in the power of one's works. Thus indeed, going in this way, he is not killed; otherwise he would be killed: because he who speaks and does not act is condemned by the sword of his own mouth. What does it mean that he is commanded to say: "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord"? What does it likewise mean that he does what he says, since he comes and sacrifices, except that the one who promotes others ought to be of such efficacy that he not only speaks good things, but persuades them? Indeed the sacrificial victim, which is seen in the prophet's hand, is recognized upon the altar.

For what is the heart of a chosen hearer, if not the altar of God? For when a teacher speaks good things with his mouth and shows them by his works, the calf is in his hand. But when he also persuades his hearers of what he says and does, the victim is on the altar. He therefore sacrifices when chosen hearts receive through love that which shines forth in the word and example of the teacher, concerning the imitation of the Redeemer. There follows: "And you shall call Jesse to the sacrifice. Perhaps this passage suggests that subjects are not to be promoted without the knowledge of their superiors.

Jesse is first called to the sacrifice, so that the good which the subject is seen to undertake may be grounded in the mind of his master. Rightly it is added: "And I will show you what you are to do. Expressing this very thing, he says: (Verse 3. "And you shall anoint the one whom I shall point out to you."

7. For unless Jesse is first called, what must be done is not revealed to him: because without the will of the master, nothing concerning the person of the subject is to be done. Therefore, when he has been called, what must be done is shown, because with the will of the devout teacher, the humility of the subject is raised to the height of prelacy. But what does it mean when it is said: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you," except that all the disciples are not equal to the chosen pastor? For among them, some are useful for obeying; others both obey humbly and have learned to command with discretion. Therefore He says: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you," so that when a person is sought for the summit of the priesthood, the search may be conducted with great care. By these words, certainly, nothing of their own judgment is left to the ordainers of Churches in the election of others. "The one whom I shall show you," He says, "him you shall anoint. Who are those who anoint those whom God does not show, except those who, led by carnal affection, elevate to the summit of the Churches those who are to be ordained, who do not discern merits but show favoritism toward persons? These indeed anoint kings, but not those who are shown by God. What is their own, they do; what is God's, they take away. For it is God's part to show the person;

it is the ordainer's part to provide the anointing. Therefore, when they show to themselves those whom they anoint, they refuse to have God as their co-worker. Hence also through the prophet Hosea the Lord complains about such chosen ones, saying: "They have reigned, but not from me; princes have arisen, and I did not know it" (Hosea 8:4). Therefore it is said to the elect, what the reprobate cannot hear: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you," so that no one may be promoted unless he is judged worthy of so great an office by the commendation of the Holy Scriptures. For in them the Lord speaks; there it is recorded what kind of man and how great the teacher of the Church ought to be. Therefore, the one shown by the Lord is chosen, who is commended through sacred eloquence. These things indeed wicked rulers despise, but good ones carry out. Therefore, concerning the obedience of the good, it is rightly added: (Verse 4. "So Samuel did what the Lord told

him. He came to Bethlehem, and the elders of the city were astonished, coming to meet him."

8. As for the historical sense, the elders are amazed, because the prophet was not accustomed to come there. By this it is perhaps signified that chosen teachers should scarcely ever be seen in public, should be frequent in solitude, free from civil affairs, full of spiritual ones. Therefore it becomes a wonder to the people when the person of the pastor is seen in public. They marvel that he goes out whom they knew as a cultivator of secrecy. Because he is held in great veneration by the people, the elders of the city are reported both to have marveled and to have gone out to meet him. But because not the people but the elders marvel, the perfect virtue of teachers is shown, which is praised not by the little ones and the simple but by the great and the learned. They also inquire about the peaceful coming of the prophet. As if, then, he who said threatened a coming that was not peaceful: "What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in the spirit of gentleness?" (1 Cor. 4:21). What then is the meaning of what is said: (Verse 4) "Is your coming peaceful?"

9. But the chosen faithful, when they rightly consider the deeds of spiritual teachers, assuredly weigh the divine will in them. For because they knew Samuel to be a prophet, it was assuredly because he had known the secrets of divine dispensation. Therefore, when they ask about his peaceful arrival, what else do they do by asking than wish to know the secret of divine counsel? Would that we also, as often as we see holy men, would be eager to inquire about the security of our peace, and to learn diligently from them how we are seen by God, we who do not have the eyes of our own knowledge. Therefore the arrival of teachers is peaceful when they come to those who are not to be struck for fault, but to be exhorted for the sake of righteousness. He therefore who had come to the righteous man who had been advanced, answered saying: (Verse 5) "Peaceful; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come with me, that we may sacrifice."

10. Those who direct their intention toward heavenly things go with the doctors to offer sacrifice. And the prophet sacrifices before those who go, when the doctor binds in the hearts of those present through love what he proclaims by word. But that we may attend a little to the historical sense, we must carefully examine what is said: "Sanctify yourselves and come with me. For if they do not dare to be present at the sacrifice unless sanctified, what must we think of those who sacrifice? For to sanctify is to purify. How pure,

then, ought the priests to be, where the people invited to the sacrifice are not to be admitted unless sanctified? For the sanctification of the body is chastity, and the sanctification of the mind is charity and humility. Let the one invited to the sacrifice therefore be sanctified, but he who invites is all the more compelled to be so. Let the priests note what they say to those invited: "Come with me. For the sanctified come with them if pure priests approach the service of God together with pure people. For to go with them is for the pure to approach together with the pure. For if the people are pure but the priests are not pure, they do not come with them, because they do not approach in an equal order of purity. Let such ones hear what another prophet admonishes, saying: "Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11). Let them likewise hear what he says:

"Wash yourselves, be clean" (Isaiah 1:16). Because therefore the people must be cleansed, he says: "Sanctify yourselves. Because likewise men of the highest rank must always remain in the continual state of their purity and draw others to the pattern of their purity, he adds: "And come with me. But because the elders are invited to the sacrifice, what do they demonstrate by this type, except that for choosing a bishop, or for anointing and consecrating him, many wise and religious men must be called? Who are indeed sanctified and come, if they resolve not to follow anything carnal in that election. For them to be sanctified is to bring a spiritual and holy intention to the bestowing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And well is it said in the type of the chosen, both of Jesse and of his sons: (Verse 5) "Jesse therefore sanctified his sons and called them to the sacrifice."

