Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets (part 1 of 3)

Cyril of Alexandria (c. AD 376–444)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

Book 1 **1**

Book 2 **23**

Book 3 **45**

Book 4 **65**

Of Our Father Among the Saints Cyril on the Prophet Habakkuk **81**

Commentary of the Same on the Prophet Haggai **124**

Introduction **142**

Book 1 **146**

Book 2 **165**

Book 3 **188**

Book 4 **209**

Book 5 **230**

Book 1

AMOS was a goatherd, and in pastoral customs and laws brought up; and he made his abode in the desert to the south of the land of the Jews, which extends as far as the borders of the Indian sea, and stretches into the land of the Persians, and countless barbarian tribes graze upon it, and it is very well-suited to be able to feed flocks of sheep; for it is good for pasture and wide and crowned with various kinds of grass. And Amos was from the village of Tekoa, situated at the very feet of the desert. And since he was a good man, and a worker of all gentleness, he was immediately enriched with the spirit of prophecy, and he prophesied not in Jerusa- lem, but while still among the flocks themselves, at the beginning of his customary and practiced concerns, then also having arrived in Bethel itself. For Tekoa was not so much under the kingdom of Judah, but under that of Ephraim. That the accounts we have given concerning these things are true, you will observe effortlessly, and you will be fully informed by his own words; for he prophesied in Bethel, as I said, saying that the altars of laughter would be destroyed, and the rites of Israel would be made desolate; and adding to these, ”And I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with a sword. But the priest of Bethel; this was Amaziah; gnashed his teeth at the Prophet.

Then he sends to Jeroboam king of Israel saying ”Amos makes conspiracies against you ”in the midst of the house of Israel, the land is not able to bear ”all his words; because thus says Amos: By ”a sword Jeroboam shall die, and Israel a captive ”shall be led away from his land. and Amaziah said to ”Amos: O seer, go, depart into the land of Judah, and there ”live, and there you shall prophesy. But at Bethel no longer ”continue to prophesy, for it is the king’s sanctuary, ”and it is the king’s house; and Amos answered and said ”to Amaziah: I was not a prophet, nor a son of a pro- ”phet, but I was a herdsman, a gatherer of sycamore fruit, and ”the Lord took me from the sheep, and the Lord said to ”me: Go, prophesy to my people Israel. He was taken, then, from the flocks, and he prophesied in Bethel, where the first Jeroboam, son of Nebat, also set up a golden calf. And I think it is somehow useful to note that the Amos who was the father of Isaiah was a different person. But what and on what subjects at all were the words from him, by taking up the matters before us we will clarify as much as possible. The words of Amos, which were in Accarim of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Jerusalem. These, he says, are the words of the prophecy of Amos from Tekoa, which were in Accarim.

But it must be known that the Hebrew version does not know this word at all, that is, 'in Accarim'; for they have only said, 'The words of Amos from Tekoa.' But the other interpreters, instead of 'in Accarim,' have put, 'among the herdsmen.' These, therefore, he says, are the words of Amos from Tekoa, which came at the time of still shepherding, and in the very sheepfolds. And concerning Jerusalem itself he says he did not so much hear, but rather saw the words. For God made the things themselves manifest and virtually present to the holy prophets along with the revelations, so that the words seemed to have become somehow visible, with the vision of things that would come to pass perhaps running concurrently with what God might say. However, this is worthy of investigation: for how could anyone think that the words came concerning Jerusalem alone, when through the voice of the same prophet God accuses both Judah and Israel? For he said again, "Thus says the Lord: For the three "impieties of the sons of Judah, and for the four, I will not turn "them away, because they rejected the "law of the Lord, and did not keep his commandments. "And their vanities which they made led them astray, "after which their fathers followed; "and I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the foundations "of Jerusalem. Then, following these things, "Thus says the Lord: "For the three impieties of Israel, and for the four, "I will not turn him away.

And having brought forward the manners of their sin, he threatened terrible things, and his discourse has a very great rebuke against both. How then could the words be understood as having been for Jerusalem, when God says, "I will send "a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the foundations of Jerusalem. What, then, will be the manner of our defense? Come, let us consider. We say, then, that it is the custom of the holy prophets, sometimes to distinctly call the two tribes in Jerusalem, Judah and Benjamin, Israel, and at other times again to name the ten other tribes in Samaria Israel, that is, Ephraim, but most often they do not distinguish. And since all are of the blood of Israel, so also they name the twelve tribes. But if they should wish perhaps to signify to us the entire Synagogue of the Jews, we will find them no longer using the name of Jerusalem in a restricted sense. The words of the prophecy of Amos, then, were concerning the whole multitude of the Jews, both that in Jerusalem and that in Samaria; but how they might be concerning them, it is necessary to say. Therefore, the manner of our defense is twofold. For first, he has introduced the God of all recounting the sins of the Synagogue of the Jews;

then having announced beforehand the things that would be against them, And he added to these things the good things that come from gentleness, and that in due time there would be a great sparing of them and a renewal to their original state. For Amos himself said again, as from the person of God, "Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says "the Lord. For, behold, I command, and I will sift among all "the nations the house of Israel, as one sifts in "a sieve, and not a fragment shall fall upon the earth. He necessarily also foretells the coming redemption through Christ, and that they will pass over to a renewal, and will be in a state of well-being, as God has mercy on them. And he spoke thus again, "In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is "fallen, and I will rebuild its fallen parts, and "I will raise up its ruins, and I will rebuild "it as in the days of old. Therefore, the words are concerning

Jerusalem. And in another way, they might reasonably be understood to be concerning her. For Syria and the kings of Damascus, and not a few of the neighboring nations, ravaged the land of the Jews, at different times different ones rising up and devastating it, carrying off plunder, and doing things out of unrestrained anger, so that they came into extreme misery.

Therefore, to all these who had sacked her, the Prophet introduced God threatening desolation, and said they would be punished for their unholy deeds. Therefore, on behalf of Jerusalem, or rather, on behalf of the whole congregation of the Jews, were the words of Amos spoken. And we shall know this clearly by examining the times of the prophecy; for it is written next: In the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. But I suppose someone will say, 'And what is the benefit for those who read this, to have to examine curiously, and very minutely, the times of the reigns of those just named, I mean Uzziah and also Jeroboam?' And to this we say that the matter is necessary, as it contains within itself the whole circumstance, as it were, of the prophecy, as if in birth pangs. For he threatens destruction and uprisings and conflagrations to Syria and Damascus and to the barbarians dwelling near Judea, and from this came the beginning of his divine oracles. Therefore it is necessary to learn the reasons why the times of the reigns were added, what and how many things were accomplished by each, how he lived, and what is worthy of hearing in both. Having turned aside, then, into apostasy, both Israel and Judah were disciplined in many ways. For when the rulers of Damascus and the Syrians would run down and besiege them, they plundered the lands among them;

and when, in turn, the Moabites and Idumeans, the Gergesenes and Elamites, the Azotians and the inhabitants of Accaron were maltreating Samaria, and indeed also the kingdom of Judah, using unbridled impulses and an insatiable will, and being driven to extremes of rage; and indeed we shall find that they have done this in various ways; for instance, when Ahab was king of Samaria and over Israel. And it is written thus in the third book of Kings, "And the son of Ader gathered "all his force, and went up and besieged "Samaria, and thirty-two kings with him and "every horse and chariot; and they went up and besieged "Samaria and made war against it. See then that the king of Damascus, that is, Ader, made allies against Israel, thirty-two other rulers of the neighboring nations, and thus made war on the land. But also in the times of Joash king of Judah, Hazael the Syrian made war on Jerusalem. And it is written again in the fourth book of Kings, "Then Hazael "king of Syria went up and fought against Gath, and "captured it. And Hazael set his "face to go up to Jerusalem.

