The Early Church Fathers Writings

Volume 93

The Early Church Fathers Writings

Volume 93

Bede: Commentaries on Samuel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Habakkuk and Tobit

c. AD 700 – 735

SERMONINDEX

The Early Church Fathers Writings
Volume 93: Bede: Commentaries on Samuel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Habakkuk and Tobit

Texts are public domain except where marked in the Sources and Credits at the back of this book. The modern English versions, the section divisions and the introductions were prepared for SermonIndex and are released under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International licence (CC BY-SA 4.0): you may copy, adapt and share them, including commercially, if you give credit and share the result under the same licence.

The modern English versions and the introductions to the works were prepared with the help of artificial intelligence, working from the Latin text, as described in Sources and Credits.

Published by SermonIndex, sermonindex.net
This book is also free to read online at sermonindex.net/books/
First edition, 2026

ISBN to be added

Contents

Introduction to This Volume ix

Part One · Commentary on Samuel 1

Commentary on Samuel 3

Preface to Book I 3
Chapter 1.1 5
Chapter 1.2 10
Chapter 1.3 14
Chapter 1.4 16
Chapter 1.5 21
Chapter 1.6 25
Chapter 1.7 26
Chapter 1.8 30
Chapter 1.9 36
Chapter 1.10 43
Chapter 1.11 48
Chapter 1.12 57
Preface to Book II 67
Chapter 2.1 70
Chapter 2.2 78
Chapter 2.3 91
Chapter 2.4 95
Chapter 2.5 101
Chapter 2.6 104
Chapter 2.7 108
Chapter 2.8 113
Chapter 2.9 123
Chapter 2.10 129
Chapter 2.11 131
Preface to Book III 143
Chapter 3.1 144
Chapter 3.2 152
Chapter 3.3 171
Chapter 3.4 179
Chapter 3.5 184
Chapter 3.6 186
Chapter 3.7 192
Chapter 3.8 204
Chapter 3.9 213
Chapter 3.10 218
Preface to Book IV 225

Chapter 4.1 226
Chapter 4.2 231
Chapter 4.3 238
Chapter 4.4 248
Chapter 4.5 259
Chapter 4.6 266
Chapter 4.7 271
Chapter 4.8 277
Chapter 4.9 279
Chapter 4.10 286

Part Two · Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah 295

Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah 297

Preface 297
Chapter 1 300
Chapter 2 310
Chapter 3 320
Chapter 4 333
Chapter 5 341
Chapter 6 344
Chapter 7 349
Chapter 8 357
Chapter 9 363
Chapter 10 375
Chapter 11 377
Chapter 12 382
Chapter 13 386
Chapter 14 390
Chapter 15 395
Chapter 16 397
Chapter 17 399
Chapter 18 400
Chapter 19 411
Chapter 20 414
Chapter 21 415
Chapter 22 417
Chapter 23 417
Chapter 24 419
Chapter 25 421
Chapter 26 422
Chapter 27 425
Chapter 28 428
Chapter 29 429
Chapter 30 429
Chapter 32 432
Chapter 33 434
Chapter 34 444
Chapter 35 445

Chapter 36 446
Chapter 37 448

Part Three · Commentary on the Song of Habakkuk 451
Commentary on the Song of Habakkuk 453

Part Four · Commentary on Tobit 477
Commentary on Tobit 479

Sources and Credits 497

Introduction to This Volume

How this book is arranged

This is the ninety-third 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 Bede, Commentaries on Samuel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Habakkuk and Tobit, from the period about AD 700 – 735.

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

Bede was born about AD 673 on land belonging to the monastery of Wearmouth in Northumbria. At seven years old he was given to the abbot Benedict Biscop, and he spent the rest of his life in the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, rarely leaving them. He was made a deacon at nineteen and a priest at thirty. He taught the monks, sang the daily services, and wrote on the Scriptures, on the calendar and on the history of his own people. Most of his books explain the Bible by gathering what Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory had taught, and adding his own lessons for the Church. His Ecclesiastical History of the English People, finished in AD 731, is the chief source for the early English church. He died at Jarrow in AD 735, and the title Venerable was given to him in the centuries after.

Bede quotes the opening words of each passage and then explains them, and the word "etc." in the text marks where the quotation stops. Samuel and Ezra and Nehemiah are divided into chapters, each with a short summary at the head; the Commentary on Samuel is in four books, each with its own preface.

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.

PART ONE

Commentary on Samuel

The First Book of Samuel in four books, from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul.

Commentary on Samuel

The Venerable Bede

AD 673–735

Bede's commentary in four books on the First Book of Samuel, which the Latin Bible calls the First Book of Kings. It goes from the birth of Samuel through the reign of Saul and the rise of David to the death of Saul. Each book opens with a preface, and each chapter begins with a short summary.

Book I

preface to book i

Commending to us the study and frequency of reading and meditating on sacred letters, the Apostle says: For whatever was written in the past was written for our teaching, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. And elsewhere: All these things happened to them as examples. They were written down as warnings to us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. And the blessed apostle Peter also says, recalling the times of the Lord's incarnation, passion, and subsequent glory, among other things: And all the prophets from Samuel and those who came after him also proclaimed these days. For if all things were written for our admonition, teaching, or consolation, not only Jeremiah and Isaiah and others like them, who predicted future events with words, but also Samuel, Jonah, Ezra, and the like, who wrote down past deeds or sayings, either their own or those of others, they too indicate these days, that is, those shining with the light of new grace; we must devote ourselves to this with the utmost effort, and strive, each according to his capacity and with the help of Christ's grace, so that what was written for us does not pass us by as if it were something alien due to our sloth or neglect. But we must attentively and vigilantly consider by what sense we obtain admonition in these, by what method we acquire teaching, by what understanding we attain consolation, in what manner all these speak and announce these days;

imitating, to the best of our ability, that scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, who brings out of his treasure things new and old. For if we care to bring out of the treasure of the Scriptures only the old, that is, to follow the figures of the letters only in the manner of the Jews, what correction do we acquire from our daily sins, what consolation amid the increasing troubles of the world, what spiritual teaching when, for example, we open the book of the blessed Samuel and find that Elkanah, a certain man, had two wives? We above all, who by the practice of ecclesiastical life are to be far from the embrace of a wife and remain celibate, if we do not know how to carve out an allegorical sense from these and similar sayings, which vigorously renew us inwardly by correcting, teaching, and consoling? Therefore, provoked by your frequent encouragement, my dearest and most longed-for of all who dwell on earth, Bishop Acca, relying on your prayers, I will scan the writings of the aforementioned prophet, who was then called a Seer, and if, by the grace of Him who granted him to see many spiritual things, I can perceive anything spiritual and mystical, I will endeavor to commit it to writing.

And after a kind of exposition of the sayings of the blessed Luke, who described the evangelical acts either of the Lord himself or of his apostles, I will also strive to show that this most holy Nazirite from the womb was no less fulfilling the office of an evangelist in his writings than that of a historian; for he, too, signified all the sacraments of the Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, with a faithful historical figure, but with the fullest utterance. Finally, to be brief, if you rightly consider the place of David's birth, his office as shepherd, the ruddiness and beauty of his appearance, the manner of his anointing, the mark of his virtues, the weight of his tribulations, and the glory of the kingdom once promised, you will see what great mysteries of evangelical faith and truth are heaped up in these individual matters. These will be discussed more clearly in their proper place; now, trusting solely in divine aid and following the footsteps of the fathers, I will undertake the task at hand in order. And if, as I desire, my toil will be of benefit and utility to many, I hope to be rewarded with them by the Lord with many blessings; if not, yet my diligence, which has kept me from idleness and from indulging in trivial things for so long, cannot be fruitless. Therefore, come, let us see, Prophet Samuel, who spoke and announced these days, how he began his speech and announcement;

and discussing in order, with the help of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, who taught how all things are to be fit to these days, let us seek how each individual matter may be fit to these days.

CHAPTER 1.1

Elkanah, a man in Ramathaim, has two wives: Peninnah, who is blessed with children, and Hannah, who mourns the reproach of barrenness.

1 Samuel 1:1

There was a man from Ramathaim Zophim ... Elkanah, etc. The first reading of Blessed Samuel typically designates one and the same Lord Christ, to be believed always as the Redeemer and Ruler of both the Synagogue and the Church; of one, boasting of herself from the justice of the law and the abundance of her believing progeny; of the other, lamenting the injustices of her long desolation with humble devotion at the mercy of her same Redeemer, and therefore, breathing again with the sublime consolation of that Redeemer. Ramathaim, as we find in the books of locations, is a city in the region of Thannitica, near Diospolis, from which was Joseph, who in the Gospels is written of as from Arimathea. Moreover, Zophim is a mountain of Ephraim in the place of Ramathaim, which the old edition called Armathem. Ramathaim, however, is interpreted as "their heights"; Zophim as "watchtower"; Ephraim as "fruitful" or "increasing"; and Elkanah as "God's possession. Therefore, there was a man from their heights, that is, a watchtower of men, from the fruitful and increasing mountain, and his name is "God's possession. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (Eph. IV), who always has a beloved possession, and consecrates a dwelling in the spiritual hearts of the faithful.

These, having transcended the earthly conversation, with all the effort of the mind, desire to observe the heavenly light of wisdom, possessing that mountain, which, with the pomp of worldly empire destroyed, grew with the fruit of believing peoples, and filled the whole earth. Of which the Psalmist says: "And He heard me from His holy mountain" (Psalm III), that is, He redeemed me through the man whom He singularly accepted as holy. This one man, namely, man Christ, explaining His own name says: "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His ways" (Proverbs VIII). But this must also be noted according to the letter, because it is not written in vain, nor superfluously, "There was one man"; since it might seem sufficient to say, "There was

a man from Ramathaim," or it could more fittingly have been said, "There was a certain man"; as some have even dared to translate against the faith of Hebrew truth. But this addition of "one" refers to the laudable title of Elkanah who, according to the Apostle's admonitions (Eph. IV), being stable and immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord, was never carried about by every wind of doctrine. For the wise man remains like the sun. For the fool changes like the moon (Eccles. XXVII). And this most fittingly applies to men of this kind, that, placed in the high watchtower of the mind and rejoicing in the fruitful summit of virtues, they are called "God's possession.

Not only is any one of the perfect in Christ rightly called "one man"; but the heart and soul of the multitude of believers were one (Acts IV), imitating after their measure Him to whom it is said: "But You are the same" (Psalm CI). On the contrary, the reprobate are many, not only in different persons or in committing errors in various ways; but each one of them, due to the various movements of his changing mind, is many. For the heart of fools will be different, and a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (Proverbs XI; James I). Hence, the very cities in which they serve are "one confusion"; and this is of the Chaldeans, that is, the fierce, or as it were of demons; the other is called the "vision of peace," whose creator and founder is that one man, of whom it is said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord" (Deut. VI). Indeed, that chorus of like-mindedness in the house, which sings: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Psalm XXVI).

1 Samuel 1:1

And (he said) his name was Elkanah, etc. The names of the fathers of Elkanah unveil their lives, faith, virtues, and the sublimity of those in whom and through whom the Lord is accustomed to be spiritually born; that is, in whose acts or inspirations, faith and love of Him are infused into hearts where they were not before. Hieroam, indeed, means merciful: Heliu, my God is his: Thau signifies a sign, Suph a watcher: Ephratite is said to mean fruitful or dusty. And the life of the saints is taught to be greatly strengthened by mercy, who said: Give alms, and behold all things are clean for you (Luke XI). Those who believe in the redemption through the incarnation of Christ rightly confess Him as their God, because the Eternal Father of Him, Lord of heaven and earth, from the time of assumed humanity, began to also be His God; whence He says, From the womb of my mother,

you are my God (Psalm XXI). The virtues and works of saints are also a sign of the coming, the teaching, and the acts fitting for the flesh of Christ, when He Himself says: And in the hands of the prophets I have been assimilated (John V). And speaking of Moses in the Gospel: For concerning me, he says, he wrote. If it is read as sons of Thau, that is, of the testament, or of the wandering, this name also fits their virtues, who know how to say;

whether we are out of our mind, it is for God; or if we are sober, it is for you; and we are fools for Christ. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men (2 Cor. V: 1 Cor. I). Finally, Paul, standing in chains before the judges of this world, because having received the faculty of speaking, he did not plead about the chains that burdened him externally, but about the confidence in the virtues he gloried in inwardly, heard: You are mad, Paul; much learning is driving you mad (Acts XXVI). And the Savior Himself speaks to the Father: God, you know my foolishness (Psalm LXVIII). Whom, in the Gospel, even His relatives wanted to bind as if He were out of His mind, and the adversaries reproached Him for having a demon (John XVII). But the watcher of heavenly joys, which is the soul of the elect alone, unaware of the joy of that life, has learned to speculate on nothing. Therefore, in the heart and mouth or work of such people, the Savior is always generated by faith, hope, and charity, and was pleased to be called and appear dusty and fruitful at the same time, while taking on the frailty of the flesh, He bore our sins in His body on the wood. And by the unique fruitfulness of His same sacrifice, destroying the kingdom of death, He has opened for us the entrance to life forever.

But according to history, it must be noted that Elkanah is called an Ephratite, not because he was of the tribe of Ephraim, but because he was born in the city of that lot. For the words of days tell us that he was a Levite, that is, from the sons of Isaac, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi (2 Chronicles VI).

1 Samuel 1: 2

And he had two wives, etc. Anna, whose name means 'grace,' represents the Church: Phenenna, whose name means 'conversion,' demonstrates the synagogue. And fittingly Anna is first, and Phenenna second; because the first times of the world had holy ones, who, living lives similar to ours without the ceremonies of legal sacrifices, sabbaths, new moons, circumcision, and various purifications, pleased God through the righteousness of faith alone, hoping to be saved by Christ's grace alone, from the time his incarnation was shown to the patriarchs. Thus finally, the conversion of the Synagogue

from Egypt to the Lord is celebrated. [1 Samuel 1:2] -- And Phenenna had children, etc. The synagogue, ever since she was betrothed to the Lord, has never ceased to generate spiritual children for him through teaching. Gentilitas, however, although it never ceased to be subject to his grace in some, albeit few, could not generate for him children who live spiritually through preaching; because she neither deserved to receive his testament openly, nor the prophecies, nor the oracles of angels.

1 Samuel 1:3

And that man ascended from his city on appointed days, etc. The Lord ascended from the common life of the faithful; for this is the city of our God on his holy mountain (Psalm XXVII): in his saints progressing and ascending from strength to strength, so that on appointed days, that is, through each increase in divine knowledge, he enkindled their heart to offer libations of adoration and good works; and this in the keeping of divine law, in which alone all sins can be forgiven for the humble and their feet can be freed from the snare, who always keep their eyes on the Lord; where only he should be sought, and he who says "I am who I am" can be found. Hence, Silo is well interpreted as separation, or remission, or where he is; signifying the law itself, which instructs those making good progress in its justice: Seek his face always (Psalm CIV).

1 Samuel 1:3

There were, however, there, the two sons of Eli, etc. Eli, my God: Ophni, meaning barefoot: Phinehas, meaning mute mouth. There were thus, in the time of the imminent Incarnation of the Lord, priests consecrated to the Lord in the law of good priesthood, and sons of rightly believing priests: but they were devoid of the grace due to action and preaching; having neither the open duty of instruction with the mouth nor the adorned steps for walking in the way of the immaculate. [1 Samuel 1:4] -- Therefore, the day came, and Elkanah offered sacrifice. The shadow of the law having passed, the light of new grace came, and the possession of God, namely, Christ becoming visible in flesh; He taught people heavenly things, and at the same time granted them to love, hope, and believe. For what He grants to His own to do, He Himself is said to do, as the Apostle testifies, who says: For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. And the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings (Philippians 2; Romans

8); namely, because He makes us to ask and to groan by His grace. Hence, above, not without reason, in Elkanah ascending, worshipping, and offering sacrifice, we understood Him who disposes ascents in the hearts of the blessed in the valley of tears, and teaches them to worship and persevere in good deeds.

1 Samuel 1:5

And he gave to his wife Peninnah, etc. The Lord, suffering in the human flesh, and provoking to divine matters, gave to the Synagogue and all who believed and feared Him in it, both small and great, various operations of virtues and divisions of graces. To the Church of the Gentiles, however, which was still in a few believers, for instance, the Centurion and the Syrophoenician woman, and also to those who, going up to worship in the temple on the feast day, said to Philip: "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (John 12:21); and to others like them, He bestowed only the gifts of faith. The grace of the charismata, however, He deferred to give for the time being. And this one was acting sorrowfully, because she knew what kind of church it would be and praised it in the faith of the Centurion or the aforementioned woman; she loved it, although it was still delayed by the supreme counsel of goodness from receiving the sacraments of the same faith. Therefore, as the hour of passion was approaching, He said, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34); He did not say, sorrowful because of death, but unto death; because, by His very death, He knew that He would destroy him who had the power of death, and after death, He rejoiced that He would reach the salvation of the Gentiles.

1 Samuel 1:6

Her rival also afflicted her, etc. The Synagogue afflicted the Gentiles, reproaching them for being neglected by God due to their immense crimes, and for neither being able to merit the discourse of God nor the oracles of the prophets, by which the offspring of souls acceptable to God might be brought forth; and therefore, the womb of their mind was deprived of the spiritual seed of heavenly virtues or of believing peoples. [1 Samuel 1:7] -- And so he did year by year, etc. He calls the Temple of the Lord the tabernacle of testimony, which remained in Shiloh until these times. Consider the single years or single virtues by which the Synagogue advanced in the house of the Lord; and the Gentiles, who were far from this, were provoked to tears, ac-

cusing it. Or certainly understand the long times of the given law itself. For reading the sacred Scripture, you will find that when Israel went out of Egypt, when it began to be the time for the Synagogue to be betrothed to God, as I might say, not a small crowd of strangers also came with them, to be joined to the Lord and consecrated by legal mysteries together; and from then until the time of the Lord's Incarnation, there were always those who believed with their right hands there. But they were in such great lack and poverty in everything, as inhabitants, strangers, and outcasts, compared to the entire people residing in the ancestral land, that weeping at the feet of the Lord and less suited to receive the food of spiritual joy and the living bread, which descended from heaven, at least falling from the Lord's table, they should be content to hope for and ask for the crumbs, like little dogs.

1 Samuel 1: 8

Then Elkanah, her husband, said to her: "Anna, why do you weep?" etc. Ten sons symbolize the receivers or observers of the law's decalogue. Therefore, the Lord consoles the Church, so that it does not bear grievously that the legislation, the promises, the covenant, and the entrusted utterances of God were given not to it but to the Synagogue; but let it be cheered and exult with the greatest joy, that it has now deserved to receive a greater gift and better grace than all these, the advent of the Mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ, whom it did not know to expect or hope for. This lesson not only figuratively expresses the different states of the two peoples, but also the differing merits of the dissenting persons in each of those peoples, and the different rewards of merits. For Christ has always loved, and will love, the humble tears of penitents more than the rigid justice of the proud; and, neglecting the Pharisee's arrogance, who exalts himself as if fertile with the progeny of ten sons due to his fulfillment of legal commands, he deigns rather to regard the lamentations of the penitent publican.

CHAPTER 1.2

Anna vows to the Lord that if she receives a son, she will dedicate him as a Nazarite; and, after being blessed by the priest Eli, she returns home with her family. And Anna rose, etc. This reading typically shows the devoted humility of the holy Church, which desires either Christ to be spiritually born in its people or its people to be spiritually reborn in Christ, even while some Jewish teachers insult and others agree with the faith. [1 Samuel 1:9] -- And

Anna rose, etc. The Church rose from the prolonged grief of its desolation, having now received confidence in supplicating the Lord. After being refreshed by his sacred body and inebriated by the precious chalice of his blood, while the Jewish teachers still remained on the same soil, ministering on the chair of Moses, keeping watch over the entrance to the heavenly kingdom so that they themselves might enter and teach those who wished to enter, she began to seek from the Lord with tears and prayers the gifts, which, before the mysteries of his incarnation were known or perceived, she could not yet presume.

1 Samuel 1:11

And Anna made a vow, etc. The Church vows, if the word would be entrusted to the nations, and the grace of faith would be granted, and a people strong in virtues would arise from them, that they would serve the Lord until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and never in the example of the Jews, they would bend the knee to Baalim and Astarte, and the other idols of the nations. But if you understand the days allegorically as virtues, all the days of their life are given to the Lord; whatever honest life they live, whatever clear thing they bear in mind or body, they attribute not to themselves, but with the Apostle they proclaim: By the grace of God I am what I am (1 Cor. XV).

1 Samuel 1:11

And a razor shall not come upon his head. And the reproof of sin shall not violate his conscience; but as far as it is possible for man, he endeavors to consecrate all his thoughts, words, and deeds, which gradually proceed as if from the brain of the heart, to Christ as a true Nazarite. Consequently, the hair of the apostles, because they are holy, cannot perish from their head (Luke XXI). However, the leprous, unclean person, and the woman captured by enemies, and others of that kind, are commanded to shave not only all the hair of their heads but also the hairs of their entire body, because they are vile and polluted; so that once the excess of mortal actions is cut off, whatever is found of living perfection in them may be more freely consecrated to the Creator. But we say these things, not because we believe that any saint has lived this life without the stain of sin, nor that what is said applies to anyone except Christ: And whatever he does shall prosper (Psalm I); but because we all ought to strive to serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness

before him all our days (Luke I); according to him who said: I have sworn and determined to keep the judgments of your justice (Psalm CXVIII). Yet it is not in vain that it is preached elsewhere, saying: And do not enter into judgment with your servant, because no living person shall be justified in your presence (Psalm CXLII). Hence, more truly, these words of Anna can be understood as spoken by the Church about the Lord himself; whom she always desires to be generated in her and her members by the grace of new virtue. For he alone, because he lived without sin in the flesh, was given to the Lord all the days of his life, finding nothing in himself whatsoever that he would cut off by repenting.

1 Samuel 1:12

It came to pass, therefore, when she was multiplying prayers, etc. It happened that, as the Church began to multiply across the world, new emblems of its devotion began to multiply, whose praise comes not from men but from God, so that the priests of the Jews should consider its external manifestations, to see whether it lived in a gentile or Jewish manner. But with Judaism gradually left behind, she rejoiced to follow the mysteries of faith rather, which purify the heart, and pleased invisible Christ with the wisdom of faith. [1 Samuel 1:13] -- And only her lips moved, etc. Clearly an ecclesiastical operation and most worthy of divine regard, which itself anticipated the Lord's encouragement with devotion, saying: Enter your chamber, and having closed the door, pray to your Father who is in secret (Matthew VI). [1 Samuel 1:13] -- Therefore Eli thought she was drunk, etc. The pride of the Jewish priesthood judged the converted gentility still heavily burdened by the disturbance of sins, and said to her: How long will you be held guilty by the bond of original sin? Be purified by circumcision, and thus be saved in the number of proselytes.

1 Samuel 1:16

Responding Anna, No, my lord, she said, etc. The Church from the gentiles, responding, said, No, O priest of Judea, consider not burdened by sins she who has already been purified by the font of baptism and the participation of the sacred body and blood, having become the inner temple of Christ. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man (Romans VII); nor am I any longer sinful, but yet I am your exceedingly unhappy servant; whom I justly call Lord, for you preceded me in a time of such ancient election. Who

has delivered me from this body of death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ (Ibid.); at whose sacred feet I lay prostrate, pouring out my soul, melted by the fire of love, in the sight of His piety through tears. [1 Samuel 1:16] -- Do not consider your servant as one of the daughters of Belial, etc. Do not compare me to souls deceived by diabolical fraud; for I, doing penance from the heart for my sins, have renounced Satan and all his works and pomps: moreover, I have willingly accepted the very sweet yoke of Christ, which the proud one long ago cast off from his neck, for which he also deserved to be called Belial, meaning without yoke.

1 Samuel 1:17

Then Eli said to her: Go in peace, etc. He who previously noted her for drunkenness, now having received the sanctification of her deed, blesses; and the envious chief priests, mocking the salutary beginnings of the Church, scorned them as similar to those of drunkards. However, some of them, having later perceived the divine will regarding these matters, began to support the believers and to render assistance; and even many of those who called the apostles, speaking by the Holy Spirit, full of new wine (Acts 2); having heard the reason of the truth, what they had previously mocked as a mystery, they accepted as believers. [1 Samuel 1:18] -- And the woman went on her way, and ate, etc. And the Church prospered in the hope of heavenly compassion, raised in the faith and love of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; refreshed by the consolatory and comforting feasts of sacred Scripture, it could not thenceforth be changed by any pressures or blandishments from the true God whom it once acknowledged into diverse errors. For you have prepared, she says, a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me (Psalm 23).

1 Samuel 1:19

And they rose early in the morning, and worshiped, etc. The growth of the increasing Church is shown. At first, Anna rises alone to pray, and the hour at which she prayed is not expressed; now having received the blessing of the priest, she rises in the morning, not alone, but with her husband and her whole family, attending to prayer. At first, the Church sought the Lord with few, but when it had received from the faithful Jewish teachers the increase of faith, with the darkness of paganism already dispelled: From the ends of the earth, she says, I cry to you (Psalm 61); overflowing with such grace of

heavenly gift, that the Lord himself, namely her husband, praying, has an advocate with the Father is not doubted to have. [1 Samuel 1:19] -- And they returned, and came, etc. Ramatha is interpreted as height. Therefore, having completed prayer, to obtain what we ask for, so that after the grievous barrenness of an unfruitful mind, we may be able to bring forth the buds of virtues for consecration to God, not to be wasted outside on superfluous things, but let us strive to return to the exalted dwellings of our conscience with faith and truth. And let not our countenance be changed to different things anymore, but let it persist in the same ardor and devotion that it conceived in prayer, even after the tears of consumption.

CHAPTER 1.3

Anna names her born son Samuel, whom she also offers to the Lord with gifts and sacrifices after he is weaned forever. But Elkanah knew Anna his wife, etc. In this reading, the Church presents its children conceived in faith, born through baptism, weaned by doctrine, commended by the gift of sincere conduct, and destined to serve the Catholic unity, originating from Jewish believers, indeed to the Lord Himself, who governs the Church, throughout all the days of their life. [1 Samuel 1:19] -- Therefore, Elkanah knew his wife, etc. The Lord had mercy on enriching the Church of the nations through His grace, and having sent the seed of His word through preachers, He commanded all the ends of the earth to remember and turn to Him.

1 Samuel 1: 20

And it happened after the cycle of days Anna conceived, etc. It happened after the illumination of much spiritual knowledge and the manifestation of virtues, through which the apostles shone upon the world, the Gentiles conceived through catechizing and gave birth to a people believing in God through baptizing, or rather the people believed in God through His people. For both must rightly be confessed, not only according to the reason of faith and truth but also as the very name of Samuel implies. For it is interpreted: God is there, or His name is God. God is there in the people who will be born, whom the Lord has chosen. His name is God, specifically whose, if not that of Him who, to signify that He would be constantly born in His own through grace, says: Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother (Matthew VII). Nor should it seem strange to

anyone that we have said that both the husband and son of the same Anna carry the type of Christ; because indeed the same Mediator of God and men is simultaneously the bridegroom and son of the holy Church which He governs: the bridegroom, always helping her to believe, hope, and love; the son, recently coming into the hearts of those believing, hoping, and loving through grace.

1 Samuel 1:21

But the man Elkanah went up, etc. Let each one abound in his own understanding (Rom. XIV). The Lord and the Church of the perfect, which is his house and seat, ascended to offer to the Father who is in heaven the vows of their works, and the Church still remains at home in those who cannot yet use the solid food of the word. Some, having received the rudiments of faith, are still children in understanding (Hebr. V). But the time will come when they also will grow, and with the grace of Christ dwelling in them, they will begin to have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil; and they will say with the Apostle: When I became a man, I put away childish things (I Cor. XIII). And now they may be such, worthy in the sight of the Lord, remaining in the calling in which they were called with God, and able to partake in the priesthood and to eat the things of the altar, and to hear even the highest things of divinity, discerning the mysteries by reading. Such is the progress of all who believe in Christ: such were the beginnings of the converted Gentiles among the learned and teachers of the Jews, as the sons of Peninnah.

1 Samuel 1:24

And she brought him with her, after she had weaned him, etc. The Church brings up her children, to whom she reasonably and without deceit administered milk, and has now advanced them from the rudiments of the new man to more perfect things, having educated them. She brings, I say, those whom the assisting grace of Christ has made strong in understanding to the fellowship of those who have already been made the temple of God through the observance of the divine law. But she brings them in three persons, namely, those who are married, the continent, and the teachers, who by the purity of their lives are fit for divine sacrifices, having bodies prepared to die for Christ, possessing a heart contrite through the mill of fear and hope, and embracing with a full mind the fervent love of spiritual grace to be inebri-

ated with a sober chalice. For since an amphora is a kind of measure, it indicates the measure of love, by which each one is commanded to love his neighbor as himself. And because it holds three measures, it is rightly applied to the aforementioned three persons, by whom the whole Church consists.

1 Samuel 1:24

The boy, however, was still a little child, etc. The people of the nations had recently converted to the faith and produced not a few martyrs, who with unanimous devotion shed their blood for Christ, and grafted the wild olive tree onto the good olive tree; this was done by ministers of the word. [1 Samuel 1:28] -- And they worshipped the Lord there. The Lord commands to pray without remission and not to faint (I Thess. V) under the figure of Anna, which the Church performs, which in the beginning of its vows, in its progress, and even in its embrace does not cease to supplicate the Lord.

CHAPTER 1.4

Anna together with her husband adoring in the tabernacle says a hymn of thanks to the Lord. My heart exulted in the Lord, etc. Once barren, now fertile in God's praise, rejoicing Church, from the change of the Old Testament or priesthood to the New, in which it was consecrated, sounds a triumphant song. But it should be inquired literally, how this Anna praying is remembered to have said, when in her entire song she is not recorded to have prayed at all, nor even addressed words to God, except in only two places, that is: Because I rejoiced in your salvation; and below: For there is no one besides you, and the rest, all seem to be spoken either teaching or prophesying, or praising the Lord. And it should be clearly understood that all her actions, involved in the divine office, and all deeds or words according to God, ought to be considered as prayers. For if prayer is only understood as what we commonly know, neither Anna would be seen to have prayed with these words, nor any of the righteous would pray without interruption, according to the Apostle's command. But if all the righteous man's acts, living according to God, are considered prayers, because the righteous continuously does what is right; the righteous will pray without cessation through this, nor will ever cease from prayer, unless he ceases to be righteous. Therefore the mother of Samuel is not in vain reported to have prayed even in those things which she spoke rightly to men. Let the joyful mother, who previously spoke with a bitter soul in her heart, sing then with a wide-open mouth; and while she

narrates her presence, may she also predict the future joys of the whole Church.

1 Samuel 2:1

My heart exulted in the Lord, etc. Truly a heart exulting, truly has the horn of spiritual kingship been exalted, which does not boast in itself, nor in perishable and fragile things, but glories in the Lord its God; according to him who says: Rejoice, O righteous, in the Lord, and I shall break all the horns of sinners, and the horns of the righteous will be exalted (Psalm 75). He does not say, He shall break, He has exalted; but, I shall break, and thus they shall be exalted. [1 Samuel 2:1] -- My mouth is enlarged over my enemies, etc. While my heart is enlarged to rejoice in Jesus, that is, in your salvation, my mouth is also enlarged over all enemies of faith and truth, to confess and proclaim His name; because even in the tightness of afflictions your word is not bound, nor is it bound in preachers.

1 Samuel 2:2

There is none holy like the Lord, etc. Indeed, we read of holy and strong people and angels; but no matter how much one advances in holiness, however much perfection is acquired, a creature cannot be as holy and strong as the Creator; because He is the bestower of strength and holiness, the other is the recipient. As for what he said, Neither is there any other beside you, and he did not add, Creator, or Lord, or anything specific; it singularly designates His eternal existence, which the Psalmist distinguishes from the frailty of creatures: You will change them, and they will be changed; but you are the same, and your years will have no end (Psalm 102). [1 Samuel 2:3] -- Do not multiply lofty words, glorying, etc. It is said to the Jews and the Gentiles: Let it suffice to have so far gloried in your almost unique glory, now with the letter of the law transcended by grace, the truth of the Gospel trampling down the errors of the Gentiles, both receive the New Testament of Christ with faith, and the commandment of love. But we are also commanded to speak lofty things, but not to multiply lofty words glorying; that is, to seek and to desire the things above, not those on earth; yet not to think more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly (Coloss. III; Rom. XII). The Gentiles are instructed to speak lofty things, by proclaiming the mysteries of the one true God, and not to multiply lofty words, by erring through many deceiving names.

1 Samuel 2:3

For the Lord is the God of knowledge, etc. Therefore, it is necessary for you to not seek higher things for yourselves, nor to search into things stronger than yourselves (Eccles. III); for the source and treasure of wisdom and knowledge, who teaches man knowledge: the Lord knows the thoughts of men, that they are vain (Psa. XCIII). [1 Samuel 2:4] -- The bow of the mighty has been broken, etc. The proud intention of the Jews, by which they always presumed to be saved by the works of the law, has failed; the exercise of dialectical skill, and the loquacity of secular philosophy, as if bent to ridicule the simplicity of faith, has been weakened; finally, all the fiery darts of malignant spirits have been blunted by the weapons of invincible truth; because God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty (I Cor. II).

1 Samuel 2:5

Those who were filled have hired themselves out for bread, etc. The Jews, having previously been refreshed by the living bread of Scriptures, now, dissembling within themselves, lack amidst the spiritual feasts of the church at the feast of the good father, who gratefully received the returning younger son, and those who were once guests of the covenants, now taste and see that the Lord is good. [1 Samuel 2:5] -- The barren has borne many, etc. Isaiah explains that the children of the desolate are many more than of her who has a husband (Isaiah LIV). The translators of the Septuagint wrote, "For the barren has borne seven." Saba, a Hebrew word, indeed designates both seven and many. But even the sense of that version becomes clear to those recognizing the number seven, which signifies the complete perfection of the church. This is why the apostle John writes to the seven churches (Revelation I), showing himself thus writing to the fullness of one; and in the Proverbs of Solomon, prefiguring this before: Wisdom has built a house for herself, she has hewn seven pillars (Proverbs IX).

1 Samuel 2:6–7

The Lord kills and gives life, etc. He kills the Synagogue and gives life to the Church; or He gives life to those whom He kills; so that we might consider that we are indeed dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus (Eph. II). Or certainly, we should understand according to what the Apostle said: For we

who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal flesh (II Cor. IV). But better, and without any controversy, we confess this fulfillment in the Lord, who died and came to life again, descending to the dead and resurrecting. [1 Samuel 2:7] -- The Lord makes poor and makes rich, etc. Those whom He makes poor and humble in spirit for their own sake in the present, He makes rich in Himself in the future and exalts.

1 Samuel 2: 8

He raises the needy from the dust, etc. He raises Christ from the dead, so that His flesh may not see corruption; and He lifts Him to the heavens, that He may not be overcome by the persecutors, the Jews, whose traditions the Apostle considers as dung (Colossians III). For He Himself became needy, He Himself became poor for our sakes, that by His poverty we might be made rich (II Cor. VIII). [1 Samuel 2:8] -- To sit with princes, etc. He himself explains this verse, when questioned by those whom he made poor so that he might enrich them; he humbled them on earth so that he might exalt them in heaven; when asked what reward they would have in the future; he responded: When the Son of Man will sit on the throne of his majesty, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. XIX). And Solomon, in praise of a strong woman, that is, the Church, or any chosen soul: Noble, he says, is her husband in the gates, when he sits with the elders of the land (Proverbs XXXI).

1 Samuel 2: 8

For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's, etc. He has not only set up high promontories and cliffs as defenses against the heat of marine tempests for the earthly world but much more so, to maintain the state of his Church, so that no wave of turbulent persecution might throw it down, he has placed the steadfast and strong hearts of his faithful. He therefore calls these foundations of the earth, the supports of the world, upon which the princes sit on thrones. And rightly so; because the more humbly they now bear, and defend more fervently, the more exalted they will be in judgment then. Blessed Job also remembers who the lords of these foundations are, and that they are not fortified by their own strength, saying of the Lord: Under whom bend those who bear the world. So that they may firmly support the burdens of the weak, they continually submit humble necks to invincible strength (Job IX).

1 Samuel 2:9

He has kept the feet of His saints, etc. He has defended the actions and minds of the pious, by which they advance towards perfection as though by steps, from the snares of the impious; and these same impious people, in the dark devices which they set for the good, will perish. Therefore, one of the saints, giving thanks to the Savior for the safety of his feet, sings: I will exult in your salvation; the nations are sunk down in the pit that they made, etc. (Psalm IX.) [1 Samuel 2:9] -- For a man will not be strengthened by his own strength. He looks up. Therefore, the impious who, trusting in their own strength, despise seeking divine help, should finally be silent in darkness, that is, condemned at last to cease from blind impiety; because whoever rightly desires to be called a true man will be strengthened not in his own strength but in the grace of his Creator.

1 Samuel 2:10

His adversaries will fear the Lord, etc. He openly predicts the terrible day of the strict and final judgment; on that day, since His adversaries will fear the Lord, it is necessary now for us who do not yet see Him to humbly fear Him, so that then we may rejoice at His sight in majesty. But even today, the Lord thunders from the lofty and luminous pages of Holy Scripture, which His Spirit enriched, to chide the stubbornness of the wicked. [1 Samuel 2:10] -- The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. It is certain that the Lord will judge not only the ends of the earth but also the inland regions. Thus it is said: He will judge the ends of the earth; as if it were said, He will also judge the ends of the earth; because no one can hide from His heat (Psalm XVIII). But it is better understood to say the ends of the earth signify the end times or the final moments of every person or the whole world; because as someone departs from the body, so will he be presented to the examination of the strict judge.

1 Samuel 2:10

And He will give power to His king, etc. After the trial of the final examination, the kingdom of Christ, which unbelievers now despise, will be elevated and shown gloriously with the revelation of His divine majesty. But the horn of Christ is fittingly understood not only of the only-begotten Son of God but also of each of His chosen ones. Hence at the very beginning of this hymn, in which throughout she marvelously commends the grace of God,

she says: My horn is exalted in my God. For we rightly call all His anointed ones christs, that nevertheless with their head they are one body, one Christ; now in part as strangers on earth, but then to be wholly exalted in the heavenly homeland. Recall the hymn of blessed Mary (Luke I), and see how the prophetess, mother, and Lord, both woman and virgin, felt similarly about God's judgments and grace.

CHAPTER 1.5

While the sons of Eli were profaning the priestly office, the boy Samuel ministered before the Lord, girded with a linen ephod, and with Eli's blessing, Hannah became fruitful with children. And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, etc. This lesson teaches that, after the incarnation of the Lord, with the teachers of the Jews having turned to worse things, the great deeds of the Church of the Lord and Savior would be proclaimed throughout the whole world. [1 Samuel 2:11] -- Thus Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, etc. The Church of the Gentiles, recently called to faith, which we said signified the birth of the blessed Samuel, God's possession, which is His co-eternal wisdom, Christ, went to enlighten, as always, the lofty hearts of His saints, faithful and angels and humans, which are His house, strongly built upon the rock of faith against the gates of hell. But the people called to faith, even seen by and wondered at by the Jewish priesthood, humbly served Christ's commands as if they were always observing themselves.

1 Samuel 2:12

Furthermore, the sons of Eli, sons of Belial, etc. The sons of the Jewish priesthood, sons of blind light, or without a yoke (for both Belial and Beliar mean this), were those who did not know the doctrine of Christ; not following the commands of the divine law but adhering to their own statutes and traditions. [1 Samuel 2:15] -- But whoever had sacrificed a victim, the priest's boy would come, etc. Whoever at that time had decided to consecrate his life to the Lord, the disciples of the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests would come, as his carnal customs began to be boiled away by the fire of heavenly devotion, and they had the rapacious desire of the world in their works; whose three-pronged bite the Apostle John describes, saying: For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2). And they would send examples or even teachings of earthly desires into whatever heart of the listener, whether it be teachable, or of slower and

narrower intellect, whether weak and fragile, or patient of adversity, whether effective in speaking, or rustic and less eloquent, which is distinguished by the variety of larger and smaller iron, bronze, or earthen vessels; and they would pollute the small flame of divine love that someone had recently conceived by their worst touch, not expecting the reward of preaching as the law decreed, but rather compelling what was due to God to be made an offering to themselves in obedience; by which most crooked staff they also now defile sacred offerings in the church, whoever, having received the mystery of faith or even the ministry of the word, seek their own benefit, not that of Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel 2:15

Even before they burned the fat, etc. The wickedness of Pharisaic deception progressed so far that even before they taught that the rich offering of love, most pleasing to God, should be made, which should be offered singularly on the altar of the heart before other sacrifices of virtues, they would put their own service before divine worship; telling their wretched listeners that each should not consume the enticements of carnal lust with a flame of heavenly charity worthy of God, but should spend these less chastised in the injury to the Creator according to the whim of carnal commands. However, these wicked ones said this to their listeners not with words, but with the deeds themselves. We wish we did not know that very similar things are being done today by teachers and priests of the Church. [1 Samuel 2:17] -- The sin of the boys was therefore exceedingly great, etc. The sin of the scribes and Pharisees was exceedingly great before the Lord, although before men they justified themselves through hypocrisy (Luke 11); because they, being men, annulled the commandment of God through their traditions; or certainly taking away the key of knowledge, they themselves did not enter, and they prohibited those who wished to enter. If, however, the boys committed exceedingly great sin before the Lord, who unworthily handled the flesh of sacrificial victims, what do you think those deserve of punishment who, with childish foolishness, have trampled underfoot the Son of God and considered the blood of the eternal covenant polluted (Hebr. 10)? Who receiving, do not discern the body of the Lord (1 Cor. 11), that is, from the perception of common and mean foods, they by no means discern the mystery of heavenly life.

1 Samuel 2:18

Now Samuel was ministering before the face of God, etc. Ephod in Hebrew, in Latin it is called a superhumeral or overgarment; the garment of this name, woven from gold, blue, purple, twice-dyed scarlet, and twisted fine linen, is mentioned in the Scripture of Exodus (Exod. XXV) as allowed only for the high priests. However, the same linen ephod is typified as usable by priests, Levites, and others, as the examples of Samuel, who was a Levite, the priests who Saul slew, and David dancing before the ark of the Lord demonstrate. For it could not have been eighty-five high priests of the same age, but priests of a lesser order. Typologically, the Ephod of various colors shows the manifold grace of virtues in a holy man. Linen, on the other hand, since it is produced from the earth, and through long practice reaches its own beauty, signifies the pure mortification of chaste flesh. Therefore, Samuel ministered before the face of the Lord, a boy girded with a linen ephod; Christ ministered to our infirmity humbly in a man, always carrying a body and soul most clean from every filth of sins. For He did not sin, nor did He do evil before the Lord: He who was conceived without iniquities, and His mother bore Him without sins. The Christian people serve Christ, crucifying their flesh with its vices and desires, chastening their body, and bringing it into subjection.

1 Samuel 2:19

And his mother made for him a little tunic. The Lord assumed not only a chaste and free from all sin, but also an entirely humble flesh, which the Church makes for Him, or whoever believes Him rightly and most wholesomely such, or because the virgin, a not ignoble member of the Church, from whom He Himself was born, shines brightly. [1 Samuel 2:19] -- Which he offered on the appointed days, etc. And the Church, never deserted by Christ, whom it has with it in secret all the days until the end of the age, ascending on the solemn days of the Mass to sacrifice, carries with it the mysteries of his flesh and blood in wine and bread. Indeed, to the people whom the Church bears for Christ, it instills the habit of humility, which it brings with it through the increase of each one's virtues, progressing to higher things with the grace of Christ, that it may render the vows of thanksgiving to the Father of lights. This is the wedding garment, according to the parable of the Gospel (Matthew 22), that everyone who enters the solemnities of

the heavenly kingdom needs. And this was first donned by the Son of the great King himself, the author and sanctifier of spiritual weddings; who, proceeding as a bridegroom from his chamber, humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death (Ezekiel 40; Philippians 2). This tunic de facto small in appearance but great in power, he did not allow to be torn even at the time of his death by those who inflicted death upon him; for he preserved even in death the example of humility which led him to death.

1 Samuel 2:20

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, etc. The priests of the Jews, having converted to faith, blessed Christ and the Church, of whom it is written: "A great number of the priests were obedient to the faith. The old priesthood often signifies in its types the Church to be blessed in Christ, and to be multiplied by the seed of the word among the nations of the Gentiles, and it speaks metaphorically to Christ: "May God the Father grant you believers from the Gentiles"; for they are the seed whom the Lord has blessed. For the return you lent to the Lord, that is, for that uniquely holy man, whom you chose to have taken from a virgin, sharing with you the person of Christ, that is, the name of God. For if a holy loan had not been received by the Lord, no one would have thought it hopeful to expect a seed from a barren woman. This means, if a man seized by God had not been glorified and seated at the right hand of the Father, the miserable gentility, and aware of its transgression, could not have reached the multiplication of the seed of Abraham at all. But while Christ, the firstfruits of the human race, was loaned to God the Father, hope is given to the faithful by His example to be saved through Him, to live in Him, to die for Him, to be resurrected by Him, and to reign eternally with Him.

It can also be said that the Church, for the loan it lent to the Lord, earned seed from Him, when, by offering to the Lord a faithful and devoted people, it received greater gifts of faith and devotion, through preachers sent throughout the world; which in whatever nations, neglecting to obey the word of God when heard, failed to receive the multiplication of the holy seed for the unpaid loan of the word to the Lord by rejecting the teachers from itself.

1 Samuel 2:21

The Lord therefore enriched Anna, etc. The Lord gave to the Church the Spirit of His grace, by which it, being fruitful, bore for Him spiritual offspring, partly to search out or preach the mysteries of the Holy Trinity powerfully, partly with perfect love of God and neighbor despised in its simplicity; because the humility of the incarnation assumed by Christ for a time was held in great esteem by the Father; by whom everyone who humbles himself, will be exalted (Luke XIV). Whence also their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Psalm XVIII).

CHAPTER 1.6

The sons of Eli increase sin, also despising the warnings of their father; and Samuel, growing, pleases both God and men. But Eli was very old, etc. In this reading, mystically, with Judaism aging and about to fall, the fame of Christ grows through the Gospel. The old age of Eli therefore signifies much, hinting at the near end of the legal priesthood. For what is growing old and aging is near to destruction.

1 Samuel 2:22

And he heard everything that his sons were doing, etc. The transgression of the sons of Eli was not small nor uniform, which did not fear to tarnish both divine religion and love of neighbor. For it is read above that they presumed from the holy meats, not what was prescribed in the law, but what was pleasing to them; that before the sacred fat was burned for God, they presumed a portion for themselves from the sacrifice that was eaten; that they took raw meat from those offering it, to prepare it more carefully for themselves; that they made the people of the Lord transgress: and, which is exceedingly horrible, they did all this in contempt of the Creator. But now it is added that what would harm the brethren, because they polluted the women of the people who were coming together to pray; and below, it is added, which is the sum of all evils, that they did not repent even when corrected by their Father. We have spoken these things more precisely, so that, reader, you may remember what to beware of in each instance. Truly, what remains to be fulfilled in the typical part is for the priests and teachers, both to watch in the Lord and to awaken others to watch, saying: Awake to righteousness, and do not sin (I Cor. XV). But even bad teachers sleep, and this with the women who keep watch at the door of the tabernacle, when seducing unstable souls,

neither do they themselves enter, nor do they allow those who want to enter the door of life. Such was once the crime of the perishing Pharisaic faction; such is also now in the false professors of the Christian religion.

1 Samuel 2:23

And he said to them: Why do you do such things? etc. He rebuked the guilty sons of Eli, but they did not listen. And the very institution of the old priesthood orders its ministers to be perfect; but the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests, being wicked, in their ruin despised the paternal voice of their law and priesthood. However, we must not overlook the literal aspect, that he rebuked the sons of Eli; but because they despised the rebuke and he neglected to cast them out as he should have, he perished along with them. What then do we wretched, what do our similars deserve, who delight in sins, who do not dare to amend, who fear their own conscience; and what the entire people shouts, they pretend not to know? [1 Samuel 2:25] -- If a man sins against a man, etc. Both refer to the sons of Eli. For he sinned against a man when the priest violated the wife of another man under the pretext of religion; but this could be dismissed with appropriate penance by God. Not only this was done, but he sinned even worse against the Lord, when the same priest, contaminated by fornication, approached the holy mysteries of the altar not only unworthily, but completely unworthy. Indeed, the terrible sentence of Eli against such presumptuous persons resounds, but much more terrible is the word of the judge himself, who says: Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the age to come (Matt. XII; Luke XII).

1 Samuel 2:26

But the boy Samuel advanced and grew, etc. While Eli was growing old and weak, the boy Samuel advanced and grew; because indeed, the rejection of the preceding commandment takes place due to its weakness and uselessness; for the law brought nothing to perfection, but the introduction of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

CHAPTER 1.7

Coming to the prophet Eli, he foretells what will happen to his house because of the guilt of disdain. Now the man of God came to Eli, etc. This reading does not teach figuratively, but with the clear words of prophecy,

that the entire old priesthood, which is from the seed of Aaron, is to be changed to the new priesthood of Christ, which is now carried out in the Church. [1 Samuel 2:27] -- Was I not openly revealed? etc. He does not speak here of the recent father of Eli, who could not have been in that Egyptian servitude; but of Aaron himself, to whose house He was revealed in Egypt, and whom He, having been instructed from there, preferred to all the tribes of Israel by the right of the priesthood. [1 Samuel 2:28] -- And I gave to the house of your father all things, etc. All things from the sacrifices of the people, whatever the priests ought to receive, to the sons of Aaron your father, because I chose them into the priesthood, I provided.

1 Samuel 2: 29

And you honored your sons above me, etc. Not content with the portion that I granted you, you also tried to take the firstfruits which were due to me; which can be understood both of the time and of the portion of the sacrifices; because before the fat was burned, they presumed to take for themselves the best parts to be eaten from the victims, as was read above. [1 Samuel 2:30] -- Therefore, says the Lord God of Israel: He spoke, I said, etc. The question arises by what reason what was promised to last forever could be changed; but recall that the priesthood of Aaron was the shadow of the eternal priesthood, and the promise of eternity; understand that truth pertains not to the shadow but to that shadowed. For lest you would think the shadow and figure to be everlasting, even its change had to be prophesied. Just as with the kingdom of Saul, it is to be understood, as it was said: "But now your kingdom shall not continue; the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever" (1 Samuel 13). Which will be more fittingly dealt with in its own place.

1 Samuel 2: 30

Now the Lord says: Far be it from me, etc. Changing times, not changing plans, the Lord seeks elected ones from the nations for Himself in a spiritual priesthood, and deprives entirely the contemptuous sons of Aaron of any order of priestly office. [1 Samuel 2:31] -- Behold, the days are coming, and I will cut off your arm, etc. These days are present, no priest is now chosen from the stock of Aaron; but the boast of the legal priesthood has been cut off, not only in Eli alone, but in the entire succession of the Levitical lineage; so much so that not even a priest of the lesser order, who are called

presbyters in Greek, that is, elders, is considered to be sought there. Whence the Septuagint interpreters have more clearly translated: And there shall not be an elder in my house for you, because indeed many from that tribe age in body, but in the house of the Lord they are not endowed with the rank of presbyters.

1 Samuel 2:32

And you will see your rival in the temple, etc. Your descendants will see the people of the nations, beloved in the faith, spiritually using the Scriptures and promises of Israel from the temple. [1 Samuel 2:33] -- Nevertheless, I will not utterly cut off every man from you, etc. A place of repentance is not entirely denied to the sons of Aaron, even though they sinned greatly and grievously in the killing of the Lord; but if any of them wish, let them come to the church repentant, partake of the altar of Christ, while the rest remain in the blindness of their perfidy and envy, by the example of whose pious dispensation, even when Eli and his sons perished, not every man was utterly taken away from the altar of the Lord. For even in the days of Saul, Abijah, the grandson of his son Phinehas, is recorded as serving in the priesthood (1 Kings 13).

1 Samuel 2:33

And a great part of your house will die, etc. A great part of the house of Eli, reaching adulthood, died when, by the betrayal of Doeg the Edomite, eighty-five priests were slaughtered together in the fury of Saul (1 Samuel 22). But even today a great portion of his house, when they come to the years of understanding, lose the rewards of life by the blade of their own perfidy. [1 Samuel 2:34] -- This will be the sign for you, etc. These words pertain to Eli and Samuel, because the death of Eli's sons and Samuel's election as priest not from the lineage of Aaron signifies the death not of men, but of the old priesthood, and the substitution of the new, in which Christ is the priest in the church forever according to the order of Melchizedek. But when the Lord says, "Who acts according to my heart and my soul;" do not think that God has a soul, since he is the creator of the soul; but this is said of God figuratively, not literally, as are hands and feet and other parts of the body. And lest it be believed that man is made in the image of God in the likeness of his flesh, other things are added which man does not have, and he might say to God: "Protect me under the shadow of your wings" (Psalm 16); so that men

understand these things about that ineffable nature not to be said with proper but with metaphorical terms.

1 Samuel 2:35

And I will build a faithful house for him, etc. The faithful house, which is built for the faithful priest on the rock foundation by the wise man, is the Church; which walked before Christ all the days of this present life, and never will the gates of hell prevail against its perfect progress. And it is beautifully said, "She will walk all the days;" because when the course of fleeting days has passed and the better day comes in His courts, which is better than thousands, and He grants the blessing, who gave the law, this house has nothing more to improve, walking from strength to strength; because she will see the God of gods in Zion and will praise Him blessed in His house, indeed even the house itself forever. For a faithful house cannot easily be understood as built for Samuel, whose sons are reported to have turned aside to greed and not walked in his ways, unless perhaps his house is to be considered the people he was leading, about which it is written: "And all the house of Israel longed for the Lord" (1 Samuel 7). And to have walked before Christ the Lord, either the Lord Himself before Samuel, or Samuel himself, whether Saul or David can be understood.

1 Samuel 2:36

It will happen, however, that whoever remains in your house, etc. And some daily not only from the priestly, but also from every tribe of Israel, and all at the end of the world the remnants of that nation, so that they may be reconciled to God, come to the church; and, rejecting the flesh of the sacrifices, they offer the word consummating and shortening of the life-giving confession, and the bread of spiritual sacrifice. For indeed silver signifies the word of the confession of faith, and the coin expresses the brevity of the same confession, which is contained in the Creed. And this man of God, who is shown to be a prophet by his office, said: Whoever remains in your house, which is what Isaiah said: The remnant shall be saved. (Rom. XII). And the apostle, recalling the words of Elijah: So therefore, he says, also at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace that has been saved (Isa. XI).

1 Samuel 2:36

And let him say, Let me go, I pray, to one of the priestly parts. It signifies to the very people, illustrious to Christ the priest; to whom Peter says: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood (I Pet. II). And as he adds: That I may eat a morsel of bread, he also elegantly expressed the very kind of that sacrifice, concerning which the priest himself says: The bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world (John VI). For since he had said above, giving food to the house of Aaron from the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were the sacrifices of the Jews, therefore he said here: One must ask to eat a morsel of bread, which is the sacrifice of Christians in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 1.8

With the eyes of Eli darkening, Samuel sleeps in the temple of the Lord, and responding to the fourth calling of the Lord, he learns what is to come upon Eli, and recounts it to him in the morning, having also divined through a second divine revelation. (I Sam. III.) But the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord in the presence of Eli, etc. In this reading, the Lord shows by all means that the ceremonies of the legal priesthood, even before he himself completed them through his passion, having already been corrupted by the traditions of the Pharisees, must be changed, with Judea soon believing in him and confessing, because God has visited his people. [1 Samuel 3:1] -- But the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli, etc. The boy who was born to us in the flesh, in the sight of the Jewish priests, was ministering his gifts to the early Church both personally and through his evangelizing disciples. And the word of the Lord was rare at that time, precious because of its rarity, for the harvest was indeed plentiful, but the workers were few (Matthew 9). Nor was there a Pharisee, Scribe, or priest who could unlock the hidden visions and the manifest sayings of the prophets for the people with exposition.

1 Samuel 3:2

It happened on a certain day, Eli was lying in his place, etc. He designates the lamp of God according to the dignity of Eli's rank. But by signification, we correctly take the lamp to mean the old priesthood, necessary indeed in the night under the shadow of the serving people, but to be removed with the approach of the day of new grace. For just as the lamp shining only in houses during the night, closed off, is not sufficient to spread the rays of its bright-

ness more widely, but the sun, when it rises, illuminates everything both outside and inside so thoroughly that even the light of the lamp becomes less useful or indeed extinguishable; rightly, this is compared to the knowledge of the law, which shone as if enclosed within one house of Judea, while the other nations outside were oppressed by the terror of blind night. To the Gospel, which, after enlightening Judea, also dispelled the far-reaching shadows of Gentilism. And just as the rising sun would hide or even extinguish the lamp, the Apostle shows, speaking of the letter and the spirit: "For what was glorified has no glory now in comparison to the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts" (2 Corinthians 3).

Therefore, Eli was lying in his place, and his eyes had grown dim, and he could not see the lamp of God, before the dignity of the old priesthood and law he served was extinguished; which ought to have watched, stood firm in faith, acted manfully, and been strengthened at the time of the Lord's Incarnation, degenerating from the alacrity of its original state, was languishing as if worn out by old age; nor was it yet clear in the light of true sense, for it had been greatly deprived of this light by the secondary interpretations of the Pharisees, after the things perfected by Christ's blood.

1 Samuel 3:3

But Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord, etc. The Lord, while instructing and ministering spiritual matters to mortals, would suspend the external vision of the mind to fix it in the contemplation of the supreme and innermost light. For they say that the temple, where the divine and heavenly sacraments are, is called a place of contemplation; where the ark of God is, that is, the glory of the supreme Trinity, solely conscious of the divine entire secret. Whence it is said in the Psalm: I kept the Lord always in my sight; because he is at my right hand, that I be not moved (Psalm XIII). [1 Samuel 3:4] -- And the Lord called Samuel, etc. It's a challenging mode of speaking, how from time to time a father calls his son to know the secrets of his judgment; and he responds that he is present, who was born before time from the Father and speaks: All things have been delivered to me by my Father (Matthew XI). And: All that the Father has is mine (John XVI). But often Scripture, according to human manner, speaks about God, or rather God himself in Scriptures speaks about himself, as in the Gospel: For I do not speak on my own, but as I hear I judge; and all that I have heard from my Father, I have

made known to you (John XV). Likewise, in Genesis, God said: Let us make man in our image and likeness (Genesis I). Therefore, Samuel, called by the Lord, responded: Here I am.

1 Samuel 3:5

And he ran to Eli, etc. Christ, called by the Father, who was always in him, to contemplate the miracles of his eternal majesty, responds that he will remain eternally with the Father by divine presence; and among these, suddenly appearing in human flesh, he speaks to the teachers of the Jews: And he himself, whom you sought for so long, and desired to come in the flesh, who was often called by the prayers and vows of the faithful for the salvation of the world, I myself have come, I who spoke, behold, here I am. [1 Samuel 3:5] -- He said, "I did not call," etc. The Scribes and Pharisees deny that they sought the coming of Christ; at whose birth, upon hearing, not only King Herod was troubled, but also all Jerusalem with him. And they instructed to sleep again in the temple the one whom, having repulsed from their disbelief, they sent back to reveal the secrets of the father's child. However, when he was a young man, that is, after the thirtieth year of his age, some from their number believed him to be the Son of God. And this is similar to how Eli, after the third coming of Samuel to him, understood that the Lord was calling him; after the third decade of his years, the Jews knew and believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

1 Samuel 3:6

And the Lord added to call Samuel again, etc. Let us not tire of repeating in our discussions what neither the Lord tired of saying, nor the historian of repeating in writing. God the Father calls God the Son, not as a man calls another man, by moving the air with words from one place to another; but showing Him, always remaining in His invisible presence, even when He bore man on earth through visible signs. And since Samuel means "God" or "name of God," we might rightly say that the Lord called Samuel when the Father demonstrated His incarnate Son with miracles as the true God, and he responded, "Here I am." To whom the same Son said: "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me" (John 14). [1 Samuel 3:6] -- And he said, "Here I am," etc. Let the diligent reader note that the same allegorical interpretation is not always the same as the order of historical truth but alternates in a similar, unequal, or contrary manner. In a similar way, indeed, Samuel's simple

youth and Eli's sluggish blindness signify the humility of the Lord Savior and the stubborn foolishness of the Jews. Unequally, however, the dubious words of Samuel saying, "Here I am, for you called me," prefigure the true and certain incarnation of Christ. Contrarily, as lower, David's sin in the matter of Uriah suggests the merciful grace of Christ, by which He condescended to save the nations.

1 Samuel 3:7

Moreover, Samuel did not yet know the Lord, etc. Moreover, the Savior, whose name is God, was not yet recognized by the carnal as always knowing all the secrets of the Father, nor before He was baptized did John see and bear witness that the heavens were opened to Him, and that the voice of the Father was made upon Him from above. Thus, in the manner of Holy Scripture, the ignorance of the blessed Samuel in his childhood concealed demonstrates the wisdom of the Son of God in the infancy of the flesh. For it is not said in vain: Because in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (Col. II), clearly to be manifested in the faithful, believing. [1 Samuel 3:8] -- And the Lord added, and called again Samuel the third time. The Lord calls Samuel the third time, he himself rises the third time and comes to Eli and tells who has called him. The Father showed the Son visible in the flesh, signs of the invisible God, for the third time; namely, in infancy, in boyhood, and in youth. For in infancy, He shone through the angel to the shepherds and with the star to the Magi. In boyhood indeed, when He at twelve years old, showed divine wisdom in the temple, where He Himself said among other things: Because it is necessary for me to be in what is of my Father (Luke II). Moreover, in youth, when the Father Himself from the heavens marked Him after baptism with His voice, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mark I). But in each of these moments, in which the Son of God is declared by God the Father, He Himself, offering Himself as a mortal man to mortal men, indicated that He was present, who had been long sought, awaited, and desired.

1 Samuel 3:8

Eli understood that the Lord had called the boy, etc. Finally, after many great deeds and words done and spoken by the Lord, after John the Baptist's proclamations were fulfilled, the priests, scribes, and Pharisees understand that Jesus, who in the reality of the flesh was born as a boy to us, is the true

contemplator of the highest mysteries of the eternal deity of the fathers; and soon, agreeing to the recognized faith, they desire to behold the divine joy, which is never absent, and wish to hear from God the Father in divinity what must be told to humans in a human way, and, like those who love and know what ought to be done, they admonish Him to do so, just as we often urge God Himself and the angels to show the devotion of our mind, as if agreeing when we know what will be done, to do it quickly and earnestly. For we say to people on earth: Arise, God, and defend your cause (Psalm 74). Stir up your power, and come (Psalm 79). Bless the Lord, all His angels (Psalm 103); and countless similar phrases.

1 Samuel 3:11

And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I am doing a work in Israel, etc. What the prophet previously foretold to Eli about the judgment of his house, meaning its rejection and the substitution of Samuel in the priesthood, the same Samuel now understands through the oracle of God about himself, and he announces it to Eli; because what the prophets heralded by defining the old and introducing the new — that is, the priesthood of Christ's Church — the same Christ, having conversed in the flesh, clearly heard from the Father in secret, where mortals do not have access, reveals openly and plainly to the leaders of the Jews. [1 Samuel 3:14] -- Therefore, I have sworn to the house of Eli, etc. The house of Eli according to the letter could not be cleansed by the blood of victims, which the iniquity of his sons polluted, but nevertheless, it was cleansed by the blood of martyrdom when so many priests of his lineage were innocently destroyed in the city of Nob for the sake of the grace of paternal hospitality (1 Kings 22). According to the consequence of allegory, the iniquity of the house of Eli, indeed of the whole house of Israel, could not be entirely cleansed by any kind of sacrifices or gifts of good action, until the Lamb of God came, who takes away the sins of the world. For only the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all iniquity (John 1).

1 Samuel 3:15

Samuel slept until morning, etc. The Lord remained in secret rest with the Father, with whom he ceaselessly arranged and governed all things invisibly, waiting for when, with the night of vices dispelled by the host of virtues, the lights of evangelical truth would reveal themselves, when the shadow of the law departed. And immediately, wherever he saw the dawn of faith rising in

anyone's heart by the breath of the Sun of righteousness, opening the more abundant gifts of his Spirit, he promised the hope of entrance to the eternal house in heaven. This happens not only then among the Jews but also among us to this day; for whoever has not yet received the grace of Christ, or having received it, has cast it away by the merits of sins, to this person placed in the night of blindness, Christ, who always watches in the saints, sleeps, and the entrance of the heavenly kingdom is closed to him. But when he receives the light of hoped-for and sought-for forgiveness, immediately the Lord, as if awakened from sleep, opens the doors of virtues, which he had closed at the coming of the evening of faithlessness. This sense agrees beautifully with another trope, that while the Lord sleeps, the sailors are in danger; while he awakens, they are freed (Matthew 8).

1 Samuel 3:19

Samuel grew, etc. The preaching of the Gospel grew, and God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. The reputation of Jesus grew, and it spread throughout all Syria. Hence John said: He must increase (John 3); and concerning the passing away of the old law like Eli, he immediately added: But I must decrease. [1 Samuel 3:19] -- And not a word from Him fell to the ground. You will find nothing earthly in the words of the Lord, nor will any of those who think earthly things understand His spiritual sayings. Or certainly it should be said that the Lord, while dwelling in the flesh, deferred the delivery of His word to the Gentiles, who, in comparison to the Jews, were like earth to heaven, yet later He deemed it worthy to call them to faith through the apostles.

1 Samuel 3:20

And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized, etc. And the Catholic, that is, the universal Church, the spiritual Israel, which has been gathered from the beginnings of renouncing the devil to the font of baptism, knows that Jesus Christ, who is called "God with Us," is the preacher of faith. For Dan is interpreted as "judgment. It signifies that time for the Church, of which it is said: "Now is the judgment of this world, now the prince of this world will be cast out" (John 12). Beersheba, however, which is interpreted as "well of the oath," or "seventh well," or "well of satisfaction," signifies the full reception of baptism, when, with the devil exorcised, renounced, and expelled from the heart, each one enters the font of regeneration to be consecrated by the

sevenfold grace of the Spirit and to be filled by the abundance of heavenly gifts. Even the very location of these places alludes not insignificantly to the sacraments of the Church, because the terminus of the land of Judea was Dan to the north and Beersheba to the south, a mystical distance well known to those who can sing with the spouse: "Awake, O north wind, and come, south wind, blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out" (Cant. 4). Dan, moreover, is a village about four miles from Paneas towards Tyre, from which place the river Jordan takes its name, as Jor means "river" or "stream" in Hebrew; this also not insignificantly points to the beginning of baptism.

Furthermore, Beersheba is a city or village in the tribe of Judah, lying to the south, as we have said. Therefore, all Israel, that is, the people of Christians intent upon the vision of God, from Dan to Beersheba, from the north to the south, that is, from the catechumens to the faithful, from those who have just now expelled the harsh blasts of the ancient enemy, to those who have already been filled with the most radiant warmth of the Holy Spirit, recognizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believers have eternal life in His name. In this reading, the person of blessed Samuel may well be referred to those very members of Christ, exalted by the merit of pure humility, about whom He Himself says: "Whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18). Those sleeping in the temple of the Lord, that is, who have turned away from the external cares of the world with the whole light of their heart directed solely towards contemplating the divine will above, are taught how the secrets of heavenly judgments are revealed in many ways which the old, blinded, and rejected Eli did not see, just as the Lord Himself, who speaks in the Gospel, says: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes" (Matt. 11).

In this context, the crowned humility of the penitents and the condemned impiety of the proud are presented as an example, so that by these things it is manifestly shown that the hidden things of the wise of the world and the revealed mysteries to the humble are spoken.

CHAPTER 1.9

Israel being defeated and put to flight by the Philistines, and also the sons of Eli having been slain, the ark of God is captured; upon hearing this, Eli himself immediately falls backward and dies, and his daughter-in-law, giv-

ing birth first to a son named Ichabod, meaning "inglorious," perishes. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel, etc. In this reading, Israel, deceived often and for a long time through the examples of the nations, having at last received faith in the time of the Gospel, is marked as having shortly thereafter lost both the Gospel and the teachers of the truth. And with the covenant of God transferred to the Gentiles, the destruction of the legal priesthood together with the Synagogue attached to it is shown to follow. [1 Samuel 4:1] -- For Israel went out to meet the Philistines, etc. The people went out, meaning, after gaining knowledge of the law, to openly perform good works which it had learned; and to the extent it could, to root out the error of Gentile customs, by which the hearts of the wicked, intoxicated, were heading toward eternal death. Whence rightly the Philistines are said to fall by drinking. In this struggle, however, Israel cared not so much to call back foreign nations from the pollution of sins as to guard itself, lest it perish by their example.

1 Samuel 4:1

And they encamped beside the stone of Help. And placed all its confidence for spiritual warfare in His aid; of whom it was said: When my heart was troubled, You lifted me up on a rock (Psalm. LX). And elsewhere: The Lord is my rock and my strength (II Kings XXI). [1 Samuel 4:1] -- Moreover, the Philistines came to Aphek, etc. As Israel was progressing in the true God, a new fury of envying and corrupting immediately seized the worshipers of many false gods; and this is what it means for the Philistines to draw up their battle lines in Aphek, that is, in new fury against Israel, teaching all the neighboring nations instructed by unclean spirits to present examples of perverse religion or action to scandalize the people of God, which they never ceased to do from the time the law was received until the grace of Christ made both one.

1 Samuel 4:2

When the battle began, Israel turned their backs to the Philistines, etc. Once the conflict between Israel and the pagan peoples broke out over true religion, with the former fighting for the worship of the one true God and the latter for the defense of idols, Israel's faith failed, and it fell into the errors of the pagans more easily than the pagans could be converted to follow its faith. Nonetheless, a significant portion, although others sinned, remained stead-

fast in defending the camp of spiritual virtues. Do not think these words refer to the status of the ancient people of God merely allegorically, but also that they have a moral application for you. For whenever you try to fight back unclean spirits in a spiritual venture, not relying on your own strength but trusting in that stone which was cut without hands from the mountain (Dan. II), and which alone knows how to overthrow the kingdoms of the devil, immediately the enemies of truth oppose your every good deed with new fury. However, be careful not to turn the back of your mind to the enemies by sinning, as the apostle James warns: Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James IV). Yet since it is written: The outcome of battle is varied, and now the sword consumes one, now another (2 Sam.

II), if by chance you have retreated and the enemy has prevailed for a time, if he has trampled the fruitful fields of your good conduct, and boasted that he laid low prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance, the four most excellent leaders followed by the whole army of virtues, you should not abandon the camp of your best purpose, which you have pitched near the firm rock, but rather with the remedy of humility and repentance restore the lost ranks of virtues with new forces; according to him who said: If the spirit of a ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for composure mitigates great offenses (Eccl. X). Therefore, when the danger of conflict from adversaries presses, offer the Ark of fervent faith as your aid. But if perchance the wicked by mixing in heresy, or by any other kind of deceit, should take it away for a time, still the aid of divine mercy will not fail you, which often allows its own to fall temporarily that, recognizing their own weakness, they might afterwards be more cautious in virtues and kept perfect for rewards. Finally, the Ark soon returns home joyfully and stays in the city's citadel for twenty years, because virtue often received again through repentance fills the mind even more ardently than before the storm of temptation, and accompanies it to fulfill the complete Decalogue of divine law, and to receive the perpetual joy of the heavenly reward.

But now that we have touched on these moral interpretations, let us return to the order of the lesson and seek the new fruits of spiritual allegory in the very old forest of the letter.

1 Samuel 4:3

Why has the Lord struck us down today before the Philistines? etc. The wisest among the people of Israel at that time sought a way to attain salva-

tion, inquiring, in fact, why those who received the law and wanted to fulfill it were unable to accomplish it, and why they were struck down by the Lord before the Philistines—that is, why, with the Lord permitting it and His grace not helping them, they lusted, while reading and being devoted to the law, which says, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exod. 20). Lastly, they found a useful counsel, that by seeking the grace of Christ, which is frequently promised in the Scripture of the law to the fathers (Deut. 5), they might find the grace of Christ signified in the law, through whom they might desire to be freed, that is, they should remember the ark of the covenant placed inside the veil of the tabernacle in Shiloh, and that it be brought by the people to obtain the help of salvation. We have said above in what manner Shiloh holds the type of the law.

1 Samuel 4:3

So the people sent to Shiloh, etc. The people sent in anticipation of their future devotion of faith; and they took unto themselves the grace of God, superior to all things, which they had learned through the occasion of the law, as their helper. It is to be noted that during the whole time of seeking and bringing the ark to themselves, the camps of Israel remained quiet; but when it arrived, they were disturbed by the enemy, because that same people did not hesitate to despise, persecute, and hate in some of its members the faith of the Lord's Incarnation, which they had eagerly sought to come. [1 Samuel 4:4] -- And the two sons of Eli were with the ark of the covenant of the Lord, etc. The sons of Eli, by both name and merit, signify that the people not believing in Christ in the flesh was partly aided by the fault of the priests of that time. Indeed, Ophni means 'unshod,' as stated above; Phinehas means 'dumb mouth.' The former signifies dissolution of actions, and the latter also signifies the inactivity of teaching, when even the perfect priests should be adorned by the walk of good work and should be free in the voice of preaching.

1 Samuel 4:5

And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, etc. When the Lord was born in the flesh, all Israel was disturbed, and at the preaching, some were moved to believe, others to contradict; and with the earthly conscience, the praises of heaven resounded. [1 Samuel 4:6] -- And the Philistines heard the sound of the cry. The fame of the Lord's preaching

spoke even to the knowledge of the gentiles. [1 Samuel 4:7] -- And the Philistines were afraid, saying, "God has come into the camp," etc. The pagans were afraid, recognizing the coming of the true God into the world, to fortify the spiritual camps of the faithful; and the worshippers of many and false gods groaned together with their destroyed cults, and they mutually strengthened one another wickedly to battle against the ranks of faith and truth. For there was not so much exultation yesterday and the day before. Neither in the law, nor before the law, were the hearts of the believers ever so ready for everything out of desire for the heavenly kingdom, whether to endure the things that horrify the earth, or to despise the things they love.

1 Samuel 4:10

Therefore the Philistines fought, and Israel was slaughtered, etc. The adversaries of truth, whether men or their leaders, the unclean spirits, fought against the believers in Christ; by whom, either openly raging, or covertly persuading, or injecting examples of depravity, some were slaughtered either by denial or martyrdom, others were repelled more urgently to abandon the tents of their firm faith. And a very great plague arose, etc. More fell with the coming of the ark than before: Because if I had not come, He says, and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin (John 15). However, according to the mystical interpretation of the number, we can say that Israel lost four thousand men before the arrival of the ark, in those who, before the time of the Lord's Incarnation, disregarded the commands of the law by believing, hoping, loving, and acting less perfectly; but with the ark brought, thirty thousand foot soldiers perished by the greater plague, who refused to accept the mystery of the Holy Trinity from the Gospel, with the promise of the celestial denarius.

1 Samuel 4:11

And the ark of God was captured, etc. And the kingdom was taken away from the Jews and given to a nation producing its fruits. The order of the priesthood, which had not behaved rightly, was transferred by the judgment of the Lord. [1 Samuel 4:12] -- But a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, etc. The people who remained from the Jews perishing because of their perfidy, hearing from the apostles: "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2), came to instruct those who, having been emptied of Christ, still boasted in the law and kept the tabernacle of the Lord in Shiloh without

the ark of the covenant; in order to provoke the listeners more easily to repentance, tearing off every old habit, and despising all former reliance on their strength as nothing, appeared in mourning. This man is said to have well descended from Benjamin, that is, the son of the right hand, because indeed the Church, in comparison to the Synagogue, because the heavenly Jerusalem, namely our mother, compared to the present one, stands out as the right hand to the left. This man of Benjamin therefore suggests either the people of the primitive Church or some teacher of that age, the son of the right hand of faith, or certainly the apostle Paul, who also descended from the tribe of Benjamin, who, though he was the last of the apostles, labored more than all in preaching (1 Cor. 15).

1 Samuel 4:13

And when that man arrived, Eli was sitting, etc. When the teacher of the New Testament appeared in Judea, having torn the garment of the letter, the old priesthood still sat on the chair of Moses, although it had lost its light; but against Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. For he feared, as indeed happened, that if he were rejected, the grace of Christ might pass to the Gentiles. [1 Samuel 4:13] -- But when that man had entered, he announced to the city, etc. The teacher evangelized, and the listener repented. For upon hearing the crime they had committed in the slaughter of the Savior, the Jews were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles: "What shall we do, brothers?" (Acts 2). [1 Samuel 4:14] -- And Eli heard the sound of the crying, etc. And the reputation of the repenting people reached even to the ears of the chief priests through the exhortation of the apostles, and it was not gladly received. Finally, while they were speaking to the people, the priests, and the magistrates of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, grieving that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And the apostles did not delay to evangelize even them.

1 Samuel 4:15

Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, etc. The legal priesthood at that time lacked two perfections that lead to life, namely faith and works. Therefore his eyes, that is, his announcements, were clouded in understanding, and they could not see Christ in the law. For there was a veil over their heart, which is removed in Christ. [1 Samuel 4:11] -- And the ark of God was cap-

tured, etc. And with the proclamation of the apostles and the faith of the repenting people spreading far and wide, the grace of God was taken away from the Jews, and that priesthood of legal judgments, once glorious on the throne, fell backward, that is, it turned back on itself and did not fear to take up the sins it once abandoned; it perished with the breaking of its singular pride, and this near that door, namely which he says: "If anyone enters through me, he will be saved" (John 10), near which he sat by the mystery of figures, but by the merit of perfidy did not enter in.

1 Samuel 4:18

The man was an old man, and advanced in years, etc. That priesthood had become aged at that time, once glorious with rich virtue, and it showed, at the appropriate time, judgments of the divine law, which is encompassed in the Decalogue, to the people of Israel through chief priests, elders of the people, scribes, and Pharisees who are also called doctors of the law. Moreover, according to the figurative interpretation of the law, each of us ought to keep the ark of the covenant within the tabernacle interiorly, and, when the time comes, while preparing to fight against the Philistines, he must offer this with himself; that is, he must always maintain firm faith and a chaste conscience; and when the situation demands, he must bring it forth as his aid in spiritual warfare against the impure, be they humans or demons, carrying with him two priests as guards, namely, the vigilant senses of twin love. For the Apostle does not deem just any faith worthy of praise, but rather that which works through love (Gal. V).

And if, perhaps, while we are fighting, the impure spirits or heretics snatch away the ark of faith and kill the priestly and devout senses, it is necessary for a Benjamite man, distinguished by mourning dress, that is, a mind uplifted by the hope of heavenly piety, to come humbly and penitently, bringing back to our minds our errors and inducing the whole city of our ruler into mourning and tears, until, through God's mercy, the captured ark is returned, and a better priest is given to us in place of the lost ones, that is, a more chastened sense, after the labors of penance, and more vigilant and careful. Neither does the time of the seven months during which the Philistines held the ark diverge from the figurative form of penance. For it is well established that the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is said to be sevenfold, must be obtained by undertaking penance for the committed sins and seeking forgiveness; and the Fathers declare that this forgiveness must be sought

in seven ways. Indeed, the expositors of the Psalter suggest seven penitential psalms, by which heavenly piety should be implored to obtain the remission of sins. However, there are those who convert the remembrance, recognition, and sorrow of sins not to seek remedy, but as Judas to augment their previous crimes.

Since they have become aged among all their enemies, with their eye of the mind disturbed by the wrath of God, they have also lost the light of faith, and suddenly returning to the seat of judicial discretion, immediately perishing, they leave; and although they seemed to have lived discreetly for a while and managed themselves well according to the precepts of the law and the Gospel (for this is to judge Israel for forty years), nevertheless, upon the onset of the trial, they succumb to a miserable death.

1 Samuel 4:19

Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, etc. The Synagogue, entrusted with the children of the legal priesthood to govern, indeed received the seed of the word from the teachers and was near to producing the fruit of faith, which it had long sought, at the Lord's preaching. However, she too, after the fall of the teachers, turned away from the uprightness of living, and although she bore not a small crowd of people, she herself, because she killed the Author of life, gave birth to death. [1 Samuel 4:21] -- And she named the child Ichabod, etc. Ichabod is interpreted as "woe to glory," or "glory has departed," which no one will nearly dispute as being an apt name for the Jews of that time. But the glory of faith was transferred from Israel to the Gentiles, from the Synagogue to the Church; but at the end of the world, it will return to Israel. Let us rejoice in the glory transferred to us; let us fear for it to be transferred from us to its homeland, which is to be brought back on the wagon of new conversation.

CHAPTER 1.10

When the Philistines took the Ark of God into the temple of Dagon, first Dagon himself, then also the people and the land were punished appropriately, and the Ark remained with them for seven months. (1 Sam. 5) The Philistines took the Ark of God, etc. This reading mystically indicates that when the faith of the covenant is received by the uncircumcised, first the idols must be humbled, and without delay, utterly destroyed, and that those who revert after knowing the faith must be punished with appropriate ven-

geance. [1 Samuel 5:1] -- The Philistines took the Ark of God, etc. The Gentiles received the word of the Gospel from Judea, where the Lord was born in the flesh, lived, and suffered, leaving the places of His dispensation sacred to the mysteries to this day. And they carried it, with a joyous reputation, into the foreign provinces of the world, which until then were burning with the flames of sins, dissolved by the enticements of the flesh. Hence, Azotus, which is called Eradod in Hebrew, according to its ancient name, signifies dissolution or effusion, or conflagration.

1 Samuel 5:2

And they brought it into the temple of Dagon. And they brought faith into the world, which was set in wickedness, and concerning which the Lord said: When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, all his possessions are in peace; but if one stronger than he assaults him and overcomes him, he will take away all his armor in which he trusted, and divide his spoils (1 John 5; Luke 11). Dagon was strong when he guarded the foolish weapons of paganism in his hall. The ark of faith is stronger, which victorious of this took the spoils of impiety, and made them the weapons and spoils of piety.

1 Samuel 5:2

And they set it beside Dagon. And they erected the churches of Christ among the nations, while in some places the worship of idols still remained. For Dagon, which is interpreted as the fish of sorrow, signifies not only the person, but also by name, him who, existing from the beginning as the author of our miseries, is called by the prophet the king of all that are in the waters. Concerning whom the Lord narrates many things in blessed Job under the figure of Leviathan (Job 40). And whom Tobias, which is interpreted as the good of God, by the guidance of the archangel, draws out from the waves, dissects, roasts, eats, salts, and carries with him for remedies and provision. That is to say, the Lord Savior overcomes by His divine power the devil who desires his fleshly food, snatches him from his hidden traps; and cutting off his members of iniquity, seasoned with the salt of wisdom, and cooked by the fire of the Holy Spirit, transfers them into the members of His body, which is the Church, and through these provides aids of salvation to others. For by means of those whom the Lord saves, taken from the devil, He will save both the pagan from the deception of idolatry, and the Jews, from whom He took flesh, from the error of their unbelief at the end of the

world. It is clear, therefore, what Tobias signifies, when through the entrails of the dissected fish, he liberates both his wife from the demon, and his parent from blindness.

1 Samuel 5:3

And when they rose early in the morning, etc. The signs of miracles becoming clear through the heralds of faith, the worship of idolatry fell away among those who were able to be converted to Christ; but, although it was betrayed and exposed, which is vanity, it was recovered among those who moved the weapons of perfidy against the truth. [1 Samuel 5:4] -- And again rising early in the morning the next day, etc. As the light of heavenly signs gradually increased, the face of idolatry was confused before the faithful of Christ, and they confessed as earthly and perishable all that they had hitherto done or believed. [1 Samuel 5:4] -- But the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands, etc. The head of all sin, the pride of the devil, and the work of idolatry; which, as if with two palms, was conducted by the profession of impiety, the ceremonies of praises and sacrifices, already separated from the related body, that is, the crowds of seducers adhering to it, was now, and about to be cast out, prepared by the growing triumph of Christ; who showed, as it were, the head and hands of the truncated Dagon lying on the threshold, when he said: "Now is the judgment of the world, now the prince of this world shall be cast out" (John 12).

1 Samuel 5:4

Moreover, the trunk of Dagon alone, etc. Moreover, the people, having cast off and eliminated the profession of idolatry, and the operations of the demonic, among those who had advanced in faith, as if near the ark of God, preferred to remain humble and submissive, rather than to be cast out with the devil, that is, to be anathematized by the members of the Church. And the state of Dagon is not asserted to have been restored as before, because after many struggles of the Church, a cessation had occurred, from the defense of false gods, and victory was given to the one true God, Christ.

1 Samuel 5:5

For this reason, the priests of Dagon do not tread, etc. For the reason that the devil is to be cast out and condemned in the end, all those who perversely follow him either by teaching or acting, prompted by him, shun considering and guarding against the time of his sentence and condemnation. Indeed,

before his worshippers turn away from iniquity, he, concerned for them, suspends their understanding, almost like the advance of the mind, from foreseeing the future or their own destruction. And this continues to the present day, that is, until each of them recognizes the light of truth, which whoever follows, not walking in darkness perpetually. Nor does he fear to tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod, for with diligent mind he contemplates and dreads the punishment of the wicked, who burn with earthly desires, and their leader the devil, moreover, striving to sprinkle his own threshold with the blood of the paschal lamb, turned towards better things, that is, to secure his entrance and exit with the mystery of the Lord's passion. Therefore, the head and feet of the truncated Dagon on the threshold are deterred from contact with the same threshold. However, the blood of the immaculate lamb always renders safe those who remember it from the enemy, because the devil, whom he deceives, removes the consideration of the end that leads to impious Tartarus, both theirs and his own. But the Lord, whom he redeemed by the example of his passion and resurrection, always teaches them to hope for life after death.

1 Samuel 5:6

But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the Ashdodites, etc. Those who, having taken up the ark of God, grieve for Dagon's destruction and set up his ruin, are struck in their hind parts, and their land is ravaged by mice. For those who, having been taught the recognition of faith or even mysteries, either do not endure the idols to be cast down, or allow themselves to be forbidden from vices, because they look back, do not abandon the uncleanness of their old life, and reclaim those things which they ought to have forgotten and regarded as dung, as the Apostle says (Philippians 3). They are punished by the things they choose, and that becomes the cause of punishment to the wretched, which was the pleasure of their guilt. But even if they seem to produce any good, those who keep the eyes of their mind turned backwards, the root of their thought and the fruit of their action are destroyed by unclean spirits. The Lord struck not only Ashdod where Dagon was, but all the borders of Ashdod because he condemns and rejects not only the capital crimes in which the manifest work of the devil is evident, but also the small ones which appear minor or light sins to men, by the sentence of the strict judge. Ultimately, every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment (Matthew 12).

1 Samuel 5:7

Seeing the men of Ashdod had such a plague, etc. Upon seeing the idol worshippers experience the power of Christ against their gods, they refuse to accept his faith, lest on account of this they might be compelled to renounce their whole host of gods. Similarly, false Christians, seeing that due to faith in Christ the sins they love are forbidden to them, detest the religion of faith as much as they can, lest on this occasion they be commanded to extinguish the desires which they serve in place of God. The men of Ashdod in every respect, that is, worthy of the name of rift, dissolution, and burning, refuse to know the sacred Scriptures so that having known them, they would have to act according to what they have learned; and because of the Lord's sentence, which states that those who are ignorant of his will shall receive fewer stripes, they refuse to know what they ought to do: not understanding that there is a great difference between being simply ignorant and refusing to know what ought to be learned. And so, feeling this as harsh to their own wills, they impudently repel the ark of heavenly knowledge from themselves.

1 Samuel 5:8

And the Gittites replied: Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried around, etc. And this carrying around of the ark suits the present time of our age, where each of the weak desires the difficult words of the Lord to be fulfilled by others rather than by themselves. But even barbarian nations, which have recently accepted the faith of Christ, soon become enfeebled by soft desires, thinking this charge should be given to others rather than be exercised among themselves for longer. [1 Samuel 5:9] -- However, while they were carrying it around, the hand of the Lord came down, etc. Those who receive faith transiently and without fixed intention not only gain no advantage by believing, but also wretchedly deserve eternal punishment for the price of salvation. [1 Samuel 5:9] -- And their prominent entrails spoiled. And the meditation of their inner heart fell back into blind and dirty matters of the present life, full of foul dung and blood of vices, appearing before all; a type of affliction to which the madness of the heretics can be compared, as shown even by the death of Arius; who, with his bowels pouring out through his backside, miserably found an end to his heretical teaching and the beginning of punishments worthy of heretics.

1 Samuel 5:11

They sent therefore, and gathered all the satraps of the Philistines, etc. Many believers of the nations today, though not in words, say: Abandon the faith, and let it return to the children of Israel, so that at last, having cut us off, they may be grafted according to nature into their own olive tree. For it is better that the ignorant perish, than to be condemned for the transgression of faith, which we cannot keep, along with other sins. [1 Samuel 5:12] -- And the wailing of each city went up to heaven. And the murmur and impatience and the clamor of Sodom, falsely significant among the faithful, in whichever places, or persons, or certainly senses of the body, which are five for the cities of the Philistines, can never escape the strict judge, who foretelling such times with a dreadful sentence says: Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? (Luke XVIII.)

1 Samuel 6:1

Therefore the ark of the Lord was in the region of the Philistines for seven months. Seven often expresses the universality of any matter, either of time, or number, or surely the fullness of spiritual grace. But the month, which is varied by the increase and decrease of the lunar light, insinuates the state of the Church laboring between good and bad times, but never failing from the Sun of righteousness. Therefore, the ark of the Lord's faith has been and will be among the nations for the entire time of the age, in which the grace of the sevenfold Holy Spirit will fill the Church and be worthy to illuminate lands, as if they were weak and subject to itself. But according to the literal present reading, which narrates that the Philistines were struck by the proximity of the ark of the Lord, it teaches that no unclean person should presume to approach the holy things; but whoever wishes to receive the Lord's body, or handle His most sacred words, let him prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup, discipline his body, and bring it into subjection, lest preaching to others, he himself should become a castaway (1 Corinthians XI, 9).

CHAPTER 1.11

Instructed by the priests and diviners, the Philistines, with due veneration, return the ark of God, which the Beth-shemites first receive, offering sacrifices to God. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, etc. This reading typically teaches that the faith of the Gospel, which is now cel-

ebrated among the Gentiles, is to return at the end of the world to save the remnants of Israel. The Philistines, taught by plagues, ask the wise men what to do with the ark of God, and how to return it to its place. [1 Samuel 6:3] -- But they said: If you send back, they said, the ark of the God of Israel to its place, etc. And we, seeing the vengeance of the impious, and washing our hands in the blood of sinners, if we decide to send back the ark of heavenly grace to its place, that is, into the hearts of those neighbors who once had it and lost it by straying, advising them to repent, it must be done with utmost care that we do not seek to do this void of virtues. But according to the one who said: And his grace towards me was not in vain (1 Cor. XV), let us hasten first to act rightly ourselves and then instruct others. In this way, we will be able to escape the plagues of those who, having received the gift of knowledge, do not know how to repay the bestower for the sins they have committed. Also, it is universally advisable for the Church that the grace of faith, which is, the fruit of virtues among the nations, should not be found empty at the end of the world, and thus return to Israel for salvation; but as it came, so it should return, given to us through great teachers and return to them by means of great teachers.

1 Samuel 6:4

According to the number of the provinces of the Philistines, etc. According to the number of the five senses of the body, which you contaminated by looking back, whose fruits you all lost by poorly handling faith, now in all that you do by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, or touching, offer to Christ the most illustrious virtues due to him, such as patience, compunction, humility, and others. [1 Samuel 6:5] -- And you will give glory to the God of Israel, etc. And confess that God alone is true, but every man is a liar (Rom. III; Psalm CXV); perhaps He may turn His face away from your sins and wipe out all your iniquities, and, while the merciful Compassionate One imposes on you a very light burden. [1 Samuel 6:7] -- Now, therefore, seize and make a new cart, etc. Now, they say, hasten, and either in your hearts or in the hearts of your brethren, putting off the old man with his deeds, put on the new one, which is created according to God in righteousness and holiness and truth (Ephes. IV); and this in the unity of Catholic peace, in which it is so beneficial to salvation to perform whatever good one can, and as noble teachers in the twin, that is, the love of God and neighbor, free from the yoke of sin, rejoicing in the offspring of spiritual faithful children,

whether for the burden of preaching the faith or bearing the necessity of the brethren, submit. But hold back any little ones and infants still in Christ within the small scope of your counsel until they grow into a perfect man.

1 Samuel 6:8

And you will take the Ark of the Lord and place it on the cart, etc. Place the more secret parts of the heavenly mysteries, imbued with the new commandment of Christ, upon it, and also set forth for all together as an example to be observed and followed, in such a way that the Church, adorned with both the mysteries of faith and examples of virtues, may be sent to seek the remnants of the Israelite people, and never let your mind's eyes turn away from observing its steps.

1 Samuel 6:10

They therefore did this in this way, and took two cows, etc. The Philistines made the ark according to the advice of their priests and diviners. And the faithful stewards of it will also act in accordance with the predictions or future instructions of previous priests and prophets; let us also make corrections either of our own, or of a neighbor, namely the members of the Church according to the command of spiritual teachers. No one should think it absurd that we say the deeds of unbelieving diviners and priests overflow to the interpreting prophets and teachers of the Church with spiritual mystery; but rather, recognizing the use of allegorical speech, let the one who reads see that even those things that not only unbelievers but also those openly hostile to God have done are typologically related by distinguished expositors for the observance of most wholesome piety. No less sacred or full of mystical piety is it that the impious persecutor of the Lord in His passion clothed Him in a purple or white robe, crowned Him with thorns, gave Him vinegar to drink, hung Him on the cross, wrote "King" in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, than that His devout and inviolate mother wrapped Him in swaddling clothes at His birth, laid Him in a manger, shepherds praised Him, magi worshipped Him; that when He was killed, His chosen disciples anointed Him with spices, wrapped Him in linen clothes, laid Him in a stone tomb, closed it with a large stone, and do not doubt to learn useful things from people of any kind, your fellow human beings. Hear what Solomon says: "Go to the ant, O sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise" (Prov. VI).

1 Samuel 6:12

But the cows went straight, etc. The teachers went straight through Christ, leading to the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, the way to Beth-shemesh, that is, the house of the sun, is the very same that says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John XIV). And elsewhere: "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John VIII).

1 Samuel 6:12

They journeyed on the same path, progressing and groaning, etc. They walked on the same path of faith and truth, indeed groaning, as people, being separated from those they love; yet they were more willing, when necessity arose, to hasten eagerly to the sacrifice of passion for the ark of the Lord rather than agreeing to lay down the ark out of the weeping of their children. Do you want proof of what we say? When Paul was staying in Caesarea, a prophet coming from Judea declared that he was to be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles (Acts 21). Behold, the cow bearing the ark of the Lord is prophesied to be sacrificed; and whatever concerns these calves, whether they, with dry eyes, expect the departure and death of their parent, let the noblest calf, distinguished by this name among the four great animals, recount what they did. When we heard this, he said, we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem; but because he could not be swayed to the right or to the left by the love or tears of the children through the insistence of the mother, see what he, about to leave, says to the weeping ones: What are you doing, weeping and disturbing my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Truly, mourning for the weak, as if confined at home like calves, which they conceive from the carnal loss of spiritual parents, gradually ceases as they also make progress. Luke says the same: And when we could not persuade him, we ceased, saying: The will of the Lord be done.

1 Samuel 6:13

Moreover, the Bethshemites were reaping wheat in the valley, etc. Furthermore, the citizens of eternal light, desirous to store the ripe fruits of virtues, which they produced with humble hearts, into the joys of the heavenly homeland; and with the eyes of their hearts lifted, they rejoiced wherever on

earth they saw the heavenly things. [1 Samuel 6:14] -- And the cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, etc. And wherever the Church sees hearts bringing forth fruit for Jesus Christ, the Lord of eternal clarity and the inventor of perpetual light, it prepares to make a dwelling there, as if finding rest after the labor of seeking. Such was always the progress of the Church; such was its coming into the nations; such will be its return to Israel.

1 Samuel 6:14

Now there was a great stone there, etc. There was in the field of the Church that exceptionally great stone, which was cut out of the mountain without hands and grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth. And concerning which the Psalmist says: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Psalm 118); that is to say, to make both one. And the persecutors of the Church cut down the structure, which, erected in the likeness of the Lord's cross, rejoiced in the firm state of new grace. Moreover, they slaughtered as a most pleasing victim to the Lord, even though unknowingly, the teachers and those who were able to bear the burdens of the weak, consumed in the flame of martyrdom. For the wood of the new cart, which had carried the ark of the Lord, was cut down when, persecution arising in the Church of Jerusalem, all were scattered through the regions of Samaria and Judea, except the apostles. The cows were made a burnt offering to the Lord upon it when all were pricked by the ardor of intimate love and dissolved into mourning and tears. Stephen was stoned, and James, the brother of John, was killed by the sword; and reading the church history, you will find innumerable such events, and infinite acts of martyrs. Among all these, the greater cutting down of this cart, that is the perturbation of the Church in the times of Antichrist, is not doubted to come.

Nor is there anything preventing these two cows, which bearing the ark of the Lord were given as a burnt offering to the Israelites, from being interpreted as Enoch and Elijah, who will then reveal the grace of faith to the Jews and are believed to receive death from Antichrist without delay. Nor should you marvel that the good deeds of the Beth Shemites are interpreted by us in the opposite manner, because it is the custom of Holy Scripture to sometimes delineate evil through good and good through evil. Indeed, how many kinds of sacrificial victims in the law, which by command of the Lord

were offered with devoted minds, typologically foretell the death of the Savior, which He received at the hands of the wicked.

1 Samuel 6:15

The Levites, however, laid down the Ark of God, etc. Ministers of the word, receiving faith and examples of the lives of saints from those who have preceded in Christ, did not place these things in some base and lowly earthly breast, but in those which they saw as firm in Christ. That great stone can be not inappropriately referred to the people who glory in the law (for the law is written on stone); and the ark placed upon the stone may be understood, when the people emulating the law have received the faith of grace. [1 Samuel 6:15] -- But the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings, etc. Whosoever belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its vices and desires (Gal. V). And elsewhere: I beseech you, he says, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. XII).

1 Samuel 6:16

And the five lords of the Philistines saw, etc. All who have preceded in Christ, so long contemplate the faith and deeds of those succeeding them in Him as in a mirror, until they recognize them also as firm in faith and progressing well; and thus, becoming more assured of their salvation, they return to the homes of their own conversation to be cared for. It can also be understood of hypocrites, who, although they seem for a time to imitate the way of life, yet do not merit to enter the gates of Beth-shemesh, that is, of the Sun of righteousness, because of the instability of their left-leaning mind.

1 Samuel 6:18

Here are the golden mice, etc. All, both small and great, strong and weak, must repay the Lord with golden vessels for their sins, that is, with the splendid gifts of contrition and humility, gentleness and chastity, and the other spiritual fruits. For who is clean from impurities? Not even if his life on earth be but a single day. And if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves (Job XVIII; 1 John I; Job XX). For who will boast of having a pure heart, who has not in some way deviated from the path of truth in one of the five well-known senses, or whose thoughts or good actions have not occasionally been gnawed at by the bite of the ancient adversary, so that he must rightly ask

for the remedies of penance for these, and from the memory of the vices he committed or the temptations he endured, he has to insist more sharply on practicing virtues? For it is to repay the Lord corrected with golden five-fold for the mice and corruptors and corrupted ones in which he was punished for erring.

And it is beautifully said that the metropolis of any province, with its adjoining cities and villages, returned one golden mouse and anus each, because we duly pay the debt for sin when the rich and poor, the learned and unlearned, signified by the difference of a walled city and a village deprived of a wall, all made one in Christ, strive to see the one and the same will of God, perceive the same good fragrance of Christ, taste together how sweet the Lord is, and equally hear and do His words. But those who refuse to repent and pay the debt of penance for sin will not escape the hand of the stringent Judge, but driven into outer darkness, will not come out until they have paid the last farthing. To whom the wise of the Philistines above, suggesting better things, said: "Why do you harden your hearts, as Egypt and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? Did they not, after being struck, then let them go, and they departed? Which is to say openly about the reprobates: Did they not, after receiving the sentence of eternal death, then first cease to sin and do harm to the good?"

1 Samuel 6:18

And up to Abel the great stone, etc. Even the strong ones in faith, and those who are sufficient in devotion to support and govern the wavering Church, conscious of their own fragility, say: For in many things we all offend (James 3). Indeed, the very highest cornerstone himself, who did not commit sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth (1 Peter 2), having suffered humanly for us, speaks: What I did not seize, I then restored (Psalm 68). And that great stone, upon which the ark of God was placed, aptly signifies him, which was the border between Israel and the Philistines. For the border is shown, from where both these demand their dues, and upon which those place the ark of the Lord as their own. For he bears the burden of the Church with his singular piety of virtue, who is our peace, and made both one.

1 Samuel 6:18

Which was until that day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. The same Joshua, who above is Jesus, and signifies the same Lord. For both names interpret as Savior.

1 Samuel 6:19

But he smote certain men of Beth-shemesh, etc. Not the priests and Levites, whose office it was to carry the ark; but the ignoble common people, to whom it was not even lawful to look upon it, he smote. To prevent this, in Exodus the people stood afar off and prayed, and Moses alone went up to the Lord. For only those perfect in knowledge and action know how to direct their mind to the contemplation of heavenly things in this life. But if anyone less perfect should presume to handle divine matters among human, it must be cautioned lest his unconsidered rashness be struck down either by heresy, or despair, or any other danger. But perhaps it is better to take this smiting of the people who had seen the ark of the Lord in a good sense; for the more anyone begins to look upon the secrets of divine majesty, the more soon, feeling humble about himself, he trembles and faints from all his confidence in his own virtues. With this most salutary wound he trembled who said: I will speak to my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes (Exod. XVIII). And also the Psalmist, when he said: My eyes fail looking for your salvation (Psalm CXVIII). Which means to say: the higher I contemplate the most sacred mysteries of your salvation, that is, Jesus, the more quickly I, struck by a vital wound, despise my own deeds which I thought were strong.

In this wound, not only struck but also dead, he rejoices who said: For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God: I have been crucified with Christ (Gal. II). To this same sense the number of the slain, fifty or seventy, which principally regards signifying rest and the grace of the Holy Spirit, also agrees. For both the seventh day and the fiftieth year were consecrated by law for rest. And the Holy Spirit, whose sevenfold grace Isaiah writes about, descended on the Church on the fiftieth day of the Lord's resurrection. For while now having eternal years in mind they console their soul, and are delighted by the sole memory of God, and their spirit fails for a while, then, exalted by the Spirit of God, they strive towards perpetual rest. To both senses fits aptly what follows:

1 Samuel 6:19

And the people lamented, for the Lord had struck them, etc. Because the Church laments with tears over its infirm or faltering members to restore them to their former state; and enkindled with zeal for the well-being of its flourishing members, who it sees have desired and failed in the court of the Lord, it pours forth sweet tears of salutary compunction and says, wounded by love: I am love-sick, and my soul has melted, as he has spoken (Songs 5); and other such things, with which countless places of Scripture and the entire text of the forty-first psalm are filled. [1 Samuel 6:20] -- And the men of Beth-shemesh said: Who can stand, etc. The men of the house of the sun, that is, the citizens of the heavenly homeland, wandering on earth; and if they taste even a little, and that by snatching, of the eternal light which they thirst for, they immediately realize how much they are nothing of their own, rightly fearing they say: For no living being will be justified in your sight (Psalm 142). Because even if someone seems to stand by human judgment, yet in the sight of the Divine Majesty, they are proven to be lying low; and with modest and kind advice, after that sublime ardor of love known only to themselves and to God, they impart to their lesser neighbors the gifts of spiritual knowledge that are sufficient for them. As the great citizen of Beth-shemesh said: For whether we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you (2 Corinthians 5). And this is what follows, with the men of Beth-shemesh speaking about the ark of the Lord:

1 Samuel 6:20

And to whom will it ascend from us? etc. Cariathiarim, indeed, which is called the city of forests, signifies the great perfection of life, but certainly less than Bethsames, that is, the house of the sun. For this, namely, signifies the sublimity of contemplation, because the pure in heart will see God (Matt. 5); that one shows the community of active conversation, by which also all the trees of the forests bearing their fruits will rejoice before the face of the Lord, because He comes, and makes His abode with them. And from Bethsamis the ark is sent to Cariathiarim, because divine grace now kindles the hearts of the great, so that they contemplate the summit through faith, now helps the humble hearts of beginners, so that they, like fruits, produce varieties of good works.

CHAPTER 1.12

The men of Beth-shemesh were struck down because they presumed to look upon the ark, unworthy as they were. The inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim then took the ark and kept it for twenty years. Then, upon Samuel's admonition, Israel abandoned their idols and served the Lord. As Samuel offered a burnt offering, the Philistines were terrified by the thunder of the Lord and fled. Samuel judged Israel, and built an altar to the Lord in Ramah. (I Samuel 7. So the men of Kiriath-jearim came and ... The mighty ones of the Church, fertile with manifold spiritual actions, having received the knowledge of the divine will from the lofty contemplations of faith, brought it to themselves and their own. They placed this in the high heart of those who, by the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit, were deemed worthy to be the temple of God, to whom He gave the power to become children of God, those who believe in His name (John 1), whom He voluntarily begot by the word of truth. Aminadab, which means 'my willing father,' clearly designates Him who, though He is the Lord of heaven and earth, has by grace become our Father. Gabaa, which is interpreted as 'hill,' is understood to be some eminent place in Kiriath-jearim or certainly the citadel of that same city, indicating the height of perfect action. In that very hill the ark of the Lord is placed when the divine will is revealed, these are preordained to eternal life.

Because no one can attain the revelation of divine knowledge except the humble, rightly, the Beth-shemesh who will accept the ark say to the Kiriath-jearim: The Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord; come down and take it up to you. This is plainly what believers from the Jewish people at the end of the world will say to those nearby to be called to faith: The nations have brought back to us the knowledge of grace, which they long possessed as a gift while we were unbelievers. Come down from the lofty pride of arrogance, and humbly receive the humble yoke of faith with a humble heart. This, as the series of this reading, can very fittingly apply to our daily state and the varying merits of different people.

1 Samuel 7:1

They sanctified his son Eleazar, etc. They chose holy and learned men, and by the name of the sons of God, they appointed teachers who would guard the state of the Church. For Eleazar, who is called the helper of God, figuratively expresses the assembly of those who can say with the apostle: "For we are

God's fellow workers" (I Cor. III). And elsewhere: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (Ibid.) [1 Samuel 7:2] -- And it came to pass, from the day the ark remained in Kiriath-jearim, etc. Here, observe the difference between active and contemplative perfection. Behold, the ark of the Lord, which could scarcely remain even one day in the field of Joshua the Bethshemite when it arrived; and not only could it not ascend to Gabaa, that is, the high place of Bethshemesh, but it could not even clearly enter its very gates. However, reaching Kiriath-jearim and being brought to its hill, it remained there for almost twenty years, with days of virtues multiplied until the year was complete, because the contemplation of heavenly life can scarcely be tasted for even a moment by the holy ones living in the flesh. For the body, which is corrupted, weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation depresses the mind that thinks of many things (Wisdom IX). On the other hand, active life can be celebrated with much longer duration and in the companionship of cooperating brethren, so much so that the Decalogue in it, doubled by the grace of the Gospel, or certainly perfected by the body and mind, is shown to be fulfilled almost as if it were the twentieth year of the ark remaining with them, proven by the merits of good deeds.

1 Samuel 7:2

And the whole house of Israel rested after the Lord. It symbolically designates the final happiness of Judah converted at the end, to which the entire previous passage particularly refers, although it can generally be applied to the whole church. Also, according to the letter, some think that the period of twenty years in which the ark rested in Cariathiarim indicates both the manner and the status of the time when Samuel governed Israel. For it is not to be supposed, as some chronographers are mistakenly troubled, that the twenty years during which the ark remained there extends to the eighth year of David's reign, when it was transported to Jerusalem by him. For we read below, in the beginning of Saul's reign, that it was in Gabaa of Benjamin, with the Scripture saying: "And Saul said to Achia: Bring the ark of God. For the ark of God was there on that day with the sons of Israel" (1 Samuel 14). Therefore, we must understand, although Scripture is silent about it, that it was brought back from Gabaa of Benjamin to Gabaa, that is, the hill of Cariathiarim, from where it was transferred to Jerusalem during David's reign.

Do not believe that the ark of the Lord was moved through various places without the significance of mystery, so that now it visits the Lord of the Solomites, now it enters the city of woods, now it appears as a helper among the camps, now it returns to the city of woods, and having left Shiloh, rejected the tabernacle of Shiloh (Psalm 78), finally ascending the mountain of Zion, which He loved; nor does it fail to be brought back and forth even then between the camps. Moreover, Uriah, speaking with David during the Ammonite war, indicated that it was under tents (1 Chronicles 17). And this continued until the time of the dedication of the house of God, wherein it received a permanent dwelling in the Holy of Holies. Know that these things are not done in vain, but in the type of the Church, which in its manifold but most peaceful diversity of its members now enjoys the sweetest light of the theoretical life, tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, now penetrates the dense active devotion, though nourished by a lesser burning or light of the mind, yet not less fruitful in good works; now it arms the spiritual militia of virtues against the dangers of the opposing world; nor does it desert its fruitful way of life suitable for resisting adversaries, but diligently takes care lest, after recognizing the mysteries of spiritual life, it seeks the literal observance of the law, like the tabernacle of Shiloh, by a perverse choice;

now in those who have already departed from the body and escaped the labors of the changing world, it ascends to the vision of eternal peace. However, even through those reigning in the seat of heaven, it does not cease to fight by praying for its members still struggling against the enemy on earth, until with the brilliance of the resurrection's glory, which is its blessed dedication, it is lifted as the triumphant one over death into the heavenly Holy of Holies eternally.

1 Samuel 7:3

If with all your heart you return to the Lord, etc. Here it is shown figuratively how the Lord teaching in Judea, performing miracles, suffering and rising, ascending into heaven and sending the grace of the Holy Spirit, made not only the Jews but also the Gentiles partakers of His mercy. Therefore, Samuel, having taken the priesthood after the death of Eli, addresses the whole house of Israel to remove foreign gods from among them. [1 Samuel 7:3] -- And prepare your hearts for the Lord, etc. The Lord, author of a new priesthood, which is according to the order of Melchizedek, appearing in the flesh, teaches the whole house of Israel, that is, the Church of those desiring

to see God, to remove from themselves the traditions of the Pharisees; and not only the works, which the law also taught, but also to prepare their hearts themselves to serve the Lord alone, saying: You have heard that it was said to the ancients: But I say to you (Matthew V.) Thus they can be freed from all enemies in the life to come.

1 Samuel 7:4

So the children of Israel removed Baalim and Ashtaroth, etc. These idols are from the Sidonians; of which Baalim signifies the higher or ascending ones, and Ashtaroth the workmanship of explorers. Therefore, whoever of the children of Israel served the true God the Father at the preaching of the Savior, cast out all profane thoughts, which, ascending into the heart from the lowest, and not from above from the Father of lights, among the best and perfect gifts descending, desired to be above good; they removed every device of unclean spirits from their chest, who, going around the folds of the faithful, seek whom they may devour. [1 Samuel 7:5] -- Samuel said: Gather all Israel to Mizpah, etc. The Savior said to the apostles that by preaching the word of the Gospel, they should gather all spiritual Israel to Mizpah, that is, to the watchtower, namely of the new truth and life. From this gathering of the universal church, the Catholic Church took its name in Greek. Placed in its unity, the Savior himself, praying, commends each to the Father, who before his passion, praying through the apostles, said: But I do not pray for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they all might be one (John XVII). And now the Apostle teaches that he does the same, saying: Who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (Rom. VIII).

1 Samuel 7:6

And they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water, etc. The fact that they drew water during prayers and fastings and poured it out before the Lord is a sign and execution of pious devotion. They gathered, as the Lord was preaching, to hear the word of the people, and being deeply moved, they drew from the bottom of their hearts a fountain of tears, which they would pour out as the most pleasing libation to God, offering it through the vessels of their eyes; and they abstained from all the allurements of the world, in that light of heavenly grace, confessing past sins and imploring the mercy of Christ. [1 Samuel 7:6] -- And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah. The

heavens are not clean in his sight (Job XV), and he finds perversity in his elect. Therefore, those too who, transcending all earthly things, gathered at the lookout of heavenly things, which Mizpah signifies, to Christ, who pre-eminent by the name of the sons of Israel, that is, men seeing God, still have much for which, as men, they may be chastised by a strict judge. Whence Isaiah says: And he shall judge the poor in righteousness (Isa. XI). There is no doubt that he speaks to those to whom he says: Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God (Matt. V); for judging the same, he says: Are you still without understanding? (Matt. XV).