11. And because we have taught through the sacred scriptures that the Lord shows who should be chosen as bishops, let us now see, as the mysteries of this sacred history speak, what kind of men He shows to be worthy and what kind He rejects. There follows: (Verses 6, 7.) 'And when they had come in, he saw Eliab and said: Is this the Lord's anointed before Him? And the Lord said to Samuel: Do not look upon his countenance, nor upon the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, nor do I judge according to the sight of men. For man sees those things which appear, but the Lord beholds the heart.' For what does it mean for the wise to enter in, except to pass into the subtle sanctuary of discernment? But he saw Eliab when he entered, because the pastor recognizes that man as worthy of leadership in the holy Church who possesses both the strength of good works and the knowledge

of truth. But what does it mean that the Lord commands him not to look upon his stature or his countenance, except that in the holy Church neither works nor knowledge are commended without humility? For what is a person's countenance but the outward manner of life by which he is known? And what is his stature but the height of knowledge by which he is raised to higher things? Whom then does Eliab more fittingly signify than those who do good and are learned, yet are arrogant?

Hence Eliab is interpreted as "my God is father. This indeed is the name they dare to presume for themselves. For what does it mean that "my God is father" is said, except that while they vigorously do good works and wisely understand spiritual things, they boast that by singular merit they have passed into the number of the sons of God? For they would say "father" not "mine" but "ours" to the almighty Lord, if through humility they saw themselves in common with the other elect in the order of heavenly birth. Rightly therefore he is rejected, because in the spiritual heights none but the humble are preferred. Thus the prophet subtly inquires about the person to be anointed, saying: 'Is this the Lord's anointed before Him?' This happens now when the chief teacher recognizes both the life and the understanding of the one to be chosen, but still inquires about the virtue of humility. But he sees his countenance and stature rejected, when he recognizes that whatever beauty he has in works, whatever loftiness exists in his learning, is without the virtue of humility. Rightly therefore the Lord says: 'I have cast him aside, nor do I judge according to the sight of man, because man sees the face, but God beholds the heart.' As if He were saying: Men are accustomed to praise great works and words of knowledge, but I praise neither words nor works that I do not see founded in true humility.

Those who are of this sort would tremble at the repulse of their unworthiness if they were willing to hear attentively what the Lord says to the prophet: 'Do not look upon his countenance, nor upon the height of his stature, because I have cast him aside.' For they consider what the arrogant do to be of great importance; but behold, the Lord declares it so worthless that it is judged not even worth looking upon. But with this one set aside, what follows is shown: (Verse 8.) 'And Jesse called Aminadab and brought him before Samuel. And he said: Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 12. Aminadab is interpreted as "urbane." Rightly therefore, by the Lord's deliberate counsel, he is rejected: because the holy church does not choose for the governance of

souls one who is vigorous in secular affairs, but one who is distinguished in spiritual conduct. Indeed, those are urbane who, having set aside their focus on heavenly things, strive to show themselves vigorous in outward pursuits. Therefore the Lord did not choose this one either, because by the zeal of a faithful pastor, heavenly things, not earthly ones, ought to be provided for the flocks of the faithful — not weak and fleeting things, but sublime and eternal ones. (Verse 9.) Then he brought forward Shammah, about whom he also said: "The Lord has not chosen this one either."

13. Sama is interpreted as "hearing." What then does Sama designate, except the obedient and simple? For to hear, for them, is to carry out by obeying those things which are commanded by their superiors. Whence also concerning the obedience of the Gentile people it is said through the Psalmist: "A people whom I did not know served me; at the hearing of the ear they obeyed me" (Psalm 17:45). But what does it mean that they are said not to be chosen by the Lord, except that at the summit of the Church are placed not the unskilled humble, but the humble wise, who both know how to carry out what is commanded and wisely command what ought to be done? For it is necessary for him both to do and to teach. Therefore let him do humbly, and let him teach wisely. Because therefore those who know how to act through humility but do not know how to command through learning are not to be taken up into royal dignity, Sama is said not to be chosen by the Lord for the kingdom. From this, then, from this let the simple and the disobedient gather how penally they thrust themselves forward to preeminence, if Almighty God does not receive even him for governance who is called "hearing" through the humility of obedience. And because holy Church has many of this kind, both simple and well-living, as well as humble and wise, it follows: (Verse 10.) And so Jesse brought all his sons before Samuel. And Samuel said: "The Lord has not chosen from these."

14. Because perfection is usually signified by the number seven, the prophet Isaiah testifies, who, declaring the gifts of the Holy Spirit abiding in our Redeemer, says: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him" (Isaiah 11:2). What then does it mean that those who are rejected from the office of preaching are signified by the number seven, when that same number signifies perfection, which no one possesses except from the infusion

of the Holy Spirit? But this is fittingly asserted: because to many the grace of the Holy Spirit is given for living well, but is not given for teaching. Since they are many and perfect in good works, they are fittingly contained in the number seven. Likewise, because they do robust things but do not understand subtle things, they are rejected from the governance of the kingdom. And so there are seven sons, and yet none of them is chosen for the governance of souls: because even though by living well they know how to govern themselves strongly, they are by no means able to protect others strongly through doctrine. Let the ordainer of the Church never rush so hastily in ordaining, because, even if he has many who are not suitable for undertaking the care of souls, those who can preside cannot be lacking to him.