And Joash king "of Judah took all the holy things that Jehoshaphat and "Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers and kings "of Judah, had dedicated, and his own holy things and all the the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the house of the king and sent it to Hazael king of Syria, and he went up from Jerusalem. For they did such things according to divine wrath, since Israel had offended, by turning away exceedingly and being terribly excited about the worship of idols. But the foreigners, when they conquered,

were insulting the glory of God. For the wretched ones thought to themselves that the hand that helped them had grown weak, and they have dared to behave insolently against the glory of God. And so the Syrians, having grown weak, when Ader was briefly besieging Samaria, made a false pretext for their cowardice, saying, "The God of Israel is a God of mountains and not a God of valleys. For they thought that those of Israel had conquered because God was able to save only in the mountains or on the hills. 'We have been defeated, then,' they say, 'because the God of Israel is a God of mountains; but if we could join battle on the bare plains, we would certainly overcome them, since the God of Israel is weak in the valleys.' But these are charges of Hellenic delusion, and the terrible unguarded speech of those who do not know the true God by nature.

Therefore, God who is all-powerful was indignant with the foreigners, and very rightly so, because even when conquering Israel, as I said, they offered thank-offerings to their own gods, and talking nonsense they thought they had prevailed even over God Himself. As time went on after the reign of Ahab, and of certain others in between and in succession, a king was proclaimed over Israel in Samaria, Jeroboam, another besides the first, who was the son of Nebat, but his namesake and of like mind and impious. But in the times of his reign the compassionate God at last pitied Israel, who was weighed down by unbearable hardship, and He freed them from their troubles through the hand of Jeroboam, although he was exceedingly wicked and an apostate. For he so prevailed over the foreigners, as even to recover again cities that had been taken away from them in the times of past kings, and to subject them to his own scepters, and to inflict very many evils on those who had formerly conquered. For it is written about him in the fourth book of Kings: "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Joash began to reign over Israel in Samaria for forty-one years; and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who made Israel sin.

For he restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by the hand of his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, and that they were reduced to a few, confined and destitute and abandoned, and there was no one to help Israel. And the Lord did not say that he would blot out the seed of Israel from under heaven; and he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Joash. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam and all that he did, and his mighty deeds, how he waged war, and how he recovered Damascus and Hamath for Judah in Israel, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? Behold, he says clearly that those of Israel were afflicted, with no one to save them, so that they were few and scattered; yet that they were saved from the hand of Jeroboam. And he has put 'from the hand' instead of 'by the hand'. For he himself was not the one crushing Israel, but rather fighting for and defending it; and he recovered Damascus, and won back the border of Israel and performed many mighty deeds. While Jeroboam was reigning, Azariah, also called Uzziah, is anointed king over Judah in Jerusalem.

who was no less burdensome to the nations, and vigorously pressing upon those who had ravaged Judea. For he was a pious and God-loving man. But when he had prevailed over the enemies, with God permitting him to conquer, he became sick with arrogance, and went by his own commands to that it was necessary then also to act as a priest to God, and indeed he dared to go up to the divine altar itself, and to offer incense. But immediately God rebuked him. For he was marked with leprosy, a terrible and incurable affliction, so that as one unclean according to the law he might be sent out of Jerusalem, and might cease then both from acting as a priest to God, and from the sacred rite he had unlawfully practiced, and from defiling the divine temple. And the sacred Scripture spoke thus concerning him in the fourth of Kingdoms: ”In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah king of Judah began to reign. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem, and his mother’s name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Amaziah his father had done. Except the high places he did not remove, because the people were sacrificing and burning incense on the high places. And the Lord touched the king, and he was a leper until the day of his death.

And these things are in Kingdoms, but in the second of Chronicles a leaner narrative is given concerning these things. It is as follows: ”And all the people of the land took Uzziah, and he was sixteen years old and they made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. He built Elath, he restored it to Judah after the king slept with his fathers. Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem, and his mother’s name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Amaziah his father had done. And he was seeking the Lord in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the fear of the Lord, in his days he sought the Lord, and the Lord made him prosper. And he went out and fought against the Philistines, and broke down the walls of Gath and the walls of Jabneh and the walls of Ashdod, and he built cities in Ashdod, and among the Philistines the Lord made him strong, against the Philistines and against the Arabs who dwelt upon the rock, and against the Meunites. And the Meunites gave gifts to Uzziah, and his name was known as far as the entrance of Egypt, because he was exceedingly strong. Then it says next concerning him: ”And he did wrong against the Lord his God, and he entered into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him eighty priests of the Lord, valiant men. And they stood up against Uzziah the king and said to him, It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense; go out from the sanctuary, because you have rebelled against the Lord; and this will not be for your glory from the Lord God. And Uzziah was enraged, and in his hand was the censer to burn incense in the temple; and while he was enraged with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, above the altar of incense. And the chief priest and the priests turned to him, and behold, he was leprous on his forehead, and they hurried him out from there, and indeed he himself hurried to go

out, because the Lord had rebuked him. Concerning Uzziah's being made a leper, these things suffice; but that he became a mighty man, and campaigned against the lands of the Philistines, and became so great in strength as to build cities among them, and to impose tribute, and to bring under his own scepters those who were once very proud, the sacred Scripture has taught sufficiently.

Therefore, since the prophetic word has introduced to us at the beginning the future desolation of the Philistines, the memory of the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam has become necessary, for they were conquered through them, as we have at least said before. We know, therefore, that Damascus was also burned by the hand of the Assyrians, and the tribes of the Philistines were no less ravaged. But since it is of these those things being later, we will of necessity attach to the times of both Jeroboam and Uzziah the things that happened to the foreigners, and no less to the leaders of the Assyrians themselves. And since the Prophet has added "Two years before the earthquake," we have necessarily also made mention of Uzziah being struck with leprosy. For since he dared to act as a priest unlawfully, he was struck with leprosy when God reproved him, and Jerusalem was shaken by an earthquake, and through this it was clear to those at that time that God was indicating his own wrath. And he said, The Lord has spoken from Zion, and from Jerusalem he has given his voice, and the pastures of the shepherds have mourned, and the top of Carmel has withered. In these words the whole purpose of the prophecy is revealed to us, and the force of what is set forth might reasonably be understood as a kind of definition and preface of the entire oracle, overshadowed by great obscurity.

For the word is composed as from a likeness and a metaphor, and as from what is wont to happen to the well-rooted summits of mountains, or sometimes also to the bare plains. For mountains, though luxuriant with thickets and woods, and plains again, crowned with much and abundant grass, when some destructive thing or perhaps a plague, or another of the maladies from the air, unexpectedly wither. In this way human affairs also fail, and sometimes bitter and unbearable calamities strike cities and countries, destroying and corrupting both small and great. For what would an enemy's sword spare, or, let us say, a plague, utterly cutting down both the one distinguished in wealth and glories and powers, and the obscure and downtrodden? Therefore, the word has now become for the Prophet especially fitting to his accustomed ways. For he was, as I said, a goatherd, and the trope is made as from the fact that the pastures of the flocks are often destroyed. What then is the truer meaning of what has been said? He says the Lord spoke from Zion, as from his own place, and from Jerusalem, as from that which was allotted to him; for the incorporeal is not in a place. But since that famous temple was in Jerusalem, the place somehow seemed to be his own, at least according to the supposition of the ancients who still had small thoughts about God. But instead of "spoke," the Hebrew version has put "roared," that is, he bellowed, in the manner of lions.