1 Samuel 7:7

And the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered in Mizpah, etc. The enemies of the truth heard that, with the Lord preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, all the people gladly listened to Him; and unclean spirits, specifically the princes of the impious (wherefore they are also called the rulers of darkness by the Apostle [Ephesians VI]), rose up against the state of the Church, or rather, against each of the faithful, to be attacked with wicked snares. Concerning their wicked uprising, we have previously discussed while expounding the name Baalim. [1 Samuel 7:7] -- When the children of Israel heard this, they were afraid, etc. The disciples of Christ, fearing the face of the persecuting Jews, watched and prayed, as He commanded, that they would not enter into temptation; and, suddenly struck by the storm of temptations, they said: Lord, save us, we are perishing. They are also remembered to have prayed frequently in afflictions after His ascension (Matt. VIII). This same practice offers us also, who are tempted, a very beneficial safeguard, that our soul may be delivered from the fear of the enemy.

1 Samuel 7:9

But Samuel took one suckling lamb, etc. The Lord took the innocent one, whom He had clothed in human form for the salvation of the world, and offered Him as a whole burnt offering on the altar of the cross to the Father. And it is rightly said that He offered a whole burnt offering, that is, wholly consumed, as one conceived without iniquity, born, and living in the flesh without sin, making all that He did through humanity worthy of the fire of the Holy Spirit of God. And the Lord prayed to the Father for His faithful, that their faith might not fail (Luke XXII). He prayed also for those who persecuted Him, that they might be forgiven the great sin of perfidy which

they committed unknowingly (Luke XXIII). And the Father heard Him, strengthening the faith of those who almost lost it, and calling those who completely lacked faith to belief.

1 Samuel 7:10

It happened therefore, when Samuel was offering a burnt offering, etc. It happened when the Lord offered himself as a sacrifice to God in the aroma of sweetness, that his persecutors, having set him on the cross, blasphemed or mocked him, and after his burial, attempted to obstruct the way of his resurrection, so that, as if he were condemned to eternal death, they would strip all hope of salvation from his faithful ones. But, with the earth shaken, rocks split, tombs opened, the dead rising, and other heavenly signs shining around his cross or burial, the enemies were terrified and scattered in different directions. Finally, at the tomb the guards were terrified and fell like dead men. And all the crowd that had gathered at the spectacle of the cross, and saw what was happening, beat their breasts and returned. Likewise also on the day of Pentecost, when the Lord thundered from above, and through the apostles, his own clouds, echoed the heavenly words, the enemies of the faith were confounded and struck by their words, with some being crushed by their impenitence and denial.

1 Samuel 7:11

The men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, etc. The apostles went out from Mizpah, that is, the watchtower of their peaceful way of life, pursued the impious by reproving them; and struck them from their ancient, that is, impious life, gradually removing them with the sword of the word, until they led them to the fellowship of the Church, which is founded upon Christ. For Bethcar, which is interpreted as the house of the lamb, or the house of recognition, certainly signifies him, who, having innocently died in humanity, powerfully reveals the paternal secrets in divinity. Upon which house of divine recognition he found a place of beloved residence, who said: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John VI). Which he desired to enter, who humbly knocking, asked: "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us" (John XIV). For they had learned from him because no one knows the Son, except the Father: nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal (Luke X).

And therefore, rightly it is called the house of recognition, through whom he alone and the Father are revealed.

1 Samuel 7:12

And Samuel took a stone, etc. And indeed we read above of the stone of help, which in Hebrew is called Ebenezer; but there the historian anticipated, whereas here he expresses both the time and the cause of the name being given; which, as a clear type of the Mediator, is rightly called one stone, because there is one Lord Jesus Christ, who justifies the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith; rightly placed between Masphat and Shen, that is, between the place where the altar of the Lord's cross was erected and the singular lamb was offered who takes away the sins of the world, and between it and the place where the victory of the Lord's word could spread throughout the world. That place, most beautifully lying above Bethcar, that is, the house of the lamb or of recognition, because the same Church of Christ shines throughout the entire world. Nor is it by chance that the same place Shen, that is, is said to be named, because the people of the Gentiles, who cry out to the Lord from the ends of the earth, and with Israel they hear: Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven (Luke 10). Of which it is also said elsewhere: And he calls his own sheep by name (John 10). Therefore the Lord took the precious stone, the chosen cornerstone, that is, himself;

and set it between the people of the Jews and the Gentiles, who by the powerful help of his Spirit would gather both into one, and miraculously rescued from all adversities, would raise them up to the contemplation of the glory of his divine majesty; to the vision of which, than which nothing is better (for indeed, whatever we who have merited to behold it, seek nothing greater), because we will rejoice in the greatest good, it is said very well: Because the Lord has helped us thus far. Whence also in the Gospel, the Lord, as if promising the highest and incomparable good to the faithful people, says: He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him (John 14).

1 Samuel 7:13

And the Philistines were humbled, etc. When they came to that assisting stone, to which the Psalmist according to the Hebrew truth alone sings: "Be to me a strong rock and a fortified house, to save me, for you are my rock

and my fortress" (Psalm 30), our enemies will be humbled, nor will they again invade the borders of our strength, when they see themselves defeated with us glorified before the Lord. For as long as we toil in this world, the wars of temptations will never be lacking.

1 Samuel 7:13

And the hand of the Lord was upon the Philistines, etc. The grace of Christ was made to crush the enemies of the primitive Church wherever the light of the Gospel shone in Judea, nor is it repulsed by disbelief and persecution. And the souls deceived by unclean teachers or spirits, are rendered and brought back to the society of the Church, from those who remained sterile of good works, to those who not only remained fruitless for themselves but also tried to oppress those who were fruitful. For Accaron turns into sterility, Geth into a winepress. And indeed, the understanding of sterility is clear, because every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matthew III). The winepress, however, signifies persecutors of the good, as the Psalms inscribed for the winepresses, and the action of the winepresses themselves demonstrate. For the wood cut from the root, stripped of leaf and bark, and utterly deprived of any hope of bearing fruit, is compacted solely for the pressing of grapes or olives. While pressed by weight, with the husks crushed and skins emptied, the most joyous must and the richest streams of oil flow; the precious liquid indeed is stored in the cellars, but the waste shells are thrown out. Indeed, the winepresses remain empty of fruit, only eagerly awaiting when they begin to press something, until even themselves, worn by long use, are consigned to flames to be burned.

Thus, surely, thus the torturers of the Church not only lack the greenery of faith, the leaves of confession, and the good fruits of operation; but also do not cease to weary the fruitful souls engaged in works of mercy and love, and other virtues' pursuits, up to the dissolution of the flesh. For they have nothing more to do after these things, when the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it, and they, always being adversaries to the good, are forever consigned to the flames of Gehenna at the appointed time. Yet because some from such individuals, through Christ's mercy, reclaim the salvation they lost in the first man, it is rightly said that Israel's cities, from Accaron to Geth, that is, from sterility to the winepress, are restored. Indeed, the Accaronite was Sergius Paulus the proconsul, the

Accaronite was Dionysius the Areopagite. The Gethite was that young man aspiring to threaten and kill Christ's disciples. Finally, the most noble cluster, crowned by rank, name, and passion, to be offered to Christ in the first fruits of the Church, was stripped of the burden of the flesh by the pressure of stones. But while they came from paganism to faith, and he from being a persecutor even to the grace of apostleship, indeed the cities—sterility and the winepress—when captured by the enemy, are reclaimed by the Church.

1 Samuel 7:14

There was peace between Israel and the Amorites. After the ascension of the Lord, with the Churches confirmed in faith, there was our peace, which made both one, between those from the Jews and those who believed from the Gentiles. There will also be in you, when you live as a true Israelite, that is, without deceit, peace with the former bitter enemy, which is interpreted as Amorite, when you have taught all vices conquered in you to favor virtues, and the members which were weapons of iniquity for sin, you will have made weapons of righteousness for God. For as long as the grace of the true Samuel lives and reigns in your mind, although you cannot completely be free from sin as a human, whatever filthy thoughts, as if ambushing the spiritual virtues, the hands of the Philistines may take from you, you will recover with his daily help, and you yourself will also free into the boundaries of your good works from the hand of the Philistines, because the patience of the poor will not perish forever. And although you may not be able to be invulnerable in the midst of battle, once the course is completed, you will be granted the crown of life.

1 Samuel 7:15

Samuel also judged Israel, etc. The Lord judges the Church at all times, in which, while it wanders on earth, He vivifies it with the light of His divine presence. For the days of Christ are the same as the days of the Church. About which He speaks in the Gospel: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John IX). Elsewhere, specifying this clearly, He says: "And behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the age" (Matt. XXVIII). He also judges it, either by teaching through adversities, illuminating with gifts, delivering it from an unholy people, or leading it to heavenly kingdoms. Therefore, with hidden presence examining each of the elect,

their hope, faith, and love, how much each has advanced in the aforementioned virtues, He examines daily either by Himself, who knows the secrets of the heart, or through spiritual teachers. For that a year denotes a person through figurative speech is also proven by the fact that the four well-known humors, by which the human body is sustained, are harmoniously associated with the four annual seasons: true blood with spring, red bile with summer, black bile with autumn, and phlegm with winter. Furthermore, the memorized cities are rightly compared to the aforementioned virtues, as their very names indicate, of which Bethel is translated into "house of God," Galgal into "wheel," and Masphat into "watchtower.

The house of God signifies those who, having recently accepted the mystery of faith, have already become the temple of their Creator. The type of wheel alludes to those who, confirmed by the certainty of hope, have undertaken the swift course of transferring from this world in mind. By the name "watchtower" are expressed those who, perfected by the excellence of love, although still dwelling in the flesh, have learned to transcend the confines of the flesh by contemplating eternity. Indeed, it is narrated above that Samuel gathered Israel in Masphat, and there judged them, and went against the Philistines to fight them, but, while he was offering a burnt offering, they were defeated and fled. Now, however, he is reported to have also circled around two other cities, as if they were associates with Masphat, because the principal virtue that gathers the Church and fortifies it against all enemies is charity. But so that one may worthily attain to this, it is necessary first to care for the gift of faith, which purifies hearts, and hope, which leads to higher things.

1 Samuel 7:17

And he returned to Ramathia, etc. The Lord returned to heaven in body by ascending once, the office of His dispensation having been completed; he returns daily in divine presence, by which he always and everywhere reaches entirety from end to end strongly, and arranges all things sweetly. For there is the flesh that he assumed for us and glorified; there is the hall of the blessed and of angels and men; there is the habitation promised to us by God, a house not made by hand, eternal in the heavens. Whence Ramathia is rightly called his height; and there, placed in body, he himself judges the Church, either chastising those still wandering on earth, until he leads them to the heavenly, or distributing worthy seats to those already dwelling with

him according to merits, where in the house of his Father he has many mansions (John XIII), knowing that the Father has given all things into his hands, and has given him authority to execute judgment (John V). There also within the veil of heaven and the eternal holy of holies, he was building an altar for the hearts of the heavenly citizens to the Father. From this, the fire of his charity being ignited, the incense of everlasting praise rises, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory (Isaiah VI). And again: Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb (Revelation VII);

and other such things, which being brought thither in the Spirit, the beloved disciple heard, to be often repeated and always remembered. Thus far may it suffice to have briefly indicated in the first book of our exposition the change from the old priesthood to the new, prefigured in the guise of Heli and Samuel, so that we may freely investigate from another beginning the wider mysteries of the changing kingdom, which were prefigured through Saul and David, relying not on our ingenuity, but depending on the help of him through all things, to whom the whole Scripture of prophecy serves, whose kingdom shall have no end, and is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Book II

Preface to Book II

Since in this little book, that is, in the second part of our allegorical exposition on the blessed prophet Samuel, with the Lord's help, we are about to speak, in our modest way, about the end of Samuel's leadership and the beginning of Saul's reign, it seems appropriate, as a prologue, to discuss the time during which each of them governed God's people; and because Holy Scripture seems to be silent about this, we undertake to search with diligent inquiry for what might be most plausibly estimated. Indeed, there were some who said that they both ruled for not more than thirteen years, because it is written: "And it came to pass, from the day the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, the days increased; for it was now the twentieth year" (1 Samuel 7). They thought that the ark remained twenty years at Kiriath Jearim, and these years, from the beginning of Samuel's life until the seventh year of David's reign, when he began to rule in Jerusalem and brought it there, should be counted; although Scripture very clearly testifies that in the times of Saul

when Israel fought against the Philistines, it was with the people in the camps. And it might much more truly seem that the twenty years which were mentioned, if they designate the time of the ark's stay at Kiriath Jearim, are to be counted rather up to this time than when David brought it from there. Some believe that Samuel should be completely ignored in the Chronicles.

Some attributed seventy years to him, and thirty to Saul. Others claimed that, combining the times of the two, they ruled the people for forty years. But we cannot find any basis for affirming any of these. However, it is very easy to see how all these could be refuted and disproved. For Scripture plainly says: "It came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month Ziv, which is the second month of Solomon's reign over Israel, he began to build the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 6). Therefore, recount the times of the Judges, and you will find that Othniel ruled the people for forty years, Ehud for eighty, Deborah for forty, Gideon for forty, Abimelech for three, Tola for twenty-three, Jair for twenty-two, Jephthah for six, Ibzan for seven, Elon for ten, who is not found in the Septuagint: Abdon for eight, Samson for twenty, Eli for forty, which together make three hundred thirty-nine years. To these, add forty years of the journey from Egypt, the same for David's reign, four for Solomon's, making four hundred twenty-three years: evidently fifty-seven years less than four hundred eighty, which must be accounted for in the times of Joshua, Samuel, and Saul; but how we should divide them, the Scripture does not teach. If we follow the authority of the chronicles, we give twenty-four to Joshua, and the remaining two have not more than thirty years together.

If forty to Saul, the remaining two do not have more than seventeen. Therefore, to open some way for inquiry, let us turn to the writings of Josephus, who is easily found more learned in such matters than anyone else besides the divine scriptures. And we will find in his history of Antiquities that Joshua ruled for twenty-six years, Samuel for twelve, and Saul for twenty over the people; these make fifty-eight years together. Nor should we be troubled by the one year that exceeds the four hundred eighty. For either Scripture, following its usual manner, placing the full sum, did not care to add the one year that exceeded; or, what is more believable, the writing of Josephus, through the carelessness of long age, added one year somewhere, as

often happens. For it is not to be supposed that there was an error in the writings of Holy Scripture; which, although differing in many other places, yet in the catalog of Judges agrees through all things with Hebrew truth and the Septuagint edition, except for one Hailon, whom they entirely omitted. The omission of whom forced the chroniclers ignorant of Hebrew truth to neglect Josephus' writings and give forty years to Samuel and Saul and twenty-seven to Joshua. For they saw that otherwise, they could not reach the four hundred and eighty-year number, which they did not know how to fulfill without the years of Hailon: for which they allowed themselves to add the nine years to Josephus so that the scripture might be satisfied.

Why should we not be allowed to subtract at least one year from that count, especially since we are concluded by similar necessity, and give twenty-five years to Joshua, and thirty-two to Samuel and Saul? Lest by believing historians more than proper, we seem to violate Scripture: which absolutely asserts the four hundred and eightieth year of the exodus from Egypt to be the fourth year of Solomon. For if it had been written thus: "It came to pass after four hundred and eighty years of the exodus from Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign," there would be no controversy at all, for the extra year would be the fourth of Solomon. And lest anyone say that we follow a false rule of four hundred and eighty years, as if five hundred and eighty should rather be computed according to some copies, the interpreter of sacred history himself, when he translated the Book of Times into Latin, where he came to the fourth year of Solomon and mentioned that the temple began to be built in it, immediately, either from his own erudition which he had gathered in the holy scriptures or from Greek authority, added and said: "It is gathered that the whole time from Moses and the exodus of Israel from Egypt to the present year is 480 years. Indeed, let no one be troubled in the computation of time by what we have written, and we have mentioned above: "From the day that the ark remained in Kiriath Jearim, the days increased:

for it was the twentieth year, and all the house of Israel rested after the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:2). This verse can also be taken in such a way that it does not mean the ark remained in Kiriath Jearim for twenty years, but from the day the ark remained there, all the house of Israel rested after the Lord for twenty years, rejoicing indeed about the ark, which they had lost due to their sins, returning to them, but afterward, sharing in the sins of Saul, gradually

deviated from His precepts. But since the preface has gone on too long, let us now begin the very order of Scripture which we are scrutinizing.

CHAPTER 2.1

Aging Samuel appoints his sons judges over Israel. However, as they deviate from the right path, the people request a king for themselves; and although, by the Lord's command, he expounds the law of the king, he is still unable to dissuade them from their wicked intent. (1 Samuel 8. Now it came to pass, when Samuel was old, etc., up to Let every man go to his own city, etc. This lesson, understood both literally and typologically, reproaches those who, neglecting the holy command they have learned, desire rather to serve their own lusts: which can be understood both generally of all false believers, and specifically of the Jews; who either, after the Savior's incarnation, rejected the preachers of the heavenly kingdom out of love for an earthly kingdom; or who, once disdaining the very peaceful governance of the judges, against the counsel of the Lord, desired to be exalted by the royal scepter's lineage. Now it came to pass, he says, when Samuel was old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel. The name of old age in the Scriptures, when used mystically, sometimes signifies maturity of wisdom and the gravity of counsel, and sometimes the sluggishness of a mind growing cold from the new fervor of a nascent virtue. For it was said of the just judge, whose wisdom no conscience can deceive: And the Ancient of Days sat. And it was said of his members: The glory of old men is their gray hair, that is, the gravity of wisdom.

Again, in a negative sense, one who felt himself growing cold in the pursuit of virtues said: I have grown old among all my enemies (Psalm 6). To both interpretations, however, what is said can be applied: Samuel, growing old, appointed his sons judges over Israel. For when faith and love of Christ had grown old among the Jews, with some indeed growing cold as if with old age, and others mature with the long habit of living, the Lord Himself appointed the Scribes and Pharisees as judges of this people, who ought to discern the right way of life and show it to those subject to them: who are called sons of God, according to what He said in Exodus, Israel is my firstborn son (Exodus 4). As said, this can equally refer both to the time of the Lord's incarnation and to the times when judges were first appointed by the Lord among the same people. For even then, as the prophet testifies, the just lived by faith (Habakkuk 2). Without a doubt, this about which Peter said:

But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (Acts 15).

1 Samuel 8:2

The name of his firstborn son was Joel, etc. Joel means 'beginning' or 'was of God', Abia stands for 'father', and Beersheba means 'well of the oath'. It is indeed a place, as the name itself proves, where Abraham and Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech by swearing; this signifies that very fountain of salvation, which, united in the pact of one and the same faith, washes those circumcised and uncircumcised; in which the aforementioned brothers are appointed as judges so that they may both offer and drink the fountain of life. But they according to their name began but did not persevere to the end, to be saved, and though once belonging to God and worthy of the name of the patriarchs, now changed to the contrary, they preferred their own traditions and crimes over both the law and grace. And when any of us, cooling with the spiritual fervor he had begun, places base and earthly thoughts before his mind, it is as if the aging Samuel set the degenerate sons as judges in Beersheba; for the perverse senses are subject to the mystery of baptism.

1 Samuel 8:4

Therefore, all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel, etc. Therefore, after the ascension of the Lord, all the elders of carnal Israel gathered together against him, and sent out to follow him into Ramah, that is, into the heights of heaven, where whatever we do on earth is quickly revealed, saying: 'We do not want this man to reign over us' (Luke 19); and as if speaking to him who can hide nothing, they said: 'Behold, they said, your faith and love in us have grown old, and the sons whom you have nurtured and lifted up, they have despised you' (Isaiah 1). Therefore, we preferred, like the nations that did not know you, and the kingdoms that did not call on your name, to remain strangers to your leadership rather than be deprived of the kingdom, faith, and homeland of your grace. For if, leaving the skill of fighting, we follow the simplicity of your doctrine, the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation. This indeed the Jews, though not in voice, at least in their depraved mind and intention, spoke against the Lord and against His Christ.

1 Samuel 8:6

The speech was displeasing to the eyes of Samuel, etc. The infidelity of the Jews was displeasing before the wise in Christ, who are the eyes of the Church, because in choosing the lowest for the highest, although ignorant, they said to the Lord, "Give us an earthly kingdom that will perpetually damn us." For of the heavenly kingdom, which you promise to the poor in spirit, we have no care, for whose salvation the Savior prayed either by himself while he was in the world, or through his members even after the ascension. This is specially narrated in the ecclesiastical history concerning James, the brother of the Lord (Matthew V), because he prayed for the people attending the temple with such insistence and diligence that his knees were believed to have taken on the hardness of camels'. [1 Samuel 8:7] -- But the Lord said to Samuel: "Listen to the voice of the people," etc. Do not take away their free will, but give the power to become children of God, to those who were unwilling to believe, and do not grieve the reproach of men resulting from the rejection of the people. For they have not rejected your teaching in the person speaking, but my divine teaching operating through you, so that I may not grant them an eternal kingdom in you. This is similar to what he himself said: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (John VII).

1 Samuel 8:8

"As they have forsaken me and served other gods," etc. That is, just as they will also forsake the grace of the Gospel and serve rituals alien to God. [1 Samuel 8:9] -- Now therefore listen to their voice, etc. And these most fittingly apply to the person of the Father speaking to the Son: "Let them go according to the desires of their hearts, and they will go in their own wills" (Psalm LXXX). However, testify to them through the Gospel, and preach to them what temporal misery before men, what eternal torment in hell those will suffer who, neglecting service, or rather spiritual freedom, preferred to reign over themselves, saying: "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, and your house will be left desolate" (Luke X), and similar things, and he said: [1 Samuel 8:11] -- This will be the law of the king who will rule over you. It does not explain what a moderate and just emperor should be like, whose perfection is taught in many places of the Holy Scriptures and especially in Deuteronomy; but

rather it intimates a wicked ruler, by whose harshness the subjects will be oppressed, in order to persuade the people to withdraw from their stubborn request. Figuratively, the Scripture that speaks of a good king signifies Christ: about whom it is sung under the figure of Solomon, "O God, give your judgment to the king" (Psalm 71). But what is said of a bad king refers to the devil: according to Ecclesiasticus, "A foolish king destroys his people" (Eccl. 10). And rightly so, because he belongs to the devil, while the other is a member of Christ.

1 Samuel 8:11

He will take your sons, etc. You, he says, were called to freedom, brothers, only do not use freedom as an opportunity for the flesh (Gal. 5). Therefore, whoever gives the freedom into which he was called as an opportunity for the flesh, will soon, under the power of an impious king, that is, the devil whom he has chosen as his lord, suffer all these servitudes in himself which Samuel spoke to the people about. For what was once said specifically of one people but has for a longer time and with historical and typical truth been practiced, should generally be applied to all mortals who cast off the sweet yoke of the Lord; whose sons the wicked king takes and places in his chariots, when the ancient enemy, taking their glorious deeds, such as modesty, patience, kindness, almsgiving, and other similar things, corrupts them with hypocrisy, vainglory, pride, or any other vicious plague, he binds them to the works of the faithless, in whose hearts, constrained by the bridle of iniquity, the very worst charioteer freely and proudly rides around in his chariots. And because now the impious enemy falsely associates those whom he considers faithful among the faithful by their works, the strict Judge will associate them in the end through punishments; of such it is rightly written: "The lord of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the unfaithful" (Matt. 24).

1 Samuel 8:11

And he will make for himself horsemen, etc. So much, he says, has the devil also subjected your stronger endeavors to himself, that through these he may strive to correct others with the bridle of error, to tame them, and to lead them to the path of impiety, and to make the offspring of virtue a herald of vices. For just as in good the chariots of virtues minister, bringing prudence,

fortitude, justice, and temperance into the hearts of neighbors; so on the contrary, the chariot of the worst king is preceded by one who, to his followers, prefigures examples of vices contrary to these virtues.

1 Samuel 8:12

And he will appoint for himself tribunes and centurions, etc. And from your great deeds, as if from sons born from the womb of a good conscience, the ancient corrupter will appoint others for himself to this office, as if certain tribunes to lead a hostile army against the camps of truth; others to promise the great perfection of eternal life to those who follow them as centurions; those who, sowing in the flesh, will reap corruption from the flesh; according to what Hosea says, "You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity, you have eaten the fruit of lies" (Hosea X). Others whom the fraudulent arranger distributes to strengthen fabricators of errors with dialectical snares and worshippers of perverse doctrines against the truth. We can also perceive the plowers of the devil's fields to be those who cultivate the hearts of the wretched with the exercise of wicked doctrine. The reapers, indeed, who, as if perfect in the smaller fruits of their hearers, lead them to the contemplation of their more secret mysteries as cleaners to the barns; this is proper to heretics, and especially is usually the invention of the Manicheans. For the sons of the rebellious people, whom we have interpreted over the diverse acts of one person, can also be referred to diverse persons, defiled by different errors but from the same adversary.

1 Samuel 8:13

He will also make your daughters his ointment-makers, etc. He will make your synagogues, or the souls of the deceived, or certainly thoughts once free from pure chastity, to favor his depraved iniquities with wicked flattery; the prophet who abhors this worst kind of ointment prays: "But let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head" (Psalm 140). Contrary to this is the ointment-maker of the good king, Mary Magdalene, who says: "While the king was on his couch, my spikenard gave forth its fragrance" (Song of Songs 1). He will also make those who serve his furnace of vices: about which the prophet testifies, "All of them adulterers, like an oven their hearts" (Hosea 7). Contrary to this is the furnace of heavenly love, of which those who have received the word of truth say to one another: "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, and explaining the Scriptures to

us?" (Luke 24). He will also make bread-makers, who call those madmen to the abominable feasts of heresies, saying: "Eat bread in secret with pleasure: stolen waters are sweeter, and hidden bread more delightful" (Proverbs 9:17). Concerning which bread, it is also said elsewhere: "Sweet to a man is the bread of lies, but afterwards his mouth will be filled with gravel" (Proverbs 20:17). Contrary to this is the bread of truth, which strengthens the heart of man. Of which knowledge, because neither flesh nor blood shall reveal, but the Father who is in heaven: rightly it is sung under the figure of a strong woman of the Church, "She is like the ships of the merchant, bringing her bread from afar" (Proverbs 31).

1 Samuel 8:14

He will also take your fields and vineyards, etc. Also taking from you the most abundant stores of your spiritual virtues, and the fruits of fervent love, not to mention the sweetest gifts of shining mercy, he will subject them rather to the pleasures of unclean spirits. [1 Samuel 8:15] -- But he will also tithe your fields and the incomes of your vineyards, etc. But the ancient corrupter will wholly deprive you of your works, almost brought to the perfection of nature, and the hope of all your life with heavenly reward, which is signified by the number ten, so that he may restore the insatiable desires of those wicked spirits serving him, whom, once stripped of angelic virtue, he made to hunger for human destruction, by the damage of these things. [1 Samuel 8:17] -- Your male and female servants also, etc. Even the improper motions of mind or flesh, for example, anger, jealousy, gluttony, lust, and other such things, which must be restrained and curbed by the discipline of wise men; but even the other duties of right intention, the cruel deceiver will instead claim for his own jurisdiction, and in the rich flocks of virtues, in which you have long served in vain, lacking the perfection of ten, the enemy himself will receive the palm of pasture in the end. Thus, you will finally bewail yourselves made servants under the adversary, whom it had previously wearied you to live as free under the Lord.

1 Samuel 8:18

And you will cry out on that day from the face of your king, etc. This prophecy is clear, and until today, it continues to be fulfilled among the Jews; who, as it is written in the seventeenth Psalm: They will cry (and there is no one to save them) to the Lord, and He did not hear them. To whom the Lord says: I

will not hear your prayers. For your hands are full of blood (Isa. I). Namely, the blood that they were calling down upon themselves in the choice of this wicked king by saying: His blood be upon us, and upon our children (Matt. XXVII). Let them wash this off with the water of baptism, and they will cry out to the Lord from their tribulation, and He will deliver them from their necessities (Psalm CVI). Otherwise, they hear from the apostle James: You ask, and do not receive, because you ask wrongly (Acts IV). But even in the moral understanding, vices are difficult and conquered late, which for a long time lying down willingly, and voluntarily casting themselves down, had oppressed.

1 Samuel 8:19

But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, etc. This obstinacy of the disobedient people asking for a king instead of the Lord does not only pertain to the time of proclaimed grace, but also before the celebrated mysteries of the Lord's incarnation. It occupied the Synagogue, indeed nearly the entire human race, from the first parent, when he put the words of the serpent before God. For always the obstinate ones endeavor to place their free will's decision before the governance of divine grace. But the good children of the Father, supplicating in spirit, do not say 'our kingdom' or 'our will'; rather, they say, 'Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6). [1 Samuel 8:22] -- And Samuel said . . . Let each one return to his city. Even today, the divine word teaches that all who are obstinate and rebellious against the Lord should return individually to the heart's council from the public scene of obstinate contention; so that each, more freely within his own heart, may diligently examine what he has done against the will of your heavenly ordination, and what sentence he is to receive from the strict judge.

1 Samuel 9:1

And there was a man from Benjamin named Kish, son of Abiel, etc. In this Saul the king, who was chosen by the people instead of Samuel, who persecuted David, committed other crimes, rejected David, and dying received a successor to the kingdom: he signifies the wickedness of the Jews, who, despising and persecuting both the prophets and the Lord, preferred to reign by themselves; therefore they left the kingdom of God, from which they were expelled, to a nation producing its fruits. Now, in that he was anointed with

holy oil, delivering Israel from the enemy, he figuratively announces the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, the present reading, which contains the history of the anointing of Saul, but no mark of reproof: designates the high mysteries of the Lord Savior's descent from heaven for us men, and for our salvation, his reception of baptism from John, and the other lofty mysteries of the temporal dispensation. And primarily, the sense that is concerning the Lord, helps, because Saul came from Benjamin, who is said to be chosen and good; whether because Benjamin is interpreted as 'son of the right hand,' or because it is the smallest tribe in Israel; for grace is always generated in Christ by the humble in spirit, to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs.

1 Samuel 9: 2

And he had a son named Saul, etc. For he who is of the earth is from the earth, and speaks of the earth: he who comes from heaven is above all; who did not commit sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth (John III; 1 Peter II). But also the name Saul, which means "desired" or "petition," most fittingly applies to Christ, who is always implored with great desire by the saints and is asked to be present. Likewise, the name of his father Cis, that is, "stern," also alludes to mysteries; whether it signifies God the Father, or David, or Abraham, or any other of the fathers, from whom Christ is according to the flesh. For that nature is stern, which not only cannot be conquered or changed, but also cannot be comprehended by any created nature. It is stern in the strictness of judgment to the reprobate, but through the grace of mercy is kind to the good. For it is said of these: "How good is God to Israel, to those who are pure in heart" (Psalm XXII)! But of those, it is said: "Your almighty word leapt down from heaven, from the royal throne, as a stern warrior into the midst of the land of destruction" (Wisdom XVIII); and in temptations, the faithful hearts of the good are stern, to whom under the guise of Ezekiel it is said: "Behold, I have made your face stronger than their faces, and your forehead stronger than their foreheads; like adamant, harder than flint have I made it" (Ezekiel III).

1 Samuel 9: 3

But the asses of Cis, father of Saul, had wandered off, etc. The souls that belonged also to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ had wandered off; because although they lived justly, before the Son of God descended to the earth, they could not receive the first robe. And God the Father said to His

only Son: Join to your company the unanimous saints who adhere to you obediently, noble desires, and following you by their own virtue, begin the work of human salvation. But if it is agreeable to accept Cis, father of Saul, as the assembly of the ancient fathers, it is apparent that he carried the care of the souls of the faithful, and earnestly prayed to Christ that He would deign to come in the flesh for their salvation, saying: "O Lord God of hosts, restore us, and show the light of your face, and we shall be saved" (Psalm LXXII), and similar things.

CHAPTER 2.2

Searching for the donkeys of his father, Saul comes upon Samuel, who receives him graciously, tells him that the donkeys have been found; and in the morning anoints him with holy oil as king, showing him what is to come. Searching for the donkeys through five places, Saul does not find them, etc. It seems that both the ancestors of the same Saul and of the blessed Samuel bore this name. And the Lord Christ, desiring to bring back the souls lost in the first human to the path of life, did not fulfill it through the five ages of this world; because until the time of his incarnation, he did not bring anyone, however perfectly living, into the joys of the heavenly kingdom. [1 Samuel 9:5] -- But when they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant, etc. From the fifth place of failed inquiry, Saul intends, as it were, to return. And the Lord seemed, due to the enormity of human transgression, as if he wished to turn back from caring for the salvation of the impious, when, in the fifth age of the world, the oracles of the prophets were withdrawn, the frequent communication with angels was withdrawn, and only the wicked deeds of depraved men increased. And indeed, the world was pressed by so many and such great crimes before the coming of the Lord, that the Creator of the human race seemed to be more concerned with protecting the just than acquiring the salvation of the impious. However, for the sake of the adversities of his chosen ones, the provident Creator wished both to prove the invincible patience and to sharpen desires by deferral more and more; therefore it follows:

1 Samuel 9:6

He said to him: Behold, there is a man of God in this city, etc. For this is the patience and faith of the saints, this is continuous love, this long expectation seeing from afar and greeting the joy of the Lord's incarnation and the res-

toration of humanity; this, I say, is the frequent plea in the Scriptures of saving grace: Stir up your strength, and come to make us safe. Arise, why do you sleep, Lord? arise, and do not reject us to the end; why do you turn your face away (Psalm 79, 43)? and other such things. Behold, they say, there is in the city of worldly conversation, most noble by heavenly grace, and without any doubt the truest chorus of the prophets. Now therefore let us go there, and from contemplating the glory of your divinity, which is only apparent to pure hearts, let us also come to perceive the mysteries of humanity, once promised and now long desired. Blessed indeed are the eyes that have seen, and the ears that have deserved to hear these things (Matthew 12). Perhaps with these things resounding about you, and affirming the path of our devotion, with the help of the proclamations of the prophets, the world will begin to believe, and we ourselves, with those who were lost brought back to life, will rest from the long effort of so much time.

The word of doubt is placed to show the severity of human error and the difficulty of healing, according to the Savior's saying: Do you think he will find faith on earth? and: If you believed Moses, you would perhaps believe me too (Luke 18). Similar to this passage, the wise lover speaks to Christ in the song of her love: Who will give you to me, my brother, nursing at the breasts of my mother, that I might find you outside and kiss you (Cant. 8)? As if she openly said: Whom I believe, confess, and adore as invisible God within, him also I long to see and speak to outside in the form of my substance.

1 Samuel 9:6

Saul said to his servant: Behold, we will go, etc. Saul, indeed, and his servant were wandering, in that they thought to seek the gifts of prophecy from the man of God, and therefore they were disturbed in vain, because they had not even taken a small offering with them, which could have been given to him as a travel provision. The small offering, beautifully woven from palm leaves, though the bread which was within it had run out, is usually given as a gift during a greeting, if the holy man had not been accustomed to say truthfully to everyone of his own accord. But the order of the allegorical sense does not err, because the Lord diligently urges His chosen servants with frequent chastening, so that they may not come empty in mind or deed to hear the word of God and to seek His way, which is Christ (for no one comes to the Father except through Him), but may carefully inquire what of appropriate

obedience, what of other virtues they should show to their teacher, to whom the word should be rightly entrusted.

And also in the Old Testament, whoever desired that Christ would come into the world to fulfill the prophecies of the prophets, who wished that Saul would enter the city of Samuel and do what he taught, were then taught by Christ Himself through secret inspiration to pursue good works, so that they might be found worthy to see and hear what many just men and kings had previously desired but did not hear or see. Behold, he says, we will go; what shall we bring to the man? The bread has run out in our supplies, and we do not have a small offering. Behold, the time is pressing for the prophecy to be fulfilled in Christ, what good works do we have, by which we may recommend ourselves to the preachers of that time, and deserve to learn from Him whom we need? Indeed, the observance of the law has been corrupted by the traditions of the Pharisees, or rather it has itself been worn out by its antiquity and as if by long use, it has run out in our deeds; and we have not been able to achieve the conversation of new grace, which awaits the kingdom of heaven, before He comes and teaches to whom it is reserved. For the plaited palms, which used to be given as a reward to the victors, signify actions worthy of heavenly reward; vessels woven from palm leaves demonstrate hearts expanded with the hope of eternal joys.

1 Samuel 9:8

Behold, a fourth part of a silver shekel is found in my hand, etc. Understand that the silver shekel represents the perfection of human salvation, which progresses toward praising God; it attains its complete solidity through the increase of four parts: for in the Old Testament, it is raised by the future faith in the Lord's incarnation; in the New Testament, it is imbued with the sacraments of the same assumed incarnation; in the dissolution of the flesh, it is elevated by the reception of the eternal kingdom; and on the day of judgment, it will also be glorified by the resurrection of the flesh. Therefore, his servant says to Saul: Behold, a fourth part of a silver shekel is found in my hand; let us give it to the man of God, so that he may show us our way. The old faithful people, longing for the sweetness of new grace, say to Christ, who encourages them to good works: Behold, there is found in me the hope and faith of Christ to come in the flesh. Let us confess this to the ministers of the Incarnate Word, so that they may instruct us more fully about our way, which is Christ. Nor in vain does the servant, with Saul who signifies

Christ, promise to do these things. For it is He who works in us to will and to act according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2).

1 Samuel 9:9

Once in Israel, everyone used to speak thus: "Come, let us go to the seer," etc. The same man is rightly called an investigator and narrator of secrets, and a prophet, because he speaks of the future, that is, he foretells. And he is not unreasonably called a Seer, because with the cleansed eyes of the heart he searches the mysteries that less perfect ones cannot. Hence, their writings are called visions as well as prophecies. "The vision," he says, "of Isaiah, son of Amoz. "The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. "The word that Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw" (Isa. 1; Nahum 1; Isa. 2). Therefore, those who claim that the prophets of God spoke in a trance like the Cataphrygians and were unaware of the wise words they uttered should indeed be refuted. In line with the truth of the apostolic sentence, it should be understood catholically that the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets, so they knew by reason when to speak and when to be silent. Finally, the Psalmist. He who diligently seeks the commandments of God boasts that he understands more than the elders (Psalm 119). And in another place: "I will sing psalms and understand in the blameless way, when you come to me" (Psalm 101). Therefore, he does not sing psalms ignorantly as if possessed, who understands what he sings, with the spirit of wisdom coming upon him;

but often the prophets, regarding certain things divinely shown to them which, due to their greatness, men could scarcely grasp, would inquire from the angels standing by as if using reason, and thirsting for wisdom. But it is questioned how Samuel, who does not speak of distant past but of present times, that is, the times of his age, can say: "For he who is called a prophet today was formerly called a seer. And they wish these and such verses to have been inserted by Ezra the priest and scribe, when he restored the holy Scripture, as if recounting times long past. For even long after Samuel's death up to the times of Ezra, the name of seers is equally ascribed to the prophets in the Scriptures.

1 Samuel 9:10

And they went to the city where the man of God was. And the Lord came through the incarnation into the world, where at that time the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist, was; with him also came those saints, not in-

deed being born again in the world they had already lived in and desired him to come; but by turning their mind to love him even in the flesh, whom they always spiritually loved in divine secrecy. [1 Samuel 9:11] -- And when they ascended the slope of the city, they found the maidens, etc. With his followers of his incarnation, and as the Lord began to teach the sublime precepts of the new life to the first believers, humble and chaste souls appeared, having come forth from the hiding places of their sins by confessing, and to draw waters in joy from the wells of the Savior, taught beforehand by John, which he eagerly seeks, if he seeing asks among them, because, examining the consciences of each coming to him, he investigates whether they have understood John the prophet of truth or received his words with love.

1 Samuel 9:12

Those answering said to them: Here he is, behold before you, etc. The simple souls answering to Christ, to whom the conscience of each, whatever they think, is open: Here, they say, is John, taught to see heavenly things, made a forerunner for you, and you hasten to follow him, we ask, to save us; for you are our helper and deliverer, O Lord, do not delay (Psalm 39). For he also today, that is, the preacher of the same grace and faith bright with light as you, came into the world. Because it is the time that all the chosen people may spiritually consecrate to God the sacrifice on the high summit of new conversation; for he himself who stands among us, not yet recognized, after I have wished to manifest you to the world, you will immediately find him prepared for the services of your coming. For neither that man of such great grace, before he has deserved to see you, nor can he ascend to the summits of the highest virtues, nor be refreshed by the perfect feasts of spiritual joy.

1 Samuel 9:13

For the people will not eat until he comes, etc. For the unlearned masses, they say, cannot taste the sweetness of heavenly life, from which they have been exiles for so long, with hope, until he comes who testifies that the kingdom of heaven is near to those who repent. For he himself first washes by baptizing those who desire to become the living sacrifices of God, with their former errors chastised, and subsequently persuades them to rejoice in the hope of eternal inheritance. [1 Samuel 9:14] -- And while they were walking in the midst of the city, Samuel appeared, etc. And the fame of Christ and his faithful ones began to spread gradually, being preached by John. And

when all the people were baptized, and he himself had come to John to be baptized by him, John met him with the devoted services of a servant, so that after heralding the coming one, he might also baptize the present one and show the Lamb of God to the people; and progressing so greatly by merits and perfected by the blood of martyrdom, he ascended the summit of virtues, so that among those born of women no prophet would be greater.

1 Samuel 9:15–16

But the Lord had revealed Samuel's ear, etc. And God the Father had revealed the secrets of His mystery to John, while the state of the Mosaic law was still standing, saying: Because after you have manifested to the world the day of the new grace compared in all respects to the legal figures as almost equal in the span of hours, I will send to you a man from the land of the son of the right hand, that is, who bears flesh not conceived by male seed, but sacred singularly by divine work, who according to his name will save the people who believe in me, eager to see God, from the power of darkness; this man baptizing and seeing anointed with the Holy Spirit, you will begin to proclaim him as the leader of my people to all. [1 Samuel 9:17] -- And when Samuel looked at Saul, the Lord said to him, etc. When John saw Jesus coming to him, instructed by the Holy Spirit, he understood him to be the Lamb of God, the one who takes away the sins of the world, the one of whom the prophet Micah speaks: And you Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come forth for me one who will be the ruler in Israel (Micah 5:2).

1 Samuel 9:18

Saul approached Samuel at the city gate, etc. The Lord came to John at the boundary of fulfilling the law and initiating grace. For the law and the prophets were until John; from then on the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it (Matt. XI). And he asks him in what humility and in what perfection of other virtues his conscience is placed, who has deserved to see so much divine contemplation before other mortals then. For the house of each individual is the conscience, in which thoughts always dwell. But he does not question him with words, but by bestowing his gifts upon him. And he, responding, reveals where his house is; for in all the virtues he practiced, he showed himself to be placed in the abode of humility;

saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John III). And other such things, to which Samuel's subsequent responses aptly correspond.

1 Samuel 9:19

And Samuel answered Saul, saying: I am the seer, etc. John responded, with the Lord bestowing heavenly gifts upon him, saying: I am the friend of the Bridegroom; I am your forerunner; I ought to be baptized by you, who, coming before me, have been made ahead of me. And indeed you will now receive baptism from me with the people of believers, together we will serve the feast of the word, and in turn, we are refreshed by the faith of the listeners. But when the splendor of your grace has shone upon all, with my role as forerunner completed, I will leave you to preach, and having joined the chorus of preceding prophets, I will take care to reveal all the mysteries of your temporal dispensation to the crowds of the faithful, indeed your members. [1 Samuel 9:20] -- And as for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not be anxious, etc. And concerning the souls which began to perish in the third period of the world, that is, at the beginning of the nascent world, rejoice, because by my preaching they have already learned to repent and hope for the kingdom of heaven. Understand the three periods: before the law, under the law, and under grace.

1 Samuel 9:20

And whose shall be the best of Israel? etc. And who will be the giver and author of the grace I preach, if not you? To whom it is most rightly confessed that all things whatever the Father has belong. For the best of Israel are the gifts of heavenly joys, which he ministers to the house of his Father who is in heaven. [1 Samuel 9:20] -- Am I not the son of Jemini from the least tribe of Israel? etc. And the Lord chose content among proud lineages, poor parents, and humble in spirit, from whom He would be born; and He speaks of Himself: I do not seek my own glory (John VIII). And beautifully Saul is called the son of Jemini, that is, of my right hand, because Christ Himself from the power of His divinity created for Himself the substance of man, which He would assume being born from a virgin; as it is read elsewhere: Wisdom has built herself a house (Prov. IX). Beautifully from the latest family among all the families of the tribe of Benjamin, that is, the sons of the right hand. For the Son of the right hand is Christ God, to whose tribe all the elect belong; but the more humble anyone is among the saints, the closer they are as

if by kinship; for even Christ as a man, though higher in majesty, is superior to all the saints in the virtue of humility.

1 Samuel 9:22

Therefore, taking Samuel, Saul, and his servant, he brought them into the dining hall, etc. The dining hall in Greek is called the coenaculum. It is called the dining hall from the three couches of those reclining thus named. For in Greek, they call a couch or bed klini. Indeed, among the ancients, in the place where the banquet was prepared, three couches were spread, on which those reclining feasted. Therefore, John, by preaching, called many to the feasts of virtues, preferring to all these Christ and His apostles, even those coming later; and rightly, because only through His baptism, which began to be given by their ministry, could the hall of the heavenly kingdom be opened. For those whom he taught would fulfill the Decalogue of the law through the recognition of the Holy Trinity with a strong and tireless mind. [1 Samuel 9:23] -- And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave you," etc. John spoke in his own language, which was accustomed to provide the audience with the food of life, saying: "Preach the power of the singular virtue, which I commanded you to say was given to no pure man." And she, immediately obeying with a prophetic heart, brought forth words suitable solely to divine power and majesty. And she testified that these belonged to the Mediator of men, to the name of Jesus Christ, saying: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; and he who comes from above is above all" (John 3). And again: "For God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (ibid.).

1 Samuel 9:24

And Samuel said: "Behold what remains, I place it before you," etc. John spoke to Christ, proclaiming the marvels of His divine power: "All those whom I could call to faith and repentance, I persuaded to give effort to virtue. But because we are conceived in iniquity and brought forth in offenses, although striving greatly, we cannot fully be free from sin and grasp the pinnacle of virtue; You, who became the Word made flesh (John 1), perfect in all ways of winning and teaching, partake of the banquets, which our frailty cannot comprehend. About which banquet the Savior indeed said: 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work' (John 4)." Then John was speaking such words to the Lord, and, recalling His sublimity

and the frailty of human condition, said: "He who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth; He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3).

1 Samuel 9:24

And Saul ate with Samuel that day, etc. And the Lord preached with John in the city shining with grace, until John was sent into prison, saying of the people who would believe in him: "I have food to eat that you do not know about" (John 4). And not only by ascending to the heights of virtues for the perfect, but by condescending to the lowest, they delivered the common commandments of living, saying to these people: "Sell what you have and give alms" (Luke 12); and to those: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery" (Matthew 19). [1 Samuel 9:25] -- And he spoke with Saul in the upper room, etc. John spoke with the Lord in the light of His known divinity. For certainly the upper room (which takes its name from the fact that by its height it first receives the rays of the rising sun before the lower buildings) signifies the hearts of those who, suspended from earthly desires by divine fear, the Sun of Righteousness rises more familiarly. For when both, namely the Lord and John, had begun the commencement of their mission for which they were sent, and the grace of the new light had just begun to shine in the world, the same John confessed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, while he himself was sent before Him, desiring Him with his whole intent of mind to rise to the works of the divine in the flesh, and to rest at the appropriate time from the duty of forerunning.

1 Samuel 9:26

And Saul arose, and they went out together, etc. And Jesus manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. Both of them went out, namely He and John, from the hidden contemplation of the divine will, and proceeded to show forth the great works of deeds outside. [1 Samuel 9:27] -- And when they descended to the outermost part of the city, Samuel said to Saul, etc. When the Lord was sitting, having assumed humility and poverty for us, revealing Himself as the most despised and last of men, and among the citizens of the world as the lowest, He also taught His followers to be poor in spirit, yet He did not immediately face death at the hands of the often impious plotters; but according to the prophecies, of which John is a part, He commanded His obedient servants to go before Him, and to pass from vices to virtues, from death to life. But He Himself remained in the world for a

little while after they departed until He completed the word about Him foretold by the prophets to His faithful.

1 Samuel 10:1

(I Kings X) Samuel took a flask of oil, etc. John took the grace of the Holy Spirit to be preached, and testified that all its fullness rests in Christ, saying: "I saw the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon Him" (Matthew III; Mark I). And well did he pour it out, for "your name is oil poured out" (Song of Solomon I). [1 Samuel 10:1] -- And he kissed him, etc. And he united the figures of prophecy to the truth of the gospel and the grace of faith to the decrees of the long-desired peace of the law, and said: Behold, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of exultation above your companions, to ask of him, and he will give you the nations as your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession (Psalm XLIV).

1 Samuel 10:2

When you depart from me today, you will find two men, etc. When Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, departed from the Jordan from John, he found the people long lost by deceit, but now confirmed by faith and operation. He found them indeed, recalling them to the way of salvation; and this ceased gradually, and as the synagogue's carnal observance was to be dying and burying, from which he himself was willing to receive flesh. For Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, from the tribe from which Saul originated. He found those whom the Lord would save; and as if in the noonday of new love, in the fervor and light of knowledge shining from the heavenly realms, within the bounds of grace and truth, which in comparison to the law given through Moses is like the right hand to the left. Hence rightly Benjamin is interpreted as the son of the right hand. The believing people, found in this manner, mercifully confessed by Christ, giving thanks for his benefits, because their souls, once wandering like brute animals, were now redeemed by heavenly grace through him who came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke XIX). They also confessed the mysteries of faith which they had learned, that by the dullness of fools' sluggishness, the Almighty Father, being solicitous for his Son and those believing in him, did not allow them to be disturbed by his passion and to fall from faith until the completion of the dispensation of the same passion and the celebration of the glory of the resurrection, he more fittingly commanded that the unclean souls either of

Jews or Gentiles, which he had temporarily neglected, be sought and saved; so that those already partially found might be perfectly gathered by their Lord to the manger.

1 Samuel 10: 3

And when you depart from there, and go further, etc. Increasing the course of his teaching, the Savior arrived at the point of revealing to the disciples the secret of his passion, signifying that he was to bestow the gifts of the highest light on the world. Indeed, Thabor, which is a very high mountain and is interpreted as the coming light, in both name and position, smiles upon the mysteries of the life-giving cross, whose sacraments the Lord, revealing them, sought devoutly, and found all the mighty confessors of the Holy Trinity ascending to God in the Church with devout progress, which is Bethel, that is, the house of God; who, according to the grace given to them, some offered the richest remedies of penance for thought, speech, and action; others offered strengthening provisions of Sacred Scripture for the heart of man, revealed by divine gift in a threefold manner; others brought the most fervent cups of compunctive love in earthen vessels of the heart to be dedicated to God. While each in their own rank recognized Christ the Savior and wished for his incarnation to bring about the world's salvation, they gave him a double interpretation of the Scriptures; that after the first reading of the history, which was completed before his incarnation through the law, he might also open the allegorical and anagogical sense, which either pertains to the truth of present grace or to the beatitude of future life, through the act of the assumed dispensation.

Surely, he also accepted these loaves from the hand of those who offered when he revealed to the disciples a worthy operation according to merits, so that they might understand the Scriptures. To this, if I am not mistaken, the interpretation of the three loaves rightly resonates; because in the Gospel, the importunate petitioner, urged by necessity, equally seeks and receives three loaves from a faithful friend (Luke 11). And in Leviticus, the loaves to be offered as a sacrifice are commanded to be prepared in three kinds of baking: namely, in the oven, in the pan, and on the griddle (Leviticus 2). We are nourished with the bread baked on the griddle when we receive those things which are openly and literally said or done without any cover to safeguard the soul's health. But with the bread fried in the pan, we seek what is often reviewed and reconsidered in the surface of the letter, to see what in it alleg-

orically suits the mysteries of Christ, the state of the Catholic Church, and the correction of individual morals. Moreover, we seek the bread of the word in the oven when we also comprehend in the anagogical scripture, that is, by the upward lifting intention of the mind, those things which we cannot yet see, but hope to live out in the future.

1 Samuel 10: 5

After these things, you will come to the hill of God, where the station of the Philistines is, etc. Understand the hill of God to be Gabatha, the city which is interpreted as a hill. Therefore, the Lord, coming to the height of His divine majesty to be explained to mortals, which impure spirits brazenly claimed for themselves, took a flock of prophets as companions, helpers, and witnesses of His preaching; just as He Himself taught by reading one of them from Isaiah (Luke IV); those prophets, indeed, were accustomed to return from the hidden summit of the highest glory to the common weaknesses of humanity by both doing and speaking, with their life and their word being like an instrument they played and a song they sang. And beautifully, the flock of prophets descending from the height and prophesying is described not as having musicians behind them, but in front of them. For the teacher is truly shown to have been in the height of divine contemplation, who, condescending to speak to the humble and weak, preaches everything he is going to say, demonstrating by his actions what he will teach by his words, similar to how it is written of the Lord: "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts I). Therefore, when the prophets met him, Saul accepted the Spirit of the Lord and prophesied with them, and he was immediately changed into another man. So also our Lord, after revealing the prophecies about Himself from the prophets, openly filled with the spirit of grace and prophecy, that is, preaching the joys to come, took up His ministry. And without delay, as the minds of believers advanced, He was changed from a prophet into the Christ, not by beginning to be what He was not, but by appearing as what He was.

1 Samuel 10: 8

And descending before me in Gilgal, etc. The Lord descended before John in Gilgal, that is, the place of rolling, namely those about which he speaks to the Father in the Psalm: Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold (Psalm 68). Not because

the Lord had undergone death's destruction before John, but because before they killed John, the Jews were persecuting Jesus and seeking to kill Him; because He not only broke the Sabbath but also called God His Father, making Himself equal to God (John 5). And John descended to Him, because he accepted the mud of prison and death as an example of His humility and patience. The Lord offered Himself as a sacrifice to the Father and made peace through His blood, both on earth and in heaven. But He awaited the time of His forerunner's example. The completeness of this, according to the custom of the Scriptures, is signified by the number of seven days, until, namely, the same John, having undergone death by the wicked, showed what the Lord Himself would suffer.

1 Samuel 10:9

So then, when He turned His shoulder, etc. When the Lord went away from John, immediately obeying the command of paternal dispensation, He was changed in a new thought, so that He who hitherto had been subject to His parents and was considered like other mortals, from then on, by the clear proofs of virtues, would also be revealed as God. And all that John had spoken of Him, and what other prophets had predicted, were true. [1 Samuel 10:11] -- And all those who knew Him yesterday and the day before, etc. Jesus, teaching in His homeland, many hearing were astonished at His doctrine, saying: Whence has this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended in Him. And Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house (Matthew 13).

1 Samuel 10:13

But he ceased to prophesy, etc. However, Jesus ceased to be considered a prophet, and began to be believed as Almighty God, of whom Isaiah to the pursuing peoples said: "Therefore desist from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for he is considered on high" (Isa. II).

1 Samuel 10:14

And Saul's uncle said to him: Tell me, etc. Saul's uncle who speaks with him here is understood to be Ner, the father of Abner, who was the son of Abiel

or Saul. Therefore, the relatives and brothers of the Lord, who were seeking what testimony John had given of him but not yet believing in him, as John the Evangelist testifies; the Lord himself responded, teaching that the entrance of the heavenly kingdom was proclaimed to those repenting by his precursor and promised; but he delayed saying that he was the God and Lord preached by that same precursor, and that he was to be proclaimed king to all nations unsparing and proud. Thus far we have briefly traversed the allegorical exposition of the anointing of Saul concerning the Lord. But also tropologically, that is, according to the rules of moral understanding, each of us keeps simple thoughts and those refreshed by the word of God to bear the burdens of fraternal necessity within the enclosures of our hearts, as if pasturing donkeys prepared for daily work, which namely, the most healthful devotion of thoughts, having been slipped away by some temptation as is usual at the moment, having escaped from watchfulness, broken with the reins of continence, to pursue external and secular things, it is necessary to recall wandering minds with all instant attention and to hasten to return them to the inner manger of heavenly fodder.

And because we are not sufficient to do anything of ourselves, as from ourselves, having received the gifts of obedience and humility, let us ascend to hear the word of God, and being raised by his modest consolations, let us acquire that which our weakness could not achieve. And indeed it will come, with the help of divine grace, that not only do we recover the interrupted watchfulness of the mind, but also being enriched with the interest of a more perfect gift, we may begin to hope for the joys of the heavenly kingdom; indeed leading devoted people of God in charity, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, kindness, faith, modesty, continence, and the other fruits of the Spirit, we may be anointed with the oil of heavenly grace as prince over this inheritance of the Lord; and also to kiss with the prophetic mouth, that is, to receive in our manner the exhortatory admonitions of the holy Scripture, by which the hearts of either ourselves or our neighbors may be comforted.

CHAPTER 2.3

Samuel, having called the people to Mizpah, seeks a king by lot and finds Saul; a part of the chosen people eventually follow him, while the rest despise him. "And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpah," etc. In this reading, Saul signifies both the arrogance of the proud and the hu-

mility of the Lord and His faithful. By rejecting the Lord, who brought Israel out of Egypt, rescued them from the hands of the Egyptians, saved them alone from all evils, and established him as king, signifies a disobedient people, preferring to reign over themselves rather than God, representing either the Synagogue or the Church's people. For today, not a few, neglecting Christ's commands—who called them from the darkness of error to faith, rescued them through baptism from the power of darkness, and protected them from the course of all evils always by chastising—prefer to serve their own corrupt lusts. Saul indeed signifies the Lord the Savior, in that he descended from the tribe of Benjamin, that is, the son of the right hand, because His love and faith are perfectly generated only in those who belong to the right side of the kingdom. That he is from the family of Metri, that is, the kind of rain that says: "Let the earth hear the words of my mouth. My speech shall distill as the dew. Whence the ardent seeker of His kingdom also said: "My soul thirsts for You like a parched land" (Psalm 142). And about Him elsewhere:

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass" (Psalm 72). Saul, meaning petition or one who was asked for, signifies that he should always be sought after for the heavenly kingdom and that entrance should be sought with every intention. That he is the son of Cis, meaning hard or difficult, suggests that God the Father is not a man that He should change, nor a son of man that He should repent; or because his faith-filled people, in whom His love is always generated, declare strongly amid adversities: "Therefore, I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50). That he was hidden at home when anointed king, or when they were coming to take him, and establish him as king, fled, signifies that He must be sought within, can be found within, and teaches what is within, showing the way within. That he was taller than all the people signifies who among the sons of God can be like God. That he had a home in Gibeah, that is, on a hill or high place, symbolizes the city set on a hill, of which it is written: "A man was born in her; and the Highest Himself shall establish her" (Psalm 87). That he went with the part of the army whose hearts God had touched. That the sons of Belial, that is, of the devil or pestilence, who despised him, are named. That he disregarded those speaking against him; for He said:

"I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeks and judges" (John 8).

1 Samuel 10:25

But Samuel spoke to the people the law of the kingdom, etc. John the Baptist spoke, as did the other prophets, to the people the law of the heavenly kingdom, which is given through Christ; and each wrote in his own book, and placed them among the sacred Scriptures, in which alone the divine will is always found. Certainly, according to the letter, it should be said that above, where the law of the king is promulgated, his proud presumption is foretold to allay the obstinacy of the requesting people. Here indeed, through the spoken, written law of the kingdom and stored for the sake of memory before the Lord, it is declared what kind of good ruler and what kind of spirit towards subjects he ought to have, according to the commands of Deuteronomy.

1 Samuel 10:25

And Samuel dismissed all the people, etc. Even today, a teacher dismisses the congregation after the sermon is finished, similarly, once the reading of the little script is concluded, he dismisses all the listeners, each to their own conscience, so that they may reconsider what they have heard through meditation, and by acting on what they have meditated, may bring it to perfection. But if anyone is disturbed as to why I have presumed to interpret the deeds of a reprobate king allegorically in relation to Christ, who is the King of Kings, let him know that it is customary for interpreters, indeed it is the essence of the Scriptures, to draw either good from evil or an allegorical form from a good man, where such an order is necessary, impartially. Otherwise, it would never be appropriate to write with black ink, but always with bright gold, or some other honorable form; for God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1). A dark color does not unorderly signify brightness. Accordingly, Blessed Pope Gregory did not doubt to transfer even the anointing of the same Saul, not only to the kingdom of Christ but also his death, which befell because of his sin, to signify allegorically the innocent death of Christ. For you may read his exposition in Job, where he says, "Let the day perish in which I was born.

Similarly, concerning King Jehoiachin, who, condemned for his crime, is carried away from Judah to the Chaldeans, he understands it as representing the Lord being transferred from the unbelieving Jews to the salvation of the Gentiles. Likewise, the Church refers all the wisdom, sayings, and actions of

Solomon, though he gravely sinned afterwards, to be figures of praises of Christ. Quite a few Church commentators, as the Apostle says, "The rock was Christ," understand the rod that struck the rock as the cross of Christ, and Moses and Aaron, holy men who struck it, as representing the chief priests and doctors of the law, that is, the Pharisees, who crucified the Lord. And if that rock, although offering salutary drinks to the people, a rock nonetheless adhering to the back of the countryside with natural mass, signifies the ineffable gifts of Christ, or that patriarch anointed with holy chrism proclaims the Son of God anointed with the holy oil of the Spirit; or certainly Cyrus, the Persian, though a reasonable man yet wholly alien to the faith and sacraments of Christ, could rightly be consecrated in type or name for the congruity of prefiguring Christ: why could not a man of Christ, consecrated in youth with mystical anointing to Christ, illustrious unto death with the most holy name, predictively proclaim the future deeds of Christ in the flesh through figurative representation? It is also to be noted more attentively that the Scripture itself does not approve of all things it takes up as examples.

For it is not to be thought that the wise man preached the art of the Marsi, which is undoubtedly demonic, when he says: "Who shall heal the enchanter bitten by the serpent? The sense of which saying is, who will correct a teacher deceived by the devil? And if it seems novel to anyone that the same Saul is said to signify both good and evil at the same time, let him see the holy man Isaac blessing his son, but not recognizing the same son, as a type of the Jews, who having long sung of Christ the Savior coming blessed in the name of the Lord, did not recognize Him already present in the flesh by faith. Let him see the same son both blessed by an angel and rendered lame, signifying the Jewish nation, blessed indeed in those who believe in Christ, but lame in those who persecute Christ. And so, through the good, good things, through the evil, evil things, and through the evil, good things are figuratively represented freely according to places and times. However, in the reception of rewards, the good bring only the good things they have done, and the evil bring only the evil things they have done.

Just as Ethiopians drawn in black color and a fair Saxon, discerned by their native color, can be easily and without any controversy distinguished, but differently in a painting, where unless each person is transformed into their proper colors as well as forms, the shamelessly deceptive picture, which has promised an image, is accused.

CHAPTER 2.4

Jabesh Gilead, besieged by the Ammonites, is commanded from Gibeah of Saul and liberated early in the morning upon Saul's arrival with his army. (1 Samuel 11. Now Nahash the Ammonite went up and began to fight, etc. This lesson typically teaches that the wars of heretics against the Church, though gravely to rage, will always be conquered with the help of the Lord. Therefore, when Saul was anointed king, Nahash the Ammonite immediately went up and began to fight against Jabesh Gilead. The grace of faith having been lately spread in the world, the devil ascended from the abyss, that is, from the hearts of the impious, and leading bands of heretics with him, began to fight against the Church of Christ. This can be taken specifically concerning all heretics in general and those who, flourishing even in the times of the apostles, taught circumcision. For Nahash, who is interpreted as serpent, is the devil. Ammon, which is translated into people of sorrow, represents a gathering of heretics, not only because of its name, which signifies the Church sorrowing from its downfall but also because he was born of night and incest. For heresy is accustomed to be born in the blindness of wretched thought from a seed not rightly presumed of the teacher of the word. Jabesh Gilead is a city that cannot be hidden, set on a mountain (Matthew 5), that is, the Church elevated in the faith of Christ.

Hence, Jabesh is well interpreted as dried up or dryness, signifying the Church, or any faithful soul, disciplined from the flow of vices, lest its ways be dark and slippery, and like the hart panting for the fountains of waters, continually yearning out of love to see God the living fountain. Gilead, which sounds like heap of testimony or passing over of testimony, is the Lord; because He rightly shows us a not small heap of living stones, established in faith, as a testimony of right living; or who desires us to pass over from the old to the new, from literal testimony to spiritual, from earthly things to heavenly.

1 Samuel 11:1

And all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, etc. Many faithful men of the Church, united in true love, often consented to serve humbly by obeying teachers, whom they esteemed as wise as serpents in frequent meditation on the Scriptures; but they did not fail to be as doves in keeping ecclesiastical peace. However, because there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed,

the fabricators of errors and cultivators of perverse doctrines continually revealed themselves, showing that they did not have the enlightened eyes of the heart, nor could it be said of them, "Your eyes are like doves" (Cant. II); but rather they desired to remove the right eyes from all their listeners, that is, the senses of heavenly and supreme contemplation, and to deflect them to see only the left and perverse things, rendering them impotent in the daily battle we wage against spiritual wickedness in high places. For this reason Nahash wanted to gouge out the right eyes of the Jabeites, so that while they covered the left side of their faces with shields in battle, they would not be able to see what they should do against the enemy, or for their own salvation. For this reason the ancient enemy tries to deprive the faithful of heavenly light, to render them useless in every spiritual fight.

1 Samuel 11: 3

And the elders of Jabesh said to him, etc. The more prudent and cautious ones in faith said to the heretics, in whom they recognized the voice of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, just as Christ spoke differently in Paul and his followers: Do not force us to believe your new doctrine until, in seeking the light of the Holy Spirit, who was given to the sevenfold Church, we have thoroughly examined the writings of the Fathers; and if in them there is no one who defends our faith, we will come out to you, and, abandoning the Catholic unity which is within, we will instead join you, who have long since gone out from it and now attack it from outside, and we will listen as it is also read against us in it. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us (1 John 2). These things they spoke not with any intention of assenting to the heretics, but being most certain of the paternal faith, they intended to conquer them by the just reasoning of their argument. This is similar to what the Psalmist says: If I have returned evil to those who rewarded me, I will fall empty by my enemies (Psalm 7). And what the Apostle says: For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

And if Christ is not risen, then our faith is in vain, our preaching is also in vain. And we are found to be false witnesses of God, because we have testified against God that He raised up Christ; whom He did not raise if the dead do not rise (1 Corinthians 15). These things were said not so that either the resurrection of Christ is denied, or the prophet is taught to return evil to those who rewarded him; but that by means of those things which could not

be proven false, also those things about which there was doubt might be established as true.

1 Samuel 11: 4

Therefore, messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, etc. Messengers sent out of necessity of the faith came to Jerusalem, or some other notable city of the faith, in which it was not doubtful that the Lord reigned; and they narrated to themselves that the Church was disturbed by heresy. Hearing this, all the people of correct belief testified to the pain of their innermost heart with tears and weeping; as has often happened, anyone who has read the church's history will find. [1 Samuel 11:7] -- And behold, Saul came, following oxen from the field, etc. And behold, the Lord came as a helper at the right time in tribulation, who was born as a man in the world after many experts in the law and learned philosophers, whom, however, He drove from the field of external freedom to taking on the walls of the Church by teaching heavenly things, and who was always diligent in considering the tears of the Church, so that He, as a pious comforter, might wipe them away and console them.

1 Samuel 11: 7

And taking both oxen, he cut them into pieces, etc. And taking both the wise man of carnal observance of the law and the one who gloried in secular philosophy, the Lord destroyed whatever they knew arrogantly with evangelical simplicity, truth, and humility; and He sent this through all the boundaries of the Church by the works of the evangelists, who earn the name by announcing well: Saying, Whoever will not depart from his paternal way of life, which was in the world, and will not gird himself up to undertake the spiritual struggle, by following the admonitions of the Gospel and prophecy in profession and deed, thinking to govern everything discreetly through action, or beneficially meditated by rumination on the word, as an example of those of whom it is said: Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? (I Cor. I), at the end he will find them to be destroyed.

1 Samuel 11: 7

Therefore, the fear of the Lord seized the people, etc. Upon hearing through the Gospel what heretics and schismatics, what pagans and unfaithful Jews are to suffer, the people of the faithful, struck with a wholesome fear, departing from the enticements of the old man, took themselves into the unity of the Catholic Church. And, scorning all the lurking places of the apocrypha,

they came to be counted by Christ in the light of the shining Gospel, and to receive their name in heaven. For this reason, Bezec is rightly interpreted as lightning, certainly signifying that heavenly light of truth and grace, about which the Lord, teaching that heretics are to be avoided, said, "And they will say to you, 'Behold, here,' or 'Behold, there.' Do not go out, nor follow them;" He added and said, "For as the lightning flashes under heaven and shines to the other part under heaven, so will the Son of Man be in His day" (Luke XVII). And about which the Psalmist says, "He multiplied and troubled them" (Psalm XVII). Nor is it without reason that Bezec is also said to mean poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew V). And those who, leaving everything, follow the Lord, why would they not be thought to be counted by their King in Bezec?

1 Samuel 11: 8

And there were three hundred thousand sons of Israel, etc. There were in the people of the nations, those who were most ready to defend the faith, who believed rightly, hoped, and acted through love. For the number three, because of the confession of the Holy Trinity, is to faith; ten and a hundred because of the choice of the reward of the right hand, and the daily denarius to be given to good vineyard workers, are related to hope. Moreover, a thousand because of the solid nature of the denarius, which naturally looks to the immutable and stable operation of perfect love, it can rightly be understood in the same Church either of the Jews or of the nations, by the strength of the men of Judah first confessing God; but by the sons of Israel, the sublimity of those who have learned to contemplate Him more perfectly, as the Psalm says: "God is known in Judah, His name is great in Israel." It is to be noted that according to the letter much before the times of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, separately the tribe of Judah, but separately also the others that were called Israel, were counted, although not yet divided by empire or religion.

1 Samuel 11: 9

And they said to the messengers who came: Thus you shall say, etc. They once said with a living voice to those present, they also speak to us today consulting their writings, the defenders of the Church, and they command to be sent to the members of the same Church in peril, never to go out to listen to heretics, certain of their salvation, where the truth of the evangelical sun

has shone. It is also said to all who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness; because the patience of the poor shall not perish forever (Psalm IX). But when the day of judgment will have inclined, eternal salvation will be given. [1 Samuel 11:9] -- So the messengers came, and announced to the men of Jabesh, etc. Those who first feared the wiles of the heretics and the thorns of their arguments, later, being strengthened by the consolations of stronger and more learned doctors, promise that they will not come to them now in the night of dialectical deception, but in the manifestation of the most radiant truth and virtue, not now to be condemned with them by the Church, but to bear arms against them with the Church.

1 Samuel 11:10

And you shall do to us everything that pleases you. They said, being glad this night, although a conflict was approaching, those who knew most certainly that the morning of faith was approaching, would soon be pleasing to the enemies, not adverse to the punishments of truth by the syllogisms, but seeking only the comforts of fleeing and returning to their own darkness. [1 Samuel 11:11] -- And it happened when the next day came, etc. It happened when the grace of God the Savior appeared for the help of the struggling Church, He established it in three parts of the faithful, namely of the married, the continent, and the teachers; whom the prophet designates under the names of Noah, Daniel, and Job, skillfully instructing each group to sharpen themselves for defending the peace of the Church. [1 Samuel 11:11] -- And he entered the middle of the camp in the morning watch, etc. As Lucifer of sound doctrine rises among the darkness of heresies, immediately the camps of perfidy are disturbed. But with the Scriptures glowing from the Sun of righteousness, they vanish, completely anathematized. For the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1).

1 Samuel 11:11

But the rest were dispersed, etc. The heart and soul of the multitude of believers, although widely scattered, are one. However, the heretics, who seem to have temporarily escaped the judgment of the Church, and are expelled farther from her, are also discordant among themselves. Just as Isaiah said, "And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians" (Isaiah 19). For Sabellius against Arius, Eutyches against Nestorius, Photinus against the Manichean, and the rest of the impious against the impious, stir up the weapons of

iniquity. [1 Samuel 11:12] -- And the people said to Saul: Who is this who said? etc. When the Samaritans did not wish to receive the Lord, the sons of thunder said: Lord, do you want us to call fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And Jesus turned and rebuked them: You do not know of what spirit you are; The Son of Man did not come to destroy, but to save (Luke 9).

1 Samuel 11:14

But Samuel said to the people who were coming: Let us go to Gilgal, etc. With the heretics vanquished, condemned, or corrected, any perfect teacher says to the Church subject to him: Come, with the face of the heart unveiled, let us contemplate the glory of the Lord. For Gilgal is indeed called revelation. And the more we are renewed in the spirit of our mind in the knowledge of him who created us, the more we see the dangers of those we have conquered; because remaining in oldness, they did not want to reveal their way to the Lord and hope in him, nor to supplicate him confidently, and say: Reveal our eyes, that we may behold the wonders of your law (Psalm CXVIII). [1 Samuel 11:14] -- And all the people went to Gilgal, etc. Upon hearing the exhortation of their spiritual teachers, the people grew in faith and in the knowledge of the truth, and in the revelation of the heart, illuminating themselves by humbling and despising themselves, sought the glory of Christ in everything, and exalted his name among each other, and for the peace of the Church offered whatever they could of their devotion before the Lord.

1 Samuel 11:15

And Saul rejoiced there, etc. Saul rejoiced in Gilgal, which is called revelation. Jesus exulted in the Holy Spirit and said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent (Matt. XI; Luke X), that is, from those trusting in serpentine wisdom, as if fighting against Israel under King Nahash; and you have revealed them to little ones, that is, to those whom in the brightness of truth and in the poverty of spirit, as if in the city of Bezek, the fear of the Lord has gathered, strengthened, and helped. Again, he says, I will see you, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you (John XVI).

CHAPTER 2.5

Samuel, having established the king, proves himself innocent and just, and calls down rain from heaven during the harvest season to instill fear in the stubborn people. (I Sam. XII.) But Samuel said to all Israel: Behold, I have listened to your voice, etc. In this reading, Samuel accurately describes the state of the Israelite kingdom. Having testified to the people that, though he was innocent and always had the Lord as their Savior, they wrongly demanded a king for themselves, he encapsulates the varying times of their entire kingdom under the figure of that same king. For what he says of one:

1 Samuel 12:14

If you fear the Lord and serve Him, etc. It is understood of all that he noted; because evidently by their merits, as the rule of their first king, so the entire kingdom which they demanded against the will of God, would have worse times in its latter days than in its earlier ones: and meanwhile, as long as they feared God, they would be blessed with good kings; and as often as they neglected Him, they would be punished with evil kings: and finally, when wickedness increased, they would exchange the kingdom itself, along with freedom and homeland, for captivity or death. Likewise, the sign of transgression and the hard-heartedness of the people was no small matter, and the more terrible because it manifested itself in a way unfamiliar to those regions: voices and rain during the wheat harvest, which in the promised land throughout the entire summer only come by great miracles, to thus signify that all who desire to rule themselves against God's long-recognized will, and to serve their own desires, are acting in an improper order: in a time when after receiving the Word they ought to bear ripe fruits of good works, they demonstrate by their disordered morals that they still need the correction or exhortation of the divine voice to teach them the elements of the beginnings of God's words. What if someone seeks to explain this reading allegorically?

It easily occurs, considering that Samuel, as the king walked before Israel, declared that he was now old, but from his youth he had lived innocently before them with witnesses from the Lord and His Christ. Because now, with the prophetic foretellings reigning in the Church Lord Jesus Christ, the books of the law and the prophets indeed bear witness to Him; and everywhere affirm, that, with the witness of the Father and the Son, and indeed

the Holy Spirit, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good. Let no place be given to a Manichaean or his associates, in which they might blame the other writings of Scripture, not even one jot can pass from it, nor the giver of the same: nor does anyone who knows himself to be redeemed by the grace of new light doubt that the figures of the prophets have not aged. What is it then when he says he did not take anyone's ox or donkey? Because evidently the prophetic and legal Scripture did not deprive anyone of the triple duty of rightly dealing with a neighbor, or of the duty of correcting and instructing a neighbor, by suggesting anything evil. For the donkey, which by its innate gentleness is accustomed to carrying necessary loads and even people, signifies the love suitable to brotherly utility.

The ox, which not only carries the imposed burdens of flesh but also prepares the fields by plowing furrows for the seeds, signifies those who, indeed, not only bear the weaknesses of their brethren but also by chastising uproot their sluggish hearts and cultivate them to receive the seed of the word. These two types of people, if I am not mistaken, encompass the entire company of workers of the Church. Thus Samuel took neither an ox nor a donkey from anyone; because old holy Scripture deprived neither the learned of the skill of teaching nor the simpler ones of the modesty of living piously with brethren. Furthermore, what it means to say: If you fear the Lord, and you and your king who rules over you follow the Lord: but if not, the hand of the Lord will be against you. And what he concluded with: If you persist in wickedness, both you and your king will perish together. For he who properly keeps the sacraments of faith, will follow the warnings of that God and Lord, of whom the only true king of Israel said: As I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in His love (John XV). But he who hears and does not heed the voice of the Lord, the divine hand remains on him until he repents. But he who persists obstinately till death, such a person, since he belongs to the most evil king Antichrist, will be damned to eternal perdition with him.

For not only those who attach themselves to Antichrist in the end times, visibly rising against God, are considered to serve his kingdom: but even today, many who have been initiated into the mysteries of faith, when they immerse themselves in various crimes, are found to be serving his kingdom impiously: and it is said to them from prophetic reading: If you fear the Lord and serve Him, both you and your king who rules over you, that is, the Lord

Jesus Christ, follow the Lord God, the Father of the same our God and Lord Jesus Christ; but if you persist in wickedness, both you and your king Antichrist (then you will have him as king) will perish together. However, what is mentioned among other things, and you will know and see that you have done a great evil in the eyes of the Lord, asking for a king over you; it does not seem easy to refer this to Christ the king, whom anyone who humbly seeks to reign over himself, does not do any evil, but a great good, so much so that anyone who neglects to do this one thing, cannot do any other good; unless it is said that, with the increasing sin of men, it happened that the Son of God came in human flesh to suffer; who if man had never sinned, would never have fought against the enemy in man:

and therefore, after sending angels, patriarchs, and prophets many times to educate the human race, in the fullness of time, since He foresaw that men would sin more grievously, reserved His own coming to reveal, that where sin abounded, grace more abounded: and rightly it is understood, because those who did not want to listen to Moses and the prophets, but compelled the Son of God to come in the flesh by the enormity of their sins, did a great evil. Neither does the parable of the vineyard in the gospel contradict this sense, whose wicked tenants, refusing to give fruits in due season and after wickedly beating, stoning, and mistreating the servants of their Lord, caused Him to send His only Son to them. But what is said about voices and rains from heaven in the time of the wheat harvest can also be interpreted in a good sense; so that we understand the voice of evangelical preaching as spiritually thundered from the heavens, in a time when hearts yielding fruits to the law should be gathered into the granaries of the early Church. And it can be said thus that the apostles themselves were reapers in those who already knew the law and made it, in calling them to the grace of the Gospel: irrigators in those who had not yet known the words of the law, and of whom it is said: Lift up your eyes and see the fields, that they are white already to harvest (John IV).

But concerning those, I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Cor. III): it should be understood more diligently, and drawn to the imitation of virtue, that blessed Samuel, being rejected by the people and expelled from leadership, nonetheless did not cease to bring the word of zealous exhortation and the help of pious intercession. Far be it from me, he said, to sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will teach you

the good and right way. O remarkable example of fraternal love, he, innocent of leadership, even a most holy prophet and priest, is expelled, and he considers it a sin against the Lord if he does not strive to elevate those who rejected him to eternal joys, equally by praying and admonishing.

CHAPTER 2.6

Saul and Jonathan choose soldiers for themselves from the people, and after the Philistine garrison is struck by Jonathan, they terrify the sons of Israel with greater forces. (I Kings XIII). Saul was one year old when he began to reign, etc. In this reading, the Lord dispensing in many ways, both kinds of wars against the Church and kinds of spiritual defenses for the Church are revealed. But first, let us literally examine the beginning of the reading, which disturbs many of the unskilled.

1 Samuel 13:1

Saul was one year old when he began to reign, etc. The sense is this: after Saul was elected, and anointed by the blessed Samuel with holy oil as king, he remained humble and similar to a private person for the whole first year, nor did he care to dress in royal attire and take up the other insignia of the kingdom: which was also proven above at the time of the Ammonite war where he was driving oxen from the field as a rustic, the beginning of which war Josephus reports happened after a month of all his honor. However, in the second and third years, he indeed assumed a royal mindset and ruled the people with royal care. Yet, he did not choose soldiers from the people who would adhere more familiarly to his side until the beginning of the fourth year. Allegorically, the son of one year represents the people of the faithful, whether in the Synagogue or in the Church, when they begin to reign, because anyone becomes associated with the kingdom of faith, and can be incorporated into the members of the eternal king, when they have first learned that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. He reigns for two years and thus chooses three thousand soldiers for himself from Israel:

because when he has learned to unite hope and love with the unity of faith, he immediately chooses teachers for himself who diligently teach that same faith, hope, and charity to him and his own, and protect them from the enemy's raid. This is to be understood in two ways; namely, we choose both the ancient teachers of the Church, who reigned with Christ long ago

and are now masters to us, whose writings or examples we follow, and we appoint new ones daily in place of those who preceded, whom we deem worthy to defend the believers, the hopeful, and the loving from the enemy.

1 Samuel 13: 2

And there were with Saul two thousand in Michmash, etc. The Church chooses for itself the strongest and those worthy of a thousand in number, by whose sword of the word and shield of faith it is fortified; furthermore, it sends back the weaker in faith to protect the tabernacles of their own conscience, in which they are strangers to the Lord. However, since both Saul and Jonathan pertain to the kingdom, but the merit of both is not the same; of whom, to pass over other things in silence, one persecutes God's chosen David as an enemy, while the other loves him as his own soul, a dual order of believers or preachers seems to be signified in them. One of them says: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name (Matthew VII)? The other hears: But you are those who have remained with me in my temptations (Luke XXII). Hence, Saul is rightly called "desired," without doubt referring to him about whom the Lord speaks to the apostles: Behold, Satan has desired to sift you as wheat (ibid.). Jonathan, however, is interpreted as the gift of the dove, or he gave the dove, or the gift of the Lord: signifying those who attribute all virtue they have to the spirit of grace and confess they have received it from him. And Saul remained in Michmash and in the mountain of Bethel, that is, in humility and in the mountain of the house of God:

Jonathan, however, in Gibeah of Benjamin, that is, on the hill of the son of the right hand with his soldiers. Because even the reprobate sometimes seem to exercise or even teach spiritual virtues with a left or unstable mind, but only those endowed with dove-like simplicity are proven to belong to the exalted kingdom of Christ, who is at the right hand of God. Also, the fact that there were two thousand with Saul, but a thousand with Jonathan, surely teaches that the more perfect they are, the fewer they are. Or certainly, the two thousand are devoted in humility and on the mountain of the house of God, by the purity of faith and advanced in the height of hope: while the thousand in the hill of the Son of the right hand are glorious in the perfection of charity, which never fails.

1 Samuel 13: 3

And Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines, etc. And every humble teacher conquers, and with the grace of the Holy Spirit helping, contends against the ranks of malignant spirits, exposing their snares, by which they endeavor to snatch away the height of heavenly life from men. [1 Samuel 13:4] -- And Israel rose up against the Philistines. With the word ministers pressing on, either to crush the enemies of their virtue, or with the trumpet of lofty preaching to rouse their neighbors to the path of virtue, the spirits of the listeners are aroused to undergo the spiritual struggle, to investigate, avoid, and overcome the wiles of the airborne powers. [1 Samuel 13:4] -- Therefore the people cried after Saul in Gilgal, etc. As the zeal for performing virtues increases in the good, so also increases the zeal of the unclean spirits to hinder and break the same virtue; who, seeing the friends of the faithful risen against them, strive to assail these hills of various snares and deceptions with their forces: and as if they ascend in chariots, the Philistines, when numerous cohorts of gentiles, or of perfidious synagogues, or assemblies of heretics, ascend with the most wicked enemy against the army of virtue: they sit on horses, when they compel the hearts of the perverse, constricted by the bridle of error, to oppose the faithful: they proceed on foot, when they lay traps for themselves. Of which it is aptly subjoined:

1 Samuel 13: 5

And the remaining crowd, like the sand which is on the shore of the sea, is numerous. For this sand is exposed to the frequent waves of neighbors' vices, and also always unstable and fleeting due to the wind of pride, above which the house constructed without the foundation of the rock of faith collapses when the moment of temptations arrives, and its ruin is great. Not without a specific mystery, the army contrary to virtue is encompassed by the number thirty and a hundred, or even a thousand, which are accustomed to signify the perfection of faith and work. For even Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11). What wonder, then, if his ministers are transformed as ministers of righteousness? Among such often-transformed deceptions, they also show themselves to be perfect in faith or work. Otherwise, they are included in the number six and do not know how to ascend to the number seven, who, loving only this life which was created in six days, neglect to strive for the future rest. Thirty also, because they figuratively express

the wicked, is understood, because the Lord Savior was not only once sold by Judas for thirty pieces of silver, but also is daily sold by many false brethren; for whoever, neglecting the truth of the faith with which they were imbued, subject all their senses of the body to the allurements of this world, as if betraying the Lord for thirty pieces of silver multiplied by five.

1 Samuel 13:5

And going up, they camped in Magmas, etc. Magmas, as we have said, signifies humility; Bethaven sounds like the house of an idol, or a useless house. But ascending from their hidden machinations, unclean spirits, either by secretly persuading like a common pedestrian crowd, or like horse riders and charioteers seducing through deceived men, first attempt to take away all the defenses of humility from their conquerors so that, by which they themselves fell from heaven, they insert the plague of pride into human hearts; striving together that whatever useless house of the mind dedicated to themselves they find, camping as if to the east of Bethaven, they block all the rising of true light with their intermediary darkness. [1 Samuel 13:6] -- When the men of Israel heard this, that they were positioned on high places, etc. When the faithful perceive the snares of the ancient enemy to be prepared to combat, either within themselves or in their neighbors by means of humility's walls, or perhaps even some of the weaker ones afflicted by their frequent incursions, it is necessary at once to resort to the bulwarks of spiritual readings, fasts, alms, prayers, and other virtues by which they may be defended and hidden from the contradiction of tongues; and the Father, who sees in secret, may have mercy and help.

1 Samuel 13:7

But the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. Those who are more perfect, under the pressures of enduring temptations, set aside all the affairs of the world, in which the reprobates descend and slip into the world, and whose snares either try to catch them or they are usually caught when tempted; they also surpass the swelling pride, on account of which Satan descended from heaven with his followers, healthily inclined; for the obstacles of such vices, the Jordan River, not only by its name, because it is called their descent or apprehension—namely of the unclean, whether men or demons—but also by its nature, flowing into the Dead Sea and losing its praiseworthy waters, symbolically shows. Because certainly all

worldly enticements and the flood of carnal concupiscence are extinguished in the lowest darkness of perpetual death. Indeed, those who traverse this Jordan, that is the apprehension and descent of the wicked, enter the land of Gad and Gilead, that is, the land of the prepared and the heap of testimony; because they ascend to a mind endowed with the constant exercise of virtues, and always fruitful in good works, which bear praiseworthy testimony about themselves. And it is fitting that those who are said to cross over the opposing river of vices are called Hebrews, that is, those who cross over. And to whom one says, seeing the wicked exalted and lifted up above the cedars of Lebanon, "I passed by, and behold, he was not." And elsewhere: "And with my God, I shall leap over a wall."

CHAPTER 2.7

The people having dispersed from him, Saul offers a burnt sacrifice; and for acting foolishly, is rebuked by Samuel, and it is shown that another will be anointed in his place as king. While Saul was still at Gilgal, etc. This lesson under Saul and David shows the figure of the Synagogue and the Church, with some falling away from faith, while others receive the promised rewards of the heavenly kingdom. But for the sense of the allegory to shine more clearly, let us first, according to the historical account, inquire how Saul sinned and deserved to lose the kingdom. It is clear, then, that with the imminent danger of war, as even the history of antiquities reveals, Saul sent and called upon Samuel, so that in a time of such necessity he might be helped by his prayers and counsel, who had instructed him to wait there and prepare sacrifices, promising to come to him on the seventh day so that they might then sacrifice and thus join in battle. But although Saul indeed waited seven days as Samuel had commanded, he did not keep the command perfectly. For when he saw that Samuel delayed and that he himself was being deserted by his soldiers, he offered a burnt offering; which, when Samuel arrived and found out, he testified that Saul had acted foolishly because he had preemptively offered prayers and sacrifices which should have been made by the will of God for the people.

Therefore, as often explained, Saul represents the teachers of the Jews, and the seven days awaited by Samuel signify the time of the law which taught the mystery of the Sabbath; Samuel signifies prophecy, or the Lord Himself speaking in the prophets. Saul in Gilgal, that is, in revelation, is commanded to wait for Samuel, who was to offer sacrifices and pray for the people for sev-

en days. And the Pharisees and the doctors of the Jews, being testified to by the prophets, were commanded to remain in the observation of the revealed and given law until more manifest and clear prophecy should show how to live and how to meet hostile enemies. Indeed, until the Lord Himself, the head of the prophets, coming to conquer aerial powers, should offer Himself as a sacrifice to the Father for the world. But while Saul was still at Gilgal, the people who followed him were terrified. Those skilled in the divine knowledge of the law were placed in the recognition of God's will; those who followed them, the listeners of the law, were terrified, and, either by the incursions of tempting sins, by the harshness of legal precepts, or certainly by the examples of their teachers, they began to tire of the law they heard. For it is rightly said that those skilled in the law are placed in Gilgal, that is, in revelation, in comparison, of course, with the gentiles, who did not even perceive the words of the law, having no understanding obscured by darkness;

although the same themselves, in comparison with the clarity of the Gospel, have a veil over their heart, and can only with a revealed face contemplate the glory of the word if they turn to Christ. Nor does it differ that Gilgal, in which Saul was, is also interpreted as a rolling place, in the sense of a heart still weak and not yet reaching the fountain of living water; of such it is said: And the sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mud (II Peter II).

1 Samuel 13: 8

And he waited seven days according to Samuel's appointed time, etc. The assembly of legal scholars, together with their listeners, waited for the advent of Christ in the flesh throughout the entire time that the Sabbath was observed in the law, knowing that He would come in the last days of legal observance; but as He delayed, so that He might come at the fullness of time which He had predestined, a considerable portion of their listeners, having slipped away, deserted the camp of the spiritual army. And indeed, concerning those who waited well, the prophet says: "But My just one lives by faith" (Habakkuk 2). But concerning those who fell away, he adds: "But if he draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10). [1 Samuel 13:9] -- So Saul said: Bring me the burnt offering, etc. Seeing that the people had slipped away from him, but not seeing Samuel approaching, Saul offered the burnt offering. The legal scholars of that time, greatly degenerating from the perfection of the early leaders, saw the people slipping away from

adherence to the law, and, not knowing that the time of the Lord's incarnation was near, established their own traditions to be observed, as if they would be pleasing to the Lord in every way. This interpretation is supported by what follows, when Saul replied to Samuel rebuking him for his foolish rashness, saying:

1 Samuel 13:11

Because I saw that the people were slipping away from me, etc. The mystical sense of these words, as is clear from what was explained above, is easily understood. He immediately added, and said: Moreover, the Philistines were gathered together at Michmash, which means in humility; for unless they were deprived of humility, they would by no means prefer themselves to the Lord; nor unless the spirits of pride besieging the gates of the heart, would they, who dwell in high places and yet observe the humble, arrogantly despise Him. [1 Samuel 13:12] -- I said: Now the Philistines will come down upon me to Gilgal, etc. The Pharisees and scribes, fearing that they might be either submerged by demons or in the mire of vices, or rendered useless in the revelation of the given law, began to have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; and as the Psalmist testifies, “There they were in great fear, where no fear was” (Psalm 52).

1 Samuel 13:13

And Samuel said to Saul: You have acted foolishly, etc. And the Lord Himself in the Gospel, and the prophets, in their respective times, rebuke those who, as though sacrificing without Samuel, neglecting the help of the divine word, worship God in vain, teaching doctrines and commandments of men.

1 Samuel 13:13

But if you had not done this, the Lord would have now prepared your kingdom, etc. This should not be understood as if God had established an eternal kingdom for Saul and later did not want to preserve it because he sinned, whom He had foreseen would sin; but He had prepared his kingdom in which there would be a figure of the eternal kingdom. But also every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, bringing forth from his treasure new things and old, reigns over Israel forever (Matthew 11). Namely that Israel, which he made to be spiritual by teaching and ruling; to such people the apostle says, "For what is my crown or joy? Is it not you in the presence of our Lord Jesus?" (1 Thess. 2). Hence, to the servant who, trading well, that is, ac-

quiring many through his teaching, it is said as he enters into the joy of his Lord: "You shall have authority over ten cities" (Luke 9); that is, from the merits and knowledge of those whom you have instructed spiritually from the law, you will shine more gloriously in the kingdom. But if some teacher has preferred his own understanding to the words of Scripture, and through those doctrines which he himself has composed, has led his listeners to carnal things rather than spiritual things; which is as Saul offering sacrifices without Samuel, sanctifying his army for battle, the foolish one will lose the kingdom. But if he had not done this, he could have had an eternal kingdom over Israel. About such people, the Savior in the Gospel: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5). For such a person is the least in the present kingdom of the Church, entirely foreign to the future one.

1 Samuel 13:14

But your kingdom shall not arise anymore. For every plant, He says, which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be uprooted.

1 Samuel 13:14

The Lord sought for Himself a man after His own heart, etc. Under the persona of David, he signifies Christ and the leaders of the Christian people; hence he specifically mentions his own people, and does not add Israel; so that even the Gentiles might be shown to belong to this leader's command. However, the Lord did not seek as if He did not know, speaking to men in a human manner, even thus speaking, He seeks us. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19). We were already known to Him, so that we existed in Him before the foundation of the world. Therefore, the Lord sought for Himself a man after His own heart, that is, one who would recognize the counsel of His will with a pure mind, and who would follow it with pious devotion. This is rightly understood of David, who, understanding beyond all his teachers, recognized the uncertain and hidden things of divine wisdom by manifest revelation, and sang of them with wonderful sweetness (Psalm 51). But it is much better and perfect to understand it of the angel of great counsel, who alone is the conscious revealer of the Father's secrets. For it is not to be believed that the heart of God, according to the Anthropomorphites, is a member of a human body, but

rather signifies the inner secret of divine counsel and wisdom. As indeed it was said above, when the new priesthood of Christ and the Church, as well as here the kingdom, was prophesied to come, with the old one put aside, as the man of God said to Eli: And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to My heart and soul (1 Samuel 2).

1 Samuel 13:15

But Samuel rose up and went up from Gilgal, etc. The prophet demonstrates the same change of the kingdom which he had predicted by word also by changing the place. For even the Lord, who said of the unbelievers: "Arise, let us go from here" (John 14); having left the Synagogue, ascended the hill of the Son of the right hand, that is, the high hearts of that people; who wished to be the Son not of any earthly, but of heavenly and eternal blessedness; and the prophetic word illuminated by the dispensation of the Savior, through the literal revelation, by which rough minds were imbued, taught those perfected in the higher and more sacred mysteries of Christ and the Church. Indeed, what was said about the two peoples, we see carried out daily in individual persons. For the people set in Gilgal by Saul are terrified, while each of the faithful, either in the revelation of knowledge, which he received as less strong; or in the mire of vices, in which he shamefully fell, weakly fixed, the soul conscious of its frailty is troubled, and for the sake of seeking its own salvation, usefully stirs up itself, lest perhaps the spiritual adversary Machmas, that is, humility, which he especially desires, be overcome; lest the revelation of heavenly doctrine be taken away; lest the walls of the other virtues be broken through by the deceitful victor.

Saul waits seven days, according to the agreement of Samuel, while someone in tribulation, with faith and diligent action, seeks the promised help of the Lord. For seven consists of three and four; three pertains to faith because of the confession of the Holy Trinity; four to works, because of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice; by which four as corners the whole structure of spiritual virtues is established. But when someone perfectly completes these seven days, that is, the light of sevenfold devotion, according to what the Psalm advises: "Wait on the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage" (Psalm 27); the Lord will come into the heart, and making his abode in it, will immediately destroy all the snares of the hostile army by the illumination of his coming. But he who has less of this perfection, less patient in adversity, less confident in the regard of divine aid, hav-

ing forgotten that of Ecclesiasticus: "Do not delay in the time of distress" (Ecclesiasticus 10); loses all at once the ranks of virtues in which he had congratulated himself, by despairing; just as Saul, because on the seventh day not yet well completed, he despairs of Samuel's promised arrival, is abandoned by the people as they slip away; who, if he had completed the appointed time, would not have lacked the promised aid of the prophet: "For the Lord is near to all who call upon him in truth" (Psalm 145).

But Saul increased his sin, not only by wavering about the promises of the prophet, but also by offering the burnt offering himself, which was fitting for the priest. Pelagius increases blasphemy, another so-called faithful increases it, while less diligent about divine grace, he confidently believes he can be saved by his own strength; and what is the gift of the high priest alone, he foolishly thinks to acquire by the decision of his own will. Therefore, according to the Apocalypse of John: Another comes, and receives the promised kingdom and the crown of life and blessing from such people. This change was signified not by the counsels of supernal beings, but by the human affairs themselves, as Samuel himself, when with the rejection of the unfaithful, and the election of the most faithful king foretold, he rose up and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. Because the word of God sent into the world will not return to him void, but will accomplish whatever he wills, and will prosper in those to whom he sent it (Isaiah 55). And having left behind the hypocrites and cunning ones, who provoke the wrath of God, he seeks the simple and faithful, whom he may elevate to the heavenly kingdom, as hearers.

CHAPTER 2.8

Israel, having no arms due to lack of craftsmen, is devastated by the Philistines in three companies while Saul watches; but Jonathan crawling between the rocks with his armor-bearer stands as the head both of the war and of the victory. And Saul numbered the people, etc., up to the point where it says: And the men of Israel associated themselves, etc. In this reading, as the endeavors of the Scriptures wane due to the craft of unclean spirits, all the paths of the human heart, which consist of a threefold division, are revealed to be miserably ravaged by them: but miracles of heavenly protection are not to be lacking for those in peril, which, through the labor of spiritual teachers and obedient listeners, hasten the enemy to flight and rally their own soldiers to hope for and obtain the palm of victory. Therefore, as the

rest fled in fear of the Philistines, only six hundred men remained with Saul. Because when any of the weak in faith tremble in spiritual combat, and sometimes even fall, only those who do right work with the sole intention of heavenly reward, with their teachers, do not cease to watch, stand in faith, act manfully, and strive through all things for charity. For the number six, which is the perfect creature of the world, designates right operation; but the number one hundred, which is squared by ten decades and passes from the left to the right, signifies the perfection of the right hand, that is, of eternal reward.

1 Samuel 13:16

Both Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people, etc. Machmas is humility, as often said, Gabaa of Benjamin sounds like the hill of the son of the right hand. It must be questioned how, with the gates of humility besieged by unclean spirits, on the perfect hill of virtues either masters or listeners can pitch their spiritual camps; and it must be seen what is written below, because Saul with his six hundred was dwelling at the far end under a pomegranate tree. Indeed, under the pomegranate tree, the people who can say: But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. VI). For the fruit of the cross reddened with the Lord's blood, like a pomegranate, encompasses many grains of believers as if with one rind of charity and hope. But at the far end of Gabaa, it has the same tree of life under which he rests; he who is not yet perfectly consummated laments with the Apostle, saying: I delight in the law of God according to the inner man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members, and so forth (Rom. VII).

1 Samuel 13:17

And three companies went out to pillage from the camps of the Philistines, etc. And everyone who legitimately fights in her camps feels that the Church is daily tested by these three companies. For three companies go out to pillage from the camps of the Philistines when impure spirits attempt to assault the guard of our inner man, either his rational part, or his irascible part, or his concupiscible part, trying to strip them of the riches of virtues, whether individually in each of them or all in one. To these parts, indeed, also correspond the names of those places and the said companies that went out. The way of Ephrath, which means the growing one, against which the first com-

pany marched, is the concupiscible part of the soul; rightly named thus, because it never ceases seeking increase; indeed, of good things, if it is ruled by Israel, that is, by the soul that longs for uprightness and the vision of God; but of evil things, if setting itself against the laws, it is ravaged by the wickedness of vices and unclean spirits. And it is fitting that when speaking of the first company, he said, "It marched against the way of Ephrath," he added, "to the land of Saul"; for the first and indeed greatest aim of the wicked spirits is to turn the leaders themselves of the holy struggle away from the undertakings of virtues by the concupiscence either of the soul or of the flesh;

so that from the deprivation of the leaders of justice, the wicked contagion may more freely spread among the unsuspecting people. The road to Bethoron, which means the house of wrath, to which the second company was heading, indicates even by its name the passion of the mind it signifies. This house was well governed by the Israelite owner when that exceedingly meek man, who was more meek than all the men who dwelt on the land, left Pharaoh, being greatly angered, to liberate the people of God. The Philistine, however, was plundered, when Cain, who was of the evil one, greatly angered by the righteousness of his good brother, was provoked to such an extent that by his wrath he broke the first laws of brotherhood through murder. The valley of Seboim, which means of the roes or the deer, to which the third company turned, figuratively announces the rational insight of the mind. For these animals are said to excel in keen sight; hence they are also called Dorcades by the Greeks from keen seeing; and it is not for nothing that they are so often mentioned in the Song of Songs under the praise of Christ and the Church. And rightly, not a mountain but the valley of the roes is mentioned, rightly placed against the desert; because we always need the help of humility, especially when discerning good and evil, lest our judgment goes astray, and the humbler one is, the more they understand what of the world is less to be loved and sought.

Therefore, the road to the boundary of the impending valley of the Dorcades holds the way of the growing one, and also the way of the house of wrath, possessed by Israel in peace, when the people of God or any faithful person, with humble intent, recognizes what should be followed and what should be scorned, and endeavors to grow in the things that they usefully recognize should be followed until the perfect day; strives to be healthily angry

and not to sin for anything that attempts to hinder either their spiritual insight or their progress and course; so that anyone who foolishly chooses evil for good by erroneous reasoning, and harmfully desires to pursue these harmfully chosen things, and thinks it necessary to be angry for everything that resists such concupiscence, all the paths and bounds of this person's mind are devastated by the bitterness of the invisible enemy.

1 Samuel 13:19

Moreover, a blacksmith was not to be found, etc. It is indeed clear what chiefly provides the enemy the space to ravage the land of promise, that is, the virtues of the Church: namely, if it lacks a teacher and the maker of spiritual arms, which the Apostle teaches are to be held against the fiery darts of the wicked. For the wicked tempters take great care, as much as they can, that we do not put on the armor of God, so that double-edged swords do not appear in our hands to exact vengeance upon them (Eph. VI). [1 Samuel 13:20] -- Therefore all Israel descended to the Philistines, etc. And today, some descend, leaving behind the elevation of the word of God, to which they ought to have ascended to hear, and they listen to worldly fables and doctrines of demons, and by reading philosophers, rhetoricians, and poets of the Gentiles, to exercise earthly intelligence, as if going to the blacksmiths of the Philistines to sharpen tools for wild or rural cultivation, they come unarmed, that is, deprived of spiritual knowledge.

1 Samuel 13:22

And when the day of battle came, neither sword nor spear was found, etc. When the day of battle against adversarial powers is a daily occurrence, many content with their rusticity, very few proceed properly armed for this battle with a fitting reading or hearing of the Scriptures; hence, aided by our lethargy, the spiritual adversary now does to us what it is described the carnal adversary did to Israel then. [1 Samuel 13:23] -- But the station of the Philistine went out to pass over into Michmash. Indeed, by not having arms, Israel betrayed the country to the enemies; and through our neglect of reading or of inquiring from spiritual teachers, like the negligence of forging arms or of seeking out Israelite blacksmiths, we give the enemies the opportunity, after overcoming the humility which the besieged Michmash signifies, to also bring weapons of impiety to the rest of the virtues, as to the boundaries of the holy land. But to repel these most terrible weapons of the enemy, not the

skill of human art, but aided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the exhortation of heavenly teachers must be sought. Hence it follows:

1 Samuel 14:1

And it happened one day, that Jonathan said, etc. For Jonathan, who is interpreted as the gift of the dove, foresaw the grace of the Spirit teachers; his young armor-bearer, the disciples obediently bearing arms not of the flesh, but powerful in God; whose youth is renewed like the eagle's (Psalm 103); a certain day begins the conflict, their sudden inspiration against the temptations of the enemy designates the inspiration of heavenly light. Jonathan encourages his armor-bearer on a certain day to go to the station of the Philistines, just as each perfect master, suddenly graced from heaven, stirs the hearts of pious helpers to overcome the assaults of vices. [1 Samuel 14:2] -- But he did not tell his father the same thing. Jonathan concealed from his father and the people the crossing to the station of the Philistines, as he had planned; for just as it is always most fitting to use the counsel of the spiritual, so sometimes it is useful to hide from the carnal the meditated, or even initiated deeds of the greater virtues; lest either their trepidation frighten and break the tender, so to speak, desire of our mind, or they themselves, by emulating us, attempt what they are not yet capable of beginning, or surely the favor of imperfect praise corrupt the integrity of our spiritual purpose. For as Saul in this place and the people who were with him have not yet made progress in virtues, the following words reveal, when it is said:

1 Samuel 14:2

Moreover, Saul was staying at the edge of Gibeah, etc. For indeed, it pertains to the indication of virtue that he dwelled in Gibeah, that is, the hill, under a pomegranate tree, and had six hundred companions. As we have already said above, the hill represents the height of virtues; the covering of the pomegranate tree represents the protection of the Lord's cross; the number six hundred of the soldiers signifies those perfect in hope and action. But that he sat at the edge of the hill, that the tree under whose shade he was covered was situated in Migron, that is, in the throat, are signs of a still imperfect mind, that is, one that has not yet fully attained the desired heights of virtues; one that holds the mystery of the Lord's Passion in speech, but cannot yet imitate it. If we read Magdon instead of Migron according to the ancient interpreters, which means "tempting," it refers to the same sense. Because

there are those who, endowed with right faith and enkindled by desires of right action, do not cease to endure the harsh battles of tempting vices: and therefore certain secret matters of these perfect athletes of Christ, which wage wars against unclean spirits, they deliberately hide from such comrades-in-arms.

1 Samuel 14: 4

But there were rocky cliffs on either side of the pass, etc. There are frequent dangers lying in wait from both the right and left for the holy teachers striving to ascend against the wiles of evil spirits, that is, in glory and ignominy, in prosperous and adverse situations; and just as teeth are accustomed to chew and deliver food to the stomach, so unclean spirits, formerly broken by the frame of the blessed, seek how to seduce the simple, corrupt the just, defile the chaste, and cast the fallen into the body of their wickedness. [1 Samuel 14:4] -- One was called Bozez, etc. Bozez, "in it he blossomed": Sene, "distress" is said. The interpretation of which is evident, for not less in flourishing than in opposing, that is, bringing distress, the ascent of the saints is hindered, and by the tireless enemy they are struck so that they might fail either in body or in heart.

1 Samuel 14: 5

A prominent rock towards the north, etc. Gabaa represents a hill, that is, the height of virtues; Magmas indicates the humility of the mind, from which virtues arise. And rightly Magmas is considered towards the north, while Gabaa is situated to the south, because in the coldness of temptations, humility is especially learned and proven; in the light of the grace of the helping Spirit, it is prospered and perfected. But since the ancient enemy tries both to hinder the prosperous course of granted virtue, and to take away the humility of the acquired virtue from teachers and disciples during adversities, rightly the ascenders against the Philistines, Jonathan and his armor-bearer, are impeded by the prominent rock to the north opposite Magmas, and the rock extending to the south against Gabaa. Yet, with the Lord acting on behalf of His own, all the savage efforts of the enemies soon fail. For, as the words of Jonathan testify, full of no less faith than virtue, it is not difficult for the Lord to save, whether by many or by few.

1 Samuel 14:11

Both appeared to the garrison of the Philistines, etc. Although the Philistines mockingly speak true things mystically; clearly the spiritual Hebrews, that is, those crossing over from vices, are defended from the assaults of enemies by the safest fortresses of the Scriptures, and refreshed by the consolation of these, proceed to public works of virtues to overcome the same most wicked adversaries when the opportune time arises. [1 Samuel 14:12] -- And the men of the garrison spoke to Jonathan, etc. The proud mockery and contempt of the enemies grant the faithful confidence to gain virtue. For the spirit is lifted up before ruin, and before honor is humility (Prov. XVI).

1 Samuel 14:13

Jonathan, however, climbed up, crawling on his hands and feet, etc. It is clear indeed that greater obstacles of temptations must be overcome with greater exertion of virtues; which is duly accomplished when, armed against the enemy, a humble spiritual listener follows all the examples of the teacher. But about the situation of this place, so it may become clearer to the reader, let us see the words of Josephus (Antiq. VI, 7). "The enemy's camps," he says, "were situated on a rock with a most subtle length, protruding in three very sharp peaks, with rocks going around, and as though ramparts preventing the assaults of the fighters. Hence it happened that the guards had less solitude of the camps; because by nature that place seemed fortified to all, and very difficult to capture, because not only did it seem difficult to ascend there, but even to approach. When therefore Jonathan had come to the camps, he encouraged his armor-bearer." And a little later: "Thus approaching the enemy's army, with day already appearing, the Philistines saw them." Again, after a few things, when he had narrated the words of the taunting Philistines, he added: "Saul's son, gladly receiving that voice as one designating victory for him, then indeed from that place, in which the enemies had been seen, withdrew; and changing place came to the rock, which, because of the fortifications of the places, was deserted by the guards, and from there, as though crawling and dragging themselves with much effort, they overcame the nature of the place, so that they descended to the enemies' camp; attacking them while sleeping, they indeed killed about twenty." However, having mentioned these places for the sake of clarity, let us return to investigating the mysteries of Sacred Scripture.

1 Samuel 14:13

And the first blow was struck, with which Jonathan and his armor-bearer smote, etc. The number ten, as is certain, often signifies the perfection of good works or merit. But on the contrary, the number twenty, in which Jacob served Laban the Syrian, and sent gifts to his brother Esau, whom God hated, demonstrates the duplicity of depraved doctrines, which strive to take away the devotion or certainty of heavenly reward from the simple and members of the Church. The half acre of plowing is the Church, which, still conversing among the reprobate on earth, rejoices to be exercised by the correction of preachers in generating the fruits of life. A pair of oxen plowing in the day is the concord of teachers, of the discipline of law and Gospel under the same yoke of faith agreeing, chastising the hearts of subjects in the light of prescribed knowledge and cultivating them to bear fruit to God by the Spirit, of which Solomon says: "But where there are many crops, there the strength of the ox is manifest" (Prov. XIV). Therefore, the first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer struck, was upon twenty men, in the middle of half an acre; and from there the Philistines, troubled and fleeing here and there, slaughtered each other with a very great massacre. First, the Church, which travels away from the Lord, shows the enemies of its faithful or actions to be sons of death, restraining them from besieging and disturbing its own through spiritual masters and obedient disciples; then they themselves of varying errors, as if with a contrary blade, pierce each other, so that, with the Church triumphing, it can openly be understood of them what is said: "For the sword of each one turned against his neighbor."

1 Samuel 14:15

And a miracle happened in the camps through the fields, etc. By the miracle, strength and virtue are given to the just among those who are reprobates camping through the fields, having hearts astray, weakened by both malice and an abundance of pleasures. Hence the blessed apostle Peter, when he described the excess of those who, as if residing in the field of free pleasure, live in desires, drunkenness, revelries, drinking bouts, and illicit idolatries, added, saying: "In which they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same flood of debauchery" (1 Peter 4). But also the spiritual adversaries, although fierce plunderers of human salvation, are accustomed to be astonished at the deeds of perfect men, and to yield to the devotion of perfect

prayers and other virtues. [1 Samuel 14:15] -- And the earth was troubled, etc. So that those who are wise in earthly things may be troubled by the deeds of heavenly men; so that demons, terrified and groaning, may recoil from attacking men, their malice broken and their strength shattered; this is not a work of human virtue, but a miracle of divine mercy. Hence Paul, when he said he had labored more than all of them, immediately added: "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15).