Therefore let the teacher seek earnestly, let him not cease to seek, until he can find those who are hidden. The great virtues of the elect, like treasures of almighty God, are almost always hidden in secret. For almighty God acts in the manner of fearful rich men: because lest he lose the treasures of virtues, he both places them in elect minds and conceals those very minds in secrecy. Therefore let him who desires to ordain, or rather to adorn, the head of the Church seek the hidden treasures. He desires to adorn the bride of Christ; but he cannot unless he brings forth the hidden treasures of the bridegroom for her adornment, and let him not cease until he finds those that are hidden. But why do I urge pastors to seek, when unless God brings forth the hidden [it seems one should read "the hidden ones"], they cannot be found? For what else does this mean: "You shall anoint whomever I shall show you"? Nevertheless they must be sought, because unless they are sought for a long time, they are by no means shown. For the Lord also promises that he will show, and yet the prophet strives to seek, that he may deserve to find. Whence the Lord also commands persistence in seeking, saying: "Seek and you shall find, ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

Therefore the prophet, seeking and persevering in seeking even after so many have been rejected—what does he suggest to us, except that by no dispensation should the unworthy be permitted to come to the summit of religion? For although in most affairs of the holy Church dispensation is salutary, it is certainly deadly and fatal where either the blind through ignorance, or the irreligious though learned, or those devoted to secular affairs are permitted to come to the leadership of others. For the first destroy the souls of

their subjects through ignorance, the second through knowing and not doing, and the last likewise through neglecting spiritual things and following carnal and earthly things. The first indeed labor with all their strength so that what they say may be praised; the second do not know what to say; the last strive with every effort to be more abundantly honored among the great ones of the world—who indeed are so much worse than the first, inasmuch as the first wish to appear exalted in spiritual matters, while these wish to appear exalted in carnal and worldly matters. The desire of these last is to be supported by riches, to be exalted by honors, to be elevated by the friendships of the powerful of this age. From all these affections of a reprobate mind can arise neglect of the souls of subjects, contempt of Christ, and the squandering of the Church's resources. Therefore let the teacher seek, so that by no dispensation may he set the unworthy over others:

because what is deadly should never be permitted. Whence it is added: "And Samuel said to Jesse: Are all your sons here? What does it mean that he seeks another, except that the seeker ought not to rest before he deserves to find? And because often what is cast aside and despised on the outside is exalted within, it follows: (Verse 11) "Who answered: There remains yet the youngest, and he tends the sheep." 15. What is the least, if not the rejected? I mean rejected by himself, not by God: because by God one is rejected through pride; but he is rejected by himself who is considered worthless and lowly. Or he is called the least who, in comparison with others, does not appear to be anything. The rejected one, therefore, is called humble; because he sees himself despised and endures it, cares not at all to be displayed, but feeds the sheep; because he nourishes simple thoughts in the contemplation of the eternal inheritance. Of these pastures of the elect, the Lord certainly says: They shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures (John 10:9). For within they have the pastures of contemplation, without the pastures of good works. Within they enrich the mind with devotions, without they satisfy themselves with pious works. Rightly is this little one said to feed the sheep, because every chosen one is humble and is not barren, who daily does great things but does not think great things of himself. Rightly therefore he is declared not only the little one, but the shepherd: because those who are truly humble cast themselves down outwardly, but through interior fellowship they dwell in the highest and eternal pastures. For it is written: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). And what grace? If not

that they may see and know the highest things, know and love them, and run toward those beloved things as ones who are well-fed and strong. And so, because he is exceedingly suitable, he is urgently commanded to be brought forth. For there follows: (Verse 11.) And Samuel said to Jesse: Send and bring him. For we shall not sit down until he comes.

16. But what does it mean, "We will not sit down until he comes"? Whom does he seek, except because in the observance of fasting the sacraments of anointing are to be celebrated? But we must attend not only to the sacraments themselves, but to the power of the sacraments. For there are certain foods which, if they are not avoided, by no means allow one to anoint kings well. Indeed, the outward affairs of the Church are certain foods of the soul, which are devoutly administered by the elect. But if the soul is satiated by the multitude of affairs, it is not perfectly permitted to enter into receiving spiritual things. Therefore, when spiritual matters are pressing, let outward things be deferred, because they must be arranged with great quietness of mind. There follows: (Verse 12.) "So he sent and brought him in." The future king is brought in when the humble are brought forth from the hiding places of their concealment. They are hidden indeed, but in pastures; because, even if they conceal themselves among the lowly and weak things of the flesh before men, great is the breadth of heavenly contemplation in which they dwell. But let us see what kind of man the one now set over others appears to be. For it follows and says: (Verse 12.) "Now he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon."

17. What does it mean that such great beauty of the king is affirmed, except that the person of the teacher must be adorned with great splendors of virtues? For of the Redeemer it was said: "His Spirit adorned the heavens" (Job 26:13). For the heavens are the sublime preachers. These heavens indeed were adorned by the Spirit, because they receive from the Holy Spirit the virtues by which they shine. What then does it mean that he is said to be ruddy, except that in red matter the fervor of charity is often signified? Hence also in the vestment of the high priest, scarlet twice-dyed is placed, so that he may be clothed with a twofold charity. He is therefore called ruddy through the ardor of charity, because while he displays the burning precepts of charity, he glows red, as it were, through the heat. What likewise does "handsome in appearance" mean, except conspicuous in inner contemplation? For he has, as it were, a handsome appearance, who shines with the beauty of vision in inner

contemplation. What then does the face signify, except the outward glory of uprightness? For since everyone is recognized by the face, the beauty of the face is the illustrious uprightness of one's manner of life. For he is perceived, as it were, through the beauty of his face, who is found to be splendid in every gesture of his body. He is therefore ruddy with love, handsome in appearance on account of knowledge, fair of face, splendid in uprightness.