When this happened, he says, the pastures of the flocks mourned; and by "pastures of the flocks" he means the nations of the foreigners, as being subject to certain shepherds, their

own rulers, who lead and carry the people under their hand to whatever they please. Therefore they mourned, that is, they have been in dejection and in every evil; for mourning happens for the dead. And the cause of their calamity was that God roared down, and as it were threatened destruction. ”For a lion,” he says, ”will roar, and who will not be afraid? But not only did the pastures of the flocks mourn, but in addition to this the top of Carmel also withered; and by ”the top of Carmel” he means Jerusalem. For Carmel is a mountain situated in the country of the Jews, on which also Elijah the Tishbite dwelt. And often the whole land of the Jews is signified by the name of Carmel. Such is what was said by God through the voice of another prophet to the sons of Israel: ”And I brought you into Carmel to eat ”its good things and its fruits, and you entered ”and defiled my land, and you made my inheritance ”an abomination.

Since, therefore, Jerusalem was named the most notable and distinguished of the other cities in Judaea, he calls it the top of Carmel, as being lifted up in glory, as excelling in pre-eminence, as conspicuous beyond the others, on account of having the divine temple, and the kings from the tribe of Judah who reigned at various times. But it is the custom of the holy prophets to hide their words providentially in obscurities, because of the unbridled impulses of the hearers. For they would not have they tolerated those speaking openly, very much stirred up to audacity, and rebuking the holy prophets and saying, “But speak to us and announce to us another delusion. And the Lord said, “For the three impieties of Damascus and for the four I will not turn away from it, because they sawed with iron saws the pregnant women of Gilead. And I will send fire upon the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the foundations of the son of Hadad. And I will break the bars of Damascus, and I will destroy the inhabitants from the plain of On, and cut off a tribe from the men of Harran, and the renowned people of Syria shall be taken captive, says the Lord. The divine Moses marvels at God as both good and long-suffering, and very rightly. For since Israel had made a calf in the wilderness, and said foolishly, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,” he had necessarily offended.

But since God threatened to destroy them completely, then Moses fell down and besought, and indeed persuaded the Creator to remit the punishment for those who had sinned, he offered up songs of thanksgiving, saying, “The Lord God is compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and very merciful and true, and keeping justice and mercy for thousands, taking away iniquities and injustices and sins, and will not clear the guilty, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children and upon the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation. The peoples of the Jews did not understand this correctly. For they thought God to be so harsh and implacable and long in wrath, as to bring the faults of the fathers upon the children’s children. And so mocking this very thing, they would say, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth were set on edge. For this reason God says to the prophet Ezekiel, “Son of man, what is this parable to you in Israel, saying, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth were set on edge’? As I live, says the Lord, this parable shall no longer be spoken in Israel. For all souls are mine; as the soul of the

father, so also the soul of the son, they are mine. The soul that sins, it shall die. And the son shall not bear the sin of his father, nor shall the father bear the sin of his son.

For how is the Lord of all still long-suffering and very merciful and true, if He does not remit sins, and cleanse the guilty, but rather extends His indignation to the third and fourth generation? What then is the meaning? He is, as I said, both long-suffering and incomparably good, and does not immediately bring punishment upon those who have sinned. But He postpones it, even to a second generation, so that perhaps some intervening repentance might check His wrath. But if this should not happen, and the third and fourth from the first should be caught in the same, or even worse evils, and be found to be imitators of their ancestors' impiety, then indeed, then at last He brings the punishments, bestowing upon the generation a sufficient long-suffering for those who have already passed; this is the visiting of the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Does He not then say, having been long-suffering with Damascus many times, shall I not at last be indignant, and very rightly, for three and four sins? For what have they done? Many other things indeed. Yet they will pay the penalty for their excessive cruelty. For I will turn away from them, because they sawed with iron saws the pregnant women of Gilead. Now Gilead is a small city of Judea, situated on the border of the land of the Palestinians.

The Syrians captured this beforehand, and destroyed it with complete ruin, cutting with iron saws the pregnant women, and together with the infants melting away the raw embryos of women. But the iron saws he calls the wheels of the wagons, with which it is the custom for the Syrians to thresh the grain on the threshing-floor. And so somewhere God also says through the voice of Isaiah to the Synagogue of the Jews, "Behold, I have made you as the wheels of a threshing-wagon, new, saw-toothed. Therefore, it is similar As if he were to say, for instance, to Damascus: I will determine your judgment, for what you have threshed and crushed those in Gilead, so as not even to spare those still in the womb, to whom mercy from all follows and is owed. That some from Damascus treated the people of Israel cruelly and savagely, you may learn effortlessly by paying attention to the words of the prophet Elisha. For he arrived in Damascus. And when he met Hazael, while Hadad was still sick, "The man of God," it says, "wept, and Hazael said, 'Why does my lord weep?' And he said, 'Because I know what evil things you will do to the sons of Israel:

their strongholds you will send up in fire, and their chosen men you will kill with the sword, and their infants you will dash to pieces, and their pregnant women you will rip open.'" Since Damascus has done these things against Gilead, and rather against the whole land of the Jews, he threatens to burn down the house of Hazael and Hadad, and to break the bars of Damascus. These things were done partly and at times by Uzziah and Jeroboam; for they themselves also took Syria and conquered it by force; and as time went on, also by the king of the Assyrians. Then he says, and I will destroy inhabitants from the plain of On. On the prophets call Bethel, in which the accursed Jeroboam set up the golden calf. But from that time on it was their custom to call every idolatrous land so. Therefore, the inhabitants in the land and plain of On, that is, of vanities, which is idols; for so the others

have interpreted; I will destroy and cut off, he says, and I will cut down no less also a tribe from the men of Harran, which is a town somewhere surely bordering Damascus, having most warlike inhabitants. And he says that the renowned people of Syria will be taken captive. By renowned, he means either the one greatly famous, or the mercenary and one gathered to them for assistance; for, as I said, they would hire their foreign neighbors when campaigning against the land of the Jews;

or renowned means the one called from outside and a sojourner. For it must be known that the Hebrew version, instead of "people of Syria," says "of Cyrene"; for the Syrians are colonists of the Cyrenians. And we remember that, as is written again in the fourth book of Kingdoms, Ahaz was reigning over Jerusalem, and Pekah and Rezin, the kings of Syria and Damascus, went up against Jerusalem, laying waste the cities of Judah under it. And since Ahaz, reigning over Judah, was in unbearable fear, he hired Tiglath-pileser the Assyrian with money for assistance. "And the king of the Assyrians," it says, "heard him, and the king of the Assyrians went up to Damascus and captured it, and carried it away captive, and put Rezin to death. Thus says the Lord: For the three transgressions of Gaza, and for the four, I will not turn them away, because they took captive a captivity of Solomon, to shut them up in Edom. And I will send a fire upon the walls of Gaza, and it shall devour its foundations. And I will destroy the inhabitants from Ashdod, and a tribe shall be taken from Ashkelon, and I will bring my hand upon Ekron, and the remnant of the foreigners shall perish, says the Lord.