1 Samuel 14:16

And the watchmen of Saul look forth, etc. Those who have ascended the watchtower of holy Scripture look forth beyond others, and they are on the hill of the sons of the right hand, that is, established in the lofty citadel of heavenly deeds, and distinguished by evident pure knowledge and simple action, and they are the first to see the impending ruin and the flight of the wicked. For it is not for all Catholics, upon reading the books of heretics or pagans, to immediately recognize what error is contained in them; upon hearing the wiles of dialecticians, to immediately discern with the keenness of a sharp mind the ruinous snares of deceptions; but for those who, by long meditation on the Scriptures or by the merit of virtues, have exercised their senses for the discernment of good and evil; the feet of many almost slipped, and their steps were nearly poured out, because they were jealous of the sinners, seeing the peace of sinners. But that most noble watchman marvelously ascending to the hill of the son of the right hand, saw the ungodly exalted and lifted high above the cedars of Lebanon (Psalm 72). And I passed by, he said, and behold, he was not; and I sought him, and his place was not found (Psalm 36). And this is for the watchmen placed in Gibeah to see the multitude laid low, which those situated below and not yet ascending the peak of perfect knowledge, thought to stand in prosperity and to live in safety; the wise foresee the certain punishment of those living in wickedness.

1 Samuel 14:18

And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here. Ahijah, also called his brother or his relative, is thus named. Therefore, the good leaders of the Church say, all the faithful daily waging war against the powers of the air, say to their brothers endowed with the reading of sacred Scripture and with greater exercise of virtues, daily offering themselves to God through the royal priesthood as a living sacrifice: they say, I say, to such who still see them-

selves agitated by temptations or behold the Church generally troubled by heresies, that, having revealed the mysteries of divine words, they should elucidate more manifest testimonies, by which they ought to use against the fabricators of heresies, by which they can overcome other struggles of temptations, with clear reasoning. But it often happens that the enemies of the Church (I mean the heretics or pagans) have so many and such great conflicts and battles of words or doctrines among themselves, that it is better that they be refuted by their own dispensation outwardly, than by the assertion of spiritual pages, proving that what they teach is false and what they do is impure:

and it must be done as the leaders of the heavenly army, just as it is described that Saul did, who, when tumult arose in the camp of the Philistines and it increased more and more, no longer consulted God through the priest, but himself, with the hand of the soldiers taken up, hastens to pursue and urge to flight the enemies he had found to be discordant among themselves. However, Ahijah the priest, the keeper of the ark of the Lord, can also fittingly represent the very authors of sacred Scripture; who, whenever piously requested, bring forth the ark of the divine oracle they keep: they also bring forth examples of good works they performed; which was symbolized above, where the same Ahijah is said to have carried the ephod. Nor is it without reason that it is mentioned that he was the son of Ahitub, the brother of Ichabod, the son of Phinehas, who had been born from Eli, the priest of the Lord, in Shiloh. Ahitub indeed means "good brother. For many of the authors of the sacred letters also traced their lineage from priests: and being instructed by good brothers, as Scripture itself attests, also had some brothers who were not good: and today's readers of the same, equally instructed by good ones, yet cannot lack the company of the wicked, whom Ichabod, both by birth and by name, signifies as inglorious.

1 Samuel 14: 20

Saul and all the people cried out, etc. Jews, Gentiles, and heretics, although they are all enemies of the Church, wound each other with the sword of the word. The Jews themselves fight among themselves through the Pharisees and Sadducees: likewise heretics and pagans, with so much dissonance of various doctrines and sacred matters, bring no less wars among themselves than with the Church. But there is one, he says, my dove, my perfect one (Canticles VI): she is the only one of her mother, the chosen one of her who

bore her, from whom Jonathan, that most valiant leader, received the name of virtue, that he might be called the gift of the dove; whose perpetual peace even the discord of the wicked serves. Hence it follows: [1 Samuel 14:21] -- And the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines yesterday and the day before, etc. Many, having been seduced by heretics and fighting against the Church with them, when they perceived the dissonance of their doctrine, and saw their dialectical subtleties surpassed by the simplicity of the Catholic faith, as if by the act of Jonathan, returned to be reconciled to the Catholic Church by the imposition of the priestly hand.

1 Samuel 14: 22

Likewise, all the Israelites who had hidden themselves in Mount Ephraim, etc. It is rightly a matter of discretion that he who can, should strive for the Church by teaching or arguing against the reprobate, avoiding that prophetic curse: Cursed is he who withholds his sword from blood (Jer. XLVIII). But he who is not effective in teaching should hide himself in the height of a fruitful mind, lest he be found by the deceitful enemy to be stripped of his virtues. For there are those who are not suitable for discovering and overcoming the cunning of heretics and the other snares of the ancient enemy, but do not fail to follow and detest these when exposed by others according to their strength: and this is what it means when the Israelites who had previously hidden in Mount Ephraim, that is, fruitful, join themselves to their own ranks upon hearing that the Philistines have been put to flight: yet the Church is always saved not by its own effort, but by divine aid.

1 Samuel 14: 23

The battle, however, reached as far as Bethaven. Bethaven is called the house of idols or the useless house. And thus the Church pursues heretics by arguing, until it convinces them that in many things they have blasphemed equal to the madness of pagans, and it extends the sword of the word until it restores the impious and faithless to piety and faith. [1 Samuel 14:24] -- And the man of Israel was joined to himself on that day. With the enemies scattered in different directions, the Church, divided throughout the whole world, rejoices always with one and the same love of brotherhood.

CHAPTER 2.9

Saul adjures the people not to eat before the enemy is destroyed, and not to eat with blood after the enemy is destroyed. He forbids building an altar, and

he does not deserve the oracle of the Lord which he seeks because of Jonathan's fault; whom, however, the people rescue so that he does not die. Thus Saul adjured the people, saying: Cursed be the man, etc., to what is written: Furthermore, the Philistines went to their places. This reading instructs teachers of truth, just as from the other allurements of the world, so also from seeking the sweetness of secular eloquence, and from every corruption of former life on the rock of faith. So Saul adjured the people pursuing the fleeing Philistines, that no one should eat until the victory over the enemy was complete: who, fearing the oath, abstained from bread diligently, and from honey which he saw flowing in the forest. The excellent teacher commanded that whoever contends in the contest of faith should abstain from all allurements of the world: and, inciting others by his own example, he says, "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." For whether the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, or whether the heretic contradicts the catholic, or the Jew or gentile against the Christian, or any unclean spirit opposes, all the efforts of temptations are better overcome by the effort of continence: the virtue of which extends so widely that it is also fitting to abstain from loving too much and following the sweetness of secular eloquence, which flows like a forest of proud and uncultivated philosophers. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb.

1 Samuel 14: 27

Jonathan, however, had not heard, when his father adjured the people, etc. He speaks of eyes being illuminated, refreshed, and renewed for gazing, which had already begun to fade due to the customary long fasting or toil. Therefore Jonathan, who had previously conquered the teeth of the rocks and the blows of swords, who, with the boldness of the enemy suppressed, had provided his people with victory and safety, is suddenly distressed by the unforeseen fault of flattering gluttony. And often, noble masters of the Church, although victors of great contests, incur a fault they had not foreseen by reading books of the gentiles with more pleasure than is fitting: to the extent that one of them writes that he was punished in a vision for this very thing, and that it was hurled at him by the Lord among the blows that he should be considered not a Christian, but a Ciceronian. But also many of the faithful listeners endowed with the grace of virtues do not cease to be tempted by lesser vices, which does not escape divine dispensation: so that

those who cannot overcome the smaller battles by themselves may learn to thank only the Father of lights in the greater ones they have, attributing nothing to themselves. Jonathan, moreover, dipped the tip of the rod, which he used either for the horse or as an aid for the journey, in wild honey: and thus he turned it with his hand to his mouth.

And any teacher sometimes, while taking care to govern subordinates with the authority of power or to conduct himself without offense, believes that he is aided by the arguments or opinions of the gentiles: and thus, so to speak, by the honeyed mouth derived from these, the eyes of the mind are indeed illuminated by the honeycombed composition of words for declaring what they know rightly more sharply; but often the progress of that same mind is delayed, recalling the vanity of the senses from pursuing the worshipers of depraved acts or doctrines. The Psalmist, singing, says, "The iniquitous recounted to me fables, but not as your law, O Lord, all your commandments are truth" (Ps. 118).

1 Samuel 14:28

Your father bound the people by an oath, etc. He troubled, because he interdicted everything; had he interdicted in part and granted in part, the matter would have seemed to be conducted more conveniently. But because in these kinds of matters the commands of spiritual Fathers must be obeyed, Jonathan was apprehended by lot, and the oracle of the Lord was withdrawn from Saul consulting that very day, manifestly showing. For if the power of a worldly king prevailed so much with God, how much do you think the command of a spiritual master prevails? But even in the typological sense, it disturbs earthly hearts if someone commands these heavenly matters solely to be carried out, since the Lord testifies that new wine is not to be put into old wineskins. It troubles the sharpness of readers and compels them to falter, who believe that they must be prohibited entirely from reading secular literature, which wherever found, it is lawful to take useful things as if they were their own. Otherwise, neither Moses nor Daniel would have been allowed to be instructed in the wisdom or literature of the Egyptians and Chaldeans, although they abhorred their superstitions and indulgences. Nor would the master of the Gentiles himself have inserted some verses of poets in his writings or sayings: but it is much more cautious to grasp the rose amidst thorns than to gather the lily among the soft leaves; much safer it is to seek salutary counsel in apostolic writings than in Platonic pages. For even the bees them-

selves, which make honey of this kind, indeed present sweet sayings with their mouth which soothe, but in their rears they keep venomous stings that strike.

1 Samuel 14: 29

You yourselves have seen that my eyes have been enlightened, etc. These words are fitting for the person who thinks that the reading of gentile literature is not harmful in the Church, whether for the learned or the teachers. You see, he says, that I have become more effective, sharper, and more ready to speak appropriately because I have tasted a little of the flower of Ciceronian reading; how much more if the Christian people had learned the sects and doctrines of the gentiles, would they not much more confidently and surely ridicule and simultaneously refute their errors, and rejoice much more devotedly in their sound faith, and give thanks to the Father of lights for this grace? For it should not be thought for any other reason that Moses or Daniel would have wanted to learn secular wisdom except that they might better destroy and conquer it once known.

1 Samuel 14: 31

So on that day they struck down the Philistines, etc. Ajalon signifies great humility. In all the things the Church rightly does, it strikes at the Philistines; because through the good it does, it diminishes the powers of evil spirits; because they must be struck down beginning from humility, up to the breadth of perfected virtue, from the beginning of faith up to the fruitful amplitude of charity. Of which it is said: Your commandment is exceedingly broad (Psalm 119). But even the very state of the universal Church, beginning from the humility of a single Judean nation, has reached to the ends of the whole world through growth. Of which the Psalmist sings to the Lord: And your fields will be filled with abundance, the fattened edges of the desert (Psalm 65).

1 Samuel 14: 31

The people were exceedingly weary, etc. That the people were said to have eaten with blood should not be thought to mean they ate bloody and raw flesh, which is not at all human but is the nature of beasts; rather, that after slaying the animals, before the blood was fully drained, they cooked or roasted the unsanctified meat and then ate it. However, this signifies the lazy teachers, who, as we often see today, exhausted by the long labor of catechiz-

ing, hasten to incorporate some whom they had rescued from demonic errors by preaching, educating them in Gentile rites; attempting to imitate him to whom all kinds of animals destined from heaven were said: "Kill and eat" (Acts 10). But they almost kill on earth and eat with blood those whom they imperfectly detach from earthly senses and the allurements of flesh and blood, either by teaching or by their own living. They hasten to incorporate into the members of the Church those who are still accustomed to vices and not yet engaged in practicing virtues; contrary to the example of the first pastor of the Church, who, placed in the upper room, that is, in the highest place of living or teaching, is ordered to kill the offerings and eat what was purified by God. And it is noteworthy that, although the perfection of the human mind is perfect and weak, Jonathan, the perpetrator of so many great deeds and the author of such a triumph, unsuspectingly succumbed to the deception of gluttony. The entire people, after observing the appointed time for diligent continence, after laying low so many adversaries in one day, are themselves overcome by the victorious gluttony. But because the temptation of gluttony is manifold, it led one to eat before the allotted time and persuaded the other to consume less lawful things even within the allotted time.

1 Samuel 14:33

They reported to Saul, saying that the people had sinned against the Lord, etc. The diligent leaders, knowing the negligence of idle teachers, wherein the people sin against the Lord, baptizing those who have not yet been purified from carnality nor fully instructed in faith, immediately rebuke such transgressors and command that the rule of heavenly life be openly proposed with Catholic authority; and they order the idle teachers, who had so far been vexed by common ignorance, to lead all those they have undertaken to instruct up to the model of life which they themselves had learned from their forefathers, and by catechizing them according to the most robust example of Catholic perfection, bring to an end their former way of life inherited from their fathers, and by baptizing, incorporate them into the members of the Church. Thus, they would no longer sin against the Lord, binding those who are ignorant of faith and heavenly life to the unity of His body, that is, the Church of Christ. Understand that the ox and the ram delivered from the Philistines, slaughtered and eaten by the people of God upon the intellectual rock, symbolize any foolish and arrogant person, renewed from deadly custom into spiritual life; as also mentioned above, sheep

and calves together with the oxen taken from them signify movements of soul or flesh devoted to irrationality and lust, but saved through the Lord.

1 Samuel 14:35

Saul built an altar to the Lord. He built an altar to offer a holocaust upon it and to intervene for the sin of the people, which they had rashly committed. Every perfect teacher builds in the hearts of the hearers the faith in the Lord's Passion, where on the altar of the living cross that precious blood was shed for the remission of sins, clearly instructing all by this example; for if the end of the Lord was death, much more should the servants mortify their members which are on earth; fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians III), and such things that are works of the flesh and blood, clearly cannot be associated with the fruit of the Spirit. But also, daily revisiting the sayings or acts of the old fathers and the people, and desiring through these to be spiritually refreshed while struggling against enemies, as many of us who perceive only according to the letter of such great authority we feel, as if killing oxen and sheep on the earth, we eat with the blood; because handling heavenly matters with a carnal and earthly eye. But whoever recognizes that all things are spiritually summed up in Christ and the Church, upon that great rock, which was cut from the mountain without hands and grew, destroying the empire of the world, and filled the whole earth, we kill without harm and feast, constructing an altar of our devotion and pious sense pleasing to the Lord.

1 Samuel 14:36

And Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night," etc. Saul, planning to attack the Philistines by night and to destroy them completely, consults the oracle of the Lord but is not answered; and seeking the cause of the sin, he discovers it by lot and adjudicates Jonathan, who confesses, to death; however, since he had brought great salvation to Israel, the people rescue him from the judgement of death. Good leaders often desire to expel all the snares of demons and to eradicate the tares sown among the good seed from the field of this world if possible, yet they receive no answer from the Lord through the Scriptures that this can be done; upon seeking the cause, they hear nothing more than that human frailty and ignorance are to blame; for even the most eminent teachers and leaders of the faithful, in the good works they do, cannot stand immune to the suggestions of sin, but all offend

in many ways; nevertheless, lest they suffer eternal death because of these, they are helped by the merits of the good deeds they have done and by the prayers of the Churches they fought to strengthen.

1 Samuel 14: 46

And Saul withdrew, not pursuing the Philistines, etc. Indeed, teachers, conscious of their own frailty, realize they are not able to track or expel all the wiles of demons; but woe to those hearts to which the repelled and cast out unclean spirits return as if to their own places.

CHAPTER 2.10

Saul conquers the enemies of Israel through a circuit, distinguished by the glory of both sons and soldiers. But Saul, having consolidated his kingdom over Israel, fought, etc., to what is written: For whenever Saul saw a strong and capable man for battle, he took him unto himself. In this reading, under the figure of the growing kingdom or house of Saul, the faith of Christ to be proclaimed throughout the world is described, who fought in a circuit against all his enemies; because from Judea, which is in the midst of the nations, Christ sent preachers to subdue enemies to his name by his word. As the Psalmist foretold: All those who are around him shall bring gifts (Psalm 75). [1 Samuel 14:47] -- Against Moab and the sons of Ammon, and Edom, etc. Moab and Ammon, who were conceived by incest at night through the help of drunkenness, in which there is lust (Eph. V), signify heretics, degenerate by the disorderly reception of the seed of paternal faith. Edom, who, though the elder, was condemned to serve his younger brother, represents the Jewish people; who are subjected to the nations of the Gentiles throughout the world, both by the blindness of the perfidy of their minds and by the condition of earthly servitude. The kings of Zobah, the Philistines, and Amalek, about whom it is subsequently said.

1 Samuel 14: 48

And having gathered the army, he struck Amalek, etc. It signifies foreign nations alien to the faith and sacrament of the patriarchs' blood, whom Christ overcomes in two ways as enemies of his peace, so that he might rescue spiritual Israel from the hand of their devastators, either by saving believers through their own faith or by justly condemning unbelievers through his righteous judgment.

1 Samuel 14: 49

Now, the sons of Saul were, etc. The three sons of Saul represent great leaders of the Catholic faith, which proclaims one God in three persons. Since they are what they are not by their own virtue but by the grace of God, and because they desire to enjoy the eternal vision of their Creator (to whom it is said, "But you are the same" [Psalm CVIII]), and because they trust that through Christ Jesus, the true King and Savior, they will be saved and reign forever; rightly the first son is interpreted as the gift of the dove, the second as I have desired, and the third as my King, my salvation. His two daughters indicate weaker members of the faithful devoted to God in body and mind; or certainly, the firstborn daughter holds the image of the synagogue, while the younger holds the image of the Church. The etymology of the names of the daughters is also fitting; for the Synagogue of the elect is not gathered from all nations broadly, but from the multitude of the Israelite lineage alone: the Church, however, is called to faith from all nations. Rightly, the firstborn daughter is said to be interpreted as from the multitude, and the second as from all.

Saul's wife Achinoam, which is interpreted as the beauty of the brother, figuratively signifies the perfection of the Catholic Church, which is often called in the Song of Love, the sister and the beauty of its Creator, who deigned to become her brother through the mystery of incarnation. Abner, the chief of his army, who is called the lamp of the father, indicates either John the Baptist, who was a burning and shining lamp (John V), or all men of virtue who shine with singular height among the defenders of the Church. We should certainly remind the reader that not always do the same persons hold the same manner of typological figures, but as the circumstances of the surrounding matters change, the types and orders of figures change according to time and place.

1 Samuel 14: 52

There was indeed a mighty war against the Philistines, etc. The primary cause of the mighty war against the Philistines was this, because Saul was gathering all the strong and fit men for battle to himself. For if the king himself were not encircled by the hand of a stronger military, by no means would he be terrifying to the neighboring enemies, nor would he powerfully incite them to war; but as in the former times Israel had served them most

disgracefully without any hope of freedom; thus surely, thus in the Church, all who are dissolved from good works, nor are endowed with the army of spiritual virtues; because being idle and neglectful we sin, we pay the enemy's tributes of evil conversation with weak languor from the hostile ones. But when we recover from servitude to sin, we resume the hope of victory, the enemy rises, and attacks us with more frequent and sharper stings of temptations, so that if possible, he may recall us to the servitude of crimes; or, if not possible, at least avenge by fiercely raging the injury of his own contempt. But let us pass from our morals to view the allegorical deeds of the ancients; and in the very beginning of the nascent Church, the more the stronger and more fit men for spiritual battle Christ was gathering to himself, the more spoils of souls at that time and they were frequently taking from unclean spirits; but also they were enduring greater struggles of martyrdom from the same.

CHAPTER 2.11

Saul, ordered to demolish Amalek, instructs the relatives of Moses to withdraw, lest they perish along with them. And because he partially violated the command, hearing that the glory of the kingdom would be torn from him as the garment of Samuel was torn. Furthermore, Samuel, having slain the king of Amalek himself, refuses to see Saul anymore. (1 Samuel 15) And Samuel said to Saul: The Lord sent me to anoint you as king, etc., up to the point where it is written, What had appointed Saul king over Israel. This reading, concerning Samuel and David, shows that the kingdom of the Jews is to be transferred to the Gentiles due to the fault of disbelief, and indeed that all who do not hate sins with perfect hatred along with their perpetrators are to be eradicated from the kingdom of faith; and with this given to better neighbors, nevertheless those who practice iniquity, along with their works, are to be destroyed.

1 Samuel 15:1

Samuel said to Saul: The Lord sent me to anoint you as king, etc. The prophetic word daily says to the rulers of the Church that they have not been chosen by their own industrious liberty, but by the ministry of the Lord to govern His people; and therefore they should always hear attentively the voice of His command. And it says to all the children of the Church to obey the commands of the Lord; for certainly every pure-hearted person, who ex-

pectantly looks forward to the vision of God, is anointed as king over His people Israel; over that gathering of good thoughts and deeds, by the merits of which he hopes to reach His vision. For Israel means "man seeing God." And blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5).

1 Samuel 15: 2

These things saith the Lord of hosts: I have reckoned, etc. An appropriate preface urging spiritual warfare, so that He who would command to engage in this should be known as the Lord of hosts; that is, of the angelic armies, by whose help we must be protected while fighting against the powers of the air. Egypt, which signifies darkness, represents past sins which followed us up to the sea of baptism but were drowned in it. But Amalek, who resisted Israel after crossing the Red Sea on the way through the desert, and whose name translates to "brutish people," signifies those sins which, after the waves of baptism, daily assail us with their weapons, striving to prevent us from reaching the promised kingdom of the heavenly homeland; so that we do not preserve the fruit of our hearts in sanctification, attempting to rip it away with deadly temptation. All these we are ordered to utterly destroy and show no mercy to; that is, put away everything for which the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language from your mouth, and such like.

1 Samuel 15: 3

Do not spare them, but kill, etc. From man to woman, from the perfected work of sin to carnal thought, namely the filthy mother and nurse of wicked offspring. The infant and the suckling, the very beginnings and purpose of nefarious action, which a recent evil thought desires to nourish even worse; understand, the ox, the sheep, the camel, and the donkey, symbolize dullness of folly, laziness of sloth, the baseness of pride, and the wantonness of luxury. [1 Samuel 15:4] -- Saul therefore commanded the people and counted them, etc. And we, in order to be able to conquer the battles of vices, must gather gentle and innocent thoughts in our heart; namely, imitators of that spotless Lamb, who deigned to redeem us with his blood from the Egypt of this world. These thoughts obeying the command of a modest spirit, because then they truly prevail against the enemy, when fortified with a twin love, that is, of God and neighbor, they walk the path of truth; when they scorn all the delights and miseries of earthly habitation with the sole hope of the

heavenly denarius, rightly the foot soldiers mentioned are comprised by the number two hundred and ten: for it is no doubt that the thousandth number signifies the perfection of the thing or person being discussed.

1 Samuel 15: 5

And when Saul had come to the city of Amalek, etc. The city of Amalek represents the densely packed array of temptations against the faithful, which now rages at us, stirred up either by demons, humans, or by our own desires. Certainly, near this city of tempting vices is a flooding torrent, that is, the turbulent drive of fluctuating thoughts, which, descending from the mountains of demonic pride, crashes against the walls of depravity more severely the more the winter of persecution exacerbates the favorable year of the Lord. Yet in this torrent we lay ambushes against Amalek when we strive to anticipate and overcome the enemy with the hidden virtues of the soul and the acts of devotion known only to the judge of our heart. For we almost meet him in open combat whenever we call upon the help of our Creator against him with alms, prayers, fasting, and other similar types of spiritual armor. But with faith, hope, and love, and similar apostolic arms, known fully only to Him who bestowed them upon us, we strive against humans and the evil spirits who lay in wait for us with care and diligence. When, I say, we are arrayed in these invisible weapons against the spiritual wickedness in high places, or amidst the very storms of temptations, we are almost laying ambushes in the torrent against Amalek; for we strike down the openly raging adversary where he cannot see it.

1 Samuel 15: 6

And Saul said to the Kenite, "Go, depart, etc." The holy history reports that the Kenites were the relatives of Moses, saying: "Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the rest of the Kenites, the sons of Hobab the kinsman of Moses; and had pitched his tent as far as the valley which is called Sennim, and he was near Kedesh" (Judges IV). Therefore, Saul commanded the Kenite to withdraw from Amalek. An excellent teacher takes care that if he finds anything among the vices which he reproves, that he may embrace virtues found among them, keeping them unharmed. For you will find many even among pagans who are meek, humble, kind, patient, and serving with almsgiving and prayers in the example of the centurion Cornelius. Surely, these virtues, because they are close to the law of God as if by kinship, emerging

from the depths of the worldly darkness, help to reach the promised rest and light, and should not be destroyed among the vices but separated from the catalog of all vices, so that they may benefit their possessor. For a Kenite, which means "possessor," should be separated from all vices. Thus, at Saul's command, the Kenite, who is to be saved, departs from the perishing Amalek when the rigorous teacher separates the virtues that help from the vices that weigh down in the examination of those to be instructed; so that the virtues, which are diligently practiced among the reprovable vices, may not be detested because of someone's bad vices. Nor, on the other hand, should someone's vices, which, as humans, cannot be free from among the virtues, be judged to be embraced because of their proximity to virtues; but with fair judgment, let the crooked be corrected in all things, which impede the way of salvation, and let the right be preserved, which help.

1 Samuel 15:7

And Saul struck the Amalekites, etc. Evila, which is said to mean "suffering" or "labor," signifies the beginning of conversion, which is not initiated without a certain painful and laborious birth of the new man. Sur, which translates to "right," represents the final perfection of correction. This solitude well described in the region of Egypt implies that one preserves the rectitude received, better if always mindful of the pressure of the darkness from which they have been delivered. In Evila, positioned with the sword of the word, he says: Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts III). But also the Apostle James says: Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to sorrow. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up (James IV). By striking the same ones, he comes to Sur, which is opposite, as Scripture elsewhere states, against the face of Egypt; as the Apostle Paul says: For you were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (Ephesians IV). And he himself positioned in Sur did not neglect to observe Egypt from which he had exited, saying: Who am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God but obtained mercy (I Corinthians XV). He shows himself struck beneficially so that he might live better after the blow, when he says: Nevertheless, I live;

yet not I, but Christ lives in me (Galatians II). Not only those who are converted but also those who, having received the word of truth, do not care to turn away from depravity, are struck from Evila to Sur: because perpetually

allocated to sufferings, they endure the just sentence of divine strictness, which is opposite Egypt; because he will repay them according to the wickedness of their pursuits. And these too, at Samuel's command, Saul strikes, while the same teacher of the Church, according to the admonitions of holy Scripture, corrects the obedient for life and rightly predicts the damnation of the despisers.

1 Samuel 15: 8

And he took Agag, king of Amalek, alive, etc. Thus far, Saul's struggle distinguished him as an excellent and discerning ruler, either of himself or of the people subject to him. From this point on, it marks him as indolent and reprobate, who rightly spared the innocent kinsmen of Moses. He rightly destroys all the common people and vile and reprobate things; but he incorrectly spares the flocks of sheep, other animals that are on the earth, garments, and all beautiful things, along with the king himself. The leaders of spiritual warfare must exterminate all those who oppose God's servants fleeing from intellectual Egypt—that is, the darkness of the world—whether they be men or reprobate actions, with the sword of the word and the rectitude of life; but whatever they find innocent and Mosaic among them, they ought to preserve unharmed. However, those who strive only to eradicate detestable and unspeakable things, such as fornication, idolatry, perjury, the concubinage of men, thefts, false testimonies, and other such crimes, either in their own morals or in those of their subjects, and do not wish to destroy drunkenness and revelries, contentions and jealousies, greed, hatred, and the desire for vain glory or honor, as if these were less harmful or even beneficial, as well as the king of vices himself, that most fattened one, the swelling of pride, indeed incur the guilt of very grievous transgression.

Because of this merit of guilt, and exemplifying Saul, the kingdom of God was once taken from the people of the Jews and given to a nation producing its fruits. And many Christians today leave the promised crown of life, which was awarded to them, to be obtained by others. Here too, according to the letter, we are most healthily admonished that the authority of the divine command should always prevail in us over human affection. For man, through foolish pity, spares man, whom God has commanded not to be spared; as if man knew better what should be done with man than He who made man (Eccl. X). Agag not only designates pride by the authority of the kingdom (because the beginning of all sin is pride), but also by his name,

which is translated to "roof," because often contained by the knowledge of neighbors, the arrogance of haughtiness swells in the hearts of the wicked. However, Saul seizes King Agag alive, and the crowd kills him, who eradicates the vices of the flesh, knowing how to distinguish their head, pride, from virtues through disputation, and defining how harmful it is, but does not know how to extinguish it in himself by living humbly. And Saul spares Agag, and the people also spare him, when even the very leader of virtues in his heart softly nods to the pride lying hidden in his innermost parts; and the entire company of spiritual works following him is corrupted by the assent to this nefarious swelling.

1 Samuel 15:10

Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, etc. The repentance of God is not a disturbance of the mind, which often befalls men as they reconsider the evil they have committed thoughtlessly; rather, it is called a change in passing things, while the immutable divine foresight remains; for just as not repenting signifies unwillingness to change what has been established. The Lord has sworn and will not repent: You are a priest forever (Psalm 109); this means that what He has once established, He has never changed the priesthood of Christ. However, Saul repented of having been made king; because even the treachery of the entire people of Judea and the false faith of Christians deprives him of the promise of the kingdom's favor. [1 Samuel 15:11] -- And Samuel was grieved, etc. These are not to be explained allegorically but rather are to be drawn to the imitation of virtue: so that for the errors of brothers, which they themselves cannot yet understand in themselves, we should not only be grieved in spirit but also cry out to the Lord for them with all intention; and furthermore, whenever the place and time allow, we should take care to recall them to the recognition and correction of their faults.

1 Samuel 15:12

And when Samuel had risen from the night to go to Saul in the morning, etc. Carmel means knowledge of circumcision; Gilgal means revelation. Therefore, many, not yet fully having conquered the struggle of vices, promise themselves with confident assurance of the crown of righteousness as if having completed a perfect purification; this is a sign of raising a triumphal confidence in themselves of a struggle already completed, and this on the

highest mountain of virtues, which is called the knowledge of circumcision. And after this, they descend into revelation, when they themselves, after ascending the summit of virtues and tasting the joy of heavenly reward, in true humility glory that they truly see with the revealed face of the heart the secrets, about which the Lord says to the Father: You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to little children (Matthew 11, Luke 10).

1 Samuel 15:13

And Saul said to him: Blessed are you to the Lord, etc. Understand the voice of flocks and herds, the uncontrolled movements of the mind, and the tumultuous thoughts of arrogant hearts; for whoever neglects to subdue and repress these within himself, vainly boasts that he has fulfilled the word of the Lord, which commanded the destruction of all vices.

1 Samuel 15:15

And Saul said: They brought them from Amalek, etc. The prophet, though unwilling, confesses this with a guilty conscience; for not only to God, to whose eyes all things are naked and open, but also to spiritual men, the deceitful hearts of the wicked are evident. For Elisha, though Gehazi was far away, was present in heart. And the Apostle, absent in body, but present in spirit, rebukes the sinner in Corinth. From the examples, he says, they brought back the manifold cries of brutish and lascivious desires. The imprudent mind spared these vices, which seemed less harmful, nor did it care to destroy them; rather, it considered these very things as virtues, and thought they should be gratefully offered to their author. For example, by considering foolishness as simplicity, calling the insolence of anger the zeal of Phinehas and Elijah, considering the sluggishness of sloth as the patience of David, and calling the tightness of parsimony the discretion of moderation; and notably, and equally to be avoided, is the most depraved habit of the wicked, who are accustomed to accumulate their faults by excusing them. For behold, Saul claims that he, along with the people, killed those things which, at the Lord's command, were to be killed; but he asserts that the people, not he, spared those things which were reserved against His interdiction. And many negligent and lazy people, if they have overcome any vices, or think they have overcome them, do not attribute this to the grace of the author, but to their own effort. But whatever they do not want or cannot ex-

tinguish in themselves, they claim that these are due to the flaw of an inherent nature, so that indirectly, and as a cause of human guilt, they may ascribe it back to the Author of nature Himself.

1 Samuel 15:16

But Samuel said to Saul: Leave me, and I will tell you, etc. Above, we read that Saul on the day was anointed king; on the day that he should be anointed, and now at night he is shown to be rejected. This is not by chance and without reason, but because the day sometimes signifies justice, night sin, he was chosen by day, and rejected by night, who due to the modesty of humility deserved to rule, due to the sin of disobedience he deserved to be rejected, not by divine judgment, but by the varying merit of man. But today the Lord saying: For many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 20); whoever is called, by deeds of darkness is separated from the light of the chosen.

1 Samuel 15:17

And Samuel said: Were you not small in your own eyes? etc. And this rebuke of blessed Samuel is fitting for any Christian transgressing the faith with which he was imbued; someone saying to him, one of the spiritual teachers, whose likeness Samuel presents: Were you not humbled in your mind for the past life, which was without God, when you came to the Church, having already received the grace of faith and baptism, made a principal in exercising the fruits of the Spirit? Through which you should reach the vision of divine clarity. For Israel means a man seeing God. And the Lord anointed you with the chrism of His Spirit, so that being a ruler and moderator of good deeds you might belong to the dominion of the eternal King. And sending you on the way of a new conversation, having defeated the old man with his deeds, He commanded you to mortify all things which are earthly part by part. Why then, disregarding the evangelical and apostolic voice, did you prefer to establish another rule of living for yourself, and to gather the spoils of vices? in which sometimes even if you seemed to deceive the eyes of mortals, before the judgment of the internal arbiter you did a great evil.

1 Samuel 15:20

And Saul said to Samuel: "Rather, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord," etc. How much this response of Saul suits the stubbornness of the rebellious proud ones is very easily evident from what was previously explained. For there are those who, convicted either by the reading of the Holy Scripture or

by the speech of teachers, and reproved for their committed faults, prefer to seek an increase of their sins by excusing themselves rather than humbly seeking remedy.

1 Samuel 15:22

And Samuel said: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices?" etc. These words indeed specifically pertain to the Jews, who, neglecting justice, mercy, and faith, and similar things, thought they could please the Lord through sacrifices and burnt offerings. But even now in the Church there are not a few burdened equally by wealth and crimes, who, while not ceasing to cling to their sins, trust that they can wash away their sins with daily alms. There are others who believe they cleanse themselves from the filth of vices, from which they do not care to abstain, by fasting, prayers, and frequent singing of psalms, while the Lord commands such offerings only from those who abstain from sin. Finally, the Psalmist does not say, "Do good among evil works"; but, he says, "Turn away from evil, and do good" (Psalm 36). And the leper or the unclean person in the law was not commanded to offer sacrifices to God while in their impurity, but wherever they were seen to be cleansed from it. However, it should be noted that he does not call sacrifices bad, but says obedience is better, to show that those too are good in their own time. He does not criticize the law, but prefers the Gospel. He says the people of the law are worthy of praise because they offered holocausts from their flocks to their Creator with pious devotion of heart; but he designates as much more praiseworthy the one who, according to the counsel of the Gospel, offers their body as a living sacrifice, holy, and pleasing to God.

1 Samuel 15:23

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, etc. Just as the other parts of this reading, so too this rejection of Saul, according to the allegory, can be applied to the synagogue, and according to the tropology of the law to any false Christian, whether teacher or disciple who was initially faithful but subsequently condemnable, fulfilled the prophecy of Balaam that says: "A ruler shall come out of Jacob, and destroy what remains of the city" (Num. XXIV); for because of the hidden and not entirely eradicated pest of pride in the heart, both the former Jewish people and now many Christians are deprived of the seat of the heavenly kingdom.

1 Samuel 15: 27

And Samuel turned to depart, etc. When the grace of prophecy turned away because of sins to depart from the Jews, they did not grasp the full garment of prophetic reading by which they could warm their souls with faith and adorn them with works; but only the extreme fringe, which is in the part of the letter, which they also tear away from the solidity of the spiritual sense, as if from the integrity of the prophetic garment. And therefore because they did not fear to tear the prophets, they deserved that the kingdom of God be torn from them and given to the Gentiles. But also today anyone who with an impious mind despises the sacred words in which he was instructed and imbued to seek the heavenly kingdom; because he stains the sacred garment by consecrating himself in the kingdom, he leaves the taken away kingdom's happiness to a better neighbor. Nor does it differ from signifying the misery of such people when it is said that Samuel, hearing of Saul's pride, turned to depart. For many, while they disdain to do the good they know they should do, eventually by the just judgment of God, deserve to be ignorant of what should be done. Hence, the multifaceted luxury of heretics' weeds pollutes the harvest of the evangelical seed with a wicked seed, while rejected from the action of truth often, knowledge finally turned away and withdrew from the mind.

1 Samuel 15: 29

Furthermore, the triumpher in Israel will not relent, etc. He who, he says, alone—indeed, all of Israel—by his grace made you triumph while fighting against Amalek, he will not spare you either, who are transgressing his word; for the more you received the power to conquer not by your own strength but from heaven, the less excusable you will be shown in preserving the anathema. Because as Moses says: The war against Amalek is the Lord's alone (Exod. XVII); and: I shall erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven (Ibid.). This same sentiment is to be understood in spiritual warfare, where we endanger ourselves the more by sparing our enemies, that is, by indulging in vices, owing to the greater grace of our Author which we daily receive for the remission and forgiveness of sins. We should fear that we ourselves, too complacent in our pursuit of heavenly vision, might deserve to hear along with Saul, Because the triumpher in Israel will not relent; that is, the one who has granted the gift of victory in many cases to incite you to thanksgiv-

ing and diligence in living, will also condemn you to severe examination by his court's decree in the end. Some believe that the saying, Furthermore, the triumpher in Israel will not relent, does not refer to the Lord, but to him of whom it was previously said, And he will give it to your neighbor, better than you;

which namely means that since David took power of the kingdom, he would not spare either the house of Saul or foreign enemies ordered by the Lord to be slaughtered. This they interpret morally, that our neighbors who are better than us strive to extinguish the vices they notice in us with utmost effort, lest they themselves fall into the same pit of transgression into which they miserably observe others slipping. But what follows, And he will not be swayed by repentance, signifies the eternal and immutable judgment of the Lord that he has threatened. Furthermore, what is added, For he is not a man, that he should repent, clearly indicates that where it is said that God repented, it does not mean a changeable nature in the divine substance, where there is no change or shadow of turning, but a form of speech adapted to humans, tempered by human manner. Therefore, God does not repent of any of his covenants like a man, for his judgment on all things is as fixed as his presence is sure.

1 Samuel 15:30

But he said, I have sinned, etc. Thus is displayed both the obstinate pride of Saul and the ever humble modesty of the blessed Samuel. For what is prouder than for someone, having recognized his crime by which he is shown to be a transgressor before the Lord, indeed even accursed, to still seek to be honored by men and in the presence of men? On the other hand, what is more kind than for someone, recognizing the wickedness of another by which he is shown to be a reprobate before the Lord, to still not refuse to honor him in the presence of men? From this, as even now, those are not lacking who, having been rebuked either by spiritual teachers or by sacred writings for their crimes, often find themselves more burdened by the harmful praise of neighbors than to rejoice in being healed by their own beneficial repentance. We too ought, in the example of the blessed Samuel, to act modestly towards such people and not disgrace those whom we do not doubt are to be condemned by divine judgment as incorrigible, especially if we have recognized them as marked by some church office, which the anointing of the same Saul fittingly expresses.

1 Samuel 15: 32

And Samuel said: Bring Agag to me, etc. Agag, as mentioned above, means 'covered'; Amalek is called a people of locusts or a people who lick. Therefore, prophetic Scripture says and its ministers and dispensers tell their listeners to bring out into the open the long-hidden wound of pride and the badly kept secret in the heart by confessing. This pride, indeed, is the king and head of other crimes, as those that spring from its root; it seeks to deceive the unsuspecting by false flattering, as though licking, and to erode all the shoots of vital grace. This same nefarious king is said to be exceedingly fat, that is, weighed down with the dangerously delightful fatness of excessively growing crimes. About which the Psalmist speaks: Their iniquity comes forth as if from fatness (Psalm LXXII). [1 Samuel 15:33] -- And Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, etc." Understand the sword of Agag as the most effective fury of pride; the Hebrew women bereft of children by him, as faithful souls deprived of the fruit of good works by victorious pride. But as you, he said, have turned countless from the path of truth, O proud presumption, so when the appointed time arrives, when He who will justly judge and destroy the entire kingdom of iniquity comes, your mother impiety, captured by innumerable crimes, will be deprived of that most wicked progeny of vices, having no more whom to seduce.

1 Samuel 15: 33

And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces, etc. And every spiritual and prophetic teacher hews the king of the licking people in pieces; when, diligently exposing the manifold deceptions of pride, carefully disemboweling the vice, he considers and explains what must be done against each of its wiles for himself and his followers. He clarifies and reveals that within the very fat Agag, that is, the covering of malice, are hidden the blind recesses of decay and corruption; and this, in Gilgal, that is, the revelation of manifest truth and faith, the teacher accomplishes. And in another sense: When, in the revelation of the final judgment, the whole body of sin is to be utterly destroyed, which the reprobate foolishly spare now, he foresees and proclaims it must be broken.

1 Samuel 15: 35

And Samuel did not see Saul anymore, etc. It is better to imitate than to allegorize, that one whom he so detests due to the merit of sin, that he does

not deign to see him even once, yet with the same consideration of brotherhood, he expends so much piety that he even testifies to this with mourning and tears. From whence it is not unfitting for such men of spirit, and that of the Psalmist, which he says: "Do I not hate those who hate you, O God? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?" (Psalm 139), and likewise the evangelical blessing which says: "Blessed are those who mourn now, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5). For if without any doubt he is blessed, who with eyes troubled by the fear of impending wrath, laboring in his groaning, washes his own bed, that is, the works of virtues, with tears each night in which he ought to rest; how much more blessed is he who, already made more secure by God's favor concerning his own salvation, prays and laments to the Lord for the transgressions of his brothers?

Book III

PREFACE TO BOOK III

Having now explained with no little effort two of our books of exposition on Samuel; one, covering the nativity, life, and leadership of the same most blessed prophet Samuel and priest; the other, containing the deeds of Saul, who was first chosen by the Lord and later rejected; now we extend our hand to begin the third, under the auspices of blessed David; not relying on our own talent, but trusting in every way in the help of the heavenly assistant, with his sacred prayers, dearest of bishops, and confidently hoping that he who preserved our allegorical progress without offense, as we believe, through the winding paths of history marked now by Saul's actions pleasing to God, now by his perverse deeds, may deign to accompany us with the grace of his piety in the spiritual acts of blessed David, which, with a broad heart, he pursued the way of the commandments of the Lord, not going astray, and which are to be transferred in a typical manner to the higher secrets of spiritual mysteries. Here briefly in the preamble, we must recall that as the old would pass away and all things would be made new, the very transition should often be intimated figuratively. For just as above Samuel is substituted for the rejected priesthood of Eli, indicating that the priesthood of Christ, now carried out in the Church, would succeed the legal priesthood; so also here, David anointed king instead of Saul signifies that the kingdom of the Jews, which was according to the law, would be transformed into the kingdom of Christ's Church. Conforming to what the Lord him-

self declares to those same Jews, saying: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits" (Matthew 21:43).

CHAPTER 3.1

Samuel at the Lord's command anoints David the Bethlehemite, brought from the pastures, as king, immediately adorned with the perpetual grace of the Spirit, so as even to relieve Saul, seized by an evil spirit, by playing the lyre. (1 Samuel 16). "How long will you mourn for Saul? etc., up to what is written: "for the evil spirit departed from him. This passage signifies the Lord Savior, singularly anointed with the oil of gladness to reign in the Church, whose bright command, the shadow of the law having been removed, urged part of the Jews to persecution, and part were saved by accepting the faith of the Lord's incarnation and passion. Therefore the Lord said to Samuel: "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? God the Father said to the prophets and apostles, grieving over the present or even future rejection of the Jews: "How long will you mourn the downfall of the stubborn people? Since I have thrown him away as deserved by their faults, so that he does not usurp for himself the singular kingdom of faith and truth, as being more excellent than the other nations and more familiar to God; rather, let the nations of the Gentiles, saved by the mercy of Christ, recognize themselves as much more exalted.

For that you may know that even the ancient prophets grieved and indeed lamented over the future blindness of their own people, which became our cause of illumination, listen to Isaiah, who, after preceding with the grace of the Lord's advent, says: "To the inhabitants of the region of the shadow of death, light has arisen for them" (Isaiah 9:2). Immediately responding to the advent of this light, he added and said: "You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy" (Isaiah 9:3). And elsewhere, recounting the affliction of the same people, he says among other things: "And the angels of peace shall bitterly weep" (Isaiah 33:7); meaning the prophets, the messengers of the divine word. But Jonah the prophet, ordered to preach to the Ninevites, preferred to flee by the danger of the sea than to commit the word of faith to the Gentiles by preaching (Jonah 1); naturally fearing lest, with the branches of the good olive broken off by unbelief, the wild olive, grafted through faith, should become a companion of the root and fatness of the olive tree.

1 Samuel 16:1

Fill your horn with oil, and come, etc. Leaving behind, he says, the care of the carnal kingdom, embrace rather that dominion, which by the light of the Holy Spirit is ascertained to be most rich, to be hoped for and loved. This not coming from yourselves, but sent by my Spirit, carefully disclose to that people, which separated from the enticements of the world, sighs for the joys of eternal salvation. For I have provided for myself a king among the sons of the same people. For Isaiah is interpreted as an island of holocaust or sacrifice, Bethlehem as the house of bread. But an island is each faithful soul; the whole Church of the saints is an island, which by seeking higher things is separated from the waves of this world, now purifying itself entirely by the fervor of the Holy Spirit, making itself an acceptable offering to God, and making its heart a dwelling place of the living bread.

1 Samuel 16:2

And Samuel said: How shall I go? etc. The prophets said to the Lord, and the apostles said: How can we preach the kingdom of the New Testament? For the zealous Jews of the law will hear and kill us. Which of the prophets did they not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of Christ. To whom the Lord responding, commanded that his body, separated from the conversation of the people, be taken up by the hand of stricter continence, and worn ready to embrace death for the Lord, and also to inflame his listeners to undertake the glory of martyrdom, as if commanded to call Isaiah to the sacrifice. For death is never better overcome than when it is endured with divine love. And I, he said, to you, O my prophets, and heralds of the future, not by men but by the infusion of my Spirit, will show what you should say or do, and who, where, or when Christ will come. These can be specially understood of John the Baptist, whom the Jews heard evangelizing about Christ and killed; but he, ready in body and mind for martyrdom, called his listeners to the sacrifice, that is to the baptism of repentance. Not any human teacher, but God Himself showed him what he should do; and having given the sign of the Holy Spirit, he taught to whom he should give the testimony of divinity from all those who he baptized.

1 Samuel 16:4

And he came to Bethlehem, etc. When the prophecies about Christ arose in the world from the prophets, those who were more prudent, meeting the

same prophets with a devout mind, already deemed their words worthy of a miracle, and with eager intention inquired whether these same oracles of the prophets signaled peace to come to the ages; or if they were going to impose an unbearable yoke similar to the Mosaic Law upon the necks of the disciples. And the prophets answered, and each of them proclaimed in their books, that they were sent to the city by God to bear witness to the one who was to come to reconcile the earthly with the heavenly; and after the long discriminations of enmity that human iniquity deserved, to reconcile the world to God through the venerable mysteries of His blood. This can be understood in the same manner about John, because the people, admiring his life and doctrine, thought he was Christ, and inquired deeply about his situation. But he testified that he was announcing peace to come to the earth,

1 Samuel 16:5

I have come to sacrifice to the Lord, etc. That is, I have come to teach and suffer for the Lord; be baptized and believe with me, so that we may live together in Christ. [1 Samuel 16:5] -- Therefore, he sanctified Jesse and his sons, etc. He sanctified them all, but anointed David alone with the oil of chrism; because the Church has many members, but one head. John baptized many, but the dove descended upon one. [1 Samuel 16:6] -- And when they had entered, he saw Eliab, etc. He introduces the sons of Jesse, the first, the second, and the third. Among them, none is found worthy to be anointed: because the Synagogue produced doctors of the law, prophets, and psalmists; but all these are participants, in none of them is the author of human salvation found. [1 Samuel 16:10] -- Therefore Jesse brought seven of his sons before Samuel, etc. The number seven is fitting to the law because of the sabbath, just as the number eight is fitting to the Gospel because of the mystery of the resurrection. Therefore, none of those who are perfect according to the law, hoping for the sabbath either of the body in the present or even of the Spirit in the future age, preach, perceive, even though being high in merits and strong in virtues, can suffice to save the world.

1 Samuel 16:11

And Samuel said to Jesse: Are all the children finished? etc. After the teachers of the law, the herald of prophecy, the sweetness of psalmody, and the long devotion of the people had been sent forth into the world, with the people instructed in divine services by the law of Moses, prophets, and psalmists, the

incarnation of Christ was still to come in the fullness of time. Of which it is rightly understood what Jesse said: There is yet the least one, and he tends the sheep. For a child is born to us; a son is given to us (Isaiah IX). He who speaks in the Gospel: I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me (John X). Nor without a certain reason of mystery is the same little one said to have tended the sheep before being anointed by the prophet; because that good Shepherd, who came that they might have life and have it more abundantly, tended ninety-nine sheep in heaven before he sought and found the hundredth on earth. He completed the number eight; for he gave us both the hope of our resurrection and his own example. Indeed, the day on which the Lord rose, from the day of his passion was the third, but from the day of the first creation, it is the eighth. Thus also after the six ages of this world, and the seventh, which is now being conducted in this life, the Sabbath of souls, as it were, the eighth age of our resurrection is hoped to come.

1 Samuel 16:11

And Samuel said to Jesse: Send and bring him, etc. The prophets of that time said to the holy ones: Send the devoted intention of your mind, and with prayers frequently offered to God, obtain the advent of Christ, saying: Show us, O Lord, your mercy, and grant us your salvation (Psalm 34); and other such things. For indeed, we cannot recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, until the Son of God, humble and poor, comes and, having broken the snare of death, grandly opens for us the gates of life. For He himself in the Gospel testifies that we cannot recline, that is, rest in the kingdom, by our own means but by His grace: Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself, and make them recline, and will come and serve them (Luke 12). [1 Samuel 16:11] -- So he sent, and brought him, etc. The old man Simeon desired, as did the other saints of that time, for the Lord to come in the flesh, and He came. However, he was red from the blood of the Passion; because the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10). He was also fairer in form than the sons of men; because He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth (Psalm 44; 1 Peter 2). This is similar to what the bride speaks in his praise: My beloved is white and ruddy (Song of Solomon 5); white in action, ruddy in blood. And what follows there, Chosen from thousands; this is what is signified here as David, rejected by his brothers, is anointed alone.

1 Samuel 16:13

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him, etc. The prophet received the task of proclaiming the glory of the true king, and said: "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God has anointed you" (Psalm 44). He who was conceived of the Holy Spirit never ceased to have the fullness of that same Spirit from the hour of his conception. John received the duty of bearing witness to Christ; and when the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the midst of those he baptized, he saw and bore witness that this is the Son of God; and Jesus went forth in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. [1 Samuel 16:13] -- Samuel arose and went to Ramah. Having completed the duty of anointing, Samuel returned home; for now, with the coming of the Lord who was foretold to come, the proclamations of the prophets were silenced. For the Law and the prophets prophesied until John (Matthew 11), from then on the kingdom of God is preached. But John himself, by the duty of his forerunning, said: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3).

1 Samuel 16:14

But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, etc. As the proclamation of Christ increased, the grace of the Spirit soon deserted the hearts of the faithless Jews, and incited them with impious fury to persecute his name; and this the Lord permitted by just judgment, so that the tested ones might be made manifest in the Church, and the wicked, by their deserving merits, might be plunged further into the depths of their own malice. [1 Samuel 16:14] -- Behold, the evil spirit of God agitates you, etc. The apostles said to the Jews, desiring in all things to serve their salvation: See and recognize how evil the spirit is, which, because of your fault, has been sent by the Lord against your minds, to oppose the name of his only begotten Son, and has led you to conspire against him: yet now, having performed penitence for your errors, flee to the aid of the life-giving wood, where the innocent limbs of the same spotless Lamb of God and our Lord Jesus Christ are stretched out. For we seek, that is, we will obtain for you, faith by explaining it more fully if you wish, that man, very well known to us but still unknown to you, endowed with singular knowledge among men, who by the saving wood of his cross knows how to put to flight all the deadly weapons of the harmful adversary: so that whenever the devil begins to move you to envy against the grace of

the Gospel, under the shadow of the law, the memory of the Lord's passion may be present, and may soon restrain your hearts from furious intention.

1 Samuel 16:17

Provide for me someone who sings well, etc., Indeed, he said, I know many who are skilled in singing, but provide and bring to me someone who sings well; which is like the Jews agreeing with the words of the apostles, saying, indeed we know many who have been crucified for their sins, but we have recognized that they are of no benefit to themselves or to us. Therefore, ensure that you imbue us with his sacraments, instructing us in his faith and love in our hearts, who, by mortifying his limbs on the wood, would redeem us from eternal death.

1 Samuel 16:18

Behold, I have seen the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, skilled in playing, etc. One of the youths is the unity of the humble of Christ, with one and the same heart and soul agreed. To the Jews inquiring about the faith, and knocking step by step, so to speak, on the locked doors of the life-giving cross, immediately clearer answers to the questions of faith, and illuminating the mysteries of the Lord's dispensation: Behold, he says, with the eyes of either flesh or faith I have seen and known the one born from the root of Jesse, in Bethlehem of Judah, a man knowing how to bear infirmities, and submitting to the gibbet of death, able to vanquish the aerial powers, sublime in both strength and prudence; indeed, the very power of God, and the wisdom of God, beautiful in form beyond the sons of men, in the innocence of life and the exhibition of heavenly deeds; and, to put it succinctly, he is the one who alone could say: I am in the Father, and the Father is in me; and, He who sees me, sees also the Father (John XIV); whose exceptional virtues indeed celebrate the glory of the name. For he is called David, that is, strong with the hand, or desirable. He is strong with the hand, indeed, in the power of his passion, because he laid low his adversaries. Desirable in the splendor of the resurrection, by which he exalted his own. For it is written of him: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle: he is the one whom the angels desire to behold (Psalm XXIII); and who, as the prophet says, will come as the Desired of all nations, and the glory of the house of the Lord will be filled (Haggai II).

1 Samuel 16:19

Saul therefore sent to Jesse, saying: Send David to me, etc. Newly catechized Jews sent words of their intention as signs to those who had gone before in Christ, saying: Believe in our fellowship of salvation through baptism in Christ, whom we have always learned in our hearts by faith, hope, and charity, to be born, ministering the pastures of eternal life to all the blessed, both angels and men. Complying with the just petitions of the brethren, they lent to them the mysteries of Christ to be received. They did not do this hesitantly, but according to him who, saying to his disciples: Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28): he immediately added and said, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (Ibid.). Among the sacraments of faith, with which they were initiated outwardly, they also sent examples of virtues, by which they were inwardly nourished: for bread and wine are spiritual virtues and doctrine. For bread strengthens the heart of man (Psalm 103). And your cup, he says, inebriating, how glorious it is (Psalm 22)! A kid from the goats is a humble sign of repentance, separated from the wanton flock of sinners: for a kid used to be offered for sins according to the law. These David carries to Saul on a donkey given by Jesse, when any wise teacher by the grace of Christ instructing his listeners, frequently recalls that the grace of virtues which they should imitate abounds in the humble and those despised by human judgment. It is notable that in the anointing of Saul, which also signifies the kingdom of Christ, donkeys, bread, a jug of wine, and also kids are found: as has been discussed in its proper place.

1 Samuel 16:21

And David came to Saul, etc. The Lord came to the hearts of the believing Jews through faith and stood before them with the indefatigable desire of that acknowledged and coveted sweetness. To those who loved him, he ministered abundant and invincible weapons of faith and truth against all the malign strife of the enemy: indeed, the breastplate of justice, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians VI).

1 Samuel 16:23

Therefore whenever the evil spirit of God seized Saul, etc. The sense is clear from the preceding, and it is suitable not only to the faithful Jews but also to us. For it must be that whenever any temptation of the evil spirit seizes our mind and turns it away from the tranquility of its state, whoever of the spiritual brothers is present should bring to our memory the humility of the Lord's passion, earnestly exhorting us; because He who was innocent and just sustained the punishment of the cross for us voluntarily, leaving indeed an example that following His steps, we may act innocently in prosperity and patiently in adversity. Thus it will come to be that, refreshed by brotherly consolation as if by David's playing of the harp, we may bear it more lightly. For David always signifies our Redeemer, but sometimes in himself, sometimes in his members: and with the departure of the dire spirit's influence, immediately the grace of the Holy Spirit succeeding will enlighten us. But if it moves anyone why the Spirit is called both of God and evil; let him know that it is called of God indeed because of His most just permission, but evil because of the most wicked will of that spirit. For God uses even evil spirits for the testing of some, for punishment or correction, or even for the maintenance of good things. For testing, indeed, as the Lord tested blessed Job by allowing Satan;

for punishment, as the lying spirit deceived King Ahab to perish in battle because of his preceding crimes by the Lord's permission; for correction, as the Apostle handed over the sinner in Corinth to Satan (I Cor. V), that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, for the preservation of virtues, as the same Apostle, lest he be exalted by the greatness of revelations, received an angel of Satan to buffet him (II Cor. XII). Josephus mentions this passage in his history of Antiquities: "And Saul was suddenly seized by certain passions and demons, bringing him suffocations and distress; and a little later: "They ordered, he says, that when demons attacked and disturbed him, standing over his head, he should play the harp and sing hymns. For it is not to be thought that that harp, however sweetly sounding, could have had such great power as to drive away evil spirits; but the figure of the holy cross, and the very passion of the Lord which was sung, already then was breaking the audacity of the devil; just as the destroying angel of Egypt did not pass by because of the virtue of the blood placed on the doorposts (Exod. XII), but because that blood was a type: the place of the middle lintel,

and of each doorpost, where it was anointed, expressed the very figure of the salutary cross.

The angel passed by the houses of the Hebrews, seeing them marked, unharmed, by the divine foreknowledge, indicating the coming of Him in the flesh who would by His blood through the cross free us from eternal death.

CHAPTER 3.2

The camp of Israel is terrified by Goliath for forty days, seeking single combat, finally overcome by David with a sling and stone. (1 Samuel 17. But the Philistines gathered their troops for battle, etc. . . . And all Israel loved David, etc. This reading mystically teaches the prolonged and frequent ambushes of the ancient enemy against the human race, overcome only by the power and patience of the incarnate Christ. Therefore, the Philistines signify contrary powers, while Israel signifies the people of the faithful, both by the merit of action and the meaning of the name. For Israel means seeing God, or it is said of a man or mind seeing God: And blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5). The ruin of the Philistines is interpreted as twofold. Both angels or wicked men falling first into sins, and afterwards into the punishment of eternal fire. But the Philistines, gathering their troops for battle, convene in Socho of Judah, that is, in the humility of praise or confession, when malicious spirits come united against the Church, shaking it with various temptations of vices. For they lead not one, but multiple troops against Israel; for according to the various qualities of their wickedness, some spirits of wrath, others of envy, others of pride, others of vainglory, others of lust, others of gluttony, others of discord, others of avarice, attempt to strike down the chosen with their weapons.

Because all these strive to take away the humility of the devotion of confession and praise to God, which they lost by being proud, from even wicked humans. For it is indeed that noble foundation, on which the house of virtues and faith is constructed, knowing to fall by no storm's force. And they measure their camps between Socho and Azekah in the borders of Domim, that is, between humility and courage, in the borders of bloods, when the entire intention of their detestable battle is to strip the faithful either of the strength of their works, or the preservation of humility amidst strong works. For they themselves, being the most proud and weak, cannot ascend the lofty walls of humility or virtue. But laying snares among these in Judah, which means they aim to destroy the confession of the pious, they seek to

tear them away. Rather, they are placed in the borders of bloods, that is, always seeking to inflict wounds of evil suggestion on the elect. But against this, the men of Israel direct their line of battle in the valley of Elah to fight against the Philistines, when the strong among the Church, attacked by the temptations of demons, seize the protection of true humility. Which is most fittingly called the valley of Elah. For Elah is a tree, shedding a most excellent resinous tear which, dissolved by the skill of a physician, binds and heals wounds.

Such indeed is the humble and tearful life of the saints, which, restraining the flowing vices, restores the dissolved members of the soul by binding. Concerning which valley the Psalmist says: Blessed is the man whose help is from you, O Lord; he has set his steps in the valley of tears, in the place which you have appointed for them (Psalm 84). Because evidently, with the Lord's help, one ascends through the tears of humility to the very place of the heavenly kingdom. The Elah tree can also be fittingly understood as the tree of life itself, which is in paradise, that is, the coeternal wisdom of God the Father; which, to overshadow us with its branches of gifts, indeed to elevate us from the valley of tears to the place which it has appointed for us, and to open more sublimely the fragrance of its knowledge, to exalt us to see the God of gods in Zion, first came down to the very valley of tears, being born a second time from the earth. Hence the same wisdom, which is the tree of life to those who embrace it, speaks in Ecclesiasticus: I also spread out my branches like a terebinth, and my branches are of honor and grace (Sirach 24).

1 Samuel 17:3

And the Philistines stood on the mountain on this side, etc. And even to this day, unclean spirits contending against the Church stand lifted up with proud boasting, after the example of that first proud one, of whom it is written in the Revelation of John: And as a great mountain burning with fire, it was cast into the sea (Rev. VIII). And the soldier of righteousness stands, not relying on his own arms, but exalted by His help, who says: A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden (Matt. III). And there was a valley between them; the place of their conflict is the temporal life itself, in which the good and the wicked fight among themselves, and the tree of life in the middle helps and refreshes the worthy, condemns and casts out the wicked; and that same life of the world is common, and the just pass through it, hoping in

Christ as the highest mountain, with diligent mind, saying: But our conversation is in heaven (Phil. III). And the reprobates through the devil, by swelling up, despise the society of their neighbors and transcend. Against this the Apostle admonishes the faithful, saying: Be not wise in your own conceits, but condescend to men of low estate (Rom. XII). For the Philistines represent no less the perverse men than the angels, serving in the one and the same kingdom of the devil.

1 Samuel 17: 4

And a man went out from above... named Goliath, etc. This notable man is the devil, who, daily going out from the camps of the Philistines, that is, from the hearts of the impious to rebel against God, does not cease to provoke the pious. And rightly he is called Goliath, that is, revealed or transmigrating. For he had long been hidden from mortals, seemingly in vain troubling Saul and the men of Israel; in vain boasting in the minds of the depraved, as in the camps of the Philistines, that he was the strongest; but now, through the diligence of the boy David, he is revealed to them, who can say: For we are not ignorant of his thoughts. Long pridefully inhabiting the hearts of the wretched, he is now transmigrated through the same strong hand, that is, the Lord Savior, who said: Now is the judgment of this world, now the prince of this world will be cast out (John XII). Or certainly, he is rightly called transmigrating because he transmigrated from angelic happiness to hell through pride. But if we wish to understand him who transmigrates others, that is, transfers them from place to place, in an active sense, the name should be referred to him; because he strives to transmigrate all his followers from the land of promise to the land of perdition, from life to death.

He is well described as being six cubits and a palm high, because he who boasts to be similar to the Most High, promises to preach perfect works and a blessed end through his philosophers. For God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh; and he established for mortals through the law six days of work, the seventh of rest. Indeed, Ezekiel saw in the hand of the man measuring the new city, a reed of six cubits and a palm; because the Lord measures the perfection of work in His chosen ones, as if in six cubits; and He contemplates the hope of eternal rest, which will be completed in the future, as if the part of the seventh. Therefore, what the Lord truly exhibits, the devil falsely promises. The height of Goliath, comparable to the Lord's

measure, is asserted to fall. His city also, Gath, which is interpreted as "press," aptly shows the multitude of the wicked, namely the devil's city, always practiced in the torments of the good in the world. It is also worth informing those unaware that he is a bastard, who is generated by an ignoble father but a noble mother; just as conversely, one generated by a noble father, but an ignoble mother, is customarily known.

1 Samuel 17:5

And a bronze helmet on his head, etc. If you inquire what a chain mail is, read in Virgil, a coat linked with hooks, and triple with gold.

1 Samuel 17:6

And he had bronze greaves on his legs, etc. Helmet, mail, shield, and greaves, are different types of arguments or reasoning methods, by which the devil rebelling against the Lord, or defending the foolishness of his own head, namely, all the wicked, or his miserable body, attempts to defend. For he covers the head of sin, when, even condemned, he does not fear to say and be believed to be God. He also covers the body when the heart of the wicked inclines to the evil word, to excuse excuses in sins. He covers, when he hedges all sides of the human mind against the darts of the truth. All these types of defenses are declared to be made of bronze, a metal more resonant than others; because whether by wicked deeds, or perverse doctrine, he is accustomed to defending not by the recognized reason of invincible truth, but by the fabulous sweetness of secular eloquence. And it is well said that the weight of his mail is five thousand shekels of bronze; because through the sweetness of deceptive speech, he does not protect all the senses of his soldiers from the enemy's incursion as he promises; but on the contrary, he closes all their senses, the five most notable, from receiving the word of truth, by which they would be saved. But he arms his right hand with a spear, when he even attempts to disturb or attack the faith of the Church through some men of sharper intellect.

For with helmet, mail, or shield, and other such things, we protect ourselves from wounds: but with a spear or sword we are accustomed to strike the adversary. Hence, it is not inappropriate that those weapons which are defenses for the fighters, when carried by the Philistine, signify those persons or speeches by which the wicked cover their crimes; but those by which the adversary is accustomed to be wounded, signify those speeches or men, by

which even the virtue of the good is wounded and disturbed. Concerning which it is rightly added:

1 Samuel 17:7

However, the shaft of his spear, etc. For indeed the work of those whom the devil brings forth against the Church for battle seems most fitting to the eyes of the foolish, as if to weave a garment of righteousness and holiness. But the sharpness of their speech knows how neither to look beyond nor to speak beyond the boundaries of this world, which persists through six ages. Although they are of such great ingenuity as to be able to judge the age, they do not know how to find its Creator. But truly, their webs are not in the garment that might warm the soul; for as Isaiah said, they have woven spider webs (Isaiah 59). And as in the one hundred and forty-third psalm, which is specifically written against Goliath, the victor of the same Goliath, the Psalmist testifies: "Whose mouth has spoken vanity, and their right hand is the right hand of iniquity" (Psalm 143).

1 Samuel 17:7

And his armor-bearer went before him. The armor-bearer precedes Goliath as he goes out against Israel, just as the weapons of iniquity and the examples of the wicked precede and assist the devil as he tries to deceive the faithful. [1 Samuel 17:10] -- And he stood and cried out against the ranks of Israel, etc. Pride is the enemy of old, so that until the incarnation and passion of the Lord Savior, he assumed he could not be overcome by any mortal. For it is not without reason that it was said to blessed Job: "There is no power upon the earth that can be compared to him, who was made to fear no one" (Job 41); and even up to the end of this present age, he troubles the Church through the Jews, gentiles, and heretics, as if with a wicked armor-bearer preceding him, standing against the ranks of Israel and crying out. Nor is it surprising if all the Israelites, fearing this one, flee. For how, without the Lord's presence, can flesh fight against an archangel? But for the flesh to prevail against a spirit lacking flesh, first God must triumph against the same in the guise of the flesh. Concerning which it is typically added:

1 Samuel 17:12

David, however, was the son of an Ephrathite man. David indeed, as always, is the Lord Christ, who is the son of an Ephrathite man, that is, a fruitful one; because from that ancient people of the Hebrews, who by believing bore

many fruits of righteousness, he deigned to take flesh. Although he is also always born and nurtured in the fruitful heart of his faithful ones through love. Not only the mystical names of the place, of which the interpretation is well-known, but also the place itself, Ephrathah or Bethlehem, bore witness to Christ being born there. And fittingly that elderly man, that is, a people mature in the knowledge of the law, is remembered to have had eight sons, because after the proclamation of the Sabbath and the Old Testament, he also foretold the grace of the Gospel and the faith of the resurrection, which was to come through Christ.

1 Samuel 17:13

But his three eldest sons went off, etc. The teachers of that people, whose three orders we have previously explained, always waged spiritual war, either girded against the allurements of their own flesh and mind, or concerned with instructing others. [1 Samuel 17:14] -- David, however, was the youngest. The Lord is to be understood as the youngest among his brothers for a twofold reason: in which he filled the number eight, that is, those to whom he entrusted the sacraments of the Gospel when they were perfected in the law, both in time and in humility. For when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law (Galatians IV). And: The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew XX). For even that grain of the evangelical mustard seed, which he himself sowed in his field, namely in the hearts of believers, is indeed the smallest of all seeds, in the humility of the doctrine of discipline, but foremost in the fervor of spiritual grace.

1 Samuel 17:15

Therefore, with three major ones following Saul, David went, etc. Because we all stumble in many ways, the only one conceived in sanctification, (James V), Anamartitos, that is, without sin, could live in the flesh, is rightly understood as God; because even teachers, certain lawgivers in Judea, prophets, and psalmists, as some interpret, priests, scribes, and Pharisees, sweating in the spiritual struggle against the law of sin opposing the law of their mind, only our Creator and Redeemer remained free from the conflict of all assaulting faults, who exceedingly also, with the generous mercy of eternal divinity, although humble in mortal flesh, refreshed the faithful flock of His Father;

for He indeed agreed with mortals in the truth of nature, but differed from them in the power of sinning, imbuing men with spiritual gifts, but committing no vices among them. Rightly, David the Psalmist is brought forth to heal Saul, but in fighting the Philistines, he returns as if free from the enemy. Furthermore, like a good shepherd, with others placed in the readiness of war, he himself, free from war, invites his most gentle lambs to the pastures of Bethlehem.

1 Samuel 17:16

However, the Philistine came forward morning and evening, etc. The number of forty days, during which the Philistine came forward and stood against Israel, represents all the time of the Church, during which it struggles in this life and, with the aid of the grace of the Gospel, tries to fulfill the Decalogue of the law amid the snares of the ancient enemy. Every day, he comes forward to tempt, morning and evening; for he tries to corrupt either the beginnings or the end of all our works of light. He terrifies the weak morning and evening, whom he struggles to overpower either by adversities or by prosperities; the same time of the struggling Church is specifically expressed in its head, when He was in the desert for forty days and was tempted by Satan. But the cunning tempter, who long rejoiced in having conquered the first Adam, perpetually grieves in being defeated by the second.

1 Samuel 17:17

Jesse said to David, his son, etc. All the faithful Hebrew people said to the Lord Savior, about to be born of their seed, desiring His advent with eager longing: Take, I beg you, to refresh and help in the spiritual battle your people Israel, who are your brothers; for you have also deigned to become man and to be born of them according to the flesh; take, I say, appearing in the midst of their camps worn out by the daily battle, the form of perfect humility; and deign to freely undergo the observance of the law, to which you owe nothing. For pounded grain signifies the contrite spirit, and the heart broken and humbled. The measure of the ephah, which holds three seahs, signifies the spirit, soul, and body of the Lord Savior Himself, or of each one of the elect, perfectly united and combined with a worthy rite of humility. Indeed, this grain of humility appeared to us in the Lord in His own power, as much as He willed, to instruct us. But in all of us, it can be

completed by the lower and upper millstone, that is, fear and hope. The ten loaves brought by David also openly demonstrate the nourishment of completing the Decalogue, which we have not from ourselves but as a gift of the giver. After He Himself was made under the law, He also made the burdens of the law bearable for us;

just as by His undue humility, He taught us to be humble by the grace of so many debts, which we could in no way repay. But, He says, from the milk-like tenderness of the same Decalogue, so to speak, and as if still suited to infants, to the strength of spiritual understanding, by which He can refresh and strengthen also the great and distinguished leaders of the heavenly army, convert. Then indeed, our mighty and desirable One, after giving loaves to His brothers, and pounded grain, also brought little cakes of cheese to the tribune, when, after showing to the magistrates of the Jews the example of patience and humility, after not abolishing but fulfilling the mandates of the law and the prophets, He also opened the minds of His disciples, whom He was more intimately instructing as leaders of the Church, so that they might understand the Scriptures.

1 Samuel 17:17

And you will visit your brothers, etc. And the Lord Himself in the flesh carefully attended to His own, if they acted rightly. And wherever and with whomever He found them, He made sure to visit and call them, and now also through His own members He ceaselessly does the same, distinguishing the good from the bad, giving His gifts to these, dismissing those empty-handed. This Isaiah commanded to do just as he commanded David, just as all faithful ones in Israel either in their own words or in prophetic speech entreated the Lord to come quickly and redeem the world, saying: Lord God of Hosts, turn now, look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard, and direct it (Psalm 80), and other such things. [1 Samuel 17:20] -- So David rose early, etc. The shadow of the law receded, truth arose from the earth; that is, the Lord in the flesh, who would minister the light of the Gospel to the world, appeared; whereby He did not abandon the ninety-nine elect sheep divinely in heaven, even when, made man, He sought the one erring sheep in the world. But He came full of grace and truth, and from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (John 1); the kind whom all the pious expected to come, believed in, preached, and loved.

1 Samuel 17:20

And He came to the place of Magala, etc. The Lord appearing in the flesh found both the saints struggling for faith and the unclean spirits plotting to destroy the fortresses of faith. Such was the state of the world when the Lord was born, such it persists until the end of this age. [1 Samuel 17:22] -- Therefore David left the vessels he had brought, etc. The Lord, leaving with the memory of His faithful ones the heavenly signs or the tokens of His earthly birth which He brought to the world as soon as He was born, so that these among their good treasures of virtues may be diligently kept; He Himself, ready to battle the prince of the world, does not delay to hasten, but also concerned for the salvation of His own, through performing and teaching works of righteousness, inquires openly, as it were, about His brothers, whether their works are right or if they still seem in need of correction.

1 Samuel 17:23

And while he was still speaking to them, the man appeared... named Goliath, etc. As the Lord Savior was speaking to men and diligently examining their deeds and sayings of justice, as if their works seemed rightly performed to him, the ancient enemy appeared, arising from the hearts of the impious, and through their actions and wicked tongues, he hurled his dreadful poisons of malicious pride against the elect, which he also does today; neither was any deceit hidden from that malicious one, nor was any virtue feared. Hence it is openly added: [1 Samuel 17:24] -- And all the Israelites, when they saw the man, fled, etc. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3). Only Christ could say: The prince of this world is coming, and he has no claim on me (John 14). And therefore David alone despises, and considers as nothing, the pride of the Philistine, whom all the others shunned and fled in fear.

1 Samuel 17:25

And one of the Israelites said: Have you seen? etc. One of the Israelites, asking whether he saw David or the Philistine; those who were awaiting the redemption of Israel, already illuminated by the miracles at the Lord's birth, with a careful mind inquired whether the same Lord was free from the snares of that ancient enemy who habitually reproaches all the faithful, whether he was in debt to death in any way, or to him who had the power of death; nor was it easy for all to recognize immediately that the Son of God,

conceived from sanctification, born without sin, and destined to live in the world.

1 Samuel 17:25

Therefore, the man who strikes him, the king will enrich, etc. They say, the man who will overthrow the kingdom of the devil, the entire people of Israel acknowledges, distinguished above all nations by royal and priestly mystery, as the possessor of all the riches that are in the heavens and on the earth, that is, as the Lord of the whole world. But also, the early Church, undoubtedly generated from his own flesh, rejoices to be united to this man, outstanding above others, by the bond of a chaste and faithful spouse, and also testifies with unfaltering faith that all his elect will be freed from the bondage of sin and elevated by the freedom of the Holy Spirit. Whether you choose to understand it as the Father of Christ the Lord or as the people of the saints, from whom Christ is according to the flesh, the explanation will hold the same end valid; for there is also one house of all the faithful, living by one and the same faith, hope, and charity, and this same house is of Him to whom it is sung: And let all those who hope in You rejoice, they will exult forever, and You will dwell in them (Psalm V). Such was the faith of the ancients concerning the coming Christ in the flesh, and such is our faith concerning Him whom we rejoice has already come.

1 Samuel 17:27

The people, however, reported to him the same word, etc. With the Lord clearly teaching, and proclaiming the ejection and downfall of the prince of the world, all the people indeed, as the evangelist recalls, were amazed, hearing him: but the envious lawyers and chief priests, inquiring how they might quench his saving deeds, or even destroy him, marking him with the note of pride and fury, because he revealed himself as the author of sobriety and humility. [1 Samuel 17:28] -- Why, he says, have you come? etc. Let the Jews be angry with Christ, and let them reproach Him with blasphemies about the compassion of His coming and incarnation; let us return due thanks to Him, who, seeking us on earth, deigned to leave those most blessed cohorts of angels in heaven; which, although they are innumerable in the many choirs of spiritual hosts, are nonetheless not unreasonably called a few sheep, until the hundredth sheep that had strayed is brought back, and with us added, they rejoice in the perfection of their number. Let us rejoice that, having inclined

His heavens, in which peace and justice reign, He came down of His own will to see our battle. For He descended to confront the enormous enemy, to conquer him in battle; that He might crown in His kingdom His own who had rejoiced with Him in victory.

1 Samuel 17: 31

The words that David spoke have been heard, etc. The words spoken by Christ about the glory of the coming kingdom were trusted and spread by fame even to the leaders of the Judean empire. And when many of these also came in part to hear the word, He spoke to them; lest they be troubled by the soon-to-be-weakened power of the old deceiver, lest they be disturbed by his soon-to-be-nullified fraud, lest they lose hope in the redemption of the human race, which was already about to come. I, He says, who for this very reason assumed the form of a servant, progressing to greater works of virtue, will conquer the ancient enemy of the world, the devil. [1 Samuel 17:33] -- And Saul said to David: You are not able to resist this Philistine, etc. This is the trembling of the weak, or even the resistance of the proud. Can this one engage in battle against the strength of the devil, which belongs solely to the Divinity; since he is clothed in human, indeed humble flesh; and yet his adversary, powerful by his spiritual nature, has learned to wield arms against the Creator and also against our kind, ever since he was created in rebellion? For he was a murderer from the beginning, and did not stand in the truth (John VIII). A murderer, of course, first of himself by his pride, and then of man by his seduction; in which double murder he long fell away from the truth he had once deserted, indeed, and he does not cease sinning until the end of the world, continually falling by accumulating sins.

1 Samuel 17: 34

And David said to Saul: Your servant was tending, etc. The Lord strengthens the weak in faith, calls unbelievers to faith, urging modestly that amidst the frailties of His humanity, by which He took on our pains, even the exalted aspects of His Divinity, by which He is capable of healing those pains, may be recognized. He Himself, he says, now deformed in the habit of a servant, for the sake of your salvation, was feeding from eternity with heavenly aliments the hearts of all the faithful, namely the flock of My Father. And one of the unclean spirits would come, either exceedingly powerful by strength or cunning with deceit. For both the lion and the bear, although each excels both

by strength, yet the bear has more deceit and the lion more strength; and thus one expresses the deceit, the other the violence, each the wickedness of the demons figuratively. They came, he says, and by deceiving they would take away some of the strong leaders of the Church, drawing him into sin from the midst of brotherly society. But I, either through angels or men by openly testifying, or by myself inwardly pricking, such men, having defeated the evil spirits, would call them back to the path of salvation; but these spirits, gravely annoyed, turning their fury to tear at the souls of the faithful that were snatched from their darkness, to blaspheme the worship of My name, promptly turned their rage of madness;

whose blasphemy I, by bringing to light and revealing through my prophets, would utterly reduce the whole ritual of idolatry to nothing; catching the wise in their craftiness, I was closing the mouths of the damnable profession, saying: For all the gods of the nations are demons: but the Lord made the heavens (Psalm 95). And: The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they shall not speak, and so forth (Psalm 113). But also by another prophet: The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth, and from those things that are under heaven (Wisdom 15); for both all the power and wisdom of the profane, which are wont to be shown through them or through men deceived by them, I was powerfully nullifying myself, who always remaining in the divinity of God, appearing temporarily in humanity to serve the salvation of men. Therefore, this inventor and source of all evil will be as one of his henchmen, that is, he will be caught in his own snares; who dared once to provoke angels in heaven, and afterward men on earth, to curse the Creator; but also unjustly always exacerbate with darts of cursing those who persist in the faith of their Creator, as though they do not serve the true God, the worshipers and devotees of Him, of whom it is said:

For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5). Which he will never cease to say through Gentiles, Jews, and heretics.

1 Samuel 17:37

Saul said to David: "And may the Lord be with you." The people of the Jews finally agreed to the undertakings of the Lord in those who could come to faith, and having truly recognized his two natures in one person, they desired that, encountering the proud darts of the devil with the humility of

man, with the assisting Divinity, he would obtain the palm of victory. [1 Samuel 17:38] -- And Saul clothed David with his garments, etc. The people of the Jews applied to the incarnate Lord the figures of legal observations, by circumcising him on the eighth day, then carrying him to the temple on the thirty-third day, offering a sacrifice for him, teaching carnal sabbaths, and annually providing examples of the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, and other such things, which in their time were most beneficial, and the spiritual teachers in the law of the Jewish people armed them very usefully against all the fiery darts of the wicked one, almost as the head and body of Saul.

1 Samuel 17: 39

David then girded himself with Saul's sword, etc. The sword of Saul is the law, which was given through Moses: the garment of David, the work of grace and truth, which was made through Jesus Christ. Therefore, David, girded with the sword of Saul over his own garment, began to test whether he could proceed if armed. For he said he was not accustomed. Observing for a time the carnal commandment of the law, while the spiritual gift of grace was not yet manifested to the peoples, the Savior began to gradually show that his body, which is the Church, burdened with the ceremonies of the law, could not suffice for the spiritual combat, especially among those who, called from the Gentiles to the faith, had no custom at all of enduring the more severe decrees of the law. Finally, the apostle Peter, contesting and criticizing those who wanted to burden the members of David advancing towards the struggle against the giant with Saul's arms, said: "Now therefore why do you tempt God, by imposing a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved, just as they will."

1 Samuel 17: 40

And he placed them and took his staff, etc. The Lord arranged the sacraments of the law, which He deemed good to adopt for a short time to prove their goodness in its time, and He exercised His power of judgment, which He always used to rule everything, even freely concerning the arrangement of the law. He set aside Saul's armor when He said: For the Son of Man is the Lord even of the Sabbath (Matt. XII). He took his staff, always held in his hands when he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes and Pharisees. He put on Saul's armor, coming to the singular battle,

when, as His passion's struggle approached, He said to His disciples: With desire I have desired, etc. (Luke XXII). He set them aside when he added: For I say unto you, I will not eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, etc. (Ibid.). In the same manner, He foretold that the Paschal cup, legally observed, should no longer be observed carnally. He took his staff, which he always had in his hands, when, with the mystery of His cross beneficial for the salvation of the world (for the figure of the staff can not improperly be applied to Him, who always had time and manner in His power), He taught His disciples: Taking bread, He gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying: This is my body, etc.

1 Samuel 17: 40

And he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, etc. Having shown the rejection of the preceding commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness, the Lord rather taught Himself to choose the very law, which is written in five books, to be observed spiritually, extracting it from the turbid minds of those who, having a veil over their hearts, could not look attentively at the face of Moses, and lifting it into the free air of evangelical light. Therefore, He also was careful to commit the spiritual law's sublime intellect to the hearts of the spiritual pastors, whom He had with Him as companions. To this, He added the aid of the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses, as if woven into a threefold cord. Thus armed with such fitting weapons, He set forth to conquer the prince of this world as a victor. [1 Samuel 17:42] -- And when the Philistine had looked and saw David, etc. And when the devil had very shrewdly looked and saw the Son of God in the world doing and teaching things contrary to him, as if proceeding against him, since he found him humble, he, knowing nothing but pride, despised him. For he was full of new virtue and grace, reddened with the blood of passions, and beautiful in the action of great deeds.

1 Samuel 17: 43

And the Philistine said to David: Am I a dog? etc. Whether you understand the power of the Savior or the wood of the cross, it refers to the same meaning. For the most arrogant enemy denies that he is like a dog, that is, despicable in work and weakness. Moreover, he denies that the patience of the Savior and the power to overcome him would be comparable to all those who pass through the life of this world, pursuing with dire, insane, furious, and

barking, and tearing with bites. Let us see what he thinks about the adversary that has come forth. For he says to the Father: Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog (Psalm 22). But elsewhere he has also marked the members of the same adversary to be compared to dogs, when he says: It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs (Matthew 15). However, by ministering the children's bread to them, he converted many of the most shameless or rabid dogs into the most chaste and meek sheep.

1 Samuel 17: 43

And the Philistine cursed David by his gods, etc. The devil curses the living and true God when he does not fear to present as gods to mortals the spirits deceived by him and for this reason damned and to be damned to eternal fire. Furthermore, arguing against the spiritual men of the Church as if they belong to a carnal life, he boasts that they can be subdued by his own teachers, who are partly heavenly beings of angelic nature and partly mortals of earthly flesh, claiming that the members should be transferred. He also curses the body of the true David through heretics by his gods, teaching to prefer fabricated thoughts from his heart and forged in the worst fire over evangelical truth, which, teaching carnally, presume that they can overcome the statements or actions of the spiritual ones. Such things more fit the proud philosophers of the gentiles or certain barbarians (for to these, birds of the sky and beasts of the earth can be very fittingly compared) than the education and humility of the Church.

1 Samuel 17: 45

But David said to the Philistine: You come to me with a sword, etc. The Lord aptly showed both to all whom he helped and to the powers he subdued, that the devil of the air is armed solely with the weapons of pride and deceit, by which he either defends and protects his own little things or breaks the true thoughts. He showed that he himself is the one whom the Psalmist foretold: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (Psalm 117). Finally, reproaching some unbelievers, he said: I have come in my Father's name and you did not receive me (John 5).

1 Samuel 17: 46

And the Lord will deliver you into my hands, etc. And by the power of my divinity, he says, you will be overcome, you who, beholding the vileness of

my flesh, are proud and exalt yourself, and I will remove you, who are the head of all evils, from the unjustly attached mortal members; and I will give your falling members and those of your followers, that is, men separated from you and humbled by my power or grace, who, deceived by your godless cults, had stuck with you: I will, I say, give them to be instructed by my own, and joined to my own ministers, who are partly heavenly beings of angelic nature and partly mortal in earthly flesh, so that with the Gospel preached throughout the entire world, every man may know that there is one true God who is now known in Judea, and in Israel his name is great (Psalm 75). Then by the universal praise of the catholic, that is, universal, from the ends of the earth those who cry out to God will say: Lord our God, how admirable is your name in all the earth (Psalm 8)! Nor should anyone find it absurd that we have said the depths of the flesh, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the earth signify the teachers who eagerly capture and draw in through faith the souls that were formerly carnal.

For even the Lord himself is most openly called the lion from the tribe of Judah, and the Church is typically called a lioness: not only on account of its strength, but also to signify the diligent pursuit of holy rapaciousness. For the patriarch Jacob says of the Lord, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up" (Gen. 49). And the Lord himself says of the Church to Job: "Will you take the prey for the lioness, and fill the soul of her young ones? (Job 39). But the Savior is also symbolized by the four living creatures. Just as he wanted to indicate the humility of incarnation and offering through the man and the ox, so through the lion and the eagle he wanted to indicate the power and sublimity of his resurrection and ascension into heaven. He also speaks to blessed Job about the Church, saying: "Does the eagle mount up at your command and make its nest on high? (Job 39). So that you would not think it typifies only the height of nesting or flying, or even the sharp vision of gazing at the sun, but also the unity of devouring, he added at the end: "And where the carcass is, there immediately it is present. Wherever he sees someone having fallen from a fitting state of life, he promptly takes care to restore such a one, as if raised from death, to catholic life through the biting corrections of his words.

We thought it should be given as an example concerning two of them, so that through these whoever reads may also know what he may think without the scruple of faith about the other birds and beasts.

1 Samuel 17: 49

And he put his hand into his bag, etc. We said above that the pastoral bag represents the hearts of the shepherds, who cling intimately to the side of Christ. Why then should not more rightly the conscience or soul of the highest and singularly good shepherd be called the pastoral bag? It contains five most clear stones, strong enough to overthrow the enemy: for it holds the purest knowledge of divine law, by which all error is conquered: whose fullness is expressed in one stone, and its breadth is spread in five books, which Christ alone could perfectly know and fulfill. Putting his hand into this bag, he took one of the five stones he had placed there, arming himself with one of the five books of Moses, of which he was the author and fulfiller, that is Deuteronomy, he used it as testimony to repel the ancient enemy's temptations. Moreover, he taught us, instructed by the Holy Scriptures, to overcome the snares of the same enemy through the unity of faith and charity. And he skillfully threw with the sling; for by the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, which we showed above as triple, he broke the pride of the enemy and gave us spiritual understanding as weapons against him. And he skillfully struck the Philistine on the forehead, because the very audacity of his presumption felled the devil: from the very show of his profession, he proved the worshippers of perverse doctrines to be foolish.

For just as the hand indicates the strength of operations, so the forehead indicates the recognition of profession. Therefore, whoever fears being struck on the forehead, let him arm his forehead with the sign of the life-giving cross, saying with the Apostle: But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians VI). Finally, David himself, because he knew how to say: The light of your countenance is signed upon us, O Lord (Psalm IV), indeed struck down the forehead of the loquacious boasting Philistine, not sealed with the light of heavenly grace, although covered with the helmet of boasting. And rightly the stone is said to be fixed in his forehead, because the devil will never completely shake off the sentence of the divine word, which he receives either in himself or in his followers from Christ the Saviour or His members, but cursed he will suffer eternal damnation in hell without end. Similar to what Isaiah testifies to his irrevocable damnation, saying: And the passage of the rod is founded, which the Lord God will rest upon him (Isaiah XXX), that is, he will never be saved from torments in eternity, nor will he roam between punishments over

varying times, nor will he find rest after the manner of our blows, who frequently raise the rod or lash from the back of the one being flogged, so that we can strike again, but without any interval of rest, he will groan subjected to perpetual retribution.

This is against those who, because of Isaiah's testimony, where it is written about the impious, say: And they will be imprisoned together in the dungeon, and after many days they will be visited (Isaiah XXIV); promise the devil and his angels and all the reprobate remission of such great crimes and eternal life with the Lord after long and innumerable ages, against the judgment of the Lord himself, who foretold that he will say in the last judgment: Depart from me, you cursed, into eternal fire (Matthew XXV). But the giant, struck by the stone, fell to the ground; because the diabolic error, struck by the word of God, no longer lofty as it once boasted, was revealed to be not heavenly but earthly and even lowest.

1 Samuel 17:50

And when David had no sword in his hand, etc. When he had no one and the Lord of his word's minister, through whom he might shatter the pride of the devil by teaching, except whom he himself had first snatched victoriously from the devil; for all are by nature children of wrath, all conceived in iniquities, and in sins are generated by the mother (Ephesians V; Psalm L); he came unexpectedly, and the adversary long strong, as a stronger surpassing him, took away all his weapons, in which he trusted, so that through those whom the enemy previously as his weapons used to kill the souls of the wretched, through them afterward the Savior, transformed into weapons of righteousness, may cut off the head of iniquity from its body, that is, compel those converted to faith to anathematize Satan, and renounce all his works and pomps. And rightly is it recounted that David first took the sword with which he slew the Philistine by his hand, and drew it out of its sheath; because every great and strenuous one of the devil's empire, whom the Lord first receiving by his visitation of piety, draws out from the obscure hiding places of errors into the light of liberating grace; and so through him also allows others to be similarly corrected and reproved. But we too, when disputing against the madness of heretics, we convict them as fabricators of lies and cultivators of perverse doctrines, either by the arguments or by the testimonies of Scripture which they themselves had proposed to bring us back; indeed, with the giant's own sword we strike down his insolence.

1 Samuel 17: 51

Seeing that their strongest man had died, etc. Seeing that the unclean spirits were defeated and prostrated by the incarnation and passion of the Lord, they fled from the hearts of the believers. And all the strong ones in the Church, gathered from both the circumcised and the uncircumcised, arose and lifted up a voice terrifying to the wicked of divine preaching and praise, and pursued them until they recognized that they were to be humbled by Christ, and as it were submerged in the valley of dejection, who had previously boasted of setting up their camp on the mountain of pride against Him; and the fugitives might withdraw to the hearts, which they had previously inhabited evilly, plundering completely every fruit of piety and faith. For the gates of Accaron, that is, of barrenness, the fleeing Philistines reached, when the malignant spirits, repelled from the minds of the faithful, once again referred to their teachers. They entered the walls of the city of vanity and falsehood itself, when they also compelled the ignorant crowd to increase their unfruitful work worthy of fire. But they also reached Geth, that is, the press, when they drew out the hearts of the deceived to torment the good ones with unjust persecution. All these can also be understood in the same order even about perverse humans.

1 Samuel 17: 53

And the children of Israel returned, etc. It is of proper order that the teachers of truth first expel from the hearts of their hearers every unclean spirit by exhaling and catechizing, and thus, those who had been the camps of demons, but now made the spiritual possession of Israel, incorporate them into the company of the strong by imbibing them with the salutary sacraments of the saints.

1 Samuel 17: 54

But David, taking the head of the Philistine, etc. I think it should be understood, according to the letter, that David took care to bring the head of such a strong adversary, which had been cut off, to the rebellious city of Jerusalem, still inhabited by the Jebusites, for no other reason than to terrify those who, trusting in the impregnable firmness or height of the walls, presumed that they could not be overcome by anyone. As a result, in its capture, which was achieved through David himself, we read that they rose to such a level of arrogance that they said: Even if only the blind and the lame, who

might possibly be found in the city, were set in the strongholds, they would be sufficient both in number and strength to preserve it. Therefore, the triumphant boy hung the head of the defeated giant against the adversary city so that the citizens, however fierce, would not doubt that they could also be conquered by the same. But according to the rules of allegory, it should be said that the Lord hastened to show the victory over the ancient enemy, received by the apostles preaching and performing miracles, to the still faithless nations, so that He might convert them to the completion of the sacraments and dogmas of life and truth by this sign of victory, whose arms He also placed in His tabernacle; because He united the men snatched from the devil to the holy Church, and exposed his snares (for these too can be understood in the arms). There is no doubt to anyone that the tabernacle of David indicates the house of Christ, which is the Church of the faithful.

CHAPTER 3.3

Jonathan and David enter into a covenant; and as women come forth to meet the returning army, since they praise David more than Saul, they create an everlasting source of hatred and envy for him. Finally, Saul, invaded by an evil spirit, tries to strike him; but since he cannot, he removes him from his presence and appoints him as a leader over a thousand men. At that time when Saul saw David going out, etc. This reading figuratively signifies the victory of Christ, by which he overcame the devil, honored the devoted and humble with services of due servitude; but indeed, the haughty and contumacious envied his glorious triumphs; yet, even though they took up the arms of impiety to rebel, they could not resist the grace of heaven, which shines throughout the world. However, it is questioned how Saul, not knowing David's lineage, would inquire about his servant for such a long time and equally his exorcist and armor-bearer. And some hold that his mind was sometimes hindered from recognizing even a familiar person by the evil spirit with which he was agitated, not considering that even Abner, a man of such severity and prudence, testifies that he does not know his lineage; for he says: And Abner said: As your soul lives, O king, if I know.

Wherefore, it seems more credible that he was not only absent those forty days in the valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines from Saul's side, but had returned much earlier to pasture his father's sheep, so that, as is often the case with adolescents, he might have grown so that his features also changed, making it not easy and quick to be recognized by those who had

known him previously. But whatever the cause was, let us, passing beyond the root of the history, ascend to pluck the fragrant fruits of spiritual allegory. As David goes out against the Philistine, Saul inquires about his lineage: but since he does not inquire from himself, what he seeks he cannot learn. Once the Philistine is struck down, he inquires from himself, and he hears.

1 Samuel 17: 58

"I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite. When the Lord was preaching before his passion and healing all those oppressed by the devil, which is to go out against the Philistine, to be laid low by the staff of the cross and the fulfillment of the Scriptures which were about him; some among the Jews were asking among themselves who he was, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or the Baptist, or another of the eminent prophets. But what they needed to know they could not, because by not coming to faith, they knew not how to inquire from him. But after the triumph of his passion, resurrection, and ascension, when the apostles were preaching, many of them believed and truly recognized him as the Christ, from Bethlehem of Judah, and the root of Jesse, according to the prophecies of the prophets, who came forth and defeated the kingdom of the prince of the world with invincible strength; which is to have had in his hand the head of the slain giant as a strong young man.

1 Samuel 18:1

(1 Kings 18). And it happened as Saul completed speaking to David, etc. When the Savior, through the apostles, completed spreading the gifts of his incarnation by preaching in Judea, many indeed, having heard the word, believed. But the more perfect ones among these, overflowing with spiritual grace, which, as has often been said, is designated by the name Jonathan, were so bonded to him with such love that they did not hesitate to give their lives for him. Meanwhile, not a few others, especially those who rejoiced in earthly sovereignty whether by elevation or by desiring it, indeed received with lesser fervor of love but with the same acknowledgment of faith; believing and confessing with certainty in his sacrament. They by no means equated him with the merits of the fathers from whom he took flesh, however high they were, but followed the Apostle's sentiment where it says, Whose are the fathers, and from whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is blessed forever over all things (Rom. 9)."

1 Samuel 18:3

Jonathan and David made a covenant, etc. Christ and the Church made a covenant of mutual charity and peace. For the Church loved Him in its more perfect members, so much so that it was ready to die for Him; deeming it just to give its body and soul for Him, who, for its redemption, though He was true God from true God, deigned to clothe Himself in human flesh and soul. For the Word was made flesh (John I), and the Lord is the protector of my soul (Psalm LIII). Finally, He stripped himself in the martyrs of the flesh with which He was clothed, and gave it to Christ's services; and similarly, whatever else it possessed of talent, virtue, and deeds, it devotedly expended to His will, even to the extent of skill and expertise in speaking, and to the industry of emitting arguments true in faith and reason, against the wiles of the ill-counseled, and to the glory of chastity and unblemished purity, kept for His love.

1 Samuel 18:5

And David went out to all, etc. Whether the people of the Jews wished to believe in Christ or to oppose Him, whether to make Him king or to crucify Him, He, coeternal with the Father's wisdom, always acted prudently, both by greatly rewarding the pious and by patiently enduring the impious. And the same people placed Him over the men of spiritual war, in some namely by believing and confessing that He alone helps those fighting for the salvation of souls to be able to conquer. In others, however, by exclaiming that He was guilty of death, by which death, finally accepted according to the will of the impious, having overcome the author of death, He grants us too the example of waging war and triumphing together with Him. [1 Samuel 18:5] -- And he was accepted in the eyes of all the people, etc. The Lord was accepted by all who had those eyes, of which He Himself speaks: Blessed are the eyes that see what you see (Matthew XIII). Especially in the pure heart of the apostles, who by a special providence were commanded to serve by preaching the salvation of the Jews. For whomever the Lord was not accepted by, such are not to be considered as having open eyes; but to be of those of whom it is said: Leave them alone, they are blind guides of the blind (Matthew XV).

1 Samuel 18:6–7

When David returned after striking down the Philistine, etc., the Lord, having returned after defeating the ancient enemy through His suffering and

appearing in the glory of resurrection to His chosen ones, the glory of this triumph having been spread throughout Judea, the lowly souls, conscious of their own frailty, came out from all the cities of Israel, rejoicing in Christ, whom they recognized as the author of life and the conqueror of death. Through the many churches which form one catholic church, they celebrated Him with concordant praise, each one manifesting the gifts of virtues given by the one and the same Spirit, devoting themselves to Him with appropriate services of humble devotion, and with eager faith above all declaring, as with a triumphal song, that although the institution of the law commanded works of justice, it had delivered no small number of enemies to destruction and snatched not few souls from the enemy's grasp. Yet with incomparable strength, the grace of Christ, by bestowing the wages of heavenly life, even tore down the very gates of death as a victor; so much so that He assured that those who receive eternal life will mock death and say: "Where, O death, is your contention? Where, O death, is your sting? (1 Cor. 15:55). And it is to be noted that not all the women of Israel, but women from all the cities of Israel came forth.

For not all have faith, but from all persons, conditions, places, and ages, those who receive the faith are chosen by Him who said: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). He did not say all, but all kinds; to signify that believers from every kind of human being would come forth. It is also to be noted that while women are said to have come out to meet Saul, they raised their voices in praise of David; for the souls piously believing in Christ publicly proclaimed to the people zealous for the law what ought to be understood about the shadow of the law itself and the light of the gospel, so that by preaching, they might also summon this people to the path of grace and truth. We can also say that when the Lord Christ returned to the heavens with immortal flesh, angelic hosts from all realms came to meet Him with the fitting exultation of praise, accepting Him as the victor over the enemy and the giver of life to us.

1 Samuel 18: 8

Saul was greatly angered, etc. But the people who gloried in the law, angered against the preachers of grace, and the word displeased them, which, with the Gospel shining forth, set an end to the shadows of the law; and he said, raging against the Lord and against His Christ: Behold, the followers of this doctrine assert that while I indeed, doing the commands of the Mosaic law,

serve shadows and figures, their Jesus brought the light of truth and life to the world; that through the law, good things of the earth, which cannot be everlasting, were promised to me; He through the grace of His Gospel grants the eternal joys of the heavenly kingdom to His faithful. Therefore, with everyone competing, neglecting the rite of the altar and sacrifices, to attend the hearing of this doctrine, what remains for me except only that he has not also taken away the summit of the kingdom from me? This because, although Christians, surpassing us in number, are all humbled and cast down in new and unknown poverty.

1 Samuel 18: 9

Therefore Saul did not look with right eyes at David, etc. The Jewish people did not accept the words of the Gospel with right understanding, from the time when inflamed with fires of envy, they began to hate its teachers or hearers, fearing namely that their law's glory being diminished, its fame and faith would rather reign throughout the world. [1 Samuel 18:10] -- After the next day, an evil spirit from God invaded Saul, etc. As the light of the faithful gradually increased, so did the insanity and blindness of the perfidious Jews, who, aroused by an unclean spirit in the midst of their Synagogue against the Lord, would sing the words of prophecy with a frenzied mouth, which they did not understand. But the Lord, to calm and mitigate their malice, daily reiterated through the apostles the example of His patience and suffering. For He sang to them with His own hand, when through His excellent worker of the body He said: Therefore let all the house of Israel know most certainly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts II).

1 Samuel 18:10

Saul was holding a spear, etc. The people of the Jews held the power of the kingdom and exercised it against the Lord Savior; thinking that they could extinguish His faith and glory by persecuting Him, in the manner of other mortals whose praise and memory, love or hatred, often fades with their life itself. Against these He prays to the Father in the Psalms: "Do not let me become like those who go down to the pit" (Psalm 142). For as much as David, a living stone, feels and discerns, exceeds a wall, which lacks nature, life, sense, and reason; so much the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, differs from pure men, even if they are most holy. He indeed, in

suitable places, is symbolized by the term stone, not just any stone in the wall, according to those to whom it is said: "You also, like living stones, are being built" (1 Peter 2). But as the chief, cornerstone, chosen, precious stone, founded in the foundation, which, bearing and protecting the whole building of the rising Church, unites circumcision and uncircumcision in unanimous peace. For it can also be understood, not inappropriately, that Saul thought he could pin David to the wall; that the Jews thought they could eradicate the name and memory of Christ and remove Him from the land of the living if they could kill or banish the apostles, the preachers of His resurrection, those who are the nearest part of His house, that is, the Church. But David could not be pinned to the wall, Christ's glory could not be diminished, nor could the impious, however much they strove, be made like those who go down to the pit; that is, buried in the tomb, neither to be resurrected before the day of judgment.

1 Samuel 18:11

And David turned away from his face a second time. And Christ fled from the hearts of the impious, who never deserts pious hearts without resting in them. But it is not added in vain a second time. For at first David went away and returned to Saul, coming into battle against the Philistines, where afterwards, arriving, he alone quickly struck down the enemy whom all had long failed to subdue; and now he turned away from his face a second time, attempting to kill him. This corresponds to the mystical sense. For at first, as also explained above, to all mortals struggling against vices, the Lord appearing in the flesh conducted life free from this conflict in the world; but also, he miraculously helped those mortals laboring long in vain by the visitation of his grace. However, what must be remembered not without sorrow, not without groaning, many repel their vivifier and protector, by spurning his words and transgressing; and what we blame the Jews for not believing, we believers do not fear to do by living badly. David turns away from his face unwillingly a second time, so as not to save him with his harp from the enemy, from whom he previously returned willingly, so as not to fight with him against the enemy;

for, owing to our merits, the Almighty Savior hides the light of his knowledge from us, removes the grace of his defense, so as not to protect us daily from the snares of enemies by the help of his cross, who deigned to take on flesh for our salvation, so that he might struggle for us who are frail, so

that he might win for us who are holy. Therefore, when God dwelt with men, at first he withdrew from their company, so as not to struggle with them against the law of sin, which in no way opposed him. Secondly, and in this not from the company of all, but from that of the proud, he turned away, so as not to trust them with his gifts; for he resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (I Peter 5).

1 Samuel 18:12

And Saul feared David, etc. The people of the Jews feared the Church of Christ, because they saw the grace of divine power in it while they themselves were forsaken. For it is written: Many signs and wonders were done among the people by the apostles in Jerusalem, and great fear was upon all. For all who believed were together and had all things in common (Acts 2); which also, this society of mutual love, is proof of the present heavenly grace. And elsewhere: And by the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch; but of the rest no one dared join them, but the people magnified them (Acts 5).

1 Samuel 18:13

Saul therefore removed him from himself, etc. Just as those who are in charge of fifty soldiers are called centurions; so they are called chiliarchs in Greek, who are in charge of a thousand soldiers, whom the Latin custom delights in calling tribunes rather than millenaries from the fact that they are in charge of a tribe. Therefore, the Jews removed Christ from themselves, having despised His faith, and made Him provide the leadership of spiritual warfare more abundantly to the believers. For their fault is the salvation of the Gentiles. But most of all, the Lord reigns over those who are stable and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord. Their quadrated conversation, so to speak, and free from any fall, is shown by the millenary number, which is a solid squared ten. For with ten, the perfection of work or reward is usually indicated. But so that this same perfection increases the breadth of fraternal love, multiply ten by ten to reach a hundred. This sum, according to arithmetic, has equal square sides but is still flat, and thus suited by the figure to the love of neighbors whom we see on earth. But so that the squaring of fraternal love is also solidified by the height of divine love, accumulate each part of the

centenary number by ten to ascend to a thousand; thus it is understood that the ten is not only equal in quadriform stability but also solid in perfect completeness; because such a number suits those over whom Christ presides, and fits both the most stable height and the highest stability. For wherever you turn a square, it stands solidly; whatever the just encounter, it proves them entirely stable and immovable.

1 Samuel 18:16

All Israel and Judah loved David, etc. All who have believed from the Jews and the Gentiles loved, and love, and will love Christ. For He went forth appearing in the flesh, went in returning to the Father; before them, that He might grant hope and shape to those still remaining to live rightly outwards, and to those entering to reign blessedly. He goes out even today before us, protecting us with aid while fighting on earth. He enters, however, when with the battle finished, He leads those to be crowned to eternal life. We thought it necessary to remind the reader that the order of allegorical completion cannot always be preserved in the same way as the order of historical prefiguration. For instance, Joseph is first stripped of his tunic and thrown into a cistern, and afterwards sold with Judah advising; first sold by Judah acting, and thereafter signifies Christ stripped of the garment of the body, buried. This is customary not only in prophetic deeds but also in words. For Isaiah first said: "In that day the root of Jesse, who stands as a sign for the people, Him shall the Gentiles seek" (Isa. XI). And then he added: "And his sepulcher shall be glorious" (Ibid.). With all believers it is evident that first the tomb of the Lord, glorified, was made by Him rising from the dead, and subsequently the sign of His cross being exalted by the apostles was made for the people, that the Gentiles might seek Him.

Those skilled in the Scriptures have been accustomed to call it recapitulation in Greek. This too must be noted that one and the same person does not always indicate one and the same portion of a person or thing that it shows. For instance, David signifies Christ, but sometimes in himself, sometimes in His holy preachers, sometimes in other faithful followers, sometimes in the just who fall seven times but rise again through repentance, all of whom as various parts of one body adhere uniformly to the head Christ. Similarly, Saul figuratively represents the Jewish people, sometimes reigning, sometimes teaching rightly, sometimes believing in Christ, sometimes neglecting Christ's commands, sometimes envying and persecuting Christ, sometimes

inflicting threats, plots, murders, and deaths upon His faithful, showing different aspects. Likewise, Goliath, who carries the type of the devil, sometimes is expressed in the very head of all the impious, sometimes in his members, namely the pagans, treacherous Jews, heretics, and false brethren. However, from these very members the Savior, having removed the worst head, has graciously made some of His own members. To prove all these with examples is a greater task than suits this place.

CHAPTER 3.4

Saul's elder daughter, whom he had promised to David, he gives to Hadriel, and he gives the younger one to him, and he betroths her with the foreskins of the Philistines. But Saul said to David: Behold my elder daughter Merob, etc., up to the part where it is written: And Saul became David's enemy for all days. This reading figuratively signifies that although the greater part of the Synagogue was made up of Pharisees, with the lesser part loving Christ, the leaders, moved by envy, sought a cause from his kingdom that they might deliver him to the authority and power of the governor. But he, with many, even among their own gentiles, being called to faith, unwilling as much as the Jewish rulers might be, joins the Church to himself from Judea in heavenly nuptials.

1 Samuel 18:17

Therefore, Saul said to David: Behold my daughter Merab, etc. Above, where Saul, through the anointing of holy chrism and the governance of the kingdom, holds the type of Christ, we understood the two daughters of Saul to signify the peoples, who, begotten for salvation by faith in Christ and love, are perfected by the chastisement of body and mind; or certainly, the greater to designate the Synagogue, and the lesser, the Church. However, in this place, because the order of surrounding affairs has changed, David indeed designates the Lord Christ, but Saul, envying him, designates the people of the Jews. Rightly, the elder daughter, who was promised to David but not given, signifies that part of his people which, greater in number and power, was promised as if to be joined to a strong and desirable hand of a bridegroom, when the predecessors of that part, namely the scribes, priests, Pharisees, and elders of the people, would flock to his hearing, call him a good teacher, and not only that but also uniquely wise as a master, whether for the sake of learning or tempting him, would frequent him with questions. How-

ever, she was not given to him but to another, when those same teachers, seeking to be called Rabbi by men, forced as many as they could to listen to them instead.

The younger daughter, who by loving David deserved to be given to him, is indeed that portion of the Jewish people which, both in smallness and contempt, preferred to follow, love, and hear the Lord Savior rather than the scribes and lawyers, hearing from him: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12). Therefore, the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews said to Christ: Behold, we entrust the greater part of the subjected Synagogue to you for teaching, just see to it that, being strong in spirit, you fight with word for the freedom of the people, who are commanded to keep the law of God and serve Him alone. For we know that you are truthful and do not care for anyone; for you do not regard the person of man, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? (Matthew 22; Mark 12) They said this, however, in the presence of the ministers of Herod, so that if he forbade giving tribute, they, punishing him, might seem exempt from his death.