But since the fervor of charity is demonstrated through holy works, the labor of work itself can be signified by the redness. For he who labors greatly displays a redness of face, because while he grows hot within, he draws redness outwardly upon his countenance. For so it is with all spiritual labor. For the more each person strives to labor for eternal life, the more fervently he is kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit to labor, as though in growing hot he produces a redness that he bears outwardly. The teacher is therefore ruddy through the labor of pious work, handsome in appearance through the splendor of contemplation. But the beauty of face is the very beauty of charity. For through other virtues we receive the form of holiness; through charity itself, we clothe that very form upon ourselves with, as it were, a wondrous beauty. Those other virtues are the body of justice, but charity is rightly understood as the face of this body. For everyone is recognized by the face, not by the body. For if you see the body but do not see the face, you do not recognize the one whose body alone you behold. But what else does it mean that the foolish virgins are answered by the bridegroom: "I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12)? Behold, virginity is preserved through great labors, and virginity itself is recognized as a great and incomparable virtue.

What then does it mean that the foolish virgins are not recognized by the bridegroom, except that they have a body by which they stand, but they do not have the beauty of face that the bridegroom would recognize? They have indeed labor in preserving the body, but they do not have the beauty of countenance in perfect charity. For these three things advance in the life of the elect in the order in which they are set forth. For no one is able to possess the beautiful visions of contemplation unless he first exercises himself vigorously in the labor of pious work. Indeed, the joys of eternal light, the immensity of that supreme light, the eternal vigor of ineffable splendor—the more laboriously it is sought, the more generously it opens itself to those who seek it. He who is already such is indeed seen to be fit for teaching; but unless he shines with a fair face, unless he bears a mind illuminated by the

rays of perfect charity, he is not proven worthy of so great an eminence. Let the pastor therefore be ruddy, and not be slack in work; let him be handsome in appearance, that is, lofty in contemplation; let him be fair of face, so that the whole strength of his work and the height of his contemplation, known to the eyes of the heavenly majesty, may shine through the ineffable beauty of charity.

Indeed, because the teacher of the holy Church must possess these three marks of immense beauty, Peter is taken up on behalf of all and is asked three times whether he loves the Redeemer. For first it is said to him: "Peter, do you love me? (John 21:16), that through love he may strive to do mighty deeds; second, that in contemplating he may know lofty things; third, that with the affection of perfect charity he may both burn with fervor toward his neighbor and blaze more ardently toward the beauty of his Creator. Let us then hear by what testimony such a one, so great, so handsome, so fair a youth, is brought forth. For there follows: (Verse 12) "Arise and anoint him, for this is he." 18. What does it mean, "Arise, and anoint him"? Was the boy so small that he could not be anointed while sitting? For indeed, while sitting, we cannot reach high things. Great therefore is the virtue, great the loftiness of the humble, if not even prophets can reach their heights. The prophet therefore arises when the pontiff raises himself in wondrous veneration of the chosen preacher. For outwardly he beholds a humble person, as it were, by seeing; but inwardly he does not recognize his merit unless he raises himself in interior contemplation. The teacher is therefore commanded to arise, because he who wishes to bestow such great sacraments upon someone must first come to know the sublimity of that person's merits. What then does it mean when it is said, "Arise, and anoint him, for he is the one," if not: offer sublime sacraments sublimely to the sublime? For often undiscerning pastors know the negligent and reprobate life of those who approach, and yet do not fear to promote them. These indeed anoint but do not arise, because they do not perceive those to whom they grant the sacraments of anointing as situated in a high place of merits. When therefore a sublime teacher is presented, his ordainer is admonished to arise, because the sacraments of anointing are worthily bestowed through ministry when the one to be anointed is perceived in the lofty sublimity of virtue. Of him indeed it is said, "For he is the one": if therefore he is the one, no other is;

because unless he shines with these virtues, he necessarily cannot attain to an order of such great loftiness. Him therefore whom the Lord promised He would show, He presented as ruddy and handsome in appearance and fair of face, saying, "For he is the one. Because no one ought to undertake the summit of governance who does not possess the strength of great work, namely the knowledge of contemplation and the fervor of charity. Rightly therefore it is added: (Verse 13. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers." 19. The horn of oil is lifted up, so that the entire life of the pontiff may be shown to be spiritual. The horn of oil is lifted up, so that in that excellent liquid the master of the Church may strive to be a man of great mercy. The head of the king is anointed with oil, because he ought to shine upon the lampstand through the flame of the word. The horn receives oil, so that by rebuking he may cleanse, and by showing compassion he may draw others through gentleness. The horn also receives, in the loftiness of office, oil for the nourishment of virtue. But he is anointed with a full horn, so that the virtue of the pontiff may be shown to be complete. For the horn has fullness in its anointing if he is perfect in the virtue of mercy as well as in charity and in the word. He is also recognized as having a full horn in his anointing whose every power is dispensed through mercy. Indeed, the very authority of the holy Church, when it is without mercy, is nothing; for the rigor of discipline is spiritual only when it is not devoid of the balm of mercy. Therefore the horn and the oil are shown together, so that discipline may always be maintained with mercy. For the horn is said to be full of oil, so that wherever the horn displays its sharpness, it may also display the anointing of poured-out grace.

But when the anointing is brought to anoint the king, the horn is seen on the outside, while the fullness of oil is hidden within. Let the prophet therefore carry the horn on the outside, but fill it with oil within; let him set forth the text on the outside, but declare the mysteries within. Let the prophet therefore know what he bestows; let the anointed king know, by receiving what is offered, what he must do. What then does it mean that the horn is on the outside and the oil within, except that often the hardness of subjects deserves to feel the rebuke of the pastor, yet fails to perceive something of his mercy? The ruler therefore displays the horn, in which the oil lies hidden; because when someone is sharply corrected out of charity, the punishment is felt, but the charity is not seen. For the ruler appears harsh

who rebukes in such a way as if he does not love; he reproves as if he vehemently hates. What then is perceived by those who are stung with compunction, except the sharpness of the horn by which they are struck more keenly? But because the pastor deeply loves within the one whom he strikes outwardly by reproving, what else does he do but show the horn by rebuking while hiding the oil by loving? Therefore a full horn is declared in the anointing of the king, so that in the chosen preacher both qualities may be shown to be perfect.