I think it necessary before all else to say this, that neither the Hebrew version, nor indeed that of the others, mentions Solomon, but the Hebrews have said, "Because they took them captive," while the others have added, instead of "of Solomon," "a complete" or "perfect" one. But we will necessarily follow the writing of the seventy. Gaza is therefore accused; this is a city of the Philistines, which is now Palestine; as having taken captive a captivity of Solomon, to shut them up in Edom. And if we understand it thus, as at least the other interpreters have published, they have not made an ordinary devastation against Judea, but having taken a sufficient number of captives, they have given them into the hand of the Edomites. The Idumaeans, though descended from the blood of Esau, have always held hostile thoughts toward those of Israel, with whom the Gazites and the Azotians and the Ascalonites, and those of the so-called Accaron and some others of the foreigners, cooperating and becoming allies, prepared to take the cities of Judea by force. But if indeed, according to the writing of the seventy, we should say that they took captive the captivity of Solomon, it is necessary to understand that somehow. For Solomon was a most powerful and all-mighty king, and he so ruled over the neighboring nations that he even built many cities among them, and in them established Israel, with Hiram giving them to him. And it is so written in the second of Chronicles:

"And it came to pass after twenty years in which Solomon had built "the house of the Lord and his own house, and the "cities which Hiram gave to Solomon, Solomon built them "and settled there the sons of Israel. And Solomon came "to Emath Soba, and prevailed against

it, and ”built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the ”fortified cities he built in Hamath. And again, after other things: ”And whatever Solomon desired according to his desire ”to build in Jerusalem and in Lebanon, and in ”all his kingdom. All the people that were left of ”the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and ”the Hivite and the Jebusite, who are not of Is-”rael, were from their sons left after ”them in the land, whom the sons of Israel did not destroy, ”and Solomon brought them up for tribute unto this day. Therefore, having allied themselves with those from Idumaea, the Gazites and Azotians and the rest have destroyed these cities, namely those named after Solomon, so that they no longer lie under the kingdom of Judah, but are assigned, as it were, to the unholy leaders of the Moabites. For this reason, he says Gaza will be consumed by fire along with the others, and the Azotians and the tribe of Ascalon will be utterly destroyed, and Accaron will fall under the hand of the smiter; and with them the remnant of the foreigners will certainly be destroyed together.

For it is likely that they have served as mercenaries, and some of the neighboring barbarians have been called for aid. It is seen, therefore, to be a grievous thing and full of all danger, to conspire with the wicked and to love to be armed against those beloved by God, and to persecute saints. For even if they sometimes suffer on account of their stumblings, being disciplined by God, yet he will not utterly neglect those who are his own; and having disciplined them usefully, he will cast into destruction the vessels of wrath, that is, those who rushed against them with unbridled anger, surely according to that which was well said to Babylon concerning the sons of Israel: ”I gave them ”into your hands, but you showed them no mercy. For the excess of torment from those who were commanded to do this is exceedingly displeasing even to an indignant God. Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away from it, because they delivered up the captivity of Solomon to Idumaea, and did not remember the covenant of brothers. And I will send a fire upon the walls of Tyre, and it shall devour its foundations.

But the Tyrians again, in addition to those from Damascus, and indeed also the Azotians, the Gazites and Ascalonites, and those from Accaron, having surpassed the forbearance befitting God, and having been conquered, in a way, by the excess of their impieties, will be subjected to wrath, at least according to the meaning of the oracle, and will endure the ultimate punishment of all. And the charge against them is that they delivered up the captivity of Solomon to Idumaea, and being unmindful of the very covenant of brothers. What, then, the captivity of Solomon is, the argument has sufficiently shown us; but how it was delivered up to Idumaea, and by the Tyrians, it is necessary to say. For having enslaved a number not easy to count of those from Judah and Israel, they have sold to the Idumeans. But they, having made their blood brothers and free men from of old into the portion of captives, both oppressed them with the bitter yoke of slavery and forced them to live by the laws of the Greeks, the wretches all but mocking the glory of God, as though He had neither preserved for them the freedom from their fathers, nor indeed had the strength to grant them a state of well-being. And so the God of all says through the voice of another

prophet, accusing not moderately those who shut up the captivity of Solomon into Idumea. ”And ”what are you to me, Tyre and Sidon and all Galilee ”of the foreigners?

Are you rendering a recompense to me, or ”are you bearing a grudge against me? Swiftly and speedily I will ”return your recompense upon your heads, for ”what you took, my silver and my gold, and my ”choice and beautiful things you brought into your temples, ”and the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel you ”sold to the sons of the Greeks, that you might drive them out from ”their borders. Now a border, as it were, of those of Israel, is Judea in a bodily sense, but the law in a spiritual sense, outside of which they have come to be, being unnaturally sold to the sons of the Greeks. The Tyrians have done this, along with the others, having forgotten the covenant of the brothers itself. And this might be understood by us in three ways. For who are the brothers, and what is the covenant, come let us say, being guided by the sacred writings to the thoughts on this matter. Hiram, who was king of the Tyrians at the time, was one of the most beloved friends of the divine David; then after him he became beloved to Solomon, so as to make covenants of unanimity with him, to cooperate with him in all things, and to contribute the necessary care while he was completing the divine temple. And he brought very many gifts, and he himself also gained even greater and richer ones.

Therefore, he either says that, that the Tyrians made war on Israel, forgetting the covenant of the brothers out of love, who had come to such a disposition and affection, that they seemed to be even of the same blood; or that the Idumeans, having descended from Esau, were brothers to those of Israel, but made war, having had no regard for the covenant of the brothers. For Esau had hostile and enemy thoughts against Jacob, being grieved in the beginning on account of the birthright; but when he was departing from the hearth of Laban at the proper time, and wishing to return home again with both his wives and children, he met him as a brother. For they embraced and kissed one another, and spoke what was fitting for friends, and treading upon their old difference, they made covenants of harmony and peace. But they were in this state. But the Tyrians, forgetting the covenant of the brothers, pitted the clans against each other, and persuaded them to hold their blood brothers as slaves, rendering the Idumeans far too strong over the vanquished by their own conspiracies. And if indeed someone should say this also of the Moabites themselves, who were of the blood of Lot, that the Tyrians violated the covenant of brothers, it is clear that it means the one from Abraham to Lot.

For since the herdsmen of both fought, ”Abram said to Lot,” he says, ”Let there be no strife between me and you, and between my ”herdsmen and between your herdsmen, for we are ”brother men. Therefore, for this reason he says it will be justly burned, and shaken from its very foundations. For ”You shall not be with the majority for evil” is useful everywhere. Thus says the Lord: For the three transgressions of Idumea, and for the four, I will not turn them away, because they pursued their brother with the sword. The word now passes to the Idumean himself, that is, those of Esau, and it says very well that they too will be subjected to the consequences of wrath. For they made war on Israel, who was their

brother, and did not shrink from raising the insolent and savage sword against those who were near and of their blood, not of the law having been mindful of nature, not having been mindful of anything human, but accustomed to conquering those outside and most hostile with enmities against brothers, and perhaps being very proud of this. Therefore let them hear from us too, ”Why do you boast in wickedness, O mighty one? And it might be said of them, and very appropriately, ”Whose glory is in their ”shame.

For what it was better to love to put as far away as possible, these things indeed honoring with an utterly wicked judgment, they will hear again, ”Woe ”to those who call evil good and good evil, who ”put darkness for light and light for darkness, who say ”the bitter is sweet and the sweet is bitter. And he ravaged a womb upon the earth. The crimes of the Idumeans are usefully enumerated, and he goes back to Esau himself, showing them to be of low birth and sprung from an unholy father, so that we might perhaps understand that which is obliquely indicated through the voice of Isaiah, ”For from the seed of serpents shall come forth the offspring of asps. He narrates, therefore, that their forefather Esau also almost ravaged the good things that had come to him from the womb and birth, and cast down to the earth the dignity of the birthright, deeming the thing worthy of almost no account for the sake of bodily food; for he sought a pottage of lentils, and having received it, he gave up the gift of nature. ”For this reason,” it says, ”his name was called Edom; which is, earthy, whence, I think, those descended from him are henceforth called Idumeans. Therefore the dignity from birth and womb he ravaged, it says, to the earth; he exchanged it for an earthy thing.