1 Samuel 18:18

David said to Saul: Who am I? etc. He does not confess himself unworthy to become the king's son-in-law, but he proposes to make it known and remembered by the same king, who he is, what his life is, what the lineage of his father is in Israel; and from this it is to be inferred whether he is worthy to receive the daughter. He himself is strong in hand, accomplished in act, and desirable in appearance: he feeds his father's sheep, and in caring for them, faces lions and bears to kill them, and also for the salvation of his people, goes out to give his life to danger against the giant armed with bronze and iron. The lineage of his father in Israel is that to which the same Israel blessed, saying among other things: The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs (Gen. XLIX). This in the same order can be interpreted of the Lord, because he did not deny himself worthy, who would join to himself the people generated by the royal descent through the teaching of the law, in the bond of unanimous peace and charity, concerning whom his herald proclaimed: The one who has the bride is the bridegroom (John III). But also for those coming to his faith, it must be asked who he is, what his life is, what the lineage of his father is in Israel;

and from this it is to be understood that he, indeed he alone, is worthy to unite the Church of the faithful to himself by the right of a bridegroom. He himself is the one about whom John writes: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John I), and others, up to what he says: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. His life is, of which he himself speaks: For as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son to have life in himself (John V). His life is such that the apostle Peter, urging his listeners to imitate it, says: He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, and others (I Pet. II). The lineage of his Father in Israel is that of which: The Lord swore to David a truth, and he will not turn from it: Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne (Psalm. CXXXI). The lineage of his Father, of which he himself testifies: For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matt. VII). Therefore, the Lord did not refuse to be the bridegroom of the Church, that is, Christ;

but it is to be sought and understood that he is. Finally, he teaches the Pharisees with the testimony of the proposed Psalm, how the Christ can be both the son and the lord of David, questioning, not denying that he is Christ, but rather arousing them to ask, seek, and knock for the recognition of the truth. And elsewhere he responds to the scribe who called him good teacher, and asked about doing good: Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone (Mark X); not meaning there that he is not good, but implying that he is to be believed as God.

1 Samuel 18:19

It came to pass then, when Merob was to be given, etc. It came to pass, when the greater part of the Jewish people ought to have believed in Christ teaching in the flesh, they rather believed and adhered to the scribes and Pharisees. However, the other part of the same people, itself royally educated through the law of the Lord, loved the coming of the Savior. The very name itself also agrees well in signifying the doctors of the law. Hadriel Molathites. For Hadriel means the flock of God; Molathites is said from "begetting me." And the assembly of legal masters, who were chosen from common action and rusticity, ordered to devote themselves to divine matters, to meditate on divine things, act and preach, rightly shines by the distinctive name of the

flock of God. Nor is it the fault of the good shepherd if any portion of the flock, jumping from his custody, prefers to be subject to the wolf's teeth rather than to the pastoral rod. This assembly of doctors, since it received the beginnings of living rightly through the letter full of new grace, is fittingly called the city of Hadriel from "begetting me." Whom indeed do we understand by "begetting" other than Him whose mysteries all the old Scripture prefigured? whom the whole knowledge of the law and prophets held long hidden, but after a long labor, at the right time brought forth for us to behold.

1 Samuel 18: 20

And it was reported to Saul, and it pleased him, etc. The envious leaders of the Jews, recognizing that the crowd loved the Lord and flocked with diligent intention to hear Him, which they detested in other matters, began to be pleased in this one part, thinking that they could reprimand Him by frequently teaching in words and catching something from His mouth, so they might accuse Him and deliver Him to the nations to be killed; even thinking that God's wisdom is subject to that sentence: In the multitude of words, you shall not escape sin (Prov. X). And they said: Let us permit Him to teach, that it may be a stumbling block to Him, and we be innocent of His blood: let the hand of the Romans be upon Him, as we accuse Him of undermining our nation, forbidding tributes to be given to Caesar, and declaring Himself to be Christ.

1 Samuel 18: 21

Therefore Saul said to David: "In two things you will be my son-in-law today," etc. Ignoring the words of Saul, which clearly signify the hypocrisy of scribes and Pharisees with their deceit and fraud, by which they sought to entrap the Lord, let us instead scrutinize more closely the mighty deeds of blessed David, because he became Saul's son-in-law in two things, namely, by killing the giant and by bringing the foreskins of Philistine slain. Clearly signifying him who, in order to adopt the Church from the Jews, first nullified the snares and strength of the ancient enemy and delivered it into light; and thereafter proposed to the same Church the examples of converted Gentiles to be emulated. For it was from the Gentiles, whose faith the Lord showed to be emulated by the Jews, when he said: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found such great faith in Israel" (Matthew VIII). From the Gentiles came

she who merited to hear from Christ: "O woman, great is your faith; let it be done for you as you wish" (Matthew XV). From the Gentiles were those who, having come up among others to worship at the feast, said to Philip: "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (John XII). From the Gentiles was also that centurion who, when the Lord gave up His Spirit, stood alone with his company, while all the Jews who were present remained silent, and feared and glorified God, saying: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark XV). Certainly, when Saul, weaving deceit, said:

1 Samuel 18:25

Thus you shall say to David: The king has no need for a dowry, etc. So we may truly understand it as a figure concerning the proud, that they do not think they need the gifts of Christ; but that this alone is required, that He be handed over into the hands of the Gentiles and be killed.

1 Samuel 18:27

And after a few days, David arose and departed, etc. A few days after the Jewish leaders decided to hand over Christ to be slain by the Gentiles, the Lord himself arose with the apostles who were with him to work the salvation of the world, shining so much with virtues and the grace of doctrine that, despite the efforts of the impious, he called not a few of the Gentiles to the grace of faith, as we have previously taught. For David struck down the Philistines, just as the Lord broke the proud impurity of paganism by word or by the example of humility and chastity. He brought their foreskins and counted them for the king so that he might be his son-in-law; with the people of the Jews, he showed the dead members of sin converted to God, so that in this way he might also receive those who would follow the conversion of the Gentiles. Not in vain did David bring two hundred foreskins to Saul, who had asked for one hundred; because, to the Jews presumptuously thinking that the Lord could not impose even the profession of carnal chastity on the Gentiles, he himself cleansed them from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God. The number one hundred indeed always pertains to the indication of great perfection, which initiated in itself before the triumph of the Passion, was fulfilled even in the confirmation of his sacraments through the apostles after the clarification of his Assumption.

1 Samuel 18:27

Saul therefore gave his daughter Michal to him as a wife, etc. The unbelieving people could not prevent those predestined to life from believing. For they saw and understood that the Lord was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; the love of the believers grew as much as the fear in the faithless. Some apply the foreskins taken from the struck Philistines by David to the condition of the present age, since the grace of Christ is at work among the Gentiles; however, the marriages of Michal, delayed for some time but eventually celebrated, refer to those who will believe at the end of the world, from the Jews: when the fullness of the Gentiles shall enter, so all Israel will be saved (Rom. XI).

CHAPTER 3.5

Saul seeks to kill David; Jonathan intervenes and placates him. And the princes of the Philistines came out, etc., unto what it says: "Jonathan brought David to Saul," etc. This reading figuratively shows that when persecutions were raised in Judea as if to eliminate the name of Christian from the earth, many even among the persecutors themselves, through the apostles' intervention, were not only turned away from persecuting but also brought to believe in Christ. Hence, against spiritual Israel, that is, the Church, the unclean spirits, namely, the rulers of darkness, that is, the leaders of perverse men, have repeatedly come forth. But from the beginning of their coming out, Christ conducted himself more wisely in his members than all the emulators of the law; and the fame of Christianity and the Church became very celebrated, to the extent that the faithful of the Church were called Christians throughout the world.

1 Samuel 19:1

(1 Samuel 19) "But Saul spoke to Jonathan his son," etc. The princes of the Jews, together with the elders and scribes, spoke to the apostles, strictly commanding them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. [1 Samuel 19:1] -- Moreover, Jonathan, the son of Saul, loved David greatly, etc. Likewise, the apostles loved Christ greatly, and, recounting the accusations of the faithless, they beseeched Him to defend His Church, to preserve the faith in His name within the Church; remaining secretly in the hearts of the believers, yet hidden from the disturbance of men. We, however, they say, you dwelling fruitfully in the minds of the pious (Genesis 27). For this is truly the

field full of fragrance and grace, which the Lord has blessed; we will speak and teach this people in Your name, and those who prefer to believe rather than disbelieve from among them, we will announce to Your holy Church, so that, knowing the state of each, it may learn to join the faithful and to protect itself from the unbelievers.

1 Samuel 19: 4

Therefore Jonathan spoke good of David to his father Saul, etc. The apostles spoke good of Christ to the Jews, recalling him as a man approved by God among them in the powers and signs and wonders which God had done through him in their midst; who not only could not be accused of sin, but also, being diligent in virtues, went around all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every infirmity. [1 Samuel 19:5] -- And he placed his life in his hand, etc. The Lord, they say, commended his love for you, which no one has greater, by placing his life for you; so that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might free those who throughout their whole life were subject to bondage. Many from among our number witnessed the glory of his resurrection, and his ascension into heaven, and rejoiced (Hebr. II).

1 Samuel 19: 5

Why then do you sin against innocent blood? etc. Why do you sin, trying to extinguish his faith, striving to remove his love from the Church, who alone among mortals could live without fault? [1 Samuel 19:6] -- When Saul heard this, placated by the voice of Jonathan, etc. When the people of the Jews heard the voice of the preaching apostles, they were placated from the wrath of former fury; and by the true assertion of faith, they testified that the Church of Christ can never be exterminated from the midst, never can his memory perish, who is before the ages and remains forever. This same people said these things in those who heard the voice of the doctors of spiritual matters, which Jonathan and his merits signify. For in whomever they did not say these things, they are those of whom it is written: And their ears were hard of hearing (Acts XXVIII). And elsewhere: And who is deaf, except to those whom I have sent my messengers?

1 Samuel 19:7

And Jonathan brought David to Saul, etc. Jonathan speaks well of David to Saul, and is heard, as the apostles preaching about Christ catechize the Jews, gaining their faith. He introduces the same one when, baptizing them, they refresh them with the flesh and blood of Christ, instruct them in the precepts of Christ, and strengthen them with the love of Christ. He becomes before him as he was yesterday and the day before when the listeners of this age received him with the same faith, hope, and charity that those who saw him in the flesh from that people, recognized him as God, or hoped for him to come in the flesh from ages past.

CHAPTER 3.6

Saul tried to strike David, but failing, ordered the house to which he fled to be watched; who, placing a statue in his place, descended through the window and came to Samuel. But Saul, hearing this, sent messengers three times, then came himself, and prophesied with the others before Samuel. The war was stirred again, etc., up to what is written: The proverb came out, Is Saul also among the prophets? In this reading, the mysteries of the incarnate Christ from the beginning are recalled, his birth, virtues, doctrine, passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, as well as the faith of those following him, and the treachery, madness, and demise of those persecuting him, is described in typological speech. For a war of temptations stirred up by unclean spirits, he came forth from the bosom of the Father into our public view, the valiant protector of the human race, namely, the one who said: I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father (John XVI). And of whom the Psalmist, under the figure of the sun, explaining this in other words, says: His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it (Psalm XVIII). Who, directing the whole line of his temporary actions against the temptations of the wicked, immediately restrained them from deceiving and harassing mortals greatly; and they fled and still flee from his face today; for wherever the grace of Christ the helper is recognized, the wickedness of the deceiving devil is immediately driven out from there.

1 Samuel 19:9

And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, etc. When the Son of God in flesh shone with miracles, the spirit of envy was kindled against him in

the hearts of the Jews, the Lord giving them over to the desires of their hearts because of the merits of their preceding sins. They were still sitting peacefully in their kingdom and homeland, and confident in their same kingdom's splendors, they did not fear to plot the death of their Savior. Moreover, when they opposed him, and even blasphemed, he, turned to rage, by the example of his meekness and patience, tried to recall them to the mildness of spirit and sobriety, as if by the sweetness of a lyre. [1 Samuel 19:10] -- And Saul attempted to pin David with a spear, etc. The Jews attempted to kill entirely in the flesh of Christ, who is God both soul and flesh. But he, commending his spirit into the hands of the Father, bowed his head and gave it up. Yet the wound of death touched the body alone; he fled the body, and his soul was saved from the sword, and his soul was saved from the hand of the dog (Psalm 21), by the darkness of their own treachery, with the executioners lowered.

1 Samuel 19:11

Therefore Saul sent his messengers to David's house, etc. The chief priests and Pharisees sent their messengers to the Lord's tomb to guard it, hoping that by denying the truth of the resurrection, the memory of His name would be erased in the future. The frequent laments of the Church announced this to Him (for the Lord hears the desire of the poor [Psalm IX]), and trembling from the conspiracy of the faithless, it somehow said: Unless you rise from the dead, the faith and confession of the believers in you cannot firmly persist; unless you invalidate the watchfulness of the guards by overcoming death, the whole faith in the future resurrection will be taken away from the world; at last, it learned that He had left the tomb's location to His guards. He went away and escaped from His executioners and the lying guards; and by appearing to His dear ones after the resurrection, He completely restored their hope and faith. David's harp can specifically and figuratively represent the cross of the Lord; Saul's spear on the wall can represent the nails of the cross, or the very soldier's lance which opened His side. As we have said, David's house is the tomb of the Lord. The leap through the window is the concealed and sudden speed of the resurrection. The wife from whom he escaped through a plan is the Church of believing Jews, who both desired the Lord Savior to rise and taught that He had risen.

1 Samuel 19:13

But Michal took an image and laid it on the bed, etc. The history of the hairy skin, of the skins of goats, is evident; for there was a cushion sewn of goat's skin, which, with its unshorn hairs, feigned the head of a man lying in bed. The statue, however, is an imitation of the true and living; the dead skin of goats is the remains of a dead animal. Therefore, Michal took an image and placed it on David's bed, as he was let down through the window and secretly saved. The Church learned to regard the Jews' Lord, who was laid in the sepulcher, not as Christ, life and truth, but as a likeness of truth and life, declaring himself to be Christ the king. The Church is said to do this in the true manner of speaking, for it bears witness to the deeds done or to be done by the ungodly, as it is written in Leviticus, "Behold, the priest shall declare him unclean" (Lev. 13): not because he could bring leprosy to the clean, but to show what was already present in the unclean. Also, Michal placed the hairy skin of goats at the head of the statue. The Church, at its beginning, discovered the perfidy even of those who not only deny the Lord Savior as Christ but also claim he was burdened with sins, not resurrected from the dead.

For it is certain that the goat often holds the type of a sinner, just as a sheep does that of the just. The hairs, brittle and externally superfluous to the body, signify dead works, becoming manifest due to their density and frequency. They place the hairy skin of goats at the head of the statue set up in the bed for David, asserting the flesh of the Savior to be rough and impure due to mortal sins, saying that until now it still holds the bed of the sepulcher, into which he descended dead. However, Michal covers the statue with garments, which the Church, after recognizing such perfidy, rejects; after showing it to the faithful, it immediately demonstrates it condemned and vanquished through outstanding works that no one else could accomplish.

1 Samuel 19:14

Saul, however, sent messengers to seize David, etc. The unbelieving Jews sent ambushers immediately after the celebration of the Lord's resurrection, who, probing the hearts of the faithful, would seize from them the love of Christ either by flattery or by threats. But they, still silent from carnal fear and remaining hidden until the day of Pentecost, sought to return no other

response to those asking than that faith languished within them and had not yet flourished well, not being firmed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. [1 Samuel 19:15] -- And again Saul sent messengers to see David, etc. When the Church was preaching Christ from the advent of the Holy Spirit, the leaders of the Jews sent [people] to more carefully see what was believed about Jesus, whether He was Christ or a prophet; whether He had risen or still lay in the sepulchre, saying: Proclaim to us who are present; because He has not risen from the dead, but still lying in the bed of earth, He awaited the day of universal resurrection, so that thus faith in Him may be uprooted and eliminated from the world. When the persecutors began to confront the Church, with the faithful rejoicing over Christ's triumph, nothing met the impious except the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense to those who stumbled at the word and did not believe; considering Him as if a leper, struck and humbled by God (Isaiah 53). But He, as the prophet subsequently added: He was wounded for our iniquities, He was crushed for our sins.

1 Samuel 19:17

And Saul said to Michal, Why have you deceived me thus? etc. The unbelieving Jews said to the early Church: Why, having neglected our traditions, did you prefer to believe in Jesus and confess that by rising He put our guards to flight? To which she replied: Because He, she said, threatens not just me, but all who refuse to believe in Him and confess these things, with eternal death. [1 Samuel 19:18] -- David, however, fleeing, was saved, etc. Ramathaim meaning heights, Naioth interpreted as beauty, which is a place in Ramah. Therefore, with Saul's messengers seeing only the image and goatskin in David's bed, David himself fleeing is saved; and with the Jews during the time of the Lord's death arguing among themselves that he was a deceiver, and not truly innocent and just, but was crucified for his crime, the Lord, who was confined in the tomb, mighty arising from death, appears in the heights of life, with immortal glory to the disciples, saying: Because thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead (Luke 24); and he goes, and dwells in the beauty of the everlasting kingdom, which is in heaven. The Church has gone after him in hope both in soul and body, and thus will be with the Lord always.

1 Samuel 19:18

It was announced to Saul by those saying, Behold, David is in Naioth in Ramah, etc. Which also concerning the second messengers, as well as the third, are related in similar order. It was announced to the Jews by the apostles and the disciples of the apostles that the Lord Jesus Christ, after his passion, resurrection, and ascension, sitting at the right hand of the Father, reigns exalted in heaven. But they immediately sent three of their former faith and religion, but now of their impiety and perfidy, namely priests, scribes, and Pharisees, to take away his confession from the believers who were persecuting; all of these persecutors, although bearing the mind of unbelievers, however, where disputing up to the statements of the prophets, to which the apostles with the revelation of the spiritual intelligence of Christ preside, they themselves also protesting these things written by the divine Spirit, simultaneously both loving them with the faithful and believing, though not even understanding, they were singing.

1 Samuel 19:22

He also went to Ramatha, etc. After Jewish doctrine did not prevail against Christ, both words and weapons were added to persecute the Son of Man who sits at the right hand of God the Father on earth. But even their earthly principality, when searching for the hidden things of the Scriptures concerning Jesus and His disciples, found nothing else in them as a response except that He, along with His own, dwells in Naioth in Ramah, that is, in the beauty of the paternal kingdom, in the heights of the heavens. And therefore, it must be certainly known to all the house of Israel that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. And it is fitting that the cistern, which by the depth and breadth of the waters of the Scriptures corresponds to the abyss, is remembered in Socho, that is, situated in humility; because holy Scripture, being contrary to the custom of secular doctrines, existing as the teacher of humility, produced by humble authors, is open only to humble listeners or readers. But the proud, having heard through these the heavenly glory of Christ, whom they could not follow with the step of the body, nor wished to attain with the step of love, began to pursue Him with the step of nefarious action, so that He Himself, saving a certain person from such and restraining their perfidy, might protest and say from Naioth, which is in Ramah, that is,

from the height of the most beautiful seat above: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me" (Acts IX)?

1 Samuel 19:23

And the Spirit of the Lord also came upon him, etc. Indeed, the Jewish persecutor of the Church recognized that holy men of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke; but knowing how to utter their words with his mouth, yet not knowing how to understand them rightly, he did not fear to enter furiously against Him by whom or about whom the words were spoken. However, he prophesied insanely, and indeed still prophesies today; that is, not understanding the true words of the prophets, he recites, reads, loves them, and extends the office of such prophecy to narrating the glory of that same higher beauty which we hope for in the heavens, giving sound without sense, and he reaches the mysteries of the height.

1 Samuel 19:24

He also stripped himself of his garments, etc. These are clearly the acts of a furious and insane person, to strip oneself, fall down vexed, and lie naked on the ground all day and night. Yet, even through the wrath of such a person, the divine power has something mystical to say for those who hear and discern. For through Balaam, who was of a contrary mind to Him, He foretold so many mysteries beforehand, and through the impious persecutor Caiaphas, He gave the secrets of His saving passion to be prophesied, and through a mute animal speaking with a human voice, He forbade the prophet's folly; and He Himself through the possessed Saul, in the presence of Samuel and the other prophets, revealed whatever mystical things He wished, so that the innocent David might seize the path to salvation; so the madness of the pursuing Saul might be made evident to all everywhere; and finally, it might be understood how much the presence of the perfect confers on the desires of the humble, which could even lift the proud by the power of prophecy; and thus the future fate of the persecuting people might be marked, who by their hatred deserved to strip Christ of the ornament of His unique kingdom, to fall from the state of the ancient righteousness, advancing amidst the prosperity and adversity of the Church, naked of both heavenly and earthly glory, miserable and adhering only to worldly desires, and among these to hold the writings of prophecy, which would support the faith of the Church by word alone. And it is well said that he prophesied with the others before

Samuel; for even now the infidel Synagogue meditates and reads the sayings of the Law and the prophets with the Church; yet the Synagogue lacks spiritual understanding, while the Church knows all those things to be understood about the Lord.

1 Samuel 19:24

From where the proverb emerged, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The Jews of the Church have become a proverb, who, with a perverted mentality, make use of Holy Scriptures, which they do not believe or understand, while among the faithful attentive to sacred readings. It is also a proverb for those who will say on the last day: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?" etc. (Matthew VII). And when you see certain unlearned individuals in the Church presumptuously taking the chair of teaching, and under the guise of a faithful teacher, instead of the commands of God, imposing their traditions to be observed, and their doctrines to be followed on deceived listeners, say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

CHAPTER 3.7

Jonathan and David renew their covenant, and with Saul intending to kill David, Jonathan informs him to flee by the shooting of arrows. (1 Samuel 20. David, having therefore fled from Naioth, etc., up to the point where it says, But Jonathan went into the city. In this reading, the Lord, having suffered persecution from the Jews, strengthens the Church more completely gathered from among them by His grace; signifying what is proper to be done concerning those same Jews, and concerning the Gentiles to be called to faith. But those reprobate Jews, feasting on the meals of the Scriptures without faith in Christ, plan equally to destroy Him along with His distinguished members, that is, the apostles, and having driven Him away from themselves, they compel Him to hasten to save the Gentiles. We have said, however, that Naioth in Rama, which means beauty in the high place, is a symbolic representation of the joys of the heavenly kingdom, which the Lord deigned to promise and to open to us by ascending corporeally. We have said that the words of Holy Scripture, in which the same kingdom is foretold, indicate this. But in both of these exalted beauties, the Lord always remains and appears to His faithful;

from the unfaithful and the proud, however, He turns Himself away and withdraws, because they neither believe when hearing from the teacher that

He reigns in heaven, nor do they read in the prophet themselves, that as He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men (Psalm 68, Ephesians 4). And, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool (Psalm 110); or understand other similar sayings about Him. And this is what it means for David to flee because of Saul's plots. About the beauty set on high, the Lord Savior, who is at the right hand of God, is not believed by the proud who hear Him saying that He ascended to heaven, the mysteries of which prophecy abounds with, and cannot be found at all in the Prophetic reading by impious seekers, who are always wholly present everywhere, but when absent from the wicked, He departs; let us see where He comes and is present.

1 Samuel 20:1

He came and spoke before Jonathan, "What have I done?" etc. Expelled because of disbelief in the Lord by the reprobate, He often returns more sweetly to the hearts of those who love Him, reminding them frequently of His incarnation, innocent life, and unjust persecution, so that rejoicing in Him, they may confess to the memory of His holiness. [1 Samuel 20:3] -- Moreover, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, etc. He was separated from death by only a single step, that is, by the wall of the house in which he was staying, when (as the title of the fifty-eighth psalm also contains) Saul sent and watched him, seeking to kill him. But immediately slipping from death through a window, he was rescued and fled away, saved completely, so that by the Lord's mercy, what was foretold in the same title might happen: "Do not destroy David," in the title's inscription. This should likewise be understood also of the Lord Savior, as He was separated from death by only a single step, so to speak, due to the temerity of men, when the chief priests sent and watched over His tomb, trying to block His resurrection, by denying the entrance to it, drawing His disciples away from the faith, and erasing all memory of His name from the midst if His disciples were retracted from faith. But according to the testimony of the mentioned inscription, just as neither the title written by Pilate, "This is the King of the Jews," nor the kingdom of the same King could ever be corrupted.

1 Samuel 20:11

And Jonathan said to David, "Come, let us go out into the field," etc. A marvelous way of speaking, as if he began to speak to God, which yet he com-

pleted in speaking to a man; but this was due to the incomparably ardent affection between the young men, mutually commending each other in virtue; this as a sign of faith, always and everywhere to be kept with God as witness; which grammarians call the figure paraprosdociam in Greek, that is, an unexpected outcome. Therefore, Jonathan and David, first secretly in the city, then also going out into the field, make a covenant of the Lord, so that Jonathan would not hide from David anything that his father might think good about him; he would not introduce him to his father unless perhaps converted to piety; but also Jonathan himself, if he lives, would receive mercy from David; if indeed he dies, David would show mercy to his house forever. Because the primitive Church at its beginning was to no small extent judaizing, but soon, going out into the fruitful breadth of Christian liberty, entered into a covenant with the Lord of perpetual love;

it was agreed that if any of the Jewish persecutors of Christ wished to recognize goodness and turn to him, their faith and conversion would immediately be made known to his faithful members, that is, to the Church itself, so that they might obtain full salvation by its association, and not cast pearls before swine, not profane its sacraments to the unbelievers, but rather believe that they should be piously received by those who would rejoice to live in peace. And if indeed among the Jews the state and life of the Church would remain intact, they would not be crowned by their own merit as believers, but by the compassion and mercy of their Author. And if, by their scorning, the way of life turned to themselves, nevertheless, to any believing among that people individually until the end of the age, and to all converted remnants together at the end, entrance to mercy would not be denied.

1 Samuel 20:5

And Jonathan said to him: Tomorrow is the New Moon, etc. The holy Scripture does not denote those unequal beginnings of the months, which the Romans have annually, twelve in number, but the new moons, which are called Neomenia by the Greeks; which the Hebrews solemnly celebrated according to the institution of the law, with sacrifices, feasts, and the rest of the Sabbath, that is, of rest. This is signified by the Holy Spirit, as often as Christ sprinkles the Church, as often as any faithful soul, like the sun, with the new light of his grace, immediately spiritual sacrifices of life are to be offered more solemnly to God, immediately sweetly indulging in the feasts of divine sayings, immediately all the commotions of external cares must be

put aside in happy rest. Wherefore Jonathan now speaks to David about coming tomorrow on the Calends.

1 Samuel 20:13

Descend therefore quickly, etc. That is, on the day when it was allowed to work up to the Kalends, he would go; so that through the Kalends, on which he said all should be silent, he would sit quietly. Jonathan therefore says to David that the Kalends will be tomorrow, and that he will be sought by Saul until the day after tomorrow. The early Church, having learned from him what to say to him, says to Christ; that the time is at hand when the Sun of righteousness will renew in the light of truth those believing or about to believe from the Jews; and that unbelievers will seek him, and in the rising of the new light, which happens through the hearing of the word, and in the increase of the same light, which happens through the operation of the heard word. For to those listening in the Church, and to those performing the commandments of the Gospel, they contrived deceits, of which the Lord speaks: Let my enemies be confounded and ashamed, who seek my soul (Psalm 35, 36, and 69). Jonathan was advising David to descend quickly, and come to the place where he should be hidden, and that on the day when it was allowed to work; and he should sit next to the stone Ezel, which is interpreted as departing, or going.

The elders of the early Church were praying to the Lord that by the grace of his inspiration he would descend quickly into the hearts of the faithful, that is, into the place always receptive to his love, of which it is sung in the Psalms, And his place has been made in peace (Psalm 75). Where he should be hidden by faith from those who, disbelieving in Christian peace, would resist, and being given over to external things, would not deserve to view the mysteries of their Creator. The devout were also praying that he would deign to make his dwelling among those strong in faith, who were ready in spirit either to always advance to virtue or, having been perfected in virtues, to depart to behold the joys of heavenly life. But they desired these things in the light of grace for those present, at a time namely of doing good to all, and of running in the way of light, lest anyone be unknowingly overtaken by exterior darkness. These things also today as then, and as long as today is called today, the desires of the saints wish the Lord Savior to accomplish with insatiable prayers.

1 Samuel 20:20

And I will send three arrows near him, etc. And I, the Church says to the Lord, with you dwelling in the hearts of the perfect, will send preachers of the holy and undivided Trinity, who, with wings of virtues, will be quick-flying, penetrating with the sharpness of their speech, stirred by the bow of diligent reading, to strike with the word of faith those who are more fragile and still, and almost earthly, yet remaining in the vicinity of the strong, held by the friendly bond of love, so that, touched by the salutary wound of charity, they may be compelled to bear all visible things gravely, to rest in the memory of their Creator alone, and to have His sole vision as sweetness. But I will send them, not as if they would end the uncertain course of the word, but as if training me to the sign of true and singular salvation, as if following only the look of divine will, directing all the blows of my doctrine to the intended target, I will pursue to the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus. I will also send listeners eager to obey the faith; who, diligently seeking through all the spiritual teachings or deeds of the doctors, may piously relate to the glory of my state, by following it devoutly.

To these listeners, indeed, if I show them capturing these same teachers who are near them, and placed among them by living well, if you deign to visit me, I will show that the usual blessing from the Jews is to be increased because peace is yours, with the arms of the hateful at rest meanwhile. But if I show that the same teachers, humbled by me, being further cast out and pursued from Judea, go and tend to visit all nations; because this is the will and providence of the eternal Father, that, blindness coming upon Israel, the fullness of the nations may enter the gates of life. Of the single word of the Father, which we shall have spoken, I confessing, and you teaching, let God the Father almighty Himself alone be the eternal witness between me and you; and rightly, because the Father alone knows the secrets of the Son, and only to those whom the Father has deigned to reveal them. Of these, the same Son speaks to the Father: And you revealed them to little children (Matthew XI). Who decreed that this God, begotten before the ages, should be incarnate at the end of the ages, and that they should be saved by the same incarnation. But speaking these things, the Church does not instruct the Lord as if He were ignorant of what He should do, nor does she teach what she herself shall do as if He were unaware;

but she prays devotedly that He accomplish these things quickly, which she has learned mercifully to be done by Him. What she should do rightly, having received through Him, she ceaselessly praises herself for this by giving thanks.

1 Samuel 20:24

David therefore hid in the field, etc. Christ is hidden in Christians by faith so that He might not be seen by those who have learned only to know, believe, and love earthly and temporal things; and times have come in which the splendor of the Church would more and more increase through the touch of the new Sun of righteousness: and the people of the Jews sat among those who rejoiced more in the pride of an earthly kingdom than in being humbled for a heavenly one, to enjoy the feasts of sacred readings.

1 Samuel 20:25

And the place of David appeared empty, etc. To unbelievers, the place of Christ appears empty in the Scriptures; because although they recount the entire series of the Old Testament, they do not deserve to find Him whom the learned scribe in the kingdom of heaven knows to find nearly everywhere in the divine pages. Thus Saul, as a type of the Jews, sitting to eat the bread of Scripture, cannot have Christ present, whom he had driven from his table by hating Him. But Cleophas, with his companion, although not yet fully recognizing Him, but already loving Him, invited Him to the table; and therefore immediately recognized Him in the breaking of the bread (Luke XXIV). We also do both today while reading, as some, perverse, try to turn even clear sayings about Christ to something else; others, piously and soberly seeking Christ in the dishes of divine letters presented, begin to have Him present, though not immediately recognized, until He Himself gradually reveals to us what was previously closed mysteries, as if we recognize Him in the offering of bread which He broke for us. Yet not all who in the Scriptures they read, cannot understand Christ, can immediately also stir up questions or persecutions against Christ; because the human mind is accustomed to gradually decline into vices just as it progresses in virtues. It can also be understood thus, that while Saul was dining, the place of David appeared empty: the Lord called His members, namely the Church, from celebrating the carnal sacraments of the law to engage in more spiritual ones. But to both senses, what follows is appropriate:

1 Samuel 20:26

He was thinking that perhaps it had happened to him, etc. For the Jews thought that Jesus was neither clean nor purified from sins because he had violated the Sabbath and done other things contrary to the decrees of the law or rather of their own traditions, and taught them as well. Therefore, they rightly found nothing in the Scriptures that could be recorded about him. They thought that the disciples of Christ were not clean because they saw that they placed the righteousness of faith before the works and purifications of the law. And so they did not consider it significant that they had not come with them to sacrifices, for they utterly detested them in their hearts due to their lifestyle differences, or even had excommunicated them from the synagogue. [1 Samuel 20:27] -- And when the second day after the Kalends dawned, etc. When in the hearts of the faithful the radiance of new grace happily grew after the silence of listening to the word until the time arrived to act on what was taught, nevertheless, the brazenness of the unfaithful celebrated empty sustenance without Christ and the rites of the flesh blindly performed sacred rituals. Traitorous parents of those chosen for Christ sought from their children, of whom it is said: "By whom do your sons expel them?" (Luke 11:19). Why did the Christians not flock to the carnal works of the law, I mean circumcision, sacrifices, and various solemnities, to hear or perform them along with the others? Why could Jesus himself, whom they believed incarnate from the root of Jesse, dead, and resurrected, as Christ God, not be found anywhere in prophetic reading?

1 Samuel 20:28

And Jonathan answered Saul: He earnestly requested me that he might go to Bethlehem, etc. It indeed seems strange according to the letter, why he should think and inquire about David in this manner, or Jonathan should respond, when the very obvious cause of royal jealousy had occurred, by which David should rightly seek his own safety, or even life: unless perhaps Saul ought to be supposed to have done or said many things under the frequent invasion of the demon, which, like those possessed, he was neither able to premeditate beforehand nor to remember afterward: and among these, also, the matter regarding David is believed to have occurred rather in the spirit of one enraged than one listening. Even Scripture seems to support this view, which, with David absent from Saul's table, says that Saul did not

reconsider the previously inflicted injury, but only thought that he might be unclean, either due to nocturnal sleep, or intercourse, or some touch of a funeral or something defiled, by which he would be kept from the company of the pure according to the edict of the law. Moreover, it supports what is written at the beginning of this entire reading: And the evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul (1 Samuel 19). However, whatever may be the case, the mystical sense is clear. For the dove-like simplicity of the chosen ones of Christ answered the ruling Synagogue that persecutes:

Jesus Christ, whom you ask about, my God and Lord, earnestly requested me, that, by sending teachers for this very purpose and in every direction, I might bring Him into the heart of the New Testament of those rejoicing in grace, where there is no blood of victims, no Mosaic manna, but according to the order of Melchizedek, the living bread which came down from heaven is celebrated in a mystery. Hence the assembly of such people is most rightly called by the sacred name of Bethlehem, that is, house of bread. Let me go, he says, to such people, believing in the mystery of the same baptism, and also the companionship of your catholic peace. And what is first and last becomes fitting, the guardianship of the word by which they are catechized and perpetually confirmed is to be entrusted to them; for the solemn sacrifice is the very life of the converted in the city of our God, on his holy mountain (Ps. 47). The unity of my chosen ones, who are my brothers and coheirs by grace, beseeches me with frequent prayers that I may always deign to multiply their number with a new generation of believers. Now if you love me with all your heart, also allow me to make others future brothers of mine by visiting through you for this cause. Nor did he longer care to seek the typical table of the law with its own;

nor in the Scripture, which you do not understand by reading carnally, do you find him who is to be sought spiritually.

1 Samuel 20:30

But Saul, angry against Jonathan, etc. The elders of the Synagogue, angry against the assembly of spiritual people, call his mother the Church by the name of an adulteress, because she has nobly taken Christ instead of Moses, the bridegroom instead of the friend of the bridegroom, the Lord instead of the servant, to be governed. "Do we not know," they say, "that you love Jesus to your own confusion, and to the confusion of Christian doctrine?" Which is deservedly called disgraceful, because, carrying the sacred law, it gleefully

abandons even the most august and widely glorified gathering of the temple, and prefers to gather its congregations in secret places despised. For as long as faith in Jesus is on earth, you will not be stable, nor will your kingdom. So now, send teachers, and even those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as God, let them rather listen to us, follow our teachings, because the assembly serving this name is the son of death. Indeed, these things were said by the perfidious; yet it turned out far otherwise than they complained, because those who, out of love for an earthly kingdom, were persecuting the citizens of heaven wandering on earth, lost both the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom together: both of which they could have had if they preferred not to impiously drive away the one Lord of both by persecuting, but to piously receive by following.

1 Samuel 20:32

But Jonathan answering his father Saul, said, etc. The assembly of the faithful in Christ, answering the unbelievers, said: Why does the Christian religion perish? Why is Christ Himself torn apart by you with a rapid bite, whom the governor himself, who gave Him over to death, first confessed to be innocent and just? Whom the thief, who also received the same sentence of death, testified to have done no evil? Indeed, co-heirs of Christ, persisting in the defense of the faith, the perfidious took up arms to conquer them; and because, after the glory of the resurrection, they could not reach Christ, nor lay hands on Him a second time, they struck His members in His place. [1 Samuel 20:34] -- Therefore Jonathan rose from the table in a fit of anger, etc. When persecution arose because of the word, the apostles and the foremost teachers of the Church gradually withdrew from the very custom of Judaizing, which they had maintained for some time to avoid scandalizing the persecutors, as both the Epistle to the Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles bear fuller witness. And to those who did not refuse to listen to the words of the law that sounded carnally (which is, as we have explained above, the beginning of intellectual new moon), they neither wished to agree nor be absent in observing these things carnally. For there was great sorrow and continuous grief over Christ in their hearts, because their brothers and kinsmen, who did not believe in Him, did not listen to them when they taught. He, who was blessed God over all forever, had been born among them according to the flesh and had deigned to become a curse for the good of others, in order to rescue us from the curse of the law.

1 Samuel 20:35

And when the morning dawned, Jonathan came into the field, etc. When, after the teaching and glorious operation, even the exhibition of virtues began to rise like the third day of the Kalends in the Church, the harmonious society of spiritual teachers came, having left the table of literal observance for the fruitful liberty of grace, according to the disposition of the Lord Savior; and the chorus of humble listeners followed, to whom she herself instructing said: "See that you grow with the steps of good deeds, and understand that all the ministers of the word whom I disperse near or far are to be preserved in my catholic peace, and do not be disturbed by the seeming harsh outcome of anyone at present, although untimely death may snatch away, although a fierce Indian, although a savage and barbarous Scythian may separate by mutual theft, the integrity of all my state unites with one heart and soul, having granted the same reward of life in heaven. Or certainly gathering the boy saying thus, and bringing Jonathan the arrows he shot, recognizing the good disciples who diligently captured both the words and deeds of their masters, and these were to be piously and soberly referred back for the confirmation of the universal Church. And when the attentive listeners had persisted in saying and doing the word together, that dove-like unity of the saints, customarily called the Church, sent other teachers, who, progressing beyond the first listeners, even committed the word to the external towns of the nations.

Therefore, humility of learners came, and to observe the deeds or teachings of those whom the wretched Church sent, for suddenly from the very mission a new voice of the fervent faith of the Church struck, which the humility of the lesser ones could not foresee, showing that they who would wound hearts healthily with the sharpness of the word like arrows, were to be destined among the nations; the first and prominent arrow struck the heart of Cornelius the centurion, expelling the deadly filth, wounding better to receive new life. And the Church cried out to its listeners still ignorant of the heavenly disposition; which is behind the boy, lest anyone delay to follow the path of virtue in the time of growing grace.

1 Samuel 20:36

The boy Jonathan collected the arrows, etc. The humble discipleship of the pious learned the deeds in order, learned also the sayings of the teachers, and

attributed all praise to the Church; or, as we expounded above, he saw the disciples of Christ, whether still vigorous with life or already snatched by death, widely dispersed from Jerusalem, from where the word of the Lord had gone out, and recognized that all should be gathered into one heavenly Jerusalem; yet he could not know the divine secret, that salvation was to be given to the nations through repentance. For only those greater in the Lord, to whom it is said; But I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you (John 15), and he himself, strong in hand, and desired by all nations, knew this secret thing.

1 Samuel 20: 40

Jonathan therefore gave his weapons to the boy, etc. He gave examples of the learned, he gave the rules of good conduct to be imitated by his disciples in the Church, and said to them: Go, advancing from strength to strength, compare these things with the testimonies of the law and the prophets, and see that we do nothing different under the teaching of Christ than what Moses and the prophets have spoken about the future.

1 Samuel 20: 42

And when the boy had gone, David arose from his place, etc. When the disciples, obeying the command of their elders, went to compile the events of their times according to the writings of their predecessors, the grace of Christ appeared more abundantly, shining forth from the virtues of the saints, those, of course, who kept their hearts open to receive the gifts of the most fervent charity given by the Holy Spirit with humble submission. For this is the most splendid diversity of the growing Church, which the forty-fourth Psalm sings, so that some manifest Christ's presence in themselves by shining with miracles; others, still intent on sacred writings, consider how the old and new harmonize with each other; others perform various services of the same faith; and still others embody what the following words signify, that divine love suddenly coming to earthly hearts provokes them with diligent contrition to adore more fervently the glory of the Holy Trinity; which our strong and desirable Lord Himself is said to do when He kindles His saints inwardly to act. As it is also said about the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit helps our infirmities (for we do not know how to pray as we ought), but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspeakable groanings" (Romans VIII); that is, He causes; this figure of speech is very common in sacred Scriptures, called

"metonymy" by grammarians in Greek, that is, transnaming, while through the efficient the effect is intended to be understood. Just like the lawgiver's words:

"The Lord your God tests you to know whether you love Him or not" (Deut. XIII); that is, to make it known. And they kissed each other and wept. Not in vain; for the more mutual love, which inward virtue nourished, sweetly incited those very holy youths to embraces and kisses, the more the everlasting separation, which they now saw impending for them, provoked them more sharply to tears and lamentations. But in the typological sense, it must be said that our Lord bestowed His holy gifts of His mouth on those believing in Him from among the Jews; for the non-believers and those expelling Him by persecution, He did not refuse to weep, saying: "If you too had known. For David and Jonathan kissing each other signifies the Lord bestowing to the Church the salutary gifts of His word, and the Church responding devoutly to the Lord with the same word's confession or teaching. They weep together, and this signifies the Lord, in our flesh, shedding tears both for awakening the elect to life and for the reprobate remaining in eternal death; one proven in the resurrection of Lazarus, the other in seeing and lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem; and His saints even now, inspired by Him, mourn many who sin and have not cared to return to salvation through repentance. For the believers could not see without pain and sorrow the Lord Christ leaving their compatriots in unbelief to convert to the salvation of the Gentiles. They wept together, he said, but David even more;

because whatever the Church works for either her growth, in which she rejoices, or her loss, in which she grieves, it is far less indeed in comparison to what God could do in the flesh for her.

1 Samuel 20:42

Then Jonathan said to David: Go in peace, etc. However, the Lord rose from the midst of the unbelieving Synagogue, saying: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing? Behold, your house is left to you desolate (Matthew 23); and He went to seek a Church for Himself from the Gentiles. But even the more perfect returned to the teachers in the primitive Church from the consideration of the aforementioned right hand of the

Most High, to complete the new peaks of the city descending from God out of heaven. If the city, as seen above, is pleasing to be understood as the fortification of prophetic reading, from which it is said: And we have the more sure prophetic word, to which you do well to attend, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts (2 Peter 1); and it is very pleasing for the afflicted and sorrowful to enter this, so that under its protection each one may either more secretly indulge in tears or more wisely wipe away the tears.

CHAPTER 3.8

Achimelech the priest gives David and his companions consecrated bread and the sword of Goliath, while Doeg the Edomite spies on them from hiding. (1 Kings XXI. Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest, etc., up to what is written: There is none like that; give it to me. Chiefly, in this reading, David shows that the Lord Savior, from his lineage, will be born as both king and priest, when he receives consecrated bread, which is only permitted for priests to eat, for himself and his companions to eat, and prepares to conquer with a royal right, arming himself with a sword unlike any other. But nothing prohibits understanding through the bread the food of the word, and through the sword those who strike the wicked with the word of truth. Therefore, in this reading, the Lord commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel to the nations, abstaining from the filth of vices; and those who were the weapons of a strong wicked man to make them instruments of justice, with a strong and desirable hand, not only suitable for agreeing with truths but also for resisting false doctrines. Nor does it inappropriately shine with both meanings; of which the Lord himself deigned to make mention in the Gospels. Therefore, David came, fleeing the snares of Saul, to the city of Nob, which translates to "barking," to Ahimelech the priest, who translates as "my brother.

The King comes, avoiding the snares of the Jews, to the gathering of faithful teachers, who, intent on long night watches, are accustomed to give some great, as it were, barks of preaching for the Lord, and to defend the house of faith sagaciously from the assault of the wicked, due to the memory of internal refreshment; who are rightly designated by the name of Ahimelech the priest, because they are ministers of the new priesthood in Christ, who deserve to hear: And I appoint to you, as my Father has appointed to me a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my king-

dom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke XXII). Elsewhere, the Lord, because he wished to seek them out, having avoided the persecutors, showed praying to the Father, saying: But you, O Lord, do not be far from me. Look to my defense. Deliver my soul from the sword, my only one from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth, and my humility from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation, I will praise you (Psalm XXI).

1 Samuel 21:1

And Achimelech was astonished, etc. The ancient chosen ones were astonished, and the modern ones are astonished too, whenever they receive the coming of the Lord's visitation with a simple mind. They are not only stunned by the majesty of His vision, but also disturbed by the rarity of those who desire to follow the grace of such great piety. For it is said: Why are you alone, and no one with you? As it is said elsewhere: My escape has perished, and there is no one who seeks my soul (Psalm 141). Though it is certain that during the time of the passion, many saints, although very few compared to the crowd of persecutors, lovingly sought the soul of Christ. But just as where it was not among them, of those whose snares are set for me, those who seek the soul of Christ (Psalm 34), so here there was none of those who expelled Christ who followed the faith of Christ. And elsewhere, when he says: All have turned aside, they have together become worthless; there is none who does good, not even one (Psalm 13). To show that he meant not all men entirely, but all of those who were to be spoken about, he added further and said: They devour my people as they devour bread: they do not call upon the Lord, they trembled with fear where there was no fear, because God is in the generation of the righteous. And in the Gospel the Lord says:

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12). It is known that the same grain before the passion of its death had many faithful followers. But it is said to be alone without the company of those who were previously unbelievers who were to be called to faith through the same passion. Why then, he says, are you alone, and no one with you? Why are you alone, that is, with your faithful members, and none outside the predetermined number by the Father could be saved from such a multitude? This is said more with astonishment than for the chosen ones to speak by reasoning against proud counsel.

1 Samuel 21: 2

And David said to Achimelech the priest: "The king has commanded me a certain matter," etc. The Lord said to the apostles, the heirs of the everlasting kingdom and priesthood: "The people of persecutors and unbelievers commanded me, as much as possible, not to call them to faith by teaching. And he said, as it were, in my ears: Let no one know the reason for the envy and plots for which, having left me, you were sent to bring salvation to the nations, and what kind of deceitful commands overflowing with wicked hatred I strove to remove you from my borders. Similar to what the Psalmist said: "They have plotted to hide snares: they said, 'Who will see them?' (Psalm 63)? When he saw, who even searched the kidneys and hearts of the plotters, God (Jer. 17). For he said, "I have separated the peoples of the nations who would believe and obey me in various parts of the world; to whom, I beseech you, if you have anything at hand of perfect work, use it as an example for conversion, or the food of the sacred law, which shines forth in the five books written by Moses, or whatever you can find from yourselves, diligently offer it for their salvation. Some boast either of the impunity of their lie or of the denigration of Scripture, claiming that David did not hesitate to seek his and his followers' salvation by lying.

They should be answered that David himself elsewhere and many of the saints often offended God by sinning, indeed no living being is justified before Him, as the great apostle said, who deserved to recline in the bosom of his Creator and Lord due to his exceptional love: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1). However, the words of Holy Scripture were not given to us so that we might learn to sin by the examples of good people; but their sins were included in the sacred Scriptures so that we might be taught not to presume upon our own righteousness from their faults, but to trust in obtaining pardon for our own sins by their penance. Nevertheless, I believe it can be easily defended in this passage that the blessed David did not lie, but, given the necessity, concealed the truth in more cautious words. For he did not say the king was his friend, nor denied fleeing the king's plots; but he said, "The king has commanded me a certain matter, and said: Let no one know the matter about which you are being sent by me. To this statement, such a sense can be applied without the stain of falsehood: "Therefore, I come alone and deserted by the company of oth-

ers, because the king gave me such a command to flee quickly, which none of the enemies should know lest they betray my presence here.

But if anyone desires to know about the necessity of lies or the constancy of a just man possibly requiring such a necessity, let him read the book of Saint Augustine on the eight kinds of lies, wonderfully and healthily moderated; and also the conferences of the Fathers, where Joseph, a distinguished figure amongst the Fathers, disputed excellently about not defining anything, also fully addressing this minor question. I have proposed only that this is enough to say briefly for the present. While truth should always be preferred to a lie without any doubt, sometimes, due to the circumstances, a lie might be usefully resorted to for a time, and the truth healthily hidden. Finally, did not Rahab the harlot, justified by works, receive the messengers and send them out another way? But she could not fulfill the merit of justification without temporarily assuming the aid of a lie. And Doeg the Edomite, whose present reading includes spying, and the following reading shows betrayal, deserved to be destroyed in the type of Judas Iscariot, to be plucked up, rooted out, and eradicated from the land of the living due to his evident knowledge of the truth.

1 Samuel 21: 4

And the priest answering David, said to him, etc. Because "laos" in Greek means "people," "laic breads" signify common breads, that is, those not consecrated by offering, but common and prepared for ordinary use. Therefore, the sacred order of spiritual leaders answering Christ says: I have nothing of secular wisdom in the work of righteousness, but only the word of the Gospel, which I will commit to clean listeners. But neither do I consider that this is to be believed among the Gentiles, unless perhaps those who are converted from the various temptations of errors to the chastity and piety of the one Church virgin. For it is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs (Matthew V; Mark VII).

1 Samuel 21: 5

And David answered the priest, and said to him: Indeed, if it concerns women, etc. He answered those sending forth the apostles to teach the nations: What God has purified, do not call common (Acts X). For the Church restrained itself with my present help from idolatry and other crimes, from the time when it emerged through confession from the hiding place of ancient

blindness, until it came to the light of knowing the holy Trinity, which is God; and the hearts of the humble were holy through the renunciation of Satan. Moreover, this manner of life, which is lived among the nations, is polluted, not yet purified, sanctified, and justified by those being catechized through the fountain of regeneration and the grace of the Spirit; but the very light of present reconciliation will sanctify it in those who receive baptism with a devout heart. It should truly be noted, according to the letter, how cautiously and wisely David either questioned the priest, or responded to the priest about his own and his followers' purity. For he not only inquired if the boys could receive the holy bread if they were clean from women, but also examined if they were clean from all pollution, which typically happens to mortals, especially concerning the contamination of womanly coupling, as if investigating matters greater than others.

For indeed, this is the greatest of those things which, though they do not make people guilty by fault, yet deter them from the touch of the saints through the impurity of any kind, for example, the touch of a dead body, or of a reptile. But David, not without discernment, examining himself and his followers, asserts that they abstained from the embrace of a wife, carefully explaining the duration of the same abstinence. He testifies that all the utensils of the boys are holy, that is, their weapons, clothes, and even the small vessels they carried for likely provisions were clean from the contamination of any filth. And because he knew that what was consecrated to divine ministries was not to be transferred to common use without great discernment, so that he would hide nothing of his state from the priest who was a steward of these things, he says only that the road by which they had come was polluted, evidently with some funerary object lying on it, or by being unclean itself. But he also says that today it will be sanctified in the vessels; that is, I do not believe that we could be defiled by the fact that we traveled a path containing something unclean, since we carefully preserved all our utensils and bodies from the touch of the same contamination.

1 Samuel 21:6

The priest therefore gave him the sanctified bread. Because he heard that they were clean who were to receive it, he consented to give them the sanctified bread; which he would in no way dare to do if he had not recognized them as clean in all respects. But if such careful attention to purity was required of him who was to taste the typical bread sanctified by the hands of

Moses, how much more necessary is it for those who, having accepted the bread sanctified into the sacrament of Christ's body in his holy and venerable hands, received in memory of his death, are to partake of it as a help to eternal life, to take care of their purity? Indeed, it is necessary for one always to remember the saying of the Apostle: "For whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. 11). The priest therefore gave him the sanctified bread.

1 Samuel 21:6

For there was no bread there but that, etc. The apostles gave to those who believed, and were baptized from among the Gentiles, the word of the law and the prophets, sanctified by the grace of the Gospel. For there was no literal knowledge among the apostles and the disciples of the apostles, except only the prophetic books, which had been openly proposed to the ancient people for reading, and had recently been fulfilled by the Incarnation of the Lord, so that they were no longer held to be said, in order that the books of the New Testament might be written, to refresh the souls of priests, that is, those united to the eternal priest's members, warmed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. And it should be noted that David asked for bread, not five or twelve (for that was the number of the showbread), but it is said that he received sanctified bread singularly; just as he is remembered to have put five stones into his pouch, but struck down Goliath with one. There are five books containing the elements of legal doctrine. But, as the apostle says, the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22; Mark 12).

It can also rightly be understood that the sanctified bread is singularly named, either because of the unity of faith and love, but should be understood plurally due to either the various works of virtues or the multiple abundance of divine Scriptures by which we are instructed in virtues; just as what is written singularly in the Psalms: He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them (Psalm 77), there is no doubt that it must be understood in the plural, especially since the Lord in the Gospels, preferring mercy over sacrifice, affirms that the bread given to him must be understood in the plural (Matthew 9). Have you not read, he says, what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread, which was

not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests (Luke 6)? Where, according to the interpretation in which we said that the Lord our Savior was figuratively shown in this reading as both priest and king, it must be understood as prefigured, that the priestly food, upon the coming of the Lord, was no longer to be given to Levi or the people of the children of Israel only, but to all the Gentiles who are to be called to faith. For it has been said to all who hunger for righteousness, who wish to belong to the company of the true David:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession (1 Peter 2). And because we have spoken about the mystery to the best of our ability, Josephus's statements (Antiquities 3, 13) also help to elucidate the plain sense of the letter more clearly regarding the showbread, which we thought should be briefly looked into and inserted into our treatise for the benefit of the readers. For, since the religion and status of Jerusalem and the temple were still standing in his times, he could very easily know and reveal to the readers what was carried out by the priests through hereditary succession, as he himself was a priest. He says, therefore, "they used to make them out of fine flour without leaven, twenty-four in number. And he adds: "They are baked two by two, split before the Sabbath, and on the Sabbath morning, they are placed on the sacred table, facing each other, with two golden dishes full of incense placed on top of them, which remain until the next Sabbath, when other loaves are brought in their place. Those loaves are then offered to the priests, and after the incense is burnt in the sacred fire, in which all holocausts are made, other incense is added to the other loaves."

1 Samuel 21:7

Now there was there a man of the servants of Saul... and his name was Doeg, etc. There were among the preaching apostles false brothers, the foremost being Judas; indeed within the Church, constituted by the mystery of faith, but moved from the firmness of their stability, bloodthirsty to betray the peace of fraternity (for Doeg is called the Edomite, a bloodthirsty man), the most powerful of the Jewish persecutors, because he received it recently. Nor do I think it should be overlooked that this Doeg, according to the Septuagint interpreters, was not merely any shepherd, but a muleteer; evidently, a shepherd of a sterile and unfruitful flock. For we know a mule, because it is a hybrid from a mare and a donkey, just as conversely a hinny from a stallion

and a she-donkey, tends to seek the pleasure of mating without the fruit of generating. Their works are similar to the unfruitful works of darkness, produced from a defiled seed, so to speak, of luxurious or deceitful thoughts. For both animals are equally lustful. Whence it is said of certain ones: "Whose flesh is as the flesh of donkeys, and whose issue is as the issue of horses" (Ezekiel 23). But the donkey's kind, moreover, with more acute sense, is always intent upon deceptions and snares. By these same wicked works, accumulating to a greater degree, with any movement itself from justice, and he is prompt to weave frauds against the just, he is placed in charge with impious zeal, as if feeding, Doeg the Edomite is preferred over the flock of mules.

1 Samuel 21:8

But David said to Ahimelech, "If you have a spear or a sword here at hand, etc." The Savior urges the apostles to train their listeners not only to learn but also to teach the word of life, by which He Himself can conquer the world, because He delayed sending preachers of the Gospel throughout the world, who would always fight for the Church against the aerial powers, instead of the angelic virtues through which the law was ordained in the hand of the Mediator. For the word of the king was pressing, that is, the enormity of human depravity, which preferred to reign by neglecting God, compelled that not angels, whose spiritual glory they could not see due to habitual carnal life, but mortal men alike to them should be sent to instruct them, who would proclaim to them to turn from vanity to the living God; who, if they had never sinned, would now rejoice in the familiar fellowship of angelic light.

1 Samuel 21:9

And the priest said: Behold the sword of Goliath the Philistine, etc. The apostles said to Christ, teachers seeking against the kingdom of the world: Behold men accustomed to battle for the devil with perverse doctrines for a long time, whom you have overcome in the humility of the cross, are entangled in the trappings of the first transgression, far removed from the garments or ornaments of the priesthood, that is, works worthy of divine sight; if you wish to release them from these same trappings, and promote them to the rank of preaching truth, we know this is due to your power, not to our virtue or piety. For there is no mortal on earth who was not immediately

subjected to the service of this kingdom upon being born, because the corrupted root, once defiled, could only produce branches of a corrupted progeny. And the Lord said: No one is better equipped to refute doctrines of vanity than those who were once imbued with them and accustomed to defend them against the Church: from their number, whom I already know to have been snatched from the hands of the devil, I will make teachers and bishops of the Church through teaching and baptizing. The title of Psalm 34 aptly recalls this choice, which reads: A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed. For he changed his behavior by declaring a false reason for his journey and concealing the true one.

This can be interpreted as the Lord changing his appearance before the apostles, either by appearing immortal after the glory of the resurrection, having previously been seen as mortal before the agony of the passion; or by commanding them to go and teach and baptize all nations (Matthew 28), whereas shortly before he had instructed them to preach only to Judea, avoiding the ways of the Gentiles and the cities of the Samaritans; but he sent them out to preach everywhere, himself cooperating and confirming the word by the accompanying signs (Mark 16), and he himself departed by the triumph of his ascension, returning to heaven. And in the same Psalm, the Lord himself testifies in the first part that he continuously blesses the Father, admonishing his meek ones—the apostles—to persevere with him in preaching his praise, who had delivered him from the tribulation of passion and death. In the second part, he declares the rewards for the faithful's conversion, especially encouraging them to the feast of that most sweet bread, which in the present reading he receives sanctified, to be shared with his own in the kingdom of the Father. In the third part, he admonishes his boys as if they were his children, from whom they should abstain from impurities when approaching this bread. In the fourth part, he says the just will be delivered from all tribulations, and the impious will suffer due punishments.

These things have been briefly stated by way of summary, so that every reader may recognize how excellently and harmoniously Scripture always and everywhere concurs with itself. And if anyone wishes to object that the priest to whom David came was called Ahimelech, not Abimelech, we respond that he had two names, not according to our opinion, but according to the inscription of another Psalm, which states: When Doeg the Edomite

came and told Saul, and said to him: David has come to the house of Abimelech (Psalm 52). And even by this name the glory of the saints is not improperly shown, for it means "My Father's kingdom. They are the ones of whom the Lord spoke the parable of the kingdom: A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom for himself, and to return (Luke 19). That is, Christ the man, departing from the bosom of the Father, went to men who had distanced themselves from his grace by sinning, to make them worthy of his reign, and to return with them to the joys of eternal peace. And concerning whom the Apostle, preaching the glory of the resurrection, had said: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Christ at his coming, then the end; he added and said: When he hands over the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15), that is, when he leads those saints he redeemed to the vision of the Father to be glorified.

CHAPTER 3.9

David, coming to Achish and being known for who he was, escapes by pretending to be insane; fleeing to the cave of Adullam, he receives four hundred men who come to him, and setting out thence, he entrusts his parents to the king of Moab. Therefore David arose and fled that day from Saul's face, etc., up to what is written: David departed and went into the forest of Hereth. In this reading, the Lord, being persecuted, envied, and despised for what He began to do and teach by the leaders of the Jews, went from there and came into the hearts of the humble; and having gathered many crowds of believers to Himself, He became their leader. He also hastened to save the Gentiles, making His dwelling among them, intending to return both to God the Father and to the Church, the mother of us all, sometime, according to the prophecies, even to save the remnant of Israel at the end of the world (Isa. X). For in the frequent pages of Holy Scripture (Hosea I, Rom. IX), and the frequent acts of the saints, the one and the same dispensation of our incarnate Savior is recurrent, though in varying figures; and rightly so, because what was always desired and hoped for by the saints should always be prophesied and marked by them as future. Therefore, fleeing from Saul's face, David came to King Achish of Gath.

Fleeing the Lord from those who despise His word, lest He be understood by the unworthy, He comes teaching to others, if perchance they might hear and rest. Nor does He cease from this activity until He finds those who are willing to humbly receive Him. Achish, my brother, or my brother: Gath is

interpreted as the winepress. And because Christ, becoming man, was deemed worthy to be incarnate from the Jewish people, He had that same people as a brother, whom He endured as a persecutor. Hence, He speaks in the Psalm: I have become a stranger to my brothers, and a foreigner to my mother's sons (Psalm LXVIII), that is, to the synagogue or human nature. This very people is justly called the king of the winepress, because they first devised the tribulations and pressures of Christ and the church among the Gentiles, intending to kill the Lord Himself as an infant, succeeding in killing Him as a young man, and thereafter persecuting the church and expelling Him from their borders. Moreover, I think there is a mystical difference between Achish and Saul, in that Saul signifies those imbued with the knowledge of the law, whereas Achish signifies the unlearned in the same people; who, although taught differently, met in equal malice against the Lord; and for this reason, in an inverted order, the knowledgeable in the law, more they received the gift of knowledge, the greater was their madness in persecuting the Giver of this same gift.

1 Samuel 21:11

Is this not David, the king of the land? etc. The scribes and Pharisees of the Jewish kingdom, serving wickedness badly, said: "See that we gain nothing; behold, the whole world has gone after him" (John XII), to whom they sang in choirs, saying: "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David, Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. XXI; Mark XI). Whom his faithful ones glorify with harmonious exultation, bearing him on high, because more are called to merit the denarius of heavenly life through his teaching than through ours are summoned to observe the commands of the law.

1 Samuel 21:12

David, however, placed these words in his heart, etc. The Lord saw in his wisdom the unbelieving and deceitful hearts of some of the Jews; and, as the Scripture customarily speaks of God in human manner, he feared so much from the face of the people who were his brothers by human communion of fragility, but were persecutors by the impiety of their conspiracy against the Lord, that to them he spoke his sacraments or warnings more in parables and riddles than in open light, lest he cast the holy to dogs and pearls to swine (Matt. VII). For just as David, who was accustomed to always show

himself sober to his own, altered his mouth before the Gittites; so also the Lord, speaking in parables before the proud and those bearing hearts eager to torment him and his own, privately made everything manifest by explanation to his own; and indeed he appeared to them in understanding so that they might comprehend the scriptures. Some wish to say that the Lord altered his mouth when he said: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, but I say to you" (Matt. V); or when, with the priesthood having been transferred, he wanted also the transfer of the law and ceremonies to take place. But they should observe that he did not show this type of change specifically to his enemies, but rather to those receiving the mysteries of his faith; and for that reason, the alteration of the mouth, which the blessed David exhibited as a type of him so that he would not be recognized by his enemies, is rather to be referred to the understanding of those who, seeing the signs and doctrine of the Savior, did not see, and hearing, did not understand.

1 Samuel 21:13

And he collapsed in their hands, etc. The hands of the Gethites, the works of the Jews; the doors of the gate reveal the beginnings of heavenly grace; saliva signifies infirmity; the beard signifies virtue. David collapsed in the hands of the Gethites; the Lord seemed to the blind to fall into sin, compared to the works of the Jews, who not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was their Father, making Himself equal to God (John V). David struck against the doors of the gate; the Lord found the fall of death among the beginnings of the proclaimed new salvation, which prefers to now open the doors to the worthy, now to close them to the unworthy; indeed, He had the doors of life through the occasion of death, either because the Jews, persecuting Him, managed to kill the grace of the evangelical preaching, or because He Himself, that He might open the gates of paradise for us, deigned to extinguish the flaming and turning sword with His blood and water, which He would bring forth from His side.

Hence, it is fitting that the Psalmist, seeing Him, so that He might lead us to announce His praise at the gates of the daughter of Zion, first spoke of striking against the doors of the gate when He had warned about our hope of salvation, saying, "Our God, our saving God, will make a prosperous journey for us, our God, the God of salvation, and the exits of death belong to the Lord God" (Psalm 68). The saliva flowed down David's beard, and the Lord

on the cross, despised and blasphemed among thieves by the wicked, enduring all things patiently, temporarily covered the strength of His divinity with the show of human frailty. Hence, the prophet Habakkuk, commending the trophy of the glorious cross, said: "His splendor will be like the light, horns in His hands, where His strength was hidden" (Habakkuk 3). For it is not for nothing that in the Song of Songs, where so much skill, such diligent repetition of the mystical Christ, just as all the limbs of the Church, are described, we find nothing said about the beard alone, which especially befits a man, because undoubtedly the perpetual virtue of the word clothed the beard as if with saliva, the weakness of the flesh hiding it in time. Therefore, He changed His mouth, hiding the mysteries of the kingdom of God from those who preferred to be outside. He collapsed in their hands, appearing as a sinner to those who boasted of the works and righteousness of the law.

He struck against the doors of the gate, among the beginnings of the revealed heavenly entrance, undergoing the inflicted passion, casting saliva on His beard, temporarily hiding the divine power and majesty, among the vices and mockeries of enemies, at that time ignominious, that is, dying the shameful death of the cross.

1 Samuel 21:14

And Achish said, "Have you seen the man who is insane," etc.? David, indeed, suspected by the Gittites due to his reputation for virtues, industriously imitated the actions of one who was mad, so that he might be thought to be possessed and, pitied by those who saw him, released unharmed. But their king, unaware of his pretense, truly expelled him as if he were insane, excluding him from entering his house as a madman. Nor does the truth of allegory depart from the shadow of history. For the Lord, to heal the eyes of the hearts of those who could not see the glory of His divinity, applied the ointment of human humility; but some of the impious accused Him in His sufferings as if He were a man of frailty, in His virtues as if demoniac, and abhorred Him as performing miracles by a power contrary to God. Finally, as the Gospel recounts, we learn not only what was thought by adversaries, but also what was thought and said by His own, who were not yet strengthened in full faith: "And they came to the house, and again a crowd gathered, so that they could not even eat bread. And when His family heard it, they went out to seize Him; for they said, 'He is out of his mind'" (Mark 3). This His

family did, still carnal in their perception, due to the immeasurable quantity and quality of His growing virtues; but look also at what the others did:

"And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub, and by the prince of demons He casts out demons'" (Matthew 12; Mark 3). But even after His resurrection and ascension into heaven, as the apostles preached the truth of the Gospel, some deranged people ridiculed and rejected it as madness. Hence it is that the one who is debtor to both the wise and the foolish, bearing witness to Christ, heard: "You are insane, Paul; much learning is driving you mad" (Acts 26). Consequently, all who accuse Christ of madness and mania, it is no wonder if, by contemptuously rejecting Him, they furiously exclude Him from the house of their minds.

1 Samuel 22:1

(1 Samuel 22:1) Therefore David departed thence and fled to the cave of Adullam. Adullam is interpreted as "their testimony"; and the Lord, fleeing the hearts of the proud, enters as a welcome inhabitant into the spirits of the humble who possess nothing of earthly height or glory. Their very humility is a faithful testimony that they are worthy to receive Christ. Or certainly, it is the testimony of those from whom, in their pride, God flees; they are called humble, whereby their testimony convinces that they could also have pleased God and received Him if they had wished. [1 Samuel 22:1] -- When his brothers heard this, they went down, etc. With Christ remaining among the humble, all the elect descend to Him by humbling themselves; or men, who are His brothers, because He Himself became man; or angels, who are most particularly the house of His Father and the place of His glory's dwelling. All those also come who, depressed by the consciousness of their sins, desire to be cleansed with the bitter tears of repentance, and to be freed from alien air, that is, the debt of sin which the devil has imposed; hoping, under the leadership and guidance of Christ, to be advanced to the joys of the kingdom.

1 Samuel 22:2

And there were with him about four hundred men. Those who remain firm in faith, acting manfully and strengthened in heart by the doctrine of the Gospel, which is marked by the most beautiful unity of the four books, are called to hope for, seek, and obtain the heavenly kingdoms. For the number one hundred, which, after so many numbers running on the left, first seeks

the right hand, as has been often said, reveals the entrance of the higher kingdom once the lower labors are completed. It should be noted that the events that took place in the cave of Adullam, which we have explained to our ability, can be referred to the primitive church and also appropriately applied to the state of the whole Church. For what follows specifically pertains to our Church, that is, the Church of the Gentiles. [1 Samuel 22:3] -- And David departed from there to Mizpah, etc. The law went forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. II), and it reached, growing towards the Church of the Gentiles, established on the highest peak of faith and virtues. Mizpah indeed is translated into a cave. He also went to the dialectical orators, philosophers, and even to the rulers of matters to reconcile them to himself; and to these, Christ commended the faith of God the Father and the piety of the Church to be protected with religious diligence until the fulfillment of the times of the nations.

1 Samuel 22:5

The prophet Gad said to David: Do not remain in the stronghold, etc. Prophecy speaks to Christ, which has not omitted to sing of his sacraments, that, with the fullness of the Gentiles entering, his faith should no longer strive to protect itself with the weakest safeguard from the insidious believing Jews of the Church but rather should see fit to save the remnants of the Israelite people according to the election of grace; who, fulfilling the prophecies of the prophets, will come at the appointed time to the long desolate hearts of proud people, but now to be exalted by itself, whose name Hareth fittingly means skepticism. Therefore, it is she to whom her author, as to a virgin betrothed to him but long deferred from the nuptial joys, speaks through the prophet: You will wait for me many days; you will not be a harlot nor be with a man, but I will wait for you (Hosea III). As the same prophet consequently explained what he said: Because the children of Israel will sit many days without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without an altar, without ephod, and without theraphim. And after this, the children of Israel will turn back and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they will fear the Lord and his goodness in the last days.

CHAPTER 3.10

While Saul was seeking David, Doeg became both a traitor and an executioner, and struck the city of the priests, Nob, with its inhabitants, with only

one, Abiathar, escaping to David. And Saul heard that David had appeared, etc., up to the point where David said to Abiathar: Stay with me, do not be afraid, etc. This passage typically signifies the return at the end of the world to the end of Judea, what pressures it is to suffer from its oppressed companions, what constancy in the same faith it is to secure from the Lord, and even with the Lord, the reward of eternity during the tribulations of the Antichrist; which can equally apply to the beginnings of the nascent Church and the very times of the apostles. So Saul heard that David had appeared, and the men who were with him; similarly, towards the end of the world, the unbelieving and impious Jews will hear, after a long denial, that Jesus Christ is preached, believed, and confessed among them, and there is no doubt that when, with Enoch and Elijah preaching, and the other ministers of the word who will exist then, the Savior shall have appeared to the hearts of the Jews, immediately after, the persecution of the Antichrist will also certainly follow.

1 Samuel 22:6

But Saul, while he remained in Gibeah, etc. The people, persecutors from the Jews, when they remained at that time in Gibeah, that is, on the hill of prophecy, not evidently of understanding, but of reading only, and were delighted in the shadowy eloquence of the law and the prophets, which is in Ramah, that is, in the high place of spiritual sense, incomparable to other Scriptures, lifted up from the glory of an earthly kingdom, which in those times of the Antichrist is not doubted to be future, and all his associates in the same persecution surrounded him, watching, standing in perfidy, acting strongly to overthrow all the defenses of faith and charity. Encouraged by these words of this sort, he will stir them up to assault faith and the constancy of the good: Hear, children of Jemini, that is, of my right hand, evidently to be blessed with a better life and joy with me. For by the name of the left hand I mean to mark those who, although they may prefer to be condemned with the Nazarenes rather than to reign and live with Christ, who appeared to us.

Indeed, can Jesus, who is not doubted to have come from the root of Jesse, give to all of you in this world the fruits of perfected works and the wine of saving wisdom, which gladdens the heart of man (Psalm 103), and in the future make you all sit upon the seats to judge, as he often promised, the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 15), understand, like I do? Who can also teach per-

fect wisdom with good works, and reward those who act rightly and wisely with blessed reward, because you have all conspired in the faith of his name; nor is there anyone who shows me where his faithful worshippers worthy of punishment are hidden, especially since, even educated by me in the law no less, he has made a greater covenant with Jesus the Nazarene, believing and confessing him to be the Son of God, who, deformed in servile habit, appeared much more vile to me, and taught him to worship God to my injury, who has strived to corrupt his own legal decrees by insidiously spreading his Gospel, which he in no way ceases to do through his ministers to this day. These and countless things of this sort do not escape the notice of the ministers of the Antichrist, to blaspheme against the brave hearts of Christ, to prevent whom from persistently remaining in faith, the host of impious men will soon reveal what they harbor within. For it follows:

1 Samuel 22:9

But Doech the Edomite, replying, etc. Doech, as we said above, means agitated or anxious; Edomite, bloodthirsty; Nobe, barking; Ahimelech, my brother's kingdom; Ahitub, my brother is good in interpretation. Therefore, he will respond to the persecuting Jews who are agitated for shedding innocent blood, being an associate of a gathering of the wicked; who, while others openly attack the faith, he usually plots inwardly to seek out and betray more diligently the meetings of the followers of Christ during the time of persecution, which he rightly suggests as the first among Saul's servants; because the more perverse and insensitive one is toward the good, the greater place they hold among the wicked. Without any doubt, the false brothers, who are within, burden the Church more than open enemies who attack it from outside. The time of the last conspiracy against Christ will respond, I say, like it is written about Judas: And night to night shows knowledge (Ps. 18). What is sober, just, and pious, he will wickedly betray, saying he has seen the faith of the Lord Jesus in the doctrine of those who, against the wickedness of the impious, bark like the sharpest and most watchful dog, and following the example of good brothers who have gone before, they also await the possession of the eternal kingdom. But they also supplicate the Father for the kingdom of Christ, and always refresh Him with spiritual bread in their members; and rescuing everyone they can from the hands of the devil, they will rather advise, command, and help them to strive for the peace of their rescuer.

1 Samuel 22:11

So the king sent to summon Ahimelech, etc. Calling on the Lord's priests, Saul calls the friendship and reception of David a crime of conspiracy conceived against him. The impious Jews, apprehending those consecrated to Christian piety, will immediately seek revenge for whatever they see done for the faith of truth, thinking it done against them, and rightly so; for to a sinner, religion is an abomination. [1 Samuel 22:12] -- And Abimelech answering the king, said: And who, etc.? The sacred order of commandments, fighting for the kingdom of Christ, will respond to the Jewish people, who consider the faith and love of Christ a crime: And who among all the prophets and saints, whom it is known from their words, prayers, and examples, served your interests greatly, could equate to the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus, who is faithful to Him who made Him (Hebrews III), just as Moses was in all His house? For he has been deemed worthy of greater glory than Moses, by how much greater honor the one who built it has than the house; he who joined to himself in the covenant of a bride the church of the Gentiles, begotten from the ancient faith of your fathers. Nor is he proven to have done or taught anything else in the flesh than what you yourselves learned according to the words of the prophets, indeed you have always desired that Christ, when He came, would do. Do we begin today to have this faith in Him and to seek the divine oracles of the word for the state of His Church, and did we not rather receive, venerate, and worship it as passed down and commended to us by the ancient tradition of the patriarchs and prophets?

1 Samuel 22:15

For your servant did not know, etc. He responded to what he was accused of by Saul, having helped David, knowing that he was weaving deceit and traps for him, because he knew nothing of this business at that time. But Christian faith also denies knowing if the Lord Jesus ever corrupted legal statutes with any fraudulent traps: which is openly to confess that Jesus Christ is not a deceiver, greedy for the praise of others, but was learned to be the true messenger of the father's will; who is therefore rightly called the Angel of Great Counsel by the prophet (Isa. IX). As is the saying of the apostle: I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest (Acts XXIII) for the reason that he would say: I knew that he is not the high priest, with the pontificate of

him who is already appeared and glorified, who with his chosen sons is priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

1 Samuel 22:17

And the king said to the emissaries, etc. We always perceive a different state of the wicked and the good. For some, ascending to the highest peak of wickedness, become authors of persecution; whom Saul himself designates by persecuting David. Some openly submit to nefarious authority by supporting the fury of the same persecution in evil; of whom Doeg the Edomite holds the type. Some, as if of a milder nature, abstain from teaching neighbors, or from extorting punishments, although they seem to keep their hands innocent from impiety; to which the servants of Saul, refraining from injuring the priests of the Lord, are properly fitted. Likewise, among the faithful to be tested by the temptations of the wicked, there are some who struggle for the truth even unto blood; who are shown by the example of the priests of Nob with their destroyed ones, who, with equal faith and love, but endowed with lesser courage to endure tribulation, rather take refuge in flight; knowing that indeed the high mountains are a refuge for stags, but the rock is a refuge for hedgehogs and hares (Psalm 104), to which one, the priest who escaped the striking hand of Saul, is figuratively equated. Since we have seen this disparity of merits and manners in the past, we also believe it will occur in the final, although greater persecution to come; namely, that due to the savagery and infanda authority of the impious authors, among the mute who obediently yield to evil, there will not be those who keep themselves immune from hurting the good; nor could the slightest modesty of such people remove the fervor of the most savage tribulation. For it follows:

1 Samuel 22:18

And the king said to Doeg the Edomite: Turn you, etc. Which the impious persecutors said to the most wicked ministers, evidently moved from every state of rectitude and further defiled by the innocent blood of the steadfast: Turn to evil, and after the crime of betrayal, also increase the infliction of tortures on the faithful of Christ, compelling them either to die or to deny. [1 Samuel 22:18] -- And he slaughtered, etc. Eighty-five men slaughtered on that day signify those who come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 22); undoubtedly strong in deeds, and perfected equally in the spiritual observance of the Gos-

pel and the law. Indeed, eighty-five is made up of five times ten plus seven; and five indeed refers to the justly well-known senses of our body, while ten and seven pertain to the law and the Gospel, on account of the Decalog of the law and the grace of the Holy Spirit more abundantly poured out upon all flesh in the times of the shining Gospel, and thus it is rare for anyone to doubt; and therefore whoever, with a strong spirit, interprets whatever they can see, hear, taste, smell, or touch, to fulfill the commands of the law and attain the promises of grace, as if multiplying ten and seven by five, completes the sum of eighty-five men. They are also rightly described as clothed with an ephod, that is, a linen garment over the shoulder, to show that all their works (for shoulders are usually taken for works) are recommended and adorned more perfectly before the glory of martyrdom by the mortification of the flesh.

1 Samuel 22:19

Now he struck the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, etc. With the doctors of Christ slaughtered by the Antichrist, he also seeks to utterly disgrace and eradicate their fame of doctrine, by which they used to courageously combat impious dogma as if barking against it, and fortifying their own life with deeds. But he does not omit attempting to compel by wicked torments all these strong in work, fruitful in generating and nurturing Christ's children, the little ones in Christ still suckling at the breasts of a pious chaste mother, as well as those carrying His sweet yoke and light burden, innocently hearing His voice, and following Him to the eternal pastures of highest blessedness, either to deny their faith in Him or to endure death for Him.

1 Samuel 22:20

One son of Ahimelech escaped, Abiathar, etc. Just as Doeg the Edomite, one who struck down the priests, symbolized the sword of all executioners, so Abiathar, the one who escaped the sword of the striker, represents all the confessors of Christ who could survive that most severe persecution. Therefore, Abiathar is rightly interpreted as "superfluous father," signifying those who, glorious in the paternal title in the Church, survived such a turmoil. He fled to David and announced to him the priests of the Lord who were killed by Saul: just as the pious devotion of those remaining, after the killing was completed, turned to the Lord, ardently commemorating the memory of

their slain brethren under his testament through prayer or by offering sacred sacrifices. To this, he himself replies through his own gospel that he had foreseen and predestined long ago that all who wish to live piously in him would suffer persecution for his name's sake; therefore, as a sure debtor of a certain reward, he would bring all souls released by such a death to the joys of eternal life. "I knew," he says, "that while there would never be lacking false brothers in the Church, without a doubt, they would aid external enemies through internal scandals. I knew that while in this whole world there would never be lacking evil ones, by whom the wisdom of the disputing good or the patience of those contending would be exercised and tested, without a doubt, tribulations and temptations would always await the pilgrim Church here. But I am the one who will eternally crown each soul of the elect with a heavenly crown after their struggles on earth."

1 Samuel 22:23

Stay with me, do not be afraid, etc. Remain, he said, in my love; do not be afraid of those who kill the body: if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; but where I am, there will my servant also be; if anyone serves me, my Father will honor him (John XV; Matthew X; John XII). This betrayal and the attack by Doeg the Edomite, and during the times of the Lord and the Apostles in Judas Iscariot and other false brothers, and at the end of the world in the very Antichrist greater than the others, can be understood, in the manner of the fifty-first psalm, which is sung in reference to him, is not inappropriately applied to that enemy, as the title says: To the end, for understanding by David himself, when Doeg the Edomite came and reported to Saul, and said: Behold, David is in the house of Ahimelech; where "for understanding by David himself" is placed at the beginning not for any other reason than to signify that David understood among the hardships he suffered innocently, what wickedness would be plotted against the true David to be born from his seed by the scheming of the wicked. For he did come, boasting in malice, powerful in iniquity, thinking of injustice all day long, and the rest, which he added in the psalm. He who understood these things through the Spirit, burdened by sins and to be burdened by punishments, Judas announced to the Jews, and said:

Behold, Jesus is accustomed to frequenting the garden of the Mount of Olives with his disciples. For from the ultimate tribulation how this title should be understood, clearly shows from what has been discussed above. But

since we have extended our discourse and dictated a longer third book in the exposition of blessed Samuel, both second and first, we think it fitting to put an end to this labor with the triumph of the martyrs among the priests, and judging it proper to cease from the work for a time to recover strength in silence.

Book IV

PREFACE TO BOOK IV

Having completed the third volume on the blessed Samuel, I thought, after some time had passed with the pleasure of meditation or writing restored through rest, that I would finally set my hand to the beginning of the fourth. However, this same rest — if it can be called rest when it involves unexpected mental anxiety — came about much more protracted than I had decided, due to a new change in surrounding circumstances, especially by the departure of my most reverend abbot, who, after a long supervision of monastic care, suddenly decided to go to Rome, and to yield his last breath as an old man among the places sacred to the bodies of the blessed apostles and martyrs of Christ, which greatly perturb the spirits of those entrusted to him, and all the more because it was an unexpected shock. But He who set Joshua the son of Nun over the leadership when Moses, advanced in years, was taken from human affairs, who substituted Eleazar in the priesthood for his father Aaron, the same one who substituted Huetbert, a young man whom love and zeal for piety long ago gave the surname Eusebius, to govern the souls of the faithful with priestly leadership and spiritual influence, in place of the aged Ceolfrid hurrying to the holy thresholds of the blessed apostles. I confirmed the degree of this substitution after the fraternal election by your, most beloved bishop, office of blessing.

As the state of the times returns to tranquility, thereby also returns to me the leisure and the delight of examining the marvels of Holy Scripture with my whole soul and diligent intention. Therefore, beginning the fourth little book of allegorical exposition on Samuel, from the victory of the blessed David, in which he saved the inhabitants of Keilah and defended them from the irruption of the attacking Philistines, with your prayers, most beloved of pontiffs, I will endeavor to share whatever mystical insights I am able, as He reveals who holds the key of David, with the readers.

CHAPTER 4.1

David saves Keilah, attacked by the Philistines; and when Saul advances against him with an army, he flees with his six hundred men to the mountain of the wilderness of Ziph. (1 Samuel 23). And they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah," etc., up to what is written: "Saul sought him every day," etc. This reading, under the figure of the men of Keilah, who, although saved by David from the enemy, soon prepare to betray him to the same enemy, illustrates the fickleness of those who hear the word and immediately receive it with joy (Luke 8); but they do not have root in themselves and are temporary; when trouble and persecution arise because of the word, they quickly fall away. And so they reported to David, those who knew that the Philistines were attacking Keilah, and with all the inhabitants driven within the walls, they plundered the granaries outside that might have been found within their reach. The chosen report this to Christ truthfully with strong hand, not instructing him as if he were ignorant of human things by speaking, but petitioning him as if he were merciful to the perils of the wretched by telling him, when they have seen either a single soul or a multitude of souls burdened with vices or still enslaved to pagan rites, occupied by unclean spirits; and whatever natural virtue they possess, as if a salutary germ, is found outside, which means it is acted out solely for worldly benefits, plundered by the wickedness of others.

For they report these things to the intellectual David who, considering the common misery of humanity, complain and pray against the kingdom of unclean spirits, saying: "We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a derision and scorn to those who are around us. How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever? Will your jealousy burn like fire? Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not know you, and on the kingdoms that do not call upon your name. For they have devoured Jacob" (Psalms 79), and the rest, up to the end of the psalm.

1 Samuel 23:2

Shall I go and strike these Philistines? etc. Because David almost always in the Scriptures, when taken mystically, signifies the Lord Christ, but sometimes in his members, sometimes in himself; rightly at this place, where he consulted the Lord whether he should attack and conquer the enemies, it is understood to be referred to the person of his members, that is, his faithful ones,

who sometimes, sorrowful over the known destruction of the faithless by those close to them, consulting the oracles of divine Scripture, inquire what should be done about these things. For also above, where it is announced to the same David that Keilah is being attacked by the Philistines, it can not unreasonably signify that any of the faithful often show the dangers of temptations in the world to equally more perfect faithful ones of Christ, perceiving that they themselves are not sufficient to overcome them. Indeed, those more perfect and strong-handed teachers of the Churches, immediately scrutinizing the testimonies of the Scriptures, find that they must have compassion and succor the oppressed, and by breaking the effort of the malign spirits, discover that the crowd suffering from long temptation is to be saved; but to the often fearful weaker ones due to imminent persecution, the reading of divine words, once consulted, promptly reveals that they should not fear those who kill the body (Matt. X), but rise from their sloth by doing the right, going to the oppressed by preaching useful things, and conquering the oppressors by exorcizing.

For there are those who, under the threat of persecutions, scarcely dare to openly profess the faith with which they have been imbued; how much less do they presume to undertake the war against the legions of malign spirits by calling others to the faith or by solidifying them in the faith? And what does it signify, typically, when the men of David say to him: Behold, here in Judea we are afraid, how much more if we go to Keilah against the legions of the Philistines? unless it is the fearful response of the weak listeners to the spiritual teachers preparing themselves for the work of the word: Behold, within the domestic walls of the Church we fear to freely defend the confession of the paternal faith, which Judea signifies; how much more, if we go to those who have either never known the way of truth, or have deserted it having known it, instructing them with the word of salvation, shall we not unquestionably expose ourselves to greater dangers by beginning to challenge the powers of the air in battle? But the Lord does not omit to raise their weakness and fear by the frequent words of His Gospel, and to strengthen them with the confidence in prayer. And this is what follows: For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John XVI).

1 Samuel 23:5

David and his men went to Keilah, etc. The Lord went in His preachers to heal the brokenhearted, and fought against the spirits of falsehood and perfidy, revealing the light of truth and faith, and drove them away from the souls of the redeemed by just separation, in whom they had previously tightly reined in with the bridle of error, as if riding over them, and subjecting them to their own power and domain, used to more effectively and powerfully ravage and subjugate others, and cause them to be anathematized with a great curse. Thus indeed He saved them, who recently avoiding their tentations, earnestly sought His protection. These things were often done from the beginning of the nascent Church, and there is almost no one who doubts that they are done daily through places.

1 Samuel 23:6

Moreover, at the time when Abiathar fled, etc. The ephod, as we mentioned above, is a priestly garment, with four most distinguished colors interwoven with gold, and two precious stones on each shoulder, and the sacred names of the twelve patriarchs, which most fittingly corresponds to signify the senses of sublime men. For those fleeing to more and more proclaim the glory of Christ, who escaped the hands of many torturers and persecutors for Him, bear within themselves senses and hearts elevated with the four excellent virtues shining with charity, tempered with precious discretion in adversities and prosperities, and taught and armed by the word and example of the preceding Fathers. And it is well said that the priest, fleeing to David with the ephod, is remembered not to have ascended but descended, according to that which is written: "The greater you are, humble yourself in all things" (Ecclesiasticus 3). But truly, because with the growing devotion of faith, the hatred of the perfidious increases, evidently by the judgment of heaven, so that both the trial examining the whole in faith makes them clearer, and the same also accuses the dissemblers of their levity, it is rightly added:

1 Samuel 23:7

And Saul commanded all the people, etc. For as the state of the Church increased, there were not lacking at various times adversaries, who, with the Lord permitting, would test its patience and wisdom by attacking it with the gravest trials, seeking to capture both the Lord Himself in it and His men,

that is, all the strong defenders of His Gospel, with impious siege, and to remove them from the midst, yet never reaching the treacherous desires of their wickedness.

1 Samuel 23:9

When David learned that Saul was secretly planning evil against him, etc. After bringing the ephod with Abiathar, David consulted the Lord, asking whether Saul would come to destroy Keilah, and whether the citizens would hand him over. Hence it can be inferred by what order he consulted the Lord before, that is, by putting on the priestly vestment and thus seeking the Lord's response through the mouth of the priest, and that this was the custom of those consulting God at that time, especially those who could not approach the Ark of the Lord. For it is written about this: "There I will speak to you, from above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim" (Exodus 25). But when David discovered both the impending enemy and the unfaithful refuge of the host city, he went out with his about six hundred men and wandered uncertainly here and there. For the holy ones, namely the members of the supreme King, seek through men of great virtue and knowledge of the holy scriptures how the state of the Church will be in the last times; and through the Scriptures, they learn that to its overthrow will come the empire of the Jewish people; and the men of Keilah, that is, of a restless mind and willing to live for themselves, not for the Creator, will quickly betray the faith they have initiated. Christ will depart from such, nor will He make His abode among them. The teachers, too, perfect in hope and work, depart. For six signify works, a hundred hope of eternal things, marking the perfection of men. For they abandon the lukewarm so that by speaking to those who do not preserve it, they do not harm further, in the example of the history which, describing the deeds of David, adds:

1 Samuel 23:13

David therefore arose, etc. Woe, however, to that soul, woe to the city, which the word of God, leaving behind, wanders here and there, uncertain where, in whose heart to settle and find rest. "Foxes," he says, "have dens, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew VIII); and this is what he says elsewhere: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke XVIII). It is certainly to be noted that these things, generally, refer to all times of the Church, to

which false brethren are never lacking, but especially to the last times, during which they will abound more, and can be typically referred, whose levity and perfidy even the name of Ceila fits. For it is said of a sling, cast forth, or stirring up, or lifting itself. And indeed why the soul of a false Christian, unstable and certainly wandering, is called cast to a sling, the wise woman explains, who in the type of the Church speaks with a strong and desirable hand saying, "But the soul of your enemies shall be whirled about in the impetus and circle of a sling" (1 Samuel XXV). But why a believer with infidelity, stirring it up, doubtlessly rightly calls it persecution, is proved by that traitor, who, from the number of Christ's disciples, added to the number of persecutors, thus far in the Church does not cease to have heirs of his depravity. Moreover, why it is called lifting itself, those manifest who usurp the knowledge of the faith for themselves specially, and do not fear to separate from the Catholic unity.

1 Samuel 23:13

It was announced to Saul that David had fled from Ceila, etc. The enemies of the faith pretend to burden those with persecutions whom they see willingly abandoning the faith. But the adversary himself of old tires out with the more severe lashes of temptations those whom he sees strong in faith and action, or whom he sees either inert in faith, or utterly faithless or apostates, he possesses as his own quite contentedly and subject in all things, often with no, or certainly very few, temptations of wrath, pride, fornication, and envy, and other such passions. [1 Samuel 23:14] -- David, however, stayed in the desert, etc. Christ, having dismissed those who receive faith only in word, rather takes up residence in the hearts of those who, in the aridity of the present age, thirst for God, the living fountain, awaiting the moment they may come and appear before the face of the Lord. He gladly remains in those whose high hearts are removed from worldly temptations and blissfully secluded in solitude, finding joy in the deficient germ and flower of virtues. For Ziph means flower or germ.

1 Samuel 23:14

Yet Saul sought him every day, etc. From the beginning of time until the end, the wicked strive to remove Christ from the hearts of the pious, but He himself defends the pious so that they might never be overcome by the wicked, as He promised to remain with them all days even unto the end of

the world (Matthew 28). And elsewhere it says: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and the rivers will not overwhelm you (Isaiah 43).

CHAPTER 4.2

Jonathan and David make a covenant before the Lord, and as the Ziphites betray him, Saul comes against David; but a more urgent need to confront the Philistines prevents him from capturing David. And David saw that Saul had come out, etc., up to the point where it is written: For this reason they called that place the Rock of Division. This reading mystically signifies how the faithful companions of Christ support the Church with great devotion when it is persecuted by unbelievers, how much the brothers under God assist the adversaries of the faith in impiety, and by what miracle Christ, as the merciful Redeemer, sometimes rescues His own from the very brink of death. And David saw, it says, that Saul had come out to seek his life. [1 Samuel 23:15] -- Moreover, David was in the wilderness of Ziph in the forest. The Lord saw, whose eyes see all things naked and open (Hebrews IV), that he had gone forth from the inner guard of the assembly of traitors, to seek and persecute the church of his faithful, whose heart and soul are one (Acts IV). He remained in the wilderness, in the Church taken from the Gentiles, which often generates fruitful trees, as hearts pregnant with the seed of varied virtues; about which the Psalmist, singing about building a house of remission and life after captivity, says: Then shall all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord, for he comes (Psalm XCVI). Now, these trees of the widely fruitful Church, spiritually fecundated with the flower or seed of good works (for Ziph is said to interpret both), are prominent to the extent that they diligently abandon all the enjoyments of this world.

1 Samuel 23:16

And Jonathan, the son of Saul, arose and went to David, etc. And the dovelike and simple spirit of the elect, progressing amid the adversities of persecutions, often called to the grace of faith from the very number of the persecutors, approached Christ with steps of growing virtues, and strengthened the workers, that is, the teachers of his word, always in the divine assistance which comes opportunely (Psalm IX).

1 Samuel 23:17

And he said to him: Fear not, etc. Although Jonathan, unaware of the fate and future destiny, as a man, made a false statement about himself under

David's reign, yet according to the mystical meanings, he reveals the joys of Christ and the Church. Truly, he bore witness to that inviolable kingdom, to which he himself belongs, by asserting that the enemies are not to be feared, for they can never reach to extinguish the dominion of faith and truth; indeed, that he whose dominion was to be multiplied, and whose peace would have no end, would reign perpetually over the chosen angels and men; and that those who loved him faithfully and with their whole heart would be closest to him in all the heights of this same kingdom. With their enemies prostrate and defeated, and subjected entirely to the feet and dominion of Christ, as Paul says: "He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet; the last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he has put all things in subjection under his feet" (I Cor. XV; Psalm CIX); and when he says: "All things are put in subjection under him," undoubtedly except him who subjected all things to him (Psalm VIII), hence it is clear that the powers that have deserted him, empty and void, Christ will render, setting victory trophies against the rivals of our salvation, whom he had long since defeated by his own death, as it is written: "Because the children have shared in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through his death he might destroy the one who has the power of death" (Hebrews II), that is, the devil. Text: Thus he struck, and the rest.

1 Samuel 23:18

Therefore, each struck a covenant before the Lord, etc. The Lord and the faithful strike a covenant with each other, that they should follow Him, and He should give them eternal life; and this before His divine presence, in whose faith He commands us to live, and to which He encourages us to aspire, assisting us. And the Lord remains in the Church, a dense forest of peoples, all the days until the consummation of the world (Matthew 8). However, each of the faithful, after completing the service of prayer or exhortation, or any other devotion offered to the Lord, returns to their conscience, so that, vacating external action, they may more freely for a time reflect on all that has been or is to be done by them, more freely purge themselves from what has been done badly, and more perfectly ready themselves for what is to be done well; such as these indeed can say with the prophet: Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest (Psalm 54)? And deservedly too, with Jonathan, they can be called a gift of doves, indeed and with the apostle Peter they can be called sons of doves.

1 Samuel 23:19

But the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, etc. Often false brothers, abandoning the bud and flower of their virtues, ascend to the arrogant enemies of faith to help them against the Church and, detesting the simplicity of the faithful, in a way say to the persecutors: "Does not Christ dwell among us through faith in the most secure hearts of the Gentiles?" Nor is it in vain that it is said in the hill of Hachilah, that is, receiving it. For where should we think the spirit of Christ more gracefully stays than in the height of a mind firmly receiving its faith? Which is to the right of the desert, because for the sake of the right side, that is, the joys of eternal life, it abandons the pomp of the world. For he who declines worldly enticements with a view to temporal and earthly reward, is said not to have turned to the right of the desert, but rather to the left, where our desirable king does not dwell, but the detestable enemy is accustomed to inhabit. And all these things the Ziphites say to Saul, when some falsely faithful men betray the mysteries of faith or its worshippers to open persecutors, and with a perverse mind, though they differ in the recognition of faith, they concord in hatred of the same faith; and to the extent they internally know the secrets of Christ, as David's hiding places, they more wickedly help those who attempt to attack the Church from without.

1 Samuel 23:21

And Saul said: Blessed be you of the Lord, etc. They promise the blessing of the Lord to themselves and their Jewish supporters when, having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, they either pursue the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with hatred, or with arms. And as the Lord says elsewhere about them and their accomplices: "The time is coming that anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16). But woe to their blessings, who, plotting against the Church, or at least against any of the Church's members, to scandalize anyone of the little ones of Christ, are proven to harm in the place of persecutors. Woe to those who, reaching to that flower rising from the root of Jesse only in name, seek with all their mind the withering and quickly perishing comforts of the present life; forgetting the blessing of Him, which is to be seen and hoped for by all, of which it is written: "The Lord hath been mindful of us and will bless us. He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron" (Psalm 113).

But blessing both, he blessed all who fear the Lord. You ask: Whom both? It is answered, the small with the great, that is, the house of Israel with the house of Aaron; those indeed who from that very nation have believed in the Savior Jesus, because not all those pleased God;

but if indeed not all of them believed, has their unbelief made the faith of God without effect? By no means. For not all who are of Israel are Israelites; nor are all children of Abraham's seed; as it is written, "The remnant shall be saved" (Isaiah 10). By that oracle of Isaiah, some of the Jews are foretold to attain this heavenly blessing, so that the greater part of them is blinded; whose type and figure Saul, rejected by God, bore, and in whose place the gentiles were appointed; for other sheep joined which were not of this fold, so that there might be one flock and one shepherd (John 10); the faith of all nations joined, and the number increased not only of wise shepherds but also of obedient peoples; to whom many blessings of God have been promised, as it is said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1); but God has blessed us, not with one blessing, but with all. Not that we all attain everything, but while each of us possesses one or several from all, we all possess through each one. And not in earthly blessings, imitating the Jews, of whom Isaiah said: "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1), but in spiritual ones. For there are indeed earthly blessings, to have children; to overflow with wealth, to rejoice in honor and health;

which earthly blessing extends even to irrational animals, it is said of them: "And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth" (Genesis 1). But the spiritual blessings are in heavenly places, for the earth does not hold a spiritual blessing. For even those blessings which in Leviticus are promised to those observing God's precepts, for instance, to lend to foreign nations, to have barns full of grain, to be blessed in cities, to be blessed in fields, and the like, we do not see fulfilled in the prophets, who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Therefore, all things are to be understood spiritually; and spiritual things are to be awaited not in earthly places, but heavenly.

1 Samuel 23:23

But if he also hides himself in the ground, etc. The ground is the fruitful mind of the chosen ones through works of faith; which, when visited and drenched by God and multiplied, the most proud investigator boasts of searching it, because not only in the openness of work or confession but also in the very secret of faith and intimate love, he may be able to take Christ from His worshippers. But if, he says, he shall even hide himself in the ground, I will search him out among the thousands of Judah. As if he openly says: But if the people of Christians shall, by our reducing them to such a few or to such poverty, come to the point where, having taken away the confidence of preaching, the solemnities of celebrating, publicly gathering meetings, and at least professing they are Christians, they scarcely dare worship Christ as if hidden in the very recesses of their hearts, there and from thence little by little, with the abundant company of persecutors as well as explorers, I will strive to exterminate Him. For I have innumerable Judahites, that is, bands of divine praise or confession, by which I may easily quench the rash undertakings of all those who think otherwise. This can also be taken simply, because sometimes Christians have been dragged out from crypts and hiding places to be led to death for Christ.

1 Samuel 23:24

But they rising up went to Ziph before Saul. Rightly the Ziphites who lay in wait for David are said to have gone to Ziph before Saul, because indeed the schismatics or heretics, the closer they are to Jews or pagans, having been admitted inside, the more wickedly and as if earlier they deprive the Church of its fruit. Which too in the times of the Antichrist, with the Jews raising greater persecutions than others, it will mainly happen in the Church, and daily it continues happening, would that we did not know. Finally, Judas, where he was received more inwardly, where he became the leader and known to the Lord, together with Him was taking sweet food, there he more mightily raised his heel against Him.

1 Samuel 23:24

But David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, etc. Maon is interpreted as dwelling. Jeshimon means bringing death. Generally, however, the faithful, having obtained Christ as their leader, rejoice to thirst for the eternal homeland, which the waterless places of the desert signify; they long

with burning desire for the dwelling of heavenly blessedness, which the name Maon, that is Hab, suggests; they know to hope for eternal life from death endured for God, which the name Jeshimon figuratively expresses. But they cannot yet perfectly transcend the vast fields of earthly thoughts. Yet when the storm of persecution arises, the mind at once, humbling itself by casting aside all things of this world, gathers itself to the most fortified rock of faith, and with its feet secured upon this rock, and its steps directed, it now joyfully moves more sweetly in the heavenlies and burns to sing the song of new hope and joy more fervently, which is, after having taken to the refuge of the rock, David and his companions dwelling in the wilderness of Maon. For the same desert of Maon, the same dwelling, not only signifies the desire for the perpetual mansion because of the height burned by heat; but also because the desert takes its name from desertion, it indicates the very dwelling of heavenly rest, which man once deserted. Finally, in the parable of the Gospel, the Good Shepherd, having left the ninety-nine sheep in the desert, goes to seek the one that had wandered (Luke 15). In this very desert David moves as a leader, and those endowed with the grace of Christ can say: "But our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3).

1 Samuel 23:25

When Saul heard this, he pursued David, etc. These things specifically regard the Jewish persecutor, who, upon hearing of the faith and devotion of believers, persecutes them on earth, while they with the whole intention of their minds look towards the heavens, himself believing that Christ will come in the flesh, which they have already learned has come. For this is Saul proceeding on one side of the mountain, and David and his men staying on the other side; these ones empty of Christ, hastening with perverted hope towards Christ yet to be incarnate; those ones having already received, by the grace of Christ the author, the sacraments of the Christian faith in which they would be saved. For he is the mountain of the house of the Lord prepared on the summit of the mountains, upon which a city set cannot be hidden (Isa. II). Nor is it surprising if they despair of being able to escape carnally from their enemies, to whom it was not said, “Do not fear, for you will not be killed by your enemies” (Matt. X); but, he says, “Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul” (Matt. X). Yet sometimes those in despair are delivered from enemies even at present, like the three boys from the furnace, Daniel from the lions' den, like Paul and Silas, and the very prince of the

apostles himself (Acts V): but also elsewhere, all the apostles from prison together; as indeed many later martyrs of great praise and glory in Christ and the Church. Hence it is rightly added:

1 Samuel 23:26

And so Saul and his men surrounded David like a crown, etc. For, with the Lord Savior protecting His faithful, very often those who, out of fear of God, did not want to act, were compelled by the consideration of human peace or some other advantage to cease from tearing them apart. Therefore, the faith of Christ, upon which His Church is built, rightly prevails against the gates of hell (Matthew XVI); it is called the dividing rock because it wonderfully defends His often despairing followers in the present and separates those who hope for future reward from the perpetual turmoil of men. Whether these things happened in modern times or are believed to happen in the future under the Antichrist, let the reader see and consider, not without tears, something worthy of tears, how much the state of the Church deteriorates daily to worse things, or to say it more mildly, to weaker deeds. The city of Nobe, due to receiving David with all his men, suffered martyrdom, which is to render good fruit through patience. Ceila, saved by David along with its citizens from the enemy, lost its savior because it did not fear to betray him at the imminent moment of persecution; and this is to receive the seed of the word with joy but immediately stumble when tribulation arises because of the word (Matthew XIII; Luke VIII).

The Ziphites, upon discovering that David was staying nearby, not only did not invite him to themselves, but also volunteered to betray him, not to avoid danger, but to gain the friendship of Saul, plotting to track his ways and overthrow his steps; and these are those who, according to the recalled parable of the Lord, hear the word, but the worry of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. I do not follow this reasoning as if I did not believe that even today there exist and will always exist many perfected in faith and truth; but because I see that, for the most part, the times are now approaching that were predicted long ago, in which, with iniquity abounding, the love of many will grow cold (Matthew XXIV). The title of the fifty-third Psalm, remembering the reading and betrayal by the Ziphites, is as follows: For the end, in songs, understanding of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul: "Is not David hidden among us? Which, to explain briefly, denotes that the psalm is spoken in the end, in

the person of Christ. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Romans X). In songs, in great distress, yet the Psalmist declares the same song with rejoicing according to the one who said: "But we also glory in tribulation" (Romans V). For it seems to me that the psalms inscribed in songs always declare the joy of the singer amidst adversities.

The understanding of David shows that David, obsessed with anguish, but also unexpectedly delivered, understood that the body of the true David, of which he himself was a member, would suffer from the wicked, how great the grace of his Redeemer was, to be often delivered at present, and always crowned in the future. But what is said at the beginning of the same psalm: "O God, save me by your name, and in your strength, deliver me," is what David seeks in this reading, refuge in the rock. And for this reason, it is called the dividing rock because of the beginning of deliverance. For the fathers drank from the spiritual rock that followed them. And the rock was Christ.

CHAPTER 4.3

David in the cave of solitude in Engaddi cuts off a part of Saul's cloak, which he later uses to urge Saul to confess his guilt. Samuel dies, and David descends into the desert of Paran. (1 Samuel 24. Therefore, David arose and went up, etc., up to the part that is written: But David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. In this reading, the Lord reveals His hidden gifts to the little ones that were hidden from the wise and prudent; overcoming the bonds of death, He immediately destroys them by His resurrection; calling the Jews, whose carnal kingdom was partly taken away, to repentance through the apostles. Without delay, as the shadow of the law fades, He is brought to be worshipped in the hearts of the gentiles, which had long been abandoned and wild, through the truth of the Gospel. For fleeing the snares of Saul and abandoning the weak defenses of the Ziphites, David ascends and dwells in the safest places of Engaddi, which is interpreted as the Fountain of the Kid. The Lord, fleeing the proud hearts of the unbelieving Jews, and also abandoning those who do not doubt to leave the commenced flowers of virtues behind, ascends as it were to higher places and dwells in the hearts of the humble in spirit; who, having confessed their own foul crimes, are washed by the life-giving fountain of the Savior, so that they might thus happily transform from goats into lambs. The Church remembers this place, speaking in the Song of Songs:

My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of Engaddi (Song of Songs 1:14). Clearly saying: Just as the cluster of the island of Cyprus is superior to the rest, so the incomparable ardor of spiritual studies of my Redeemer's grace is accustomed to intoxicate the mind which He has captivated. And this is only in those peoples who, renewed in the font of baptism for the remission of sins, know how to spread the joyful fruits of good action. The vineyards of Engaddi, which are fruitful in balsam, a tree from that region, are now regarded as vines. When their bark is cut, the sap that drips, beautiful with glittering tears and very apt for making chrism, manifestly proves how suitable it is for signifying virtues.

1 Samuel 24:1

And when Saul had returned, etc. Saul, having stopped pursuing the Philistines, is suddenly recalled with a sinister mind to hunt down and kill David; he turns his weapons from the just conflict against the enemies to the unjust one in which he strikes a fellow citizen. Thus indeed, unbelieving Jews, while being equipped with the word of Holy Scripture, often dispute various errors of the nations against idols, miserably turn the missiles of unbelieving words against Christ and the Christian religion. And when they know that publicans and sinners have been cleansed through the washing of the saving water and admitted unto themselves, now separated from the enticements of the world, which is typified by David staying in the desert of Engaddi, they immediately set traps against the innocent in vain, seeking to swallow him alive, as hell does, as one whole, descending into the pit. Hence it is aptly added:

1 Samuel 24:2

Saul, however, taking three thousand chosen men, etc. Just as in a good sense the number three is usually placed for a certain mysterious grace, clearly designating those who are either glorious by the confession of the Holy Trinity, or devoted by faith, hope, and charity, or perfect in thought, speech, and action, or something of the sort; so also, when it is placed in an evil army, it not undeservedly denotes those who are found to do everything contrary. Therefore, in this place, the three thousand armed men with whom Saul sets out to persecute David and his men are to be mystically understood as those who, with a threefold battle array against the Lord and against His Christ, meditating vain things (Psalm II), that is, going in the counsel of the un-

godly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of pestilence, have done everything contrary to the Blessed Man; those namely whose will is in the law of the Lord, and who will meditate in His law day and night. Saul also proceeds to search for David even upon the most abrupt rocks, which are accessible only to the ibexes, as he sets the snares of deception and treachery to the kingdom of the Jews against the Lord; even in his highest sayings, which remain scarcely comprehensible to perfect listeners alone.

For the ibexes, which are small quadrupeds and know how to stay and give birth only on rocks, and if at any time they fall from the high peaks of rocks, they catch themselves unharmed with their horns, symbolize the humble listeners of the word of God, who, the more they perceive themselves to be of lesser merit, wisdom, and virtue, the more they seek strong refuges of the Holy Scriptures, in which they ought to dwell mentally and place the fruits of good works, as ibexes seek refuge among the rocks, and whatever temporal ruin befalls them, sustaining themselves on the testaments of heavenly words, they are saved as if by the reception of their horns. The Lord remembers this animal, and has marked how it is not contemptible in its figure, speaking mystically to the blessed Job: "Do you know the time when the ibexes give birth among the rocks? (Job XXXIX).

1 Samuel 24:3

And he also came to the sheepfolds, etc. In persecuting the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, he also dragged the wicked investigation to the gatherings of his faithful disciples, who offered themselves as sheep to the raging wolves, to see if they could find any reason within them to criticize their master. Hence the saying: "Behold, your disciples do what is not lawful on the Sabbaths," and others (Mark II).

1 Samuel 24:3

And there was a cave, etc. This cave is a symbol of the Lord's tomb, whose entrance Saul entered to relieve himself, while the rulers of the kingdom of the Jews, having departed from Pilate, secured the tomb, sealing the stone with guards, in an attempt to block the path of resurrection to the Author of Life. By doing this, they revealed to all the long-conceived and steeped filth of their unfaithful minds. Moreover, the Lord lay hidden in the inner part of the tomb, and his men also hid there—that is, the strong who at that time were to become stronger as his disciples. It is certain that wherever they were

in the city of Jerusalem at that time in body, they held with their entire focus and desire the place of the tomb, where they mourned the burial of the only one they loved. Indeed, they hid in the cave because they did not at all want those who had unjustly killed him to know the devotion and love they had for him. Or certainly it is to be understood that David's men hid with him in the cave, and even rose and came out from the cave with him, according to the Apostle's statement: "Our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom. VI). And as he had previously said: "For as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life" (Rom. VI).

1 Samuel 24: 4

And David's servants said to him: Behold the day, etc. Christ's carnal disciples, still of a servile spirit, said to him when they saw the power of the crucified and the madness of those who crucified: Behold, the time is at hand, of which God the Father spoke to you through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that he would make all your enemies a footstool for your feet (Psalm 109). But they said this with their whole heart, although not in words, whomever of them desired the death of those who, releasing a thief, condemned the Savior to death, because it was proven by him who cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, unwilling for the Lord to drink the cup which the Father gave. It was proven in those who sought fire from heaven to descend upon the impious, not knowing of what spirit they were, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy souls, but to save. But with the appropriate moderation of his piety, he did not completely kill the wicked, but withdrew from them, in no small part, the habit of the kingdom, so that even thus confounded, they might come to the recognition of their madness and correction.

1 Samuel 24: 5

After these things, David's heart struck him, etc. The Lord groaned for the human race, from which he took flesh, with the affection of compassion, because by its merits he was compelled to take away some part of its royal ornament, preferring that it might have the kingdom here and always in the fu-

ture age, preserved by divine law. Finally, seeing the sinful city, he wept over it saying: For if you also had known, and the rest (Luke 19). He lamented with human pious compassion the detestable loss of the kingdom, which he decreed by divine justice would come to pass.