For he ought to be sharp in reproving, gentle in showing mercy. Let him strike perfectly, so that he may perfectly pierce the whole force of the disease; let him anoint perfectly through mercy, so that he may restore to health the wounds he inflicts. For if he strikes less forcefully than he ought, he fails to expel what lies deeper hidden. And if he strikes forcefully but does not anoint abundantly, he kills the one struck through severity and does not restore him to health. Let the horn therefore be whole, and the fullness of oil complete, so that through the horn wounds may be struck with severity, and through the oil they may be soothed. 20. But what does it mean that he is anointed in the midst of his brothers, except that he is commanded to spread examples of virtue all around? He is anointed in the midst of his brothers so that all may be able to become partakers of so great an anointing. For he who is placed in the midst is seen from every side. He is anointed with oil in the midst of others because he who is set up as an example for others ought to have no part of himself obscure, so that all may look upon him and take from him an example of light. Hence also the holy living creatures are described as having eyes all around (Ezek. 1), because when the chosen teacher receives the ardor of charity, the power of mercy, and the zeal for righteousness from the gift of the Holy Spirit, he dwells as it were in a sphere of light, which renders him radiant from every side to those standing around him. Or he is anointed in the midst of his brothers so that he may always consider himself both anointed and in the middle. Let him therefore acknowledge his dignity and exercise the force of that dignity, because he has been anointed. Let him see himself as one in the middle, a man of common condition, so that he may recognize that those over whom he stands are his equals.

He is therefore anointed in the midst of his brothers so that he may be both humble and exalted—exalted in rank, humble in self-estimation. Likewise, he is anointed in the middle so that he may not love himself with

private affection, but from all his preeminence may seek the gain of others. Hence Saul is reported to have been anointed alone at the farthest part of the city (1 Sam. 9). For what does it mean that he is anointed alone by one alone, except that he was destined to swell with pride over the power of his high position through private self-love! For when he wished to love himself singularly on account of the dignity he had received, he carried the nourishment of light, as it were, alone. Hence also the boy who accompanied him is sent ahead, because none of the elect follows the examples of him who is rejected by divine authority. David, therefore, is anointed in the midst of his brothers, because the chosen teacher does not glory with singular love in that by which he is raised to singular heights. And because spiritual gifts are heaped upon chosen rulers through the ministry of men, it is added: (v. 13) "And the Spirit of the Lord was directed upon David from that day forward."

21. For the Spirit of the Lord is directed after the anointing: because we receive the sacraments outwardly, so that we may be filled inwardly with the grace of the Holy Spirit. For outwardly man operates, inwardly God, and not man. For outwardly man rises, inwardly the spirit directs itself: because man bestows upon man the order of religion, but the spirit is directed into him upon whom the order is conferred, so that outwardly he may receive the sublimity of the order, and inwardly the strength of the Holy Spirit. Outwardly the order is entrusted, so that he may do the things that are of God; inwardly the spirit is directed, so that he may powerfully accomplish what is enjoined. For great is the burden of holy orders, great the frailty of the flesh. Therefore, because so great a burden is entrusted to one who is weak, the spirit is directed: so that the weak one may be strengthened, and may bear so great a burden all the more willingly, the more powerfully the almighty spirit itself helps him to bear it. But the spirit is said to be directed, so that, turned away from the proud king, it may be perceived. Therefore the spirit directs itself into another, when the grace of the same spirit flees the proud and the deceitful. Whence it is also written: "The Spirit of the Lord of discipline will flee from the deceitful" (Wis. 1:7). Hence also He says through Himself in the Gospel:

"The Spirit breathes where He wills, and you hear His voice, and you do not know whence He comes or where He goes" (John 3:8). The Spirit indeed comes and goes, because He abandons the reprobate and takes up the elect. And because the judgment of almighty God is inscrutable, man does not

know whence He comes and where He goes: because it cannot be known whether anyone ought to persevere forever in the grace which he receives. The spirit is therefore said to come from him who has fallen away, and to go to him who will persevere: because He abandons some in time, takes up others, and yet does not abandon them. Whence also, as a type of the elect, it is said of David: "The Spirit of the Lord was directed upon David from that day and for the remainder. He is directed indeed on the day of anointing, when we so receive the sacraments of Christ outwardly that we are filled inwardly with the grace of the Holy Spirit. And the spirit is directed "for the remainder," who never departs from the grace which he receives. This grace of the directed spirit we ascribe to preachers in such a way that we attribute it to all orders of the holy Church. For whoever receives the faith of our Redeemer is reborn through the baptism of our redemption, and is redeemed from all sin by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Whence also, suggesting the gift of the same Holy Spirit to the elect who have been redeemed, the Apostle Paul says: "In whom you were sealed on the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). If therefore we consider the people formerly proud in circumcision losing the Holy Spirit, we see equally the direction of the same spirit into those who are baptized. In whom indeed we are directed, because through pride they lost the grace of the Holy Spirit. What then does it mean, what is said, "From that day and for the remainder," unless that the grace of the Holy Spirit is so received that the elect are taught to persevere in it even to the end? Many indeed after the remission of sins commit sins unto death, in whom assuredly the spirit does not appear to be directed "for the remainder. Therefore the spirit is directed in the elect alone "from that day for the remainder," because for the reprobate, at the beginning of their faith, sins are forgiven through the Holy Spirit, but they afterward lose the grace of the Holy Spirit through iniquity. For He is directed "for the remainder," but in David, because David is interpreted as "strong of hand. He is indeed strong of hand who prevails over the devil and holds through perseverance unto the end the good that he has received. Of whom the Lord certainly says: "He who perseveres unto the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22).