They would be held liable for the same crimes who put the enjoyment of carnal things before spiritual things, and choose temporary things instead of eternal things, and things that are shaken instead of things that are not shaken, and despising the glory that is from God, but having most unwisely preferred the splendid things among men, which also, like shadows, pass by those who possess them. And very usefully the divine Paul cries out, ”Lest there be any ”fornicator,” he says, ”or profane person like Esau, who for one ”meal sold his birthright. And he has seized his terror for a testimony. He again mentions another matter, able to slander the Idumean, as having always been awkward and wicked, and most hostile and warlike to those of his own blood. It is written, then, in Numbers, ”And Moses sent ”messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying, Thus ”says your brother Israel: You know all the ”hardship that has found us; and our fathers went down ”into Egypt, and we sojourned in Egypt many ”days, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our ”fathers. And we cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard ”our voice and sending an angel ”brought us out of Egypt; and now we are in Kadesh, a city ”on part of your border; we will pass through your ”land; we will not pass through fields or through vineyards, ”nor will we drink water from your cistern; by the king’s highway we will ”go;

we will not turn aside to the right or to the left, until ”we have passed through your borders. And Edom said to him, You ”shall not pass through me; but if not, I will come out against you in ”war. And the sons of Israel say to him, ”We will go along the mountain; and if I and my cattle drink of your water, ”I will give you a price, but ”it is no matter; we will go

along the mountain. ”But he said, You shall not pass through me. And Edom came out to ”meet them with a heavy host and with a strong hand. And ”Edom was not willing to allow Israel to pass through ”his borders, and Israel turned away from him. Observe then again in these things, how terrible and beyond all reason are the crimes of lack of affection. For Israel did not ask for water from Edom without payment, but he was in arms, and drew up for battle, and having begrudged them passage alone, and having proceeded to this point of awkwardness was convicted, that if Israel had not turned away, he would not even have spared their blood. He has seized, therefore, his terror for a testimony. For they indeed they refused and drew back, fearing to make war, so that they might not seem to neglect love towards their brothers; but he made their drawing back, or rather their cowardice in this matter, which he also signifies by the name of dread, a pretext for a harsh protest against them.

For he threatened plainly, that if he would not depart from the borders belonging to him, he would go out against him and make war henceforth. Therefore Edom was without love for his kinsman, and not moderately guilty of the charge of brother-hating; for this reason he was justly also hated by God; ”For God is love,” according to the voice of John, ”and he who abides in love, abides in God. Therefore he who has chosen to live without love is not in God; how could he be? But he will rather lie outside of intimacy with God. And his anger he kept for a victory; and I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the foundations of her walls. This is indeed the third transgression of Esau. For his anger, clearly fierce towards enmity and impiety, he kept for a victory, that is, for complete victory, and to the very end. For he in no way ceased from his impious undertakings, although, as I have already said, Esau had departed from that ancient impiety, and no longer sought to kill Jacob, but rather changed to gentleness and brotherly love. For when he returned from the hearth of Laban, he embraced him with weeping; and somehow tears are always wont to be shed even in times of extreme joy; but those descended from him were exceedingly harsh, in the awkwardness of their ways surpassing even the wickedness of their forefather.

But it is true, that in every way and altogether ”The ways of the resentful lead to death. For this reason he also says I will send a fire upon Teman; this is a metropolis of Idumea; and it shall devour the foundations of her walls; for it has been burned by conquering enemies, and Teman has perished along with the others. Hating brothers will therefore end in fire and flames, and rising up against those of one’s own blood, or even those gathered into unity and one-mindedness from spiritual kinship; but the boasts of love are free from such evils. Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away from them, because they ripped open the pregnant women of the Gileadites, that they might enlarge their borders. And I will kindle a fire upon the walls of Rabbah, and it shall devour her foundations with shouting in the day of war, and it shall be shaken in the day of her consummation, and their kings shall go into captivity, their priests and their princes together, says the Lord. The savagery of the Damascenes is also recorded in the case of the Ammonites.

For they too killed the pregnant women of the Gileadites, not in defense of some others, nor indeed lending their wrath to foreigners, but for themselves, so that they might have a wider domain, and the borders of their kingdom extending very far, with all the land of the Jews laid waste, and those of Israel completely overthrown, as though God had suffered powerlessness, and He who promised to save, and to show Himself invincible to those who wish to make war, had truly grown weak. So then, having also captured the cities, they dared to mock the protecting God, and to the falsely-named gods they lit thank-offerings and sang victory odes. For this reason He says that Rabbah will be burned; this too is a metropolis of the land of the Ammonites; and He says that it will perish with a shout, that is, with the Babylonians shouting their war-cry against it. For they have taken it with a whole army, with Nebuchadnezzar overrunning the land of the Ammonites. And they shall go as captives, he says, the subjects together with their rulers, and those appointed to serve their own gods, having no help from them. For what could a deaf idol do, or how could it help anyone? And the proponents of the heresies are like those who cut open pregnant women, so that they might enlarge the borders of them.

For in order that they may appear to be leaders of many, they do violence to wretched souls, and by deceptions from their words they cause them to miscarry a faith that is, as it were, raw and unfulfilled, speaking to them perverted things, and belching out things ”from their own heart, and not from the mouth of the Lord. For no one says, ”Jesus is Lord,” except ”in the Holy Spirit,” nor ”Jesus is anathema” except in Beelzebul. Thus says the Lord: For the three transgressions of Moab, and for the four, I will not turn away from it, because they burned the bones of the king of Idumea to lime. And I will send a fire upon Moab, and it will devour the foundations of their cities, and Moab will die in weakness, with a shout and with the sound of a trumpet. And I will destroy the judge from her midst, and I will kill all her rulers with her, says the Lord. The Moabites again have acted impiously, not moderately, so as to drive even them beyond the inherent gentleness and forbearance of the God of all. But their accusation is the sin against the dead; I mean the burning of the bones of the king of Idumea; and burning them in such a way as to finally reduce them to dust and lime. What then is the crime? Hatred and inhumanity and unbridled savagery against those of Israel.

For one might say that the bones of the aforementioned king were burned for no other reason than solely on account of those of Israel. And since the story is clear, I will relate it briefly. It is written in the fourth of the kingdoms ”And it came to pass after the death of Ahab that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. And King Joram went out on that day from Samaria and mustered Israel, and he went and sent to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab has rebelled against me; will you go with me against Moab to war? And he said, I will go up; I am as you are, as your people are my people, as your horses are my horses. And he said, By what way shall I go up? And he said, By the way of the wilderness of Edom. And the king of Israel and the king of Judah and the king of Edom went, and they made a circuit of a seven days’ journey; and there was no water for the camp nor for the cattle that were at their feet. Observe, therefore, how the king of Edom, that is,

of Idumea, also took up arms with the kings; and since they were in want of water, they sent for the blessed prophet Elisha, and they begged that what they sought might be given from God. When this happened, the Moabites were captured;

for it is written again after other things, "And Israel rose up and struck Moab, and they fled from before them. And they went in, advancing and striking Moab, and they overthrew the cities, and on every good portion of land each man threw his stone and filled it, and they stopped up every spring of water, and cut down every good tree, until only the stones of the wall were left torn down. Therefore, those from Moab, being enraged that those of Israel had at times conquered, while the king of Edom aided them and marched with them, since they could not otherwise harm a dead man, they sinned against his remains, consuming them with fire, not even sparing his bones any longer, adding, as it were, to the destroyed of Israel the one who had from time to time been their helper. Therefore, their cities will be burned, and He says they themselves will perish in weakness, not wasting away by disease, nor consumed by common ailments, but with a shout and with the sound of a trumpet, that is, as in war and battle; and He threatens that also judges and rulers and all her leaders will perish together with those under them. For they were in charge of counsel and enterprises, and of the whole impiety they were surely the instigators to the others. Thus says the Lord:

For the three transgressions of the sons of Judah, and for the four, I will not turn away from them, because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and His commandments they have not kept, and their vanities which they made have led them astray, which their fathers followed after them; and I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the foundations of Jerusalem.To the lawless nations has also been added the one instructed by the law, that is, Judah; for the Judge is no respecter of persons. That He endured him while he was always sinning, and persevered for a long time, is shown by the fact that He was moved only at the third and indeed also the fourth sin. And yet it was surely necessary, as is reasonable, to allot to the other nations, since they do not have the divine law, a more abundant gentleness, and to lavish upon them the length of His forgiveness, but to demand punishment for indifference immediately from Israel, since he was nourished in the divine commandments and was not ignorant of the profitable path, but He endured even those who knew the law as if they did not know it. But when He at last beheld them carried away to the limit of wickedness and of awkward reasonings, then He says He will send the fire upon Jerusalem itself, and consume even to its very foundations the city that is so brilliant and renowned. And the crimes of those of Israel are very many;

but most of all God blames them for following the errors of their fathers. For the ones still yoked to the greed of the Egyptians, and nourished in their customs and laws, kindled their worship for a calf; but the others, having escaped that most wretched slavery, and being instructed in many ways by the divine commandments so as to know clearly what is pleasing to God, were caught going backwards, and being dragged down into the error of their fathers, and perhaps even fearing as unseemly not to be seen in equal evils. For they too have worshipped the golden heifers. And the cause of such impiety for them has

been that they rejected the law of the Lord, and were unwilling to keep His commandments. Therefore, as long as we are keepers of the law and lovers of God, and are diligent to keep the commandments, we shall be found wise and sagacious, and knowledgeable of every virtue, and indeed enriched in all such things. But having inclined toward indifference, and having disregarded the divine laws, we shall hereafter be carried about by every wind, deprived of the best mind and understanding. And we shall be ”portions for foxes,” with the unclean spirits dragging us this way and that. Rightly and wisely, therefore, does the divine David sing concerning every righteous man, ”The law of his God is in his heart, and ”his steps shall not be tripped. Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away from him, because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals, those who trample on the dust of the earth. He does not leave him unpunished, but rather subjects to punishments Israel, that is, the tribes in Samaria. And that they themselves, sinning unguardedly, have all but consumed the tranquility owed by God to the weak, the turning away for three and four sins would show, which having suffered they must necessarily be subjected to terrible things, and be in every evil. Therefore, the divine David, fearing this thing, and knowing it to be a cause of destruction, implored, saying, ”Do not turn Your face from me, and ”do not turn away in wrath from Your servant. For wrath always follows, and, as it were, accompanies the turnings away. And what are the crimes of those of Israel, he clearly states. For they have sold, he says, the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals, that is, they did not endure to speak rightly and justly, and to render for each of those being judged the justice that accords with the law. But if it happened that a man was righteous, sober and gentle, modest and unboastful; for such a one would be understood as both righteous and poor, or poor in spirit;

being brought to judgment by one of the more powerful, this man is sold to his enemies, although the law clearly proclaimed, ”You shall not take ”person in judgment; and again, ”You shall not slay the innocent and the just. For the one entrusted with judging is certainly established in the order of God, to whom alone judging is proper. ”For there is one lawgiver and judge,” according to the voice of the saint. Therefore, the one who falsifies the account of justice and shows partiality will certainly insult the divine dignity, and offends God who says, ”Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every one to his ”brother. He accuses them, therefore, of selling the just and the poor to their enemies, and of being accustomed to doing this for the sake of a few and most worthless gains, which would scarcely suffice for those who received them for the purchase of sandals. But it was far better, having chosen to honor righteousness and what is pleasing to God, to be intoxicated rather with the honors from Him, and indeed to have the wealth that comes from a good reputation. ”For a good name,” he says, ”is to be chosen rather than great riches. It should be known that through the voice of Isaiah He says something like this to the mother of the Jews, that is, Jerusalem: ”Your silver is dross; your wine merchants mix wine with water;

your princes are rebellious, companions of thieves, loving gifts, seeking rewards, not judging the fatherless, and not attending to the case of the widow; and again through the voice of Jeremiah, ”Her leaders judged for a reward. It is therefore everywhere accursed not to render judgment that is right and blameless, but in a burdensome manner and discredited by its inequality. And they struck the heads of the poor with their fists. He clearly reproaches and accuses them of oppression and greed, as being unholy and merciless, and those whom it was better to deem worthy of care and to choose to honor, and to love to restore with assistance out of love, they were accustomed, on the contrary, to do wrong, wasting away with unbearable and bitter sorrows those who are burdened with poverty. But our Lord Jesus Christ records what is done to them as done to His own person. For He says, ”Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these, you have done it to Me. Therefore, we shall offend God in no small measure, by taking advantage of the weak and ”striking the humble with fists,” as it is written, and embittering with sorrows those who are weighed down by poverty, although we ought rather to extend to them the hand of mutual love. ”For poverty,” he says, ”humbles a man, but the hands of the diligent make rich;

and the disciple of Christ also writes somewhere that ”Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. And they have turned aside the way of the humble. You will understand this in two ways: for either it means that they have thought arrogant things, and have come to such a measure of God-hated arrogance, as to reject even brothers, unless they are swimming in wealth and have splendid possessions, and to go with hatred, as it were, and in the same way as those who have not excessively practiced the passion of love of money, who are also humble, thrusting away the vain turmoil of life; or else, that having become teachers and leaders of the people, they pervert the way of the weaker, that is, of the humble, it being clear that these do not of themselves have an accurate knowledge of what is expedient, but rather adhere to the voices of their instructors. And the multitude of this kind is very great. For some live rather un-curiously and in simplicity, and depend on the voice or instruction of their teachers, and whatever way they learn is good, they love exceedingly. Therefore, the wise and God-loving among those allotted to lead show the straight path, by which, rushing along, they achieve a life pleasing to God.

But those who have thought little of the divine law pervert the way of the humble, causing them to be outside of what is reasonable and truly fitting; such as Jeroboam did, having persuaded them to worship the man-made heifers; and having turned them away from the path that is straight and of the good, I mean of being devoted to the God and Lord who is so by nature and in truth. They turn aside from the way of the humble, those who do not hesitate to say to the one who is simple in mind, ”Come with us, share in ”unjust blood. They also turn aside from the way of the humble, those who twist the correctness of ecclesiastical dogmas to what seems right to them, persuading the mind of the more simple to go down a crooked and perverse path; and for indeed there is nothing right among them, but rather distorted and unseemly little sayings, and compositions of words, full of impiety and ignorance alike. And a son and his father went in to the same girl, so that they might profane

the name of their God. He again accuses them for passionate and unrestrained pleasures, and has shown them to be neglectful of all decency in this one trespass. For it was better to be master of the passions and to overcome improper and loathsome pleasure and to cut off desires, and having resolved to rebuke the wills of the flesh and persuading to be still the law that rages in our members.