1 Samuel 24:6

And he said to his men, "May the Lord be merciful to me," etc. David is shown to have refrained from killing Saul, despite Saul's most hostile pursuit of him, for two main reasons: first, he remembered him as his lord and as having been anointed with royal chrism. Here, primarily, he venerates the kingdom and the anointing with due honor, which indeed he always knew symbolized the ever inviolable kingdom of the Lord and the spiritual anointing. Furthermore, he also teaches us through moral disciplines that we should not dare to wound our leaders, especially those distinguished by sacred orders, with the sword of harsh words, nor presume to criticize by tearing away even the fringe of their final and unnecessary actions. Yet if we accidentally do such a thing incautiously, we should immediately strike the heart with sorrow and strive to correct the rash deed by repenting. However, according to the established order of explanation, in which we have said that Saul signifies the Jewish people or kingdom and David signifies Christ, we can understand that Christ called the same people or kingdom his lord, because he deigned to take on the form of a servant from it; and he called Christ the Anointed of the Lord, because he had bestowed the anointing of spiritual grace on that people before all other nations. Therefore, he did not wish to strike them down with his hand to utterly destroy the wicked, but, as with the royal robe cut off, he divided them from the earth and overthrew them in their own life. And as another psalm says, "Do not kill them, lest my people forget; scatter them by your power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield." (Psalm 59).

1 Samuel 24:7

And David restrained his men with his words, etc. And the Lord restrained the severity of his disciples, who wished the impious to perish, by saying: Do not judge, and you will not be judged (Matthew VII). Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned (Luke VI). And elsewhere: For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him (John III), and so on of this kind, and he did not permit them

to take immediate vengeance on the wrongdoers, but rather to love the correction of those who amend their ways.

1 Samuel 24:7

Moreover, Saul rising from the cave, etc. The keepers of the Lord's tomb, who, having fallen prostrate through fear of the approaching angel and had become like dead men, and fleeing from the tomb, nonetheless continued the evil schemes against the Lord, saying that his disciples had come at night and stolen him away while they were sleeping. Which can also be rightly understood of those who placed guards at the tomb (Matthew XXVIII); who, even though they withdrew from guarding the tomb of the Lord with groans and confusion, nonetheless did not turn away from their intent of persecuting his faith with raging steps. With these both having been driven away from the watch of the tomb, the Lord himself did not delay to gradually reveal the glory of his resurrection, which he had assumed secretly, to his followers. And with this truth confirmed and taught, soon through them thundered the proclamation of free preaching, calling back benignly to the remedy of repentance and his love those who had turned away from him, his persecutors. To those whom he reconciled to himself with the first words of humanity and piety, he diligently taught some of them to look back after him, that is, to repent of their crime against God.

1 Samuel 24:8

And bowing himself, David prostrated on the ground and worshiped. The Savior, with his compassionate heart, bowed down to help and aid earthly and weak hearts, showing through the ministers of His word, He Himself first presented examples of worship and reconciliation with God to those who had already offended Him long ago. He said to the people of the Jews through the heralds of the Gospel: "Why do you listen to the words of human wisdom, of the Scribes and Pharisees speaking: Jesus seeks harm against you; if we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John 11). Behold, at the time of My passion with so many miracles appearing, whoever could truly see, saw in you that the Lord had delivered you into My power, since at a single gentle word of My response when I said, "I am He," such a large armed band fell trembling, and when I was crucified, an unusual darkness covered the whole sky at midday; when I gave up My spirit, the whole

earth was moved, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and countless bodies of the dead were raised. Finally, at the appearance of an angel testifying to My resurrection, an immense earthquake occurred, and your guards were stunned and became like the dead. And indeed I thought that if you did not repent, I would destroy you; but patient regard of My compassion spared you, favoring that through penance you might deserve pardon and salvation. For I said: I will not strike completely, nor will I remove from the midst the people, although sinful and hostile to Me, from which I received the form of a servant, in which I would win back the whole world; which in the fathers long ago divine generosity imbued with the blessing of singular grace.

1 Samuel 24:11

Rather, my father, see, etc. Rather, says the Lord, my people, since I was called and was the Son of Man to confirm the promises of the fathers, it did not displease me to be incarnate. See and recognize the boundary of your royal state in my power; for when I cut off the summit of your earthly kingdom, calling many from its defense, which is carried out through arms, strife, and wars, to the simplicity of my faith and religion, giving many into the hands of enemies for the guilt of perfidy, I did not wish to extend the hand of open vengeance against you. Consider and see that there is nothing evil or wicked in my work, and recognize that I am he of whom the prophet testifies: "He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth" (Isa. LIII). Who among you convicts me of sin (John VIII), you who conspire to erase the memory of my name from the land of the living?

1 Samuel 24:14

Whom do you persecute, king of Israel? Whom do you persecute? etc. Israel means a man seeing God. Whom then do you persecute, O people, who were chosen before all other nations to see the glory of divine brightness? Whom do you persecute? Is it that great and most vigilant shepherd of holy sheep, whom you did not hesitate to betray to death and continue to hate even after his death? He who was lowly in human appearance but swift in the leap of resurrection, having escaped your hands when you attempted to seize him, you foolishly think that you can again grasp him thundering from heaven? Indeed, I do not seek my glory; there is one who seeks and judges. Let it seem absurd to no one that a dead dog or a flea bears the Lord's figure, since in another place due to the frailty of the flesh, which he received from a virgin's

flesh without male seed, he says of himself: "But I am a worm, and not a man" (Psalm XXII). And due to the glory of the resurrection, which he quickly and swiftly completed from death to life as if by a leap: "And I am shaken out as a locust" (Psalm CVIII).

1 Samuel 24:16

And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept, etc. And as the Lord taught through the apostles, the people of the Jews, among those who were predestined to eternal life, lifted up their voice in the confession of faith, which they had long sunk low by denying, and washed away the stains of ancient guilt with worthy tears of repentance, confessing both the justice and goodness of the Lord; and also recalling the errors of their own wickedness, that they indeed had fiercely handed over the author of all goodness to death: but He, given to death unjustly, being omnipotent, preferred to save than to destroy those who killed Him.

1 Samuel 24:20

And now because I know for certain that you will reign, etc. This is the voice of the penitent people of the Jews, seeking the path of salvation from Christ whom they acknowledged. And now because I know for certain that you are He of whom it is said, "His government will be multiplied, and there will be no end of peace" (Isa. IX), having in your dominion that kingdom in which the pure in heart will see God without any end to their blessedness, confirm, I pray, the faith which you have granted by the largess of your sacraments, and augment that same faith in me with your heavenly gifts, so that, having received the pledge of the Spirit, I may have confidence that the offspring of my works, born from my heart, will be saved from eternal destruction after the dissolution of the body. Nor take away my name from the house of the heavenly habitation, which you have deigned to give to my fathers, who awaited you faithfully and lovingly through the law to come. But as for some of the Jews who poured forth these and similar words of confession, the Lord justly granted their petition, and imbued with the sacraments of the Gospel, He made them faithful from among the catechumens and the competent.

1 Samuel 24:22

So Saul went to his house, etc. The people of the Jews who were able to repent from their faithlessness through the teaching of the apostles went to work on the care of their inner salvation. On the other hand, the Lord himself

and his preachers, knowing that many from the same people would wage wars against the faith, having left the lowly and earthly things, soon ascended to safer and higher places, that is, those who would rightly believe and firmly persevere, by illuminating the hearts of the Samaritans and nearby nations. This reading's memory, and its spiritual reference to Christ, is taught by the title of the fifty-sixth Psalm, which is inscribed thus: To the end, do not destroy David, in the inscription of the title, when he fled from the face of Saul into the cave. Although it seems to be written about David in two words; it opens up in two others, because it truly signifies Christ entirely. That which says "Do not destroy David" seems to prohibit from destroying him, who had been prepared by the Lord's promise for the kingdom, from the insidious enemy. And what it adds in the closure: When he fled from the face of Saul into the cave, it smiles upon the particular moment of time in which he was thought to be able to be destroyed.

Nevertheless, what is placed in the beginning, to the end, forewarns that everything should be referred to him, who remains the perfection of all good things for us, because when we came to him, there is no longer any need to seek anything beyond. And what follows, in the inscription of the title, expresses the very title of the Lord's passion, which Pilate wrote in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; and which itself, in figure of an unshakeable kingdom, could not be destroyed by any reasoning or by him who wrote it. Therefore, the sense of this entire title is the same, commanding the Jews not to suspect that they can take away the glory of Christ, even when he is killed and buried: To the end, do not destroy David, in the inscription of the title, when he fled from the face of Saul into the cave, understand the psalm as sung to him who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes; so that you may seek not to destroy Christ by taking away or diminishing his kingdom, which is marked by the true inscription of the title, even when you see him enter the closed tomb through his death due to the impious harassing him; and indeed, the tomb's closed doors were fled from the face of those pursuing him, so that they would have no power to pursue or even see him any longer.

Moreover, that very psalm, according to the tenor of this same reading, openly and appropriately celebrates the Lord's passion, burial, and resurrection, and also the faith of the Gentiles, which is mystically contained within the end of the present reading, where among other things about the tri-

umphal passion: He gave, he says, those trampling me to reproach. (Psalm LVI). Of the burial and resurrection: He delivered my soul from the midst of the lions' whelps, I slept troubled. This trouble is better understood in his members who had not yet fully believed in his resurrection while he slept in the tomb. Likewise, of the resurrection: I will arise early. But concerning the Gentiles, inspired and cooperating to faith: I will confess to you among the peoples, O Lord, I will sing a psalm to you among the nations. And the damnation of the Jewish nation, which is marked by the cutting of Saul's cloak in this reading, the aforementioned psalm describes this way: They dug a pit before my face, and they themselves fell into it.

1 Samuel 25:1

(I Reg. XXV.) Samuel died, etc. The shadow predicting truth to come waned with the dawning Gospel, nor could the people be removed from the rites of the customary ceremonies without sorrow, which they did not doubt had been established by the institution of the divine law. Hence James, speaking to the apostle Paul, said: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and they are all zealous for the law" (Acts 21). Yet, as the custom of Judaizing gradually ceased in the Church, just as the prophet's lifeless members were removed from human view, they were laid in their house in Ramah, that is, in a high place; because while the sacraments of the law had ceased to be celebrated outwardly, all began to be sought, understood, and tested inwardly in Christ and the Church. Indeed, the prophet's house is the church of the believers, and this is situated in that high place, of which it is written: "And the Most High has established her" (Psalm 86). And elsewhere: "For he is exalted" (Isaiah 2).

1 Samuel 25:1

But David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. Paran is interpreted as wild ass, or fruitful, or their fierceness. Therefore, with the type of prophecy ceasing, and with Rama, that is in Christ, as it is said, and the Church fulfilled, Judea being left behind, the truth of faith has deigned to approach the nations long wild and of untamed spirit, but now about to be fruitful with the fruit of justice. And not only because of its wild or fierce name, but also because of its fierce and savage inhabitants, Paran is most fittingly suitable to signify the nations. For Scripture narrates that Ishmael, from whom the Saracens descend, lived in the wilderness of Paran, he con-

cerning whom it is said: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman" (Gen. XXI). The son of the free woman, that is, the people renewed by spiritual grace, dreading the turbulent neighborhood, complains, saying: "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged, I have dwelt among the tents of Kedar" (Psalm CXIX), and so forth, until the end of the psalm, which describe the Saracens as special adversaries of the Church in a general manner. But so that Christ might call also the sons of the bondwoman, that is, the people serving this world, to freedom, and make them sons of the promise like Isaac, He descended to the wilderness of Paran, that is, the humbled hearts of the Gentiles, and infused them with the grace of His mercy.

CHAPTER 4.4

David, intending to strike down Nabal of Carmel, is appeased by the intervention and gifts of his wife Abigail. After Nabal dies ten days later, David takes her as his wife; he also takes Ahinoam of Jezreel, after his wife Michal was given to Phalti, the son of Laish. There was a man in the wilderness of Maon, etc., up to what is written: But Saul gave Michal his daughter, David's wife, etc. This reading typically teaches that the synagogue, condemned by the wickedness of its leaders and teachers, was saved by the Lord, but it was later also partly rejected when the Gentiles were called to faith; it marks the salvation of the humble with some characters, but the rejection of the proud with others. Thus, there was a man in the wilderness of Maon, that is, of habitation. There was a congregation of scribes and Pharisees engaged in the studies of the Holy Scripture, which, being endowed with a unique virtue beyond all other Scriptures, moreover teaches all its readers to become solitary in the world, that is, separated from its desires and pomps, and to make themselves a dwelling worthy of God. And his possession, he says, was in Carmel, that is, in the knowledge of circumcision; because the word of the law, which they preached, proclaimed the true chastisement, but it did not give the perfection. For what the letter showed by commanding, it did not perfect, but grace aiding did.

Therefore, not in perfection, but in the acknowledgment of consummate chastisement did the Pharisee and legal scribe have possession, because the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1). That man was indeed called very great; because the mentioned teacher, although in no small part wise in earthly matters, yet excels greatly

above all the preceptors of secular philosophy, who were entirely ignorant of the divine law and used themselves alone as masters in those things which they taught.

1 Samuel 25: 2

And he had three thousand sheep, etc. To the scribes and Pharisees were committed innocent and penitent souls for teaching: these perfected by faith, hope, and charity; those still following the rudiments of first faith which begins from fear. [1 Samuel 25:2] -- And it happened that his flock was being sheared in Carmel. It happened that some of the more perfect listeners among the scribes, in the recognition of external chastity, were abandoning their legal acts so that the inner man might be renewed day by day. It happened that all the people subject to them were giving the Lord their wool, as if it were the first fruits and tithes of their produce, which could be lost without pain. [1 Samuel 25:3] -- The name of that man was Nabal, etc. Nabal means foolish, Abigail is called the father's joy: and the foolish man was a legal expert who, having the key of knowledge, neither entered himself, nor allowed those who wished to enter. The father's joy, however, is rightly called the synagogue among those to whom it is said: But rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke X). For she was most prudent in such matters, understanding the word of faith; and beautiful in doing what she could understand. Meanwhile, her masters were hardened in unbelief, wicked in living badly, and malicious in plotting against the Lord.

1 Samuel 27: 3

He was from the tribe of Caleb. The teachers of the synagogue were from the disciples of the lawgiver. For the scribes and Pharisees sat on Moses' seat (Matthew XXIII); who, since they then led other mortals by the grace of both human and divine wisdom, can, not unjustly, be called Caleb, that is, the whole heart; or because we read that patriarch Caleb was powerful in faith and virtue, we can say that the faithfulness of the faithful is the increase of damnation for the faithless, who have degenerated from the life of their parents.

1 Samuel 25: 4

When therefore David heard in the desert that Nabal was shearing his sheep, etc. When the Lord, conversing in the world in man, heard that the learned in the law were preparing their hearers either to cleanse themselves from sins

or to offer their own for the Lord, as if with the fitting scissors of practice, He sent His most valiant disciples, namely the heralds of the heavenly denarius to be attained, whose youth had been renewed like the eagle in baptism, and said to them: Ascend into the recognition of circumcision, open in the progresses of virtues and doctrine, show that you truly know and have ascended the height of spiritual chastity: and by doing this you will come to the very teachers of the law, and also evangelists announcing salvation from my name, which I am called and am the Savior, to those future heavenly in peace, saying: Let there be peace to all who by believing in the name of God the Father wish to be brothers of Christ, let there also be peace to you converted in pious society to the same faith; nay, and to all whom you have taught, and to all that you do, peace. That is, the peace which made both one and broke down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in His flesh (Ephesians II).

1 Samuel 25:7

I heard that your shepherds are shearing, etc. And the Lord spoke these things through his apostles to the chiefs of the Jews, "I heard that your disciples are teaching the people, who used the same pastures of sacred Scripture as we did. We were never troublesome to them, but behaved quietly toward everyone, and moreover preached the gentle yoke of humility and the light burden: nor did anything ever perish from their teaching or deeds: they were with us at all times in the recognition of circumcision, that is, where they, like us, acknowledged spiritual circumcision in the highest words of divine eloquence. It must be understood here that something could have perished from the substance of those who had been in Carmel without David; that is, the superfluous reading in many ways, not profitable for the salvation of the soul, of those who, reading the Scriptures, did not know how to understand Christ in the Scriptures. Ask, he says, some of the innocent and knowingly humble among your people of whom the kingdom of heaven is; and they will tell you that the grace of the Gospel is not contrary to the letter of the law, but in both Testaments the just live by faith.

1 Samuel 25:8

Now therefore let the young men find favor in your eyes, etc. Because, they say, you teach the people, which is to intellectually shear the flock, ensure that even the disciples of Christ preaching may find in you the grace of faith

and good action. For indeed we come to preach uniquely good things in the light of grace, so remarkably good, that the previously unheard kingdom of heaven is proclaimed to mortals; and to this, the whole race of men is called, from which the Gospel also received its name in Greek due to this foremost goodness. Whatever virtuous obedience your strength finds, willingly bestow it upon those teachers rejoicing in serving your salvation, and upon the offspring from your lineage, to the truly strong and desirable hand of Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel 25:10

Answering, however, Nabal spoke to David's young men, etc. The foolish leaders of the Jews, responding to the disciples of Christ preaching to them, said: We are disciples of Moses, but this man we do not know where he comes from (John IX). And the disciples of Jesus grew in the presumption of teaching, so that they could not be surpassed by anyone, who fled by despising the experts in the law, much their superiors in knowledge. Therefore, we will take up the words of the Holy Scripture, entrusted to us specifically for teaching, which can be read and understood simply; that is, to drink water: partly to be handled more carefully, so that they may be understood in this way, which is to break and eat bread by chewing. We will also take the deeds of the preceding fathers, which we have prepared for teaching to aid the life and virtue of our listeners, and we will give them to teachers, entirely separated from our religion and faith, who pervertedly transfer the holy words to the sense of their doctrine.

1 Samuel 25:13

Then David said to his men, Let each one gird on his sword, etc. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, can indeed be understood; with which the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (Ephes. VI), was girded to vanquish the unbelievers, whenever he revealed the word of the Father to the world through his Gospel. And his disciples were girded when they preached the same. But because it is read in the following: David, being prohibited from striking the wicked, thanks to Abigail's intercession. The Church never prays, however, that Christ might not inflict the saving wound of his word upon the unbelievers. It is better understood in this place that the sword signifies the vengeance of destruction, which threatened the Jews after the Lord's passion; with which sword, indeed, the Lord himself,

and his ministers of the same word, were girded, not by inflicting punishment on sinners, but by predicting this punishment as future to the sinners, unless they repented. Due to the fear of this sword, the Church, interceding with the Lord, suspended its blow for more than LX years.

1 Samuel 25:13

And about four hundred men followed David, etc. Whoever could be found perfect in prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice followed the Lord to the office of preaching. Moreover, others, content with the twin perfection of charity, preferred to live quietly with those they had won for Christ, rather than gird themselves for spiritual battles to win others. [1 Samuel 25:14] -- But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, etc. When the chiefs of the Jews scorned the word of faith, the unity of Christ's disciples announced to the synagogue subject to them, saying: Behold, Jesus Christ sent apostles, namely messengers of truth, instructed in the divine Scriptures, to command eternal blessing to our elders, and they rejected them. These men, that is, Christ's apostles, were good apostles, were good enough for us by preaching the heavenly kingdom; and not troublesome, by imposing the burdens of the law on our necks anymore. Nor did anything ever perish of what we established during all the time we lived in their faith, living in deserts from the allurements of the world, and in a quasi-solitary life. At all times, I say, whether observing the rites of the law still, or celebrating the mysteries of the revealed and proclaimed grace, whoever joined themselves to the faith of Christ were saved from all destruction. They were helpful to us in teaching, both in investigating the obscure parts of the Scriptures, and in plainly bringing forth the clear ones, all the days in which we instructed our listeners according to their truly evangelical understanding.

1 Samuel 25:17

Wherefore consider and reflect upon what you do, because, etc. I have explained, he says, what benefit and grace the faith of Christ has, and how great a hardness our leaders have shown in resisting it. Wherefore consider and reflect upon, by what order you have declined and avoided the malice of the proud, who did not want the blessing, and it will be prolonged from them, that you might not only escape His wrath but also be deemed worthy to receive the blessing of inheritance; because the malice of vindication against the leaders of your people, and against your own people, has been ful-

filled; who, having formerly killed and stoned the prophets, to complete the malice of their sin, did not fear to lay hands on the Lord, the uniquely powerful one among the prophets, and they are the sons of the devil, choosing Barrabas the robber for themselves instead of Christ the Savior; so hardened in their minds, that they are unable to grasp the words of any of the spiritual teachers.

1 Samuel 25:18

Abigail then hurried and took two hundred loaves, etc. Motivated by the preaching of the apostles, the Synagogue hastened to be reconciled to Christ, whom she recognized had been offended by her leaders, and brought her listeners, who had already been instructed in the letter of the law; and she placed them upon the humble and simple dispensers of the word of the gospel, by whose ministry or intercession they were brought to Christ: upon those, namely, who could say, We have become like a beast before you on earth, and we are always with you (Psalm LXXII); and: We are fools for Christ's sake (I Cor. IV). For the two hundred loaves are those who, through the fellowship of the same faith and action, are so mutually connected by a bond, so strengthened by the fire of supreme devotion, that they can in no way be separated from each other. The two skins of wine, who, intoxicated with the virtue of twin love, desire to mortify the flesh, but be quickened by the Spirit, and be inwardly renewed day by day, to receive and contain the must of spiritual grace. The five roasted rams, whatever in their senses is proud, and found to be like ill-horned against weaker neighbors, they are accustomed to cook entirely with the flame of devout mortification devoted to God. The five measures of parched corn, who know how to subjugate the aforementioned senses of the body to the spirit, and to tame the necessary humility as a mill;

which in fact the humiliation or contrition of the flesh, because it must be done moderately, neither less nor more than just, this parched corn is well described by the measure of five, which among the Hebrews is a definite measure, one and a half modium. The hundred clusters of raisins signify those who rejoice in virginal continence, and moreover are bound to each other with the bonds of indivisible charity, and even in the flesh relish the most perfect beauty of angelic chastity. For the dried grape, cut off from the vine that bore it full of its own wine, is usually kept uncrushed for the gift of greater grace; and the virgin flesh, separated from the common fellowship of

the Church by the iron of stricter continence, embraces within itself the sweetness of mature chastity, beloved by the Lord for the grace of the whole Church. Indeed, one hundred, because it signifies the mystery of heavenly and angelic perfection, is widely known to all. The two hundred cakes of figs are souls who impart the sweetness of their spiritual and perfect fellowship to their neighbors by teaching, so that by doubled virtue they may also merit a double palm. All these things were sent as a feast to David through Abigail, with men imbued with various virtues through the teaching of the law, whom the Synagogue sent to be baptized and instructed in the sacraments of the Gospel to Christ.

1 Samuel 25:19

And he said to his servants: Go before me, etc. Many from Judea had gone before, coming to the faith individually, and the Synagogue followed after them. For it was first said: But the Lord added to the number those who were being saved daily (Acts II); and afterward, indeed, the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace, and was being built up, walking in the fear of the Lord, and was filled with the comfort of the Holy Spirit. However, lest it provoke its foolish leaders to worse, the believing Synagogue refrained from indicating the mystery of its faith. [1 Samuel 25:20] -- Therefore, when he had ascended the donkey, etc. When the Synagogue confessed to all that it had served a foolish sense until then, and descended to the beginnings of the Christian faith, which starting from the infirmity of the Lord's incarnation, usually leads to the heights of recognizing divinity, Christ and his disciples descended to meet it, so that by preaching they might assist its efforts and, from the mysteries of his humanity with which it was imbued, they might elevate it to the highest summits of Divinity.

1 Samuel 25:21

And David said: Truly, in vain have I kept, etc. The Lord said, detesting the long foolishness of the proud Jews: Truly in vain for so long a time have I offered the gifts of my grace to those out of their minds compared to other nations, and in return they gave the evil of faithlessness, persecution, and the cross, for the good of the grace I gave. Therefore, I will take the wicked from the land, so that until the morning of the universal judgment, no one from the perverse lineage may be left immune. This was said not so that all faithless Jews before the day of judgment might be shown to be dying, but so that

they may be taught to be deserving of death and damnation in all respects. This is similar to when Korah stirred sedition in the desert, the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, Separate yourselves from the congregation of this people, so that I may destroy them suddenly (Num. XVI); and yet by their interceding and saying, Almighty God of the spirits of all flesh, will Your wrath rage against everyone because of one sinner? wrath was suspended, and the grace of mercy was bestowed. And on the following day, when the whole multitude murmured against them, he said, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, I will destroy them now. But what He showed that the wicked deserved by just judgment, He changed by mercy through the intercession of the faithful. Therefore, in this place also, under the figure of David, the Lord defers judging what the faithless have deserved, as the following spiritual interpretation of this reading will show. For it follows:

1 Samuel 25:23

When Abigail saw David, she hastened and descended from the donkey, etc. When the synagogue recognized Christ, or rather, having itself been recognized by Christ, it hastened to renounce its old way of life, which had zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; and with the most devout humility, bearing witness to itself as dust and ashes, it began to worship the steps of the Lord's incarnation with humble prayer, either repenting for itself to be accepted by the Lord, or praying for its people and unbelieving leaders that they may not be struck corporally, with an open confession, and testifying that the wicked are reserved for eternal punishment, and that Christ's kingdom will remain in perpetual peace, and begging with every desire of the soul that it may belong to this. [1 Samuel 25:25] -- Do not, I beseech you, my lord the king, set your heart upon this wicked man, Nabal, etc. The synagogue of believers, moved by pious humility, begs the Lord not to utterly destroy their wicked rulers and nobles before the punishment of the final judgment, so that those who are awaiting eternal destruction for their foolishness of disbelief, may at least enjoy a little temporal pleasure. At the same time, humbly excusing or rather lamentably accusing herself, that she too recognized the messengers of such great good, that is the apostles whom He sent, so late.

1 Samuel 25:27

Wherefore, accept this blessing, etc. Because, he says, it is not hidden that the impious are destined to perish by just judgment, I beseech you to kindly receive those whom I have offered to be dedicated to you, converted piously, to be consecrated by you, to be blessed by you, and to commit them to the ecclesiastical society of your servants who have gone before. [1 Samuel 25:28] -- Take away the iniquity of your servant, etc. Wash me more, he says, from my injustice, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 51). For I believe and confess without any doubt, that when the plans of the persecutors are suppressed and defeated, God the Father, who alone is sufficient to save and protect the world from the evil one, will multiply far and wide the people consecrated by your faith. [1 Samuel 25:31] -- And when the Lord has done good to my lord, etc. When God the Father has made all your enemies a footstool for your feet, and you have entered the kingdom with your elect forever; I beseech you, establishing me at the right hand of your throne, to deem me worthy to be a participant in the same kingdom.

1 Samuel 25:32

And David said to Abigail: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, etc. The Lord refers the grace to the believing synagogue to the glory of the Father, signifying that we should always bless and praise Him; also rewarding the believing synagogue that prays even for the unbelievers with deserved blessing. Simultaneously showing how pleasing He considers a prayer that is made with a benevolent mind for the adversaries. [1 Samuel 25:35] -- David then took from her hand everything she had brought him. The Lord accepted the devotion of all believers, which the hand, that is, the work of the Synagogue preaching, had brought to Him on behalf of her children. He kindly advised that after receiving from Him the grace of heavenly peace, they should return to conscience and diligently discern how they should live for themselves.

1 Samuel 25:36

Moreover, Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, there was a feast in his house. After showing the Lord the affection of her devotion, the Synagogue of believers came to see the life and mind of the unbelievers, in case she might be able to call them to faith as well. But when she saw them satiated with the feasts of legal sacrifices, rejoicing that they were a royal race above other na-

tions, and, what is worse, inflated with a mad intoxication against the word of the Gospel, she was silent for a while about the danger of the crime committed, until she herself, more and more confirmed by the light of the Holy Spirit, proceeded more freely to reprove and they, with the glory of Christ shining openly, would recognize the sin they had committed against Him more evidently, and recognizing, would lament, lamenting would cleanse themselves. However, they, recognizing their guilt, chose not to cleanse it with repentance, but to increase it with pride. For even the apostles and all who repented from the snares of the devil are believed to pertain to Abigail, that is, to the person of the Father's exultation, either as companions or as gifts.

1 Samuel 25:38

When ten days had passed, the death of Nabal can be understood as nothing better than the extermination of the most proud kingdom of the Jews, the overthrow of the temple, and the cessation of legal observances. Indeed, after the procession of ten days, it is evident that it pertains to the consummation of the law given in the Decalogue. [1 Samuel 25:39] -- David therefore sent and spoke to Abigail. The Lord sent preachers, so that, with the Synagogue's perfidious leaders destroyed by the sword of the Romans with their followers, they might invite her, in the remnants that remained, to His spiritual marriage. [1 Samuel 25:41] -- Rising, she worshipped prostrate on the ground, etc. Rising to the exercise of good work, the synagogue of believers of those times first gives an indication of its belief by worshipping Christ as God; then it promises to wash its earthly works polluted by impurity with the humble service of His servants, first with the wave of baptism, and afterward with the pleasant source of its intercession and exhortation. According to which He Himself, having washed their feet, insinuates: How much more, He says, you ought to wash one another's feet (John XIII).

1 Samuel 25:42

And she rode upon an ass, etc. Following the messengers of the Lord's word, the faithful synagogue, the closer it comes to receiving His gifts, the more surely it recognizes its own foolishness, slowness, and impurity. This can also be rightly understood of each faithful soul which, having mounted an ass, also leads five maidens with her to David; when recognizing her natural sluggishness and dullness, whatever she can do by seeing, hearing, tasting,

smelling, and touching, she joyfully expends all this in fulfilling the commands of her master. Otherwise, coming to David, Abigail has five maidens as companions; because the synagogue, to be coupled with the mysteries of Christ, brings with her none other than souls imbued with the rites of the law, which is written in five books. If anyone doubts that after the slaughter inflicted upon the Jews by Vespasian and Titus, the Church was gathered from their number, let him read ecclesiastical history, and he will find that after the destruction of Jerusalem was completed, Christians dwelling there, especially of the circumcision, who had fled from the Roman sword the Lord revealing it, immediately returned; and there for more than sixty years until the final destruction, which was done under Hadrian, there were not lacking Jews who served the Lord faithfully in the Church, so that during all that time bishops in Jerusalem were chosen from no other source but circumcision.

Therefore, Abigail, holding the type of the faithful synagogue, not only signifies the persons of any one time, but sometimes those who began to believe in the Lord existing in the flesh; sometimes those who, after His ascension, repented at the preaching of the apostles; sometimes those who even from their number could reach the office of preaching; sometimes those who, after the killers, sellers, and dispersers of Christ and the Church, came to faith. Since they all learned to have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, rightly they are all signified by the same Abigail, a very prudent and beautiful woman, whose name is transferred to the rejoicing of the Father; truly signifying that one whom, assisting at His right hand in vesture of gold, that is, in works of charity shining in glory, the same Father rejoicing addresses: Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and your father's house, because the King has desired your beauty (Psalm XLIV).

1 Samuel 25:43

But David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, etc. Ahinoam means brother's beauty, Jezreel is interpreted as seed of God. Therefore, the Lord chose not only from the synagogue of the Jews those whom He would join to Himself with internal love, but also graciously took from the gentiles a people to be imbued with His sacraments, confirmed by His love. He who is rightly called brother's beauty, insofar as he delights in seeking the glory of his Redeemer, not his own. For He Himself deigned to become our brother, either because

of the humanity of His nature similar to ours which He assumed; or because He gave the power to become sons of God to as many as received Him (John 1). Finally, in the Song of Songs, the Lord Himself is called the brother of the Church because of the communion of the same nature, and she is called His sister; whence this: You have wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, you have wounded my heart (Song 4). And she, desiringly expecting His incarnation in the ancient faithful: Who will give you to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find you outside and kiss you (Song 8)? that is, that I may deserve to see and speak to you in the form of a man, whom I have always been accustomed to believe, love, and adore in the invisible nature of deity. He who is most beautifully called brother's beauty from Jezreel, that is, born of the seed of God, namely that seed that went out to sow, who sows (Matthew 13), that is, the word of faith; which, after He Himself entrusted to the Jews, the Lord also took care to evangelize to the foreign gentiles through His apostles; so that, according to the parable of the Gospel, there might be one fold and one shepherd (John 10).

1 Samuel 25:44

But Saul gave Michal his daughter as a wife to David, etc. Phalti means my savior, Lais means lion, or fears for himself, Gallim means those who are transmigrated. The leaders and teachers of the Jews, after they saw that the Gentiles believed in Christ, withdrew the common people subject to the Synagogue from him and taught them to believe rather in the Antichrist, whom they await as their savior at the end, indeed the son of the devil, who was made so that he would fear no one, and roamed around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. V); and he is numbered among the unclean spirits, who also formerly transmigrated from the heavens to Tartarus, and daily do not cease to lead their followers from virtues to vices, from bad to worse.

CHAPTER 4.5

When the Ziphites betrayed Saul, he descended against David, who, descending upon his camp at night, while all were sleeping, took his spear and water jug, and then provoked him, when awakened, to confess his error and fault. (1 Samuel 26. And the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, etc., up to what is written: Saul returned to his home. This lesson teaches that Judea, because of the guilt of treachery which it exercised against the Lord, lost the kingdom

which it should have hoped to receive from Him in the heavens, or to preserve from Him on earth; but also completely lost the observance of the legal ceremonies, which, if it had desired to believe in Christ, could be transformed into spiritual understanding, and it could itself keep them spiritually; nonetheless to them, if they agree to convert even late and perform penance, the promised heavenly kingdom is granted by the Lord. The Ziphites, which are interpreted as "blooming," express the teachers of the Jews, glorying in the flower, indeed the fragrant one, that is, the rudiments of legal knowledge, but utterly ignorant of the fruit of the righteousness of faith. Saul, who is called "desired," typically denotes their kingdom, which they asked for from the Lord. His city Gibeah, which is transferred to a hill, demonstrates the proud exaltation of the same kingdom. Achila, which is interpreted as "receiving it," designates the constancy of those who received the faith of Christ in Judea with a pious mind. Therefore, the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying:

"Behold, David is hidden on the hill of Achila, which is opposite the wilderness": it is written below that it was opposite the wilderness along the way. When the Lord was preaching in Judea, the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, came, swollen with the pride of their royal power, to incite envy, saying that the hidden love of Jesus in the heart of the crowd that received His faith believed that Christ the King had come into the world; about which it is well said: "Which is opposite the wilderness along the way. For the city, on whose hill David is hidden, is placed opposite the wilderness, when a crowd of the just, happy with Christ as their guest, takes care to avoid the tumults of earthly desires and to render themselves solitary from worldly allurements. And this is the only way to achieve this most perfect solitude of mind, to receive the advent of Christ in the height, like the hill of the same mind, of whom He himself says: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14).

1 Samuel 26:2

And Saul arose and went down to the desert of Ziph, etc. Understand Gabaa of Achila, not the city of Saul, but the hill of Achila, which is called Gabaa in Hebrew. Therefore, incited by perverse teachers, the kingdom of the Jews was stirred up to persecute the Lord, having in the army of impiety those who were prepared to fight against faith, hope, and charity, advancing to war

as if in a triple line: of infidelity, despair, and hatred. With this armed force, the camps of iniquity hastened to encamp in the midst of the crowd that had received Christ in their hearts, in the hope that they might either find and kill him bodily, or spiritually repel him from the love of his faithful. Therefore, with David dwelling in the desert, Saul came after him into the desert; because once Christ as a dweller was received in the hearts of those who strove to desert the world, persecution immediately followed, which tested the believers, and provided with the struggle an occasion for earning the palm of victory. This same thing happens now and continues to happen at all times in the history of the Church. But let us see what David did when Saul followed him.

1 Samuel 26:5

And David arose and came to the place where Saul was. When the Jews were persecuting Him, the Lord did not leave the province, did not withhold the benefits dispensed, but always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where everyone gathered, and healed their sick (John 10). [1 Samuel 26:6] -- And David said to Achimelech the Hittite, etc. Many, when the Lord was preaching in the flesh, from the Gentiles, many from the Jews flocked to the faith, but he chose the first ministers of his word, by whom he would overthrow and conquer the camps of the persecutor's kingdom, from the Jews, who adhered to him with both a closer affection and the reception of the sacraments. For Achimelech the Hittite, who is interpreted as My brother the king cut off, by nation indeed represents the people of the Gentiles, but by name and faith shows the same as cut off from the rites of idolatry, and joined and united to the kingdom of Christ. Furthermore, Abisai the son of Zeruiah, the brother of Joab, that is, the incense of my father, the son of distress, the brother of the enemy, figuratively designates the chosen disciples of Christ from the Jews, fervent in love, children of penitence, brothers by nature of the persecuting people.

1 Samuel 26:7

Therefore, David and Abisai came to the people by night, etc. The Lord and his disciples came to visit the people, who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, and found his kingdom entirely depressed in kinship, and torpid with blind stupor, all the defenses of virtues, with which they ought to have been armed against spiritual enemies, lived in earthly desires, but also

all the teachers and listeners languishing with the same pestilence of sloth as the princes. [1 Samuel 26:8] -- And Abisai said to David: God has delivered your enemy into your hand today, etc. The disciples, now endowed with spiritual faith, understood that all things were given into the hands of the Savior by the Father; but still hindered by carnal ignorance, they thought that the proud and despisers of his word should be sought to be devoured by fire sent from heaven. Whom he immediately recalling from this intention, determined that rather patience was to be had, saying: For the Son of Man did not come to destroy souls, but to save them (Luke IX). Certainly, what David adds:

1 Samuel 26: 9

For who has stretched out his hand against the Lord's anointed? etc., according to the ongoing exposition indeed demonstrates that no one is free from the crime of sacrilege, who attempts to invade the kingdom of the Jewish people, given specially to him by the Lord, and consecrated with holy oil, and to profane the city and the temple dedicated to divine worship, disregarding the fear of God. But according to the supplicant's sense of the statement, it teaches with what great reverence divine sacraments must be treated, even though they are dispensed by the hands of the wicked; how much honor is due to persons devoted to the service of the sacred altar, how much presumption should be restrained from harming these persons, no matter how wickedly they live, because of the mark of any rank, since he himself, the exile, innocent, refrained from killing the most unjust persecutor of him, solely because of the holy oil of anointing which he had received in the figure of Christ either of the name or of the kingdom which he was not to preserve, and restrained his soldier by command and himself by divine fear. Therefore, we must be careful not to presume to defame and attack the reputation of bishops, presbyters, deacons indiscriminately.

1 Samuel 26: 11

Now therefore take the spear that is at his head, etc. The spear either insinuates the power of the kingdom itself or the arms of spiritual virtues, by which the kingdom could be helped. However, it can be taken regarding the earthly kingdom they had and the heavenly kingdom they hoped for, which anyone among them knew to hope for. It is indeed established that both were rightfully taken away from the faithless. Moreover, the cup of water is

the observance of carnal types; which, compared to evangelical perfection, is as a cup of water to a cup of wine, not inappropriately taken; whence also above Nabal, despising David who asked for water, did not give it. Abigail also gave wine because the people of the faithless, whether of the law or of the letter, refused to ascribe it to Christ; but everyone faithful knows and recognizes that all things are to be referred to Him, and these things filled with a spiritual flavor to be fervent. Therefore, the spear and the cup of water are taken away from Saul, when because of the crime of perfidy, the entire kingdom and the literal custody of the law are taken away from the Jews. This indeed is done by Abishai at the command of David; when at the command of the Lord, each of the apostles preaching the rights of the Gospel teaches that all old things are to pass away. However, when the spear and the cup were taken away, David added, saying, And let us go; it signifies that Christ was about to depart from the Jews and pass over to the Gentiles to be saved with His preachers. And He Himself, coming to the Passion, announcing it almost with the same word said: Rise, let us go hence.

1 Samuel 26:12

And there was no one who saw or understood, etc. There was no one among the reprobate who, hearing the Lord or His apostles preaching the future desolation of Judea, and the erasure of its ancient state from the land, understanding either their past misdeeds or future damnation, would awake to repentance; but they persisted in all impiety, because the Lord, due to preceding merits, blinded their senses. Alternatively, the sleep of the Lord fell upon them, that is, heavier than usual, which the Lord imposed on them particularly because of David's advent, not allowing them to awaken until He himself had gone back. [1 Samuel 26:13] -- And when David had passed over to the other side, etc. When Jesus had passed over from this world to the Father, and remained untroubled in the height of the Father's kingdom, clearly separated far from the sight of mortals, and there was a great distance between Him, immortal victor over death, sitting at the right hand of the Father in the flesh as God, and those who, being mortal, miserable, and impious in this world, endeavored to fight against Him; He cried out through His apostles, preaching to the people of Israel, and to its scribes, urging them to rise from the slumber of their harmful lethargy and to respond to Him by believing. For Abner, who is interpreted as the lamp of the Father, shows those who should have ministered the light of truth to the people at that

time. His father Ner, who is translated as a lamp, typifies their teachers who preceded in spiritually kindling and showing the light of legal knowledge to them and the people.

1 Samuel 26:14

And Abner answered and said: Who are you that cries out? etc. The Pharisees and scribes responded, not recognizing the disciples of Jesus, who cried out teaching the people, and disturbed the kingdom of the Jews, as if by the shedding of Christ's blood, convicting it. And they said, "Do you want to bring this man's blood upon us?" [1 Samuel 26:15] -- And David said to Abner: Are you not a man? etc. The apostles said: Are you not the scribes, learned in the law, chief priests, and Pharisees, excelling the people equally in rank and knowledge? Why did you not protect the untouched dominion of your people, insisting on the vigilance of perfect work and doctrine? [1 Samuel 26:15] -- For someone from the crowd entered to kill the king your lord. Literally, this is said of Abisai, who entered the camp with the intention, if somehow possible, to kill the king. Allegorically, it is understood of the apostles, who with diligent warning predicted the future destruction of the wicked kingdom because of sins.

1 Samuel 26:16

Now therefore see where the king's spear is, etc. See, they say, now where the scepter of your power is, which you have lost both on earth and ceased to hope for in heaven; where is the shadowy observance of the law, which you have thirsted for with all your heart, in which you boasted that the hands of your deeds could be washed from all stain of sins. All alike, because you have lost Christ, and the temple itself is gone. Indeed, all these things, even if not yet completed in the times of the apostles, were for the most part begun in and before their times and still occurring while they were alive, as anyone who reads the history of old will find. For finally, Herod the Great, and his sons, amid the countless calamities they inflicted on the Jews, also took away the holy garment from the priests, and never allowed them the permission to minister in it; they changed the order of the priesthood at their whim, tearing up the legal order. Pilate defiled the temple by secretly introducing images of Caesar during the night, following the impiety of Herod, who had first profaned it by setting up a golden eagle in it and commanded that the young men who tried to remove it for religious reasons be burned alive.

Caius [Caligula] ordered that both the temple and all their synagogues be profaned with the sacrifices of the gentiles and filled with statues and images, and commanded that he himself be worshipped as a god there. As for the degradation of the kingdom, until it perished utterly, there is no end to speaking of it.

1 Samuel 26:17

But Saul recognized David's voice, etc. Saul, recognizing David's voice, moved by his humility, innocence, and justice, confessed that he had sinned and promised not to sin against him anymore, and orders him to return. Many of the leaders of the Jews, recognizing the voice of Christ through the apostles' exhortation, confessed that they had sinned, repenting, and implored him with many tears and great prayers to return by the grace of forgiveness to their hearts, which he had deserted because of their faithlessness.

1 Samuel 26:19

If the Lord incites you against me, etc. If, he says, led by the Spirit of God you persecute me, it is necessary that I appease the divine mercy with sacrifices and prayers; but if not by the will of the Lord, but against His will, having been corrupted by the deception of wicked men, you thought it right to rage for a time against the innocent; it is certain that those are held worthy of a curse in the divine examination, who, by wicked persuasions repelling me from His tabernacle and holy land, compel me to live among idolaters, whom I utterly detest. And if this flame of persecution has arisen from men, as I said, it is just in every way that my blood should not be shed by the impious, which the hands of persecutors have thus far unjustly sought. According to the mystical understanding, it is the voice of the members of Christ, that is, of His faithful, who, caught by the persecution of wicked men, are accustomed to diligently examine their hearts. And if for their sins they recognize that punishment of chastisement is inflicted upon them by the Lord through such men, they immediately strive to purge these with sacrifices of due contrition. But if they see themselves unjustly suffering injuries or deaths from the impious, so that they may be called away from the path of truth, they indeed understand those who do these things as deserving eternal curse from the Lord;

because they wish to turn the faithful of Christ from the inheritance of the Catholic faith even to the idolatry of gentility or any kind of heresy.

However, those who innocently suffer these things rejoice, being saved by the Lord from all death and corruption, and indeed even anticipating receiving the palm of their patience. We can also accept it as said in the person of the apostles to the persecuting Jews: If the Lord incites you to persecute us, His wrath is appeased by our prayers; but if, which is more true, the sons of men, they are accursed by the Lord, who have driven us out preaching divine things, so that we do not dwell in Judea and Jerusalem; they said, Depart; and because you believe Jesus to be God, serve Him rather among the nations, who are accustomed to worship alien gods.

1 Samuel 26: 21

And Saul said: I have sinned, etc. To David, who proposed two causes for his exile and inquired from Saul what was true, Saul himself, conscious of his own mind, responded that it was not by the Lord's incitement, but by his own foolishness that he had persecuted him. But now he begs him to return home, assuring that he will suffer no further harm from him. And many Jews, having confessed their crimes, took care to recall to themselves by faith the Lord whom they had driven away by their infidelity. [1 Samuel 26:22] -- And David answered and said: Behold, one of the king's servants shall pass over and take it, etc. The Lord, responding through His teachers to the repentant Jews and those who have turned from the crime of persecution, said: Behold, the power of your kingdom rests with me; let the unity of the faithful pass into the unbelieving hearts of the proud, and let the spiritual weapons of the heavenly kingdom promised to you long ago be brought back swiftly. This was fulfilled in no small part in the times of the apostles, and remains to be fully completed in the times of Elijah, who preached and brought back the hearts of the fathers to the children. He says nothing about taking the cup of water, because the Lord does not teach that the shadow of the law should continue to be observed. The title of Psalm 53 remembers the betrayal of the Ziphites, which seems to refer more to an earlier betrayal, whereas there it is said according to the title: Is not David hidden among us? But here it is different: Behold, David is hidden in the hill of Achilah.

CHAPTER 4.6

David with his six hundred men went to Achis, and having obtained a residence in Ziklag, he laid waste to the neighboring inhabitants of the wilderness. (1 Samuel 27) And David said in his heart: "One day I will perish by the

hand of Saul," etc., up to where Achis says of David: "He has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel," etc. This passage hints at the present state of the Church, which, after long struggles of martyrs, enjoys peace among nations, as continuous as it can be among men. David said in his heart: "One day I will perish by the hand of Saul; is it not better for me to flee and be safe in the land of the Philistines?" and so forth. The Lord, in His wisdom in which He makes and disposes all things, says: "Behold, the Jews are persecuting the Church of the saints, who are, in fact, my members, and they never know how to temper their raging fury once it is kindled; therefore, lest they suddenly overthrow its state and remove it from the midst, it is better for it, always possessing Me as a guide, to withdraw to the Gentiles to be saved; seeing the widespread conversion of these to its faith and love, the insane may despair of being able to destroy its constancy; and they may even cease to pursue it with threats and murders in Judea, seeing it shining with heavenly grace in the Gentiles."

1 Samuel 27:2

And David arose, and he went himself, etc. The Lord leaves the seat which He used to hold in the hearts of the Jews from ancient times and went to acquire the Gentiles for His faith, He himself and the ministers of His word, notable by their multiplicity, that is, intent on perfect work in this present time, and suspended in their mind by the undoubted hope of heavenly things in the future.

1 Samuel 27:3

And David dwelt with Achish in Gath, etc. Gath, which is translated as winepress, signifies the pressures and tribulations by which the faith of the Church is tested in this life; as also the Psalms, which are titled for the winepresses, declare. Achish, who is called Brother of man, signifies the people of the nations who, by believing in Christ, rejoice to be his brother through grace, and to act manfully. For Maoch, his father, who is translated into emasculation, that is, deprived of manly action, mind, and virtue, demonstrates the Gentiles of earlier times, who, serving idols, remained void both of the work and reward of virtue. Therefore, the Lord dwelt among the nations first in persecutions and very great pressures, until they themselves could know to accept his faith; he and his apostles: every shepherd, with the Church subjected to him which he governs and educates; Christ himself as

the one shepherd of twin flocks, namely those he brought from the Gentiles, and those from the Jews dispersed in the day of gloom and cloud, whom he does not cease to preserve and feed among the nations. David's two wives can also be understood as the chaste souls of the faithful, adhering to Christ in the lifestyle of two ways of life, namely active and contemplative. Ahinoam the Jezreelite, that is, my brother's beauty, deriving origin from the seed of God, may be she whose eyes of an enlightened mind burn with all their strength to see the King in his beauty. Abigail, on the other hand, that is, my Father's exultation; the wife of Nabal the Carmelite, that is, the foolish and soft one, can be understood as she who, recently saved by repentance from the blandishments of a foolish teacher, brings such joy in the Father in heaven along with the angels, more than over the ninety-nine righteous who do not need repentance.

1 Samuel 27: 4

And Saul added no more to seek him. This signifies the present time of the Church; when the Jews, seeing it glorified among the nations, and also protected by the favor of secular kings, although they do not cease to hate it, have nevertheless lost all hope and intention of overcoming it altogether. [1 Samuel 27:5] -- But David said to Achis, "If I have found favor in your eyes," etc. The Lord said through his disciples to the Gentile people: "If the doctrine of truth, which I preach, and the life which I promise, are pleasing to you, let a humble heart of the listeners be given to my words in the firm unity of the faithful, where I dwell by the grace of the Holy Spirit." [1 Samuel 27:6] -- Therefore Achis gave him on that day Siceleg, etc. Siceleg is interpreted as the purification of a raised voice; but to purify a voice is to bring a voice to itself, with careful discretion, to inquire which speech smells of truth, which of falsehood. Therefore, the believers from the Gentiles gave to Christ, to dedicate their dwelling, which is understood as the Church, throngs of souls who, coming to themselves from the voices of preachers, knew how to discern, by reason, and to separate the purity of the apostolic voice from the dregs of the philosophical or pagan voice. For this reason, such assemblies of souls, having been withdrawn from gentile ceremonies, have become subject in perpetuity to the authority of the apostles. This sense, I believe, is also aided by the history of Josephus in the Antiquities (Book XVI, Chapter 13), which says: "To whom the king gave a certain village called

Siceleg. This village he so loved, that when David reigned, he and his men honored it as their own possession."

1 Samuel 27:7

Now the number of days that David lived in the land of the Philistines, etc. There was, is, and will be a time of Christ's dwelling in the Church of the Gentiles, until he fills the four corners of the world with the complete light of his heavenly grace, until he pours the light of the Gospel, which is contained in the unanimous variety of the four books, into the believing hearts of the Gentiles. And note that David, coming to the Philistines, begins to dwell in Geth; but soon, with Achis' permission, he turns to Siceleg: because, coming to the Gentiles in the disciples, Christ, first pressed by the winepress of pressures by the unbelievers, finally after many grapes of the martyrs pressed, he approached to instruct those who among the dregs and wine of intellectual innkeepers, that is, those teaching various senses, knew how to judge.

1 Samuel 27:8

And David and his men went up, etc. Upon the rock, Egypt sounds darkness. Therefore, the Church was growing through the steadfastness of Christ's disciples, and was rescuing souls from pagan rites, which, following the examples of not new but ancient men, had clung to earthly desires, with all going to the hardness of heart, and arriving as far as the dark land, covered with the gloom of death, the land of the misery of darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, and eternal horror dwells. [1 Samuel 27:9] -- And David struck all the land, etc. The Lord strikes with the sword of His word whatever earthly and lowly thing He finds in unbelievers; nor does He allow anyone of those who truly receive the faith, either in spirit or in flesh, to live further in their prior conduct, but makes all by true confession say with the Apostle: But it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me (Gal. II).

1 Samuel 27:9

And he took the sheep and the cattle, etc. Christ, taking from the nations souls of diverse character, hastens to gather them all into the unity of the preexisting Church in Himself. [1 Samuel 27:10] -- But Achis said to him: Against whom have you made a raid today? etc. Although he seems to deceive in the literal sense, who, rising against the Philistines, devastating the province not far from them, said he had made a raid against the one who

arouses their king against his own people: yet the figure of speech does not deceive, because while he draws the nations to faith, Christ arises against the clear and burning blasphemy of the Jews. For by His just judgement, blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and thus all Israel shall be saved (Rom. XI): therefore, while bringing in the nations, He rises against Judea, which, out of pride, broke not a few branches of the good olive tree, so that by grafting in the wild olive tree, He might make it a partaker of the good root and fatness of the olive tree. And it is well said to be a rising against, because He who falls, says He, upon this rock, will be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder (Luke XX).

1 Samuel 27:11

David did not bring to life a man and a woman, etc. Christ forbids those converted to Him from living in sins. Just as first showing this to the teacher of His Church, He commands the multitudes of impure hearts, saying: Rise, Peter, kill and eat (Acts X). And Paul teaches that they are not dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus (Ephesians II). But neither does He now command believers to undergo martyrdom or deaths for His name from the impious. [1 Samuel 27:11] -- Saying, Lest perhaps they speak, etc. Therefore, he did not bring to life, lest they speak against him. For the listener bears witness against his teacher, who, less perfectly educated either in believing or in acting, shows himself less extinguished by improper action or thought. [1 Samuel 27:12] -- Therefore Achish believed in David, etc. The entire fraternity of the nations believes in Christ, saying that the people in which He was born He abandoned due to their infidelity; and because of this infidelity, threw down so many branches of the good olive tree, so that by believing it might graft itself in, and cast those to be burned into the fire. Indeed, for me now believing, hoping, loving, He is the debtor of eternal life; so that without Him I can do nothing, both in the present the pledge of the Spirit, and in the future He will provide me with the eternal grace of His protection. Concerning this perpetual servitude bestowed upon faithful servants by God the Lord, the Lord Himself says: Amen I say to you, He will gird Himself, and will make them sit down to eat, and passing will minister to them (Luke XII).

CHAPTER 4.7

The Philistines gathered against him, Saul seeks the oracle of Samuel, raised through a witch at Endor, and learns of the adversities to come upon him and his people. (I Samuel XXVIII. It happened in those days, etc., until it is written: When they had eaten, etc. This reading signifies that the Jews, because of the complete fulfillment of all prophetic ministry in Christ, after the faith of the nations has been confirmed, and against both their perfidy and that of the heretics spiritually aroused, are no longer to save the Lord's Church, but to frequent the synagogue of Satan and perish; nor to hope and believe in the dispensation made by Christ in the flesh, but in the future kingdom of the Antichrist. In this, it is first to be noted, that not always the same things or persons hold the same significance; but sometimes evils can be represented by the good, just as goods can be figured by the evil. For the Philistines, who almost always are accustomed to be placed in evil, signify here, because they have David with them, the believers from the nations. On the other hand, the people of Israel, because they expelled him by persecution, figuratively denote the present perfidy of the Jews or the wickedness of the heretics.

Conversely, Israel, prepared for battle against the gathered forces of the Philistines, with collected councils of learned men, signifies believers from the nations who propose to overcome the craftiness of the heretics or the perfidy of the Jews, so that they may be corrected entirely, or at least be less likely to prevail against the good in disputation. If anyone considers it absurd that the faithful should be signified by the infidel Philistines, thinking them only to prefigure the gentiles, let him know that the gentiles themselves, worshipers of many gods, are accustomed to battle against the Jews and the heretics alike, because both these groups glory in the worship of the one true God and in the name of Christ; yet let him understand most certainly that Achish, who is interpreted as "brother of a man," who kindly received David in exile, who gave him a place to reside, and who trusted so much in his power and friendship that he summoned him to go out with him to the battle, signifies the faithful from the nations. Finally, it follows:

1 Samuel 28:1

And Achis said to David: Knowing now, know, etc. Which is clearly that all Catholics propose to combat the erring by reproving, reasoning, or remem-

bering the words of Scripture, to say to the Lord: God, you know our foolishness and weakness (Psalm LXVIII), for without you we can do nothing, provide us with aid as we struggle, may your holy ones grant us the help of their intercession; and whoever of them authored the holy Scriptures by your inspiration, may they provide us with the secrets of spiritual knowledge by which we may overcome the carnal. [1 Samuel 28:2] -- And David said to Achis: Now you will know, etc. It is clear according to the letter, because David, promising aid to the king, also promises to be his guardian, whether in the battle or after the victory. But according to the spiritual sense, the head of the strong brothers and those acting manfully is Christ. To whom, he saying, And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew XXVIII); they respond: And we have learned that no one should be our guardian of the grace leading us, by which you remain in us, other than yourself, not only on all the days of this age, but also in the future, where one day in your courts is better than thousands (Psalm LXXXIII).

1 Samuel 28:3

Now, Samuel was dead, etc. Josephus narrates that this happened two years before the death of Saul, writing thus (Antiq. VI, 14): "Saul reigned, with Samuel living for eighteen years, and for another two years after his death." Indeed, earlier in the order of history, the death and burial of Samuel are described in nearly the same words; but it is recapitulated here so that the necessity that prompted Saul to seek out the necromancer might be recalled to the readers. However, mystically, the death of Samuel, with the Lord suffering, indicates the cessation of the legal figures as well as the prophets, which foretold His future incarnation. The mourning of Israel signifies that not without great sorrow could the carnal ones be separated from the old institutions of the Lord. I believe that all of Israel, which was able to see the desolation of the temple of Jerusalem and the land of promise—both of which were given to the fathers as a type of heavenly grace—could not at all withhold their lamentation and tears. The burial, which took place after the death and mourning, signifies that time when the faithful Jews altogether ceased from the observation of legal shadows. For it is known that for a considerable time the early Church observed Jewish customs, until the evangelical doctrine gradually prevailed, and it itself completely abstained from legal observation. And fittingly, Samuel is buried in Ramah, his city where he was born, which is interpreted as "exalted": because the same Church of

Christ, which once gave forth the beginnings of prophecy, concluded the fulfilled figures of prophecy with honorable devotion, as if they were the limbs of the dead Samuel.

1 Samuel 28:3

And Saul removed all the magicians, etc. Magicians and soothsayers, the first of whom, commonly called sorcerers, use blood and sacrifices, and often touch the bodies of the dead, following (whom other translations call enchanters) accomplish their work with words; all these soothsayers and idolatries of the Gentiles are mystically designated, whom the people of the Jews, although more wise in earthly things than heavenly, removed completely at this time. For no one now dares to worship Baalim, or Astaroth, or any other monsters of the Gentiles, although they are not perfectly faithful to the Lord. [1 Samuel 28:4] -- And the Philistines gathered together, etc. The Philistines in this place, inasmuch as they seek the aid of David and his men, represent the faithful from the Gentiles; but inasmuch as they scorn and reject him, they represent the unfaithful who oppose Christ. For they oppose both the unfaithful Jews and the heretically unfaithful, and the Catholics, Christians and pagans alike. Therefore it is fitting that the Philistines are said to have been encamped in Sunam, which is interpreted as 'crimson'. For crimson holds the appearance of fire. Indeed, the faithful, fervent with the love of Christ, and the pagans, raging with the fire of persecution, do not hesitate to fight against their adversaries. For the good fight against the evil; the evil fight among themselves; but the good cannot fight among themselves at all. Moreover, Israel, because it gathered under Saul who was dying and impious, not under David who was just and destined to rule, either signifies the present blindness of its own people, as we said above, or the heretical depravity; and thus rightly it is described to have gathered on the mountain of downfall, which the name Gelboe signifies, and to have fallen there.

1 Samuel 28:7

And Saul said to his servants: Seek me a woman who has a familiar spirit, etc. Denied an answer by the Lord, Saul sought a woman with an unclean spirit, through whom he might inquire; and with the cessation of the prophets and the ceremonies of old after the Lord's passion, the people of the Jews consult and frequent the synagogue of Satan, such as today is their synagogue, having a familiar spirit, which in their language signifies the mouth of the

abyss. Nor is anything understood better than entrance into eternal punishments. But even the name itself, customary from the meaning of the perfidious faction, does not differ. For it is said to be derived from Apollo Pythius, who was a diligent practitioner of these arts, who himself is said to have borrowed such a name from that place, because he struck the serpent Python in vengeance for his son being killed by him.

1 Samuel 28:7

And his servants said to her, etc. Correctly it is narrated that the woman with a familiar spirit, whom some call a ventriloquist, lived in Endor, which means in the fountain or eye of generation, so that the very place of her habitation bears witness to the already lost Synagogue, which, deceived by the serpent's conversation, feigns to give light and the cup of wisdom to its listeners. [1 Samuel 28:8] -- He therefore changed his appearance, etc. The people of the Jews, having changed their habit in worst either of their earthly kingdom or of faith and works, by which they ought to have been spiritually adorned and loved, came to the hearing of such a Synagogue, which the woman with a familiar spirit signifies, in the blindness of a darkened heart; with those who, transgressing the unity of the true faith or charity, have by no means come to the knowledge of the holy Trinity. For he knows that the number two is sometimes placed in evil, who knows on what account the work of the second day alone in the creation of the world did not deserve the blessing of divine vision, and that unclean animals entered the ark under this number, and he rightly understands innumerable other things of this kind in the Scriptures.

1 Samuel 28:11

And the woman said to him: Whom shall I raise up for you? etc. And the people of the Jews, entering their synagogue, through the prophecies once summarized and completed in Christ, desire as if to be raised up from the dead for themselves, namely practicing so as to serve anew the shadows of sacrifices, the Sabbath, new moons, leprosy of houses and clothes, and the other literal observances. [1 Samuel 28:11] -- And the woman said to Saul, etc. She calls one seen in the plural, as is very customary in Scripture, where often many are designated by the singular, and singular individuals by the plural number. Finally, when one calf was made, the people said: These are your gods, O Israel (Exodus 32). And not one frog or fly was sent against the

wicked, but it is said: He sent among them the dog-fly, and it devoured them; the frog, and it destroyed them (Psalm 77); and countless others of this kind.

1 Samuel 28:15

But Samuel said to Saul: Why have you disturbed me? etc. And the books of the Old Testament, very full of the grace of prophecy, openly testify to readers that after the passion of the Lord they should not be raised again to the symbolic observance of the letter, but rather that the very ministers of prophecy are disturbed when they see what they wrote understood differently than they themselves sensed.

1 Samuel 28:15

And Saul said: I am greatly distressed, etc. The Jews, abandoned by God, possess the gift of prophecy not by merit, attacked by all nations, follow, so to speak, a dead shadow of the law and the prophets under blind night. This, beset by miseries, they think should be consulted as to what should be done with them. Indeed, those same legal ceremonies, now celebrated in vain and in corners, signify that which was once shown publicly by the command and gracious acceptance of God, namely that the old things were to pass away, and all things were to be made new, that the kingdom of the Jews was to be utterly destroyed and the kingdom of Christians to be spread throughout the whole world, just as Samuel, though dead, but raised through impious art, revealed everything about the change of kingdom which he had foretold while alive. If anyone is indeed troubled by how a woman with demonic art could disturb and raise a prophet after death, let him know for certain either that the devil showed then a false shade to those seeking it, or if Samuel truly appeared, that the devil could only do as much as the Lord permitted. Nor is it surprising that such things are allowed to a malign spirit for certain secret reasons, since he set the Savior on the pinnacle of the temple, and asked for and received Job to tempt. But if we believe that it was rather the fantasy of an unclean spirit that appeared, this should not disturb as to how such a one could speak true and prophetic things. For we know that the devil often can foretell many future things which he has learned from holy angels, but thereby one ought to listen to his words the less, because all that he speaks or does among men, he does with the intention of deceiving. And what was said among other things:

1 Samuel 28:19

Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, whether Samuel said it, or an evil spirit, it is understood no otherwise than without a body, that is, in another life. For by no means could wicked Saul be there after death, where good Jonathan could be received, indeed a great chasm is established between them, where one is received into the bosom of Abraham with Samuel, the other buried in the flame of hell with the devil. However, both are taken from the conversation of this life, which the devil always lacked. Nor does anything hinder the understanding, if we believe these things fantastically said and shown by the devil, that the evil one wanted to mix falsehoods among the truths he would speak; and saying under the person of Samuel to the wicked one, You and your sons will be with me. To secretly persuade sinners that after death, even the worst sins being put to sleep and dismissed, they can then live blessedly with those who lived well before death.

1 Samuel 28:20

And immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, etc. Reading the words of the prophets, the people of the Jews celebrating vain sacrifices, indeed the wretched suffer terror, but they do not have the strength of faith by which they may be blessed, because the grace of evangelical preaching has been shining around the world for such a long time, and they did not know how to eat the living bread that came down from heaven. [1 Samuel 28:21] -- Therefore that woman came in to Saul, etc. And that faithless people, oppressed by so many calamities among the nations today, is troubled on all sides, so that not even the very words of sacred reading, which they still perceive in the darkness of ignorance, would delight it, though perceiving by reading or hearing them, compelled by its own synagogue.

1 Samuel 28:24

But that woman had a Paschal calf in her house, etc. The most tender and excellent calf, and fine flour bread, which Abraham and Sarah prepared to refresh the Lord during the fervent midday sun (Gen. XVIII), implies the faith in the Lord's incarnation and the perfection of devout humility, with which the holy Church, together with its spiritual teachers glowing with the light of love and wisdom, placates the Lord. But on the other hand, this Paschal calf, and the flour which the demon-possessed woman cooked for

Saul who was about to die, and presented for his servants to eat in the middle of the night, express the birth and reign of the Antichrist, and the breaking of the hearts of those who serve him with foolish humility: which the synagogue of Satan, enveloped in the darkness of impiety, suggests to its hearers who are wretched and condemned to eternal death as things to be believed and hoped for, as if it refreshes them with sweet feasts from the fear of surrounding troubles; so that the hearts nourished with this food, progressing in wickedness, go darkly through the shadow under the solitary night.

CHAPTER 4.8

The Philistines gathering to fight against Israel, David and his men are ordered to return from the camp and go home. (1 Sam. XXIX.) Therefore the entire army of the Philistines gathered in Aphek, etc., up to where it is said: But the Philistines went up to Jezreel. This reading, in which the princes of the Philistines cast David out from their camp, clearly signifies that time about which the Lord said: And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matt. XXIV). Therefore the armies of the Philistines gather in Aphek, which is interpreted as a new fury; the treachery of the gentiles rages against the Jews, it rages against the heretics. For in this place Israel signifies both, and always ceases not to increase new snares for the old; against these indeed, because they proclaim one only God; against those, because they preach Christ; against both, because they mock idols, waging dire conflicts.

1 Samuel 29:1

But also Israel encamped by the fountain, etc. The fountain which was in Jezreel, that is, in the seed of God, indicates the baptismal washing, by which the children of the Church are regenerated through the grace of the Holy Spirit. If therefore you understand the unbelieving Jews, or the heretics worse than unbelievers, figured in the name of Israel, both place their treacherous camps over the fountain of renewing grace; one through pride by despising it, the other through heresy by violating it. [1 Samuel 29:2] -- And the satraps of the Philistines indeed marched by the hundreds, etc. Understand the last contingent either by the merit of humility or by the order of time. For in every age of the world, the nations of the gentiles have set up in battle array against the Jews, since that nation was founded, and strive to defeat them by hand or mouth; but also against the heretics, because they are

a portion of the Church, burning with a similar mind due to envy of the name of Christ, the Lord appears humble and despised by those chosen from the secular world; because the children of this age are wiser in their generation than the children of light (Luke XVI). He also, having incarnated in his time, and in the fullness of times, appeared humble to the world, showing examples of humility, rejection, and poverty outwardly to his followers, whom he instructed within on how desirable it is to be mighty in hand for defeating the proud, and in blessing the submissive.

1 Samuel 29:3

The princes of the Philistines said: What do these Hebrews want? The pagans despise the life, society, and doctrine of the faithful of Christ, who are justly called Hebrews, that is, those who pass over; because they now know how to transit from vices to virtues, in the future to hope for a passage from death to life, to transcend the low desires of the flesh, and likewise all the adversities of the world, the soaring heights of a humble mind. [1 Samuel 29:3] -- And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, etc. Achish praising the friendship of David, the angry princes of the Philistines avoid his companionship in battle, fearing his fighting prowess as fame spreads. Finally, among other things they say: [1 Samuel 29:3] -- Is this not David? etc. While the Church of the nations praises the faith in Christ, through which eternal life is deserved, angry philosophers and priests of idols fear to believe in Him, whose word they mourn has destroyed their worship and wisdom; they see His triumph over the ancient enemy being celebrated in the unanimous chorus of the holy Church, one which no other could have merited, they refuse to unite themselves to His members, to be subject to His rule by receiving faith.

1 Samuel 29:3

And Achish called David, and said to him, etc. Achish himself indeed declares David to be upright, innocent, and good, as an angel of God; but so as not to offend the eyes of the Philistine princes, he orders him to withdraw from the battle, in peace, with anger. The crowd of believers from the nations praises, loves, and proclaims Christ's justice, mercy, and holiness, as of Him who was sent by God for the salvation of the nations, but prays that the word should not be entrusted to blasphemous and proud leaders of idolatry, lest by hearing and not believing they incur a greater judgment; and it urges the Lord, as it were, to be content to rest in the calm and serene hearts of be-

lievers, rather than offering Himself to the non-believing by preaching, thus providing a cause for scandals and persecutions. [1 Samuel 29:6] -- I know that you are good in my eyes, etc. And the Church, excelling in the praises of the Lord, even adds this: Indeed, I myself know, and with the opened eyes of faith I understand the goodness of your heavenly grace, and that you are the one of whom the prophet foretold: And his name will be called the angel of great counsel (Isaiah IX); that is, the messenger of the Father's will. But the princes of doctrines and cultures of the nations, spurning the help of your protection, trust that they should be saved by their own virtue and industry.

1 Samuel 29: 11

The Philistines had gone up to Jezreel. When David departed with his men, the Philistines went up to Jezreel, that is, to combat in the seed of God, where they had previously assembled in Aphek, that is, in the new wrath. And the reprobates often, having driven away the stronger doctors of the Church from their proximity, exert all their strength to corrupt the weaker ones, whom, out of respect or fear of the former, although raging in spirit, they had previously not presumed to touch and disturb. Not only those who carry arms or argue against the good, but also those who, presenting examples of depravity under the name of brothers, display them to the sight of the pious, ascending into Jezreel, that is, the seed of God, try to infect it with the tares of diabolic seed. We see and hear that the mysteries of this reading are being fulfilled even today in many places, driving the Lord from the hearts of many, and oppressing His chosen ones; but with the approach of the world's end, with the heaps of evils growing, we do not doubt in trembling fear that they must be fulfilled more and more.

CHAPTER 4.9

David, with the guidance of an Egyptian boy, defeats the Amalekites who had struck Ziklag, recovers the spoils, and distributes gifts to his friends. (1 Samuel 30.) And when David and his men came to Ziklag, etc., up to what is written: David sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, his friends, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord." In this reading, it is typically shown that those led astray by heretics, as long as they do not lose the love of unity, can easily be brought back to faith through the grace of Christ by the teachers of truth; and that both these teachers, and simpler individuals content with their own salvation, are all to be rewarded

with the same denarius of eternal life; but also, that the heresiarchs themselves are partly to be corrected by the Lord, and partly to be punished with perpetual vengeance. Amalek is called a people of locusts, or a licking people; and the Amalekites make an attack from the south on Ziklag, when heretics, who are accustomed to seduce the hearts of the innocent with smooth words and blessings and to maliciously destroy all the fruits of spiritual knowledge with their slanderous tongue, from the very words of the Holy Scripture, which the holy men of God spoke and wrote inspired by the Holy Spirit, lay snares for the simple-hearted.

1 Samuel 30:1

They struck Ziklag, etc. Ziklag is interpreted as 'distillation of the drawn voice,' which those who strike and set on fire, who confuse the discernment of heard preaching with the battering ram of their arguments, and cast down the tranquility of ecclesiastical faith with the malignant fire of their error. Indeed, this fire is very similar to the one with which the proud king burned the books of the prophet Jeremiah; but contrary is the fire which the Lord sent to the earth and wished vehemently to kindle. [1 Samuel 30:2] -- And they had killed no one, etc. Heretics captivate but do not kill; who though they may rob the simplicity of faith from the less instructed, yet they cannot take away the fervor of charity, which is the life of virtues. [1 Samuel 30:3] -- When David and his men came to the city, etc. The Lord, arriving in His elect and Catholic teachers, and seeing the towers and roofs of the Church once shining, leveled to the ground by heretical discourse, first, as is proper, beseeches the Father with tears and prayers for its restoration, and then promptly begins the task of restoration as well. The doctors lament for the churches and souls entrusted to them, which they had brought forth and nurtured for God, corrupted from the simplicity of faith for a time, due to the delayed help of Christ; this is to say, with the advent of David delayed for a time, their wives and children were taken captive. For if His assisting grace were present, they certainly could not have been corrupted.

1 Samuel 30:5

Indeed, even the two wives of David were taken captive, etc. It has already been said above that David's wives signify both the active and contemplative lives of the holy Church, which rejoice to serve the true King in the present. However, the Church has often been enveloped by such a storm from

heretics and pagans, as was made clear by the great Arian sedition, that not only the decorum of the contemplative life was lost – which, according to the name Jezrahel, the very Author of graces sowed in the hearts of the serene and humble spirits – but also the constancy of the active life, which those who recently escaped the hands of the ancient enemy are accustomed to exercise, seems to disappear under the force of the persecutor's wrath.

1 Samuel 30:7

And Abiathar applied the ephod to David, etc. Those things which His saints do by the inspiration of the Lord, He Himself is said to do according to the manner of the Scriptures, since He aids them to do it; just as it is also said of the Holy Spirit, who has power and operation together with the Father and the Son: For He intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, because He makes those whom He has filled to groan and to pray to the Lord for their salvation. Therefore David, having applied the priestly stole to himself, consults the Lord whether he ought to pursue the robbers; while the pastors of the Church, enlightened inwardly by the grace of their Creator, through the reading of the Holy Scripture, with which teachers must always be clothed in the ministry of the word, seek the counsel of the divine will as to how they should act towards erring ones. The Lord responds that the robbers must be pursued by David, and that the plunder should be recovered from them, just as in the same reading He has taught that heretics must be pursued by the teachers of the Church through debate, overcome by overpowering them, and the plunder should be recovered from them by calling back to the Church those souls previously seduced by their deceit.

1 Samuel 30:9

David himself therefore went, and six hundred men who were with him, etc. The Brook Besor, which is interpreted as announcement or flesh, or the carnal sense of heretics difficult to correct, or signifies the redundancy of secular eloquence, and equally rapid and violent in its flow, not easily overcome except by the most perfect doctors. Therefore our desirable king, truly strong in hand, went to fight by the word of truth against the stubbornness of those erring, he and his chosen ones proved by the integrity of their work and the certainty of their hope, which the number six, by which the Lord completed His works, and one hundred, which in the reckoning first asks for the right hand in confession, clearly denote. Finally, in the hundredth psalm, the dis-

tinction of the final judgment, where the hope of all rightly hoping burns, is openly described, where, with mercy and judgment sung, the faithful of the earth and those walking in the immaculate way are by mercy promoted to the seat of eternal blessedness and the ministry of their Redeemer; but all sinners of the earth by the just judgment in the morning of declared action, which had long been hidden, are mentioned to be killed and destroyed from the city of supreme peace.

However, while his saints accompany the Lord on the path of truth, when it comes to the point of disputing and overcoming heretics, some often even great men, though not from the purity of believing, yet tired from the skill of speaking, desist. For not all who know how to believe rightly also know how to overcome by reasoning those who think contrary to the right faith. For often the torrent of announcement, or flesh, or their carnal sense, who are unable to grasp spiritual matters, or the urge to pronounce the carnal things they feel stands in the way; which those less skilled may not know how to overcome and, like Elijah or Elisha, break through and disperse by the power of their discretion. This was especially evident in the Nicene Council, where among so many and such great doctors gathered from the whole world, hardly anyone at first, except Athanasius, the deacon of the Church of Alexandria, could be found who knew how to contend with Arius, immediately detect his evasions and deceits, and defeat them. Where a certain pagan philosopher, much armed with Aristotelian arguments, challenging the Christians very frequently, could be overcome by none of the doctors even distinguished in dialectical art, until one bishop of remarkable sanctity arose, utterly ignorant of sophistical speech, but distinguished in the wisdom of divine faith, and with simple yet truthful prosecution throughout nullified his multifaceted cunning.

Therefore, only those who are either strengthened by an outstanding grace of the Spirit in faith or pre-taught with greater skill in disputing can suffice to cross such a torrent by teaching. They are rightly remembered as four hundred who pursue robbers, for they eminently excel in prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, because they rejoice to fight for the Gospel; rightly two hundred who, though tired, hold back; for there are those who, while they do not know how to defend faith and action by disputing, do not fail to exercise it by living.

1 Samuel 30:11

And they found an Egyptian man in the field, etc. The Catholic teachers hastening to engage in the battle with the heretics often find men abandoned by them, notable for the dark stain of their sins, unable to follow the teachers of error to devastate the Church due to the tenderness of their intellect; and they bring them to hear the Catholic faith, giving them the bread and water of the word; but they also add the sayings of preceding teachers, who, from the most beautiful tree of the present Church, as it were, from the fig tree, or severed at the brink of life and death, throughout the entire year of this current age which is now being lived, do not cease to preserve the mature memory of their teaching to refresh the souls of the faithful. And they well give a fragment of the dough, because they suggest not complete works to such people, but the sayings of the fathers deemed sufficient. They well give two clusters of grapes; because they show that they are to be united to Christ and the Church by the bonds of dual love.

1 Samuel 30:12

Who, when he had eaten, etc. When he had received the nourishment of the true faith, he also received the confidence of mind by which he would hope to obtain the grace of mercy. [1 Samuel 30:13] -- David therefore said to him: Whose are you, or from where? etc. It is a rule of the Church to inquire of those who defect to her from heretics through their teachers; who, before they fled, what they thought about faith, to where they tend in the future in mind. And when they have known them to contradict heresies with full intensity, and to favor the Catholic faith, then and only then should they apply the sacraments of the same faith to be reconciled with them, lest they seem to throw holy things to the dogs, and pearls to the swine. Of whose, he said, are you listeners, and of what, or to which sect are you proposing now to belong? It is necessary to reply, he who seeks to escape the snares of the heretics: I confess, I have been darkened by sins, having been devoted to listening to the heretics; but my master, who imbued me with errors, has left me: because where wars were waged against the Church, he found me less suitable in tongue or intellect for this contest; nor did he wish to take me any further into such a conflict with him. Truly, we breaking out from the south, that is, light, promising our perfect and Spirit-breathing doctrine,

and brought not a few of the gentiles to our sect, and in no small part obstructed the faith of the Church.

1 Samuel 30:15

And David said to him: Can you lead me to this band? etc. David is advised to find and conquer the robbers, who is left sick by the Amalekites; because there are those who, having lived among heretics, by the laziness of their mind, do not have the strength to harm the good, and the same ones, suddenly favored and touched by divine grace, acquire sufficient strength from God to resist the perverse; indeed, it is much more convenient and certain through those who know the secrets of the heretics, being converted to the Catholic, their errant sayings are confounded. But what he asks to be sworn to him, that he will not be killed, and that he will not be handed over to his master, so that he will reveal to them the hostile band of persecutors; this surely he asks from his spiritual teachers, that only on this condition will he disclose to them the secrets of the heretics, if they show him without any doubt the faith by which he may escape perpetual death; nor allow him to be subjected again to vain doctrines.

1 Samuel 30:16

When he had led him, behold, they reclined, etc. Heretics recline on the face of the earth, eating and drinking; whether they read the obscure or the clear Scriptures (for this is the difference between eating and drinking), they always seek not the heavenly things through these, but the earthly, nor can they say with the Apostle: "But our conversation is in heaven" (Philippians 3). And as if they celebrate a feast day for the spoils they had plundered from the land of the Philistines and Judah, regarding their inventions, by which they had taught some pagans to err worse under the pretext of Christ's name, or turned the faithful away from the path of truth, as the best light of knowledge, they joyfully say: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118). [1 Samuel 30:17] -- And David smote them, etc. Christ smites heretics in two ways: either by chastising them to receive the faith or by anathematizing them to endure eternal punishment. Both of these forms of smiting extend from evening to evening, because they reach from the recognition of the error darkening the hearts, to either the bitterness of the same error's repentance for a time or eternal punishment. Indeed, the four hundred men, who with camels escaped the sword of David

and as many of his soldiers by fleeing, are surely those who, despising the voice of Catholic teachers, neither agree to be corrected by them nor fear to be condemned; but, relying on the height of their virtues, or rather, on their swelling pride and boastfulness, just as on a camel's hump, they boast that they equally hold the name and number of evangelical perfection, and hope to obtain the joys of the heavenly life.

1 Samuel 30:19

Therefore David rescued everything, etc. By conquering or correcting or avenging, or exposing the wicked doctrine of the heresies' founders, the Lord rescues the souls they had deceived and brings them back to the unity of Catholic peace. [1 Samuel 30:21] -- David came to the two hundred men, etc. After the victory over the plunderers, David equally enriched those who were weary and stayed behind, with those who fought, with a share of the spoils. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom (Jerem. IX). We cannot all do everything. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Yet all laboring at different times in the same vineyard of the Lord, will receive the same denarius of life in contemplating the image of the supreme king.

1 Samuel 30:26

And he sent gifts from the spoil to the elders of Judah, etc. The Lord loves and urges all the members of His Church, in various persons, conditions, and ages, to always rejoice in His victory, in the perpetual increase of His kingdom, and whenever they see souls previously corrupted by the devil's sedition restored to the Church, to glorify and bless the Father who is in heaven. He especially delights to see those doing this who have preserved their love in a pure heart and have held on to the sayings or examples of the saints in the diligent memory of a chaste conscience. For this is the true David exulting and either hosting or defending his men. Likewise, any catholic teacher, when investigating, exposing, and conquering the thorns of heretics, must not delay revealing these things to other brothers, whether by conversing or even writing, for the sake of the knowledge of avoiding and overcoming such things. And note, not only in believing in God but also in loving neighbors, the heretics greatly differ from the catholic and gentiles greatly from Christian perfection. The Amalekites leave behind their tired and dying companion of their journey and expose him as if to be torn apart

by wild beasts and birds. But David prepares his tired companions in a safe place for battle and enriches them with abundant peace and blessing upon his return.

The title of the fifty-second psalm also recalls this lesson, which reads, "To the end for Amalech, the understanding of David," signifying Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. X), for the understanding of the figurative David in bearing with, persecuting, and fighting the Amalekites, what the city of the true David is to suffer from the faithless and what he himself is to repay to them. But the text of the psalm, very easy to understand, throughout rejoices in the mysteries of this lesson; because it begins with the endeavors of the wicked faithless saying, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God' (Psalm LII)," either claiming there is no God who cares for human affairs or considering within a foolish heart that any person in the holy Trinity is not truly God; and it ends in the triumph of the true David, "When the Lord restores the fortunes of His people, Jacob will exult and Israel will rejoice (Psalm XIII)."

CHAPTER 4.10

In the battle joined, Israel flees and falls before the Philistines; and now, with the sons of Saul slain, he himself, about to die, falls upon his own sword. The Philistines carry off their bodies, but the people of Jabesh bury them with due honor and, through fasting, seek relief from the Lord for their woes. (I Kings XXXI.) The Philistines were fighting against Israel, etc., until what is written: And they took their bones, etc. In this reading, it is figuratively shown that, because the leaders of the Jews were corrupted by the example or words of the Gentiles, and by neglecting the spiritual weapons of their own knowledge, which ought to have fortified them against the enemy, the lesser forces of good actions succeeded in their place, leaving them to the Gentiles. While the wicked exult over their fall, the good should rather remember any useful example found among them, if they find any elect among them; but let them leave the outcome of the reprobates to the judgment of the heavenly judge. The same can be equally understood about heretics and false Catholics. Therefore, with the time of Davidic reign imminent, the Philistines, as always, were fighting against Israel. As the time of new grace approached, the Gentiles, as before, attacked the purity of Israelite faith through examples of depravity, sometimes showing perverse works to those about to perish, sometimes engaging in idolatry, following the ex-

ample of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, eating and committing fornication (Num. XXIV).

1 Samuel 31:1

And the men of Israel fled before the face of the Philistines, etc. They who seemed strong in contemplating the will of God, which the name Israel signifies, were deceived when they imprudently followed the works and teachings of the Gentiles, and they perished corrupted in the luxurious pride, which the name of Mount Gilboa, meaning slippery, signifies. But the downfall of heretics was also helped greatly by secular wisdom. Hence, one of our own beautifully said, Philosophers, the patriarchs of heretics, stained the purity of the Church with perverse doctrine. [1 Samuel 31:2] -- The Philistines attacked Saul and his sons, etc. The surrounding nations attacked with full intention to destroy the kingdom of Judea and to remove the sons of that kingdom from their midst, and they corrupted the priests, Scribes, and Pharisees with their corruption, namely the sons and teachers of that kingdom. They even prevented the heretics from preaching or worshiping the grace of the Holy Spirit with a simple heart, which is to strike Jonathan, that is, the gift of the dove. They forbade praising the Father, who made us his sons not by nature but by adoption, with worthy confession; which signifies the killing of Abinadab, that is, my voluntary Father. They opposed believing that salvation would come to the world in the kingdom of Christ; which indicates the killing of Melchisue, who is called My King Salvation, I believe. A philosopher, who seduced Arius, killed Melchisue as if; who Macedonius, Jonathan; who Manichae, Abinadab, because namely that one taught to deny the omnipotence of the true king Christ, that one to derogate from the gifts of the Holy Spirit, this one to blaspheme the goodness of the highest Father, master of corruption.

1 Samuel 31:3

The entire weight of the battle turned upon Saul, etc. The gentiles were exerting all their strength to destroy the kingdom of Judea. And men most adept in the arts of deception drew near to him, and the leaders of that kingdom were severely seduced and corrupted by them, who, by seizing the simplicity of the truth from their hearts, inflicted a multi-faceted wound of fraud and cunning. For just as an enemy's sword signifies an open enticement to idolatry and graver sins, so the subtler arguments of deception are repres-

ented by an arrow. Saul did not perish by the sword of the Philistines, but by arrows; because the leaders of the Jewish kingdom did not perish, with the kingdom, by open crimes, which no one would doubt to be deadly, but rather by those acts which, under the guise of piety, bore the most impious poison of death. For example, when God says: "Honor your father and mother," they, on the contrary, taught their listeners to say to their parents: "Whatever gift is from me, will benefit you," and thus completely cease to honor them. Similarly, they said: "Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; whoever swears by the gold of the temple, is obligated," and other such things, which the Lord sternly reprimands them for in the Gospel, especially that they killed the very Lord of the Law and the Gospel as if He were a transgressor of the Law. All of these arguments of sins are imitated by the gentiles for cunning, when they turn a mind trained in philosophical studies to nefarious arts, undoubtedly falling by the arrows of the Philistines. However, nothing prevents the archers from being understood as unclean spirits, whose deceptions caused their ruin.

1 Samuel 31: 4

And Saul said to his armor-bearer: Draw your sword, etc. The armor-bearer of Saul signifies the doctors of the law; for just as the arms and arrows of the Philistines are the deceits of the wicked, so on the contrary, the arms of the Israelites ought to be mystically understood as the words of spiritual doctrine, by which the people of God had to fortify themselves against all dangers. But Saul, wounded unto desperation by the archers, preferred to die by the sword of his armor-bearer rather than by that of the uncircumcised, because the rulers of the kingdom of the Jews, once having set the purpose of dying in their sins, preferred to be destroyed by their doctors who were dissolving the commandments of the law and thus teaching them, rather than to be polluted by the company of the gentiles, whom they called common and unclean. Moreover, they feared to enter the praetorium of a gentile, so that they would not be contaminated, but could eat the Passover (John XVIII). Nevertheless, they did not fear to contaminate that same Passover, turned for their ruin by the law, which they had received, with the blood of the innocent.

1 Samuel 31:4

And his armor-bearer did not want, etc. There is no doubt that among the reprobate teachers of the law there have been some who, through a sinister interpretation, did not want the sharpness of the word to kill their own listeners, and yet those listeners turned to their own ruin either by despising or, what is worse, by blaspheming the things rightly said by their teachers. Upon seeing their spiritual death, that is, their obstinacy in sinning, those ministers of the word, deteriorated over time, saw that the testimonies of the law, which they had feared to interpret wrongly, when contemptuously disregarded, became an occasion of downfall for them. We regret to acknowledge that the same things happen often today. But even heretics, wounded by their own sins, when they twist the words of divine scriptures into arguments for their error, surely turn their own weapons upon their own chests as they are about to die; and any brother, even remaining in the unity of the catholic Church, when he defiles any skill he has learned for the common good of the Church and those among whom he lives with the contagion of pride, arrogance, avarice, or any other vice, miserably pierces himself with his own sword, because that which ought to have been defended against the enemy, instead aided the enemy.

1 Samuel 31:7

But the men of Israel saw, etc. Seeing, however, certain unlearned and ignorant of the true remedies of humility and the salutary washing of baptism, the learned in Judea, their own teachers, being defeated in the spiritual contest by the triumph of sin, and also the not small multitude of the common people, who had been close to their teaching, driven by the adversary from their ancient seat of constancy, they themselves, perturbed by the fall of their elders, lost all works of virtue and defenses of spiritual knowledge that they had; and the sins of the Gentiles came and all studies of virtue in the unbelieving Jews were corrupted by perverse inhabitation; unclean spirits came, and the hearts devoid of the constancy of faith were occupied; or certainly the Gentiles came and made the once best studies of the Jews their own by believing. For even in former times, they had themselves made the divine words, which they had already partly abandoned, be interpreted for them; and now they have received the faith of Christ cast away by them, along with the divine Scriptures, and they possess them as if by inhabitation.

Indeed, that which was said, beyond the valley, and beyond Jordan, should be explained more clearly mystically, the very site of the place being intimated to a few.

There is a great valley around the Jordan, itself flat, extending in immense length, called in Hebrew Elon or Aulon, which is surrounded on both sides by succeeding and coherent mountains, beginning from Lebanon and reaching beyond it to the desert of Pharan; and notable cities are in that Aulon, that is, in the flat valley, Scythopolis, Tiberias, and the lake near it; but also Jericho, the Dead Sea, and the surrounding regions; through which, as we said, the Jordan flows in the middle, rising from the sources of Paneas and ending in the Dead Sea. Since, therefore, it is not hidden that the valley signifies the lowliness of humility, and Jordan, in which the Lord deigned to be baptized, signifies the waters of baptism, it is rightly embraced by the valley of Jordan, so that the very site of the place may admonish us to seek humbly the entrance into the saving fountain and to behave humbly after we have left it. Whoever, therefore, were not in the valley of Jordan, but beyond the valley and beyond Jordan, they flee; because those who either neglect to receive or to keep the remedy of humility and baptism, can by no means prevail against evil spirits. This can generally be understood about Jews and pagans, about heretics and bad Catholics.

1 Samuel 31: 9

And they cut off the head of Saul, etc. The corruptors or demons persecuted Judea with the weapons of impiety to such an extent that they completely deprived it of the principal kingdom itself and snatched away the defenses of the sacred law, by which they prevailed against all adversities. Their downfall was soon spread widely by heralding to their accomplices as a sign of their own triumph and a cause of joy; and the increase of wickedness in the armor of God, which the blessed apostle Paul commanded us, who are to fight against the spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians VI), and who first put it on, fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, receiving from the Lord the crown of righteousness (II Timothy IV); this, I say, the armor of heavenly warfare. The Jews, deceived and deceiving, tried to carry the divine words into infernal places, that is, to equate the doctrines of demons. It is evident that they did this and are doing this in two ways; either by carnally interpreting spiritual words perversely, or by treating the same divine letters, as common and not supported by any divine authority, ac-

cording to their wishes. Indeed, the very nation deprived of the stronghold of the kingdom of Judea, reduced to nothing, and handed over to the power of enemies, the deceivers publicly displayed as a joke and a common proverb;

which figuratively is the body of Saul, truncated on the wall of Bethshan, that is, displayed as an enemy's house, suspended by impious hands. But even heretics, struck down by the arrows of preceding sins, deprive themselves of the protection of charity, which is the fortress of all virtues. Just as the impure spirit cuts off the head of Saul when they persuade to follow their own sense rather than that of the Scripture. They strip them of arms when they pervert the divine words to their own, that is, diabolical sense. They place the arms of Saul in the temple of Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth indeed, not only because it is an idol, but also because it means the creation of spies, signifies the doctrine of malignant spirits, who, wandering around the folds of the faithful daily, explore if they can devour someone. When they perversely change the works with which they had served God to the service of their own wickedness, they hang the members, truly devoid of light and life, on the wall of the enemy's house.

1 Samuel 31:11

When the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard this, etc. Jabesh, which is interpreted as "dried up," designates the Church, which from all the flow of carnal desire, from every pollution of flesh and spirit, the fervor of justice of the Sun, that is, the aspiration of divine love, tempers. Whence, rightly is such situated on a mountain. And itself is called Gilead, that is, a heap of testimony, to signify the most subtle life of the saints, so that it cannot be turned aside to error, being established by fitting testimonies of Scriptures. Moreover, it is the city which, at the beginning of his reign, Saul, when he still served the Lord with humble piety, liberated from the siege of enemies. So, when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard whatever the Philistines had done to Saul, all the strongest men rose up.

1 Samuel 31:12

And they walked all night, etc. When the inhabitants of the city of Christ situated on the mountain, Judea, from which they recollected heralds and ministers of salvation had come to them in patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, were treated with contempt and ridicule by the gentiles, they rose to the work of the word, all zealously rejoicing to act; and amidst the darkness

of erring ones themselves walking the path of virtues, they forbade rejoicing in the public insultation of those whose fault brought salvation to the gentiles as if pertaining to the house of the devil. They say, if the first fruit be holy, so also is the lump; and if the root be holy, so also are the branches. But if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and made a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches (Rom. XI), and the other things which the Apostle miraculously and elaborately addressed to the Romans.

1 Samuel 31:12

They came to Jabesh and burned them there, etc. The corpses, carnal or fleshly bones, signify the strongest and the works of virtues. Therefore, they burned the corpses of Saul and his sons, who left the weaknesses of the downfall of the Jews to divine judgment, so that they might understand that these things were done or permitted according to the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom. XII), according to the inscrutable counsel of His will. Indeed, we must understand the burning in this place according to that which is commanded regarding the receiving and searching of the sacraments of the Lord's passion under the type of eating the lamb: If anything remains, you shall burn it with fire (Exod. XII). They buried the bones in the forest of Jabesh, as when they found any strength and firmness in the weak, they did not despise them as worthless, but preferred to add them to the fruitful works of the saints; if they knew any among the carnal and frail to strive for the virtues of the soul, they took care to number them with the fellowship of the saints. For indeed, the fruit of good works is known to be expressed through the forest, which in reading Genesis, understands what or what kind of forest Abraham planted in Beersheba. Otherwise, Saul, dead and ridiculed for his sins, is rescued from public disgrace by the men of Jabesh, whom he saved.

The corpse is burned, and the bones are placed in the forest; for it is indeed fitting, that if any of the faithful and great men, overcome by sin, incur spiritual death, they may be helped especially by those whom he benefited in goodness, so that he may be able to revive, and that his carnal [deeds] may be revealed by their most fervent prayers in compunction, and his spiritual deeds may be commended to their Creator, worthy of His kindness.

1 Samuel 31:13

And they fasted for seven days. Literally and rightly for the dead, so that they may reach rest, it is fasted for seven days, which after the six ages of this world, in which we labor in the flesh, the seventh is in that world the age of rest for the souls freed from the flesh, in which the blessed await that glorious time when they may deserve to rise. The figure of this rest and resurrection, and the seventh day in the law, and the seventh or fiftieth year, in which rest of works was given, typologically foretold. The Lord showed the same example of our hope and dispensation of faith, who was crucified on the sixth day of the week, rested on the seventh in the tomb with His body, and on the eighth which is the first day of the week, rose from the dead. But in part of the allegory, regarding the blindness of the Jews who thus far observe the Sabbath carnally, his faithful fellow citizens and kinsmen rightfully retain sorrow and continuous grief in their hearts, as if they are fasting for seven days; because while their brothers and kin are still established in error, they can in no way have full joy. But when they too have fully understood the mystery of the eighth day, that is, of the Lord's and their own resurrection, both together, aided by the grace of Christ, will rejoice in perpetual festivity.

PART TWO

Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah

The return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple and the walls.

Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah

The Venerable Bede

AD 673–735

Bede reads the return of the Jews from Babylon, the rebuilding of the temple and the repair of the walls of Jerusalem as a picture of the Church being built from the scattered people of God. Each chapter opens with a short summary of what the Latin text of Ezra and Nehemiah says.

PREFACE

The exceptional interpreter and doctor of the Holy Scriptures, Jerome, while he briefly ran through the books of the same Scriptures in a letter to a friend, and briefly touched on what was contained in each of them, said: "Ezra and Nehemiah, evidently the helper and consolation from the Lord, are narrated in one volume, and they restore the temple, build the walls of the city, and all that crowd of the people returning to their homeland, and the description of priests, Levites, Israel, proselytes, and the works of the walls and towers divided among individual families, present one thing on the surface, but retain another in the core. Therefore, most reverend bishop Acca, diligently complying with your urgings, I devoted my work to considering the same volume. Confident, however, in the helper and consoler, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that He kindly grants us to, with the covering of the letter removed, more deeply find another and more sacred meaning in the core of the spiritual sense; that is to say, it indeed designates the same Lord, and His temple and city, which we are, by prophetic figures, but manifestly by reason. In this work, notably, we were greatly aided by the aforementioned master of the Church, Jerome, in the explanation of the prophets, who had foretold that the same deeds which Ezra and Nehemiah wrote about, were to be done under the figure of Christ and the Church."

It is clear to all readers that the house or temple of God in the holy Scriptures is customarily called such, and each of the elect, and the entire Church together, that is, the company of the righteous; because God deigns to dwell

in the hearts of those who believe, hope, and love Him, according to what He Himself says: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (John XIV). Hence also the Apostle says: The temple of God is holy, which you are (I Cor. III). And in the Epistle to the Hebrews: And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken; but Christ as a son over His own house, whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Hebr. III). In whose figure of the spiritual house or temple, King Solomon made a temple to the Lord in Jerusalem; for Solomon himself, who is interpreted as peaceful, aptly held the figure of Him of whom the prophet sings: His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace (Isa. IX). Of whom also the Apostle writes to the Church of the Gentiles:

And He came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near, because through Him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. II). But the fact that the same temple was built in seven years and was completed and dedicated in the eighth can signify that during the whole period of this age, which revolves in seven days, the Lord builds the Church by gathering the faithful for the heavenly building. Moreover, in the future life, with the appearance of the glory of resurrection, He perfects it completely, and raises it into the joy of immortal life in the vision of His eternal glory. Because indeed He Himself rose from the dead on the eighth day, that is, after the seventh of the Sabbath, rightly is our time of resurrection also expressed by the number eight. But that in the following age certain parts of the temple began to decay due to excessive age, but these were soon restored and brought back to their former state by the efforts of kings and priests who were at those times, signifies the daily and slight errors of the faithful, about which Solomon says: The just man falls seven times and rises again (Prov. XXIV); who by their daily zeal, with the Lord granting, are corrected through the examples or exhortations of the preceding righteous ones, as though through the diligence of the kings and priests of God;

for kings and priests are deservedly called perfected in the Church, since they are members of the highest king and priest, when they have learned to govern themselves well, when they have learned to offer their bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice. The further fact that, with the increasing evils, the very temple was profaned by the filth of idols, and ultimately destroyed and

burned by the Chaldeans, signifies the more serious falls of those who, though joined to the members of the holy Church through the confession of true faith and the sacrament of the saving bath, are once again cast down from the state of faith by the deceit of evil spirits and are burned by the flame of their vices. But that, with the temple destroyed and the city of Jerusalem likewise ruined, its citizens were carried off to Babylon, but after seventy years, repenting of their evils, they were mercifully returned by the Lord to their homeland and rebuilt the same temple and holy city with great labor, typologically represents those who, deceived by the devil, not only lose the sincerity of faith and the integrity of good works but are also seen to be assimilated to the Gentiles and publicans through the bitterness of their crimes, according to what the Lord says: If he does not listen to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Matt. XVIII).

Yet some of these, repenting through the look of divine grace, return to the Church when, pierced by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, they begin once again to listen to and keep the commandments of divine law, which they had abandoned. For there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which the prophet Isaiah enumerates with clear distinction. And indeed the sum of all divine law is comprehended in ten commandments. Multiply seven by ten, and you get seventy. Hence, by proper significance, those who were taken captive to Babylon by perverse works are freed after seventy years and rebuild the house of God and the holy city. Because sometimes those who, through their sins, were separated from the communion and society of the holy Church and joined the lot and number of unbelievers, again by the gift of the Holy Spirit, exercise themselves in the pursuit of good works and by this regain the communion of the faithful, namely of the house and city of the Lord, from which they had been ejected. For it is notable that one and the same repentance to return to the Church is typified by the repaired house of the Lord after the fire, the restored city of Jerusalem after destruction, and the people returned to their homeland after captivity, and the returned holy vessels which had been carried away to the house.

However, since the prophet Ezra sufficiently explains how all these things were done, it is fitting to mention some points from his volume and to expound them with a spiritual sense as the Lord grants so that it may be more manifest how those who had perished through negligence or error should return to repentance; how great God's grace is, how much effort they them-

selves must make to seek and obtain pardon for their transgressions; how the same penitents, along with those who have recently come to faith, build one and the same house of Christ, and similarly await the future solemnity of its dedication.

CHAPTER 1

Cyrus, at the beginning of his reign, liberated the captivity of God's people, and, after returning the holy vessels, ordered them to ascend to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Ezra 1:1

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, etc. Ancient histories, which likewise agree with the writings of the prophet Daniel, recount that Cyrus, king of Persia, with the assistance of Darius, king of the Medes, destroyed the empire of the Babylonians, killing their last king Balthasar, and devastating and destroying the city itself. Cyrus, knowing that the kingdom had been given to him by the God of Israel, immediately after he conquered the kingdom that had oppressed and enslaved the people of Israel, granted the people the ability to return to their homeland and to rebuild the house of their God, which had been burnt down in that place. He proclaimed this decree of liberation not only verbally to those present but also sent letters to those far-off throughout his provinces, declaring publicly that the God of Israel is the true Lord and God of heaven and the author of all kingdoms. All these events were openly predicted by the holy prophets, and Jeremiah foretold the number of years they would serve in Babylon and when they would be called back to their homeland. Isaiah even revealed the name of King Cyrus, through whom the liberation from servitude and the permission to restore the temple would occur, without any prophetic enigmas. Thus, Jeremiah says: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the captives whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them, etc. And later:

"When seventy years are completed in Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill my good word toward you and bring you back to this place" (Jer. 25, 29). Moreover, Isaiah says: "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord who makes all things. And shortly after: "Who says to the deep: Be dry! and I will dry up your rivers. Who says to Cyrus: He is my shepherd, and he will fulfill all my pleasure.

Who speaks to Jerusalem: You shall be built, and to the temple: Your foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44). "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him, and to loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut. I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have named you, though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me.

I will gird you, though you have not known Me" (Isa. 45). From Isaiah's prophecy, it is believed that King Cyrus greatly loved the children of Israel, released them from captivity, and commanded the rebuilding of the Lord's temple because he had heard their prophets speak by the Spirit of God of his kingdom and the destruction of Babylon. The very manner of the conquest by which Babylon began to be overthrown was explicitly expressed by the same prophets; Isaiah said: "Who says to the deep: Be dry! and I will dry up your rivers. And Jeremiah added: "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire. Histories narrate that, by diverting and drying up the Euphrates river that flowed through the middle of Babylon, the enemy entered the city through its dried-up channels. These few points have been mentioned about history. Yet, according to mystical meanings, King Cyrus is a type of the Lord and Savior both in name and deed, which we state not from our conjecture but from the very clear words of Isaiah, where Isaiah says in the person of the Lord: "I have likened you, and you have not known Me" (Isa. 45). God likened him to His Son, although he did not recognize God who likened him; first, in that he dignified him by calling him His anointed; secondly, in designating him Cyrus, meaning 'heir,' long before he was born; for the name fittingly applies to Him to whom the same God the Father said:

"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance" (Ps. 2). The Apostle says: "He appointed Him heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1). And even while He appeared in the flesh, the enemies who persecuted Him said: "This is the heir. Come, let us kill Him, and seize His inheritance" (Matt. 21; Mark 12). But also because God the

Father subjected nations before the face of Cyrus, turned the back of kings, broke the gates of bronze, and shattered the bars of iron, that is, of Babylon and other cities taken by him, these treasures of hidden riches and secrets of various unknown provinces likened him to our Lord and Savior, who subjoined not only all gentile nations but even the very rulers and authors of secular wisdom to His dominion through the preaching of the apostles across the world; who overthrew the gates of Hell to bring His elect, taken thence, into the liberty of the heavenly homeland; who destroyed the errors of the nations and by the mouths of humble apostles overturned doctrines fortified by human reasoning, so that, having corrected them, He might reveal the light of His faith and truth, in which are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These treasures our Lord eternally possessed in the nature of His Divinity from the Father, but in assumed humanity, He received them in time, from the moment He began to be man.

So He likened Cyrus to His only begotten Son, our God and Lord Jesus Christ, for just as he, by destroying the Chaldean empire, liberated God's people, sent them back to their homeland, and ordered the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, manifesting this in letters to fulfill the words of Jeremiah, who predicted this would happen. Thus, the Mediator between God and men, by destroying the kingdom of the devil throughout the world, rescues His dispersed elect from tyranny and gathers them into His Church, justifying them by faith in the present and hastening them toward the vision of perpetual peace in the future, for Jerusalem is called the vision of peace. He also causes the restoration of the temple that had been set on fire, bringing back those who had lost faith through the snares of the ancient enemy to salvation, making them worthy of His habitation. Moreover, He sent the holy Scriptures into the whole world, by which he preached the faith in His name and the hope of salvation to all who belong to His kingdom, that is, to all the elect. Not only Jeremiah but all the prophets, in common sense, foretold this. As He Himself said to His disciples: "It is necessary that all things written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Me be fulfilled" (Luke 24). The Lord also stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that, recognizing the power and providence of the God of Israel, he would do what Scripture narrates of him.

And the Lord says in the Gospel to the Jews: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of My-

self; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things" (John 8). When Cyrus in his written declaration says: "The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth," he rightly confesses the God of Israel to be the Lord God of heaven, who also has control of all the kingdoms of the earth and can give them to whomever He wills. Yet it seems less true that he declares all the kingdoms of the earth were given to him unless it is understood that at the time he wrote this, no adversary of his reign existed; or that, having conquered, destroyed, and emptied the ancient and strong empire of the Chaldeans, he believed none could resist his kingdom in the whole world. This statement, however, truly applies to His majesty who said: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28). The same Scripture of Cyrus follows:

Ezra 1:3

Who among you of all His people, let his God be with him, etc. Great is the faith of the king in these words, great shines his piety. Faith indeed, that he understood the people of Israel to be the people of God above all other nations. Piety, that he allowed all who wished without exception to return to their country as free men. Faith, that he confessed that the same Lord God both dwells in heaven and is in Jerusalem and can go up with each of those returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. Is it not clearer than light that he believed this one to be not corporeal and confined to one place, but a Spirit present everywhere? He confessed that he has a place in Jerusalem and in the temple such that he did not doubt that He presides in the kingdom of heaven; he believed so much that He reigns in the heavens, while nonetheless He is with His faithful on earth and directs their minds and hands to do what is salutary. Moreover, all the words of this Scripture exude a spiritual sense. For whom is it not easily evident that only those with whom God is, from the confusion of sins, to the works of virtues, as if from Babylonian captivity, can pass to Jerusalem to freedom? Because without Him we can do nothing (John XV). Who does not see rightly that ascension is named in the same sentence?

Because surely all who sin, and who serve the cares of this world, are in the lowest place. But those who desire to please God must necessarily lift their minds to higher things, yearn for heavenly things, surpass all the pomp and enticements of the world with the love of eternal things. Jerusalem is also mentioned to be in Judah, that is in confession, so that we who deserved to

be captivated by Chaldeans through forgetfulness of God, who are interpreted as demons, that is, by malignant spirits, may return through confession of divine piety to the vision of free peace and light; and there we build a house for the Lord God of Israel, that is in the unity of catholic peace, confessing either our iniquity or divine mercy and grace. Let us prepare our hearts in which the Lord Himself may deign to dwell graciously and illuminate with His presence. And let us also care to kindle the hearts of our neighbors to praise their Creator and perform works of piety. For in both ways we build a house for the Lord, either by exercising ourselves in works of justice or by encouraging those whom we can to follow the path of justice, both by examples and words. The rest of the writing of King Cyrus follows:

Ezra 1:4

And all the rest, wherever they live, should help him, etc. The distinction of words is to be noted, because to all those released from the injury of captivity, the king gave the permission that whoever wished to go up and build the temple of the Lord might go up with the leader. However, he did not command everyone to go up there. For if there were any from the same people of God, who preferred to enjoy the liberty given more than others in the various places, he commanded them to assist those who were ascending from their own places, providing them with money or livestock for the necessity of such a long journey. He also desired them to give and present other gifts, which, upon arriving there, they should offer in the temple of the Lord as a memorial for those who remained. Therefore, all were freed from the Babylonian captivity. All were devoted to acts of piety; but the more perfect went up to build the temple of the Lord, while the rest helped those who ascended. For although all the chosen, having been delivered from the power of darkness, pertain to the liberty of the glory of the sons of God, and all rejoice to be numbered among the society of the holy city, that is, the Church; yet it is not the task of all, but only of the more perfect, to labor in building the same Church also by preaching to others.

Hence, such as these, before other believers, are deemed worthy of double honor by the Apostle (1 Tim. V); just as the angel said to Daniel, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who instruct many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. XII). And certainly, the more these instructors of many teach their helpers to seek and love heavenly things, the less they themselves care for acquiring or possessing

earthly things, and indeed, very often, whatever temporal things they have acquired, they leave all for the hope of eternal things. Therefore, it is necessary for their poverty to be supported by the generosity of the wealthier, who cannot preach, so that even the rich may be partners in the same preaching. On their behalf, John says to Gaius: "For they went forth for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles" (John III). Therefore, we ought to support people like these, so that we may become co-workers for the truth. Consequently, it is now said that those who were going up to build the house of the Lord should be aided by the generosity of money from their friends wherever they lived, that is, whether in Chaldea or other places to which they had fled in fear of the Chaldeans: except, he says, that whatever they voluntarily offer to the temple of God, which is in Jerusalem;

for it is fitting for those who abound in temporal riches not only to supply the necessary things to the poor of Christ from these, but also to freely perform good works themselves, so that by the merit of these, as if by spontaneous offering, they also may earn a share in the temple of God, which is the Church. Let this brief mention of the writing of King Cyrus suffice. Nor will anyone doubt that his words overflow with spiritual sacraments since it is foretold that God raised his Spirit so that he might understand these things to be written and commanded; since, as the prophet Ezra admonished, he commanded these things to the people to fulfill the words of the prophets. For how could it be that a king, inspired by divine instinct, would not be able to write about heavenly mysteries, who is proven to have known, confessed, and loved the true glory of God's house and to have restored it? When the very governor, a treacherous man, enemy, and murderer of our Redeemer, wrote the greatest sacrament of true faith, to set over His cross: "This is Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. In the intention of this title, he remained so fixed that he could not be persuaded by the Jews to alter it, although they asked persistently. He also wrote it in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in the grace of a certain mystery for us;

because surely all divine law, which the Hebrews had, all worldly wisdom in which the Greeks boasted, and all earthly kingdom, in which the Romans then preeminent, attest that Christ is the King, the Lord of all the holy and confessing ones. If, therefore, the writing of a prince hostile to God is so full of significant sacraments, how much more could a king, a lover and doer of divine worship, inspired or raised by the Lord, as the prophet says, both de-

clare and spread in writing the mysteries of the Lord? The subsequent text of holy Scripture shows what effect his edicts and writings had.