But if the state of the universal Church is considered, we see the Spirit of the Lord directed upon David "for the remainder": because the grace of the Holy Spirit began to fill the elect of the holy Church from the very beginnings of that same Church, whom He does not cease to guard even to the

end of the world. 22. Now indeed, according to our plan, the book ought to be brought to a close at its end; but it returns to memory that we referred the beginnings of the volume to the conversation of the Redeemer. And since through John our same Redeemer is declared to be the beginning and the end, the book is most fittingly closed if it is completed in the narration of our Redeemer (Rev. 1:8). David, therefore, meaning "strong of hand," represents the Redeemer of the human race Himself, who prevailed over the ancient enemy and carried away the elect from his power. He is called the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, because He willed to be born from that people whom He filled, as it were with bread, with the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. For Judea was the "house of bread," which possessed the solid food of the Scriptures in spiritual understanding, as if from bread. But what does Samuel signify, except, as we have already often said, the order of the new preachers? And what does David represent, except the Redeemer? Samuel is therefore sent to anoint him. For to anoint him is to preach his incomparable sanctification to those who are ignorant of it. For he is, as it were, anointed when the fragrance of his renown is opened to those who do not know him. For he was anointing him who said: "Because in him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9).

But why do we take only the new preachers as pertaining to his anointing, when we see that the old ones also anointed him so reverently? For what smells better and sweeter than what the prophet Isaiah poured out upon him, saying: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety; and the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him" (Isa. 11:2)? Likewise, he who is held in our hands, David, speaking to him, says: "Beautiful in form above the sons of men, grace is poured forth upon your lips" (Ps. 44:3). And shortly after: "God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions. Moreover, Daniel anointed him and offered the whole sacrament of anointing to the Jews, saying: "When the Holy of Holies shall come, your anointing shall cease" (Dan. 9). The prophet is therefore sent to anoint him, because the fragrance of him is never grasped by the little ones unless it is spread abroad through the mouths of preachers. Whence also those three women prepare spices and anoint the Redeemer in the tomb (Mark 16). Jesus is indeed anointed in the tomb when the glory of his resurrection is preached. Whence also when they come, Jesus is not

found; because when they rightly discuss the Lord's death, they show that the dead one is already rising, and as it were by coming they do not find him;

because where they rightly understand the cause of his death, they find that life has been restored through that death. 23. But what does it mean that he is commanded to fill the horn with oil? For what was the severity of the law, if not the sharpness of a horn? For it struck as if with a horn, since it did not pardon sins through mercy, but punished them by inflicting penalty. The horn, therefore, is filled with oil, because such a King is anointed who mercifully forgives the sins of men, not punishing through the severity of the law. For they were holding forth the horn of Moses, who said to the Lord concerning the woman who had been caught in adultery: "Moses commands that such a woman be stoned; what do You say about her? (John 8:5). But He who had been anointed with the full horn says: "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her. That man had taken up the horn for striking, as it were, who said: "If this man were a prophet, He would know who and what sort of woman this is who touches Him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). But Jesus, who had been anointed from the fullness of the horn, forgave everything, saying: "Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much. Hence to those murmuring about His reception of sinners He says: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13).

The prophet is therefore sent with a full horn to anoint David, because teachers now preach Him who dissolved the harshness of the law, and restored through the warmth of His grace everything that it had set forth rigidly. Was he not anointing Him—he who was sent to anoint Him—of whom it is said: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John: he came as a witness, to bear witness to the light" (John 1:6)? But we have heard how he was sent; let us hear how he anoints: "Behold," he says, "the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). 24. By the horn, namely of his kingdom, the sublimity of the holy Church can be designated, which is great, but is not harsh and proud. Concerning this horn it is said above through Hannah, the mother of Samuel: 'He will exalt the horn of his Christ' (1 Sam. 2:10). For hence it is said through Zechariah: 'He has raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of David his servant' (Luke 1:69). What indeed is the horn of salvation, if not the sublimity of ecclesiastical power? For what is nowhere said to the ancients is now said to the universal Church: 'Whatever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound

also in heaven; and whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven' (Matt. 16:19). This horn is indeed said to be raised up and full of oil, because the holy Church, together with the sublimity of power, extends the bowels of compassion. And because through the vice of condemned humanity we can more easily be lifted up to the authority of power than bent to the tenderness of piety, rightly he is commanded not to prepare a horn, but oil. For he who says, "Fill your horn with oil," indicated that the horn existed without oil. What is this, except that we can grow angry and rebuke even without deliberation, but we cannot be bent to mercy except through great meditation? As if he were saying: Fill with oil the zeal which you naturally have; for if you do not have it of yourself, you can have it from virtue. This is certainly said to him who is sent to anoint the Redeemer, so that he who is placed in the office of preaching may always strive to be rich in mercy.

25. By this horn the affection of the mind can be shown. This horn is certainly commanded to be filled, because the anointing of our Redeemer, that is, His sanctification, ought to be perfectly known before it can be sufficiently preached. The horn is therefore filled when the holiness of the Redeemer is well recognized. And he is anointed with a full horn when He is preached most excellently. For John, because he had come to anoint by preaching, as it were filled the horn by knowing, so that he might be able to anoint Him by speaking well. But if we wish to understand the filling well, let us hear what is said in the Gospel: "The word came upon John the son of Zacharias in the desert" (Luke 3:2). He therefore anointed Him with a full horn, who was first perfectly taught by the Word before he could speak of the divinity of the Word and the assumed nature of man. But coming, he had a calf in his hand; because, in order to become a worthy herald of the Redeemer, he slaughtered his own flesh to God through abstinence. By the name of calf the Lord Himself can also be designated. What then does it mean that the prophet carried a calf in his hand, except that he who wishes to show forth Jesus by preaching ought to imitate the sufferings of Him whom he preaches through the mortification of the flesh?