But they were far behind such brilliant virtue, and were perhaps defeated by the passions of the flesh. Then how is it not wise, even in shameful things, to choose the better, and to consider that it is of the most exceedingly improper things for a son to leap upon his father's bed, and for a father to delight in raging unholily upon his son's very bed, and to choose to commit a terrible deed, which even without the law through Moses nature knows to be shameful, and deems worthy to condemn with movements of wrath? And indeed Reuben, having wronged his father's bed, offended not moderately; and the divine Paul was exceedingly indignant about such a thing being done by some; and these were Corinthians, to whom he also writes, saying, "It is actually reported that there is "fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, "that a man has his father's wife. But he did not stop his indignation at this; but he delivered the one who had done it "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Therefore, those who are guilty of such offenses profane the name of their God. And we do not say, by any means, that they imputed profanation and impurity to the divine nature. For how could they, or from where? But rather they cause the God of all to be blasphemed, as being a ruler of profane peoples.

And indeed He said somewhere to the Jews, "Because of you my name is blasphemed continually "among the Gentiles. For just as those who live rightly are said to sanctify God, so also would those who practice an unclean and inglorious way of life be understood to profane Him. And binding their garments with ropes they made curtains next to the altar, and they drank wine from false accusations in the house of their God. Our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching that the divine temples ought to be maintained for no other reason than to glorify in them the God of all, and to make the worship that is fitting for him, once rebuked the Jewish merchants; for they were bringing into the temple sheep and oxen and doves; and indeed, "making a whip "of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, saying, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer."" And the sacred writing noted, "His "disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal for your house will consume "me.'" And the divine Paul also rebuked some who were accustomed to daring such things; for he writes thus: "Do you not have "houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church "of God and humiliate those who have nothing? Therefore, it is seen to be unprofitable everywhere to dare to misuse the divine houses, as if they were common and belonged privately to each person.

For where would the reverence due to God still be kept, if we serve the pleasures of the flesh in his sight? and in those places where we ought to be seen as radiant through solemnity, to be laughed at there, slipping into what is unseemly, and willing to do what is not right? which indeed he does not permit some to do without blame, and very rightly so. For they did

not, he says, keep the altar free from hangings, but having fallen under them, they dared to get drunk and to fulfill the works of pleasure, so that they might also hear God saying clearly, “And I am a witness, says the Lord. From what sort of absurdities would a drunken man abstain, whose mind is deranged and is prone to every kind of evil whatsoever? For the God of all sees even ”the things in darkness,” according to what is written, and nothing at all is unseen by him; but it seems somehow that the things in churches especially are done by us as if he were almost present and watching. And if it is truly most shameful, and has the ultimate condemnation from the law, to get drunk at all, how is it not beyond all description tending towards depravity, for such people to be seen even in the churches themselves? And what is still more burdensome, if the things for luxury are collected from unjust and wicked gains? Those who do this will hear God saying clearly, “Is my house a den of robbers?

Therefore, the crimes of others will be of great benefit to us, and through the things by which others have stumbled, we will become better, if we avoid their ways. For the temperate would reasonably be safer, if indeed they wished to live according to the law, if they chose not to emulate the wicked. But if it were said to Judah, that is, the two tribes in Jerusalem, Binding their garments with cords they made hangings next to the altar, the argument would rightly hold to the interpretation just now stated by us. But if indeed the offense were also brought against Israel, I would say that not in the house of him who is God by nature and in truth, nor next to the altar were the tents woven by means of the hangings, that is, the things of drunkenness were done, but in the house of their god, that he might mean Baal, or some other of those made into the form of an idol by human invention. How then could it still be counted as a crime for Israel, to be in a house of idols, perhaps, and beside the profane altar itself to get drunk with wine and weave tents? Because they have honored these things, and made the temples of their supposed gods workshops of drunkenness as well as of every shameful pleasure, although it was necessary rather to desire to worship God purely and with all sanctity, and to enter the house that is truly holy, and to consider the altar venerable.

But they, eager to consider things so venerable and admirable as nothing, having honored things far more shameful, even dared to act insolently towards their own gods, trampling everywhere on the divine dignity, and fearlessly insulting the glory fitting for the one and only God by nature, when having also placed it upon those falsely named, they endured to esteem it of no account. But I destroyed the Amorite from before them, whose height was like the height of a cedar, and he was strong as an oak; and I dried up his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. Do you see how he then shows them to be impiously insulting and choosing to despise, and him whom they ought rather to delight with songs of thanksgiving and with obedience in every single thing, they have chosen most foolishly and senselessly to grieve, because of their exceedingly great awkwardness of manners, and to drive to forgetfulness the good things they have suffered? For I, he says, destroyed the Amorite from before them; that is, I brought down the barbarian races, signified perhaps by the one Amorite, as being hard and rather coarse; I prepared to conquer the one who was

so overgrown and unbreakable, so as to seem now somehow to be raised to the height of a cedar, and to imitate the strength of the exceedingly sturdy oak. For there was no other but I alone, he says, who withered him, and struck him down to the roots, and almost dried up his fruit.

For since he has spoken as if about a tree, the discourse plausibly persists in the figure, and says that the harm came to its root, and that in this way the fruit also was destroyed. For the wood in the forests would not die in any other way, except in this manner. For that they were destroyed, when those from Israel, the Amorites and Hivites, Girgashites and Perizzites and Jebusites, with God clearly fighting alongside, no one would doubt. Bitter therefore it is to despise Christ, who gave us [the power] "to tread on serpents and scorpions and on all the power of the enemy," who destroys those who resist, and subdues the stronger; "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness of this age, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And we have conquered all of these in Christ. And if we are to grieve our own Savior and Redeemer by turning aside to laziness, we will be at a loss, I know, for a reason and a pretext able to deliver us from punishment and fire. And I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you about in the desert for forty years, that you might inherit the land of the Amorites. He clearly explains what He said, and as if the discourse were going backwards, He reveals in brief the things from the beginning to the end.

For I delivered them from slavery, He says, and freed them from the greed of the Egyptians; and I nourished them in the desert, sending down the manna to them from above, and in a manner befitting God sending forth springs of water, and from the steep rock bestowing outflows of unexpected streams. And the toil of their journey was not for small things, but so that they might inherit the land of the Amorites, which was promised to their fathers. But they have slipped into such stupidity, as perhaps not even to know my love and philanthropy towards them. It is necessary, therefore, for us who are in Christ through faith to remember, that we too have been freed from slavery, and just as from Egypt we have moved into the desert, that is, into a wide and truly most pure way of life, unmixed with what is worse, I mean, the Evangelical way; we have been enriched with the bread from heaven, the one giving life to the world. For we are strengthened in Christ, and we have had springs of pure waters in the writings of the holy Apostles; for thus also the prophet Isaiah named them, saying, "And draw water with joy from the springs of salvation. And what could the springs of salvation be, rather than surely those who send forth for us the saving and life-giving word, and evangelize the mystery of Christ, and initiate into the mysteries all under heaven.

And I took of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for sanctification. Are not these things so, O sons of Israel? says the Lord. And you gave the sanctified ones wine to drink, and you commanded the prophets, saying, You shall not prophesy. It is a great matter for reproach and for condemnation for every evil to be, as it were, charged with ingratitude by

God, who distributes to us all things, both those for glory and those sufficient for life. For although there were many nations throughout the world, He made Israel alone the chosen one, and to this glory God then called and raised him, so that some, those who loved a holy and most lawful life, were even adorned with the dignity of prophecy, and the young men among them were taken for sanctification, that is, those more mature in mind and having intellectual strength. For some were sanctified according to the law, those called Nazirites, letting the hair of their head grow for the Lord, abstaining from wine and the things from it—I mean vinegar and grapes and raisins and grapestones—and keeping very far away from dead bodies. And the discourse concerning these things is deep. Nevertheless, God honored them, both as prophets, as I said, and by raising up some of them to be sanctified typologically. But they, rejecting in an unseemly way this so brilliant and admirable glory, gave wine to drink to the sanctified ones, that is, those who had upon themselves a vow of sanctification.