Ezra 1:5

And the leaders of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin rose up, etc. Cyrus indeed, having proclaimed his voice, and having sent letters throughout his kingdom, permitted, nay commanded, from the whole people of Israel, which consisted of twelve tribes, those with whom God was, to go up to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord. Nevertheless, of the entire people, only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the priestly and Levitical tribe, to whom Jerusalem itself and the temple of the Lord previously belonged, wanted to ascend. For the other ten tribes had long since under King Jeroboam been alienated from the temple of the Lord and the worship of piety, and for the merit of such a great transgression had been taken captive by the kings of Assyria, and deported beyond the mountains of the Medes, and are not said to have ever been collectively returned to their homeland. Moreover, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who held Jerusalem and the surrounding regions of Judah, together with the priests and Levites to whom the ministry of the temple belonged, although they had imitated the sins of the ten tribes, never abandoned the habitation of the city of Jerusalem and the ceremonies of the temple. Hence they were the last to be captured by the Chaldeans and the first, under Persian rule, to be permitted to return home;

and rightly so, because our Lord arose from the tribe of Judah, and his mother Mary was also connected by consanguinity to the tribe of Levi. Hence Elizabeth, the wife of the priest Zechariah, is called her cousin by the angel (Luke 1). The tribe of Benjamin also joined them in devout faith, particularly because the city of Jerusalem was within its lot, and therefore it deserved to share in the mercy granted to them. It is beautifully said that the leaders of the fathers from the aforementioned tribes rose to go up to build the temple of the Lord. For it is the duty of the leaders and fathers, that is, of the teachers, by work and doctrine of preaching, to take on the laborious task of exhorting, reproving, correcting, and striving in the pursuit of good works, to build the mind of the erring. They are said to rise well to go up to Jerusalem, because they seem to lie down with a weak and inert mind who shirk the care of their own or their brother's salvation. But they rise when they hear the king's edict, and indeed, the Lord stirring their spirit, so they

ascend to build the house of the Lord when, admonished by the words of the holy Scriptures, and kindled by the grace of their Creator, they shake off the sloth of their previous negligence;

and having taken up the intention of a better way of life, by daily advancements in good works, like certain steps of ascent, they strive to reach the highest virtues, which are in the vision of eternal peace. In these steps, the first are those who restrain their own life from vices by living well. The second are those who, by well teaching, convert their neighbors from their errors or negligences. The highest are those who, after good works and teaching, await the joys of perpetual reward. But that those who thus ascended to build the house of the Lord were helped by all who were around them with silver and gold, substance and cattle; we have briefly previously discussed how it is mystically to be understood; namely, that the abundance of believing rich should support the poverty of preachers. This can also justly be taken thus; that the hands of the builders of the temple should be aided by their companions who cannot build, by giving money; when secular men entrust their children or family to holy preachers to be brought up for the Lord; so that what they themselves cannot do, they offer to the Lord through those who can complete it. They give silver vessels, when they present men brilliant in eloquence; they give gold ones, when they present those illustrious in natural talent; they give beasts of burden, when they present those slower in mind but meek and accommodating to carry the light and gentle yoke of the Gospel;

they give cattle, when they present those humble in spirit and mild, who usually give freely to the poor from their substance, as from milk or wool. They also give substance and various utensils when they commend men or women distinguished by the manifold flowers of good works to the holy teachers of the Lord, by whom they are consecrated to the Lord and progress in the building of His house. For there are many who are naturally chaste, patient, modest, liberal, abstinent, kind, spurning worldly honors and pleasures alike, lovers of justice no less than of wisdom, and perhaps like Cornelius, devoted to prayers and alms-giving; of whom the Apostle says: "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law" (Romans 2). These are offered to holy preachers to be reborn in Christ, or to be more firmly confirmed in the faith, as varied utensils to be

contributed to the building of the house of the Lord, given to the leaders of the fathers.

Ezra 1:7

King Cyrus also brought forth the vessels of the temple of the Lord, etc. Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels of the Lord from Jerusalem, as any unclean spirit, snatching certain of the faithful from the Church, deprives them of the joy of internal peace. Moreover, he places them in the temple of his god, when he joins them to the company of the reprobates, who are the temple and city of the devil, namely the head of all evils, both angels and men. But King Cyrus brings them forth and numbers them for the prince of Judah to be returned to Jerusalem, when our Lord, who is the heir of all things, rescues those whom He has predestined to eternal salvation from the power of Satan, and offers them to the priests of the Church to be reconciled through repentance. And well does he say that the vessels are numbered for the prince of Judah; for the Lord knows the number of His elect, nor does any of His sheep perish who confess His great and terrible name; for Judah means confession.

Ezra 1:9

And this is their number: thirty golden bowls, etc. Different types of vessels signify different persons or operations of the faithful. Finally, we read in the Apocalypse that the twenty-four elders had golden bowls full of incense (Rev. 5); and the Scripture explains: These are the prayers of the saints. Therefore, the bowls, which are open, bright vessels, signify the hearts of the simple, who know not how to conceal any deceitful thought within them, but are accustomed to express with a pure tongue what they hold in their mind. Wherefore it is rightly said that such aromatic substances, that is, prayers acceptable to God, are found in them. On the other hand, the impure hearts of the reprobate are deservedly compared to sponges, which are dark and convoluted within. Hence also the Jews, when the Lord was crucified, offered Him a sponge full of vinegar (Matt. 27; Mark 15; John 19); so that by such a service they might signify that to their Creator, coming to them in the flesh, they offered from a deceitful heart thoughts and bitter words, deviating far from the pure taste of their forefathers. The knives, however, which they used for cutting and dividing the limbs of the sacrifices according to the proper order, so that with everything properly distinguished, a part would be

consumed on the sacred altar by fire, a part would be for the use of priests, a part for Levites, and a part for the offerers;

these surely demonstrate in the Church those who are distinguished by the grace of discernment, who perfectly know how to discern from the saving sacrifice, which is Christ, what should be said to all, what to the more perfect, what exceeds the measure of human thought and should be attributed to the fire of the Holy Spirit; likewise, because all who are dedicated to Him in faithful service are victims of God. The knives by which the limbs of the sacrifice are divided into pieces are typologically understood to be the scribes educated in the kingdom of heaven; who, carefully examining the merits and thoughts of their hearers, know well how to judge with whom they should advance in the rank of ecclesiastical ministry. The cups, which are vessels for drinking, figuratively express those who are accustomed to be inflamed with the fervent ardor of inner charity. As for the fact that some vessels were gold, some silver; the golden ones signify those who shine with a greater splendor of spiritual wisdom; the silver ones, those who are clear in the beauty of speech and know how to expound eloquently what they know; whom the Apostle distinguishing from one another, says: To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12).

And the fact that the number of vessels, both individually and collectively in total, is mentioned, reminds us that the Lord contains the sum of His elect, not only those who persevere in the purity of the received faith, but also those who, after they have strayed, return to faith by repentance, written in the book of eternal memory. In whose figure it is aptly added:

Ezra 1:11

Sasabasar took everything, etc. Because surely none of those who are predestined to life can perish forever; but all who belong to the Lord, although they may seem to be led into Babylon, that is, the confusion of sins, for a time, are brought back by divine provision through association with the just also by whichever means to the peace of the Church. Moreover, the vessels which the army of the Chaldeans is said to have captured from Jerusalem and smashed, and the broken ones taken to Babylon, express the type of those who are so captured by the victorious devil, that before they can be saved by repenting, they are taken away from human affairs to be seized for eternal punishment.

CHAPTER 2

The number of those who returned to Judah under the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua: also the total amount of money which the chiefs of the fathers gave for the restoration of the temple is described. [Ezra 2:1] -- Now these are the children of the province, who went up from the captivity, etc. He calls them the children of the province of Judea, not of Babylon. For to this belonged not only those who were transferred from it to Babylon, but also those who were born in Babylon from their stock. Even though they were born physically in Babylon, they longed with their whole mind for Judea and Jerusalem. Their notable leader Zerubbabel bore their figure, who by name indeed indicates that he was born in Babylon; but by intention and actions shows that he is a citizen of Jerusalem. In another sense, they are children of the Church, children of the heavenly fatherland, not only those who are already imbued with the sacraments of the Church, but also those who, although wandering outside, that is among the impious for some time, are yet by divine election preordained to life before the ages, to be consecrated in their time by the mysteries of divine grace. About whom it is aptly added:

Ezra 2:1

And they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, etc. For when those who have strayed from the faith are freed from the power of Satan, along with those who have recently learned the faith, they return to Jerusalem of desired peace and to Judah of devoted confession or praise. Soon each one enters and returns to his own city, that is, he devoutly performs the keeping and practice of virtues, which divine largess has bestowed upon him according to the measure of faith. And it is well said, with general reference, that they have returned to Jerusalem and Judah, he immediately added: Each to his own city, because indeed each individual dwelt in their own cities, yet all generally pertained to Jerusalem and Judah. Therefore, Jerusalem signifies the universal state of the holy Church, which is throughout the world. The cities pertaining to it designate each of the virtues of the faithful, in which, as if by the protection of cities, they are fortified against the temptations and incursions of evil spirits. The cities in which those who came from captivity to Jerusalem and Judah dwelt can also be understood as the various Churches of Christ throughout the world, from all of which one Catholic Church is completed. In these Churches, whoever resides, each one professes himself as

a child of the Catholic Church, as a citizen of Jerusalem. Moreover, they were led before others by Zerubbabel and Jesus, one from royal lineage, the other from priestly lineage, as is shown in many places of sacred history;

both of them represented one and the same person of our Redeemer, namely the true King and High Priest. For He alone is the one through whom we ought to come to salvation. Hence He says: No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14). He gathers each of the elect, either through His own hidden inspiration or through the manifest teaching by holy preachers, from the confusion of present life to the vision of eternal peace and the confession of divine praise, as if from Babylon to Jerusalem and Judah. This vision of peace and this confession of thanksgiving, given by Him, begin indeed in the present but are perfected in the future.

Ezra 2:3

The number of men of the people of Israel, sons of Phares, two, etc. After the catalog of leaders, consequently the number of the people; after the sum of the people has been counted, the ranks dedicated to God follow in order. However, he speaks of the people of Israel, the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and whoever had escaped from the hands of the Assyrians of other tribes once; but, captured by the Babylonians with these, they had nonetheless been led into captivity. Finally, it must be noted that within the very series of the catalog, and especially where the same catalog is repeated in the second part of the book, that is, in the words of Nehemiah, nearly fifteen names of cities are listed, which, unless I am mistaken, are all found only in the tribe of Judah and Benjamin. Hence it is likely that the people of Israel should be understood here, primarily from these very tribes, together with the priests and Levites who had their lot among them. However, the Nethinim, who are described in order after the priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, were themselves then those who are now called subdeacons in the Church, obedient to the duties of the Levites, and receiving offerings in the temple from the people. Furthermore, the sons of Solomon's servants were called the builders of the temple, who were responsible for repairing the sacred structures, or whatever had been damaged, and restoring them again from the sacred money.

What we said above about the vessels must now be said about the people; that Scripture so diligently distinguishes how many from each generation of the captives returned to their homeland; in order that we might be re-

minded with how much certainty the Lord inscribes the sum of His elect in the book of life and, as it were, records them in the register of heaven, how many souls each of the faithful, either by preaching or showing the examples of good works, have converted from error; for each of whom He rewards those who converted them with a certain recompense.

Ezra 2:59

And those who came up from Thelmela, etc. In this place, even according to the letter, the grace of God, by which also in the Old Testament the Gentiles were received into salvation, is shown. While a catalogue of those who clearly belonged to the people of God has been listed, some of those whose origins whether from Israel or from proselytes were unknown, are also included, and their number is mentioned among the children of Israel. Even though due to the long separation of their fathers from the temple or the people of God, they couldn't specify how they belonged to them; nevertheless, since they had ascended from captivity when general permission was granted, and hastened with those who unquestionably descended from the seed of Israel to build the temple of God, they were accepted by them as companions. For they were glad to have them as brothers and acquaintances due to the common love of faith and religion, although because of the uncertainty of their carnal origins it seemed they recognized them less. Moreover, in the spiritual sense, among penitents who, liberated from the captivity of vices, ascend to build the house of the Lord either in themselves or in others, there are often some bound by graver sins who appear so estranged from all acts of piety and chastity that none of the goodness and religion they had received from holy teachers seems to remain in them. About these, what else can be said than that they cannot indicate whether they were born from Israel, that is, from the holy Church by believing; for evidently, by sinning, they have become as though they had never belonged to the holy seed; however, through repentance, they sometimes correct themselves and turn to a better life, so that their number is rightfully inscribed among the true Israelites, in whom there is no deceit, in heaven (John 1).

Ezra 2:60

And from the sons of the priests, the sons of Tobiah, etc. The sons of the exiled act with the same caution towards the priests as they are reported to have acted towards the people. For they took great care that it would be openly re-

vealed without confusion who truly belonged to the people of Israel or to the priestly lineage; but those who were suspected, or who were certainly begotten from the lineage of proselytes, that is, foreigners. Therefore, they removed the suspected priests from the office of the altar, until their origin could be more certainly clarified; but nonetheless preserved them in the society of the exiled with unanimous peace. According to the mystical sense, the sons of the priests, ascending from the Babylonian captivity, seek the record of their genealogy, and not finding it, are ejected from the priesthood; because they themselves, the ministers of the altar, fall into such crimes and such unspeakable doctrines that even if they return to salvation by repenting, they cannot become worthy to be promoted to the sacred rank which they lost, nor to resume the office of teaching the Gospel or administering the sacraments. For these, although they expect eternal life among the faithful, do not find the record of their rank, which they cannot regain, among the perfect priests.

Ezra 2:64

The whole multitude as if one, etc. Note the grace of the early Church, in which the heart and soul of the multitude of believers was one (Acts IV), being found even in this group of exiles: so that even though there was such a large army, which almost completed the total of fifty thousand, and this army of different rank and condition, nonetheless the whole multitude, on account of the same faith and love, seemed as if it were one man, by the gift of Him who makes those of one mind live in a house. But the servants and handmaids returning from Babylon to Jerusalem hold the type of those in the Church who indeed strive, through the improvement of a better life, to overcome vices and ascend to the pinnacle of virtues; yet they are not sufficient by themselves to provide the way of a regular life, but rather need to be still restrained by the industry of those who have preceded them in Christ, and to be directed to the path of the desired truth. It continues:

Ezra 2:65

And in those same places, singers and singing women were appointed (II Chronicles XXV). Not only among the Levites were singers found, along with the doorkeepers of the temple and the Nethinim, but also within God's people, joined with singing women, they hastened to restore the buildings of the house of God. According to the literal meaning, he calls singers those

who resounded the psalms with sweet modulation; this, we see from the Words of the Days, was customary for the Levites to do in the temple of God among the daily sacrifices. But it is also credible that at that time many from the people themselves did this in each of their places. According to the mystical senses, however, singers in the temple or people of God are those who, with greater sweetness of spirit, keep the heavenly commandments themselves and urge their listeners to keep these same commandments through frequent exhortations. Moreover, it is fitting that women singers are joined to the men, considering the feminine sex, where many individuals are found who, not only by living but also by preaching, kindle the hearts of their neighbors to praise their Creator and, as if with the sweetness of their holy voices, assist in the labor of building up the temple of the Lord. To the ministry of all these people, the title and text of Psalm 115 aptly apply. The title is: When the house of the Lord was being built after the captivity, a song for David.

This, according to the literal sense, seems to express the restoration of the temple, about which the present book writes. But in the anagogical sense, that is, in the higher sense, it suggests the building of the holy Church, made up of souls saved from diabolic captivity and recalled to the knowledge of their Creator; in which building of the Church, every chosen person ought to resound with a song of praise and confession, with strong and desirable hand, that is, to the Lord Jesus Christ, sincerely understanding that without His grace, nothing good can be done. To this very title, the psalm corresponds: Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name, proclaim His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples (Psalm 95), etc. Therefore, we are first commanded in the building of the house of the Lord to sing a new song to the Lord, that is, to retain His love within our hearts and show our observance of His commandments outwardly; and this not by a few, but by all the earth, through which the holy Church is spread. Then, we are commanded to evangelize His salvation, that is, Christ (for in Latin, to evangelize means to announce good news); and this not to a few listeners, but to all peoples among whom the Church is spread throughout the world;

not that one individual can evangelize to all nations, but that all of us in our respective times and places can and should wish for the eternal salvation's

joy for all, saying: Praise the Lord, all nations, and laud Him, all peoples. For His mercy is confirmed upon us (Psalm 116), etc.

Ezra 2:66

Their horses were six hundred and thirty-six, etc. A mule is born from a donkey and a mare, a she-mule from a horse and a she-donkey. Hence, among the people who ascended from captivity, the animals, which facilitated their journey, are also listed; both their number and that of the people are indicated in the prophetic book. For certainly there are many in the Church who are either slower in understanding or even carnal in mind, who nevertheless humbly submit to the spiritual teachers and diligently support the burdens of fraternal necessity. These, along with the other elect, are delivered from the confusion of diabolic captivity and strive towards the walls of the celestial city. Their number, as well as that of the more perfect ones, is preserved intact in the eternal memory of the inner witness. Thus, from the perspective of the holy universal Church, it is said to God: "Your eyes saw my imperfection, and all were written in Your book" (Psalm 139). And in another psalm: "You will save both men and animals, Lord; as You have multiplied Your mercies, O God" (Psalm 36). But immediately concerning the more perfect ones: "The sons of men shall hope under the shadow of Your wings" (Ibid.), etc.

Ezra 2:68

And of the leaders of the fathers, when they entered the temple of the Lord, etc. It is a great sign of devotion when someone, not only offering the due oblations, which are commanded by the law of the Lord, but also in addition to these, offering other things which are not commanded but are advised, freely offers his gifts to the divine majesty. For it is commanded: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness; honor thy father and mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Matt. XIX). The voluntary offering, however, is: If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor. And what the Apostle says: Concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel (1 Cor. VII). And concerning himself: The Lord has ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel, but I have used none of these things (1 Cor. IX). And to the Thessalonians: Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought, but worked with labor and travail

night and day, that we might not be burdensome to any of you; not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example for you to follow (1 Thess. IV). Therefore, it is rightly said that the leaders of the fathers freely offered gifts for the construction of the house of God;

because the more someone abstains from what is forbidden and even from what is allowed, the more effectively he builds the Church of God; when all who know their examples of perfection fear falling into illicit acts themselves, seeing that these men do not use even lawful things fully; they rather say, All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient (1 Cor. VI). It is also rightly said that they gave according to their ability for the expenses of the work. For this is the measure of human perfection, to labor for the Lord according to one's ability and to establish the state of the holy Church, first by rightly conducting one's own life, and then by correcting others. And those who live in this way among the people of God are rightly called leaders of the fathers; because by the perfection of their lives and teachings, they rule over those who, by the merit of their pious care, deserved to be called fathers in the Church, living more excellently and transcending the general commandments of the law. They gave voluntary offerings: gold, silver, priestly garments. In the gold, we perceive the brightness of wisdom; in silver, the purity of eloquence; in priestly garments, the works of justice, transcending much the manners of the common people and worthy only of hearts consecrated to priesthood and God. For the desirable treasure rests in the mouth of the wise; and the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth;

and let thy priests be clothed with righteousness (Ps. XI, XVII, CXXXI). Thus, the leaders of the fathers offer gold, silver, and priestly garments according to their ability for the expenses of the works of the temple, when holy men, whatever wisdom, eloquence, or good deeds they possess, use them all well for the building up of the faithful of Christ. There is indeed a certain weight of gold and silver, a certain number of priestly garments recorded in holy history, so that following the preceding exposition of the numbers of vessels, men, and animals, we may remember that the Lord can always observe all our thoughts, words, and actions, and reward them with worthy merit. Among all these, it should be noted how much the people of God benefitted from the injustice of captivity and long servitude. Those who were in a very small number carried away captive, that is, the souls of men, as Jeremi-

ah writes, four thousand six hundred, while others were either killed or widely scattered in fear of the enemy, or certainly left in their homeland by the mercy of the same enemies, now multiplied among the enemies, almost fifty thousand men returned to their homeland. Those who were stripped of their wealth and equally subjected to every kind of servitude, now not only freed but also returned enriched with gold and silver, garments, servants, substance, and beasts.

And because it greatly pertains to the matter, they who lost their homeland due to the multitude of false gods, so that it was said to them by the reproaching prophet, According to the number of your cities were your gods, Judah (Jer. II); now return to the same homeland, not only rejoicing in the faith of one true God but also united in the same faith and worshiping with unanimous devotion and soul, submitting themselves with a religious mind and tongue to sing His praises; so that those who once were distinguished by the divided names of Israel and Judah due to the diversity of religion, now are all called by the ancient name of Israel due to the unity of piety. The worship of piety, which they spurned in the holy land while the prophets proclaimed and demonstrated examples of justice, they now embraced in a foreign land serving idol-worshipping enemies. What then is to be looked at in these things? What is to be commended to memory? Except that those whom freedom and abundance of all things in their homeland made neglectful and oblivious of heavenly commandments, were brought to the service of their Creator and Redeemer by servitude abroad and poverty. For it is a familiar thing that the human heart is dissolved by wealth and freedom, but is recollected by hardships and poverty. Therefore, what was once done for one people is now usually performed daily for all those repenting after sin;

while those who through negligence fell into the snares and temptations of the devil, with divine aid through the diligence of penance rise again; those who were stripped of the riches of virtues by the ancient enemy and departed from the society of the Church, often return to its communion more practiced in virtues than they had previously lost; because evidently, the more grievously they remember having erred, the more ardently they strive to labor in good works.

Ezra 2:70

The priests and Levites, therefore, dwelt among the people, etc. The whole of Israel is mentioned, not only the ten tribes that were once called Israel, to distinguish them from the two tribes that were called Judah; but all who generally ascended from captivity, whether from Judah and Benjamin or tracing their origin from other tribes. For when the ten tribes were taken into captivity by the Assyrians and the Samaritans replaced them in their land, whoever remained broke and destroyed all idols, and with a whole heart began to serve the Lord and to offer their sacrifices in the temple, as clearly shown by the words of the Chronicles where it is written: So Josiah removed all the abominations from the land of the children of Israel and made all who were left in Israel serve the Lord their God; all his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of their fathers. And a little earlier under the same king, when the house of the Lord was being restored, it says: After the money that had been brought into the house of the Lord, which the Levites and the doorkeepers had gathered from Manasseh and Ephraim and all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they delivered it into the hands of those who were over the work in the house of the Lord.

Therefore, those who remained, along with the tribe of Judah and Benjamin with whom they had been joined, were taken captive to Babylon together and then released to their homeland together, and each one returned to their cities, which they found empty with the fields and small villages. For no colonist had entered these lands while they served in Babylon, just as no one entered the lands of the two tribes, as Scripture says: If anyone had escaped the sword, he was taken to Babylon and served the king and his sons until the king of Persia came to power, and the word of the Lord was fulfilled through Jeremiah, and the land enjoyed its Sabbaths. For all the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath until seventy years were completed (2 Chronicles 36). So after this very long Sabbath, the land of Judah along with the rest of Israel received back its inhabitants. However, the greater part of the ten tribes, who had been taken by the Assyrians beyond the mountains of the Medes, never returned home; even if they did return, they could not have entered their cities because the Samaritans possessed them. About these, the Jews today make many Jewish and unbelieving claims that when their Christ

comes and reigns, these too will return with the rest of their nation to Judea and reign over the entire world;

not understanding the words of the prophets, who promised the kingdom and riches of the city of Jerusalem, not to one carnal nation of the Jews, but to all nations in Christ spiritually, which is now happening throughout the world. These things are said on the surface level of the text. But in a spiritual sense, the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, and Nethinim dwell in their cities, and all Israel in their own cities, returning from Babylon; when both the ministers of the holy altar and the teachers, and the people of God themselves, each in their respective ranks, serve God faithfully; whether those who in the same rank have once been defiled or lost through sins but are corrected through repentance; or who, coming newly from the kingdom of the devil to the Church, have acquired a good rank by serving well. For the Levites or the children of Israel entered into their cities, not only those who had once been taken captive and lost these cities, but also those who were born from the lineage of captives and learned that they belonged to those cities by paternal succession. Thus, in a spiritual sense, the Levite receives his city, from which he had been exiled by the Chaldeans when a deacon of the holy Church, having once lost the virtue of perfection seduced by the devil, is restored by the grace of the Lord.

For example, one who through drunkenness, lust, or pride had become unworthy of the rank he had received, and then again through continence, frugality, humility, and other marks of a better life, returns to the same rank more worthily. Again, a Levite born in Babylon enters his city in the land of Judah when someone regenerated in Christ sheds the guilt of original sin and, newly instructed in the Church, keeps the rank of deacon which he once received with regular moderation. For as he has been freed from the bondage of Chaldea through the grace of his Redeemer, so also through the execution of good works, in which the predecessors of the same rank have lived, he ascends to the walls of his own city. But those sons of Israel who were led away captive in such a way that they never returned to their homeland but left their cities and lands for others to possess; they certainly signify those who, by sinning so leave the Church that they never return by repentance, but rather leave the promised rewards to others who are worthy of them; to whom, in fact, the Lord in the Apocalypse, urging repentance says: Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the first

works. Or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent (Apocalypse 2). And again, suggesting to another who stands firm in faith not to fall: Behold, I come quickly;

hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown (Apocalypse 3).

CHAPTER 3

The people gather in Jerusalem in the seventh month, and after building the altar they celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and other festivals of the Lord.

Ezra 3:1

Now the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in their cities, etc. The seventh month, which is called October among us, was entirely more solemn than other months due to legal observances; in which even the dedication of the temple was celebrated. Therefore, it was appropriate for the devotion of the faithful, who had come up from captivity, that when they first entered their cities each one with his livestock and the money they had brought, and provided suitable dwellings for themselves and their families, they would all flow together to Jerusalem, and there construct an altar to offer burnt offerings to God; and this at the same time of the year, in which the temple itself, with the altar and all its vessels, was once consecrated, to which they regularly used to come to the day of its consecration annually. In the deeper sense, the seventh month suggests the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is described as sevenfold in the prophet Isaiah and in the Apocalypse of Saint John. In this month, indeed, after captivity from our cities, we come together in Jerusalem, when after having washed away the filth and errors of sins, after beginning the supports of good works, we are enlightened by the greater grace of the same Spirit, and thus in the love of heavenly peace, which is contained in true unity, we are kindled: for Jerusalem is said to be the vision of peace.

And it is well said that all Israel congregated as one man in Jerusalem in the seventh month; for this is daily done in the spiritual Israel, when, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, all the elect throughout the globe worship God with one and the same faith, and pant for the joys of perpetual peace and fidelity with one and undivided love; and as much as they can, even now by loving and enduring each other they imitate this. But it is well added:

Ezra 3:2

And Joshua, the son of Jozadak, arose, etc. For Joshua and Zerubbabel, both of whom, as we mentioned above, fulfill one and the same figure of our Lord and Savior, were engaged in the work of divine worship. Joshua conspicuously for the priesthood, Zerubbabel for the kingdom; because the former descended from a priestly lineage, the latter from a royal lineage. Our Lord, however, is the true king of Israel, that is, of all who see the Lord; and also the true high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He is a priest, evidently, because He cleanses us from our sins through the sacrifice of His body, and even after His passion and ascension, He intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father (Rom. VIII). He is a king because He equips us in the present for spiritual warfare, and helps us to conquer, and grants an eternal kingdom to the victorious in the future. Not only Joshua and Zerubbabel, but also their brothers were set over the people in the building; these brothers concerning whom our King and Priest, after the glory of His resurrection, appearing to the women who sought Him, said: Go and tell My brothers (Matt. XXVIII). These brothers, namely the more eminent ones in the Church who adhere more intimately to their Redeemer, build His house with Him, as they strengthen the hearts of the faithful with their words and examples, with His help. And it is fitting that he calls them brothers of Joshua priests.

For the apostle Peter says to all the churches: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood (1 Pet. II). Likewise, concerning the whole Church, John says in Revelation: Blessed and holy is he who has a part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and Christ (Rev. XX). For when the elect are members of the supreme priest, and offer their members as a living sacrifice, and render their contrite spirit as a sacrifice to God, they rightly deserve both the name of brotherhood and priesthood. Moreover, with great religious providence, the sons of the exile first built the altar of God, so that even though the temple of God was not yet founded, they would have a place where, by offering holocausts and sacrifices, they could show their devotion. We also do this spiritually today in the Church, when above all, we place in our hearts the faith of the Lord's incarnation and passion, when we teach our listeners to receive this above all else and to root it deeply in their hearts, according to what the Apostle says, speaking to the still-infant Corinthians in Christ, For I de-

termined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor. II). On this altar, we ought to offer our holocausts, that is our perfect thoughts and actions;

for truly it is only in this way that the vows of our deeds can be pleasing to God the Father, if we partake in the sacraments of our Redeemer, if we are kindled with the fire of His Spirit as if on a sacred altar; for a holocaust means entirely burnt, by which name they called those sacrifices from which nothing was to be used for human purposes, but everything was to be given to God and consumed by sacred fire. These mystically expressed the life of those faithful who seek nothing of their own, but expend all their living in the service of the inner arbiter. Who not only trample underfoot the pleasures of their soul or body for the Lord's sake, but also rejoice to lay down their own soul for Him, who can say with the apostles, Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us? (Matt. XIX). To whom He responds: And everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. This holocaust of a more continent and sacred life is to be offered on the altar of the God of Israel, for it is only through the faith of our Redeemer, as we have said, that our good works can be acceptable to God the Father.

For Diogenes and his followers who adhered to foolish philosophy, even though they relinquished their own things and led a bare and poor life in the world, did not follow the Lord. They seemed indeed to make a holocaust, but they did not do it on the altar of the God of Israel; for while they made themselves strangers to their own pleasures, they did not know how to have Jesus Christ as an advocate with the Father. Concerning this altar, it is fittingly added:

Ezra 3:3

They placed the altar on its bases, etc. For the bases are indeed the hearts of the elect, prepared by the commandments of preceding teachers, like the tools of craftsmen, to receive the sacraments of the faith of the Lord. And it is well said that there is one altar, but there are many bases that support it; for there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (Ephesians IV), but there are many hearts of the faithful, established by the one rule of truth, as if gathered in equal measure, bearing the heavenly burden of the sacraments with common devotion. Otherwise, whoever entrusts the sacraments of faith

to those less instructed and still not caring to abandon former vices, places the altar of the Lord on the ground without bases, because they hand over heavenly matters to earthly minds. This place also agrees with what the Lord says in the Gospel: Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand, so that it gives light to all who are in the house (Matthew V). Just as the Lord is rightly called the altar, because he cleanses us from our iniquities, because receiving the vows of our prayers, he commends them to the Father; so also the lamp can not unfittingly be called, because he placed the light of eternal divinity on the vessel of assumed humanity.

The bases are, however, put under the altar, and the lampstand is put under the lamp, when the faithful with humble intent submit their hearts or bodies to practice by working what they believe. It is well said, when it was mentioned that they placed the altar on its bases, that the peoples of the lands were deterring them around; because with the undertakings of the pious faithful to God, the contradiction of wicked spirits or men will immediately be present, who strive to hinder the good work lest it be perfected. Hence such peoples of the lands are well called, in distinction from those who say: But our conversation is in heaven (Philippians III). But although the peoples of the lands deter, it is necessary for the citizens of the heavenly city to persist in virtuous works begun. For it follows: And they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord morning and evening. For we offer burnt offerings to the Lord on his altar, when, with unwavering devotion established in our hearts by his faith, we give effort to good actions. And we do this morning and evening, when we certainly remember that we received the beginnings of a saving intention from him, and that we can only complete the good things we have begun through the help of his grace; and thus with burning desire we offer to him vows of gratitude in all things with a pious life.

Again, we make a burnt offering in the morning, when for the light of spiritual knowledge received, we repay our Creator with good living. We make a burnt offering in the evening, when for the eternal rest, which we hope to receive from him after good works, we burn with incessant zeal. It can also rightly be taken according to the letter, that we offer burnt offerings to the Lord morning and evening, when we strive to please the divine majesty at all times, so that rising at dawn, we do not first proceed to perform the necessary duties of human frailty, before, inflamed by the fire of divine charity, with devout prayers we commend ourselves to the Lord, accord-

ing to the one who said: And in the morning my prayer shall come before you. Similarly, after completing the day's work, we do not give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eyelids, before we consecrate a place to the Lord in ourselves with a more diligent instance of prayers, according to what the same prophet says: Let my prayer be set before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice (Psalm 140).

Ezra 3:4

And they kept the feast of booths, etc. The Feast of Booths, which in the Gospel is called in Greek Skenopegia, that is, the pitching of booths, was a festival of seven days, beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, during which the Lord commanded all the people to make booths for themselves from leaves and branches of the most beautiful trees, and to leave their houses and stay in these booths for seven days, daily studying the decrees of the divine law, and offering burnt sacrifices to the Lord in fire. They were ordered to do all this in memory of the time when they had once come out of Egypt and dwelt in booths in the wilderness, with Moses preaching the law and the divine presence frequently appearing to them, looking forward for a long time to when they could enter the promised land, so that the grace of this great benefit would never fade from their minds. Therefore, those who had come up from Babylon to Jerusalem, with great devotion to carry out all the commands of the Lord, took care to celebrate this feast on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, performing every day of that week the things commanded by the law. All of which we ought to do spiritually with equal devotion.

For we too have come out of Egyptian slavery through the blood of the Lamb, so that we might come to the promised land, having been baptized into the sacraments of the Lord's passion, casting off the heavy yoke of trespasses, so that, having been adopted into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, we might be heirs of the heavenly kingdom. For we were dwelling in booths and tents, journeying for a long time through the desert, until we might come to our homeland, when in baptism renouncing not only Satan as the king of Egypt, that is, of darkness, but also all the pomps and works of this age, we promised to be like foreigners and pilgrims in this world, citizens of another life which we hoped for from the Lord. In memory of this hope and promise, we must dwell in booths in the seventh month, that is, being illuminated by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is

described as sevenfold, leaving this world with our whole mind as if it were alien and pressing on us, and fixing our intention on hastening to the unwithering joys of paradise; and we must do this for seven days, that is, during the whole time of the present life, which is circled by as many days, without ceasing, and every day of this week we must make a burnt offering and the work of the day in its day;

a burnt offering, that is, a whole burnt sacrifice in things that properly pertain to divine service, such as prayers and fasts. And the work of the day in its day, in those things that pertain to the service of fraternal love; such as giving bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the cold, hospitality to the traveler, visitation to the sick, burial to the dead, teaching to the wandering, and comfort to the grieving. And it is well that he said they should make a burnt offering on each day according to the command of the law, and the work of the day in its day, he interposed, In order; because whatever is done in the service of divine or fraternal love out of order, loses the merit of its perfection. For "the honor of the king loves judgment" (Psalm 99); for whatever we do devoutly in honor of the highest king, it is necessary to distinguish with the discretion of judgment when or how much it should be done; lest if we do our proper work disorderly, we spoil the rule of its correctness. Paul implied these mystical feasts of booths, that is Skenopegia, when he was preaching and occupied in the work of tentmaking (Acts 28). For he was making tents, that is, booths, both to teach himself to be an inhabitant of the world and a pilgrim, and to teach those he instructed to be pilgrims in this life and hope for a future homeland.

For we are accustomed to use booths and tents when traveling or making a journey; which the same Apostle testifies that the saints do in this life, when he says: "While we are in this body, we are pilgrims away from the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5). And to the Hebrews: "For we do not have here a lasting city, but we seek the future one" (Hebrews 13). Since he wanted those who perfectly alienate their minds from the world and faithfully confess themselves as citizens of the homeland which is above, to immediately open the entry to all virtues, it is rightly added:

Ezra 3:5

And after these things, the daily burnt offering, etc. He calls it the daily burnt offering, which was offered in the morning and evening. Moreover, he calls the Kalends the beginnings of the months, that is, the rising of the new

moon; from which the Hebrews always began their months, as they had no months except the lunar ones. Hence the Greeks, instead of Kalends, better call them "neomenias," which means "new moons. Now, if by the month, because of the thirty days by which they are completed, they designate the fullness of the works of light, when in faith in the Holy Trinity we fulfill the commandments of the Decalogue; what are the beginnings of the months, in which the moon, to shine again for us, is said to be newly lighted by the sun, except that they designate the beginnings of each good work, which through the grace of our Creator, we perceive as if by the presence of the Sun of Righteousness? Because of this symbolism of divine illumination, without which we can neither begin nor complete anything good, the Lord commanded all Kalends, that is, the beginnings of the months, to be celebrated and the ceremonies of sacrifices to be observed. This is why the Psalmist says: Blow the trumpet at the new moon, on our solemn feast day (Psalm 81). Which is openly to say: Rejoice, ye righteous, in the Lord, and in the word of doctrine sounding to your neighbors;

as soon as you consider yourselves to be regarded by Him in order to do good deeds in the notable light of internal inspiration; by which you are called away from the desire of this world, and are more deeply dedicated to divine matters. Well then, it is said that after the feast of tabernacles was completed, the children of the exiles made the daily burnt offering, both on the Kalends and on all the Lord's consecrated solemnities, and in all where a gift was voluntarily offered to God. Because after the mind has once perfectly renounced this world, it must constantly devote itself entirely to the service of the divine will, which we have said the burnt offering was to designate; and this it should do both in the initiation of each good work and in the devout execution of those virtues which the Lord has commanded, as well as in those in which a pious mind, apart from general commands, delights to spontaneously serve the Lord. About which the Lord Himself, giving counsel rather than commanding, says: If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have (Matt. 19). And when He was disputing about taking a wife, He said not by commanding but by advising: He who can accept this, let him accept it (Matt. 19). But Paul too, boasting about these things which he offered to the Lord as a spontaneous gift, says: Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife (1 Cor. 9)? and so forth, in the same place.

Ezra 3:6

From the first day of the seventh month they began the burnt offering, etc. It has often been said that the seventh month designates the sevenfold illumination of spiritual grace. Hence it is well said now: Because from the first day of the seventh month they began to offer a burnt offering to the Lord, since indeed from the very beginning of divine inspiration, it is necessary that the human conscience be transformed, and disregarding lower pleasures, it must burn with thoughts only of the Lord's matters. From the first day of the seventh month, that is, from the first illustration of heavenly grace, they were offering the burnt offerings of virtues to the Lord, who, with the Holy Spirit coming upon them in fiery tongues, immediately, as if changed from what they had been, began to burn with new flames of intimate love, and to proclaim the great works of God with the tongues of all nations; and they are so dedicated to this burnt offering, or rather they themselves are made a burnt offering, that it would be easier to be killed by those who thought oppositely than to be turned from their intention. Hence deservedly the same seventh month is called the new year among the Hebrews; indicating to us by its name that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the faithful are given the power to fulfill the new commandment of mutual love, and to resound the new song of heavenly praise in the building of the house of the Lord.

About whose observance of this month the Lord thus mystically commanded: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you will have a sabbath memorial, with trumpets sounding, and it will be called holy; you will not do any servile work on it, and you will offer a burnt offering to the Lord (Leviticus 23). Indeed, a sabbath memorial, that is, the first day of this month will be a rest, when the mind inflamed divinely, abstains from temporal allurements and strives to contemplate the will of God. The priests blow trumpets when the faithful strive to preach to the neighbors that fervor of internal sweetness which they have begun. No servile work is done on such a sabbath when the mind, as much as it can in this life, keeps itself free from every pleasure and contagion of sin to please God; for servile work is sin. Because whoever commits sin is the servant of sin (John 8). And therefore rightly a burnt offering is offered to the Lord on the same sabbath, because indeed he is truly rendered free from the service of sin whose whole heart is inflamed with the fire of love. However, it must be noted, according to the

letter, that in the seventh month, the people having been gathered in Jerusalem and everyone there gathered, Joshua and Zerubbabel with their brothers are said to have built an altar, and from the first day of that same seventh month to have offered a burnt offering to the Lord.

From which it is inferred that this altar was made with rather quick work from unpolished stones and not as formerly made of wood and covered with bronze plates. For otherwise, even with the crowd of builders in full force, it could not have been completed and prepared for offering a burnt offering on the same day on which it was begun. For it is also proven in the book of Maccabees that it was made of stones, where it is mentioned to have been profaned by the Gentiles and after six years to have been renewed by Judas Maccabeus (1 Maccabees 4). And, it says, they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the one that had been before. It should also be noted that the beginning of the fifth age of the world, just as the four preceding ones, is consecrated by burnt offerings offered to the Lord. For in the first age, blessed protomartyr Abel, first of all the elect, offered burnt offerings to God from the firstlings of his flock and of their fat, dedicating the entrance of the nascent world, both with the offerings of the firstlings of beasts and ultimately with his own blood. The beginning of the second age was consecrated by Noah, offering burnt offerings to God from all clean beings contained in the ark.

The third age was consecrated by Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, and by Abraham the patriarch, this one with bread and wine, the other with his own son offered to God, consecrating its very beginning by erecting an altar and calling upon His name when he came into the Promised Land. King David consecrated the fourth age to the Lord by building an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and offering burnt offerings to God, by which he sought to appease His wrath, which he had incurred by numbering the people (2 Samuel 24). In that place also, it is said that Abraham once offered his son; and later, with the temple built by Solomon, the altar of burnt offerings is established there. The beginning of the fifth age is now consecrated by Joshua, the son of Jozadak, the great priest, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, by building an altar in the same place and offering burnt offerings to God as soon as they returned to Jerusalem after a long captivity was broken, and thereafter they took care to placate the Lord daily with constant burnt offerings. All these occurrences prefigured Him who was

to come in the sixth age in the flesh and was to redeem the whole world with the offering of the same of His flesh and blood. Therefore, after building the altar and offering burnt offerings to God, the Scripture continues, saying:

Ezra 3:6

Furthermore, the temple of God was not yet founded. The foundation of the temple of God typifies those who have recently converted to the faith, preparing a place and dwelling for the Lord in their heart and body, as the Apostle says: "Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you? (1 Corinthians 6). And again: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (1 Corinthians 6). Thus, those who had been liberated from captivity and came to Jerusalem intended to build the temple, which they later indeed accomplished; but first, by building the altar, they commended themselves to the Lord through daily burnt offerings, so that they might thereby become more purified and worthy to approach the building of the temple. Similarly, in spiritual edification, it is always necessary that anyone who has decided to teach others should first teach himself; whoever intends to instruct his neighbor in the fear or love of God should first make himself worthy of the teacher's office by serving God more devotedly, so that he does not hear from the Apostle: "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach not to steal, do you steal? (Romans 2). Hence, the Apostle says about himself: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, so that after preaching to others, I myself should not become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9).

For this reason, it is fitting that the sons of the dispersion are found to have offered no other sacrifices or victims than burnt offerings, that is, entirely consumed offerings, to God: for it is necessary that anyone who, by living well and even abstaining from lawful things, gives himself wholly to his Creator, who, by teaching, wishes to restrain others from unlawful acts, should, by the merit of good action, obtain abundant divine assistance in preaching, and also more effectively urge his listeners to follow what he teaches by his example of good deeds. It can also be mystically interpreted that, having built the altar, they offer burnt offerings to God, but do not yet build the temple, those who recently converted to the Lord, as soon as they recognized His faith, burn with such love for Him wholeheartedly that they may already be counted among the perfect, even if they have not yet received the time or ability to accomplish and perfect the good things they desire to

do. Blessed Abraham offered this kind of burnt offering to the Lord, even if the temple was not yet built, when he was already perfect in faith and before he carried out the acts of faith, as Scripture says: "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Genesis 19). When therefore he added the fullness of good works to his perfect faith, offering Isaac his son on the altar, as if the temple had also been built, he offered more perfect burnt offerings to God;

for indeed, each act or step of pious devotion is like an order of polished stones with which we construct in our heart a beloved house and dwelling place for God. However, how the sons of the dispersion, after building the altar and offering burnt offerings to God, came to build the temple is subsequently shown.

Ezra 3:7

However, they gave money to the stonecutters and the builders, etc. The stonecutters are hewers of stones. Hence it is written in the book of Chronicles: And David commanded that all proselytes from the land of Israel be assembled, and appointed some of them as stonecutters to cut stones (II Chron. XXXII). Builders are those who make cement for binding stones from gypsum or lime. Hence another translation for stonecutters and builders is hewers of stones and craftsmen. Therefore, note the pious ingenuity of the people, that sparing no expense, from what was necessary for them, and from what they lived on, they either bought materials for the building of the temple or hired workers. Joppa, however, is a maritime city of Palestine, about forty miles from Jerusalem. But Sidon and Tyre were the most noble cities of Phoenicia, having Mount Lebanon nearby. Hence, the children of the exile, obtaining their aid, asked for cedar wood to be cut for them from Lebanon and transported by rafts through the sea to Joppa, from where they could again carry it by land to Jerusalem for the work of the temple, which is established to have been done in the same order at the first construction of the temple. And because Solomon, with royal power, obtained whatever he desired from his friend King Hiram without any labor. But now exiles, returning home after many years, since they did not have the power of the kingdom, obtained all that the desired work required by means of payment.

In a spiritual sense, the stonecutters in the building of the house of God are those who, by teaching or reproving, shape the hearts of their neighbors; whom, when they teach to stand steadfast among the partakers of the same

grace, they fit them as hewing stones to be neatly joined. For as a square, whichever way you turn it, it will stand. And the mind of the elect, while it remains unmoved among all the adversities or prosperities of the world, demonstrates that it possesses the form of invincible virtue. In this sense, it is also described that Noah's ark was made of squared timbers (Gen. VI). For the same Church, which the temple made of stone signifies, also the ark made of timbers represented. The same was also shown by the tabernacle composed of boards and curtains (Exod. XXXVI). Builders, however, are in the house of the Lord, the same holy preachers who, while they bind those whom they instruct with good works in the bond of charity to each other, they join with the infusion of cement, saying: Be prudent and watchful in prayers, above all having unfailing mutual charity among yourselves (I Pet. IV). And the apostle Paul, commanding us to have the bowels of mercy, kindness, humility, modesty, patience, and the like, immediately added: But above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfection (Col. III).

But also the Sidonians and Tyrians, who cut the cedar wood from Lebanon for the temple structure, figuratively denote the same holy preachers, who cut down the men once elevated and shining in the glory of this world with the axe of God's word from the state of their former conversation so that, having them prostrated salutarily, and as if dried out from the corruptive moisture of innate senses, they correct them from all vice's tortuosity and raise them loftily for the ornament or defense of the holy Church. Concerning this, it is said in the Psalm titled, At the completion of the tabernacle: The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars (Ps. XXVIII). For the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars that the tabernacle may be completed when the hearts of the proud are humbled by divine inspiration, so that, with them also corrected, the number of the holy Church may be perfected. Hence, the Sidonians are interpreted as hunters, the Tyrians as constrained. For the holy preachers are hunters, capturing the wandering and errant senses of the wicked with the nets of faith to subjugate them to Christ, as He says: Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matt. IV). They are also constrained because they have tribulation in the world, yet confident because the Lord has overcome the world (John XVI). Therefore, stonecutters and builders, preparing stones and cement;

Sidonians and Tyrians, bringing cedar wood from Lebanon to the temple work, suggest holy preachers, who instruct the minds of their listeners to the fellowship of the Church by teaching. The princes of the fathers, namely Joshua and Zerubbabel and their brothers, give money to the same stonecutters and builders so that they might be more eager to work when those who have preceded the teachers of the word in time, merit, and learning, by Christ's authority either propose examples of their virtues or grant the pages of the divine scriptures, whose exhortations or promises fortify, so that they may not weary in the heavenly labor. They also give to the Sidonians and Tyrians food, drink, and oil, that they might bring the cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa when they recommend spiritual gifts, among the greatest of which is charity, to be emulated by the same teachers to make them capable of preaching (II Cor. XII). Or certainly when our Lord, whom we also taught to be designated by Joshua and Zerubbabel, distributes spiritual gifts to the ministers of His word, by which illuminated inwardly, they may become stronger to combat by preaching the pride of the arrogant and the foolish wisdom. For it does not need to be taught how food, drink, and oil signify the internal nourishment of our mind, who says well that of the Psalmist singing to the Lord: You have prepared a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me.

You have anointed my head with oil, and my cup inebriating, how splendid it is (Ps. XXII). Therefore, money is given to the stonecutters and builders, food, drink, and oil are given to the hewers of wood, so that they might prepare materials for the building of the house of the Lord when the abundance of virtues is divinely bestowed on the preachers of truth, by which assisted, they may suffice to correct the perverse hearts and fit them for the reception of heavenly goods. They bring the cut wood to the sea, not to be submerged in it, but to be carried through it to Joppa, which means beauty; when the same teachers announce to their listeners called to faith, the temptations of the world will occur to them but can be overcome by faith, so that first, either the waves of vices or of wicked men must be endured and thus they may reach the most beautiful fortifications and port of virtues. We can also understand that the wood intended for the temple building is carried through the sea to Joppa so that we renounce the devil, who is called by the prophet the dragon, king of all that are in the waters, that is, of the

wicked, whose conversation is not in heaven but in the perturbations of the fluctuating sea of the world.

We renounce all his pomps and works, and then we come to the beauty of the faith, by which we confess the Holy Trinity, one and true God, the dispensation of the Lord's incarnation, the unity of the holy Church, the remission of sins, and the resurrection of the flesh. Therefore, rightly in this city Peter raised Tabitha, a woman devout to God, from the dead (Acts IX); because certainly in the perfection of this faith, and generally the whole Church is raised from the death of sins through baptism; and when after baptism we again fall into the death of sin, we must revive through that same faith by repenting and be returned through the reconciliation of the priests of the Church again to the assembly of the faithful.

CHAPTER 4

In the second year of their coming, the house of the Lord is founded, but the people of the land hinder its completion.

Ezra 3:8

In the second year of their coming, etc. He says they came to the temple of God, not because they found it already built, since it was foretold that it had not yet been founded; but it is said that they came to the temple of God, to the place of the temple of God, to the work they desired to rebuild as a temple. Modern Jews are mistaken, who are accustomed to say that the walls of the temple were never overthrown, but only the roof by the Chaldeans; since Ezra clearly writes that the children of the captivity made the temple from its foundations. However, when it is said above that they came to Jerusalem in the seventh month, and here it is added that in the second year of their coming, in the second month, they began the work of the temple; it is clear indeed that in seven months they prepared stones, cement, wood, and other necessary works; and at the beginning of the eighth month they began to apply themselves eagerly to the desired work. For six months were of the first year and the seventh of the following; which, indeed, anyone learned can easily find was done in a great mystery. For the seven pertain to the sabbath, in which the Lord either rested from all His works after creating the world or rested in the tomb after redeeming the world through His passion. The eight pertain to the first of the sabbath, in which He Himself rose from the dead.

The seven refer to our hope of a sabbath after death. The eight look forward to the joy of our eternal blessedness after the resurrection. Therefore, because the work of all the elect, who are the temple and house of God, is begun and perfected by the grace of the Holy Spirit and is carried out with every regard and intention of future rest and immortality; it is rightly considered that those who search out the temple, having offered holocausts to God from the seventh month, began to prepare the expenses for building, and, with the preparations made in seven months, commenced the work itself in the eighth. Neither is any other number found at all in the preparation of such a great work than that which symbolically denotes either the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, by which we are assisted while working, or the rest of souls, or the resurrection of bodies, which we, hoping well, work for. Moreover, what the time of forty-six years signifies, in which the temple was built, as also the scripture of the Gospel testifies, is explained in its own place. However, the great devotion of that entire people is shown to us as well to be diligently imitated, since not only the elders, namely Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the remaining priests and Levites, but also all who came from captivity to Jerusalem from the greatest to the least, appointed Levites to hasten the work of the Lord. For they rejoiced to have returned from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem;

and as much as they had loathed the idols and wickedness of the proud city they had escaped, they desired to see the beauty of the city consecrated to the Lord, to which they had merited to come. As much as they abominated the temples of idols, among which they had long been present, they desired the temple of their Creator, which they mourned to be destroyed and from which they had been exiled as captives for so long, to be quickly restored. In the same order, even now, not only bishops and priests but also the congregation of the faithful, that is, the house of God, should diligently teach and appoint those teachers who diligently fulfill the holy work of the Word by counseling. Also, the people themselves, called from the captivity of vices to the vision of true peace, should demand the ministry of the Word from those who know how to impart it. These ministers of the word, that is, Levites, are said to be appointed from twenty years old and above; because it is fitting that those who are presented to preach the word of God to the people should not only show the example of the law by work in action but also keep it undefiled in the purity and integrity of heart before their Creator.

Nor should there be any doubt that the state of the Church will take prosperous progress where both the prelates rightly keep their grade by regularly appointing teachers of truth to the people who will instruct them, and the people compel the appointed teachers, by diligently listening and obeying their teachings, not to cease from speaking. But alas, alas! the negligence of our times offends both the greater and the lesser, hindering them, the former from preaching the word, the latter from hearing it, and both from doing it, because we consider less diligently either how great the bitterness of the demonic captivity from which we are rescued is, or how great the solemnity to which we are called, the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all, of which we have already received a pledge in the present Church. Let us, however, consider the excellent works of the Fathers, that we may the more be confounded by our own smallness in action. It follows:

Ezra 3:9

And Joshua stood and his sons, etc. In this place, Joshua does not refer to the son of Josedek, the high priest, but to one of the Levites, of whom it had been foretold that they would be appointed from twenty years old and above to attend to the work of the Lord, among whom were also Kadmiel and the sons of Henadad, who were recorded as having taken heed of the same work, along with their sons and brothers; indeed, earlier in the catalogue of the people of Israel, these, after the priests, are the first Levites mentioned by name. "The Levites," he says, "the sons of Joshua, and Kadmiel of the sons of Hodaviah, seventy-four" (Ezra 2). From both passages it can be gathered that they were chiefs and patriarchs of the Levites of that time. Here, the sons of Judah are rightly interspersed among the Levites, who together took care in restoring the temple of the Lord; and these, on account of the same agreement in piety, are remembered as having stood as one. For this is the order of virtue previously mentioned, always to be imitated by us, that each person in their own way may build up the holy Church, all the ranks dedicated to God, and the devotion of the entire people. And it is to be noted and more frequently remembered how much good was bestowed upon the people by the evil of captivity;

from which being freed, they are all shown to have given such great attention to heavenly services as never before. But even today, it has benefited many who had lived negligently in the peace of the Church to suddenly err and fall into some sins, while after their fall, being lifted up by penance, they

began to serve the Lord more diligently; and those who seemed sluggish and slothful in standing innocent, when reminded by their accidental fall, girded themselves more vigorously for their own protection against all the snares of the ancient enemy; so that those who had previously offended by neglecting their own life, afterwards even cared for the safety of their brothers along with their own rise. Therefore, all the people returning from Babylon to Jerusalem took care for restoring the temple, but especially the Levites and the sons of Judah, namely because of the priestly and royal dignity of the holy Church. For the royal and especially the priestly tribe builds the temple; because undoubtedly all those who form the hearts of the faithful, either by teaching or by good living, belong to the body of the eternal king and priest, that is, our Lord and Savior. Hence, even the leaders of the work, Jesus from the priestly tribe and Zerubbabel from the royal tribe, took their origin from both tribes.

Ezra 3:11

So, with the foundation of the temple of the Lord laid by the masons, etc., great devotion of all persons is shown. With the foundation of the temple of the Lord laid, both priests and Levites and all the people, according to their respective statuses, praised the mercy of the Lord. The priests, indeed, adorned with holy garments as they were accustomed while the temple still stood, sounding the trumpets and stirring the hearts of the people to the sweetness of the heavenly praise; the Levites, strumming well on cymbals, singing hymns to the Lord; and the people, exhibiting their hearts' affection in common clamor in praising the Lord. The Levites also praised the Lord by the hand of David, either on the instruments which he made or the psalms which he established, or because David, in the placing of the ark, appointed Asaph and his brethren to give thanks to the Lord, as the words of the days testify, concerning whom it is again said: "Because his sons were under his hand, prophesying according to the king. (1 Chronicles VI). Rightly, also in this place, when the sons of Asaph praised and gave thanks to the Lord by the hand of David, that is, they are to be understood to have done this according to his arrangement.

According to the mystical sense, indeed, with the temple of the Lord founded by masons, the priests stand in their attire with trumpets, when converted sinners from the error of sins, and with faith and love of Christ established in their hearts, all who hear the masters of the churches rejoice.

They themselves, moreover, decorating themselves more diligently with good works, sound the trumpets of saving doctrine, so that both by the example of virtues and by the exhortation of sermons, they might aid the good beginnings of those who either recently by repenting have come to the grace of Christ or have recently taught others to turn to the grace of Christ. The Levites also stand to praise God with cymbals when even ministers of the second order serve their Creator with pious deeds for the instruction of neophytes, and this in the mutual sweetness of charity. For cymbals, which strike each other to sound, most fittingly express the works of charity, with which the holy ones excite each other to the praise of their author. They also praise Him through the hand of David, the King of Israel, when they diligently consider and strive as much as they can to imitate the works that the Lord and Savior carried out in the flesh.

Ezra 3:12

Many also of the priests and Levites, etc., who had seen the first temple founded, and this temple before their eyes, were emitting voices partly of weeping, partly of joy. Joy indeed, because the temple of the Lord, which had been destroyed, had now begun to be restored. Weeping, however, because they were grieving, seeing how much the wall that had begun at that time differed from the most magnificent power of Solomon, by which the first temple was founded. They rejoiced greatly because, having been freed from captivity, they had received the ability to rebuild the temple. But they wept with a loud voice, because they knew that the first temple had been destroyed due to their own crimes, whose greatness nor glory they were able to match at all. For the prophet was saying: "Great will be the glory of this last house of the Lord, more than the first" (Haggai 2), because it pertains to a greater matter, not to the magnitude or ornament of the house; because it was a greater miracle and a more evident display of divine power that a few remnants of captives, even with enemies resisting, were able to complete such a work, than that the most opulent king, having no adversary at all, indeed having the most powerful and wealthy king of Tyre as a helper, did this with the most learned craftsmen as he desired. Also, the glory of that last house will be greater than the first;

because in the former house, the devotees of the Old Testament proclaimed to the people the writings of the law and the prophets. In the second, however, Christ and the apostles evangelized the grace of the New

Testament and the entrance of the heavenly kingdom. But even in the rebuilding of the spiritual temple, both weeping and joy are born among the leaders. For the holy teachers rejoice in the salvation of the penitent; they mourn because they have ever committed sins to be repented of, and have not always persisted in the will of their Creator. Those who have risen from the death of the soul through repentance rejoice in their salvation; they mourn having ever lost the life of the soul through sin. The neophytes also rejoice that they have been gathered by the grace of their Redeemer; they grieve that they, along with all humankind, perished in the first parent and, as if the temple of God was corrupted by enemies, were transferred to Babylon, that is, the confusion of the present exile, in the state of the immortal body and soul. But because, as the progress of the good increases, so does the envy of the wicked, and there will never be a lack of temptations from the depraved during the growth of the pious, who either by feigning good or openly inflicting evil, try to harm the saints, it is rightly added:

Ezra 4:1

The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard, etc. The history is known; because it speaks of the Samaritans, the enemies of Judah and Benjamin, whom the king of Assyria transported into their cities and lands from various nations of the ten tribes in captivity. These, after receiving the law of God, partially observed it, while still serving the same idols as before. These people, regarding the true worshipers of God with disdain, promised them help with the work, intending to bring about harm once accepted into partnership. It is clear to anyone that such people figuratively represent false brethren, that is, heretics and bad Catholics. They are enemies of Judah, that is, of confession and praise, which the Church offers to the Lord in the present through true faith and worthy works of faith. They are also enemies of Benjamin, that is, the sons of the right hand, while they segregate those who listen to them from the faithful people's lot, who are to receive blessing and the eternal kingdom at the right hand of the Judge in the future.

Such people say to Zerubbabel and the elders, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God like you do," as heretics desire the same authority of preaching to be granted to them among Catholics, promising to hold and love the same true faith and actions as them, so that, having gained the power to teach amidst the good seed, from which the Apostle Paul derived the name to be called a 'seed-speaker,' that is, a seed-sower, they may inter-

sperse the tares of secret doctrine. Some did this at the Council of Nicaea, who subscribed to the true faith among Catholic fathers with a non-Catholic mind; so that being more familiarly mixed with the faithful, they might more freely build a place for receiving the Arian perfidy. Likewise, Pelagius in the Palestinian Council anathematized his own heresy, by which he most fiercely attacked the grace of God, in confession and writing, not from the heart, lest he be anathematized himself by Catholic priests, and thus lose the place of teaching in the Church and the ability to sow his error. "Behold," they say, "We offered sacrifices from the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us here. You offered sacrifices, but unclean ones because you did not renounce idols. For what fellowship has righteousness with iniquity? Or what communion has light with darkness? What agreement has Christ with Belial? (II Cor. VI).

For you have entered the land of the sons of Israel, not introduced by Joshua, not subjected to the rule of Jerusalem, but brought into their land by a perfidious king, an enemy of the people of God, not to serve the Lord in this, but the same adversarial king. Thus, heretics and false Catholics, when they attack the peace of the Church, either by living perversely or also by teaching, are wholly alien to the kingdom of Jerusalem and belong to the lost lot of the Gentiles, whose sins they do not abandon; indeed, to speak more openly, such people, not led by the Lord Jesus but by the devil, of whose figure Esarhaddon king of Assyria held, enter into the borders of the holy Church. For what but the instigation of the devil leads someone to receive the sacraments of the Church, not so that they may sanctify themselves to God for healing, but so that consecrated to God, they may corrupt others out of familiarity, to be condemned more fiercely? Simon the Magician acted this way (Acts VIII), who received baptism in the Church, not out of zeal for his salvation but to know the Church's affairs more surely from proximity; which he demonstrated by his end, for he most severely troubled the Church not as a false brother but as an open enemy. It follows:

Ezra 4:3

It is not for you or us to build a house for our God. Heretics are not to build the house of the Lord, which is the Church, from which they themselves are proved to be strangers; but only those who, adhering to Christ the true King and Priest, have deserved to be called the leaders of the fathers, due to the de-

vout care which they have for those who desire to see God, which is the meaning of Israel.

Ezra 4:4

Thus, it happened that the people of the land hindered them. He rightly calls those who disrupted the workers of the truth and tried to hinder the work of the Church the people of the land. But the people of Judah, that is, those confessing and glorifying Him who with a whole heart sought to build for the Lord God, sought to convert all minds and mouths they could to doing His will, to seeking His glory. How often have heretics not only in individual cities but also in entire provinces, either by perverse teaching or by hostile violence, impeded the doctrine of true confession, let us not know. For instance, let us remain silent about the teacher of the nations, who, bound for two years in Caesarea due to the persecution by the Jews (Acts 23), had his tongue restrained from the duty of building the house of God. Behold, through the snares of subsequent heretics, blessed Athanasius was exiled from his homeland for many years, Ambrose was besieged in his city, Hilary was relegated to exile, Eusebius suffered martyrdom; many bishops in Africa, having had their tongues cut out, were ejected from their province, others were tormented or killed by various punishments, the house of God, which they had built, was handed over to be profaned by the people of the land, that is, by men seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ; until, at the divinely appointed time, there should again be a supply of wise architects to rebuild that house after the captivity; that is, until the Catholic Fathers were given the ability to restore the Church after the heresies had been discovered and overcome.

Ezra 4:5

But they hired counselors against them, etc. The distinction of the words is noteworthy; because they indeed hired counselors against the builders of the temple with a price given, in order that their plan might be destroyed; yet he does not say that their plan was destroyed, nor that they ceased from their work, until the letter of accusation was written to Artaxerxes, and by his command, as the Scripture says, with arm and strength. For it follows there: Then the work of the house of God in Jerusalem was stopped, and it did not continue until the second year of Darius, king of Persia (I Esdr. IV). Whence it is gathered, that indeed during the whole time of Cyrus, they pursued the

work, although more slowly than justly, but upon his death, not being hindered by wicked counsel, they were openly repelled from working. For the enemies did not dare, while Cyrus was still living, who had ordered that work to be done, to openly oppose, although covertly suggesting or counseling, to go against his decrees. The allegorical sense, however, is readily apparent: because heretics, as the opportunity of the time permits, now pursue the Church with the counsel of wicked doctrines, now with the more bitter fight of swords, and sometimes even do not fear to harass it with the support of gentile rulers. For they impede the hands of the people of Judah, when they delay the Church in its weaker members from the works of pious profession. They strive to destroy the plan of working when they also endeavor to divert their spirits from the very intention of good action. They accuse them to kings, when they also seek the protections of earthly rulers against the Church. How much this harms the faith became as clear as light during the time of the Arian perfidy.

CHAPTER 5

The Samaritans write letters of accusation to the kings of Persia, and by the decree of royal letters they prohibit the work of the temple. [Ezra 4:6] -- In the year of the reign of Ahasuerus... they wrote an accusation, etc. Josephus (Antiquities XI, 2, 3) believes that this Artaxerxes, who received the letter of accusation from the Samaritans and forbade the construction of Jerusalem and the temple, was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, who, after his father ruled for thirty years, reigned himself for eight years; and after him, the Magi ruled for one year, then Darius, the son of Hystaspes, succeeded to the throne. In his second year, the angel permitted the temple to be built, saying through Zechariah the prophet, interceding for the people: Lord of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry? This is the seventieth year (Zech. I). As for Ahasuerus, to whom it is said the letter of accusation was equally sent, it is perhaps silent on whether he replied or responded because either he died in the same year he began to reign, leaving the rule and these matters to Artaxerxes; or he was indeed contemporary with Artaxerxes but, being of lesser power, allowed him to handle and decide these things more.

Ezra 4:11

This is a copy of the letter, etc. Artaxerxes, who is persuaded, and who, being persuaded, commanded that Jerusalem should not be built, holds the figure either of some pagan ruler, certainly an enemy and persecutor of the Church, or of the ancient enemy of all good things, and adversary of the Jews, who accused the ecclesiastical men before the king: the Samaritans, who accused, always represent heretics. Hence, they call Jerusalem, with suitable expression, a rebellious and wicked city. For such do the heretics judge the Catholic unity which they attack. In truth, however, it is rebellious and constructs its walls and walls of the right faith with the stones of celestial testimonies against the weapons of attacking errors, of which Isaiah says: "And salvation will occupy our walls, and praise your gates" (Isaiah 60). But it should not be called wicked, except only by those who are completely averse from the best opinion. Among which it should be noted that from that time, the people of God began to be counted by the name of the Jews, because those who first ascended from captivity and restored the walls of the city of Jerusalem and the work of the temple, and possessed the province emptied of inhabitants, having again defeated the enemies who held the neighboring places, were chiefly from the tribe of Judah.

Ezra 4:12

Now, therefore, let it be known to the king, etc., thanks be to God, that the enemies of the city of the Lord, which is the Church, confess the truth about that city; for if it were built after captivity and its walls made of living stones, that is, holy souls, raised against the arrogance of this world, the citizens of that city, that is, the people of the elect, will not give further tribute of hateful servitude by sinning to malignant spirits. Rather, the building of piety will harm the princes of the power of this air, as more of those who, through the washing of regeneration, are taken away daily from the kingdom of the devil, having been born into the service of that kingdom due to the guilt of the first transgression; who, by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, no longer pay unjust tribute to the enemy, but justly offer proper tribute of due servitude to their Creator, and return to the giver of gifts, from whom they received, by living well and giving thanks, the annual dues of their firstfruits and tithes, which are done through the beginning and perfection of good works.

Ezra 4:14

We, therefore, mindful of the salt which we have eaten in the palace, etc. The Samaritans eat salt in the palace, when heretics are educated with the flavor of worldly philosophy, with the sweetness of rhetoric, and with the cleverness of dialectical art. They also consider it impious to see the king's injuries completed, when they cannot endure if anyone tries to attack the kingdom of the devil with pious faith or action, and they fear wars stirred up in the Church, lest their heresies and deceptions, along with the doctrines of the Gentiles, are defeated by its defenders, led undoubtedly by Him who said: "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10). And again: "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled" (Luke 12)? Namely, the sword of His word, with which He strikes down adversaries; and the fire of charity, with which, by kindling the hearts of His own, He burns away all the arms and shields of the opposing faction.

Ezra 4:16

We announce to the king, that if that city is built, etc. He names the Euphrates river, within which is Syria. Which rightly indicates the stream of holy baptism, either because it is one of the four rivers which, rising from one source in paradise, irrigate the whole world; indeed in the figure of the four evangelists, who, inspired by the one source of life, that is, the Lord Savior, proclaim with a harmonious voice to all nations the washing of salvation; or because Euphrates is interpreted as fruitful; which name most aptly fits that sacrament by which the world, washed and sanctified, customarily brings forth the fruit of souls thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold to God. Therefore, the king of the Persians, who are interpreted as tempters, seeks possession beyond the river, when the ancient enemy, by stirring up the incursions of temptations, tries to break into the boundaries of the Church, and to subjugate to himself even those who are redeemed by the sacred font. The Samaritans help him, as heretics who attack the Church fight for the kingdom of the devil, and as if they are said to be grieving: Because if that city is built, and its walls restored, through true faith and the religious works of the righteous, he will not be able to have possession and place beyond the river, that is, in the hearts of those who are already reborn to God through baptism. They are also understood who do not understand the true faith,

that one and the same mind cannot be possessed by light and darkness, iniquity and justice, Christ and Belial.

Ezra 4:17

The king sent word to Rehum the commander and to Shimshai the scribe, etc. The sense of the letter is clear, and so is the allegory; because the profane king, namely the ancient adversary, most gladly supports the wishes of those who persecute the Church, and prohibit it from being built. But the enemies of Jerusalem dwell in Samaria, which is interpreted as guardian; not because they can in any way keep the precepts of faith and truth, who are proven by obstinate mind to oppose the true vision of peace, but because they themselves boast that the custody of virtues remains with them when they fight against the walls of peace through heresy. [Ezra 4:23] -- Therefore, the example of the decree of King Artaxerxes was read, etc. Moreover, the sequence of history is clear, that the enemies of the people of God first obstructed the holy work by persecution, then attempted to dissipate the plan of their righteous intention with wicked counsels, and yet they were not able to entirely withdraw them from the work of the house of the Lord until, fortified by royal assistance, they opposed them with public authority. Notable is their deceit in accusing, as they complained that those who were building the house of God were constructing a city against the kingdom of the Persians; and with the king commanding that the city should not be built, they immediately, having received the authority of the royal letters, resisted the rebuilding of the temple with harmful power; although they had only accused them of building the city, not of constructing the temple, and the king had only prohibited the city from being built.

CHAPTER 6

At the exhortation of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua build the temple of God; and Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the river, seeks Darius' decision on what should be done about it. (1 Esdr. V.)

Ezra 5:1

And the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied, etc. These things are more fully written in the books of these prophets; with words by which they either reproved the laziness of those who had been more negligent towards the work of the temple, or stirred them to work with the promise of God's

aid; by which devotion at their exhortation, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the people set themselves to the work of building the house of the Lord. And indeed the prophet Haggai begins thus: In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet saying: Speak to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and to Joshua, the son of Jozadak, the high priest, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts: This people says, The time has not yet come to build the house of the Lord. And the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet saying: Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? (Haggai I). And shortly after: And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people;

and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius (Ibid.). And in the following, which we placed above: The glory of this latter house will be greater than that of the former, says the Lord of hosts (Haggai II). Likewise, Zechariah begins thus: In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet (Zech. I). From which title it is clearer how Ezra names him the son of Iddo, evidently because he was the grandson of him. But Iddo himself is to be understood as a noble prophet, of whom Zechariah, as a distinguished prophet, is rightly called his son. Among these, it must be noted the great spirit of these prophets, who ordered the temple to be built against the decree of such a great king and the Samaritans, and all the surrounding peoples hindering the construction of the temple. Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the people who were with them, are likewise proven to have been of no less faith, as they listened to the prophets commanding rather than the king forbidding.

But since we have often spoken in this volume about Zerubbabel and Joshua, or Jesus (for it is the same name), how they designated the Lord Savior, the king and high priest both by lineage and act, it seems appropriate to explain their names as they signify Him. Zerubbabel is therefore called a garden in Babylon, or master of Babylon; Shealtiel, my request is God; Jesus or Joshua, savior; Jozadak, the Lord is just. And indeed openly, as the son of Nun clearly signifies the Lord Christ Jesus. Hence each led the people into

the promised land, that one from a long stay in the wilderness, this one from the longer captivity, in a figure of the true Jesus, who, delivering His chosen from all evils, leads them to the joys of the promised heavenly kingdom; who is the son of Jozadak, that is, of the Lord's just one, about whom it is sung in the psalm: The Lord just shall crush the necks of sinners, be ashamed and be turned back, all who hate Zion (Psalm 128). Zerubbabel, called a garden in Babylon, refers historically to him because he was born there, being of the lineage of David, who was born in Bethlehem. According to allegory, it pertains to the Lord; who, that He might lead from the confusion of errors, deigned to arise and dwell for a time in Babylon, that is, in the confusion of this world.

He is also called the master of Babylon, not that he teaches the things of Babylon, that is, of this world; but because he instructs those whom he found oppressed by the yoke of Babylon to the grace of freedom, and leads the instructed to the walls of the heavenly homeland. His father is Shealtiel, that is, my request is God, who himself says in the psalm: Request of me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance (Psalm 2). But also, each faithful one invoking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when seeking none other than God himself from Him, can rightly be named Shealtiel, that is, my request is God, according to the dictum of the Psalmist: For what is there for me in heaven, and what have I desired on earth besides you (Psalm 73)? and the rest, until he says: But for me it is good to be near to God. Our petition is therefore God, when we seek only Him from Him, so that we may be deemed worthy to enjoy the eternal vision of Him.

Ezra 5:3

At that time, Thathannai came to them, etc. The sense of the letter is clear, because the leaders of the Jews, strengthened by the words of the prophets, were not able to be hindered by the persecution of the enemies from the holy work, which they had ceased from for fear of the enemies while the prophets still rested. What is now carried out in the holy Church in the same manner, while those who had become more lukewarm towards good work due to the snares of evil men or spirits remained for a while, suddenly corrected by the words of either faithful teachers or divine Scriptures, begin to boil over with good endeavors to such an extent that they cannot be overcome by any machinations of temptations, nor can they be recalled from their intended purpose. However, it is rightly asked how it was said, "To which we responded

to them," as if he who wrote was present at that time, since Ezra is said to have written this book, who is found not to have been in Jerusalem at this time but came much later during the reign of Artaxerxes. Either he was truly there at that time when the temple was being built and returned to Babylon after the temple was made to lead more of the children of Israel back to Jerusalem; or certainly, even if he was not there while the temple was being built, he nonetheless joined with those who were building, because he considered everything that was done concerning his brothers or that they did as his own. Similarly, the Apostle also, for the sake of fraternal concord, in a way associates himself with the saints who will be at the end of the age: "We," he says, "who are alive, who remain, will not precede those who have fallen asleep at the coming of our Lord" (I Thess. IV).

Ezra 5:7

And it pleased them that the matter should be referred to Darius, etc., until the end of the letter. This letter that Thathannai writes to Darius is very different from the letter that Rehum and Samsai wrote to Artaxerxes. For that letter was filled with accusations against the people of Jerusalem, whereas this one is full of praise not only of the people but also of Almighty God. Indeed, it begins thus: "To King Darius, all peace. Let it be known to the king, that we went to the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is being built with unpolished stone, and timber is being laid in the walls, and this work is being diligently built, and it grows in their hands. Therefore, we questioned these elders, and thus we said to them: Who gave you the authority to build this house? etc. In these words, it is also noteworthy how it is said, the house of God is built with unpolished stone; since it is evident that such a work could only have been done with polished stones. But "unpolished stone" should be understood to mean new stone, which they indeed found unpolished, but by polishing, they made it fit for building the house of the Lord:

for even if some of the old stones, which, as Jeremiah lamentingly shows (Lamentations 4), were scattered at the head of every street, remained, it is nonetheless doubtful that new stones had to be polished, from which the work of the temple could be completed. In which indeed there is an evident mystery, since we see the Church of God being built, not only from those who repentantly return to the life of holiness which they previously lost by sinning; but also from those who recently have been called to faith, com-

posed under the instruction of teachers like the rule of craftsmen, and placed in the building of the house of the Lord in a suitable order. Although it can also be rightly understood this way, that the temple was built of both old and new stones, of long-polished and more recently unpolished stones; since from both peoples, namely the Jews and the Gentiles, one Church of Christ is gathered; one, which was long polished in knowledge and observance of God's law; the other, which was enslaved to idolatry, had shed the deformity of a rustic and earthly mind by no industry of spiritual architects, by no cult of piety. And what follows in the same letter: And timber is placed in the walls. The timber that was placed for the monument or ornament of the walls of the temple signified the same life of the saints in the ornament of the holy Church, which the stones also signify, as we have taught above.

These timbers the prophet mentions in a psalm, in which the house of the Lord is built after the captivity: "Then all the trees of the forest will rejoice before the face of the Lord, because he comes, for he comes to judge the earth" (Psalm 96). Indeed, the hearts of the once proud rejoice because they were cut from the impious mount of ancestral tradition, and have deserved to be transferred into the construction of the house of the Lord. They rejoice before the face of the Lord, because he comes to judge the earth; whose strict judgment they have anticipated by a healthy fear, and whose coming once they dreaded as sinners, now corrected and justified, they eagerly desire. That former letter, therefore, was written with insidious intent, this one with friendly letters; and rightly so, because the former was from the Samaritan enemies of the Jews everywhere; but this one was sent by the governor of the region beyond the river, that is, lower Syria and Phoenicia, and by his associates, who had no domestic enmities against the Jews, but only wished to know and execute the will of the king, from whom they received the authority of governance. Hence, the Samaritans, who wrote the first letter inciting the king's anger against the builders of the temple, are rightly compared to heretics, who often so defile the Church with vile plagues that they even make it hateful to the Gentiles and arouse their fury against it.

Nevertheless, this governor of Syria, who does not accuse but consults the king about the work of the house of God, rightly represents those who, still situated in gentile life, marvel at the faith and works of the Church; nor do they deny that they would believe if they could understand that this is the true and just worship of divinity. Finally, hearing from the elders of the Jews,

when they gave an account of their construction: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are building the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house; and the rest, which they answered about the renovation of the same temple, which was commanded by Cyrus. Having nothing further to contradict with his advisers, nor wishing to impede the builders, he was simply inquiring whether Cyrus had indeed ordered the temple to be built, and whether Darius himself wanted it built. Having recognized the will of both kings, along with his own, he diligently aided the construction of the temple that the entire work might be completed, as is written subsequently. All these things harmonize with the mind and action of those who, previously living a gentile life, suddenly witnessing the conduct of the holy Church, desire to hear and learn the rationale of the same religion;

and at last, recognizing that this originated from the God of heaven and earth, who is the only true God, they themselves, believing, rejoice to assist its building. But let us see what King Darius did when he received the letter from the governor and his advisers.

CHAPTER 7

Darius, after reading Cyrus's letters, ordered the temple to be built, which was completed in the sixth year of his reign. (I Esdras VI.) [Ezra 6:1] -- Then King Darius commanded, etc. Josephus (Antiq. XI, 3) mentioned the name of the place where these letters of Cyrus were found thus: And a book was found in Ecbatana in a constructed tower, in the region of Media. Moreover, another translation has it thus: In Ecbatana, in the safest building of the region of the Medes. Hence it seems likely that the name Media signifies nothing other than Media. What follows is:

Ezra 6:3

And as for laying the supporting foundations, etc., it is not for us to explain; because neither in the earlier building of the temple nor in the later one is any of these measurements or such work found. Hence it is inferred that Cyrus uttered this of his own accord, and noted the measurement or order of the work as seemed appropriate to him; inasmuch as the temple, as the Words of the Days recount, in the first measure, that is, within the inner

walls, had sixty cubits of length, twenty cubits of width. Furthermore, as the history of Kings writes, the height was up to the upper chambers thirty cubits; then another thirty cubits up to the upper chamber, as the height of the porticoes ascended, as Josephus testifies (Antiq. VIII, 3); then another sixty up to the top of the roof; that is, altogether one hundred twenty cubits, as the Words of the Days teach. But how does he say that three courses of uncut stones are to be laid, and thus the courses of new wood, when the whole temple was lined inside with cedar? unless perhaps it was the custom of the Persians to build temples in a varied work such that there were three courses of stones along the walls, and the fourth of crafted wood: and he also thought that this should be done in the same way in the temple of Jerusalem.

Or perhaps it should be understood that he spoke of the court of the priests, which was made around the temple in a circle, had three courses of polished stones, and a fourth of cedar wood, and it was up to the chest height of those standing by; or certainly the house of the Lord, which was in front of the temple, about which the Scripture, when the palace of King Solomon was being built, thus recounts: He also made the greater court roundabout of three courses of hewn stones, and one course of hewn cedar, and likewise in the inner court of the house of the Lord, and in the porch of the house (1 Kings VII).

Ezra 6:5

But the golden and silver vessels of the temple, etc. It states that the vessels were then placed in the temple of God, signifying the temple of the Babylonians, in which Nebuchadnezzar had placed them, as is more clearly read above, from which Cyrus had ordered them to be taken and returned to Jerusalem. So far, the letters of King Cyrus, which were found in Ecbatana; to which were suddenly added, in a new and unusual manner, from the persona and authority of King Darius: [Ezra 6:6] -- Now therefore, Thathannai, governor of the region, etc. Thus the sequence of the text is such, as if Darius himself had read the letters of Cyrus, and immediately confirmed them with his own authority upon reading them, thereby restraining all their adversaries, and ordering the temple of God to be built in its place, as it was read to them, and assisting its worshippers in all things with the most devoted mind to serve according to his will. Therefore, Artaxerxes, who forbade the building of the house or city of God above, signifies those lords who opposed the construction of the holy Church with persecutions leading to death; amidst

these disturbances, the same Church flourished most especially by the victory of the martyrs. Darius signifies the pious devotion of those kings who, recognizing the will of the Christian faith, not only did not resist it but also took care to assist it with their own means. Many of these, after the prohibitions of the previous persecutions had been lifted, desired to consecrate themselves and their subjects with the sacraments of the same faith; the persons of whom fittingly correspond to what is subsequently added in the words of King Darius:

Ezra 6:8

But also it has been commanded by me, etc. For who could explain how much the Church has been aided or even enriched throughout the world by the liberality of royal gifts? Although it can also be understood allegorically, that expenses from the king's treasury are allotted to the work of the temple, when some from the family of secular princes come to the faith of Christ, with the princes themselves favoring them; who, as it were, were in the king's treasury, while they were privy to royal secrets. But they are given to the elders, that is, the senior Jews, for the expenses of the work of the temple, while to those who have preceded in the confession of Christ, entrusted to the teachers for education, and uniting to the members of the Church; such as Cassiodorus, formerly a senator, suddenly a doctor of the Church; who, while carefully considering what Ambrose, what Hilary, what Augustine, what Cyril, what John, what other brothers said in the exposition of the Psalms, which he made excellently, undoubtedly proved himself taught by the senior Jews, that is, the confessors and praisers. The subsequent statement is similar to this:

Ezra 6:9

But if it shall be necessary, also calves, etc. For who does not know that calves, lambs, and kids, which are clean animals, also grain, salt, wine, and oil, which through the law were offered to God, are often understood in the Holy Scriptures as signifying good men, or perfect works, or spiritual gifts? All of which are now, by the king's command, offered as a burnt offering to the God of heaven, while, with the favor of the powers of this world, the holy matters of the Church increase, and the peoples subject to them from all sides are gathered into the one and the same faith of truth to be consecrated to Christ, and whatever good each one has naturally heard divinely,

whatever beneficial he has learned from the men of the Churches, he expends all this in the service of divine worship. Concerning which it is aptly said that according to the custom of the priests who are in Jerusalem, they should be given, because surely the vows of those offering are made acceptable to the Lord only if they are offered according to the situation of catholic peace. For whatever good things are mixed either with pagan superstition or with heretical contention ought in no way to be considered as good. But the same priests offer them for the life of the king and his sons, according to that of the Apostle: I urge therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life (I Tim. II).

Ezra 6:11

Therefore, a decree was established by me, etc. The sense of the letter is clear: because he wished to impose the most severe punishment, if anyone attempted to change the decree of his religion; that is, the loss of everything he could possess and his soul, which he would lose even confined to a cross, with the torment of prolonged suffering. The spiritual understanding is also clear, because our works are all compared to wood: good indeed to fruitful trees, but bad to barren and worthy of fire. The wood is taken from his house, who tried to oppose the Lord's burnt offerings; and it is raised, and he himself is nailed to it, when the works of those who resist the peace of the universal holy Church are manifest to all as useless and perverse; and they are shown to have sought not the joy of life in these works, but rather a snare of death. The house of such people is also made public, that is, written into public record, when even their bodies in which they remained longer in this life are handed over to the most savage exactors to be punished perpetually at the resurrection, that is, to spirits. However, Darius rightly and faithfully desires that his decree be confirmed with the help of divine power, as he abruptly adds in prayer, saying: "May the God who caused His name to dwell there scatter all kingdoms and people who stretch out their hand to oppose and destroy that house of God which is in Jerusalem."

Ezra 6:12

I, Darius, have established a decree, etc. And he himself, therefore, as a man temporarily endowed with the kingdom, for the peace of the house of God, does everything he can with public law, breaks those who contradict as much

as he can: and God, since he has eternal and omnipotent power, he truly asks to accomplish the same thing, and desires with pious devotion that His name may remain perpetually in His house; and whoever dares to attack this, may they be deprived of the kingdom and life forever. Which in the same order is also conducted now in the holy Church, when earthly powers converted to the faith issue public edicts for the state of the same Church, and with the Lord's help, and placing all enemies under His feet, desire always to have tranquil peace and quiet. [Ezra 6:13] -- Therefore, Thathannai, the governor of the region beyond the river, and his associates executed it diligently, etc. And now also, with people flocking to the faith, and sometimes even from those who are outside, favoring its peace, the elders of the Jews, that is, those who are worthy of the seat of teaching, build and prosper their Church daily either by word or by example; for even if the ancient enemy attacks occasionally, nevertheless the word of God finds some in whom it may prevail and, with the adversaries driven away, may construct the walls of truth.

Ezra 6:14

And they prospered according to the prophecy, etc. For the same prophets had foretold that if they persisted in building the temple, they would soon, with the Lord's granting, complete the work itself and also abundantly abound in all good things as a reward for their devotion. Among these is the saying of Zechariah: The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands shall also finish it; and you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you (Zech. IV). This means that when you see the temple completed by that same Zerubbabel who laid its foundation, then you will understand that I was sent by the Lord and that what I spoke, I said by His command. Also Haggai says: From the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? And do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still not yield? From this day, I will bless you (Haggai II). And the outcome of events showed that what was truly predicted had come true. Moreover, all the prophets, indeed all the sacred authors of Scripture, promise prosperity to the builders of the holy Church, that is, to the teachers, if they, not wearied by adversities, do not rest from their holy labor.

For divine help shall be present, whereby the house of the Lord, begun in the heart of the listeners by believing and living well, will be completed. To

those same architects will come the blessing of the fruits of the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree, that is, a more abundant supply of spiritual gifts, which will undoubtedly be granted to us more abundantly by the Lord as we more diligently strive to build the habitation of His glory, whether in ourselves or in the hearts of our neighbors. Nor should anyone consider contrary what Haggai says, that the foundation of the temple was laid under King Darius, to this sacred history we are expounding, which states that in the second year of King Cyrus the temple was founded by the masons, with the people greatly rejoicing and praising God (I Esdr. III). For then the foundation of the temple itself was described, that is, the interior house of holiness, whose measurements are especially referred to in the histories of Kings and Chronicles. But now, along with the building of the house itself, the buildings of the porticos and treasuries, which surrounded the house in a circle on every side, are narrated as founded, of which mention is made in the book of Chronicles as follows: He also made the courtyard of the priests, and the great vestibule, and the doors of the vestibule, which he covered with bronze (I Chron. IV).

In this vestibule surrounding the temple, both the people used to stand to pray and the guards and doorkeepers of the temple used to keep watch through their shifts day and night, as the book of Chronicles abundantly teaches there. Sometimes this house generally is counted with the temple itself; as in the Gospel, where the Lord, teaching in the temple, was brought a woman caught in adultery by the Pharisees and Scribes (John VIII), whom they could have brought only into some portico of the temple; at other times, separately under the name of treasuries, or chambers, or porticoes, or courtyards. Hence the Psalmist says: Who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courtyards of the house of our God.

Ezra 6:14

And they built and constructed, etc. He says Artaxerxes, who reigned after Darius, during whose time Ezra ascended from Babylon to Jerusalem. However, it is questioned how it is said that, by order not only of Cyrus and Darius but also Artaxerxes, the house of God was constructed, when it is immediately stated that it was completed and dedicated during the reign of Darius. Unless it should be believed that Artaxerxes, having sent much gold and silver to Jerusalem, also ordered that anything lacking in the building or decoration of the temple, or in its vessels, be completed from the money he had

sent and given. For it is written that the same king, along with his princes and counselors, sent much gold and silver and precious vessels to the temple while Ezra was hastening there. Among other things, it is mentioned in the copy of the king's letter: But whatever else is needed for the house of your God, which you have to provide, you shall do so from the king's treasury and finances (1 Esdras VII). The month of Adar, on the third day of which the house of the Lord was completed, is called March by us, which the Scripture usually calls the twelfth month according to the lunar cycle. It is not without mystery that the house of the Lord, which began in the seventh month with the building of the altar, was completed in the twelfth month. For it began at the start of the seventh month;

because we begin all good works with the grace of the Holy Spirit preceding us, and, with it accompanying us, we strive for perfection. It was completed in the twelfth month due to the significance of perfection contained in this number, especially due to the sum of the apostles, in whose faith and doctrine the church is perfected. Similarly, the number twelve signifies the perfection of correct faith and action because whether you multiply three by four or four by three, you will complete twelve. The number three is rightly related to faith because of the confession of the Holy Trinity; the number four to good works because of the same number of excellent virtues, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice; of which the Book of Wisdom, in praising Wisdom itself, mentions, saying: For she teaches soberness and prudence, righteousness, and courage; nothing in life is more useful than these (Wisdom VIII). Therefore, it is right that the house of the Lord, begun in the seventh month, was completed and dedicated in the twelfth month; because the mind of the elect is illuminated by the grace of the Holy Spirit so that it may reach the perfection of good works with faith in the holy and undivided Trinity, and thus joyfully awaits the dedication of blessed reward.

And since this same reward pertains to our future celebration at the time of the universal resurrection and in the vision of the same Trinity in which we now believe, it is rightly mentioned that the house of the Lord was completed not only in the twelfth month but also on the third day of it; because the Lord rose from the dead on the third day, our resurrection can rightly be designated by the three days' number, of which the prophet says: He has torn us, but he will heal us; he has struck us, but he will bind us up; after two days he will revive us; on the third day, he will raise us up (Hosea VI). The build-

ing of the temple began in the first year of King Cyrus and was completed in the sixth year of Darius; which are, according to the Chroniclers, forty years. For Cyrus reigned for thirty years, after him, his son Cambyses reigned for eight years, who in this volume, as Josephus asserts, is called Artaxerxes; after him, the Magi, who killed him, ruled for one year, after which Darius until the temple's completion and dedication, six years; which are, as we said, forty-five years. However, it is questioned how, with the Lord saying to the Jews under the figure of the temple about his passion and resurrection: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up; they responded: It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days? (John II);

when no more than sixty-five years are found from the first year of Cyrus to the sixth year of King Darius. But if we read in Josephus' History, where he adds three years after the temple's completion and dedication, in which the construction of the surrounding fortifications and other remaining parts were completed; we will see that the sum of forty-six years can be correctly calculated for the construction of the temple with all its prominent structures completed. However, adhering to this chapter of the Gospel, we should bear in mind that the temple built by Solomon and rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Jesus has multiple representations. It signifies each chosen soul, which, because of Christ dwelling in it, is rightly called Christ's house and temple; and the entire church, that is, the congregation of all the elect, both angels and humans; and the Lord's own body, which was born of the virgin, lived without sin in the world, was released from death by the impious but was resurrected by him on the third day to life. This figure is particularly fitting to that which says the temple was built in forty-six years. For physiologists report that the human body in the womb grows from conception to the complete formation of its members in this number of days.

And it was fitting that the house, which was to have the figure of the Lord's body, should be founded in Jerusalem in the same number of years in which the Lord's own body was to be formed in the sacred womb of the virgin, who is rightfully named Jerusalem, that is, the city of the great King and the vision of peace, of whom it is said: He is our peace, who made both one (Ephesians II). Just as what is written about the same temple: The door for the middle story was in the right side of the house; and they went up with winding stairs into the middle story, and out of the middle into the third (1

Kings VI); specifically prefigured the Lord's body, of which it is written: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and immediately there came out blood and water (John XIX). For the door of the middle story was in the right side of the house, meaning starting from the eastern corner of the southern side to the earth, and through its inner part by a hidden way rising gradually to the higher stories; because our Lord and Savior wished to open for us the door of salvation in his body's right side, through whose sacraments, being washed and sanctified, we might enter the higher hall of the heavenly kingdom.

We ascend through the door of the middle story into the upper room when, consecrated through the water of baptism and the cup of the Lord's chalice, we pass from this earthly conversation to the heavenly life of souls. From the upper room, we also penetrate into the third story when we accumulate the bliss of souls with the perception of immortal bodies.

CHAPTER 8

The sons of the captivity dedicate the house of God and celebrate the feast of Passover.

Ezra 6:16

Now the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, etc. The sons of the captivity rightly rejoice that they are worthy to both cast off the yoke of captivity and to build the house of God, which was destroyed. They offer a great number of sacrifices in the dedication of His house as devout servants to God. They also offer sacrifices for the sin of all Israel, not only for those who could be present, but also for those who were still placed in Babylon or in other provinces, living among enemies outside the promised land. They pray to God to be merciful to them as well and to protect them from evils among the enemies or to bring them back to the desired homeland. Because the rebuilding of the house after their captivity, as often said, signifies the correction of those who have strayed from the path of truth through sin after having initially started it, the well-restored temple is rightly dedicated by the priests and Levites and the other sons of the captivity in joy. For when those who have sinned are corrected, there is great joy in heaven before the angels of God (Luke XV). There is joy also for the teachers who have labored for the salvation of the erring; and for all those who have migrated from Babylon,

that is, the confusion of sins, to the height of virtues—the promised land in thought and deed.

Therefore, both the priests and Levites and all the people rejoice in the dedication of the restored house of the Lord because all orders of the holy Church must rejoice together in the reconciliation through penance of those who have sinned. They offer sacrifices in this dedication when they render thanks to God for the conversion of the erring, when many, seeing their devout life to God, also gird themselves to works of greater virtues, not wanting to be slothful in good works, in which they had remained more innocent, by sinning less. This can equally be understood of those who have recently come to faith, to receive the sacraments of Christ, that many who were advanced in the faith often emulate the more fervent zeal of the newcomers and follow their examples in good works. Not only do the priests, Levites, and the people offer sacrifices for the dedication of the house of the Lord which they had renovated, but also for the sin of all Israel. For just as it is fitting to favor the good deeds of those who are with us, and to make their good deeds our own by imitation, so it is necessary with diligent care to pray to the Lord for the state of the whole Church which is scattered throughout the world, according to the example of the Lord's prayer;

in which no one asks for daily bread, or for the forgiveness of sins, or to be delivered from temptation and evil, only for himself, but rather for all who have the same Father in heaven. Likewise, after the temple has been built, dedication follows when the total number of the elect shall at the end of the world reach the grace of heavenly rewards. Many acceptable sacrifices to God are offered in this dedication; those, indeed, of which the same house of God, that is, the holy Church, rebuilt through the glory of immortality after the long captivity of mortal distress, sings to its Creator and Redeemer, saying: "You have broken my bonds, I will sacrifice an offering of praise to You" (Psalm 115). And since the same sacrifice of praise is to be offered to God, not only for the gifts of virtues given, but also for the purged and removed stains of vices: correctly, after bulls, rams, and lambs were offered in the dedication of the temple, goats are also said to have been slaughtered for the sin of all Israel; for the grace of God, which confers the benefits of virtues, also removes the iniquity of sins. No Pelagian has a place in the house of God, who persuades that by the freedom of his own will he can either be

freed from evils or confirmed in good. Indeed, goats for sin are offered in this life when the elect of supreme piety supplicate to be freed from sins.

They are also offered in the future when the same ones give thanks because, by the grace of God, they have been freed from sins; and therefore, they will sing the mercies of the Lord forever (Psalm 100); for they will never forget that they were once miserable and have been made blessed by His gift.

Ezra 6:18

And they appointed priests in their orders, etc. The order demanded devotion, so that after the Lord's house was built and dedicated, priests and Levites who would minister in it were immediately ordained; lest the house shine in vain if those who serve God within were lacking. This should be frequently impressed upon those who, constructing monasteries with magnificent work, do not at all place teachers in them who would encourage God's people to the works of God, but rather serve their own pleasures and desires there. But what he says about priests in their orders and Levites in their turns being appointed signifies the shifts of weeks; in which the whole assembly of each rank was distributed into twenty-four parts, so that each order would minister its turn during its week, specifically from Sabbath to Sabbath in the temple; and then, for twenty-three weeks, free from the temple's duties, they would take care of their own household affairs, as the Words of the Days narrate. For around the inner sanctuary, they had already made the porches of the temple, at the gates of which the Levites kept watch in turns, as it is also written there. But what is said, "As it is written in the book of Moses," does not refer to the shifts of the Levites, but to the works of God; for Moses wrote what the priests and Levites ought to do in the house of God;

but the shifts of the Levites and the orders of the priests into twenty-four lots, as we mentioned, were described not by Moses, but by King David with the prophets, priests, and Levites of that time. And now too, with Christ's Church being built and dedicated through the regeneration of new peoples to the faith, it is fitting to appoint priests and Levites in their orders and turns over the works of God; and the people are initiated not only into the sacraments of faith but are also instructed to perform the works of God by the examples and teachings of the righteous ones preceding in Christ; and this not by the capture of human ingenuity, but as it is written in the book of Moses. To which the Lord's saying agrees: "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28). Therefore, we must teach our hearers not our own precepts, but those which are the commands of the law and the Gospel, if we care to reach the rewards which the Lord promised, together with those same hearers.

Ezra 6:19

However, the sons of the exile made the Passover, etc. What was the point of recounting the celebration of the Passover after the house of the Lord was built in the historical narrative? When it had long been promised that from the first day of their arrival in Jerusalem, they would offer the legitimate sacrifices and holocausts in all the festivals of the Lord. Unless perhaps he wished to recount the Passover being celebrated particularly to remind the reader that the sons of the exile completed the building of the temple with the same devotion of spirit with which they had begun. For it was already predicted there that the people gathered as one man in Jerusalem, and Joshua the son of Jozadak rose up, and his brothers, the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brothers, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it. And now, with the temple dedicated, already in the forty-sixth year, the same piety of religion is remembered to be in the hearts of all, when it is said that the priests and Levites were purified as one, all clean to sacrifice the Passover. For what greater perfection can there be in this life than the unity of a clean multitude? For there were many priests, many thousands of Levites, who were all purified and clean to sacrifice the Passover. Nor with differing intentions of souls, but, as Luke writes about the early Church of the New Testament, with one heart and one soul, which is found true in faith and love of God, nor is there a differing unity of love and chastity in the people. When it is said to sacrifice the Passover to all the sons of the exile and their brothers, the priests, and to themselves, it is immediately added:

Ezra 6:21

And the children of Israel ate, etc. Therefore, the Passover was sacrificed for all the children of the exile, all the children of Israel ate, not only those who had returned from captivity, but also all who had previously been situated elsewhere, who had at that time purified themselves from the defilements of the people of the land to come to them. This can also be rightly understood

of the proselytes, who, though naturally Gentile, were converted to the people of God, having received circumcision and being purified by legal sacrifices, so that they too were worthy of participating in the saving sacrifice. And it is to be noted that he calls the people of the land those who serve the defilers; so that by contrast, he might teach that the people of heaven are those who, being separated from them, serve the Lord in unity and chastity, and celebrate his solemnities with a sincere heart. Nowhere else, unless I am mistaken, is the same people of Israel found to have existed with such devotion with the priests and Levites, their teachers that is, since they came out of Egypt through Moses; but this devotion was made by divine chastisement, for when they were delivered to be afflicted by their enemies for their sins, afflicted by adversities, they were turned away from sins by repentance; by the merit of repentance and conversion, they were freed from their enemies: and being destined to serve God better, they were called back to their own homeland.

But up to this point, we often see even those who have frequently defiled the temple of their body by sinning, and thereby have been taken captive by the devil, returning to the Lord through repentance. And rightly so, with greater diligence than they were accustomed to before, they have striven in good works to prepare again in themselves a dwelling place for their Creator. It is to be noted indeed that Solomon first completed the temple in the greatest peace of his kingdom, in a very short time, with no one contradicting in any way; but now, having been destroyed on account of sins, the children of the exile, with great contrition of heart, labored in a long work, often delayed by the enemies, and finally, divinely aided, restored it. For it is easy indeed for anyone converted to faith and recognition of the truth, to renounce the devil and confess the living and true God, to receive the sacraments of Christ; and being initiated by these, to become His temple in remission of all sins, and to keep the received innocence of life with accompanying grace. But it is of great labor for anyone who, having received the sacraments of faith, contemptuously sins, to recover their former dignity;

for to such a one, cleansing cannot easily be given again through the water of baptism, but the sin tainted must be washed out with the long labor of repentance, with copious flows of tears, with the more stringent efforts of continence, by whose cleansing the very habits of vices also resist like an enemy crowd of Samaritans; the more difficult to overcome, the longer they

have possessed the land of the heart devoid of virtue. It can also be said that therefore, particularly with the house of God rebuilt and dedicated, remembrance is made of the Passover, since none would doubt that people of such religion would want to celebrate the Passover in its due time; so that it might mystically be insinuated that this is the sum of all perfection, when, having transcended all the desires and allurements of the world, we always with entire intention of mind ponder the entrance into another life. For Passover is interpreted as passing, having its name from this, that either the children of Israel in it, through the sacrifice of the lamb, passed from Egyptian slavery to the joys of freedom, or the spotless Lamb Himself, that is, the Lord Christ, sacrificed for our redemption, passed from this world to the Father. Which we also imitate, when we pass from base pleasures to seek heavenly things. Indeed, we perfectly perform this when, released from the prison of the flesh, we enter the heavenly kingdom. To which sense apt is what follows:

Ezra 6:22

And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread, etc. The Apostle teaches us how we ought to keep this feast spiritually, saying: "Let us therefore feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5). This is to be observed for seven days; because throughout all this world's time, which runs for as many days, we ought to lead our life in sincerity and truth, indeed in the sacrifices and holocausts of all good works. And because our Lord, at the time of the Passover, conquered death, tasted momentarily with the eternal power of resurrection; the celebration of the Passover may be referred typologically to the time of our resurrection; so that the building of the temple designates the present state of the Holy Church, the dedication signifies the future life, which happens in the exultation of the holy souls, when they leave the body. The sacrifice of the Passover hints at the glory of the resurrection, when all the elect, no longer believing in the sacrament, but seeing in reality and truth, will be refreshed by the flesh of the spotless Lamb, that is, of our God and Lord. Hence, in this Passover, it is stated that all the priests and Levites, the entire assembly of the people, all who had flocked to them from the nations, were pure, as if they had all attended as one;

for then the Lamb of God truly takes away the sins of the world. And as the Apostle John says: “The blood of Jesus, the Son of God, cleanses us from

all sin" (1 John 1). Then there will be true unity when God will be all in all (1 John 1; 1 Cor. 15). Then the true feast of unleavened bread will be celebrated in joy, when no leaven of malice or wickedness remains in the elect, and all will cling to the divine vision in truth and sincerity of heart. And this not in the seven days of the passing world, but in the one day of everlasting life in the courts of the Lord, which is better than thousands in the light of the Holy Spirit, whose sevenfold grace the prophet commends to us (Ps. 84).

Ezra 6:22

They celebrated the feast of unleavened bread for seven days, etc. For this is the greatest joy of the righteous, both in this age and in the future, that the work of the Church is complete, with even the Gentiles who once resisted being converted, aiding its state and confirming peace of the Christian Church's religion throughout the entire world. Thus far, it is written about the return from Babylon to Jerusalem of the people who had been taken captive; the return of the vessels that had been taken away; the restoration and dedication of the temple that had been burned; the celebration of the festivals, and the singing of the songs of the Lord, which could not be sung in a foreign land, under the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua. All these things contain one and the same knowledge of human salvation in Christ, both those who came into the world with the sin of the first transgression, purified by the sacraments of faith, are saved; and those who corrupted the faith they had received by sinning, repent and return to their senses, and both, through one and the same Savior, the true king and priest, celebrating as if the most blessed Passover, pass from this world to the Father, from death to life. Truly, because the temple was burned and the city of Jerusalem destroyed, the holy Scriptures that were kept there were also destroyed by the hostile calamity, and these, by the mercy of the Lord and his return to his people, had to be restored; so that, having restored the buildings that had been torn down, they would have something from which they, being admonished, might learn to be restored inwardly in the faith and love of their Creator. Hence it well follows:

CHAPTER 9

Ezra the priest ascended from Babylon, bearing the honorable letters of King Artaxerxes to all the keepers of the public treasury beyond the river; with which he also honored the temple of the Lord. (1 Esdras VII.)

Ezra 7:6

After these words, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, etc. Josephus (Antiq. XIII, 5) considers this Artaxerxes, under whom Ezra ascended from Babylon to Jerusalem, to be Xerxes, the son of Darius, who reigned after him. Furthermore, the books of Chronicles believe that the successor of the same Xerxes, who is also called Artaxerxes by them, is here designated. Now Darius, under whom the temple was built, reigned thirty-six years; after him Xerxes reigned twenty years; after whom Artabanus for seven months, which chronographers count as a year; after whom Artaxerxes for forty years. Ezra, a swift scribe in the law of Moses, because he restored the law which had been consumed; not only the law but also, as common tradition of the elders says, he rewrote the entire series of sacred Scripture which had been equally consumed by fire, as he saw fitting for the readers. They say in this work, he added some words which he deemed appropriate; among which is this: "And there arose not a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face," etc. Words indeed which only one who lived long after Moses could say. And in the book of Samuel: "Formerly in Israel a man going to inquire of God would say, Come and let us go to the seer. For he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer" (1 Sam. IX). Moreover, he left untouched some entire volumes, which were once held among the people of Israel;

of which now only the memory of the name remains in sacred Scripture; as it is said in the book of Numbers: "Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord" (Num. XXI). And in Joshua: "Is this not written in the book of Jashar? (Jos. X). But also in the volume of Kings and Chronicles, the historical books of the prophets Ahijah the Shilonite, and Shemaiah, Iddo, and Nathan, as well as Isaiah, and Jehu the son of Hanani are mentioned (1 Kings XVI; 2 Chron. IX); concerning whom it is said that he wrote the book of the kings of Israel; and many others, of which it is said no traces can be found today. The Hebrews also report, and there is no doubt among them about this matter, that the same Ezra invented lighter letters against the names of those they had hitherto used, by which he swiftly restored such a great amount of books that had been consumed. Therefore he is known not only as a scribe but also as a swift scribe. However, the earlier letters remained with the Samaritans, with which they used to write the five books of Moses, which they alone had received from the sacred Scripture.

Ezra 7:7

And they ascended from the children of Israel, etc. Because on the first day of the first month he began to ascend from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, he says they came to Jerusalem by anticipation. Moreover, in the following he describes more fully in order how they came, and where they assembled their army. It should be noted that at the beginning of this volume it is written that they ascended from Babylon according to the promise of Cyrus, with leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua, of the sons of Judah and Benjamin with the priests and Levites, all whose spirits God had stirred. It is also added of them that they were of the captivity which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried to Babylon. However, here under the leadership of Ezra there is no mention of Judah and Benjamin, nor of those carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, but only of the children of Israel, and of the priests and Levites who went up with him. Whence it seems likely that those who were called back to Jerusalem at that time were from Judah and Benjamin, who had been carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. But those who are now read to have been led back by Ezra were from the ten tribes, who were specially called Israel after the division; whom the kings of Assyria had long before the times of Nebuchadnezzar taken captive and made to dwell beyond the mountains of the Medes.

Thus, for the most part, two tribes returned home and laboriously restored the temple. But the ten tribes, who had less care for the temple and religion, neglected to return to their homeland though commanded by the king, because with the empire of the Chaldeans destroyed, they lived freely under the kings of Persia, who favored their people. Yet, when they learned that the temple had been rebuilt and that the envy of the Samaritans was curbed, some of them finally consented to return home; although many remained there, whose descendants are said to still be detained in those parts today, serving the Persian nation. Just as often mentioned, Zerubbabel and Joshua designate the Lord and Savior, who by his grace releases the captivity of the human race and builds his own house in us by sanctifying and possessing us; so also Ezra, both priest and swift scribe, plainly announces the same Lord, who did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matthew V). He could rightly be called a scribe of the law of God, or a swift scribe in the law of Moses, because he gave the law to Moses through an angel, he taught the holy prophets all truth by the grace of his Spirit, and as soon as he touched

the minds of all the elect with his love, he kindled them to understand and do the will of God the Father. Hence, promising the grace of the New Testament, the prophet said:

"And this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord; "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts" (Jeremiah XXXI, Hebrews XV). The psalmist beautifully remembers this scribe, saying: "My tongue is the pen of a swift-writing scribe" (Psalm XLIV). For the tongue of the prophet was the pen of a swift scribe; because what the Lord inwardly taught him by illuminating him without any delay, he himself declared outwardly to men in time by his tongue's service. Ezra, whose name means helper, openly demonstrates this. He is indeed the one through whom alone the faithful people are usually introduced to be liberated from tribulations, and as if from Babylonian captivity to the freedom of Jerusalem, from the confusion of vices to the peace and serenity of virtues, advancing by the steps of merits. In the second psalm of Ascents (Anabathmon), he shouts to all who aim for the highest, showing by whom they should aim and reach: "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm CXX). Ezra also held this figure in his actions, when he led a considerable part of the people back from captivity to Jerusalem, and brought money and sacred vessels to the glory of his temple, purging the people from foreign wives with pontifical authority. All these things also indicate what has been or will be done by the Lord in the holy Church, which is clear to an educated reader;

but we too will strive to make it apparent even to simpler people. For just as Ezra ascended from Babylon, and with him the children of Israel, and the sons of priests and Levites; this signifies the pious dispensation of our Redeemer, who appearing in the flesh entered the confusion of this world, himself free from the confusion of vices, to lead us back with him, freed from all confusion, to the tranquility of heavenly peace; whose pledge of eternal peace we have received in the present Church, as the Lord says: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you" (John XIV); that is, I leave temporary peace to those traveling on earth, I give eternal peace to those reaching the heavenly homeland. It is also blessed that he began to ascend from Babylon in the first month, and came to Jerusalem in the fifth month with the sons of the captivity whom he led. For the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem is completed in four months; because through the four books of the

holy Gospel, we learn the faith and sacraments of truth, by which we ought to ascend from the captivity of the ancient enemy, led by the Lord, to the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. In the same four books are contained the commandments of works, by whose as it were daily steps we can reach the promised heights.

Nor was it without the figure of mystery that on the first day of the month he began to ascend from Babylon, and again on the first day of the month he came to Jerusalem; for the beginning of the month, in which the moon is believed to borrow new light from the sun, designates the new beginning of heavenly grace. And fittingly Ezra ascended from Babylon on the first day of the first month with those he saved from captivity; because the beginning of a holy way of life, in which we renounce Satan and his kingdom, is brought about in us by the illumination of divine grace. Also, he came to Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for this too is not done by the freedom of our will, but by the inspiration of heavenly light, that, having heard the oracles of the Gospel, we are incorporated into the members of the holy Church. A noble and healthy custom in the Church, grown from the teaching of the fathers, is that those who are catechized should have the sacrament of the four Gospels explained to them, and their beginnings be recited. Again on the first day of the fifth month, he came with those who had been freed from their enemies, to Jerusalem;

because when we enter the heavenly kingdom, having completed the precepts of the four holy Gospels, we celebrate as it were the new beginning of the month, because we already see the joys of the new light in the Sun of righteousness, and after the four months of luminous action, as a pilgrim in the way of life, we celebrate the fifth month of perpetual reward in the light of the heavenly homeland.