Indeed, to hold a calf in the hand is to show the likeness of Christ's passion in the power of one's works. For otherwise, he who comes to anoint the king is slain; because indeed the preacher of truth brings himself into danger of his own salvation, who tramples by wicked conduct the word that he preaches with his mouth. Samuel therefore, coming to anoint the king, car-

ried a calf in his hand; because the forerunner of the Lord first showed himself admirable through the splendor of a heavenly way of life, and thus made known the good of so great a grace to those who did not know it. 26. But what does it mean that he is commanded to seek among the sons of Jesse, except that He was to be born from the ancient people and was to have no equal? He is therefore commanded to be sought, so that we might believe in Him with reason. And because He says of Himself: "No one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44), it is rightly said to Samuel by the Father: "You shall anoint the one whom I shall show you. For he had anointed, as it were, one who was shown to him—he who heard from the one whom he had anointed: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). He is sent therefore to Bethlehem, because when Christ is sought according to the flesh, He is found born from the people of the Jews. He came also to Bethlehem, because the order of preachers strove first to convert Judea, and afterward preached the faith of the Redeemer to the Gentiles. But what does it mean that the elders of the city marvel, except that those who had attained the understanding of maturity were astonished at the preaching of so great a novelty? But marveling, they come to meet him, because they gladly hear the preaching of the truth. To come to meet preachers is to hear with desire the word of faith that they preach. What do they ask about his peaceful entrance?

What is a peaceful entrance, except when he has come with the presence of peace? This same peace He shows who says: "He Himself is our peace, who has made both one" (Eph. 2:14). What does it mean, then, that they ask about his peaceful entrance, except that the hearts of the elect Jews were waiting with desire for the promise of the fathers? As if wavering, those who were waiting might say: "Has the peace perhaps come, which foretold that it would come, so great a span of time running ahead? And because the new teachers relate that what the ancient fathers had promised has been fulfilled, they say: "It is peaceful. As if to say: We do not promise future things, but we show the present gifts of peace. In our entrance it is present; in our word it is not something future. Already the righteous Simeon saw, already he held and adored Him, saying: "Now you dismiss your servant, O Lord, according to your word in peace" (Luke 2:29). Already He appeared to the shepherds; already, with the long-awaited peace sent from heaven, the multitude of an-

gels sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke 2:14). And because He had come not only to preach peace but also to persuade, he adds, saying: "I have come to sacrifice."

27. What is it for a priest to sacrifice, except to join the hearts of the elect to our Redeemer through love? As if he were saying: You wish to know whether he has come, but it does not profit to be known unless it profits to be loved. I have come therefore to sacrifice to the Lord. Hence it is that Paul expels those in whom he could not sacrifice, saying: "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22). But to those invited to the sacrifice it is said: "Sanctify yourselves, and come. The Jews therefore cannot come with us to the sacrifice of faith, because they refuse to judge the Lord Jesus from the Scriptures, but out of hatred alone they flee from hearing his preaching. Whence the Lord complains through himself, saying: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse, because they have seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24). What then is the meaning of what is said: "Sanctify yourselves, and come"? But for hearers to be sanctified is to prepare the secret place of a pure mind for hearing. For them to be sanctified is indeed to cast hatred from the heart, and to prepare purity of intention for hearing the word of preaching. Therefore the sanctified are commanded to come, because coming profits nothing for those who do not have purity of intention in hearing.

And because the Holy Spirit speaks through holy teachers, he says: "Come with me" — as if to say: Attend to the one speaking in such a way that you believe the one hearing is with you, because I speak in such a way that I hear, since I myself am the one who speaks and governs the speaking. And because at the beginning of the nascent Church many of the Jews both heard devoutly and believed faithfully, it is rightly said that Jesse and his sons were sanctified by Samuel and invited to the sacrifice. 28. But among the seven sons of Jesse, the king is not found. For what are the seven sons of Jesse, if not all the perfect ones of the Synagogue? They come to the prophet, but none of them is chosen, because the chosen preacher both looks upon the perfect sons of the Synagogue and believes none of them to be the Redeemer of the human race. He therefore brings forward all the older sons, so that when we look upon all the perfect ones, we may consider the excellence of the Redeemer. Among whom indeed, unless the little one is brought forward, the

king is not revealed by the Lord, because surely when we compare great men to our Redeemer, how greatly His dignity surpasses theirs is seen. He is therefore not found among the others, because they are mere men. Therefore the boy who tends the sheep is sought in the pastures, because He submits Himself to the Father in obedience even unto death; yet who shall declare His generation (Isa. 53:8)? He is called the little one because the grace of His humility is commended. He is therefore called the little one, who is declared by the Psalmist to have been made lower than the angels (Ps. 8). But the little one tends the sheep, because through humility He is lowly, and through majesty He is exalted. Here He labors and hungers, but there He feeds the angels from the glory of His majesty.

For while all receive from the fullness of His glory, they are, as it were, satisfied in those most blessed pastures by the boy. The little one is also declared to be the shepherd, because over the assumption of His flesh the heavenly citizens rejoice ineffably. For that ineffable joy of the blessed citizens is, as it were, the food of the sheep. He is therefore commanded to be brought forward urgently; until He comes, the reclining at table must necessarily be postponed. For they would have reclined at table before He came, if the people had believed in another. Therefore He had to be awaited, who was the singular and unique food of blessed souls. Whence He also says of Himself: I am the living bread which came down from heaven (John 6:51). But because He who ascended is the same one who descended (Eph. 4:10), He is sent there so that He may be brought forward. For to send to the pastures is to extend the mind above the angels even to the equality of the eternal Father. And to find Him is to believe Him equal to the supreme Father in all things. But he brings Him forward who already declares that He came for the Redemption of the human race through the humanity He assumed. For he had sent and brought Him forward—he to whom one is sent in His type—when he said: He who comes from heaven is above all (John 3:31). Isaiah was bringing forward the little one tending the sheep when he said:

A little child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Mighty, Father of the age to come, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). But because the faith of a teacher profits only himself for salvation and not also his hearers, He is commanded to be sent and brought forward, so that each one may have faith in Him through which he may deserve to be saved. For each one must go and bring Him, because they

must firmly believe Him to be equal to the eternal Father through His divinity, and a partaker of our nature through His humanity. 29. Of whose description it is also said: "He was ruddy, and beautiful in appearance, and fair of face. Ruddy indeed, because he was wounded by the lance; ruddy, because he was reddened by his Passion. Whence also it is said to him through the prophet: "Why is your garment red? (Isa. 63:2). He was indeed ruddy, who colored the brightness of such great innocence with the redness of his precious blood. He was also beautiful in appearance, because by rising again he put on the beauty of immortality, and looked upon us mortals with great love. For as if promising the beauty of his appearance to his disciples, he says: "I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice" (John 16:22). Hence also promising, he says: "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be. What is the beauty of the face, but the glory of his majesty? For his face is perfect knowledge. Paul also, recalling this, says: "We see now through a mirror in an enigma, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also have been known" (1 Cor. 13:12). What then is the beauty of the face, but the splendor of eternal divinity? This beauty is now believed, not seen; then it will not be believed, but seen, because the apostle says:

"When he shall appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Whence also to Moses, seeking that same beauty of the face, he replied: "You shall see my back" (Exod. 33:23). Whatever we can now contemplate of his divinity is not the beauty itself, but a veil over the beauty. We behold the back, so that we may follow; but when by following we arrive at him, we behold the front, that is, the beauty of his face. He was therefore ruddy in this world, beautiful in paradise, and eternally fair of face in heaven. And this threefold beauty can also be recognized in his manner of life in this present world. He was indeed ruddy, because he ardently loved those for whom he laid down his life. He was beautiful in appearance, because he knew all things. Fair of face, because he did all things well. But what is that beauty of appearance? "No one knows the Father except the Son" (Matt. 11:27). Peter also, marveling at this, says: "Now we know that you know all things, and it is not necessary for anyone to question you" (John 16:30). The crowds who beheld him bear witness to the beauty of his face, who say: "He has done all things well; he has made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (Mark

7:37). Hence also others, marveling, say: "What manner of man is this, that the winds and the sea obey him? (Matt. 8:27).

What then is the beauty of the face, but the beauty of holiness? What likewise is the beauty of the face, but the splendor of his incomparable way of life? Because in everything he did, he shone with the incomparable light of grace. The Psalmist, marveling at this beauty of face, says: "You are beautiful in form beyond the sons of men; grace is poured forth upon your lips" (Ps. 44:3). Paul, proclaiming this, says: "Who, being the splendor of his glory and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins, sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having been made so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did he ever say: 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'? (Heb. 1:3). Concerning him, therefore, it is rightly commanded to the prophet: "Arise, and anoint him, for this is he."

30. Peter the apostle also, not only a prophet but the greatest patriarch, saw the indescribable light poured from above, the overshadowing cloud, the Father crying out: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 2 Pet. 1:17). There it is said: "He himself is." Here it is said: "This is my beloved Son." There, because he was being shown in types, he is perceived as more absent, when it is said: "He himself is." Here, however, because his glory was now revealed, he is perceived as more present, because he says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He therefore is to be anointed, he is to be praised, and to be soothed with perpetual acclamations. But who could worthily suffice to praise him, when one cannot suffice even to behold the glory that one praises? What does it mean that Peter falls when he hears the voice resounding with words of such great proclamation? But he was a little one; he was still seeing what he was not sufficient to see. He was seeing, and because by seeing he was falling, this signifies that he could not attain to that which he deserved to see. No one can say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Because therefore Peter had not yet received that fullness of the Spirit, he was unable, as a little one, to proclaim Jesus. Therefore he is first commanded to rise and to tell the vision to no one until he had risen from the dead. For after the resurrection he was about to receive the Holy Spirit. Whence it is written: "The Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been

glorified" (John 7:39). Peter therefore ought not to tell the vision before the resurrection, since indeed he saw well, but before he had the Spirit, he did not understand.

31. What then is it that the Lord says to Samuel: "Rise, and anoint him"? What is it that he is commanded to rise in order to anoint, unless that he who eagerly desires to proclaim the sublimity of the Lord must be greatly lifted up to heavenly things? But how upright was Peter, who was raised up to behold such great things? Yet if he still awaits a higher state of perfection, who would not fear to undertake the office of so great a preaching? If the Lord admonishes a prophet to rise, does he dare to preach the Lord who lies fallen through the lapse of wickedness? For this is why every preacher is commanded through Isaiah: "Go up onto a high mountain, you who evangelize Zion" (Isa. 40:9). The high mountain is the perfection of teaching and of works. Let him therefore rise who is commanded to anoint the king; let him stretch himself toward lofty things. Let him rise in lofty work, let him rise in lofty contemplation, let him rise in the wisdom of the word, let him rise in the power of charity. Indeed, he who is anointed through preaching is so great that he can scarcely be reached even from the heights. And perhaps Paul was able to anoint him because he says: "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). He was able to anoint him because he had raised himself to the secrets of the third heaven and heard hidden words in paradise.

Because, therefore, the Lord Jesus ought to be preached sublimely by the sublime, the prophet is commanded to rise, because he is ordered to anoint the one through whom Christ himself is signified. Lofty indeed, nay most lofty, is this virtue of perfect conduct, yet it is perfectly accomplished by many. Great indeed is this sublimity, yet holy Church possesses many who are sublime. For from the time she rejected the Synagogue, she raised up holy Church to an innumerable height of virtue. Rightly therefore it is said: "And the Spirit of the Lord was directed upon David from that day forward. The day indeed is faith in the Redeemer, in which holy Church is illuminated and the rejected Synagogue is cast down in wondrous blindness. On that day, therefore, the Holy Spirit is directed upon David, because his grace is taken from the Synagogue and given to the elect of holy Church. For he is directed because he abandons those and takes up these. But he is directed on the day because he who is not illuminated in faith in the Redeemer cannot have the Spirit directing himself within him. The Spirit, therefore, is directed on the

day because he is given to those who possess the light of faith. Moreover, he is directed upon David because only holy Church receives him, which is the body of the Redeemer.

But since, with God as author, we have completed the things we proposed to treat from the Book of Kings, the supreme and almighty Spirit must be entreated that he who brought forth his words through whomever he willed may grant both to the writer and to the reader the disposition of virtue. Amen.

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