Ezra 7:9

And on the first day of the fifth month, he came to Jerusalem, etc. That is to say, he was confirmed by divine grace and protection, because he was completing a successful journey. Likewise, in the mystical sense, the mediator of God and men, according to the good hand of his God upon him, that is, according to the disposition of divine power, which was in him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (II Cor. V). Indeed, that hand was over him, according to the fact that he was made man. Hence he said: The Father is greater than I (John XIV). For greater is the divinity, not only

of the Father but also of Christ Himself, and of the Holy Spirit, which is one. By that same hand of divine power, exalted in passion, he ascended to the walls of the heavenly city, showing this ascent path to his followers who humbly follow him.

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had prepared his heart, etc. Oh, what great virtue of this saying, what sublimity of merit, for a man to prepare his heart for the obedience of the divine will, and to be able to say: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; I will sing, and I will chant a psalm to the Lord" (Psalm LVI)! That is, I will exult in the Lord with my whole soul, and I will accomplish in the execution of works what has been commanded by Him. Therefore, he prepared his heart to investigate and rewrite the law of the Lord, which the devouring flame had consumed. He also prepared so that he himself might first fulfill this by doing, and thus open his mouth to teach others. This can similarly be understood of the Lord Jesus; for He prepared His heart to investigate the law of the Lord, as He divinely provided for Himself a man He would take up, who would not only be without sin but also full of grace and truth, because with no law of sin conflicting in Him, He would keep the law of God without any contradiction of mind or flesh. Hence, He says in the Psalm: "In the volume of the book it is written of me: I desired to do your will, O my God, and your law is in the midst of my heart" (Psalm XXXIX).

Likewise, the Lord investigated the law of God, because, setting aside the traditions of the Pharisees, He taught how the Holy Scripture was to be understood mystically, what spiritual secrets were hidden under the cover of the letter; because He showed that the decrees of the Gospel, which He brought to the world, were more perfect, more acceptable to God the Father, than those He had previously sent through Moses. Hence, He Himself says: "You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy': but I say to you, love your enemies; and so forth.

Ezra 7:11

This is a copy of the letter of the edict, etc. Artaxerxes, who with the most devoted mind venerates the temple and the priests of God according to his ability, and offers prompt service to him, indicates the Christian princes, just as his predecessor Darius did. And it is not surprising if we say that the successors of Cyrus, who built the temple of the Lord and the city, who loved

and helped his servants and law, bear the figure of the kings of Christians, since the Lord himself through the prophet said that Cyrus comes as a figure of his son, and deigned to honor him with that name, saying: This says the Lord to my Christ Cyrus (Isa. XLV); and the rest which we have more fully set forth above about him. [Ezra 7:12] -- King of kings Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest, etc. He names him the most learned scribe of the law of the God of heaven, because even to the king himself the fame of divine virtue had reached, through which he had renewed the Law, burned by the Chaldeans, in the same words as before, although in a different character of letters. He also names the God of heaven, to distinguish from those whom he knew that the foolish madness of wretches had instituted among dead men, or certainly some. I beseech, however, that it may not be burdensome to the reader to briefly run through the text of the letter, and to see how much it fits the persons of Christian kings.

Ezra 7:13

From me a decree has been made, etc. He grants permission to all who wish to go to Jerusalem, he compels no one to go: and Christian princes, compelling no one, lest the will of faith be uncertain or doubtful, permit all who are pleased from their kingdom to worship Christ.

Ezra 7:14

For you have been sent from the presence of the king and his seven advisors, etc. And in the book of Esther, we read that it was the custom of the Persian kings to use the counsel of seven wise men in all matters to be done or decided. The faithful use seven advisors when in all things they do, they follow the precepts and decrees of the divine Scriptures. Of which the Psalmist says: The words of the Lord are pure words, silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times (Psal. XI). This is perfected by the holy sevenfold illumination of the Spirit. But if anyone finds it incongruent that something good could be figured in the holy Church from the advisors of that Persian king by whom the people and prophet of the Lord are released from captivity and sent back to their homeland, let them read the small works of the Fathers, who figuratively said that the holy actions of our Redeemer were designed through the actions or cases of reprobate kings Saul and Jeconiah: namely, Saul anointed as king but killed due to his own crimes, interpreted as the innocent death of King Christ: and Jeconiah's translation from Judah to Bethlehem, which he

held due to his sins, relating typologically to the grace of our Redeemer, by which He deemed it worthy to migrate for the salvation of nations around the world, leaving the Jews behind due to their perfidy.

They taught that the actions or deeds of Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar should be understood typologically in relation to the enemies of the Church. For example, Pharaoh commanded the male infants of God's people to be killed in the river, but to spare the females; because the devil desires to extinguish strength in us and nurture what is frail and weak. Likewise, Nebuchadnezzar ordered all the peoples subject to him to bow down and worship his statue upon hearing the sound of symphony and music. And the devil strives to bend the hearts of mankind away from righteousness through the allure of earthly pomp and toward following desire, which is the servitude of idols, deceiving their hearts. Therefore, if the evil deeds of the reprobate happened as a figure not only of evil but also of good, why could not the good deeds or words of the good, contained in the prophetic volume, prefigure the good acts of their followers? Also, let us consider the works of Saint Augustine, who said that even the seven men of one woman who died without children, about whom the Sadducees, denying the resurrection, tempted the Lord, have a certain figure of ecclesiastical sacrament, as well as the woman, her sterility, and death. He also taught that the deaths of those same men were figures of memorable things since neither the Lord Himself nor any of the evangelists narrated this story from their own perspective;

but the evangelists included in their writings what the impious had spoken against the Lord with blasphemous lips because of the most sacred response of the Lord. Thus, Ezra is sent from the presence of the king and his seven advisors to visit Judea and Jerusalem. And since the leaders of the world have been converted to faith and are also strengthened by the exhortations of the holy Scriptures, they desire Christ the Lord to come to save His Church and to gather from the nations through daily aid, which the name Ezra signifies, shouting earnestly: O Lord God of hosts, come back, look down from heaven, and see and visit this vine (Psal. LXXIX). That You may visit, he says, Judea and Jerusalem in the law of Your God, which is in your hand. For the law of God was in Ezra's hand; since he not only preached it with his tongue but fulfilled it in action. Likewise, our Lord, appearing in the flesh, had the law in His hand, not only because He followed the precepts of the law in all things but also because He had the decrees of the law in

power; and truly He once established it through Moses as He willed, and now He changes it as He wills and transfers it to more perfect things. Hence He said: You have heard that it was said to the ancients, but I say to you.

And it is remarkable how the word, which the prophets used, is found in the letter of Artaxerxes, stating that the law of God is in the hand of His servant. For it is written: The word of the Lord came through the hand of Haggai the prophet; and the Lord did what He spoke through the hand of His servant Elijah; and, The Lord bore witness in Israel and in Judah through the hand of all the prophets (Haggai I). For indeed the prophets not only preached the things of God by speaking but also by acting.

Ezra 7:15

And to bring silver and gold, etc. Note the faith and wisdom of the king and his counselors, who understood that the gifts they wished to offer to the Lord should be offered through him who had the law of God in his hand, that is, fulfilled it in deeds. It is wondrous to say, how faithfully and learnedly the king declares that he has a tabernacle in Jerusalem, whom he previously called the God of heaven; for we are accustomed to use a tabernacle on a journey, and the God of heaven has a tabernacle in Jerusalem; because he who has an eternal seat in the heavens deigns to dwell for a time with the saints who are on pilgrimage in this Church. Hence that passage of Revelation, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21). Indeed, because the blessed Ezra represented not only the preachers of the holy Church, among whom he was one, but also the Lord Savior, to whose members he belonged, it is as if we offer our gifts through him, whose help we need in all things, so that the good works we do may be acceptable to God the Father. For no one, he says, comes to the Father except through me (John 6). And concerning him, John says, "He is the atonement for our sins" (1 John 2).

Ezra 7:19

And all the silver and gold whatsoever you find, etc. The story is clear, that for this reason the king and his counselors gave money to Ezra to be carried to the temple of the Lord, and they also desired others to give, so that sacrifices, and offerings, and libations might be bought from this money, which would be offered upon the altar of God: and if any money remained, it would be distributed not otherwise than according to the will of God. And it should also be noted here, when he mentions the priests offering in the

house of their God, he clearly teaches that even if some of the priests and Levites had ascended to Jerusalem with Ezra, nevertheless some still remained in Babylon with the rest of their people. The allegorical sense is also clear, because the faithful desire their good works to shine in the holy Church for this reason, so that through these they may also merit to have a part with the saints, and others may be edified by their examples. For just as our sacrifices, libations, and offerings of silver and gold are made to offer to the Lord, so too, by the shining example of our works, our neighbors are converted to the duty of piety, by which they too, living well, may be consecrated to the Lord. But if any silver and gold were left over, from which offerings could not be bought, this too was ordered to be arranged according to the will and pleasure of God.

For there are certain magnificent virtues of the saints which cannot be shown to everyone as an example of work, but are only recited to glorify the grace of God; as is the case where Daniel and Jeremiah prophesied as children, that John was not yet born, that Cornelius with his household, not yet baptized, received the Holy Spirit, and numerous miracles of the saints shine like silver and gold in the house of the Lord; yet from the same silver or gold, offerings to be placed upon the altar cannot be bought; because when we hear of such things, we ought indeed to marvel at them as divine, but we are not able to imitate them as if they were possible. Sacrifices, however, were properly called those which were offered from the fruits of the earth, such as bread, fine flour, ears of corn; libations, however, were those which were made from wine and liquid things.

Ezra 7:19

The vessels also which are given to you for the service of the house of your God, etc. Not only silver and gold of various weights, but also vessels are given to Ezra to be carried to Jerusalem. But our Lord in a figurative sense, namely Ezra, entrusted the vessels which are given to him by men, such as the vessel of election Paul, and of which he speaks, the vessels of mercy, he has delivered all in the sight of God the Father in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rom. IX). Regarding these vessels, he speaks in the Gospel: "Or how can anyone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Mark III). For the king of Babylon was strong, that is, the devil dominantly ruling over the wicked; but defeated and bound by the Lord, he lost the vessels, that is, the

hearts of the elect, which he unjustly possessed. Neither could he contradict the one who took these away and brought them back to the heavenly city, to which they originally belonged.

Ezra 7:21

And by me, I, King Artaxerxes, have ordained and decreed, etc. And Christian rulers command all who are subject to them to promptly give whatever the Lord and our high priest asks of them, without any delay or reservation, but swiftly fulfill the commands of the divine will. Let them give gold in the confession of true faith, wheat in the demonstration of good works, wine in the fervor of love, oil in the exhibition and cheerfulness of mercy. And all these are commanded to be given to the great priest and the scribe of the law of the God of heaven under a number of one hundred; that is, to the Lord Jesus Christ, who bringing the heavenly mandates from the Father to us, has promised rewards in the Father's house to those who follow heavenly pursuits; and we ought to insist on no other actions than those of good works rewarded by the grace of heaven. For the number one hundred, which in the counting of fingers moves from the left to the right hand, usually signifies the joys that are in the right hand, that is, in eternal life. Moreover, it is said that the talent has a measure of three kinds: the least being fifty pounds; the medium seventy-two pounds; the highest one hundred twenty pounds; a chorus being thirty measures, and a bath, which is also an ephah, being a tenth part of a chorus, that is, three measures.

Ezra 7:22

But salt without measure. Everything that pertains to the rite, etc. It is agreed by all that salt signifies wisdom, whence in common speech dull-witted people are called tasteless; but it matters what kind of salt it is. For the Lord also commanded that in every sacrifice salt be offered (Levit. II), and in the Gospel He says: Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another (Mark IX). Nor is it in vain that David is read to have struck the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, because surely we are commanded to offer the salt of heavenly wisdom, by which catechumens are initiated, in all our works' sacrifices. David indeed strikes the Salt Pans of the valleys with their inhabitants, as Christ destroys weak and worldly wisdom along with its followers. Hence it is well ordered now that salt be given diligently without measure in the house of the God of heaven; because it is surely necessary that whatever wis-

dom anyone has, they should exhibit it all in service to their Creator. And it is to be recalled that the Samaritans, writing to another Artaxerxes, were said to have mentioned the salt they had eaten in the palace, and therefore could not tolerate that the temple and the city of God be built against his interests. But now here Artaxerxes commands all the guardians of the public treasury, among other donations, to give their salt to the house of the God of heaven as much as is needed. For it is recognized there that heretics sometimes are emboldened to attack the Church with the deceitful taste of human wisdom. But here it is implied that those converted to the faith at the same time as wisdom often assist that very faith through the discipline of the same secular wisdom, as they more powerfully conquer its adversaries through it.

Ezra 7:24

And we make known to you concerning all the priests, etc. This privilege, by which priests, Levites, and the other ministers of the house of God are rendered free from taxes, is clearly shown, in that the rest of the people of the children of Israel, upon arriving in the homeland, paid tribute to the king. This is known to be done by the king with well-considered provision, so that those who were always occupied in divine service might be free from their servitude; and those who possessed nothing of their own on earth, but lived from the tithes of the people, from these no one should demand the payment of tributes. From all these things, it is most clearly proven that the king not only loved, but also very well learned what the worship of divine service required.

Ezra 7:25

But you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God, etc. The king repeats the word he had spoken and confirms the truth he had recognized with a repeated statement. For previously, he had said that the law of that very God was in the hand of Ezra. Now, however, he says, the wisdom of his God is in his hand. Because, indeed, the wisdom is the law of God, as the Psalmist says: "The mouth of the righteous will meditate on wisdom, and his tongue will speak of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart" (Psalm 36). And the righteous has the law of God and wisdom in his hand, while in all that he does and speaks, he shows himself to be mindful of the divine will. Therefore, the sense of the letter is clear, and the spiritual understanding is clear, that evidently our Lord and Savior has the wisdom of God in his hand. For

He is the power of God and the wisdom of God, by whose sole authority it is to appoint judges and overseers of the Churches, who judge all things according to His will and preach His faith to the unlearned throughout the world. And everyone who despises the decrees of His law will be punished according to their own error, either by present punishment or future justice.

Therefore, Artaxerxes, writing to Ezra and expressing in writing the love he had for religious worship, clearly manifested what Christian kings, devoted in future times, would do concerning the faith of the truth. Hence, we have briefly taken care to recall his letter, leaving out certain parts, so that the reader might understand how much it concords with the deeds which Christian princes have done for the peace of the holy Church with the revealed grace of the Gospel. Indeed, we can figuratively refer the person of Ezra not only to the Lord Christ but also to any overseer or teacher of the Church; to whom often kings and princes have sent letters for the status of the faithful. And fittingly Ezra himself, to whom this letter was given, subsequently bursts forth in praise of God, saying:

Ezra 7:27

Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, etc. And who would doubt to confess His holy and mystical words, which the prophet, divinely inspired, recounts, by whom he also affirms the house of the Lord to be glorified?

CHAPTER 10

The number of those who went up with Ezra, and how they obtained the aid of the Lord for their journey by fasting and praying. [Ezra 7:28] -- And I, strengthened by the hand of the Lord my God, etc. He calls the hand of God the power of God, which works all things. Rightly does he gather those whom he will lead from Babylon to Jerusalem, who themselves are known to have the hand of God, by which they are strengthened. Because indeed, thus anyone becomes fit to bring others to God through his teaching, while first he himself is inwardly strengthened in his mind by God's grace against all things that impede the holy work. [Ezra 8:1] -- These are therefore the chiefs of the families, etc. Until the end of the genealogy, he carefully enumerates the chiefs who went up with him from Babylon and explains their genealogy. He also endeavors to add the number of those, which reaches one thousand four hundred and forty, so that he may thus suggest that the names of those who ascend from the confusion of this world are written in the book

of life of the Lamb. But also, each of the teachers, namely the chiefs of the families of God's people, receives eternal rewards to the extent of the number of souls they have brought to the Lord, according to that parable in the Gospel, where, with the good and prudent servant saying: Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds (Luke XIX), the master responds to him, saying: And you will be over ten cities; that is, you will appear more glorious in the heavenly kingdom from the lives of those whom you have taught.

Ezra 8:15

But I gathered them at the river that flows to Ahava. I do not remember reading this name of the place anywhere else. However, when it is later written, And I proclaimed there a fast by the river Ahava; and after some further writing, We set out from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month; it seems probable that Ahava is both a river and that another river flows into it, at the confluence of which Ezra gathered those who went up with him. Moreover, Josephus substitutes the Euphrates for this name. Whence Ahava can not incongruously be understood as some tributary of the river Euphrates. [Ezra 8:15] -- And we stayed there three days, etc. Ezra acted prudently, so that before beginning such a journey, he carefully ensured he had a supply of ministers of the house of God, through whom, upon arriving in Jerusalem, he could complete what was necessary for the temple's use.

Ezra 8:17

And I sent them to Iddo, etc. The Caspian Sea, as Orosius writes, rises from the northern region of the ocean, whose shores and deserted places around the ocean are uninhabited and uncultivated. From there, it extends southwards through long narrow passages, until, expanded over great distances, it is bordered by the roots of Mount Caucasus. It has many Hyrcanian and Scythian tribes from the east to the ocean, wandering widely due to the unfruitful spread of the lands. To the west, it has many tribes. But in general, the region far beyond Albania under the Caspian Sea and mountain is called by the name of the Amazons. It should be noted here that while historians write "Caspium," Ezra in this passage calls it "Casphiae." For the Hebrews, not having the letter P, use the letter Ph in Greek or barbarian names, such as Phetrus, Philatus. Therefore, it is also proven that the sons of Israel reached the places of Casphiae through the captivity by the Assyrians or

Chaldeans, as Ezra sends there to bring ministers of the house of the Lord, namely Levites and Nethinim, whom Josephus calls sacred servants. It should be noted that they lived very freely in peace, even though they were among foreigners, who immediately at the command or request of Ezra could send such a large group of soldiers. For two hundred and fifty-eight chosen men were on that expedition, as their following catalog shows; to which Ezra being added, it is found that his army almost had the total of seventeen hundred men.

Ezra 8:21

And I proclaimed there a fast, etc. An example of fasting and praying, when we want to commence something of great virtue: and because the faithful hope in the Lord never fails, nor can it happen that we do not obtain what we justly seek from a pious and just helper through abstinence and prayers with faith. But we must carefully observe that fasting is prescribed first, and thus prayer is subsequently instructed. For first he says, And I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before the Lord. And then he adds: And we asked for a straight way for us and our children, etc., up to the conclusion of the sentence: But we fasted, and we prayed to our Lord for this, and it turned out well for us. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that whoever enters to beseech the mercy of the Lord should first live more abstinently, to show themselves worthy to be heard; and thus, praying to the Lord, they should not doubt that what they request will turn out well for them.

CHAPTER 11

Ezra weighed out the offerings of the king and his counselors, to be carried to Jerusalem by the chief priests, who upon arrival there would offer burnt offerings to the Lord. [Ezra 8:24] -- And I separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, etc. It has been frequently said that the silver and gold and vessels sent from Babylon to Jerusalem signify souls, which are converted to the Lord from the confusion and errors of this world. Hence, Ezra appropriately entrusts such vessels to the priests, who are to carry them to Jerusalem; for it is necessary that through the hands of the priests, those who desire to reach the companionship of the holy Church are washed in baptism and consecrated to the Lord. Likewise, those who have separated themselves from the society of the Church through sin, and have fallen into the service of the devil, into the captivity of the Babylonian king by persevering in sins, must

be reconciled to the holy Church through repentance by the ministry of the priests. And fittingly, there are twelve priests to whom this duty is assigned, on account of the twelve apostles, through whose teaching the Church was initially founded throughout the world, and who continue to build it up through their successors until the end of the age. To whom applies the statement that Ezra made to those same priests:

Ezra 8:28

You are holy to the Lord, and the vessels are holy, etc. For it is fitting that the teachers of the Church should never forget the holiness by which they themselves are consecrated to the Lord through the Holy Spirit, in the day of redemption, for which they also prepare their hearers to receive; so that those who have already been offered to the Lord through the rudiments of faith are further confirmed by the examples and admonitions of those who have preceded them in faith, and become worthy of entrance into the heavenly city. They must be watchful in all things and ensure that none of the souls, namely the vessels of the Lord, entrusted to them is lost, but that they bring them in their entirety to the gates of the holy city.

Ezra 8:29

Be watchful and guard, until you weigh, etc. We weigh the silver and gold, and the vessels which we received from Ezra, before the leaders of the priests and Levites, and the heads of the families of Israel in Jerusalem, and into the treasury of the house of the Lord, when by teaching and instructing those whom the divine order has entrusted to us, we present them such that they may be found blameless and fit for the treasury of the heavenly court, that is, the seats of internal peace and light; and this not by the judgment of any men who may easily be deceived, but by the scrutiny of the blessed apostles, and other exalted men, who are with the Lord and are to judge our actions. These are indeed rightly understood to be the leaders of the priests and Levites, and the heads of the families of Israel, that is, the men or souls who see God. Concerning whom the Psalmist says to the Lord: "You will appoint them leaders over all the earth" (Psalm 45). And about whom Solomon, in the praises of the Church, says: "Her husband is noble at the gates, when he sits with the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31). At the gates, he speaks, in the context of the final examination.

Ezra 8:31

We therefore moved from the river Ahava on the twelfth, and all the rest full of mysteries. For it is read above that on the first day of the first month they began to go up from Babylon; and now it is said that on the twelfth day of the same month they moved from the river Ahava. Therefore, on the first day of the month, they went out from the gates of Babylon, but until the twelfth day, they waited by the mentioned river until they called Levites and Nathinneos from the region of Caspia to themselves and commended themselves to the Lord more diligently through fasting and praying due to the dangers of the long journey. So, when we teach the new people of the Church to renounce the devil and believe and confess the true God, it is as if we depart from Babylon at the beginning of the first month with money to be consecrated to the Lord; because we show them the beginning of a new conversation, which leads those who are snatched from the devil to the heavenly kingdom. Hence, the same month is usually called the month of new or new fruits in the Holy Scripture. For in the same month, under the same signification of new conversation, the fathers were brought out of Egypt by Moses.

But when we give the symbol of faith to these same listeners of the new life, which was arranged by the twelve apostles and is comprehended by as many sentences, it is as if we stay twelve days in the first resting place; and so, we undertake the journey begun to the promised land, which by the acceptance of the knowledge of faith, we show them that a path of virtues must be entered upon to reach life. In these days, Ezra was occupied with fasting, prayers, and gathering Levites and Nathinneos with the children of the migration, because it is necessary that when we propose to acquire new people for faith, then we ourselves must especially give our attention to diligence in virtues, by which we commend ourselves more familiarly to the Lord, and offer an example of good action to those we instruct: we also call in a religious cohort of brethren to assist us, so that helped by them, we may more effectively transfer the souls of the faithful to the fellowship of the elect and to the summit of a more perfect life, as holy vessels to the temple of the Lord. It is aptly subjoined that those who came to Jerusalem from Babylon stayed there for three days, and then the silver, gold, and vessels they had brought were offered and weighed in the house of the Lord. Indeed, the three days of stay in Jerusalem represent the virtues that should be held by all the faithful, faith, hope, and charity.

Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to show these virtues first in themselves, and then to offer those they have taught and instructed in these same virtues to be tested by the foremost fathers in Christ. For when the holy Church finds those we catechize to be proven in faith and action, as the vessels we offer in the temple, by the hands of the priests, it will find them to be of pure metal and perfect weight. This is also done daily in this Church through the chosen ones in the examination of the life of believers, and in the heavenly Jerusalem, it is more perfectly fulfilled in those who have merited to enter it, as we have said above. In this life, holy teachers, staying as it were for three days in Jerusalem, on the fourth day offer the silver and gold they have brought to be weighed by the priests, when they show themselves to be strong in faith, sublime in hope, fervent in love, and also demonstrate that their listeners shine like tested silver by the confession of true faith, gleam like pure gold through the purity of inviolate sense, and excel like vessels consecrated to God by accepting spiritual gifts. In the heavenly homeland, these same teachers first receive the grace of reward for their faith, hope, and love, and then also for those they have taught, as they are honored more for the precious and worthy vessels they have brought, as after the joy of a three-day stay in Jerusalem.

But there is a difference between the vessels that Ezra offers with the priests in Jerusalem and those that above Zerubbabel and Joshua are said to have offered; because those were transported from the temple of the Lord to Babylon and afterward brought back to Jerusalem; but these were made in Babylon itself, but in devotion were sent to Jerusalem by the king or princes of Persia, or even by the people of Israel who lived in those parts. Therefore, those vessels signify those who, after receiving the knowledge and sacraments of faith, and after beginning virtuous works, are deceived by the ancient enemy and taken into the confusion of errors; but by the mercy of Christ's grace, they are called back to salvation. However, these signify those who were born subject to the death of the first transgression by sin, but through the washing of regeneration by the ministry of priests, they were cleansed and gathered as children of the holy Church. Those represent penitents from their errors, these persevering nations in the beginning virtue. Concerning which it is well subjoined:

Ezra 8:34

And every weight was recorded in that time. For the priests in the temple record all the weight of silver and gold, and of the vessels offered to the Lord, just as diligent teachers examine the lives of those under them, and discern by careful inquiry how much each one has progressed in faith or work, and according to the measure of their capacity, they arrange each in the house of God by their fitting steps. But even if now the laziness of overseers lies dormant and either ignores the lives of those entrusted to them or pretends not to know them, the internal judge is present, who keeps intact the number of believers and the weight of each one's soul in the balance of His examination, so that He may render to each according to his work. It can also be said; because when holy preachers reach the heavenly Jerusalem with those whom they have instructed, all the weight of their good action is recorded at that time in the book of life and they are rewarded in heaven with deserving retribution.

Ezra 8:35

But also those who came from the captivity, the sons of the exile, etc. A great devotion and religiosity is shown by those who, when they came from captivity, arriving at the temple and altar of the Lord, first of all offered burnt offerings, not only for themselves but also for all Israel, that is, both for those who had already returned home and for those who were still enduring exile from their homeland, so that the mercy of their creator might protect them all. The spiritual meaning is also evident, that those who truly and perfectly escaped the captivity of the ancient enemy, by sinning they were held, but by repenting they freed themselves, who with firm intention submit to divine service, who wholly detach themselves from low desires, and are inflamed by the flame of heavenly desire to ascend to the heights. This is to offer burnt offerings, that is, wholly burned sacrifices or victims to the Lord, thinking or doing nothing but His will in all things. It is also a sign of a perfect mind when someone sacrifices for all Israel, that is, for the general well-being of all the faithful, as if mindful of unity and brotherhood in all, he supplicates the heavenly piety.

Ezra 8:36

They also delivered the king's edicts to the satraps, etc. Another edition has: And they glorified the people and the house of God. Therefore, they uplifted

the people by making royal authority, with which Ezra was exalted, honorable to all. They also uplifted the house of God by adorning it more splendidly with vessels and gifts which the king, his counselors, and his princes sent to it; and by freeing its ministers and priests from tributes and taxes, except to the Lord alone. Mystically, however, the people and the temple of God held one and the same figure of the holy Church; which Ezra and the sons of the exile uplift, by bringing from Babylon the vessels sacred to God, when holy preachers, gathering to it, by the Lord's gift, the assemblies of believers, make it honorable to all even strangers and show it as awe-inspiring. Likewise, the same preachers, when they elevate those whom they instruct either by their examples in good conduct or by words towards the perception of the heavenly rewards, they now uplift the people and the house of God, because they indeed bring great joy both to those dwelling in the heavenly homeland and to those still journeying on earth.

CHAPTER 12

Ezra, hearing that the people of Israel had been defiled by foreign wives, takes on the habit of mourning and prays to the Lord for forgiveness of their guilt. (I Esdras IX.)

Ezra 9:1

After these things were completed, etc. The guilt of this transgression is also clearly described and reproved by prophetic authority in the prophet Malachi; because evidently those who returned from Babylonian captivity, both princes and priests and Levites, as well as the rest of the people, took wives of Israelite descent, who, suffering from the hardship and infirmity of long life, and the fragility of their sex, had been worn out and contracted weakness and deformity of body, and they married foreign women who were either flourishing in age, or more beautiful in body, or daughters of the powerful and rich. This should be understood not about those who were then with Ezra, but about those who had already ascended from captivity with Zerubbabel and Jeshua; for those who had come with Ezra could hardly have so quickly despised the doctrine of such a great leader and prelate, as it is understood, that after scarcely five months in their homeland, they had left their own wives and taken foreign wives; of whom these princes, who brought this crime to Ezra to be punished, were more likely to have been. Nor is it surprising that the people of Israel, along with priests and Levites, are said to

have committed this crime, since that transmigration was more from Judah and Benjamin than from the ten tribes which were called Israel.

For it should be known that when Israel, that is, the ten tribes, was taken into captivity, the traditional name was also indiscriminately applied to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, calling them Israel. Therefore, the people of Israel in this place is to be understood not in the distinction of Judah and the ten tribes of Benjamin, but in the general distinction of the peoples of the lands, understanding the people of God, who polluted the dignity of their heavenly name with the society of earthly ones. For also the same prophet Malachi, whom the Hebrews assert to be Ezra himself, recalls such transgression in his book of prophecy: "Judah has been unfaithful, an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, because Judah has desecrated the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and married the daughter of a foreign god. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob anyone who does this—an advocate or master and student—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty" (Malachi II). Where, referring to Judah, he clearly indicates that the people of the first transmigration were polluted by this crime. And when he adds, "May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob anyone who does this—an advocate or master and student," he taught that both the leaders and the people, polluted by this transgression, and if they do not correct it, should be eradicated from the fellowship of saints.

And when he added, "Even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty," he warns that they offer sacrifices to the Lord in vain, who do not fear to submit themselves to the devil by sinning. Among these, the admirable faith and excellent purpose of the people freed from captivity, who called other nations the peoples of the lands in distinction to themselves, should be noted, so that they clearly implied that they themselves, although born from the earth, believed they had their conversation not on earth, but in heaven, since they believed in the God of heaven above all other nations and hoped to obtain blessings from Him. From this, they rightly grieved that their sanctification was contaminated by people of the nations; and what is more serious, they confessed that their leaders, from whom they should have been corrected, were the first to err. It should be carefully noted, and taken as an example for conduct, that what the leaders sinned and made the people committed to them sin as well, other leaders who lived more

sanctly strive to correct. But because they cannot do it by themselves, they refer the cause to the pontiff, that is, their archbishop, by whose authority such a grave, multifaceted, and long-lasting sin would be expiated. No one doubts that foreign wives figuratively represent heresies and superstitious sects of philosophers.

When these are incautiously admitted into the Church, they not only contaminate the holy seed of Catholic truth and pure action with their errors, but also all the sins with which the Gentiles are accustomed to be polluted, while Christians are not ashamed to imitate them, become like foreign wives, degenerating from the holy seed of the word of God, by which they were born, as the apostle James says: "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth" (James I); and as if they produce profane offspring from the daughters of foreigners, while following the attractions of those who go astray, they bring forth perverse acts into the knowledge of everyone.

Ezra 9:3

And when I had heard this word, I tore my garment, etc. Ezra reveals the deepest sorrow of his heart, he tore his clothing, plucked the hairs of his head and beard; he sits in mourning, so that by such dishonoring of his body and clothing, along with the sorrow of his face, he might more quickly rouse all hearts to repentance either for their own or their brothers' sins, because clothing is often used to signify our deeds, which either bring us to glory if clean, or to destruction if soiled, and do not commend themselves with the splendid love of the bridegroom. By the hairs of the head are meant thoughts, which arise from the hidden root of the heart, as if from the inner chambers of the brain. These, if upright, should be preserved: but if reproved, ought to be cut off. Hence, about Samuel, who was to be holy, his mother says: "And a razor shall not come upon his head" (cf. 1 Sam. 1:11). And to the apostles, the Lord says: "And not a hair of your head shall perish," because surely all the thoughts of the saints are worthy of eternal remembrance before the Lord. But truly, the sinner, that he may be cleansed from his iniquities, must cast away from himself reproveable thoughts, that is, the sources and incentives of evil deeds.

Hence, the leper in Leviticus, when he has received healing, among other ceremonies of purification, is also commanded to shave off all the hair of his body, so that being thus cleansed, he might be worthy to enter the camp (cf. Lev. 14). Because then we are perfectly cleansed from the foulness of vices

when we strive to expel not only harmful actions but also thoughts from ourselves. The beard too, which is a sign of male sex and age, is customarily taken to signify virtue. The high priest tore his cloak and tunic, to signify that the people he ruled had less perfect deeds, and whose deficiency needed to be mended through repentance and renewed in better behavior. He plucked the hairs of his head, so that he might signify to the same people that wicked thoughts must be uprooted from their hearts, and room given for useful ones to be born anew. He also plucked the hairs of his beard, so that even in the virtues they seemed to possess, they might be humbled, and reminded that these small or non-existent things were mixed with vices and not esteemed in the examination of the inner judge. He sat in mourning, to teach that through the lamentations of repentance, forgiveness for such a great offense ought to be sought. Nor is it to be wondered at if the actions of such a good leader soon bore great virtue among the subjects. Consider what follows:

Ezra 9:4

And all those who feared the Lord gathered to me, etc. O, what a great change of things! It was previously said that the treachery of princes and magistrates led many to luxury, and now with a good prince turned to lamentation, and indicating through his grief and tears what should be done by sinners, it is said that all those who feared the word of God, which threatens to punish transgressors, gathered to him. O, how much pious examples help good teachers! Ezras spoke nothing at all, but, having only heard of the crime, it is written that he was turned to tears and weeping, and drew the crowd of the faithful to him not by shouting, but by mourning. It is added:

Ezra 9:5

And in the evening sacrifice I rose from my affliction, etc. Ezra had prepared himself through the contrition of his heart and the affliction of his body, so that he might be made worthy to hear divine compassion, and thus he broke forth into the words of prayer. He bent his knees, spread his hands, and poured out prayers to the Lord at the time of the evening sacrifice; not doubting that this sacrifice would be more pleasing to God—because it was offered in a spirit of humility and a contrite soul—than if it had been offered with the flesh and blood of sheep. Symbolically, by bending his knees with his garment rent, spreading his hands to God, and pouring out prayers

and tears, he turned the minds of many to repentance, as it is written in what follows, showing the Lord Savior, who deigned to pray for our sins both before His passion and at the very time of His passion; and who, with His hands extended on the cross, willed the garment of His flesh to be torn and mortified with wounds for our restoration, so that He, as the Apostle says, who died for our sins, might rise for our justification (Rom. 4). This was suitably done at the time of the evening sacrifice, either because the Lord, at the end of the world, offered the sacrifice of His flesh and blood to the Father and commanded us to offer it in bread and wine; or because, with the completion of the legal sacrifice, He freed us by His passion and, separating us from the peoples of the earth, made us heavenly, and granted that we might cling to Him with pure heart and body. The prayer itself, by which he, though just, associated himself with the sinful people, saying:

Ezra 9:6

My God, I am confounded and ashamed, etc. It befits the humility of our Redeemer, who appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh to take away the sins of the world. Hence, even in the Psalms, which according to the testimony of the Gospel, are written about Him, He clearly calls the sins He took upon Himself as ours, saying: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Psalm 21:1). And adding: Far from my salvation are the words of my sins (Psalm 21:2). And again: O God, you know my foolishness, and my sins are not hidden from you (Psalm 69:5); not because He could have sins or foolishness in Himself, who, as the Apostle says, was made wisdom and justice and sanctification and redemption for us from God; but because, taking on the cause of those He came to save, He deigned to transfer upon Himself even those things that truly pertained to their frailty.

CHAPTER 13

While Ezra prays and weeps, the people also turn to repentance, and with unanimous counsel they separate from foreign wives. (1 Esdras 10) [Ezra 10:1] -- Therefore, as Ezra prayed and implored, etc. The effectiveness of Ezra's prayer, weeping, and lamentation is shown when immediately a very large assembly of both sexes and all ages is reported to have gathered to him. They wept, either those who had sinned, repenting of their guilt, or those who had remained chaste, grieving over the transgression and fall of their brothers. But whether these, or those, or both wept, they are all shown greatly

troubled by the prayers and lamentations of their priest, such that even women, along with children, are said to have been present. It can also be understood with this discretion, that first the innocent and upright gathered to him, when he said: And all who feared the word of the God of Israel assembled to me because of the unfaithfulness of the exiles (1 Esdras 9); now even those who had sinned with their wives and children gather to act in repentance.

Ezra 10:2

And Sechenias responded, etc. Josephus says that this Sechenias was the first of the Jerusalemites, and he himself, as befits a leader, with the greatest authority, soon helped Ezra's intention, both by confessing that the people had sinned together with him, and by advising that repentance should be made, by casting off foreign wives, along with the children born from them. [Ezra 10:2] -- And now if there is repentance in Israel concerning this, etc. He says, if the people perfectly repent of this transgression, first let us turn to the Lord and promise correction, and ask for pardon; then turning back to ourselves, let us root out and excise from us all the actions and roots of the crime committed, namely by casting out the wives along with all their unlawful offspring; for this is truly to repent, and to turn wholly inwardly in the heart to the Lord, and outwardly to cut off all matters of sin from their very origin. And what follows:

Ezra 10:4

Arise, it is your task to decide, etc. He very fittingly teaches how it should be conducted among the elders in council, so that each person may state what seems best according to their understanding, or what they have seemed to have understood; and yet leave the decision to him who has the power, ready to obey all that he has determined to be done according to the will and law of God. [Ezra 10:5] -- And Ezra rose before the house of God, etc. Eliasib was the high priest of that time, since after Jesus the son of Jozadak, his son Joachim, and after him his son Eliasib, carried out the rank of high priest, as both the subsequent sections of this sacred history and the Jewish history of Josephus prove.

Ezra 10:6

He did not eat bread, etc. Here they will have an excellent example not only of weeping and praying, but also of fasting for those who have sinned; and

since blessed are those who mourn, who weep for their own sins, because after receiving remission, they are comforted, how much more are they to be believed blessed, who also mourn for the errors of their brothers; and this to such an extent that they do not even want to touch bread and water, which is the nourishment of those who abstain, nor enter their house, or ascend to their bed, but rather prefer to pray throughout the night in the courtyards of the house of the Lord. For there was the house of the priest, which, as evening came, Ezra is reported to have entered. Finally, another Edition instead of Johanan's bedchamber, has Johanan's vestry, by which name Scripture often refers to the porticoes surrounding the temple on all sides, in which the ministers and guards of the same temple used to reside. They also mourn now for the transgression of those who came from captivity, who grieve for those who, having been recently rescued from sins through repentance, have again fallen into sin, by which they might be once more captured by the devil. Regarding whose seducers, as about parents of impure wives, the apostle Peter speaks: For, speaking arrogant words of vanity, they entice by lusts of the flesh, those who have barely escaped (II Peter II). And a little later he speaks about those who, as if ascending from captivity, are nonetheless captured by luxury: For if, he says, those who have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first (Ibid.).

Ezra 10:7

And a voice was sent into Judah and Jerusalem, etc. While it is said that the sons of Judah and Benjamin gathered, it is clearly evident that those who were defiled by the marriage of foreign wives were from the first migration, which was from these tribes, and through Jesus and Zerubbabel, they were recalled to the house, as we have previously mentioned.

Ezra 10:9

He is the new moon, on the twentieth day of the month, etc. The ninth month is the same which the Hebrews call Casleu, and the Romans call December, which comes in the middle of winter and is rainy and stormy, as anyone would know. Therefore, it should be noted more diligently that when the people gathered in mid-winter, they were reminded to tremble from sin and rains. For when they saw that rains were falling even more than

usual during the season of rains, they returned to their conscience and understood this to be due to their crimes and feared the celestial wrath that would come, being warned by the disturbance in the atmosphere. Therefore, they did not presume to conduct their affairs in private houses but gathered in the square of the house of the Lord, having assumed the habit of penitence and humility. This is mentioned for those who, although the elements are disturbed, and either by the noise of the winds, the flooding of the rains, the heaps of snow, the heat of drought, or even the ruin of men or animals increasing from above, and with the same Judge by clear signs threatening the force of His wrath, do not inquire at all about the correction of morals, by which they might please the Judge and evade the impending plague, but only diligently consider by what skill they might either avoid or overcome the adversities that rage outside due to sins.

But the people sat in the square of the house of God, that is, around the priest's court, which was surrounded everywhere by the house of God itself, as we taught above; having around it on every side in a square the spacious houses of the courts, in which the people could stand when necessary due to the rains and still see what was happening at the temple gates or around the temple. For the inner walls were made with columns up to the ground, and the outer walls were solid.

Ezra 10:10

And Ezra the priest arose and said, etc. This passage corresponds to what was previously mentioned: And Ezra arose before the house of God and went to the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib, and he went there, he did not eat bread, and he did not drink water; for he was mourning. Here the devotion of the high priest is to be noted, who, mourning, praying, and fasting for the transgression of the people, remained for three days in the courtyards of the temple; nor did he wish to enter his own house before he saw the people, having given their consent, wholly repentant and turned to the Lord with all their heart. The other leaders also seem to have shared in his devotion, as they are said to have gone to the houses of their fathers after the assembly was finished. For if the sacred history writer did not wish to signify this with that statement, what was the point of writing that, after the discussion was completed, Ezra and the heads of the families went from the courtyards of the temple to the houses of their fathers, when everyone would know that they would do this even without Scripture saying it? What was the

point of adding, And all by their names, when this too would be well-known to all, except that he wanted it to be understood that they were such whose names and deeds should rightfully be kept in memory and handed down to be known by posterity?

Ezra 10:16

And they sat on the first day of the tenth month, etc. Note that the number three is very commonly used in mystical figures. It was previously said that in three days all the sons of the diaspora should come to Jerusalem; and now in three months, namely the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, they are punished by foreign wives. For there are three virtues without which we cannot attain life: faith, hope, and charity. Coming into the world at the third time of the age, the Lord bestowed upon us the grace of the Gospel. For the first time was before the law with the patriarchs, the second with the prophets under the law, in the third He Himself came with grace; because redeeming us by His passion, He rose from the dead on the third day; through whose grace, both by being joined in fellowship with the holy Church and by being cleansed from the allurements of vices, aptly the sons of the diaspora, having to be corrected from their errors in three days, convened in Jerusalem, and in three months completed their task of correction. But also literally, the leaders of the families and the Levites worked opportunely and salutarily so that before the beginning of the first month all those who were stained by profane marriage were completed; that is, they were cleansed from such a crime, so that they could enter the first month, in which the Passover was to be held, pure, and could celebrate the Paschal feast pure, and could begin and continue the year pure. This is also suitable for us to imitate every year in Lent in preparation for Easter, so that as the solemnities of the Lord's Resurrection approach, we cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, so that we may also be able to be partakers of the Resurrection.

CHAPTER 14

Summary of those who cast out the foreign wives they had taken.

Ezra 10:18

And there were found among the sons of the priests those who had taken, etc. The Hebrews apply to this place the prophecy of Zechariah: And the Lord showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him (Zech. III). And a

little later: And Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And he said to him, See, I have taken away your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes. And put a clean turban on his head (Ibid.). They say rightly, Satan stood at his right hand to oppose him because the accusation was true, as he too, along with the others, had taken a foreign wife. But what is said, that Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, is interpreted in three ways: either because of the unlawful marriage, or because of the sins of the people, or because of the squalor of captivity. The angel, before whom Joshua stood, commanded the other angels in the person of the Lord to remove from him the filthy garments, which we mentioned. When they had completed the command, the same angel again speaks to Joshua: See, I have taken away your iniquity from you; these are the filthy garments; and I will clothe you with rich robes, that is, I have united to you an Israelite wife.

And what follows: Put a clean turban on his head; which many call a mitre; in this they understand the dignity of the priesthood, that with the stains of sins cleansed, he has a pure priesthood. But we should note that Ezra does not write that Jesus himself had taken a foreign wife, but says that some of his sons and brothers were defiled with this crime. Although the guilt of the sons reflects on the father, he cannot be perfectly righteous who neglected to correct his delinquent sons while he could. Whence some say that the aforesaid prophecy about Joshua is not to be referred to the son of Jozadak but to the Lord the Savior. Who, though He is the brightness of glory and the express image of God's substance, accepted filthy garments for a time out of compassion for our frailty, as Isaiah says: But He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins (Isa. LIII); to whom Satan stood at the right hand to oppose Him, always seeking to oppose His right hand and His virtues, as the sacred history of the Gospel reports. And the apostle says: He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb. IV). From whom the filthy garments are removed, and He is clothed with rich robes, when He cleansed us from our sins in His own blood, so that what the apostle says may be fulfilled: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Or He who had filthy garments in His passion, received rich robes in His resurrection, so that we may truly say of Him: Even though we have known

Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer (II Cor. V). He also received the turban on His head, for He was proven to have an eternal priesthood, according to the Psalmist: You are a priest forever (Ps. CIX). As for what Ezra says, that the brothers of Joshua the son of Jozadak also took foreign wives, we should understand them not as his carnal brothers, but as relatives according to the custom of Holy Scripture; nor could his brethren in the flesh have lived until then and devoted themselves to pleasure, since more than a hundred years had passed since Cyrus began to reign and sent Joshua and Zerubbabel with the captivity of Judah and Benjamin to rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. It follows:

Ezra 10:19

And they gave their hands, to cast out their wives, etc. First, they reject the illicit wives from themselves, and thus they offer a ram for themselves, so that, with the crime removed, they could approach the altar in purity. Indeed, it is difficult for the sacrifice of him to be accepted by God, who has not first endeavored to abandon the fault for which he offers, as Isaiah says: Cease to do evil, learn to do well (Is. 1). And because the sons or brothers of the high priest, who were the first to sin, rightly offer a ram from the flocks for the punishment of the crime, so that by such a sacrifice they might indicate that they were offering themselves, who appeared to be the teachers of the people and leaders like the leaders of following flocks, from their former life, to slaughter and purify themselves and offer worthy penance to God through a better life. It is noteworthy how skillfully the devil always battles against the faithful, never leaving them a secure time without combat. Behold, those who could not be overcome by adversities are overcome by blandishments; they overcame public enemies by building the temple of the Lord and dedicating it, but they were overcome by the love of foreign women, so they might not keep the temples of their hearts or bodies, dignified for the indwelling of God.

Of which matter the figure was completely fulfilled in our times, since we see the minds of the faithful much more dangerously tempted inwardly now, drawn and enticed by their own desires, than they were once outwardly, when the fierce adversary raged against their steadfastness with iron and fire. But the piety of the Lord will assist, which, just as it then granted them the virtue of patience against the open battles of the raging ones, so it may also grant us the caution to guard against the snares of creeping flattery. Finally,

through the diligent action of the industrious pontiff and all those who feared the Lord, those who had sinned were pricked in their hearts and cast away foreign wives; and thus, with the foulness of lust expelled, the honor of chastity returned, and in the city of the Lord, with the rubbish of vices cast out, the flowers and aromas of virtues were scattered. Up to this point are the words of Ezra, by which he described the deeds of Zorobabel and Jesus, and afterwards his own. And he himself also clearly held the type of the Lord Savior, in that he renewed the holy Scripture, recalled the people from captivity to Jerusalem, elevated the house of the Lord with greater gifts, appointed leaders beyond the river Euphrates, and corrected the sons of the captivity from foreign wives.

For the Lord restored the sacred Scripture, which the Scribes and Pharisees had either defiled with their traditions or taught was to be understood only according to the letter, showing it as full of spiritual sense, as it was written by Moses or the prophets. And He also had the New Testament described by the apostles or apostolic men, sending the Holy Spirit from above. He led the people out of Babylonian captivity and brought them to Jerusalem and the promised land liberated, because He, having suffered once on the cross, redeemed the world with His blood, and descending to the underworld, led out those He found there as true Israelites, that is, the elect, bringing them to the walls of the heavenly city, and granted them the joys of the promised inheritance of old. And daily, gathering the faithful from the turmoil of this world, He calls them to the fellowship of the holy Church and the everlasting kingdom. He adorned the temple with gold and silver and precious vessels, which either the people of Israel or the Persian princes had sent there through him, because He never stops adorning and glorifying the Church with the faith and works of those who believe from both peoples, namely, Jew and gentile.

He appointed leaders and overseers for all the people beyond the river, who knew and taught the law of God, because in the holy Church, which is also washed with the river of sacred baptism, and transcends the river of Babylon, that is, the turmoil of the fluctuating world by the sincerity of faith, He placed apostles, evangelists, pastors, and leaders. He corrected the sons of the captivity from foreign wives, because He forbade those who had renounced the world by profession of faith to serve again the enticements of the world. He also cast out the sons of such foreign mothers from the con-

gregation of the captivity, lest, when they grew up, they might follow the faithlessness of their mothers rather than the faith of their fathers, because our works, even those that seem good to men, if they are mixed with carnal delights, or have taken their origin from the contagion of human favor, He taught to reject, nor to deem them worthy of the fellowship of those who, perfectly renouncing the world, with full mind progress to heavenly things; who do not allow themselves to be enfeebled by temporal blandishments, but rather are exercised by adversities, and prepared for eternal rest with joy. But if anyone wishes to object, saying that it is not written that the sons of the adulteresses were cast out, but only the women themselves, it is though Shecaniah, suggesting and saying:

Let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and those born of them, was followed by the prompt, And Ezra rose and adjured the chiefs of the priests, Levites, and all Israel, to do according to this word, and they swore, he should understand that if they did not cast out those children born to them by foreign women, it was because they taught them to renounce maternal infidelity, and consecrated to the Lord through circumcision and a saving sacrifice, making them companions of their faith and chastity. It is clear indeed that the mystery of this matter is evident, because good works, which we do for the sake of temporal advantage, or favor, or delight, either are to be counted as among evil works, or must be distinguished by the lowest intention and done solely for heavenly recompense. For he who, for example, fasts, prays, gives alms with the intention that he may be seen and praised by men, such a one indeed, the offspring of a good deed, is as it were born of an unclean mother of a filthy conscience; hence it cannot have a part with the congregation of those who ascended from Babylon to Jerusalem, because a justice, or rather a simulation of justice, which has received its reward in the present, will lack future recompense in heaven.

But if such a worker of a deed, converting his mind to better things, begins to do for heavenly reward what he did for the desire for empty praise, consecrating his offspring, even if unworthily born, to the Lord, he makes it a citizen of Jerusalem, because he corrects a work badly begun from the time, making it worthy of eternal reward in heaven.

CHAPTER 15

Nehemiah, the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes, upon hearing of the affliction of those who were in Jerusalem, fasts, prays, and seeks mercy from the Lord. (Nehemiah I)

Nehemiah 1:1

The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah, etc. Nehemiah is interpreted in Latin as "the Lord comforts," or "comforter from the Lord"; who, when he had renewed the walls of Jerusalem and freed the people of God from the insults of their enemies, elevated observance of the divine law; it is evident that in both name and deed and person he fittingly designates the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who declares himself sent for the comfort of the poor in spirit, when about to ascend to heaven, he says to his disciples: I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that is, consoler (John 14). The Psalmist shows that it is He who builds up the city of God, namely the holy Church, and comforts the mourners when he says: The Lord builds up Jerusalem, and gathers the dispersed of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted (Psalm 147), etc. The figure of Nehemiah also suits the holy preachers, through whose ministry heavenly consolation is conferred upon us, while, after the fall into sin, they promise penitent ones hope of divine pardon and propitiation, as they rebuild the walls of Jerusalem destroyed by enemies. The month of Chislev is the same we call December, and is the ninth month among the Hebrews, the last month of the year with us; whose name, interpreted in Latin "his hope," most clearly matches the desires of him who directed his mind to raising up the ruins of the holy city.

For the first foundation of good action is that we have undoubted hope of the Lord's assistance in accomplishing what we desire. It is the same month in which our Lord was born in the flesh, beautifully prefiguring long beforehand by its name that in it the true Nehemiah, that is the comforter from God the Father, so long hoped for by the chosen, would come into the world for the building of the holy Church. But that Nehemiah writes that he was in the citadel of Susa when men came who reported about Jerusalem. Susa is the metropolis of the kingdom of the Persians, as we read in the history of Esther (Esther 1); which Nehemiah calls a citadel, as does the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8); not because the city is a citadel, but because it is built with such strength that it seems to be one. Susa is interpreted as “horsemanship” or

"returning", a name suitably adapted to the fortification of the faithful minds of those especially concerned with the captivity of Jerusalem, that is, the salvation of those who, once snatched from the Church by the devil's snares, have now by penance been brought back to the Church through the grace of God. Such are in the returning citadel, that is, in the strength of a mind called back from weak delights to the desire for the heavenly homeland, from which they fell in the first parent. Such are in the strong host of holy hearts, who bear God as rider. As the prophet says:

Riding upon your horses, and your ridership is salvation. The Lord indeed ascends upon his horses when he enlightens the hearts of preachers which he governs with the grace of his piety; and his ridership is salvation, because he leads to eternal salvation those whom he governs, and he makes others too, through them, who are equally governed, partakers of the same eternal salvation. Therefore, Nehemiah inquiring about those who had remained from the captivity of Jerusalem, let us see what follows:

Nehemiah 1:3

And they said to me: Those who remained and were left, etc. The sense of the letter is clear, because those who had remained from captivity, although they seemed to live in peace with the king of Persia being their friend, whom he had also sent with letters much earlier, who had power in the whole region beyond the river; nevertheless, they were in great affliction of mind, because their enemies reproached them that the holy city still remained in ruins. But now also in the holy Church, it is justly afflicted, and pricked with salutary sadness, they who, themselves repenting from past crimes, consider that their neighbors still lie under vices, so that through the negligence of those who could have benefited many of the corrected, the devil has a free entrance into the Church as if through the walls of a destroyed city. This is all the more necessary to be lamented, if even those who ought to have benefited others by teaching or example, wrongly living, show themselves as an example over destruction to those who see them. For this is what it means for the gates of Jerusalem to be burned with hostile flames, those who ought to have introduced the worthy into the company of the elect by living and teaching well, and kept away the unworthy, to perish by the fire of avarice, lust, pride, contention, envy, and other vices which the malignant enemy is accustomed to incite. But what seems to us to be done about these things, or what ought to be done, is shown when it is immediately added:

Nehemiah 1:4

And when I heard such words, I sat and wept, etc., up to And direct your servant, etc. For if a holy man, hearing the buildings of stones and wood destroyed, rightly mourned, fasted, and prayed, and for a long time sat in sadness; how much more in the destruction and ruin of souls, which is committed through sin, should continuous mourning, tears, and prayers be insisted upon? So that, with the Lord pitying, those who lay filthy in the longlasting filth of vices, as a reproach against religion, with the enemy triumphing, may be raised to their former health.

CHAPTER 16

Nehemiah, having received permission and letters from the king, came to Jerusalem to build the city; from this year are calculated the seventy weeks of years which the angel foretold to Daniel, and they reach to the time of the Lord's passion. (II Esdras II.) [Nehemiah 2:1] -- Now it happened in the month of Nisan, etc. Nisan is the first month of the year according to the Hebrews, in which they always used to celebrate Passover, which we call April. Therefore, what was said above, that he mourned, fasted, and prayed for many days, it is evident indeed that for four continuous months, namely the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, he devoted himself to this most sacred dedication, awaiting the opportune time in which he could express his desire to the king. And indeed, he was the chief cupbearer, he used to hand the cup to the king, performing the duty of joy outwardly, but inwardly he was weighed down with severe sadness, because he remembered the holy city as destroyed and the people of God given over to reproach and contempt by the enemies of God. Hence, with those like him, he declares speaking in the Psalm: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion" (Psalm 136).

Nehemiah 2:2

And the king said to me: "Why is your face sad? etc. Just as we have clearly recognized, with Isaiah teaching, that Cyrus, the first king of the Persians, holds the figure of the Lord and Savior because he released the people of God from captivity and commanded the temple to be rebuilt; likewise, we can rightly understand his successor in the same empire, Artaxerxes, who commanded with the same devotion that the city of Jerusalem be rebuilt, as a type of the Lord. The Lord constructs for himself a city from living stones,

that is, one church from all the elect, through the office of preachers. Therefore Artaxerxes is well interpreted as testing the light with silence. For the Lord is the light of life, who tests the hearts of His faithful with silence, sometimes enlightening them with the sweetness of heavenly grace, sometimes obscuring them with the hardships of the present life, so that, educated by temporal adversities, they may more fervently desire eternal goods. This year is memorable, in which it was permitted to build Jerusalem, and it is already prefigured in the mystic writings of the prophet Daniel, with the angel saying to him that seventy weeks have been shortened over his people and over his holy city. And shortly after: From the going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. And shortly after:

He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. These weeks, therefore, begin from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when he gave permission for the rebuilding of Jerusalem; at which time, as Julius Africanus writes, the years of the Persian reign were one hundred and fifteen, and the same number of years remained incomplete until Alexander the Great, when he killed Darius; but it was the one hundred and eighty-fifth year of the captivity of Jerusalem; and they reach up to the times of the Lord's passion, by which the end was put to legal sacrifices and offerings. Indeed, each of these weeks has seven years, that is, four hundred and ninety years according to the lunar course; only in such a way that each one, in a new and unusual manner, has no more than twelve lunar months. Hence, the angel carefully says that seventy weeks are not counted but shortened over his people, which are solar years 475. Concerning this entire prophecy, I have taken care to discuss it as fully as I could in the book of Times.

Nehemiah 2:10

And Sanballat the Horonite, etc., heard. And the heretics are grieved, and all the enemies of the Church are saddened whenever they see any elected persons working for the sake of the Catholic faith or for the correction of customs, by which the walls of the Church are to be renewed. Indeed, the diversity of souls and matters is to be noted, for it was said above that those who remained from captivity in Judea were in great affliction and reproach; but also Nehemiah led a long fast with weeping and prayers because the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and its gates were burned with fire. And

now, on the contrary, the enemies of that same holy city are in great affliction and are grieved because its buildings are to be restored, and at the same time, the citizens understand that they are to be lifted from the insults of their enemies. From this, it is to be gathered that even in this life, the sentence of the Lord can be fulfilled; He who said: Amen, amen, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy (John 16). For as the world that rejoiced is weeping, the sorrow of the righteous will be turned into joy when the holy affairs of the Church are seen to grow, and those who had strayed by sinning are recognized to return to it by repenting.

CHAPTER 17

Nehemiah, coming to Jerusalem, observes the ruined state of the walls by night, and in the morning, revealing the purpose of his journey, strengthens the heart and hands of the people to rebuild. [Nehemiah 2:11] -- "And I came to Jerusalem and was there three days," etc. He wanders through various parts of the destroyed city, carefully scrutinizing each, and considers anxiously how they ought to be repaired. Thus it is with spiritual teachers, often rising at night and by diligent investigation examining the condition of the holy Church while others are resting; so that they may vigilantly inquire how those things which are defiled or ruined by the wars of vices may be corrected and raised by castigating. But the wall of Jerusalem is laid waste, and the conduct of the faithful is soiled by earthly and low affections; the gates are consumed by fire, when even those who ought to open the way of life to others through teaching, abandoning the office of truth, become equally torpid with common inertia, and serve temporal cares.

Nehemiah 2:17

"And I said to them: You see the distress we are in," etc. These words are plain and very apt in a spiritual sense, because holy teachers, and indeed all who are fervent with zeal for God, are in great distress as long as Jerusalem, that is, the vision of peace which the Lord has left and entrusted to us, is seen to be deserted through the wars of dissensions; and they observe the gates of virtues, which, according to Isaiah, ought to have been occupied by praise (Isa. 60), being cast down and held in contempt by the prevailing gates of hell. Hence they strive, by gathering the ministers of the word into a single en-

deavor, to rebuild by faith and good action those things which seemed to be destroyed.

CHAPTER 18

The wall, towers, and gates of Jerusalem are built, starting with the great priest Eliasib. (Nehemiah III.) [Nehemiah 3:1] -- And Eliasib the great priest rose, etc. This Eliasib, the high priest of that time, was the son of Joakim, who, after his father Jesus the son of Josedec the great priest, himself also for no small time held the insignias of the high priesthood. And rightly the restoration of the city began with the great priest and his brothers, so that those who had precedence in rank of order might themselves become an example to all in good works. And it is well joined with the priests who are building.

Nehemiah 3:1

And up to the tower of a hundred cubits, etc. For priests build up to the measure of a hundred cubits, when they kindle all whom they instruct with love and desire for eternal things. For the number one hundred, which in the counting of fingers passes from the left to the right, represents heavenly goods, which, in comparison to temporal and lesser goods, are as the right hand to the left. They are also said to have sanctified the gate they built; for it is the duty of priests to make their works specially worthy of sanctification above others, and to act earnestly so that whoever is joined to them may sanctify the name of the Lord in themselves by living well. According to the letter, it seems that the first gate of the flock was either built or sanctified by the priests because it was near the temple and belonged properly to them; for it also seems reasonable that the building of the city should start from the temple. For it is indeed necessary that we first preserve within ourselves the constancy of faith and love for God, and then add works of piety that pertain to the love of our neighbor; thirdly, that is, lastly, we should take care of those things that pertain to the general provision of this life, concerning which the Apostle says: Having food and clothing, let us be content with these (1 Tim 6).

But it could also seem probable that the gate of the flock is so called because through it the animals that were to be offered in the temple were usually brought in. Therefore, the priests build the gate of the flock at the beginning of the building of the city of God, when holy preachers imbue their

hearers, above all, with the truth of faith which works through love, through which they should introduce the sacrifices of good deeds and offer them to God on the altar of their heart. The construction of this gate, extended to a hundred cubits, is sanctified to the tower of Hananeel, that is, to the grace of God, when from the beginning of faith to the firmness of good action, which is accomplished only with the inspiration and help of God, they extend solely with the intention of eternal retribution. It should be noted, indeed, that our manuscripts have: And they built the gate of the flock. The old translation has: And they built the gate and the pool of Bethesda; of which name John makes mention in his Gospel: Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches; in these lay a great multitude of sick people (John 5), etc. Nor does anything prevent us from understanding that this place is designated here; for the name of the Sheep Gate is not much different from the name Bethesda: for in Greek a sheep is called 'probaton'.

Jerome also mentions this place in his book of Places, writing thus: Bethesda is a pool in Jerusalem, which is called the Sheep Gate, and it can be interpreted by us as pertaining to sheep. It once had five porches; and twin pools are shown, one of which is usually filled with winter rains, and the other, wondrously red, as if with bloody waters, reveals signs of ancient work. For they say that sacrifices used to be washed in it by the priests, hence it received its name. From all these indications, it appears that the Sheep Gate is near the pool of Bethesda, so that by this gate the sacrifices to be washed in that pool were brought in.

Nehemiah 3:3

The fish gate was built by the sons of Asnah. He called it the fish gate, which looked towards Joppa and Diospolis, that is, Lydda, and it was closer to the sea among all the routes to Jerusalem, which now is said to be called the gate of David, and is the first of the gates to the west of Mount Zion. To this opinion seem to agree the words of the Chronicles, in which it is written about King Manasseh of Judah: "After this, he built a wall outside the city of David to the west of Gihon in the valley, from the entrance of the fish gate, around to Ophel, and raised it very high" (2 Chr. 33). In a typological sense, just as the flock of the Lord's faithful is so often called fish, hence as He said to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21); so also He promised the same to Andrew and the other apostles, saying: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers

of men" (Matt. 4). Again, He spoke of these fishermen through a parable, saying: "They chose the good fish and put them into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matt. 13). Therefore, they built the fish gate in Jerusalem when those steps are ordained in the Church by which the elect are separated from the reprobate, like good fish from bad, to be brought into the fellowship of eternal peace.

The fish gate is built when, by the works of virtues, the faithful serve those who see themselves, having been rescued from the waves of turbulence and worldly desire, led into the tranquility and peace of spiritual life. Zephaniah the prophet remembers this gate, saying: "A sound of crying from the fish gate, and wailing from the second" (Zeph. 1). Because what he added, the second, signifies a gate of the second wall in the same area. For in the times of Hezekiah, the wall of the city was doubled, the Chronicles narrate, where it is written: "He built diligently all the wall that had been broken, and raised up towers upon it, and outside another wall" (2 Chr. 32). These things about the literal sense. But according to the allegory of the law, Zephaniah heard the voice of crying from the fish gate and wailing from the second, because he foresaw that both would be thrown down by enemies: for he saw that the faith and works of teachers, by which it was proper for others to be saved from the waves of corruptible life and led into the holy Church, would be overthrown by the snares of the ancient enemy, that is, by the desire for earthly pleasures which would deprive them of heavenly joys.

Rightly, indeed, he heard a voice of crying and wailing from both the first and second gate, both from the outer and inner, because he saw that both outward works and the hearts of the negligent within would be overthrown by the devil's attack; but since the Lord lifts up those who are cast down (Ps. 145:14), Nehemiah records that the same fish gate was restored after a long ruin: for even if some of the preachers fall by sinning, there will not be lacking those who, up until the end of the world, succeeding in the place of their predecessors, with the Lord's help, open the gates of righteousness by preaching and living rightly. Rightly, however, it is added about those who destroyed this gate:

Nehemiah 3:3

They themselves wove it and set up the gates, etc. Returning also to the others which are said to have been built, the gate is repeatedly mentioned frequently; because it is evidently necessary that whoever has begun the con-

struction of good action, should continue adhering to their beginnings up to the peak of perfection, and being alert, should set up the gates, bars, and locks. For gates are set in doors so that, being opened at a fitting time, the citizens may have the ability to enter or exit. Locks and bars are set so that, with the doors stopped up and closed, the enemy may not be able to enter. Thus, in our good works, gates of kind provision are to be set up so that fellow citizens, that is, our neighbors, seeing these, may glorify our Father who is in heaven, and they themselves too learn to follow our examples and walk with us through the walls of virtues. Also, locks and bars are to be set up against the plots and invasions of the enemies, so that we may be diligently fortified on all sides, lest perhaps the ancient enemy, having been unwisely let in, might take our stronghold of virtue by force. Hence it is well said in Proverbs: "A brother helped by his brother is like a fortified city, and judgments are like the bars of cities" (Prov. XII).

When indeed both peoples, that is, the Jews and the Gentiles, agree in brotherly love in Christ, they build one Church, namely the city of their Creator. And just as the bars strengthen the gates of cities, so the doctrines of truth defend the Churches throughout the world, which make one Catholic Church, from the incursion of the unbelievers. Likewise, we set up locks and bars on our gates, when we carefully guard against disclosing the secrets of our faith to pigs and dogs, that is, to impure minds, or performing our righteousness for the sake of human favor, and admitting through our good works those who bring more danger by their praise than a helpful support by their observation.

Nehemiah 3:6

And they rebuilt the old gate, etc. That old gate is what John mentions, saying: Beloved, I do not write a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning (1 John 2). The old commandment is the word which you have heard. Therefore, the old gate is rebuilt in Jerusalem, when the word of faith and love, which has been handed down from the beginning of the holy Church, is either recovered in those who have gone astray, or begins to be established in those recently believing. [Nehemiah 3:8] -- And they left Jerusalem, etc. The wall of the broad street in Jerusalem is the firmness and fortification of perfect love in the hearts of the elect, to which its teachers reach by building, when progressing in works of charity, they can say to their Creator and Helper: We have run

the way of your commandments, when you enlarged our heart (Psalm 119). Indeed, that enlargement of an enlightened mind, which can love both a friend in God and an enemy for the sake of God.

Nehemiah 3:13

And Hanun built up the Valley Gate, etc. We know that the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which was also called Gehenna, that is, the Valley of Hinnom, was to the eastern side of the city of Jerusalem, through which flows the Kidron stream, mentioned in the Gospel (John XVIII), when it receives waters from rain or snow, flowing from the northern to the southern region. But we also read of the Valley of Gihon on the western side of the same city, as the Book of Chronicles says about King Manasseh of Judah, which we have mentioned above: After this, he built a wall outside the City of David to the west of Gihon in the valley (II Chronicles XXXIII). Gihon, moreover, is the name of the spring where Solomon was anointed king outside the city. Therefore, whether Ezra signifies this one, that one, or any other valley of the same city in this place, the mystery is clear, because the Valley Gate is built in Jerusalem, when for those who have been recently initiated into the knowledge of faith, or for those who have been restored to chastity of faith by the truth's teachers who had gone astray, the virtue of humility, among other virtues, is commanded to be observed, through which they may deserve to be elevated by a greater grace of God, as the Holy Scripture says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (I Peter V). And in the Psalm:

And the valleys are covered with grain (Psalm LXV), which means, the humble will be abundantly filled with the gifts of heavenly sustenance. And it is fitting that after the Old Gate and the wall of the broad street, the Valley Gate is built; because indeed, after the first principles of the catholic faith, which works through love, humility must be inculcated to us, which is the guardian of virtues, so that according to the wise man's precept, the greater we are, the more we should humble ourselves in all things (Ecclesiasticus III).

Nehemiah 3:14

And a thousand cubits along the wall up to the Dung Gate, etc. They say that the site of the city of Jerusalem is arranged on such a gentle slope, facing north and east, that rain falling there never remains, but flows like rivers through the eastern gates, carrying with it all the filth of the streets, augmenting the torrent Cedron in the valley of Josaphat. From this, it seems

likely that the gate is called the Dung Gate, through which filth and impurities are accustomed to be carried out. It is by no means of less strength and usefulness that all impurities should be carried out of the city of the Lord than that which is pure should be gathered into it. Therefore, they build the Dung Gate in Jerusalem, who ordain those into the ministry of the Holy Church, through whom the filth of vices may be cleansed from the minds of the elect. But also corrupt-minded men should be excluded from the borders of the Church, with the help and weakening of all impurity by the shower of heavenly grace; so that according to the Psalmist, "All who do iniquity may be destroyed from the city of the Lord" (Psalm 10). And since it is a sign of great perfection when someone progresses so much through the merit of humility that they can keenly perceive their errors and effectively cleanse those discovered;

it is rightly said that those who built the Valley Gate also constructed a thousand cubits in the wall up to the Dung Gate. For the number a thousand signifies perfection, and a cubit signifies the operation which is done by hands and arms. And they reach a thousand cubits building in the wall of the holy city from the Valley Gate to the Dung Gate, who, having acquired the grace of humility, devote themselves so industriously to the works of perfection that they cast out from themselves all rubble of not only harmful action or useless speech but even superfluous thought.

Nehemiah 3:15

And Shallun built the gate of the fountain, etc. "Pagos" in Greek signifies a village in Latin. But writers tell that from that front of Mount Zion, which faces the eastern region with a steep rock, within the walls, and at the roots of the hill, the fountain of Siloam bursts forth; which indeed flows southward with alternating access of waters, that is, not with continuous waters, but it bubbles at uncertain [fixed] hours and days, and through the hollows of the earth and caves of very hard rock, it is accustomed to come with great noise, with which, namely, the city is said to use this one spring, and this not perpetual. Therefore, understand the gate of this fountain designated in this place, especially when it is openly added:

Nehemiah 3:15

And the walls of the pool of Siloam in the garden of the king, etc. Therefore, Siloa, which is interpreted as the sent one, where the man born blind and

was illuminated, signifies the Lord Savior, who was sent by God the Father for our enlightenment; whose source can most aptly be understood as the same Father, from whom He was born. Concerning which the Psalmist well says: For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we will see light (Psalm 35). And the Fountain Gate is built in Jerusalem when teachers are appointed in the Church, who preach to the people the faith of divine eternity. The walls of the pool of Siloam are also built when the very firm and invincible testimonies of the Scriptures, by which the mystery of the Lord's incarnation is designated, are rooted in the minds of the faithful. These walls of divine utterances reach the king's garden when, with the mysteries of the Lord's dispensation known, we begin to produce the sprouts of virtues with the help of the most high king, our Lord God. They also reach the steps that descend from the city of David when someone learns to advance from the general life of the faithful to heavenly things with spiritual desires. The steps that descend from the city of David to the lower part of the city of Jerusalem are indeed aids of divine inspiration or protection, by which we are gradually raised to reach the walls of the heavenly kingdom.

For David made steps by which we should ascend to his city when divine piety taught us the order of virtues by which we may seek heavenly things, and granted us the gift of performing those virtues. Concerning these steps, the Psalmist undoubtedly said: Blessed is the man whose help is from thee; in his heart he has arranged the ascents in the valley of tears, in the place he has appointed, etc., until he says: They shall go from strength to strength; the God of gods shall be seen in Zion (Psalm 83). Therefore, the builders of the holy city reach these steps, after building the walls of the pool of Siloam and after the king's garden, when after manifesting the sacrament of the Lord's incarnation, by which the blindness of the gentiles from their birth was washed and illuminated, and after beginning through faith the sprouting of good deeds, the holy teachers more diligently show their listeners the progress of virtues over time; by which they ascend to the vision of their Creator, namely strong in hand and desirable, as David will call. The most reverend father, by name and life Benedict, rightly understood that these progressions consist mainly in humility, when interpreting the ladder of the patriarch Jacob, shown with angels ascending and descending on it, as designating our journey to heavenly things; he meticulously and piously distin-

guished the steps of that ladder by the increments and advancements of good deeds done through humility.

The city of David, according to the letter, is called Mount Zion, which, placed to the south, stands out as the fortress of the city, and the larger part of the city lies below the mountain, situated in the plain of a lower hill. Hence it is written in the book of Kings: David began to take the fortress of Zion, this is the city of David. And shortly after: David dwelt in the fortress, and called it the city of David (1 Kings 25).

Nehemiah 3:16

After him Nehemiah built, etc. Note that King David is buried not in Bethlehem, as some assert, but in Jerusalem; and indeed not without a certain reason of mystery. For just as in Bethlehem he was born and anointed as a king, prefiguring that the Lord Christ would be born there from his seed and be adored by the Magi under the guise of a king; so also, having died and been buried in Jerusalem, he signified that the same Lord would suffer and be buried in that city, but would rise again from the grave. Therefore, after the gate of the fountain, and the walls of the pool of Siloam, which reach into the king's garden, and up to the steps that descend from the city of David, even up to the tomb of the same David the measure of the holy city extends; because he who preaches the faith of divine eternity, who declares the dispensation of the Lord's incarnation, who relates the fruitfulness of the Church adhering to Christ; of which he Himself says: A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse (Song of Solomon IV); he declares to the faithful listeners that not only do they need to imitate those steps of good deeds by which they ascend to the eternal homeland; but also they must always recall the sacrament of the Lord's Passion to their memory, that they may recognize that through Him who died and rose again for them, they too are to be raised from the region and shadow of death to life, and to ascend to the heavenly kingdom. It follows well, however:

Nehemiah 3:16

And up to the pool, etc. The pool, indeed, constructed with great effort, can not be unreasonably understood as divine Scripture; which, created by the work of the Holy Spirit, provides for us a washing to cleanse sins, and at the same time offers a cup of salvific taste. Which if it has been transformed for us by the Lord into wine, that is, translated into a spiritual sense, it inebri-

ates us with the more pleasant sweetness of truth. Wherein also is the house of the strong; for whoever has been accustomed to be refreshed by the frequent streams of divine words by hearing and doing, they are rendered strong and invincible against all the snares of the ancient enemy. Therefore, after the tomb of David, in the holy city a pool constructed with great effort is placed, to which the house of the strong is adjacent; because through the passion of the Lord, the abyss of the Scriptures has been revealed to us, by whose abundance the hearts of the faithful are strengthened, and the city of Christ made impregnable to all enemies. For if the waters fail or are obtained by the enemy, the city is easily captured. And if the ancient enemy removes from us the fountain of the word of God, nothing prevents the fierce attacker and destroyer from immediately ascending the citadel of our mind.

Nehemiah 3:17

After him, their brothers, the Levites, built, etc. Up to this point, the first wall of the city is constructed, from here the measure of the second, that is, the inner wall, which we mentioned above, begins. Hence, in this description, it is said that many of the builders built opposite their own house; for many houses of the city were either adjacent to or joined to the inner wall. Therefore, after the construction of the outer wall, the measure of the second wall follows also in our city, when, after the perfection of works and speech—which can appear to men—we strive more to please God in the inner parts of our mind, so that we may not presume to conceive anything in secret that would offend the eyes of the internal judge. And it is rightly said that the second measure is built against the ascent of the most solid corner; the most solid corner indeed is the Lord, who brought together the people of the Jews and the Gentiles in His faith and love; hence in the Psalm (Psalm 117) or Isaiah (Isaiah 28), He is called the cornerstone. Against the ascent of which corner the second measure is built, when through the purity of pious thought we strive to reach the vision of our Creator; even when held in this life, we frequently sigh with longing for His vision. From here follow many orders of builders who are said to have built the second measure, because the greatest structure of the holy Church is in the fortification of inner virtue, when we, of course, guard our heart with all vigilance, for from it springs life. To discuss these individually and to draw everything to spiritual understanding would be too lengthy.

Nehemiah 3:26

The Nathinnei, however, dwelt in Ophel, etc. The Nathinnei are considered to be the Gibeonites, who served the house of the Lord with faithful devotion according to the arrangement of Joshua the son of Nun. Ophel, however, was a tower, not far from the temple, of enormous height. Hence, Ophel, that is, of darkness, or named after a cloud, because its head rose up to the clouds. Finally, where it is written in Micah: And the tower of the flock, the cloud of the daughter of Zion (Micah IV); in Hebrew, for the cloudy tower, it is written "the tower Ophel. This tower is mentioned, and its part within the city is indicated in the book of Chronicles, referring to King Manasseh, which we also previously noted, that he built a wall outside the city of David to the west of Gihon in the valley, from the entrance of the fish gate around up to Ophel (II Chron. XXXIII). Therefore, according to the location, it was fitting that the temple servants lived in the nearby temple tower. However, according to the mystical sense as well, Nathinnei dwell in Ophel, that is, in the cloudy tower, when those dedicated to God in the profession of a more perfect life, always live in the fortress and height of virtues and actions and thoughts. Saying with the Apostle, For our conversation is in heaven (Phil. III). Of whom the multitude of the people also testifies with admiration, saying: Who are these who fly like clouds? (Isa. LX).

Similarly, Nathinnei dwell in Ophel, when those distinguished in the garb of religion have learned to penetrate the hidden things of Scripture, about which it is said, Dark water in the clouds of the sky; that is, the mystical knowledge in the prophets with an illuminated heart, and to meditate on these readings day and night. Regarding their habitation, it is aptly added: Up to the water gate towards the east and the tower that projected. For the gate of waters is the Lord, who daily waters us with the grace of his mercy lest we fail in the troubles of the present life. The Psalmist desired to enter this gate, when he said: As the deer pants for the fountains of water, so my soul desires you, God (Psalm XLI). This gate is fittingly mentioned as positioned towards the east; because indeed the same Lord, who, by the torrent of his pleasure, drenches us lest we thirst, also illuminates us with the gift of his visitation, lest we dwell in the darkness of errors. Accordingly, Zechariah says: The dawn from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (Luke I). He also defends us with the protection of his aid, lest we be touched by the enemy. Hence it aptly follows:

And up to the tower that projected. Understanding this, the same Psalmist said: You led me, because you have been my hope, a tower of strength in the face of the enemy (Psalm LX).

Therefore, the Nathinnei dwell in Ophel, up to the water gate towards the east, and the tower that projected; when faithful persons dedicated to sacred readings rejoice in being drenched and illuminated by divine mercy and grace, and in always being protected from the enemy. And because after the present gifts of virtues one ascends to see the clarity of the dominical man, it is rightly added:

Nehemiah 3:27

After them, the Tekoites repaired another section, etc. Indeed, the wall of the temple is the body of the Lord Savior, about which He Himself said to the Jews: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2): which, of course, the temple of His body, His persecutors destroyed in death, but being raised up, and exalted to the heavens, His lovers saw in glory, and do not cease to see forever. Therefore, from the great and eminent tower, even to the wall of the temple, the structure of the holy city is reached, as every just person, from the height of contemplation, in which, with earthly temporals despised even in this life, they are elevated to aspire to celestial things, and in that life, with the brightness of the Lord's incarnation revealed, they also ascend to the eternity of divine glory. And because Tekoa means trumpet or horn, the Tekoites are interpreted as trumpeters, it is aptly said that the Tekoites built these things; for it is the duty of teachers, whose sound has gone out to all the earth, to reveal either the present gifts of God, or the future in His city, that is, the people of the faithful.

Nehemiah 3:28

Upwards to the Horse Gate they built, etc. Jeremiah mentions this gate and designates it to be on the eastern side of the city, writing typically about the holy Church: And the city shall be built for the Lord from the tower of Hananeel (Jer. XXI). And a little later: Up to the brook Kidron, and unto the corner of the Horse Gate eastwards (Ibid.). Horses, when taken in a good sense, like donkeys, camels, and mules, sometimes signify the Gentile peoples converted to the Lord, and sometimes the cares of temporal matters rightly subjected to the Lord by the soul. The priests built the wall of God's city up to the Horse Gate, just as the holy teachers, after the calling of the

Jewish people, continued spreading the word until they brought the Gentile peoples into the Holy Church. Equally, they build to the Horse Gate when they provide the example of a sufficient mode of living for those who enter the gates of the holy Church to restrain their carnal or mental desires; or certainly when they arrange their own thoughts, which they must have in dealing with their livelihood or habits, in such a way that they do not hinder the freedom of mind, with which they have always proposed to seek heavenly things. And it is aptly added about the laborers, "Everyone against his own house"; this phrase is often repeated in this construction of the holy city.

There is no need to labor in explaining how in the holy Church each one should build a wall of virtues against his own house and fortify his mind against the devil's snares; so that he who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. V), cannot in any way break in, while each one fortifies his own body and mind with the strong faith in the Lord. But everyone also builds against his own house if he protects with diligent guard of regular discipline those who are committed to him, so that they cannot be deceived either by the incursion of vices or by heretical persuasion. It would take a long time to discuss in spiritual interpretation each of the buildings of the holy city or its builders; which, even without our speaking, the skilled reader can very easily recognize. This much, however, should be noted, that those who build the gates and towers, through which either citizens may enter or enemies be warded off, are the prophets, apostles, and evangelists; through whom the form and order of faith and right action have been provided to us, by which we ought to enter the unity of the holy Church; and by whose words we learn how to refute and repel the adversaries of truth. But those who build with other words are the pastors and teachers, whom the Apostle placed second, through whose diligence the Catholic faith, which was built by the great architects of the Church, is preserved throughout the world to this day.

And just as Nehemiah, enumerating the builders of the city in order, renders them perpetually memorable; so the Lord, the comforter of our poverty, inscribes the names in heaven of all who build up His Church among the elect. But let us consider the remaining matters as well.

CHAPTER 19

Sanballat and Tobiah mock the builders, but they are scorned; they wage wars, but they are repelled by prayers and arms. (Nehemiah IV.) [Nehemiah

4:1] -- Now it came to pass, when Sanballat heard, etc. Clearly, this is the anger of the heretics, these are their words, who vainly call themselves Samaritans, that is, guardians of God's law, when they are in fact greatly opposed to God and His laws, as they have long been separated from the house of David, that is, from the unity of Christ and the Church through heresies or schisms, or wicked deeds; who fear that their own impiety might be attacked and excluded, and therefore dread the building of the walls of faith. This is the derision of all who say they know God but deny Him by their deeds. For the Samaritans served the Lord in such a way that they did not renounce their ancient gods. Today, those who imitate them typologically are those who are Christians in such a way that they also consider their belly as their god, follow greed, which the Apostle clearly calls the service of idols; and being enslaved by the other allurements of the world, they serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. And therefore, such people, like the heretics, do not want the walls of the Church to be renewed, lest, as the state of piety grows, they are forced to abandon their impiety. Such people are accustomed to call the Jews weak, that is, confessors of the faith, and easily vanquished by the nations, while in the daily contest for souls they prefer to embrace vices rather than to obtain the palm of victory through virtue. And because there are some among the heretics who even deny forgiveness to those who repent after falling, it is rightly added in the person of these:

Nehemiah 4:2

"Will the stones be rebuilt?" etc. For the stones were rebuilt, burnt from the heaps of dust, and were placed again in the work of the holy city, when those who had either denied the faith under the fire of persecutions or had lost the purity of conduct under the grips of vice, repented by the mercy of the Lord; so that they both recover the integrity of the catholic faith by steadfast profession, and obtain the ornaments of virtues by amended morals.

Nehemiah 4:3

But also Tobias the Ammonite, his neighbor, said: Let them build, etc. And both the person and words of this Tobias agree with heretics. The person indeed, because his patriarch Ammon was conceived from incest and drunkenness, and at night and in a cave. All of which clearly can be easily applied to any heresiarch; whose entire origin is from carnal pleasure and impurity,

from the darkness of errors or crimes, from private gatherings, and not from the public symbol of the holy Church. Indeed, Tobias himself, meaning "good" of the Lord, said not by merit and truth, but by arrogance and pride, that the wall of the holy city could be leaped over by a fox; it is evident that heretics are called foxes. From which is that of the Song of Songs: Catch for us the little foxes that ruin the vineyards (Cant. II); which is to say quite clearly, Catch and bring to light the putrid and deceitful cunning of heretics, by which they strive to corrupt the fruitful minds of the faithful. Therefore, if, he says, a fox climbs up, it will leap over their stone wall. If against their faith's assertion any heretic arises, he immediately becomes proud and will subject all the confidence of their doctrine to his feet, which they boast is fortified like a stone and founded in Christ. But such blasphemers will come to what the sacred writer of this history, in imprecation, adds:

Nehemiah 4:4

Hear, our God, for we have become an object of contempt, etc. Similar to that of the Psalmist about the enemies of the elect, speaking as if under the guise of one wicked person: His trouble will return on his own head, and his violence will descend on his own crown (Psalm VII). [Nehemiah 4:9] -- And we prayed to our God, etc. This is the only refuge against all the enemies of the Church, namely prayer to God, and the industry of teachers who meditating day and night on his law, fortify the hearts of the faithful against the snares of the devil and his soldiers by preaching, consoling, and exhorting them. [Nehemiah 4:10] -- But Judas said: The strength of the bearer is weakened, etc. Judas speaks of the tribe of Judah's sons. However, the question is about not being able to build the wall because an excessive amount of soil was piled up at the place of the wall, which first needed to be removed so that the foundations of the wall could be laid on solid ground. This relates to the parable of the evangelical house, whose builder dug deep; and with the accumulation of earth removed, he laid the foundation on rock that could not be toppled by any force of water or wind (Matthew VII; Luke VI). For first, the soil of earthly desires must be removed from our hearts, and then the firm and impregnable wall of good works must be built upon the foundation of faith; for whoever attempts to erect the edifice of holy action upon the soil and rubble of weak thoughts is deceived, and instead of a house or

city, he will soon find, when the storm of temptation strikes, that he has built ruin.

Nehemiah 4:11

And our enemies said: Let them not know and understand, etc. And this is always accustomed to be done in the spiritual building. For the tireless enemy remains with his satellites, namely unclean spirits and wicked men, who, caring less for the works of faith and virtues, strive to hinder and, as much as they can, always to attack, and they seek to kill the mind of the faithful with the sword of wicked suggestion. But we, according to the Apostle, must take up the armor of God against these, so that we may be able to resist on the evil day, and stand perfect in all things (Eph. VI). However, it is well said that he set up people with arms around the wall, so that the builders, surrounded by a line of armed men, might apply themselves to building the wall with a freer and more secure hand. For the degrees of the faithful are divided, and some adorn the Church with good works within; others, armed with the arms of sacred reading, watch over the Church against those heretics attacking it. These comfort their neighbors in the truth of the faith with devout religious fervor, those exercise necessary combat against the darts of the devil or vices, by which they labor to attack the same faith, and repel the insidious wolves from the Lord's fold with pastoral care.

Nehemiah 4:15

And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it had been made known to us, God had frustrated their plan, etc. And in the spiritual building, if we have always been clothed with apostolic arms, the plan of the devil and his angels, who desire to defeat us, will be frustrated.

CHAPTER 20

All the builders, armed and prepared for battle, were thus committed to the building of the walls.

Nehemiah 4:18

And it happened from that day on, that half of the young men did the work, etc. It is to be noted that not only half of the young men did the work and the other half were prepared for war, but even those who did the work, the youths, were girded with swords. For so great is the cunning of the ancient enemy, so great is the fury of his militia fighting against the Church, that not only the preachers of truth, but also the people of God themselves must

always be vigilant against his schemes and stand as if in battle array. Indeed, those who build gird their loins with swords when those who devote themselves to good works, who take care to arrange those entrusted to them in an orderly manner (that is, to place living stones in the building of the holy city fittingly), strive to restrain the flows of luxury in themselves by the keenness of the word of God. Nor should it be overlooked that when David or Solomon built that same city, nothing is reported about armed builders or adversaries attacking; but when the city was destroyed due to their sins, it was rebuilt with greater labor and industry, because such is the spiritual building that pertains to the salvation of souls, that in baptism, reborn through faith and the confession of the Holy Trinity, we become his city and house by the grace of God without any of our labor.

And if after the washing of the sacred font, we relapse into sins, seduced by the devil, and the enemy, victorious, destroys the walls of our virtues with the fire of vices, we must repair the buildings of good works we have lost with greater efforts of prayer, affliction, vigils, alms, and a stricter way of life. For it is more difficult for those who have experienced the allurements of vice to abstain from them than for those who are ignorant of them; and it is less laborious to beware of the unknown pleasure of the flesh than to reject the known one.

Nehemiah 4:21

Let each one remain with his child, etc. Note how much effort they had in working, who also continued in labor at night. Thus the Apostle did, who worked night and day with his hands, so as not to burden any of the believers by seeking a livelihood (I Cor. IV). Unless perhaps they are to be believed to have succeeded each other in turns working, so that some worked by day on the wall, and others kept night watch against the attacks of enemies. For even the builders of our city do both at the same time. And those same ones who build up the Church by instructing the faithful, also drive away unbelievers and contradictors by reproving them from injuring the Church.

CHAPTER 21

Upon the people being stirred into uproar due to hunger and scarcity, Nehemiah compels the nobles and magistrates not to demand interest from their brothers, but rather to provide money for them. (II. Esdras V.)

Nehemiah 5:1

And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives, etc. Indeed, the people desired to build the city wall, but due to the great famine, they were hindered from the sacred work. This famine was caused not only by the shortage of crops but also by the greed of the rulers, who demanded greater tributes from the same people than they could pay, which we see happening in the same manner among us daily. For how many are there among the people of God who willingly desire to obey divine commands, but are prevented from fulfilling what they desire by the lack of temporal goods and poverty, and the examples of those who seem to be adorned with the appearance of religion, when they themselves, from those they appear to govern, demand an immense weight and tribute of secular goods, and contribute nothing to their eternal salvation, either by teaching, or providing examples of living, or by performing works of piety. And would that some Nehemiah in our days, that is, a comforter sent by the Lord, would restrain our errors, ignite our hearts towards divine love, turning our hands away from our own wills to build the city of Christ. But let us see according to the letter, for the outcry of the afflicted people was increased by a threefold distinction. Some, indeed, compelled by hunger, were arranging to sell their children for food to the wealthier; others, sparing their children, preferred to give their fields and homes for food; still others, preventing both the sale of their children and their fields, only persuaded this, that they should borrow money for the king's tribute, with their fields and vineyards given in pledge, until, with the return of abundance and crops, they could repay what they had borrowed to the moneylenders.

Nehemiah 5:7

And he rebuked the nobles and magistrates, etc. As the best leader of the heavenly army, and a wise architect of the city of God, what he wanted the nobles and magistrates of the people to do, he first declared that he himself had done; namely, giving alms to the poor, and seeking nothing from them except the observance of the law of God and the edification of his city. In this reading, it is not appropriate for us to seek the sense through allegory, but rather to diligently observe the very text of the letter; that is to say, apart from the daily fruits of alms, we should be concerned, when a general time of famine and poverty afflicts the people, to lend to the needy whatever we

can, and also to remit the tributes which we used to demand from our subjects as if justly, to the extent that our Father may also forgive us our debts. A very terrible conclusion is imposed on this reading, when it is said:

Nehemiah 5:13

Moreover, I shook out the fold of my garment, and said, etc. For whoever either refuses to give mercy to the poor, or does not blush to demand back what they do not have, as if justly, this person is shaken out of his house, namely, from the assembly of the holy Church, in which he believed he would remain forever, thrown out. He is also shaken out of his labors, that is, deprived of the fruit of the good works in which he thought he had laudably labored. For labors without pity cannot become fruitful before the Lord. How greatly this rebuke or imprecation of Nehemiah moved the hearts of all is clearly declared, when it is immediately added: [Nehemiah 5:13] -- And all the multitude said, Amen, etc. For when, having heard his testimony, all responded Amen, and praising God, they did what was commanded; it is evident, indeed, that they received his words not compelled by fear, but with the deep affection of their heart.

CHAPTER 22

Nehemiah explains how much piety he brought to the people by his own example. [Nehemiah 5:14] -- From the day on which he commanded me to be their leader, etc. Explaining this typologically, the Apostle says: "For the Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel; but I have used none of these things" (I Cor. IX). Nehemiah, along with his brothers, lived in such a way for twelve years during his leadership that they did not consume the provisions owed to the leaders, thereby mystically indicating that it is an apostolic work when someone promoted to the governance of the people of God nobly exercises the work of leadership by building up the Church, but does not seek material gain from those he governs by preaching and living well.

CHAPTER 23

Sanaballat and his associates attempt to pull Nehemiah away from the building of the wall by hiring domestic intrigues against him; but, having discovered these, the wall of the city is completed to perfection. (Nehemiah VI.) [Nehemiah 6:1] -- Now it happened that when Sanaballat and Tobiah heard, etc. The enemies of the holy city urge Nehemiah to descend to the plains and

enter into a covenant of peace with them, with calves slain together as a testimony of the contracted covenant. However, he, to avoid neglecting the religious work, perseveres in the mountains. Similarly, heretics and false Catholics seek to have the companionship of peace with true Catholics on the condition that the true Catholics do not consent to ascend to the stronghold of ecclesiastical faith or operation, but rather force those who dwell in the heights of virtues to descend from the depths of wicked works or doctrines. And it is well that they wish to make a pact with Nehemiah in one field; because undoubtedly they desire to release all those whom they can seduce into the same liberty of a more luxurious life, which they themselves follow. It is fitting that they wish to make the same pact with him with calves slain together because false brothers eagerly offer sacrifices of their prayer or action with true Catholics to God so that, being truly believed as faithful themselves, they can corrupt the same true Catholics through the proximity of communion. However, Nehemiah representing the role of faithful teachers, senses neither to descend to the profane nor to be tainted by their sacrifices, but devoutly persists in the conceived works of virtues; and the more ferociously the enemies tried to frighten him, the more he strives to become formidable to the same enemies by doing good works. Hence it is also said in the following.

Nehemiah 6:9

But all these terrify us, etc. Therefore, in the spiritual structure, because the cunning enemy always tries to hinder our hands, let us always strive to strengthen them in good action with divine help. [Nehemiah 6:10] -- And I entered the house of Shemaiah, etc. Assaulted by the treacheries of enemies, Nehemiah entered the house of Shemaiah as though of a friend and brother; but he also found him to be a traitor and enemy, since he had been corrupted by the gifts and friendship of outsiders; for the chosen always have battles without, fears within; not only apostles, but also prophets, lived lives beset by dangers from their kind, dangers from their demands, dangers from false brothers.

Nehemiah 6:15

Now the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, etc. The month Elul, according to the Hebrews, is the sixth month of the year, which the Romans call September. And rightly is the wall of the holy city

completed in the sixth month of the year, so that the perfect action of the faithful, whether penitents or innocents, is also designated in this ultimate time. For the number six usually signifies the perfection of good works; either because the Lord completed the creation of the world on the sixth day, and on the seventh He rested; or because we are to labor in good works in the six ages of this present world, and to hope for the Sabbath of souls in the seventh age, which is in the life to come. Rightly is it completed on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, on account of the five senses of the body, by the ministry of which good works are to be performed externally. For as the simple number five usually signifies these senses, so when it is multiplied by itself and brought to twenty-five, it demonstrates these same senses with greater perfection. Thus we complete the wall of Jerusalem on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, when diligently consecrating all the senses of our body to divine services, we bring the endeavors of virtues begun to a firm end, and faithfully complete with the help of the Lord what we have begun to do for the strengthening of Catholic peace.

This wall is also rightly said to have been completed in fifty-two days; for the fiftieth psalm is the psalm of penitence and forgiveness, in which also the Prophet specifically prays about the building of this city, saying: "Deal favorably, O Lord, in Thy good will with Zion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built" (Psalm 51). On the fiftieth day of the Lord's resurrection, the Holy Spirit came to the primitive Church, through whom the devotion of repentance is infused in us, and the gift of pardon is granted to penitents. Moreover, there are two precepts of charity, namely the love of God and the love of neighbor, through which, granted to us by the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins is given, and we are commanded to labor for the attainment of eternal life. Therefore, most fittingly, the citizens rebuilding the wall of the holy city, which had been destroyed by enemies, restore it in fifty-two days, because this indeed is the perfection of the just in this life, that through the grace of divine inspiration, they punish whatever they have sinned by repenting, and henceforth adorn themselves with good works in the love of God and neighbor.

CHAPTER 24

The gentiles are terrified by the deeds of the city of Jerusalem; and Nehemiah lists the singers and assigns guards to the gates. [Nehemiah 6:16] -- It happened... that all the nations feared, etc. Those who previously sought to

terrify the builders of the holy city, to delay them from working, now fear themselves with the construction of the same city completed, and they are disheartened, recognizing that this building was begun and completed by the authoring of God. Thus also in the holy Church, when a firm structure of charity, continence, peace, and other virtues has risen, the unclean spirits fear, and the temptation of their strength is repelled by our forces, and rather promotes our victory. This can also be received concerning heretics as well as false Catholics; who, by the constant faith of the good working through love, either are corrected and amended, or being exposed are guarded against and expelled from the boundaries of the Church.

Nehemiah 7:1

But after the wall was built, etc. And in a spiritual sense, wherever the wall of the Church may be built, gathering new peoples to the faith, or correcting those who have strayed, immediately the gates of regular discipline should be set up, so that the ancient enemy, who goes about like a roaring lion (I Peter V), may not anywhere break into the fold of the faithful. The gatekeepers, singers, and Levites must be reviewed, who guard the same gates; it is clear that the role of these pertains to all holy teachers. For gatekeepers are those who have received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so that they may admit the worthy and humble, but keep out the proud and impure from entering the heavenly city, saying: 'You have no part or share in this matter; for your heart is not right before God' (Acts VIII). Singers are those who proclaim with a devout voice the sweetness of the same heavenly homeland to their listeners. Levites are those who always watch over the service of divine worship. Nehemiah commanded that the gates of Jerusalem not be opened until the heat of the sun, that is, throughout the entire night, so that neither the enemy covered by darkness might break in, nor any incautious citizen going out be captured and perish by the enemy.

Which also the guardians of souls ought to diligently do throughout the whole night of this age, lest, neglecting the observance of a pious conversation, the devil either enter to disturb the company of the faithful or seize and destroy any of their number among the faithful. However, when the Sun of righteousness appears and the light of future blessedness shines forth, there will no longer be need for the cloisters of continence; for the adversaries will no longer be given the power to attack or tempt the faithful, since they and their prince will be condemned to eternal retribution. Wherefore

John in his Apocalypse says of the future glory of the same holy city: 'And its gates will never be shut by day, for there will be no night there' (Rev. XXI)."

Nehemiah 7:3

And I appointed watchmen from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, etc. The watchmen of souls are not from the neophytes, nor from the common crowd, but they are to be established from those who, having been liberated by the grace of God from the struggle with vices, have accustomed their minds to Jerusalem, that is, to the vision of tranquil peace, who can say with the Apostle: "But our conversation is in heaven" (Philippians 3). Of whom it is well said that He has appointed each in his own turn; so that, after completing their course, being withdrawn from this light, others immediately are preferred in their place for the governance of the faithful. Nor at any time are there lacking those who strive to keep vigil for the peace of the holy Church on account of night terrors, while the truth of the prophetic word always runs to the end of the age, in which it is said to the same Church: "Instead of your fathers, sons are born to you" (Psalm 45). It is also well added, "And each against his own house." For in this way the guardianship of the holy Church is rightly perfected, if each one carries the concern of all the faithful in such a way that he is especially placed over them, to whom, by the authority of God, he devotes more diligent care.

CHAPTER 25

Nehemiah, in order to find worthy inhabitants for the city, reviewed the book of the census of those who first ascended from Babylon to Judea. [Nehemiah 7:5] -- The city, however, was very wide and large, etc. These things suit that time typically. When the word of God, sown far and wide by the apostles, the whole world received the new seed of faith, and the Church buildings not yet constructed, but only by hearing and the sacraments of the word, the people were still being trained while still unpolished. [Nehemiah 7:5] -- Moreover, God put it into my heart, etc. Therefore, having convened not only the nobles and magistrates but also all the common people, he carefully took care to review their number so that he could discern the complete total of all, who should inhabit the city of Jerusalem itself, and who indeed should dwell in other cities.

CHAPTER 26

In the seventh month, the people are gathered in Jerusalem, and Ezra reading the law of Moses, they attentively listen. (Nehemiah VIII.)

Nehemiah 8:2

And the seventh month came, etc. When Nehemiah sought to provide and arrange who should dwell in the city they had built, the seventh month arrived; for they were far away. For since the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, no more than five days remained until the beginning of the seventh month. This seventh month, from its first day to the twenty-second, was entirely consecrated to legitimate ceremonies; and after these were duly celebrated, he returned with the leaders and the people to arrange the residents of the built city. Here, the devotion and concord of the people are to be noted, who, as if one man, that is, with one and the same faith and love, gathered at the temple of the Lord; and they asked their priest to bring the book and repeat the commands of the law they should follow, so that with the city built, the structure of work pleasing to God might also rise, lest, as before, due to the negligence of religion, the ruin of the city should follow. And it was well that in the sixth month the city was built, and in the seventh, the people were gathered into it to listen to the law; indeed, the sixth day is for working in the law, the seventh is for resting.

And this is our most beloved and acceptable rest to the Lord after our good work, that abstaining from servile work, that is, sin, we may more diligently give attention to hearing and fulfilling His commands. Hence, at the beginning of the same seventh month, the solemnity of the trumpets was appointed, by the sound of which the people, amidst prayers and sacrifices, might be more fervently awakened to the memory of the divine law. And now too, by spiritual understanding, after the holy city is built, the divine reading must follow, and the trumpets sound more frequently; for indeed, it is necessary that the people initiated in the heavenly sacraments, also from time to time, be more diligently instructed by sacred speeches on how they ought to live. But when it is said the people are gathered at the square before the Water Gate; I think the Water Gate refers to the court of the priests, by which the temple was surrounded on every side by a quadrangle, most especially on the eastern side of the temple, where the bronze sea was for washing the hands and feet of those entering the temple, and where the ten bronze

lavers for washing sacrifices were; where also the altar of burnt offering was, between which and the temple Zacharias, the son of Barachias, was stoned (Matthew XXIII). However, the people did not have the permission to enter within this gate of the court, but only the priests, the ministers of the Lord.

The people, however, stood outside this gate, and mostly in the square which was on its eastern side, to listen to the word or to pray. Therefore, the people were rightly gathered before the Water Gate, who by their priest were to be spiritually watered with the flowing Scriptures.

Nehemiah 8:4

Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden platform, etc. This place seems to be remembered in the Scripture of Chronicles, where it is said: Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord, facing the multitude of Israel, and stretched out his hands. For Solomon had made a bronze platform and had placed it in the middle of the basilica, measuring five cubits in length, five cubits in width, and three cubits in height, and he stood upon it (II Chronicles VI). Indeed, in the middle of the basilica, in the middle of the priests' courtyard, where the main basilica was surrounded on all sides by the outer courtyards of the temple. About these it is also written earlier in the same book: He also made the courtyard of the priests and a great basilica (II Chronicles IV). However, Solomon, as a king, made a bronze platform; while Ezra, as of lesser authority, set up a wooden platform to speak from, much like Solomon or Moses made a bronze altar for holocausts, for which the sons of the captivity replaced with stone. But it should not be thought that a wooden platform has a lesser degree of perfection than a bronze base. For it has often been said, as bronze endures through the passage of time or through the sweetness of sound, divine sacraments never fail through the passage of ages, and their sound goes out into all the earth;

thus also wood is very fittingly appropriate for them, especially on account of the trophy of the Lord's passion. Therefore, the high priest stands above the entire people when he who takes the position of a teacher, by the merit of a more perfect life, surpasses the actions of the crowd. He stands on a wooden platform made to speak from, when by the singular imitation of the Lord's passion, he makes himself loftier than the others. Hence, he worthily gained the confidence to freely preach the word of God. For he who scorns to imitate the Lord's passion according to his own measure has not yet ascended the wooden platform from which he can stand above the weak. There-

fore, such a scribe must either tremble or blush to preach the commandments of God, fearing or being ashamed to propose for others to do what he himself has not done. Hence it aptly follows in the subsequent paragraphs:

Nehemiah 8:5

The people stood in their place. For when leaders strive as much to excel their subjects in good works as they do in honor, then these same subjects, incited by their good examples, already follow the course of their own lives devotedly; admonished by their pious exhortations, they delight in frequently shedding tears for their admitted errors, or even for the desires of the heavenly homeland. Hence it is fittingly added here: [Nehemiah 8:9] -- "But all the people wept when they heard the words of the law." For the same holy teachers, who stir the minds of their hearers to tears with sacred readings and devout exhortations, also console those tears by promising them the eternal joys to come. Rightly it is added:

Nehemiah 8:10

"And he said to them: Go, eat rich foods, etc." For the day of the Lord is holy to us when we strive to hear and fulfill his words. On which day, although suffering external tribulations, we ought to be rejoicing in hope, according to the Apostle's saying: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6). On this day we are also commanded to eat rich foods and drink sweet wine; that is, to rejoice in the abundance of good action divinely bestowed upon us and in the sweetness of hearing the word of God. For sweet wine is wine sweetened with honey, hence it is called Oinomeli in Greek. But we are also instructed to send portions to those who have not prepared themselves, from these same most wholesome mental feasts, so that we may also strengthen the consciences of our weaker neighbors either by the example of pious action or by the sweetness of devout exhortation, so that their souls, according to the Psalmist, may be filled as with marrow and fatness from the abundance of heavenly generosity, and with joyful lips may praise the name of the Lord (Psalm 62). We ought to imitate this literally as well; so that, on feast days, after prayer, readings, and the completion of the singing of psalms, when we plan to care for the refreshment of the flesh, we also remember to give a portion to the poor and to strangers.

CHAPTER 27

They celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, with Ezra reading the law of God to them every day.

Nehemiah 8:14

And they found written in the law that the Lord commanded, etc. These things are more fully written in Leviticus, and that they were ordered to be remembered for that long journey during which the Lord, bringing His people out of Egypt, made them dwell in tabernacles in the desert for forty years, daily teaching them the precepts of His law through Moses (Leviticus 23). The erection of tabernacles was commanded, which in Greek is called Scenopegia, for seven days every year, that is, from the fifteenth day of the same seventh month to the twenty-second. The sacrament of this observance must be diligently examined by us with spiritual inquiry, especially since the Lord deigned to be present at this feast in the Gospel (John 7) and dedicated it with His sacrosanct words while addressing the gathered people. Therefore, our fathers were also freed from Egyptian servitude by the blood of the Lamb, and led through the desert for forty years to reach the promised land, just as through the Lord's passion, the world was freed from servitude to the devil, and the early Church was gathered by the apostles, which, as if led through a desert for forty years, was brought to the promised heavenly country. Imitating the forty-day fast, which Moses, Elijah, and the Lord Himself completed, it used to lead a life in great continence, always thirsting for the eternal homeland; and fully separated from all the allurements of this world, it conducted a nearly secluded life in daily meditation on the divine law.

For remembrance of this, at the same time, we must also dwell in tabernacles, leaving our dwellings, that is, abandoning secular delights, confessing that we are pilgrims in this life and that our homeland is in heaven; and to desire to reach it sooner. And this on the solemn day in the seventh month, that is, in the light of heavenly joy, when our heart is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which the prophet praised as sevenfold. In these tabernacles, indeed, we are commanded to stay for seven days; for throughout the duration of our lives, which revolves through so many days, we must keep in mind that we are sojourners with God on earth and strangers like all our fathers.

Nehemiah 8:15

Go forth, he says, to the mountain, etc. And let us also go forth from a dwelling of general thoughts, to the height of the holy Scriptures to be frequently meditated upon; and let us bring from there, as if olive branches, the fruits of mercy, with which by refreshing the poor, we may simultaneously shade ourselves from the heat of tempting vices; and branches of the most beautiful wood, which the Jews call cedar, indeed, the fruits of charity, which is amongst all virtues the most beautiful and illustrious, through which our Lord ascended the wood of the cross for our salvation. As we imitate His passion to the extent that it is possible, we are certainly protected by the branches of the most beautiful wood. Let us also bring branches of myrtle, in the mortification of desires and all vices. For even the magi, offering myrrh to the Lord, taught typologically that those who belong to Jesus Christ ought to crucify their flesh with its vices and lusts. Likewise, whoever can say: 'For we are the good fragrance of Christ to God, in every place' (II Cor. II), brings myrtle branches to make a shelter for themselves. Let us also bring palm branches, the ornament of the victorious hand, so that we may always carry a mind victorious over gluttony, wrath, greed, and other vices, and always strive to be stronger than all enemies; so that in the future we may be worthy to be consorts of those about whom John speaks in his Apocalypse: 'They stood before the throne in the presence of the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands' (Rev. VII). Also, branches of woody trees, that is, the adornments of other virtues; with all these we make mystic tabernacles for ourselves, as by being delighted with good works, we draw our entire mind away from worldly enticements.

Nehemiah 8:17

And the people went out, and brought back, etc. On the house-top, he says, on the roof of the houses. For in Palestine they do not have gabled roofs on the houses, but the tops of all the houses are flat, with beams and boards laid over them. Hence, in the law, it is commanded that when someone builds a new house, they shall make a parapet around the roof, so that no one may fall from it and incur the danger of death (Deut. XXII). In the same way, each of us goes out and makes tabernacles on the house-top, that is, on the roof of his house, when, transcending the dwelling of his flesh with his mind, he diligently tramples upon its harmful desires with meditations of

heavenly light and freedom. This same thing we do in our courtyards when, with our mind burning towards heavenly things, we stand as if outside the world, whose dwelling we desire to leave behind more swiftly. We also do this in the courtyards of the house of God, when, even if it is not yet permitted to enter the hall of the heavenly dwelling, we place all the memory and residence of our thoughts in its vicinity. We also do this in the street of the water gate, when, with our heart expanded on the path of God's commandments, just as the servant desires at the fountains of water, so our soul desires the living God (Psalm XLI). We also do this in the street of the Ephraim gate, that is, of the fruitful or growing, when in the same ample freedom of heart we advance in such a way that the gate of righteousness is opened to us by the Lord, and we may always grow in Him for salvation, and may merit to abound in greater fruits of good action day by day.

Nehemiah 8:18

He read from the book of the law of God, etc. As far as the meaning of the text goes, the Feast of Tabernacles was typically celebrated for seven days, that is, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the moon, up to the twenty-first. Then on the eighth day, that is, the twenty-second of the month, a gathering of the people took place once more, marked by a greater festivity. For it is written in Leviticus: On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered all the fruits of your land, you shall celebrate the Lord's feast for seven days. The first day and the eighth day shall be a Sabbath, that is, a rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, etc. (Leviticus 23). So Ezra read to the people in the book of the law of God during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles; because this truly is our genuine solemnity of mind in this life, that through each day, that is, through all the good works by which we are enlightened by the Lord, we may devote our attentive hearts to reading, hearing, and doing His words. This solemnity begins on the fifteenth day of the month, when the moon is at its fullest at night, whereupon all the shadows of our mind are resolved by the most brilliant light of Christ. And it follows with the eighth day of the Sabbath, that is, of rest, obviously at the time of the resurrection in the future life; the joys of which we are uplifted by hope for now, and then we will fully enjoy in reality, when that most longed-for gathering—the entire assembly of saints, both angels and men—rejoices together in the presence of their Creator, never to be separated.

CHAPTER 28

After the completion of the Feast of Tabernacles, they convene again to confess, read, and pray to the Lord. (Nehemiah 9.) [Nehemiah 9:1] -- The children of Israel assembled in fasting and sackcloth, etc. The devotion of the people corrected after captivity is noteworthy, for once the solemnity mandated by the law of the Lord was duly completed, and after just one day of interval, they themselves willingly gathered in fasting and penance, diligently carrying out what they had heard during the days of holy readings and rejoicing, by separating themselves both in mind and body from the company of those who were proved to be estranged from the Lord and His worship, lest through the association and examples of the wicked they should again fall into the evils of captivity and distress; evils which they scarcely perceived themselves to have escaped even after long periods or centuries. And what might we mystically take from these things for ourselves, except that following such examples, whatever we have understood should be done in the public assembly or audience, we should again discuss mutually among ourselves, and diligently seek by thorough inquiry how we might be able to fulfill each of these with the correction of our hearts and bodies. The great diligence of their more correct life is evident as it is stated:

Nehemiah 9:3

"And they rose to stand, and read, etc." For who would not marvel that the people had such an extraordinary care for piety, that four times a day, that is, at dawn, the third hour, the sixth, and the ninth, at times when they were to be dedicated to prayer or psalmody, they would commit themselves to hearing the divine law, so that with their minds renewed in God, they might return purer and more devout to implore His mercy; and also at night, four times, shaking off the lethargy of sleep, they would rise to confess their sins and seek forgiveness. I believe it is by this example that the custom has grown in the Church, that at every hour of the daytime psalmody a reading from either the Old or New Testament is said from memory before all the listeners; and thus strengthened by the apostolic or prophetic words, they bend their knees in prayer immediately. And also at night, when they cease from their labors, their ears are directed to the listening of divine readings.

CHAPTER 29

The prayer or confession of Ezra, in which he entreats the Lord to remember the covenant that He made with their fathers. [Nehemiah 9:6] -- And Ezra said: You alone, Lord, etc. What was previously stated, Because they confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers; is shown in more detail with Ezra beseeching how it was done. Moreover, in the conclusion he says, Therefore over all these, we ourselves make and write a covenant; and our princes, our Levites, and our priests sign; and so forth. It is more clearly shown how, with great grace of devotion, all their persons made a new assembly after the Feast of Booths, so that they might unite themselves with the divine covenant, having been thoroughly cleansed from the contamination of sins, and confirm the condition of the holy covenant both by word and by writing. As if separated from the company of the impious, they might more securely fulfill the work which they had long ago begun; that is, they would appoint suitable citizens of the reestablished city from the number of the pious.

CHAPTER 30

The leaders together with the people make a covenant, and write it to keep all the commandments of the Lord, and to aid the ceremonies of His house. (II Esdras X.) [Nehemiah 10:1] -- But the signatories were Nehemiah the Tirshatha, etc. Another translation has, Nehemiah, who is the Tirshatha; for Nehemiah had two names. Hence it is uniquely added, the son of Hacaliah; which is more clearly indicated above, where it is said: But Nehemiah said, he is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the scribe, and the Levites interpreting to all the people, This day is holy to the Lord our God (Neh. VIII). [Nehemiah 10:31] -- The peoples of the land, who bring goods for sale, etc. And for us, the Sabbath is always to be kept spiritually, always to abstain from servile work, that is, from sin, always to be free and to see that the Lord himself is God, so that after such a Sabbath, freed from the sins of conscience, we may reach the Sabbath of future glory in the heavens. But the peoples of the land seek to profane our Sabbath by bringing goods for sale to us on the sanctified day; because unclean spirits strive to defile the purity of our hearts, and by the price of our consent, to introduce the temptations of vices to us, so that they may pollute the day of the greatest sanctification; that is, to obscure the light of our pious thought or action with errors that are introduced. But we should

avoid such a market, having enclosed ourselves within the walls of our city, which is the custody of a more perfect life.

Nehemiah 10:32

And we shall set upon us the precepts, etc. All these things contained in this chapter pertain to the care of the house of the Lord and its ministers and ministries. And the best order of religious conversation, to be spiritually imitated now for us too, is that first the children of the transmigration chastise themselves from the defilements of the nations; then, by the observance of the Sabbath, which stood out among the foremost commandments of the law, they are sanctified; and thus henceforth they turn all care of acting to the service of divine worship. For first it is necessary for us to be cleansed from evils, and thus to be adorned with good acts. However, it is long enough to discuss each of these allegorically, in what order we should spiritually act towards the worship of the Lord, and this more so in the very volume of the law.

The leaders from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi live in Jerusalem, along with a tenth part of the remaining people.

Nehemiah 11:1

Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. etc. The arrangement that had been begun right after the rebuilding of the city is now complete; but up to this time, it could not be finished before the numbering of the people and the completion of the solemnities of the seventh month, so that it might be determined who should live in the holy city itself and who in the other towns. It is fitting regarding the figures of the sacraments that the leaders of the people are said to have lived in Jerusalem. For it is proper that the prelates of the holy Church should surpass the people as much in the merits of their life as they surpass them in the height of their power. Indeed, the other cities of Israel signify the devout conversation of God's people. But the habitation of the people of Jerusalem especially represents the deeds of those who, having overcome the struggle against vices, approach the vision of supreme peace with a free mind, according to that verse of the Psalmist: "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psalm 87). Hence, subsequently, a tenth part of the people was chosen by lot to receive habitation in Jerusalem, while the other nine parts resided in their own towns;

because it is indeed the privilege of the perfect—those who fully keep the precepts of the Decalogue in the love of God and neighbor—to approach the heavenly secrets with their minds and to imitate, if I may say so, the peace of supreme blessedness amid the turmoil of a fleeting life. Although the gate to eternal life is open to those who keep God's general commandments, as the Lord declares to the rich man who questioned Him in the Gospel. Such people dwell, as it were, in the cities given to them by the Lord, because they vigilantly guard themselves against the snares of the ancient enemy by adhering to the divine law. But those who wish to be perfect, having sold all that they have and distributed it to the poor, and thus follow the Lord, these dwell, as it were, in the citadel of Jerusalem, close to the temple of God and the ark of the covenant, because they approach more intimately the grace of their Creator. It is well said that their habitation in the holy city was not due to human choice, but by the casting of lots, just as the possession of other cities was given by lot to the children of Israel in the time of Joshua; because indeed both small and great blessings are received not by the freedom or effort of one's own will but by the gift of the hidden Judge and Giver.

Nehemiah 11: 2

The people blessed all the men, etc. And we must make the exalted life of the elect, which we cannot follow by imitation, our own by rejoicing and venerating it. It should be noted, according to the faith of sacred History, that those who are said to have dwelled in Jerusalem were none other than from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and the Levites. For it clearly follows: [Nehemiah 11:3] -- Each one dwelt in his own possession, etc. By these words, it is plainly taught that all of Israel, that is, the ten tribes, lived in their cities, in which even the priests and Levites held their portion decreed by law. However, from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, whoever was chosen by lot dwelled in Jerusalem; along with those from the priestly and Levitical tribes. For the tribe of Benjamin had been dwelling there from ancient times, as that city had fallen to them by lot. The tribe of Judah entered there in the times of David, when he made it the metropolis of the entire Israelite kingdom. The tribe of Levi was added when the ark of the covenant was brought there, and the altar and temple of God were built. For, see the following passages of this book and you will find that inhabitants of Jerusalem are counted only from these three tribes, and their total is carefully tallied; once their

catalog is completed, Scripture still goes on to add in which cities the rest of these tribes lived. For it follows:

Nehemiah 11:25

Of the sons of Judah, they dwelled in Kiriath-arba, etc. For Beer-sheba was the boundary of Judah to the south, and the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom to the north next to Jerusalem to the east. Then the cities of the sons of Benjamin are recounted in a similar order. After listing these, it is added: [Nehemiah 11:36] -- And concerning the Levites, portions of Judah and Benjamin, it indicates that the Levites received their share in the possession of the children of Judah and Benjamin according to the decree of the law. Let these few words be said about the history. Concerning all these things, if we also wish to hear an allegorical sense that fits our actions, Judah is interpreted as confessing, Benjamin as the son of the right hand, Levi as taken up. Tribes of all these partly live in Jerusalem, and partly in subordinate cities given to them by God, because the gains of the faithful are many and diverse, for which there are also many mansions in the house of the Father in the heavens, as we taught above. Some are content to keep the general commandments of God: not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness against their neighbor; to honor father and mother, and to love neighbors as themselves. Others try to take a stricter way of a perfect life, yet all praise and confess the grace of their Creator according to their calling and are children of the eternal kingdom, which is at His right hand; and they are taken up by Him into life, when the time of that judgment comes, in which two will be in the field, one will be taken, two women grinding at the mill, one will be taken, and one left (Matthew XXIV).

Nehemiah 12:1

These are the priests and Levites, etc. Here the chief priests are described together with their brothers, that is the lesser priests, and the Levites, those who went up from the captivity of Babylon with Zerubbabel and Joshua the son of Jozadak. After explaining these, those who succeeded each other in the chief priesthood from that time up to the beginning of the kingdom of the Macedonians are also included. For it follows:

CHAPTER 32

The progeny of Joshua the high priest, and those who were leaders of the priests and Levites at that time, is expounded. [Nehemiah 12:10] -- Now

Joshua begot Joakim, etc. Finally, Jeddua, who is placed last among these, Josephus writes (Antiquities II, 8) was the high priest in the times of Alexander the Great, and humbly and honorably received by him when he met him with his brothers. Indeed, he names him Jaddus, and says that he was the father of Onias the high priest, of whom it is written in the book of the Maccabees; not that Nehemiah, the author of this book, could have lived in the flesh until those times, but because he knew his infancy, who yet could have reached the grade of priesthood after a long time following his death. For at the end of this little book, there is also mention of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliasib, that one of them was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, although the name of this son-in-law is indeed omitted. But because Joiada is the same grandfather of Jeddua, it is clear that the son-in-law spoken of is either the actual father of this Jeddua, or his uncle; therefore, he could have been born while Nehemiah was still alive.

Nehemiah 12:12

In the days of Joachim there were priests, etc. However, after providing the succession of chief priests, a catalogue of the lesser priests and Levites who existed during their times is also added, so that we might know that, when the number of citizens in Jerusalem increased abundantly, the group of priests and Levites was also distinguished and noble, sufficient for the ministries of the temple and altar, for confessing and praising God, for the guardianship of the same temple and city, and for instructing the people. Nor was it done without the understanding of a holier mystery, that the rebuilt city of Jerusalem deserved such a great number of citizens in every rank and order, as it is never read to have lost so many even while the enemy was pressing and destroying. For just so, the holy Church often received greater increases from its losses, when many, frightened by the example of one who lapsed into sin through negligence, became more cautious about persevering in the chastity of faith. Often the very ones who sinned, after performing penance, began to bear greater fruits of good works than those they were accustomed to bear before the incursion of sin. Often the Church, devastated by heretics, after receiving the light of truth through the diligence of Catholic doctors, generated more children of the same truth, recovering many to know and defend reason.

For blessed Fathers Athanasius, Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine, and others like them would never have composed so many and such magnificent treat-

ises on the holy Scripture if not for the multifarious errors of heretics against the correct faith. But while the heretics were trying to support their lies with testimonies of Scriptures, they were forced contrariwise to refute them with the authority of the same Scriptures and to explain how their statements should rightly be understood. Reading these writings today, we receive them as more vigilant guards at the gates and entrances of the holy city and temple, and as more copious ministers for the office of the altar and the sacrifices of the Lord; for through their words we are instructed to more intently serve under the divine gaze of majesty, in the custody of faith, and in good action. This can also mystically be understood of the persecution by the pagans, by which the holy Church was very frequently shaken; it seemed indeed to be completely destroyed on the occasion of the martyrs, but it was better constructed as they were crowned in secret. With their miracles shining forth after their deaths, a greater people flocked to the confession of faith, until the very pinnacle of worldly power consented to submit its neck to the sweetest yoke of Christ, so that the state of the holy city, which is the Church of Christ, long attacked by unbelieving kings, was again helped and propagated by the efforts of believing kings and princes of the age;

just as the city of Jerusalem was indeed overthrown by the kings of the Chaldeans, who are interpreted as fierce or like demons, but was restored and exalted with the due honor by the kings of the Persians, who are said to be interpreted as tempted, through friendly provision.

CHAPTER 33

The city of Jerusalem is dedicated with solemn joy, and guardians are appointed over the treasury houses for the offerings of the saints. [Nehemiah 12:27] -- At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, etc. The city had already been built for some time, but it was not fitting to dedicate it until inhabitants were gathered, appropriate ministers for the temple were assigned, and guards were appointed for the gates and vestibules. Once the holy city is established, it is dedicated when, at the end of the age, the number of the elect is completed and the Universal Church is brought into heaven to behold its Creator. Whenever we are uplifted in this life with the desires for that life, we rejoice as if at the dedication of our figurative city. Thus, this same dedication can be understood in two ways signification-wise: at one time, in the hope of those desiring and purifying the eyes of their heart, by which they

may be able to see God; and then in the actual enjoyment of the divine vision by blessed people in spiritual bodies among the angelic host of spirits.

Nehemiah 12: 27

They sought out the Levites from all their dwellings, etc. Spiritual Levites, that is, those chosen for the lot of the kingdom, are also sought from all their places, when the Son of Man shall send His angels, and gather His elect from the four winds, from the highest part of the earth to the highest part of the heavens. And they make dedication with joy, song, thanksgiving; and with various musical instruments, for in the perception of eternal life they will rejoice together, giving thanks to Him by whose gift they have deserved to enter that city. Moreover, cymbals, psalteries, and lyres can be understood as the bodies of the saints, now immortal, rendering the sweetest sounds of their praise to the Lord. But in the present life, the Levites are gathered in Jerusalem when the faithful, inflamed by the memory of supernal peace, place their whole mind's delight in it, and of that eternal inheritance in the heavens which they hope to receive; and if they cannot yet see it, at least they rejoice in the hope, according to the words of the Psalmist: Rejoice, you just, in the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness (Ps. XCVI). For they make dedication in song and thanksgiving, receiving with a mind rejoicing in the Lord whatever occurs in the world, whether adversity or prosperity. They also make it in cymbals, psalteries, and lyres, when they cause the grateful sounds of good works to ascend to the ears of their Creator, and also kindle the hearts of their neighbors to the love of the same Creator and Savior.

Nehemiah 12: 28

So the sons of the singers gathered, etc. The sons of the singers are imitators of those who have striven to serve the Lord with a devout and cheerful mind, or even to sound forth His word by preaching to others; who build for themselves villages around Jerusalem, when they dwell in the vicinity of the heavenly homeland with a lofty heart, saying: "For our conversation is in heaven" (Philippians III). And they build these same villages in the plains around Jerusalem, when they humble themselves the more with a heart expanded in God, as much as they sweetly taste and touch the glory of His loftiness; who, indeed, all being gathered now and with the progress of good works, to the

heavenly homeland of virtues, and in the very time of dedication - that is, of eternal reward - are found there together.

Nehemiah 12: 30

And the priests and Levites purified themselves, etc. It is a wholly just order that those teachers and prelates who wish to purify the people should first be purified themselves; first, they should chastise their own body and bring it into servitude, lest perhaps, while preaching to others, they themselves should be found reprobate (I Cor. IX). The priests and Levites were purified by prayers and by the offerings of sacrifices, and also by abstaining from wives, they purified the people by preaching the same continence. They also purified the gates and the wall with trumpets and the songs of psalms, with the people accompanying them by encircling. Together they purified with themselves the people, the gates, and the wall, offering great sacrifices after completing the circuit for the state of the citizens and the city. But also now, those who preside over the people with holy leadership, and have been taken by the Lord into spiritual ministry, carry with greater seriousness the memory of our dedication, which is in the future resurrection; thus, they strive the more earnestly to purify and sanctify both themselves and those entrusted to them; lest perhaps anyone, found in a defiled state of mind, be cast outside from the common joy of the holy solemnity and be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness.

Nehemiah 12: 31

And I caused the leaders of Judah to ascend upon the wall, etc. The leaders of Judah, that is, of confession or praise, are indeed the more advanced teachers of the holy Church, who ascend upon the wall in the dedication of the city; because when the time of recompense shall appear, they will be shown to have transcended the general conduct of the holy Church by living more loftily. These are of whom the Lord promises to the same Church through the prophet, saying: "I have appointed watchmen upon your walls" (Isaiah XXVI). Hence it is just that those who are now elevated as the wall of the holy Church in the capacity of watchmen, should then also surpass the others in the glory of their reward. Where two large choirs of praisers are established, because from both peoples, namely, the Jews and the Gentiles, who praise God in the heavenly homeland, they come. What also anyone learned recognizes to happen daily in this life. These choirs indeed go to the right upon

the wall, because the just, by living rightly, hasten to eternal life both now in the present, and will reach it in the future. They go to the gate of the dung heap, indeed in the present to purge the filth of sins from the Church by living rightly and correcting those who err. In the future, however, so that they may expel by judicial power from the city of the Lord, that is, from the entrance to the heavenly homeland, those who were unwilling to be corrected. Or certainly, the choirs of praisers go to the right upon the wall to the gate of the dung heap, while they proclaim the worthy of praise, who took care to eliminate all uncleanness from the Church by preaching, reproving, excommunicating, anathematizing.

Nehemiah 12:35

And of the sons of the priests with trumpets, Zechariah, etc. Indeed, in this life, the sons of the priests play the trumpets at the dedication of the city of God, because they inflame the hearts of the listeners with the memory of the heavenly homeland by preaching, and this is in the vessels of the song of David, the man of God, when, relying not on their own sense or desires, but following in all things the life of the fathers and prophets, they insist on doctrine, the word of preaching. Ezra, the scribe of the law of God, precedes them to the gate of the fountain, as in all that they do, they keep the words of the sacred Scripture before their eyes, by which they may be led to the entrance of eternal life. About this, the Psalmist says to the Lord: They will be filled from the abundance of your house, and you will give them drink from the torrent of your pleasure, for with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36).

Nehemiah 12:37

And they went up against them on the steps of the city of David, etc. Above, when the city was being built, it was said: Those who built the gate of the fountain continued their measure of work up to the steps descending from the city of David (Neh. III). There, therefore, is the descent of the steps during the building; here, however, during the dedication of the city, is the ascent mentioned; just as there labor and conflict with the enemy is conducted, here the joy of the enemy having been defeated is celebrated, because indeed all the saints, who now are humbled under the mighty hand of God, will be exalted by Him in the future. Those who now build the walls of the Church on earth from living stones, namely holy souls, in affliction and dangers, in many vigils, then with the completion of the same building, and

when it has been raised in the kingdom of heaven, they, rejoicing, ascend to contemplate its glory. However, the house of David, that is, by the strong and desirable hand, are all the just, who by the grace of their Creator are filled and inhabited by Him. And the sons of priests ascend upon the house of David, when holy preachers, or martyrs, as they now pass through the general life of the just, either through the ministry of the word or the struggle of martyrdom; in this way, then, the general rewards of them precede the higher gifts of remuneration.

To whom the parable of the faithful servants aptly fits, of which one says, Lord, your mina has made ten minas; the same Lord says, Well done, good servant, because you have been faithful in a little, you will have authority over ten cities. To another saying the same, Lord, your mina has made five minas; and He says, You be over five cities (Luke XIX). For as many as one now instructs to life by his word or example, to such an extent he will then be honored, appearing more glorious in the perception of life. The priests also come to the water gate towards the east, when those who in this life, just as the deer longs for the fountains of water, so desired to appear before the face of God, they reach the affection of this desire, and merit to see the rise of the Sun of righteousness without setting. But it is said, And they went up against them; it does not signify the contrariety of distance, but the encounter of harmony, by which the elect both in this life once kindle each other to the love of their Creator, and in the next life more perfectly rejoicing in each other's happiness, always without weariness they praise Him, in accordance with the example of the seraphim, who, as the prophet testifies, calling to one another, celebrate the holy Trinity with associated exultation (Isa. VI).

Nehemiah 12: 38

And a second chorus of those giving thanks went opposite, etc. It is long to discuss each gate or tower in particular; it suffices to say that those who completed the gates, towers, and wall of the city in great labor, hardship, hunger, cold, daily and nightly watchfulness, against an indefatigable and insidious enemy, then, with the enemy repelled and confounded, walking through the gates, towers, and buildings of the same city, rejoice together in songs and hymns, with psalteries, cymbals, lyres, trumpets, and thanksgiving, together with those who were the makers of the work and the teachers of God's law. It is doubtful to none that this also happens in the same manner in a spiritual

edifice. When the time of ultimate retribution comes, as if by the long-desired dedication of the city of God, everlasting faith receives rewards for its works; when, like Nehemiah and Ezra, and the other priests and Levites, each presenting their laborers, all the teachers of the faithful people introduce those whom they have brought to the Lord to the walls of the heavenly homeland. Then, among other things, in the holy walls of the city, even upon the tower of the ovens, in whose structure they had labored before, Nehemiah advances with a chorus of praisers, while the teachers of truth rejoice in the sublime rewards of those they have taught. For if the breads of the ovens, which are baked in secret, signify the inner devotion of the faithful mind, confirmed by the fire of love;

whence such breads are commanded by law to be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord (Leviticus II), which are more aptly figured by the ovens in which those same breads are baked than by their own hearts, which are always to burn with the flame of intimate love, and tend to produce acts and words of virtues. About which the prophet beautifully says: "Your Lord is a fire in Zion, and a furnace in Jerusalem" (Isaiah XXXI). And Luke himself about himself: "Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke XXIV). And against, the hearts of the reprobate also burn, but with the fire of sins. Hence another prophet about them: "All of them are adulterers, like a heated oven" (Hosea VII). Therefore, the builders of the holy city build a tower of ovens among others, when the teachers establish the hearts of their hearers in faith and in the work of truth, so that they may be worthy to receive greater gifts of the Spirit, and daily new feasts of virtues to be brought forth in the joy of the people of God. Rejoicing, and singing praise to the Lord, they advance upon the tower of the ovens on the day of the dedication of Jerusalem, when in the time of future retribution, they rejoice in the eternal beatitude for the glory of those whom they have instructed with the teachings of life.

Therefore, the ovens are the hearts of the elect, in which love is poured out by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them. And the tower of the ovens is the height and guard of good works; which same hearts, lest they may be harmed by evil spirits, lest the flame of virtues be able to be inflated or disturbed by the wind of pride, always need to be fortified with careful and anxious vigilance.

Nehemiah 12: 40

And two choirs of those praising stood in the house of God, etc. Walking before the walls and gardens of the city, in a song of joy, and with musical instruments, they return to the temple of the Lord; so that there also standing, they may render praise to the Lord with sounding trumpets, and fulfill the vows of dedication with the offered sacrifices. But that same homeland of the future life mystically signifies the house of the Lord, which both the city of the Lord also indicates, just as the present Church is customarily called in the Scriptures both the house of Christ and the city. However, there is a distinction, as the buildings of the city sing the praises with songs of gratitude and instruments; but in the house of God standing, they are reported to have praised and sung clearly. For the chosen ascend the walls of the city, which they made with the joy of the heavenly country, which they themselves made with the diligence of good works, they enter. They perceive the diversity of the gates, and the height of the towers and buildings, when entering into the house of the Father, they contemplate the difference of many mansions there according to the diverse merits of men. But they stand in the house of God, and sing more clearly, when each received into their own mansions, they remain in stable habitation in the perpetual vision of their Creator, and celebrate His praises in the age of God with an undivided voice.

Where two choirs of those praising will be, either from both peoples, as we interpreted above, joined, and coupled into one modulation of divine praise; or made of angels and men, fulfilling the Lord's promise, where it is said, that men will be equal to the angels of God (Mark XII). But also in this life the just ascend into the city of the Lord with hymns of dedication, when longing with all their heart for the memory of future reward, they daily progress more and more in good works, according to that of the Psalmist: He has set ascensions in his heart in the valley of tears (Ps. LXXXIII). And again: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord (Ps. CXVIII). For behold he also calls the undefiled those walking in the way in the law of the Lord, because they thus indeed hold the accepted innocence of heart and work, so that moreover they strive to grow in the merits of virtues to higher things. But they stand in the house of the Lord with praises, because in the very pursuit of good works they persevere indefatigably, according to that of blessed Elijah: The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand (III Kings

XVII), that is, in whose will to be completed I remain with an indefatigable mind. But aptly it follows:

Nehemiah 12: 43

And they sacrificed great victims on that day, etc. On that day of perpetual light (about which Zachariah said: And there shall be one day which is known to the Lord, not day nor night: that is, removed from the experience of passing times) the chosen sacrifice great victims to the Lord, namely those which the Psalmist, tasting in the hope of future things, said: You have broken my bonds, I will offer to you the sacrifice of praise (Psalm 115). He also rightly shows where he hoped to sacrifice this victim, when he immediately adds: I will pay my vows to the Lord in the courts of the house of the Lord, in the presence of all his people, in the midst of you, Jerusalem. For in the midst of Jerusalem we render our vows to God in the presence of all his people, when in the heavenly homeland with the entire assembly of saints gathered, we offer him those praises for which we now groan and which we daily long for with a desire for grace.

Nehemiah 12: 43

For God had made them rejoice with great joy, etc. These things truly pertain to the edification of that holy city which is in the future, in which God is the king who gladdens His citizens with His presence, indeed with great joy; hence, when the king was born in the flesh, the angel appearing to the shepherds said: Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people (Luke 2). This is in clear distinction from human joy, which is both small and transient; and therefore, the wise should consider it of little value. However, in that joy which God grants to His city, it is well mentioned that the wives of the citizens, together with their children, also rejoiced; because at the time of the resurrection, not only those who had either preached the word or steadfastly endured in the works of faith will receive the great reward of their great labors, but also the weaker ones, those who shared the same faith, will rejoice together with them in the same reception of eternal life. For the Lord blessed all those who feared Him, the small together with the great (Psalm 115). This dedication can also be understood in this life metaphorically, in some chosen ones, who, having purified the eye of the heart, are worthy to contemplate part of the joys which the whole Church will fully receive in the future, like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the

other prophets; like the apostles (Matthew 17), who rejoiced to see the Lord glorified on the holy mountain; like Paul (2 Corinthians 12), who was worthy to be caught up into paradise and the third heaven; like John in the Apocalypse, who, the higher they ascended into the lofty heights of the heavenly city, the more clearly they took care to sing the praises of the Lord and always to offer Him the greatest sacrifices of good works.

Nehemiah 12: 44

They also appointed men over the storerooms of the treasury on that day, etc. While all rejoiced in the building and dedication of the city, every effort was made to ensure that the worship of religion, which was established through ceremonies, especially the teaching and duties of priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, was maintained and grew. Therefore, diligent men were appointed to carefully gather and guard the money contributed by the people in the temple treasury, for the use of those same ministers of the temple and altar; to also carefully preserve the first fruits of the crops, tithes, wine, and libations brought to the temple; so that, with an abundance of things either to be offered to the Lord or from which the ministers of the Lord themselves could live, the multitude of those same ministers would more willingly agree to make their dwelling in Jerusalem, from whom the gathered crowd of people should be taught and at the same time sanctified.

Nehemiah 12: 44

Because Judah rejoiced in the priests and Levites who stood by, etc. This was the reason why the people chose to have the priests and Levites, and the other ministers of the saints to dwell in Jerusalem; because they rejoiced in their good works, through whose devoted diligence to God, the people themselves were corrected from their errors, and the city was constructed and dedicated with great praise and joy. We have an allegorical exposition of this chapter prepared for us; because the Lord decided that those who proclaim the Gospel should live from the Gospel (1 Cor. 9). But woe to those priests and ministers of the saints, who indeed delight in joyfully receiving the rightful stipends from the people, but do not strive to labor for the salvation of the same people, neither to provide them with any guidance in holy living, nor to sing to them anything sweet about the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom, nor to open for them the gate of the heavenly city by having citizenship in heaven, but rather by acting perversely they are found to close it. In

whose works the people cannot in any way trust, nor praise the Lord, but rather are much more compelled to be afflicted. Note well indeed that Judah, who previously spoke as one despairing in the construction of the city: "The strength of those bearing the burdens is weakened, and there is much dirt, and we are unable to build the wall" (Neh 4), and the rest of that place;

now had regained strength of mind and body to carry away the dirt which hindered the building of the wall that had fallen, to overcome the lurking enemies who were threatening. Therefore, with good reason, he rejoices in the priests and Levites, singers and gatekeepers, whose labor and exhortation enabled him to escape such a great danger of affliction, and found such great glory of regained prosperity. And you, therefore, if your heart is weighed down by the dirt of vices, so that you are unable to build in it a city worthy of divine habitation, if you see the evil enemy intending to draw you back from purging the rubble of vices, from building the walls of virtues, listen to the consolation and advice of the priests; be constant in listening to and keeping the divine readings; and thus you will stand, so that the habitation of your praetorium, with the snares of demons driven out, will have God as the victor enter, about to sanctify it as his city, and to make his dwelling with you.

Nehemiah 12: 47

And they sanctified the Levites, etc. The people sanctified the Levites by giving them tithes, as if to the holy ones of God; and the Levites themselves sanctified the priests by offering them a tenth part, as if giving from their own tithes to those higher than themselves.

Nehemiah 13: 1

On that day, it was read from the book of Moses, etc. It is evident that the Moabites and Ammonites, because they were born of incest, hold the figure of the heretics, whose founders, while they corrupt the doctrine of the fathers, from which they themselves were taught, by misunderstanding it, use it as if the daughters of Lot secretly and in the dark used their father's seed, and not lawfully: therefore the progeny of such, that is, the followers of heresies, can never have any part in the Church of the Lord. For whoever are corrected from this, will no longer be the offspring of the same origin. However, they met the children of Israel coming out of Egypt with bread and water, if they, living well, and dwelling in Catholic peace, would offer the solace of

the word of God to those who have recently been rescued from the service of sins by the water of baptism and the waves of the sea, aspiring to the freedom of the heavenly homeland; just as Barzillai the Gileadite did (2 Samuel 19), who met David and his army fleeing from Absalom with provisions, so that by refreshing them, he rendered them stronger against the new tyranny of the king's son; clearly signifying those who strengthen the church scattered by heretics with the help of the heavenly word, and take care to encourage them to conquer their madness.

But while these same heretics strive to destroy neophytes with their leaders and by the shown examples of others, or with malignant words, like a people born of incest attacking the exodus of Israel from Egypt with their arms, and Balaam the soothsayer, who is interpreted as the vanity of the cursed people, and with wicked plots. But God turned the curse of Balaam into a blessing for His people, and protected them from the arms of hostile nations; for all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8).

CHAPTER 34

All foreigners are separated from Israel, and the portions of the Levites and the firstfruits of the priests are placed in the treasury of the house of the Lord. [Nehemiah 13:3] -- Now it came to pass when they heard the law, etc. Hearing the law about the two enemy nations to be anathematized, the faithful people immediately separated all foreigners from themselves; because it is necessary for us to attend to the hearing of the truth in such a way that when we are prohibited by divine reading from any single vice, we immediately purge not only that particular vice concerning which the discourse may have occurred, but also everything whatsoever of vice we find soiling us, both from our actions and our conscience. [Nehemiah 13:5] -- He made for himself a large treasury, etc. This statement, where Nehemiah writes that he was not in Jerusalem, does not seem to pertain to the matters narrated above up to this point, but only to the present location; for the previous matters were seen to have been done or spoken at the time when the city was built and dedicated, when Nehemiah was still residing in Jerusalem; with those things diligently completed, he returned to the king, and while he was absent, Eliashib made a large treasury in which were stored those things necessary either for the ministry of the house of the Lord or for the use of the ministers. He was not afraid to place certain unlawful things in the treasury

of the house of the Lord; because when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he immediately strove to disrupt those things. For it follows:

CHAPTER 35

Nehemiah, having returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, again cleanses the treasuries of the vessels of the Gentiles and places there those things appropriate for the house of the Lord. [Nehemiah 13:7] -- And I came to Jerusalem and understood the evil, etc. We read above that Tobiah was an Ammonite servant, an enemy of the people of God; therefore, Eliashib the priest acted very wrongfully; for he made a treasury in the vestibules of the house of God for this man, even though he was closely related to him by kinship, in which he placed his vessels, having ejected the vessels of the house of God, and the other things required for its ministry; for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What accord has Christ with Belial? What agreement does the temple of God have with idols? What communion have heretics and schismatics with the orthodox and peaceful children of God? (II Cor. VI)

Nehemiah 13: 8

And I cast out the vessels of the house of Tobiah outside, etc. And you, whatever of infidelity and impurity you find among the faithful, immediately cast it out, so that from the hearts of the believers, which are the treasuries of the Lord, when they have been filled with the riches of virtues, the vessels of the Lord may be brought in; that is, those very hearts which shortly before had been vessels of error through fault may again become vessels of the Lord through correction; and there the sacrifice of good works and the incense of pure prayer may be found, where formerly was the den of thieves. But those also who cast out the vessels of Tobiah the Ammonite from the treasury of the temple, and replace there the vessels of the house of God, and the sacrifice and incense, are those who, excommunicating or anathematizing heretics or false Catholics and expelling them from the Church, appoint in their place the servants of Christ who serve Him with faithful deeds and prayers. Certainly, this too should be compared to Nehemiah, with the zeal of the Lord the Savior, when finding those selling and buying in the temple, he made a whip of cords and drove them all out (Mark XII, Luke XIX); and Nehemiah, aptly as in his other acts, thus in this also carried the type of the true comforter and cleaner of God.

CHAPTER 36

Nehemiah diligently strives to prevent the Sabbath rest from being violated by the Gentiles' market.

Nehemiah 13:15

In those days I saw in Judah men treading wine presses on the Sabbath, etc. By law, we are commanded to work for six days on necessary things, and on the seventh, we are to rest; the general mystery of this command is clear, that all the elect in this world, which is measured by six ages, ought to labor for eternal rest; but on the future day, as on the seventh day, they hope to receive perpetual rest from the Lord. And according to tropology, that is, the moral sense, the elect also in this life keep a Sabbath dedicated to the Lord, when they separate themselves temporarily from the cares of this world, devote themselves to prayer, and lift their purified minds to the contemplation of heavenly things. For when we carry out the demands of the flesh with a sincere heart, and not in desires contrary to the Apostle's command, we labor as if in six days on necessary things; since we are occupied with things needed for this world. Furthermore, the Sabbath of our prayers and devotion, in which we are freed from temporal activities, so that we may sweetly taste the joys of eternity, is rightly assigned to the seventh day; because it imitates the future rest of life and blessed praise; but the Gentiles seek to profane the Sabbath day when earthly thoughts inopportunely disturb us during our time of prayer and try to draw us away from deep love through memory or delight in temporal things.

They load wine, grapes, and figs onto donkeys, and all kinds of burdens, and bring them into Jerusalem, when they seek to burden the foolish movements of our spirit with carnal pleasures, attempting through these and similar temptations to violate the rest of our hearts devoted to God. But Nehemiah opposes these tumults of improper thoughts so that they do not disturb our Sabbath, when with strict diligence, aided by the Lord, we exclude useless and inept imaginations from our hearts during prayer. He exhorts them to sell such merchandise on the days when it is lawful to do so, when the devout heart imposes a boundary on its thoughts, so that during prayer, it abstains from the cares of passing things. Yet at other times, when opportunity dictates, let them not completely turn away from efforts concerning

food and clothing; but let them dispense these with appropriate moderation when necessity demands.

Nehemiah 13:16

And the Tyrians lived in it, bringing in fish, etc. Just as the good fish represents pious faith, which when one asks from the Lord, one does not receive the serpent of unbelief; similarly, the wicked fish represents base thoughts, which by their very nature tend to immerse themselves excessively in worldly cares; these the Tyrians, who are interpreted as the constrained, seek to sell to us on the Sabbath, when impure spirits improperly attempt to overwhelm the rest of our pious life with deep worldly concerns. However, for such commerce Nehemiah rebukes and chastises the leaders of Judah, when divine inspiration mercifully purges those who strive to serve the profession of piety from such thoughts. [Nehemiah 13:19] -- Therefore, it happened, when the gates of Jerusalem rested on the Sabbath day, etc. If our conscience, when purified from vices, rejoices in the indwelling of God, it can rightly be called Jerusalem. What are these gates of Jerusalem, but the senses of our body, namely, sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch? through which the things done outside reach the knowledge of our mind, as if entering through them; which we are commanded to close on the Sabbath day, so that when we seek to occupy ourselves with psalms or prayers to God, everything external is expelled from the mind, and we pray and praise only our judge in secret with a free mind. And because no one becomes supreme suddenly, but ought to reach this perfection and peace of mind, of which we speak, through long progress in holy living with the aid of Christ's grace, it is fittingly added and said of these things:

Nehemiah 13:22

He also said to the Levites that they should be purified, etc. For it is necessary that they be purified from the daily exercise of good works, who desire to guard the gates of their senses from any incursion of turbulent thoughts. And whoever wishes to sanctify the Sabbath day, that is, to make useful to oneself the leisure of prayers, psalmody, holy reading, and tears, it is necessary to cleanse one's conscience with great diligence, so that one may be able to bring to completion the intent of good action well. This can also be rightly interpreted in an allegorical sense concerning the teachers of the faithful. For whoever desires to guard the gates of the holy Church, that is,

the faith and works of their hearers, through which alone one enters the Church, from the contagion of heretics and vice knocking, ought first to purify their own heart and actions from every stain of errors.

CHAPTER 37

Nehemiah cleanses the Jews from foreign wives and establishes the orders of priests and Levites, each in his service; and finally recommends himself to the memory of God for good. [Nehemiah 13:30] -- But in those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, etc. And now in the holy Church they marry foreign wives, whoever tarnishes his conscience with the pleasures of crimes, which properly belong to the pagans. And the children born from these do not know how to speak Jewish, as the deeds which arose from a corrupted mind reveal nothing of pious profession; but rather sound like pagan folly than ecclesiastical chastity. For Ashdod, which is called Asdod in Hebrew, is interpreted as "word of fire." Therefore, according to the allegorical sense, the sons of foreign wives speak Ashdodite, when deeds begotten through wantonness expect the retribution of eternal combustion. Hence, rightfully, the parents of such are not only rebuked and cursed by Nehemiah, but some are also beaten; because it is necessary for the erring to be more severely restrained by teachers of the truth, so that they may learn to be happily transferred from the word of avenging fire to the word of divine praise. But also heretics, when they devote themselves more to the studies of gentile philosophy, dialectics, and rhetoric than to ecclesiastical simplicity, it is not surprising if their listeners speak according to the tongue of the people, and the people indeed speak, turning over the holy scriptures with their mouth, but interpreting these with erratic and pagan sense.

Nehemiah 13:30

Therefore, I cleansed them from all foreigners, etc. An apt and fitting end in all respects for the edification of the holy city and the temple of the Lord, so that with the citizens cleansed of every stain of foreign and alien pollution from God, the orders of priests and Levites might rightly be preserved in their ministry; so that the institution of the master of the Church, royally established, may remain and grow in goodness, encouraging the people disciplined from all sin; for indeed this people, among other things, offers wood to the Lord to sustain the fire of the altar, as they perform works of virtues surely worthy of divine consecration. For if wood did not sometimes

signify something good, the prophet would not say: "Then shall all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord" (Psalm 95). But wood burns and is consumed on the altar of holocausts, when works of justice in the hearts of teachers are perfected by the flame of charity. Rightly then does such a founder and dedicant of the city, after many labors of his devotion, commend himself to the memory of his Creator and the Giver of all good things. And You, supreme Father of lights, from whom every good gift and every perfect gift descends; who have bestowed upon me, most humble of your servants, both the love and the help to consider the wonders of your law; who in the treasury of the prophetic volume has granted me the grace not only to embrace the old things, but also to find new gifts by the uplifting of the old, and to bring them forth for the use of my fellow servants, remember me, my God, for good (James 1).

PART THREE

Commentary on the Song of Habakkuk

The prophet's prayer, explained for a sister in Christ.

Commentary on the Song of Habakkuk

The Venerable Bede

AD 673–735

The prayer of Habakkuk in the third chapter of his book, explained at the request of a woman whom Bede calls his dearest sister in Christ. Bede takes the prophet's vision of God coming from the south as a picture of Christ's coming and of his triumph over death.

INTRODUCTION

The allegorical exposition on the Song of Habakkuk, which you asked to be explained, dearest sister in Christ, mainly declares the mysteries of the Lord's Passion. Hence, according to the custom of the holy, universal, and apostolic Church, it is solemnly repeated every week in the morning praises on the sixth day of the Sabbath, on which the same Passion was completed. But it also mystically describes the event of His incarnation, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, the faith of the Gentiles, and the perfidy of the Jews. The prophet, contemplating the state of the present age, had seen the peace of sinners and the afflictions of the righteous, had seen the wicked abound in riches, and the innocent be subjected to daily scourges; had seen impiety in the place of judgment, and iniquity in the place of justice; had seen the tears of the innocent and no consoler, nor anyone able to resist the violence of the slanderers, deprived as they were of all help. Knowing also that these and countless other such things could not have happened without divine providence, troubled greatly in spirit and sighing deeply from his heart, he cried out to the Lord: "How long, O Lord, shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? (Hab. 1:2). And again: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.

Why then do you look upon those who deal treacherously and are silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? Why do you make men like the fish of the sea, like reptiles that have no ruler? (Hab. 1:13-14). Yet amid these reflections, he immediately recalled the dispensation

of the Lord's incarnation and passion, which he had known in the spirit of prophecy, and understood that he had complained much more bitterly than he ought about the afflictions of the saints in this life, to whom eternal rest was promised in the future, when even the Son of God appearing in the flesh was not to leave the world without the suffering of the cross, who was to be born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mother, and was to live in the world without any sin. And beginning his prayer to the Lord concerning his ignorance, he thus begins.

COMMENTARY

Habakkuk 3:2

Lord, I heard Your report and feared. The report of the Lord the Savior is what He heard from the Father, that He would come in the flesh, be born into the world, dwell among the weak as the Almighty, among sinners as the Just, among men as God, perform heavenly works, teach heavenly precepts, promise heavenly gifts, be tempted, scourged, mocked, killed, and by His death destroy our death; rising from the dead, ascend into the heavens, and having sent the Spirit from above, illuminate the world with the grace of truth. Of this report He Himself frequently made mention in the Gospel, saying: "But He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him" (John 8:26). And again: "But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Concerning this, John the Baptist also says: "He that comes from heaven is above all, and what He has seen and heard, that He testifies" (John 3:31). Therefore, the prophet heard this report of the Lord in spirit, and feared because he complained of the oppressions of the righteous in the world, while even the Lord Himself, who makes the prosperous journey for us to salvation and life, met with death's end in the world. He feared because he lamented over the tribulations of the saints, who are not only to be delivered from tribulations by the Lord but also to be crowned eternally with the Lord.

Habakkuk 3:2

I considered Your works and was afraid: surely those works by which He redeemed the world, becoming obedient to the Father unto death, even the death of the cross: that, as the Apostle again says, through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

Indeed, the more one diligently considers these works, the more one trembles at the works of one's own frailty. [Habakkuk 3:2] -- In the midst of two animals you will be known. It can be understood as in the midst of two animals, in the midst of Moses and Elijah. For there he was known to the three disciples on the holy mountain because he was to die, telling them that he would suffer in Jerusalem. There, he was known because he would rise again and would become immortal, with his countenance made bright like the sun, and his garments shining like snow. There, he was known because he was the Son of God, with a voice from the Father in heaven saying to him: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him (Matthew 17:5). It can also, not unreasonably, be taken as in the midst of two thieves, among whom he was crucified and by dying was known to be a man. However, with the sun darkened, the earth shaken, and the other miracles narrated in the Gospel happening around the cross, he was known to be God. By interceding himself to the Father for his murderers, he was known to be most pious. By this same example, the prophet, who foresaw this in the spirit, was admonished not only to patiently bear the oppressions of the wicked but also to extend the grace of his kindness to those persecuting him.

Habakkuk 3:2

When the years draw near, you will be known, when the time arrives, you will be revealed. The Apostles refer to this when they say: After the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law (Gal. IV, 4). The prophets foresaw these times and years from afar and greeted them from a distance, saying that when the years drew near and the time arrived, the Lord would be revealed and recognized. For it was also heard above, as the Lord said to him: Though the vision is yet for an appointed time; it will speak at the end and will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not delay (Habak. II, 3). Hearing this, and considering the works of the passion, he feared and was in awe, because he was moved by the transitory happiness of the wicked and the temporal affliction of the good. However, for having made a penance worthy of his unaware wrongdoings, he soon trusted that he could obtain forgiveness for his error. Hence he consequently adds:

Habakkuk 3:2

In that time when my soul is troubled, in the wrath of mercy you will remember. When my soul is troubled, he said, struck with worthy sorrow of satisfaction and repentance because of the fear of your wrath and judgment, which I dread to have incurred carelessly, I believe that I will more quickly obtain the mercy of the pardon desired from you: where the marvelous swiftness of divine pity should be considered. He said that he was troubled in soul only because of the wrath of God, and immediately added that he was turned to mercy from wrath. To which the Psalmist's saying is similar: I said: I will confess my injustices against myself to the Lord, and you forgave the impiety of my heart (Ps. 31:3). But such indulgence can be for the smallest faults. Otherwise, our offenses, the graver they are, the greater and longer repentance, weeping, and alms they require. Up to this point, the prophet briefly encompasses with what fear of mind he was struck, having heard and more carefully considered the event of the Lord's incarnation and passion. Then, more fully, he immediately describes what that hearing, what those works of the Lord were that he was so moved by. It follows:

Habakkuk 3:3

God will come from Lebanon and the Holy One from the dense and dark mountain. Lebanon is the highest mountain of Phoenicia, notable for its lofty, incorruptible, and aromatic trees, from which the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem was also made, as Scripture testifies; hence in the Scriptures, sometimes even the temple itself is designated by the name of Lebanon. Hence, for instance, Zechariah speaks about the coming of the Chaldean army against it: "Open, O Lebanon, your gates, and let fire consume your cedars" (Zech. XI, 1). Therefore, God comes from Lebanon, because the Lord appearing in the flesh sowed the first seeds of the Gospel in that very temple, and from there filled the entire world with the seed of His faith and truth. Hence, Isaiah says, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah II, 3). He sprinkled there the first seeds of faith not only through the apostles, who, filled with the Holy Spirit after His passion and resurrection, laid the first foundations of the Church there by preaching, whose sound then went out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Psalm XVIII, 5); but also through Himself, first in that very temple giving testimony of the faith to be had in Him, sitting in the

midst of the doctors when He was of tender age, asking them questions as a mere boy, but answering those teaching as God of eternal majesty;

where, being sought and found by His parents, He Himself indicated that He was God and God's Son by saying: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke II, 49). However, it should be noted that in the Hebrew truth this verse is as follows: "God will come from Teman," that is, from the South, which has an easy sense according to the letter, because Bethlehem, where the Lord was born, is situated to the south of Jerusalem. And when He was brought to Jerusalem by His parents on the fortieth day of His birth, that an offering might be made for Him according to the law, God indeed came from the South. And he says, "the Holy One from the dense and dark mountain. The Holy One, the same Mediator of God and men, who is plainly called God above, of whom Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mother said: "Therefore, the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke I, 35). The mountain from which the same Holy One is sung to come can be understood to mean the kingdom of the Jews, from which He took His fleshly origin. From which also Daniel saw the stone cut out without hands, that is, Christ begotten without the work of a man, who crushing the kingdoms of the world, would fill the whole world with the glory of His name (Dan. II, 45). This mountain is rightly called dense and dark;

for it has many fruitful trees, that is, many holy men laden with the fruits of virtue, who both instruct our hunger with the sweetest taste of their doctrine, and with the shade of their intercession protect our frailty from being dried up by the heat of tribulations from the inner greenness of love. This fits figuratively with what the apostle Peter, certainly a distinguished tree of this mountain, not only refreshes the hungry and thirsty for righteousness with the fruit of doctrine but also saves the sick with the shadow of his body (Acts V, 15). These holy and sublime men can also be designated by the term "South," from whom God is said to come, on account of the fervent love with which they are usually enflamed in the Lord and the doctrine with which they enlighten men, from which South God came because He deigned to be incarnate from such men. From which South God comes daily, when, reading or hearing their words or examples, the love or knowledge of truth is more perfectly generated in our hearts.

Habakkuk 3:3

His majesty covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. The dispensation of the Lord's incarnation having been described, he immediately added the mystery of the ascension by which the same humanity was to be glorified, according to the saying of the Psalmist: His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit reaches to the end thereof (Ps. 18:7). For his majesty covered the heavens, because he who was made a little lower than the angels through the incarnation, was crowned with glory and honor through the resurrection, and established above the works of the Father's hands through the ascension, and all things are placed under his feet (Ps. 8:6), and as the apostles preached, the earth was filled with his praise: this very thing being briefly but very clearly included at both the beginning and end of the same psalm, when it is said: O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! for your magnificence is elevated above the heavens (Ps. 8:2). But even before the passion and resurrection, when the Word made flesh dwelt among us, his majesty covered the heavens, because the assumed humanity, though still mortal, surpassed the heavenly powers. And the earth is full of his praise, with the same heavenly virtues truly knowing that he was the creator of the earth, as of all creation by divinity, who then dwelled on earth through humanity: from which, at his birth, they sang: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will (Lk. 2:14).

Habakkuk 3:4

His brightness will be like the light. The brightness of the virtues and the doctrine of the Lord and Savior will enlighten the believers; from which he is called the Sun of Righteousness in the Scriptures; but because the same brightness could not shine perfectly in the world unless he, having tasted death for a time, destroyed the kingdom of death, and rising from the dead granted the hope and faith of rising to the world, it is rightly added:

Habakkuk 3:4

Horns are in His hands. There the power of His glory was confirmed. He calls the transverse wood of the cross horns, which He held fixed by the hands, so that by overcoming all death in this manner of death, He might thus confirm the power of His glory in the hearts of the chosen, so that they are not retarded from His love by any terrors or blandishments; also promising them the glory of future incorruption, through which the last enemy, death,

will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). Finally, on the holy mountain, with Peter, James, and John present, His splendor shone like light; and they were indeed delighted by the sight of this splendor, but nonetheless, it was proven how fragile and weak they still were at the time of His passion: but after He accepted the horns of the cross in His hands, there the power of His glory was confirmed: so that it could not be driven away from the hearts of the faithful by terrors, nor wounds, nor even death itself. The kingdoms of this world can be suggested in the horns, as is the custom of the prophets. (The sublimity of the human mind, whether good or reprobate, can be designated by the term horns). And horns are in the hands of Christ, because He Himself is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15). Horns are in His hands, to humble one, and exalt another, He breaks all the horns of sinners, which are foolishly exalted, and the horns of the just are exalted, namely desires devoted to God, by which they strive to overcome all contests of the impious and vices.

Habakkuk 3:4

And He placed the love firm in the strength of His fortitude. The saints indeed loved the fortitude of Christ with intimate love, even before His passion; but this very love was not firm until, having completed His passion and resurrection, He more fully gave them the grace of the Holy Spirit. Then indeed it was made so firm that not even the horns of kings themselves, namely the power of the insolent, could break it. [Habakkuk 3:5] -- The word will go before his face, and it went out into the fields. Before the Lord came in the flesh, the words of the prophets preceded, bearing witness to his coming; and these same words went out into the fields when, as the apostles preached, they were spread throughout the whole world: not only in the prophetic writings did the word of preaching precede the Lord, but also in the apostles, when they evangelized the world about the now accomplished advent of Christ in the flesh, the word went before his face, because obviously the doctrine of truth first reaches the ears of those who are to be taught, and then the faith and understanding of the Word enlightens hearts and makes them worthy for God to inhabit; this is typologically designated in the Gospel, when the Lord himself sent disciples to preach in every city and place to which he himself was about to come: which we see done in the same order even to this day; for the Lord follows his preachers, because the

word of the teacher must first be heard, and thus the light of truth is established in the heart of the listener, whence it is aptly added:

Habakkuk 3:6

His feet stood, and the earth was moved. For when the steps of truth are impressed upon the minds of the listeners through the preaching doctor, soon the mind itself, troubled in its consideration, is moved. However, the feet of the Lord can not inconveniently be understood as the doctors themselves, through whom the word is ministered, for he who is present everywhere by himself is carried into the whole world through them as through his feet. These feet stand, and the earth is moved, because the more the holy doctors persist strongly in preaching and preserving the truth, the sooner the hearts of earthly people are struck to repent of their errors; and because this action of repentance should be attributed not to the human preacher but to illuminating grace, it is rightly added: [Habakkuk 3:6] -- He looked, and the nations melted away. Which is to say openly: The Lord had mercy, and the nations repented; by which gaze he looked at Peter when he denied; and he, pricked by the memory of his sin, immediately melted into tears.

Habakkuk 3:6

The mountains were broken exceedingly. He calls them proud mountains, and about the vanity of this world, or kingship, or wisdom, or wealth, exalting themselves, who, with the Lord watching, were not only broken but exceedingly broken, when, by His mercy, some from such ranks not only descended from empty and proud heights but also opposed the same by living and preaching. Indeed, Saul and Matthew were mountains, the former elevated by the wisdom of carnal letters, the latter by the mammon of iniquity, but when each was converted to the teaching of humility, they were made disciples of Christ, the mountains surely were exceedingly broken. [Habakkuk 3:6] -- The everlasting hills flowed down. By the name of hills, as with mountains, proud men are expressed, but perhaps inflated with a lesser arrogance of elation, yet not free from the guilt of swelling pride, and therefore healthily inclined, so that they may deserve to be elevated by the Lord. They are rightly called everlasting hills, because while temporarily humbled, they flow down from the swelling of pride, they are glorified forever by Him who says: And everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled (Luke 14:11). Another translation for everlasting hills plainly has hills of the world, which

pertains to the distinction of the hills of the Lord, that is, of holy men, who, because of the loftiness of mind, disregarding all temporal and lowly things, are worthy of such a name, about whom the Psalmist says to the Lord: Let the mountains receive peace for Your people, and the hills righteousness (Psalm 72:3).

Habakkuk 3:6

I have seen His ways of eternity beyond the labors. The ways are of the temporality of the Lord, by which He came into the world, so that He might appear to men for a time; but His ways of eternity, by which, leaving the world bodily, He returned to the Father, with whom He remained eternally, even while He conversed temporally in the world: indeed, He longed for these ways, when approaching His passion, He said to the Father: I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which You gave Me to do (John 17:4). These are concerning the ways of assumed temporality, and immediately concerning the ways of eternity He added: And now, Father, glorify Me with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was (John 17:5). The prophet saw these ways of eternity beyond the labors, namely of the incarnation and passion, of which it was said above: God shall come from Lebanon, or from the South, and: Rays are in His hands, and other such things, which are found many in this same song. Of these labors the Apostle says: He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8); and immediately concerning the ways of eternity, which the Mediator of God and men deserved through these labors, he added:

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-10); and because through these same labors of His, and through these same ways of His eternity, when, having completed the labors of His passion, He returned to the Father, not only the people of the Jews but also of the nations were to come to eternal rest, aptly it is added:

Habakkuk 3:7

The tents of the Ethiopians will be terrified, and the tents of the land of Midian. For who does not know that the Ethiopians and Midianites are

peoples of the nations? By whose names all the nations of the Gentiles are hinted, who, upon hearing the preaching of the gospel, would be shaken with a healthy fear, so that just as the prophet heard the future report of the Lord and feared, considered the future works of His incarnation, and trembled, so the nations, upon hearing the same report through the apostles, and with His works already accomplished, would begin to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. And appropriately, he first mentioned the Ethiopians, who are at the ends of the world, to mystically indicate that the sound of the preachers would go out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. In this mystery, the eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, as it is read in the Acts of the Apostles, the first fruits of the Gentiles, with Philip evangelizing, received the faith and sacraments of Christ. The people of the Midianites, however, descended from one of the sons of Abraham from Keturah, who was called Midian, and is in the desert of the Saracens towards the east of the Red Sea in Arabia. Therefore, let the Ethiopians fear the name of Christ, so that His faith may be signified as reaching the ends of the world.

Let the Midianites also fear, thus indicating that the Mediterranean peoples too may be saved through this. But that he did not say: The Ethiopians and Midianites will be terrified, but the tents of the Ethiopians will be terrified, and the tents of the land of Midian, is said in that manner of speech, as it is said in the Gospel: And the whole city went out to meet Jesus; and in the psalm: And your cup intoxicating (Psalm 21:5), while it was not the city itself, but those who were in the city, who went out; nor was it the cup itself, but that which is in the cup that is accustomed to intoxicate: this figure of speech is called metonymy in Greek, that is, transnomination, when through that which contains, that which is contained is shown.

Habakkuk 3:8

Is your wrath against the rivers, O Lord, or your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea? By the term "rivers" and "sea," the hearts of the unbelievers are signified, which are rightly called rivers because they flow downwards with the whole force of their intention; the sea, because they are darkened within by turbulent and bitter thoughts, and they exalt themselves above others with swollen waves of arrogance. Therefore he asks, did those who sink their minds from heavenly desires into the appetite for lowly things, and those who, unstable with pride in their spirits, raise themselves

against their neighbors, sin so grievously that the deserved wrath in such people should never be lifted? Or will you bestow the grace of your mercy on all those around the world sinning in either a lighter or graver manner as it appears in the world? For indeed I see that you are going to send apostles to proclaim your glory to the nations; but who will believe is known by you, not by human knowledge. This is what follows:

Habakkuk 3:8

For you will ascend riding on your horses, and your cavalry is salvation. That is, you will ascend into the hearts of your chosen ones through the illumination of grace, through which, under your guidance, they will tread the path of virtues, and by preaching you across the whole world, carrying the life of eternal salvation, they will proclaim it to the world. The figure of this cavalry was also shown in the Lord literally when, while heading to Jerusalem, he rode a donkey, with the crowds that went before, and those that followed, and those that came together singing: Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (John 12:13). In this riding, salvation was proclaimed, for surely it signified their spiritual journey, whereby with the Lord leading them through the apostles, they are led to see the kingdoms of the Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all (Galatians 4:26).

Habakkuk 3:9

Stretching, you extend your bow over scepters, says the Lord. The bow signifies the sudden coming of the divine judgment, by which he foresaw that even scepters, that is, the kingdoms of the world, should be examined. Therefore, the prophet insinuates what the Lord, ascending on his horses, that is, filling and ruling the apostles and their successors with his grace, does among them: Stretching, he says, you extend your bow over scepters, that is, by threatening through the teachers, you will threaten that your judgment will come suddenly, so that whoever is terrified at the threat of wrath, as at an extended bow, and takes care to supplicate to your piety, will not feel the release of the arrows, that is, the threat of eternal punishments. But when he added, stretching, you extend your bow over scepters, he added: Says the Lord, he signifies God the Father, about whom the Son himself says: The Father, he says, judges no one; but has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22).

Habakkuk 3:9

The earth will be split by rivers. Rivers here are not the same as those above, from which he feared the anger and fury of the Lord, but rather those about which he himself said in the Gospel: He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And the evangelist explains: This he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive (John 7:38). By these rivers, therefore, the earth will be split, when the hearts of the carnal, irrigated by the word of saving doctrine, humble themselves, breaking the hardness of their disbelief, and open the bosom of their internal thought, which had been badly closed, to receive the words of salutary reproof or exhortation; which is explained more broadly subsequently when it is said:

Habakkuk 3:10

The waters shall see you, and the nations shall mourn. Indeed, the hearts of sinners, broken to the acknowledgment and confession of the truth by the frequent exhortation of teachers, as if by the flood of frequent torrents, see God for now through faith, and lament that they have been separated from Him for so long by their guilt; yet when their sorrow of repentance is ended, they see Him more fully in the future by sight, and rejoice forever in the blessed vision of Him. It can also be understood in this way that it is said the earth will be split by rivers, as if it were said that the earth is to be split so that newly formed rivers might arise from it—a phenomenon often recounted in ancient histories, namely, that, when an earthquake occurs, rivers that were not there appear. Whoever understands prudently does not doubt that this can happen, because the earth is as full of countless water veins as the human body is full of blood veins; according to this perception, the earth is split by rivers when a carnal conscience, broken to repentance, progresses so much over time with the help of divine grace that it can also bring forth streams of doctrines to others, watering the parched hearts of others with its example or words to bear the fruits of virtues.

Habakkuk 3:10

Sprinkling waters on the paths, the abyss gave its voice from the height of its imagination. The same teachers are symbolized by the name abyss, who are also symbolized above by the rivers, but they are called rivers because of the power of stronger reproach, by which they cut through the hardness of the

earthly mind to bring it to repentance for its errors. The abyss is rightly called by the depth of knowledge with which they are filled within, attested by Solomon, who says: "Deep waters are the words from the mouth of a man" (Prov. XVIII, 4). Therefore, the abyss gives its voice sprinkling waters on the paths, when the holy preachers, filled inwardly in their hearts with the deep knowledge of truth, outwardly present the ministry of the word to those who listen, gradually and in parts according to the capacity of the weak, bringing forth what they themselves hold inwardly in much and ample measure. However, he says "on the paths" in the works, either of the same teachers or their hearers. For they sprinkle waters on their paths when they show examples of rightly living wherever they walk, with the voice of preaching always showing to those who watch. They sprinkle waters on the paths of those who watch when, by teaching and living, they show in advance by which ways of actions they should enter. If, however, it is read as some manuscripts have:

"Disperse waters on the paths," it is clearly said by God, who Himself spread the waters of life from the fountains of Israel far and wide into the nations of the whole world, saying to His disciples: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Well then, when He had said that the abyss would give its voice, He added "from the height of its imagination," because that which the holy preachers proclaim marvelously outside to us proceeds indeed from that fountain of wisdom by which they, amazed themselves, are illuminated inwardly with contemplation of heavenly joys. Did not the great abyss give its voice from the height of its imagination when the apostle Paul said: "Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged; you are not narrowed in us, but you are narrowed in your own bowels. I speak as to children, be enlarged yourselves also" (II Cor. VI, 11). However, from where or in what order it happened that the world was sprinkled with saving waters, and that the abyss of heavenly wisdom thundered unto the earth, is subsequently shown when it is said:

Habakkuk 3:11

The sun was raised, and the moon stood in its place. For the sun, the Lord of righteousness, was raised to heaven after his passion and resurrection, and having sent the Spirit from the Father, he illuminated the Church and spread it through the whole world, so that it might stand in its place, that is,

after the mystery of the Lord's incarnation was fulfilled, rising from a long languor of infidelity, standing in faith, acting manfully, and being strengthened in his love. And because he had aptly compared Christ to the sun and the Church to the moon, he immediately subjected it to the same sun.

Habakkuk 3:11

In light, your arrows will go forth, in the brightness of the splendor of arms. The arrows of Christ, however, are his words, by which the hearts of men are pierced, so that with the wound of salvation inflicted, the faithful soul may say: "I am wounded with love." Certainly, these arrows go forth in light, because through the ministry of teachers, the words of truth became known openly to the world, according to what the same Truth commanded them, saying: "What I tell you in darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered, preach on the rooftops" (Matthew 10:27). And since the brightness of miracles followed the words of light, he added: "In the brightness of the splendor of your arms." For warriors strike down their adversaries with arrows, defending themselves from wounds with weapons; hence, appropriately it signifies the words of the preachers, by which they overcome the depravity of unbelievers, and the miracles by which they confirm the truth of their preaching. Therefore, the arrows of Christ go forth in light, they go forth in the brightness of the splendor of his arms, because the great deeds he accomplished, the mysteries he revealed, the commandments he set forth, the rewards he promised, are now known to the whole world more clearly than the sun through the evangelical writings. And the holy teachers, because they are children of light, whatever they do or speak with his gift, naturally shine brightly with light and splendor.

Habakkuk 3:12

In your threatening, you will humble the earth, and in your fury, you will bring down nations. By threatening the severity of judgment by which the wicked are condemned, you will healthily humble those who were accustomed to place earthly things before heavenly things, so that, with earthly desires gradually diminished, they might begin to understand and seek what is above; and by inflicting fury, you will condemn forever those who, in their obstinate exaltation, despised being humbled for a time, which the Psalmist

prays might not happen to him, saying: "O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor chasten me in your wrath" (Psalm 6:2).

Habakkuk 3:13

You went out for the salvation of your people, to save your anointed ones. The Mediator between God and men went forth from the Father and came into the world, not to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He calls all the elect anointed ones, who are most rightly named by this title because of the anointing of spiritual grace; hence the Psalmist says about those who, wishing to harm the saints, were restrained by divine prohibition: "He rebuked kings for their sake, saying, 'Do not touch my anointed ones'" (Psalm 105:14). However, he saved his anointed ones, not those he found as anointed, but those he made his own anointed, that is, anointed ones, by going forth from the Father and appearing in the flesh through the Spirit of adoption. Concerning this anointing, admonishing his listeners, the Apostle John says: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth" (1 John 2:27). This verse is found in some editions as: "You went out to save your people through Jesus Christ your Son," which is understood as said to the Father because he went out to save his people through Jesus Christ his Son. For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and because the same going forth, that is, his coming into the world, was to be not only for the resurrection of the faithful but also for the ruin of the faithless, it is aptly added:

Habakkuk 3:13

You sent death upon the heads of the enemies; you stirred up bonds up to the neck. For indeed, to his chosen ones, whom the prophet had called Christ's, he brought the joy of salvation, but to those who neglected his anointing grace, he sent eternal death. This was fulfilled even corporally in the very Jewish people, who pursued the Lord appearing in flesh unto death, after they crucified him, not many years intervening, when the Roman army fell upon them; excepting only those who withdrew into the faith of evangelical grace, they were condemned with an enormous disaster, and moreover deprived of their kingdom and homeland; and this is what he said: You stirred up bonds up to the neck; namely the neck of the kingdom, which they had raised against the Lord before, about which the most blessed protomartyr Stephen said to them in their fury against him: Stiff-necked and uncircum-

cised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit (Acts VII, 51). But the Lord stirred up bonds up to the neck, when he sent the hostile army for the overthrow of the proud nation, not only of the Jews but of all who refused to accept the humility of the Christian faith. The Lord dashes pride according to what the Psalmist sings about the saints: And the two-edged swords in their hands to execute vengeance on the nations, reproaches on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with iron fetters (Ps. CXLIX, 6); iron, evidently, because eternal, which once taken, can never be loosed. But if anyone were to say it should be read in the plural: You stirred up bonds up to the necks, the sense is the same. For the just Lord will strike down the necks of sinners.

Habakkuk 3:14

You cut off the heads of the mighty in their alienation; the nations will be moved in it. In the Greek, it is written "in ecstasy," which some have interpreted as "in stupor," others "in mental excess." Whether it is called stupor, alienation, or mental excess, it all means the same thing: when someone, astonished and bewildered by a sudden miracle, is rendered alien from their own mind, something the Evangelical history frequently recounts as having happened to the Jews, saying they were astounded and marveled at the teachings and virtues of Jesus, saying: "Where did this man get all these things, whose father and mother we know?" (John 6:42). And in the Acts of the Apostles, when the lame man was healed by Peter and John at the temple gate, it says: "They were filled with astonishment and ecstasy" (Acts 3:10), in which ecstasy, that is, admiration or mental alienation, many people were moved to believe in the Lord; but the heads of the mighty, that is, the chief priests and elders, were cut off by not believing, from the lot of the faithful. Nations were also moved in it, when, hearing or seeing the virtues of the Lord and his apostles, they were so astonished and amazed that, anathemaing and rejecting the gods they had worshipped, they devoutly received the new faith of Christ. Regarding them, aptly it is added:

Habakkuk 3:14

"They will open their mouths like a pauper eating in secret." Just as a pauper who has remained fasting for some time, if he happens to find food somewhere, hastens to refresh himself with it in secret, and does not want to bring it out in public, lest it be snatched away by another, and he perishes

from hunger: similarly, the peoples of the nations, having been offered by the apostles the bread of the word, from which they had long remained fasting, immediately opened the mouths of their hearts and began to taste it with all avidity, dedicating themselves more to hearing or reading the Scriptures, the more they remembered they had long subjected their ears and minds to superfluous, even harmful, teachings in the most miserable kind of poverty. The order in which the poverty of the nations came to perceive the delicacies of the word is hinted at when it is added:

Habakkuk 3:15

You sent your horses into the sea, stirring up many waters. For the sea, indeed, means the world; the horses of God, the holy preachers; the many waters, the peoples of the nations. When the horses of God were sent into the sea, the many waters were stirred up, because when the heralds of the word were scattered into the world, the hearts of the nations were disturbed, some to believe and receive the sacrament of faith, others to contradict or even persecute the heralds of this faith. Hence the Psalmist aptly says: "All who saw them were troubled, and every man feared, and they declared the works of God and understood His deeds" (Ps. 63:9). For although all were troubled, not all feared and declared the works of God, but whosoever remained rational men; and those who were estranged from human reason were compared to senseless animals and became like them. Although such people were disturbed and moved by the virtues of the saints, they neither wanted to fear God nor to declare or understand His deeds. Furthermore, it is aptly said of these horses, namely the holy preachers, earlier: "You will ascend, you will ascend on your horses," and now it is added about the same: "You sent your horses into the sea," so that from both sentences it may be gathered that the Lord sent preachers into the world in such a way that, while they preached, He was never absent, but like a charioteer to horses, He was always present to guide their minds.

Habakkuk 3:16

I guarded and my stomach was terrified at the voice of the prayer of my lips. He calls his mind his stomach in the manner customary to prophets, because just as the stomach receives food by which the strength and life of the body are replenished; so are holy thoughts received in the mind, by which the life of the inner man is sustained and maintained, lest it should fail. Therefore, I

guarded, says the Prophet, carefully attending to the future passions of Christ and the subsequent glories, the reprobation of my people, the faith of the nations, the disturbance of the same nations at the new preaching, the persecution to be stirred up by unbelievers against believers; and my heart was terrified by these things which I, foreseeing, spoke of as coming. Or certainly contemplating the different states of the human race: I guarded, he says, myself, with a trembling mind more diligently, lest I should sin in deed, in word, or in thought, and lest I, while preaching to others, should become a reprobate. And it should be noted that he says he was terrified by the voice of the prayer of his lips, although he seems to have prayed nothing at all in this whole song; but only describing with fear and trembling the future mysteries of Christ and the Church; nor is he mistaken who calls his song a prayer, he who also gave it such a title: The Prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet for Ignorances, because whatever a holy man speaks, indeed the whole of this is a prayer to God; whatever he does, anyone whose sincere intention is to please the Lord, this itself intercedes with God for him, and recommends him to the Lord.

Habakkuk 3:16

And trembling entered into my bones. Just as Scripture sometimes designates our carnal actions by the name of flesh; so by the name of bones it usually designates strong and spiritual deeds. Therefore, he says, my heart was terrified by the things I foresee coming into the world, and whatever spiritual strength I thought was within me, all of this trembled as if fragile, while I observe the greater virtues and passions of the blessed Christ and His apostles; which is more clearly explained by the following word, when it is said: [Habakkuk 3:16] -- And beneath me, my strength was disturbed. However, he rightly says that his strength was disturbed not in himself, but beneath himself, because the prophet, having been taken up to the contemplation of heavenly mysteries, saw himself, as it were, elevated above himself; and the higher he is made by the light of contemplation, the more he sees himself as imperfect by the merit of his actions. For being lifted up to the sight of the highest things, he is rightly disturbed by the things he has done in the lowest. Yet the prophet's strength was disturbed, his bones trembled, his belly shuddered, not only because he knew himself to be less perfect in action, but also because all who wish to live piously in Christ are said to suffer persecutions; and he saw that even Christ Himself, who entered the world without

sin, would not leave the world without the punishment of sin, as he had also indicated at the beginning of his song. Nevertheless, the same fear and trembling did not remain devoid of consolation, for the hope diminished the adversity present, and made lighter the rewards of the future. This is what follows:

Habakkuk 3:16

I will rest in the day of my tribulation, that I may ascend to the people of my transmigration. For he rests not only in the day of retribution, but also of tribulation, who does not doubt that he will obtain eternal joys through temporal afflictions, according to the saying of the Apostle: For we are saved by hope (Rom. VIII, 24). And again: Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation (Rom. XII, 12). And this is the rest of the elect in this life, that, leaving the desire for lowly things, they strive with the whole intention of their mind and with daily steps of good works to ascend and migrate to the fellowship of those who have preceded them in Christ; and, with the struggles of their sufferings finished, they may receive the crown of life in the example of those who, having been once transported to Babylon from Judea, returned again to their homeland under the leaders Zerubbabel and Jesus, whom the scripture calls the sons of the transmigration. It is recorded that with great devotion they restored the sacred things which the enemy had destroyed; which is the clearest figure of our state. For we were transported in our first parent from the heavenly homeland and brought into this world's Babylon, that is, confusion; but by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great King and High Priest, whose type Zerubbabel and Jesus bore, we are rightly recalled again to the homeland and the vision of supreme peace, which the name Jerusalem signifies;

provided that, meanwhile, laboring in the Jerusalem of the present Church with pious works, we prepare ourselves in due time for entry to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. If it is read indifferently, as it is found in some Codices: I will rest in the day of tribulation, and my is not added, it can be understood according to that which is sung in the Psalm about the just man: In the evil day the Lord will deliver him (Ps. XL, 2), that is, in the day of judgment, when eternal tribulation will seize the reprobates, eternal rest will oppose and receive the just; but even before that final and general judgment, the saints rest in the day of tribulation, ascending to the people of their migration, when through good works transported from the

world, they are united to the joys of the just who preceded them in the heavens, while equally their persecutors, taken from this life, undergo the eternal torments of hell, to be punished forever. Moreover, the day of tribulation can also be understood in this life, when, with the scarcity of temporal goods increasing, those who loved such things excessively, as if surrounded by miseries, grieve; but each chosen one, although enduring the same troubles bodily, has rest in the Lord with fixed hope of mind, knowing that the more he is weighed down in the lower things, the higher he will ascend after the pressures to the eternal fellowship of the celestial citizens.

And this understanding aptly agrees with what follows:

Habakkuk 3:17

For the fig tree will not bear fruit, and there will be no generation in the vineyards. The work of the olive will lie and the fields will not yield food. The sheep have failed from their food, and there will be no oxen in the stalls. But I will glory in the Lord, and I will rejoice in God my Savior. For when the opulence of worldly things fails, carnal and lovers of this life are troubled, the righteous do not grieve over the loss of temporal goods but rejoice in the possession of the heavenly kingdom promised to the poor of Christ, mindful of the promised consolation of Him who said: Do not fear, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. And what wonderful faith, hope, and love of the prophet! The Son of God had not yet appeared in man receiving the name Jesus from His parents, and he, foreseeing the same name in the Spirit, testifies that he rejoices in Him amidst adversities, who would open the gate of the heavenly homeland for His faithful long after being born in the flesh. If anyone also seeks to expound these verses figuratively, the fig tree, vineyard, and olive were the synagogue of the Jews, which brought forth the sweetness of good works, the fragrance of fervent love, and the richness of a merciful soul devoted to God. Sheep and oxen were typically in the same people;

the sheep, namely, in those who humbly heard the voice of the supreme Shepherd; the oxen, on the other hand, were in those who, zealously bearing the yoke of the law, by diligently teaching and correcting the hearts of listeners, as it were plowing the land of the Lord, prepared for the fruits of good works; and for those living spiritually, the fields of the divine Scriptures most widely made spiritual foods, with whose nourishment he who was made like a beast before the Lord delighted, and always adhered to Him,

saying: The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want, in a place of pasture, He has placed me there (Ps. 22:1). But this fig tree, to which the Lord came the third time, that is, in the legislation through Moses, in the diligent rebuke and exhortation through the prophets, in the offering of grace through Himself, neglected to bear the fruit of virtue, because of which it was condemned to eternal dryness by His curse. The generation in the vineyards of the Lord once failed, that is, the fruit of charity failed among the crowds of the Jews, because they offered vinegar to Him who thirsted instead of wine, that is, the sweetness of virtues He sought in them, they brought forth the bitterness of vices desiring virtues. The work of the olive lied, when that people anointed the heads of the wretched with the oil of flattery, and echoed the true words of the prophet falsely, saying:

But I, like a fruitful olive tree in the house of God, have trusted in the mercy of God (Ps. 51:10), wherefore at the time of the final retribution, bringing forth extinguished lamps, with their own darkness, they will be excluded from the entrance to the heavenly homeland. The fields do not yield food when the same people, opening the pages of divine writings, cannot rightly understand and find the pastures of truth. The sheep fail from their food, for those whom the refreshment of internal sweetness is absent, whence the innocence of a simple life may not come forth. Thus it was said: the sheep have failed from their food, that is, because food was lacking, as the Prophet in the Psalms: And my flesh, he says, was changed because of the oil (Ps. 108:24), that is, because the oil with which I might be refreshed or anointed was not there. Indeed, some Codices have it this way: The sheep have failed because they did not eat, and there are no oxen in the stalls. For although there are abundantly in the Jews the stalls of heavenly writings; yet because they do not taste the food of heavenly understanding in them, those who bear the sweet yoke of the Gospel are absent.

Considering all these things that are to come upon the perfidious part of his people, the prophet immediately shows what he himself would do with the faithful of the same people, or rather with the society of the Church, which was gathered in Christ from all over the world, or elected: But I, he says, will glory not in my own righteousness, but in faith in the divine protection, I will rejoice in God my Savior, that is my Savior, because I perceive salvation to be not in me, but in Him. And as if we were to ask him why he glories in the Lord and rejoices in God his Savior, whom he called his own

with great affection of love, he immediately, as if insinuating the most just cause of the same joy, ended his song thus:

Habakkuk 3:19

The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet as sure as deer's, and He will set me on high places, so that I may triumph in His glory. As if He openly says: Indeed, beneath me my strength is troubled, that is, while I contemplate the condition of human frailty, which is below; and while I lift the eyes of my mind to the grace of divine help, I trust that I can make strength in Him. He is able to lead the steps of my works to the completion of a firm end; He can set me on high so that we may utterly despise all the loftiness of worldly power by the contemplation of eternal goods. I shall overcome all temptations which come to me either from the adversities or the blandishments of the world in His love through which I will be, that is, while in all things I do not seek my own glory, but His, from whom I remember that I have received whatever good I do. For deservedly, they are helped by the Lord, that having overcome temptations, they, having been proven, may reach the prize of the heavenly calling, who refer the entire cause of their victory to His praise. Some manuscripts have: And I will triumph in His Song, which looks to the same sense.

For whoever knows how to give thanks to Him from the heart in all the tribulations he suffers, he triumphs in the Lord's Song, knowing that all things work together for good to those who love God, and as accustomed with blessed Job: Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21). Finally, the apostles Paul and Silas, amid beatings, darkness, and chains of prison, sang a hymn to God; and thus divinely helped, they suddenly emerged as victors, for indeed, although their feet seemed to be tightly bound in stocks, the steps of their works were made complete in virtues. Beautifully, the end of this prophetic song corresponds to its beginning. For he who, having heard and considered the works of the Lord appearing in the flesh, faithfully fears and trembles, is made so that, despising those things which in this life are borne in various states like the waves of the sea, he may glory and rejoice in Him alone whose joys he can perpetually enjoy; helped by Him, so that he is neither broken by the adversities of the present world nor enervated by its allurements; he sings the praises of His grace both in the present, that he may deserve to conquer, and in the future, because he has conquered, he should never cease to sing.

It also happens that such a soul overcomes the world in the glory of the Lord, namely, by His same glory, both often recalled to memory in times of struggles, and beheld perpetually in times of rewards, according to what He promised: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8). It should be noted, however, that with the prayer or song of Habakkuk explained, his name, which is interpreted as embracing, corresponds to the sense of the same prayer. For it is clear that he embraced the Lord with the inward love of the heart and adhered to Him, who testifies that he glories and rejoices in Him alone. May it happen, dearest sister and virgin of Christ, that also we, loving Him, may be made worthy of such a name. If indeed we strive to embrace Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength, He will deign to embrace us with the arms of His love, mindful of His promise where He says: He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him (John 14:21); and thus we will deserve to be numbered among the members of that bride who is accustomed to joyfully sing to her Creator, her heavenly spouse: His left hand is under my head, and His right hand shall embrace me. Amen (Song of Solomon 2:6).

It concludes with the song of the prophet Habakkuk to the virgin sister of Christ.

PART FOUR

Commentary on Tobit

A short exposition of the story of Tobit and the angel Raphael.

Commentary on Tobit

The Venerable Bede

AD 673–735

A short allegorical commentary on the story of Tobit, who was blind, and of his son Tobias and the angel Raphael. Bede reads the story as a picture of Christ and the Church.

PREFACE

The book of the holy Father Tobias, and on the surface of the letter it is evident to the readers, as it abounds with the greatest examples and warnings of moral life. And if anyone also knows how to interpret the same allegorically, he sees its inner meaning to surpass the simplicity of the letter as much as fruit surpasses leaves. For it is proven to contain the greatest sacraments of Christ and the Church if it is understood spiritually. Indeed, Tobias himself designates the people of Israel, who, while all other nations were given to idolatry, served God with right faith and just deeds, as it is read about Tobias.

CHAPTER 1

Because when all were going to the golden calves, etc. For Jeroboam, who fabricated golden calves for the deception of his subjects, expresses the author of idolatry. And indeed Tobias was captured... he did not forsake the way of truth. This captivity made by the king of the Assyrians designates that captivity of the human race, by which through the king of all the wicked, that is, the devil, it was cast out from the habitation of the heavenly fatherland and was transferred into the pilgrimage of this exile. Tobias imparted all that he could have daily with the captive brothers, etc. And the people of Israel, in their teachers, ministered the alms of the word of God not only to the rough listeners of their own nation but also to those who from the nations wanted to convert to their way of life. For whatever natural good they could have, which was not taken away by the conquering enemy, all this they showed to their own as an example of virtue. But they also always gave some portion of

salvific knowledge to the Gentiles; which is Tobias ministering the tithe of his substance to the strangers.

Tobias, after he became a man, took a wife, Anna, from his own tribe, etc. And the same people, after they grew up and were multiplied in Egypt, took a synagogue instituted with legal ceremonies through Moses. He begot a son from her, etc. Because he knew that Christ would be born from his lineage, as Moses said: "The Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers, you shall listen to him" (Deut. XVIII). And the Lord said to David: "I will place the fruit of your womb on my throne" (Psalm CXXXI). To whom he gave his name, by believing and confessing, as the father says about him: "And I will make him my firstborn" (Psalm LXXXVIII). Just as it is said about the people, "Israel is my firstborn son" (Exodus IV). Whom he taught to fear God from infancy, etc. By believing and confessing, because he would not sin, nor would deceit be found in his mouth, but the spirit of the fear of the Lord would fill him.

Tobias gave ten talents of silver to Gabael, his needy compatriot, under a bond. And the people of God entrusted the knowledge of divine law, which is contained in the Decalogue, to the Gentiles through the Seventy Interpreters, so that through this they might free them from the poverty of unbelief. He gave it under a bond, that is, under the condition of returning it, once he himself became rich, or the one who gave it would demand it back. But the Gentiles received the word of God from the people of Israel through interpretation, which they now understand spiritually after the incarnation of the Lord, and they practice to acquire the riches of virtues; they repay the lender when, at the end of the world, they receive the believing Jews into the unity of the Church, commit to them the sacraments of Christ for their salvation, and also unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures.

Tobias is ordered by the king to be killed, and all his property to be taken away because of the good he had done, etc. And the devil strove to destroy the people of God with spiritual death through idolatry, and to take away all the riches of virtues from them, but he could not; because there were many holy teachers among them who provided for and protected their life and salvation. However, he fled with his son and wife. Because the enemy could neither take away the faith in the Lord's incarnation, nor the state of the synagogue, although he vehemently attacked it, which became very clear in the struggles of the Maccabees. But after the king was killed by his sons, all

his possessions were restored to Tobias. Because after the devil was often overcome, and condemned for his crimes, which he generated like a wicked offspring, prosperity returned to the people of God. We also see the state of the Church fluctuating through these struggles after the incarnation of the Lord.

CHAPTER 2

Tired from burial, Tobias came into his house, ... and became blind. Do not be surprised, reader, that sometimes good deeds symbolically signify evil, and sometimes evil deeds signify good things. If this were not allowed, God would never be written with black ink but always with bright gold, because He is light. But even if you write the name of the devil on a white stone, it still signifies deep darkness. Therefore, blind Tobias signifies what the Apostle says, "Blindness has happened in part to Israel" (Rom. XI). He was tired from burial and became blind, because he who persists tirelessly in good works is never deprived of the light of faith. Spiritually, he lies and sleeps tired, who neglects to watch and stand in faith, to act manfully, to be strengthened. To him well applies the apostolic word: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Eph. V). Swallows, because of their light flight, represent pride and lightness of heart, whose impurity quickly blinds those over whom they rule. For it is as if one sleeps under the nest of swallows, who incautiously subjects his mind to lightness, wantonness, and pride. This blindness, however, prevailed over the people of Israel, especially with the imminent coming of the Lord in the flesh, when they were oppressed by the yoke of Roman servitude and violated the commandments of the divine law by living wickedly.

Tobias' relatives mocked him, and his wife reproached him, as if he had served God in vain. Rebuking and instructing them, he turned to God in prayer. In that people, there were some who, with foolish rashness, insulted the miseries of the people, which now differed greatly from the former happiness of the holy fathers, who once served God sublimely among them. The same people diligently cared to correct them through their teachers and chosen ones and turned themselves to implore God's mercy for the attainment of eternal life. It should not be seen as inappropriate that the same Tobias, both blind and preaching the word of God, is said to signify both the reprobate and the elect. For even the patriarch Jacob, wrestling with the an-

gel, was made both lame and blessed; signifying, in his lameness, the unfaithful of his people, and in his blessing, the faithful.

CHAPTER 3

Sarah, the daughter of Raguel in the city of the Medes, who had been given to seven husbands, and the demon killed them as soon as they went in to her. This symbolically announces the multitude of nations, whose teachers only knew the life of this age, which revolves in seven days, and could say nothing about eternity. Therefore, all of them were seized by the devil, as they were slaves to idolatry, until our true spouse, the Lord, came, who joined her to himself through faith, after overcoming the enemy; just as Tobias took Sarah as his bride after the demon was bound, by the command and cooperation of the archangel, through whom the divinity of our Savior is fittingly signified, just as his humanity is signified by Tobias. Nor should one be surprised that we say that the one person of the Mediator between God and men is symbolized by two persons, namely the angel and the man, who has read in the expositions of the venerable Fathers that his one person suffering for the salvation of the world is prefigured in Isaac, who was offered by his father on the altar, and in the ram, which was sacrificed. He who was killed as a sheep in his humanity, remains impassible in his divinity with God the Father, just as Isaac returned home alive with his father. For if the ram aptly designates the humanity of Christ, the man signifies the divinity; why should not the man much more aptly signify the humanity, and the angel the divinity?

Therefore, the holy angel of the Lord, Raphael, who is interpreted as the medicine of God, was sent to free both Tobias from blindness and Sarah from the demon. The Lord was sent into the world, who said of himself, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Luke IV); who also redeemed the Jewish people from the darkness of disbelief, and the gentiles from the bondage of idolatry. Of whom the prophet said: "And his name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel" (Isa. IX).

CHAPTER 5

The angel appeared to Tobias and offered himself as a companion, through whom he would accomplish great things for the people to whom he was sent. And the Son of God assumed a man, in whom, visibly conversing with men, he would save the human race. Tobias brought the angel to his father, who

greeted him, saying: "May joy be with you always." To which he replied: "What joy will there be for me, who sit in darkness and do not see the light of heaven?" He said, "Be of strong spirit, it is near that you will be healed by the Lord." And our Lord, through the miracles he performed in the flesh, showed the people of the Jews, from whom he had taken flesh, that he himself is the Son of God, and the angel, that is, the messenger of the Father's will. To whom he also proclaimed the joy of eternal salvation, saying: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. III). And to those despairing of acquiring the heavenly light: "I am," he said, "the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John VIII).

The angel promised Tobias to lead his son to the city of Rages in the Medes, and to bring him back to him. The Lord promises to the believers from the Jewish people, although the same people are in large part blinded, that he will reveal the mysteries of his incarnation to the Gentiles, and again at the end of times, he will more broadly open the same to his people from whom he had taken flesh, accompanied and effected everywhere by the faith in his divinity. He speaks of the leading to the Medes: "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, etc." (John X). The Apostle speaks of the return: "Until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. XI). When Tobias asked the angel where he was from, he said: "I am Azarias, the son of the great Ananias." Azarias means "the Lord is my helper," Ananias means "grace of the Lord." And the Lord intimates to those who believe in him that he is the one whom the prophet, desiring his coming, sang: "Be my helper and my deliverer, O Lord, do not delay" (Psalm LXIX). Of whom also the evangelist says: "And we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John I).

Then, having prepared everything to be carried on the way, Tobias said goodbye to his father and mother, and they both walked together. With the Lord appearing in the flesh, all things that pertained to the redemption of the world and by which the faith and life of the holy Church would be nourished and strengthened, until the end of the way of this age, were prepared; that is, his virtues, doctrine, temptation, passion, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit, faith of believers, and persecution by unbelievers. Having accomplished these in Judea, the Mediator of God and men preached

through the apostles to the people and the synagogue, from whom he had taken the origin of the flesh, the joys of heavenly salvation and peace. And to those who wished to believe and receive, he granted these things through himself, and thus he came to the salvation of the Gentiles in those same his teachers.

CHAPTER 6

Therefore, Tobias set out, and the dog followed him. When the Lord came to save the nations, his holy preachers followed in his footsteps, because they fulfilled what he commanded: "Go and teach all nations" (Matt. XXVIII). Indeed, the Lord first filled the house of Cornelius with the Holy Spirit, and then Peter washed it with water (Acts X). The doctors are called dogs because they defend the house, substance, and spiritual sheep of their Creator from thieves and beasts, that is, from unclean spirits and heretical men. Tobias, guided by the angel, stayed the first night near the river Tigris; and he went out to wash his feet, and behold, a huge fish came out to devour him. Here again, the sacrament of the Lord's passion is more clearly signified. The huge fish, which was killed by Tobias when it attempted to devour him, as taught by the angel, represents the ancient devourer of the human race, that is, the devil, who, while seeking the death of our Redeemer in the flesh, was captured by the power of divinity. The river Tigris, named for its swift current from the swift beast, the tiger, indicates the course of our death and mortality. In which the huge fish was hiding, because the invisible seducer of the human race held dominion over death. Tobias stayed by the streams of the Tigris, because the Lord, appearing in the world, lived among sinners and mortals, but the wave of sin did not touch him, nor did the prince of darkness find anything of his own in him. Tobias went out into the river to wash his feet; and the Lord accepted death, to which he owed nothing, so that he might cleanse all the faithful, namely his members, from the contagion of sin and death. The fish came upon Tobias, desiring to devour him; and the devil came to the Lord suffering on the cross, seeking if he might find any sin in his soul.

Terrified by the fish, Tobias cried out with a loud voice, saying: "Lord, it attacks me." And the Lord, at the imminent moment of death, began to fear and be troubled, not fearing the devil, but the death that entered the world through the envy of the devil (Wis. II), trembling with the natural frailty of the flesh; hence he prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him

(Mark XII). And he said: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you, remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will" (Luke XXII). The angel said to Tobias, "Take hold of the fish's gill, and draw it to you." The Lord took hold of the devil, and he who sought to capture him in death was himself captured and defeated by dying. He took hold of its gill so that with the right hand of his power he might separate the most wicked head from the deceived body, that is, he might remove the wickedness of the ancient enemy from those whom he had wrongly joined to himself and made almost one body with himself, and insert them into the body of his church as a kind Redeemer. For the fish has a gill at the boundary between its head and body. Just as our Lord is the head of his church, and the church is his body; so the devil is the head of all the wicked, and all the wicked are his body and members. Therefore, the Lord took hold of the gill of the huge fish, and drew it to himself, and cast it on dry land, because by breaking the power of the devil, he confidently led them openly and rescued from the power of darkness those whom he foreknew to be children of light.

When he had done this, the fish began to thrash about on dry land before his feet. When the Lord, having overcome the wickedness of the malignant enemy, brought it to light and made it manifest to all, the proud devil still endeavored to stir up persecution against His chosen ones, who are His feet; because through them the Lord walks on earth, who reigns above all in heaven. Then the angel of the Lord said to him, "Gut this fish, etc." The Lord gutted the fish when He revealed the devil's wickedness more broadly to the saints, and as if eviscerated the hidden schemes of his plots. He kept the heart for Himself, because He wrapped up his cunning in the holy books; about which it is written, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field" (Gen. III). And Paul also said of this heart: "For we are not ignorant of his designs" (II Cor. II). He also kept the gall, because He wanted it to be written and preserved how furiously he raged against the human race for the sake of caution. He also kept the liver, because He deigned to make known to us, through the doctors of truth, the devil's malicious plans against us. They say that by the heat and power of the liver, the hidden parts of consumed food are digested and reach the stage of digestion. When we diligently inquire by careful thought how the things we intend to do should be accomplished, it is as if we digest the food taken into the stomach by the heat of the liver.

These things are necessary for useful medicines. The cunning and malice of the devil, the ancient enemy, known to us, help towards healing; for the more we thoroughly investigate them, the more cautiously we avoid them. Tobias roasted the fish's flesh, etc. Whatever they took from the fish signifies those who are transferred from being members of the devil to being members of Christ, that is, those converted from unbelief to faith. What they left behind signifies, on the other hand, those who, having heard the word of God, prefer to remain among the dead and decaying members of their deceiver rather than return to the fellowship of the Savior. He roasted its flesh in those whom he found carnal, but by the fire of his love, he made them spiritual and strong. Indeed, the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles in the appearance of fire. "The rest," he says, "they salted," which pertains spiritually to the teachers, to whom it is said: "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. V). They salted them, that is, Tobias and the angel; for the same Mediator between God and men both taught the apostles humanly by speaking and divinely gave them the salt of wisdom in their hearts.

They took with them what was sufficient for them, etc. Because the Lord gathered enough from Judea into the faith, who were sufficient for the example of living or for the ministry of preaching, until He also laid the foundations of the Church among the Gentiles. The angel suggests to Tobias that, upon entering the house of Raguel, he should ask for his daughter Sarah as his wife. Raguel signifies the people of the Gentiles, whom the Lord deigned to visit through His preachers, so that He might take a bride for Himself from among them, that is, make the Gentiles His Church. The name Sarah is also fitting for the Church, due to Sarah, the wife of the patriarch Abraham, who gave birth to Isaac, the son of promise, that is, the free people of the Church. The name Raguel, which means "God's pasture" or "God's friend," designates the people who, having overcome the deceit of the devil, bind themselves and theirs to the fellowship of the Lord, who can say: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23). And who deserves to hear: "I no longer call you servants, but friends" (John 15).

"To you belongs all his substance." And the Father to the Son: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalm 2).

CHAPTER 7

They entered Raguel's house, who received them with joy. The Lord visited the people of the nations through the teachers of His word, who were gladly received in many places, as the Acts of the Apostles testify. When asked for his daughter, Raguel at first feared, knowing what had happened to those seven men; but the angel teaching that the unclean could not possess her, while Tobias, who feared God, could, he soon consented to give her. The people of the Gentiles, hearing the word of faith and admonished by the apostles to make the Church of Christ from their progeny throughout the world, could not accept the laws and customs of the new faith without certain exploration; knowing that for many former times they had teachers, who, as if comprehended in the number seven, knew only the joys of this life, saying nothing certain about eternal things, and therefore, without the hope of immortal life, the destruction of eternal death had seized them. But with the inner truth itself teaching, which sounded outwardly through the mouths of the doctors, they finally understood that it was necessary for fools to say foolish things and for those who did not know the true Lord to perish; but by right, the Creator of the world coming into the world should take up the governance of the world. And confessing faith in Christ, they rejoiced to be sanctified by His sacraments.

CHAPTER 8

Tobias, being brought into Sarah's chamber, took out part of the liver from his bag, etc. And the Lord, about to receive the Church from the Gentiles, in the first beginning of its dispensation, commands that in each believer Satan and all his works, and all his pomps be renounced; and then to confess the faith of the Holy Trinity for the remission of sins, which is to burn the innermost bowels of peace with living coals. When these things were done, the angel, seizing the demon, bound him. For after the renunciation of the devil, and after the confession of the right faith, follows the remission of sins, the demon having been expelled through the water of baptism. He bound him, because he restrained him from harming the faithful; though he is sometimes permitted to tempt them, so that they may be tested, he is nevertheless forbidden to overcome them lest they fall away from the faith.

He bound him in the desert of Upper Egypt. Both the desert and Egypt signify the hearts of the unbelievers, which are deserted, that is, abandoned

by God, being unworthy of His habitation. And these are the same as those darkened by the shadows of their infidelity, according to the interpretation of the name Egypt. And rightly, the one who is deserted by the grace of divine light is filled by the prince of darkness. Therefore, the angel, having seized the demon who wanted to kill Tobias, bound him in the desert of Upper Egypt; because restrained from seizing the faithful, who are members of their Redeemer, the same Lord and Redeemer permits the devil to dominate only the unbelievers. In whom He also keeps him bound; for he is not allowed to harm even those impious ones he possesses as much as he desires with his insatiable fury. Meanwhile, around the crowing of the rooster, Raguel, fearing that Tobias might have been killed by the demon, dug a grave with his servants; but when he soon learned of his safety, he ordered the grave to be filled again. The crowing of the rooster is the sound of the preachers, who, when they were proclaiming to the world that the morning and true day of faith would come after the darkness of error, there were some among the Gentiles who doubted whether the Lord had truly conquered the ancient enemy, and therefore thought it better to bury and hide the faith of His name; but afterwards, when they recognized the light of truth, as the dawn was advancing and the crowing of the rooster, that is, the voice of the doctors, became more frequent, who were accustomed to lift themselves up with the flight of an eager heart to heavenly desires, they drove away all the clouds of doubt from their minds, and truly recognized that Christ, having overthrown the enemy, is the spouse of the holy Church.

Raguel, rejoicing over the life of Tobias and the union and marriage of his daughter, had two fat cows and four rams killed, and prepared a feast for all his neighbors and friends. The Gentile people, rejoicing over the faith of Christ and the calling of the Gentiles to God, were so advancing in the Lord that even from their number some became teachers, and later also martyrs. They are indeed cows because they bear the light yoke of the Gospel; because they also beget and nurture those who advance to bear the same yoke by preaching. They are also rams because they are fathers and leaders of the peoples, about whom it is said: "Ascribe to the Lord the offspring of rams" (Psalm 29). They are fat cows because the doctors are filled with the grace of heavenly delight. Of which the Psalmist prays: "My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness" (Psalm 63). The two cows are killed because whoever for Christ either voluntarily mortifies their own body to be-

come a living sacrifice or hands it over to the infidels to be killed: such have learned to stand against the enemy with the weapons of righteousness, on the right and on the left, that is, in prosperity and adversity. The four rams are killed because the holy doctors and martyrs preserve the four books of the holy Gospel in faith and work, because they are fortified with the four principal virtues, prudence, courage, temperance, and justice;

because they establish the flock of Christ throughout the whole world, which is distinguished by four regions. Raguel had the cows and rams killed because the Gentile people taught those who came to the faith from their stock to be such that the excellence of their virtue would make them temptations for the enemy, and when tempted, he would not overcome them but make them victorious martyrs. Or certainly, he himself caused to be killed those who taught to crucify their flesh for Christ with its vices and desires. By whose death he prepared a feast for all his neighbors, because the progress, life, passion, and crown of the saints bring joy to many, and they receive them as if they were a feast, being refreshed by their examples. And Raguel urged Tobias to stay with him for two weeks. We also implore our Lord, praying that He may remain with us until we attain the perfection of holy rest through the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that we may rest from servile acts, that is, sins in the body, and from evil thoughts in the mind; and may He rest in our heart and body, He who said, "On whom will my spirit rest, but on the humble and quiet one who trembles at my words?"

CHAPTER 9

Tobias asks the angel to take animals or servants, go to Gabael in Rages of the Medes, give him his promissory note, and receive the money from him, and invite him to his wedding, and he agrees. The faithful, namely the members of Christ, ask the Lord to take some of the believers and entrust them with the duty of preaching the word, and that He Himself might come in them to gather into His faith the nations that have not yet received the mysteries of faith, but have only heard of it by reputation; and He might graciously grant that they, through obedience of faith, return the talent of the word they learned by reputation; and they too might be gathered to the wedding of the holy Church, in which Christ is the bridegroom, in which He made new wine from water, that is, gave the spiritual understanding of the law, by believing and living rightly. And the Lord does not refuse, but receiving the prayers of those who ask well, daily gathers new peoples into

the Church. It can be understood spiritually, as said above, about those nations which received the letter of the law through the seventy translators: and therefore they could sooner accept the faith, as they held it in known books.

Therefore, Raphael, taking four of Raguel's servants and two camels, went to Rages of the Medes; and, informing him about everything concerning Tobias, received the money and brought him with him to the wedding. Raguel's servants and camels are preachers chosen from among the Gentiles, through whom the Lord also gathers others. Servants, because they serve the necessity of those to whom they preach the gospel. Camels, because they bear the burdens of their weaknesses with fraternal submission of charity. Why there are four servants and two camels was shown above, where two cows and four rams are killed. Such, with the help of Raphael, bring Gabael to Tobias's wedding when holy preachers, with divine assistance, gather new peoples into the unity of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER 10

Because of Tobias's delay due to the wedding, his parents were saddened that he did not return to them on the appointed day. And now, as Christ tarries among the Gentiles through faith in the Church gathered from the Gentiles, whoever among the Jews individually converts to faith in Him are greatly grieved; because the Lord delays His coming to save them, being retained among the Gentiles. This well suits what his mother, poor and as if bereft of both husband and son, said with much sorrow: "Alas, alas, my son, why did we send you to travel, the light of our eyes, the staff of our old age, etc." And Tobias, consoling her, responds: "Be quiet and do not be disturbed, our son is safe, etc.," suits those same ones who now believe among the Jews; who still console themselves and their own with this, that truly a time will come when the Lord will return to them, and then all Israel will be saved; knowing that the Lord, who promised this, is faithful. For as we taught above, the same Tobias, by his blindness, signifies the unbelievers, and by his faith, the believers, according to the customary manner of the Scriptures.

Raguel asks Tobias to stay with him for a longer time, but he is not heard, with Tobias saying: "I know that my father and my mother are now counting the days, and their spirit is tormented within them." And when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, no one will be able to prevent God from granting salvation to Israel and removing the blindness that has happened in

part. For divine mercy remembers that there is great sadness and continuous sorrow of heart for those who believe from among the Jews because of the blindness of the unbelievers, who are their relatives according to the flesh, who are Israelites. Therefore, Raguel sent Tobias back to his parents, giving him Sarah with much substance. In the end, the teachers of the Church send Christ back, with the Church itself full of the riches of virtues, to enlighten with faith and enrich with the substance of good works the Jewish people, from whom He took His flesh.

CHAPTER 11

The angel and Tobias went ahead to his parents; then his wife followed with substance and her family. After the divine grace, the illuminator, precedes to enlighten the blindness of the Jewish people, and they recognize in their writings that Christ is true God and man, and after the acknowledgment of the true faith, as if seeing the angel and their son whom they had not seen for a long time, rejoicing greatly; thus finally they join themselves to the holy Church, which is gathered from the Gentiles, in the participation of heavenly mysteries. As they approached the house, the dog that had been with them on the journey ran ahead and, as if acting as a messenger, joyfully wagged his tail. The figure of this dog, which is a traveler and a companion of the angel, is not to be despised. The dog represents the teachers of the Church, who, as we taught above, often fight against heretics, driving away the grievous wolves from the fold of the Chief Shepherd. To them, it is fitting that dogs naturally repay kindness with gratitude and keep vigilant watch for the safety of their masters. Therefore, the dog runs ahead because he first announces salvation to the house, and then the Lord, the illuminator of the world's hearts, follows. It beautifully says "as if acting as a messenger" because indeed every faithful teacher is a messenger of the truth; it beautifully says "wagging his tail joyfully," for the tail, which is the end of the body, signifies the end of good work, that is, perfection, or certainly the reward which is given without end. Thus, the dog joyfully wagged his tail when he revisited the home of his masters, from whom he had been away for a long time. The teachers rejoice in the fulfillment of their work when they understand that Judea will be gathered by the Lord through their ministry. They rejoice in the reception of the eternal life reward and in this same reward, which is common to all the elect, they gladden the hearts of those to

whom they preach, while they promise them the immediate coming of Christ's grace.

Therefore, when the dog announced that Tobias had come, his blind father, rising, began to run, stumbling with his feet. Hearing the word of salvation from the teachers, the Hebrew people rise from the long slumber of their infidelity and run with love to the Lord; although stumbling in their works, until the fullness of faith and good work, they receive the light, being regenerated and instructed in Christ. And taking the hand of the boy, he ran to meet his son. The blind man takes the hand of the boy so that he may run with unimpeded steps to the Lord; even if he himself does not fully understand the path of faith, he still strives to give his assent to the one who knows the light of truth well, so that he may reach the Lord. And receiving him, he kissed him with his wife, weeping for joy. Judaea, in the end, joyfully receiving the union with Christ, joined weeping to its joy: rejoicing because it believes; grieving because it came to the Lord so late.

Then Tobias, taking some of the fish's gall, anointed his father's eyes. And the Lord reveals more openly to believers how great is the malice of the ancient serpent, who once eagerly sought to devour Him in His passion; but by this, he himself was rather killed, losing his members, that is, those he previously held. A sort of membrane, like an egg, began to come out of Tobias' eyes after they were anointed with the fish's gall, and he regained his sight. And the people of the Jews, after they recognize the bitter malice of the most wicked enemy, will regain the lost light. The membrane, which had covered his eyes, signifies the folly of self-pleasing. For they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. X). And as it says again: Seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God (Ibid.). For the black pupil sees, the white one is darkened. And those who seem wise to themselves, saying, "Are we also blind? (John IX), the truth is not in them. But those who are conscious of their own frailty and ignorance and know how to say, "My God, enlighten my darkness" (Psalm XVII), these will enjoy the light of life in the Lord. Moreover, the membrane was like an egg, for eggs signify hope; because it is not yet alive, not yet animated, but is separated from the bird that laid it, waiting to live, proceed, run, and fly. And the Apostle says: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom. VIII). Hence, in

the evangelical parable, under the name of bread, fish, and egg, the three highest virtues, faith, hope, and charity are expressed.

Therefore, the people of the Jews still have a veil before the face of their heart, so that they do not understand the grace of Christ. They have a cataract, because they seem to themselves white and just above all. But they have this cataract like the membrane of an egg; because they endure the blindness of the mind under the most foolish and vain hope of Christ being born in the flesh and delivering them and giving them a great kingdom throughout the world. But to any of them from whom the mist of error is removed, they will recognize that Christ has already come and redeemed the world with His blood. It aptly fits what follows: Because, having received sight, Tobias glorified God with his wife, and all his acquaintances, saying, "I bless you, Lord God of Israel, because you have chastised me, and you have saved me," etc. The seven days signify the light of spiritual grace, which is taken as sevenfold. Therefore, after seven days, Tobias, having been illuminated, his son's wife enters, because after Judaea has been illuminated through faith, after receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Church will enter it, so that there may be one fold and one shepherd, and one house of Christ founded on one cornerstone. The livestock and camels also entered, and the wife's considerable wealth. Many faithful persons and many virtues of the Church will then be gathered among the Jewish people. But also the money that he had received from Gabael. The knowledge of the Scriptures, which they once lent to the Gentiles, will then be returned to them.

Tobias' relatives came, congratulating him on all the good things the Lord had done for him, and they feasted with him for seven days. This is what Moses said in the song: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people" (Rom. XV). They feast together for seven days; because they rejoice in spiritual gifts and virtues. The angel, about to return to heaven, more openly explains to them who he is, why he came, and that he is returning to God. And the Lord will then reveal more broadly to that advancing people the gifts of His knowledge, opening and showing to all that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. Therefore, the angel returns to God, and Tobias remains with his father. And the Lord is understood by the elect, equal to the Father in divinity, consubstantial with us in humanity.

CHAPTER 13

Then the elder Tobias, opening his mouth, blessed God. Confessing His severity and mercy, and at the same time admonishing His faithful to always proclaim His benefits, to fear His scourges; imbued with the spirit of prophecy, he chants many praises concerning our heavenly mother, Jerusalem. And the people of the Jews, converted at the end of the world to faith, will have many teachers and prophetic men who will inflame the minds of their neighbors with heavenly desires, while they frequently resound with the perpetual joys of the heavenly fatherland.

CHAPTER 14

The elder Tobias, at the hour of his death, called to him his son Tobias and his seven grandsons, and said to them that the destruction of Nineveh was near and the restoration of Israel. And then in Judea, faithful and just teachers seeing this, when they are about to leave the world, admonish their relatives that the world is now approaching its end and the goods of the future life are soon to come. They especially admonish those whom they see reborn through the grace of the Lord and filled with the gift of the sevenfold Spirit; this is to be the sons of the younger Tobias in the number of seven, and these young men, that is, strong in faith and overcoming the evil one. "Direct your steps, so that you may leave Nineveh. For I see that its iniquity will bring about its end." And this is to say to the faithful to their hearers: "Direct the intention of your heart, so that you may leave behind the desires of this world and earthly life, and seek heavenly things with your whole mind. For it is evident that the multitude of the wicked and the transgression of God's commandments throughout the world are such that they can only be ended by the destruction of the world itself, just as it was once terminated in the flood and the abolition of the entire human race."

So Tobias left Nineveh with his wife, sons, and grandsons, and returned to his in-laws, finding them in good old age. This is what the Lord does daily, and will do until the end of the world: He turns away from those whom He recognizes are not His own, to visit and enlighten the hearts of those whom He has predestined to eternal life. He finds these in good old age, rejoicing that they have long been devoted to good works by His grace. Otherwise, He sees them in bad old age and passes them by, as those who, living far from the divine, are not mature in counsel, not venerable with the

whiteness of good action like gray hair, but are bent under the burden of vices. Of such, Isaiah says: "The child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. LXV). Rightly, they will be subject to a curse for their sins, who, although living many years, never cared to abandon the levity of a childish mind.

He finds them in good old age and unharmed, etc. And our Lord and Savior takes care of those whom He knows to persevere in the safety of good works. He Himself, closing their heart's gaze to the delight of this present life, lifts them to the contemplation of eternal light. He Himself leads them to heavenly places after the end of this life. His is the inheritance, of which the prophet sings to Him: "Arise, O God, judge the earth, for you shall inherit all nations" (Psalm LXXXII). And having completed many years in the fear of the Lord with joy, all his relatives buried him. The burial of Tobias signifies the faith of the whole world when our Lord, with His whole body, which is the Church that He has redeemed, enters into eternal rest, with angels rejoicing in the fellowship of redeemed men and placing each member of their Creator in various mansions of the heavenly homeland according to the diversity of merits.

And all his generation remained in good life and holy conversation. This is one generation throughout the whole world and throughout the whole time of the world, seeking the Lord, seeking the face of the God of Jacob (Psalm XXIII). Of which it also says: "The generation of the upright will be blessed" (Psalm CXII). What better life, what holier conversation is there than to remain forever in the glory of their Creator? So that they were accepted by both God and all the inhabitants of the earth. Men brought to the heavenly homeland will be accepted by God, by whose grace they have been redeemed; they will also be accepted by the angels, whose number they will complete, to whom they will be joined in perpetual fraternal society. These are indeed the inhabitants of that earth, of which the Lord says: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. V); which the Psalmist, desiring to see, said: "I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm XXVI).

Sources and Credits

Where each text comes from, and the licence under which it may be reused. The public-domain translations are unaltered apart from the division into numbered sections. Texts marked CC BY-SA 4.0 may be copied and adapted provided that credit is given and the result is shared under the same licence.

Commentary on Samuel

English: a modern English version prepared for SermonIndex with the help of artificial intelligence, working from the Latin text printed in Migne's Patrologia Latina, volume 91 (Allegorica expositio in Samuelem), and released under CC BY-SA 4.0. SermonIndex has divided the text into chapters and short sections and marked the Bible verse at the head of each section where the Latin gives one. *Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0.*

Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah

English: a modern English version prepared for SermonIndex with the help of artificial intelligence, working from the Latin text printed in Migne's Patrologia Latina, volume 91 (Allegorica expositio in Esdram et Nehemiam), and released under CC BY-SA 4.0. SermonIndex has divided the text into chapters and short sections and marked the Bible verse at the head of each section where the Latin gives one. *Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0.*

Commentary on the Song of Habakkuk

English: a modern English version prepared for SermonIndex with the help of artificial intelligence, working from the Latin text printed in Migne's Patrologia Latina, volume 91 (Allegorica expositio in Canticum Habacuc), and released under CC BY-SA 4.0. SermonIndex has divided the text into chapters and short sections and marked the Bible verse at the head of each section where the Latin gives one. *Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0.*

Commentary on Tobit

English: a modern English version prepared for SermonIndex with the help of artificial intelligence, working from the Latin text printed in Migne's Patrologia Latina, volume 91 (In librum beati patris Tobiae explanationis allegoricae de Christo et ecclesia), and released under CC BY-SA 4.0. SermonIndex has divided the text into chapters and short sections and marked the Bible verse at the head of each section where the Latin gives one. *Licence: CC BY-SA 4.0.*