For they persuaded them to despise sanctification itself, surely saying that the law of God is absolutely nothing, and that for men to wish to be sanctified and to fulfill the customary rites for this purpose is useless. For even if the law was in shadows, yet it was not entirely deprived of the doctrines of truth; for the form of piety flashes forth in its types. But to rebuke the holy prophets themselves belongs to those who completely shake off the word of God, and who do not endure to be instructed, and who are ignorant that they have been honored, since, being from among them, they were taken up for communion with God. And he further asks in their midst and says, Are not these things so, O sons of Israel, says the Lord? Is it so, he says, that you will determine what is false even of such manifest matters? Will God need witnesses to convict you, who have chosen to slander such evident things? Therefore one must be sanctified, and with a steadfast mind attend to God, not admitting the opinions of the wicked. ”For evil communications corrupt good manners,” and the words of pleasure-lovers carry one away from sanctification and all reasonableness. Therefore we shall rather adhere to the voices of those who speak for God, to whom the Savior himself also bears witness, saying, ”It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Therefore, behold, I roll beneath you, in the way that a cart full of stubble rolls. It was the custom for the ancients to transport by carts the things from the fields and whatever fills the threshing floor, and this practice is preserved to this day among those who inhabit the land of the east and of the west. And the wheels roll together with the axles, the wood creaking heavily and gratingly, and the loads placed upon them all but crying out. Therefore I myself, he says, the Master of all, will be as the thing that rolls under the cart, that is, the axle; for it, as I said, rolls the wheels with itself, having them fixed and fitted to it. And I will cry out as if against the impious, no longer being able to bear the grievous burden of their transgressions. ”For they have rejected the law of the Lord, and his commandments they have not kept, but their vanities, which their fathers made, have led them astray,” and they have forgotten me, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, who destroyed the Amorite

from before their face, who took from their sons for prophets and from their young men for consecration.

But I have honored them, but they themselves have descended to such an evil counsel, as to ”bind their garments with cords, to make curtains next to the altar, and to drink wine from false accusations in the house of their God,” and to give ”the consecrated ones wine to drink, and to command the prophets, saying, ’You shall not prophesy.’” Therefore, being all but laden with such impieties of yours, like an axle under a cart that is full of stubble and sheaves, I will make the loudest outcry. And what harm will come from this, or what sufferings will again befall them, he makes clear immediately in what follows. However, it is necessary to say this, that it is truly a terrible thing to provoke God, and to finally slip into such wickedness that our sin becomes unbearable to him, even though by nature he is exceedingly gracious, good, and gentle. Therefore, one must by all means refrain from loving to offend him; but if anything should happen and one should suffer a human failing, one must not be seen to delay in repentance, nor indeed allow one’s faults to grow, but rather, using a sobriety befitting a saint, to draw them back, and to hasten to transport the ailing mind to what is better. For in this way God will be forbearing, and since he is good, he will bestow his mercy.

And flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong man shall not retain his strength, and the warrior shall not save his life, and the archer shall not stand, and he that is swift of foot shall not be delivered, nor shall the horseman save his life, and he will find his heart in mighty deeds; the naked shall be pursued in that day, says the Lord. Nothing will save, he says, in the days of wrath those who have offended; not swiftness of foot will deliver the swiftest runner from evils; not strength of body the one who is strong; nor military experience the one who knows tactics and has practiced archery excellently and is admired for it; useless to those who use them is both the swiftness of horses, and in addition to this, knowing the cavalry battle. but each of these, he says, will find his own heart in dominions, that is, overpowered by fears and yielding without a fight to those who wish to lay waste the victory. For then there will be cowardice among those of Israel, and such dominion of the Babylonians, that even the unarmed man will be able to pursue, that is, to prevail over those in arms, even if one of the Babylonians is without a breastplate; and the unarmed and unequipped man will be able to pursue those in full armor. Therefore, when God shakes down into weakness those whom he chooses to harm, nothing could help.

And this I think is what is said to us in another way through the voice of the psalmist: ”He will not delight in the strength of the horse; nor is he pleased with the ”legs of a man,” and again, ”A horse is a vain thing for ”safety, neither shall he be saved by his great strength. For such things are completely useless, if God does not contend with them. For he is the Lord of hosts, who gives sinews to the weakened, and enervates those who have grieved him, and with him ”one shall chase a thousand, and two in turn shall move ”ten thousand,” and a great and countless multitude will be consumed by perhaps two or three resisting them, unless God defends.

Book 2

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O house of Israel, and against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: Only you have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. The word might be understood as having come against all of Israel, no longer taking Judah and Ephraim in part, but with the whole race gathered as if into one; for every tribe of Israel was brought up from Egypt. Therefore, with none being left out, he commands them to hear the things from God. And what were these things? For there are countless, he says, cities and countries throughout the whole world under heaven, and those in them are beyond number, but you from Israel out of all I have made chosen, I made myself manifest through many wonders, I delivered you from bitter and unbearable slavery, I declared you enviable and thrice-blessed, I have instructed you by law for what is pleasing to me, I have fortified you with my assistance, and I have brought you into the land promised to the fathers. But since you alone, he says, out of all who have been deemed worthy of so conspicuous a grace have not ceased grieving and have offended in many ways, for this reason I will henceforth demand of you an account of your folly, I will no longer tolerate those who sin and have an unreproved inclination for this.

Therefore, to despise God and to disregard the master's will is a cause of destruction for anyone henceforth who has known him, or has been known by him, in the manner of spiritual kinship. And indeed the most wise Paul writes to those from the nations called through faith, who then suffer from weakness, and are eager to go backward as it were, saying: "But now that you have come to know God, "or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the "weak and poor elements of the world, whose slaves you want to be once "more? For the Creator knew them even before faith; for he is ignorant of absolutely nothing that exists; but in these things, as I said, knowledge would very well signify spiritual kinship. If Will two walk together at all, unless they know one another? Deep is the riddle and dim the saying; nevertheless, we will speak as we are able. He therefore accused Israel, because "they commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'" And for what reason they recklessly rebuked the voices of the saints, it is necessary to say. For since they were announcing the grim things that would come from wrath, and the things through which it was likely for sinners to become better, fearing perhaps the outcome of what was spoken, they

practiced resistance and opposed them, those who were accustomed to leading astray the mind of the common folk to what was not fitting, and deceiving those yoked under them.

For they rebuked the prophets, but they accepted the deceivers, as though they were going on the straight path. Therefore, through the voice of Isaiah, God says, "My people, those who call you blessed lead you astray and confuse the path of your feet. And Amaziah the priest of Bethel also rebuked Amos the Prophet, saying, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and live there and prophesy there, but in Bethel you shall no longer prophesy again. But those who opposed the prophets, out of very great awkwardness and terrible perversity, fabricated a convenient pretext for their resistance, saying this: "The Lord has not sent you. He therefore accuses them, because they claimed that the prophets from Him did not convey words from above and from God; but rather they thought that things were being uttered from their own opinion, and that they were speaking things different from what seemed good to the Lord of all. For this reason He says, O foolish and senseless ones, will any of you become friends and walk the same path of life, not having known yourselves, or rather one another; that is, unless they have seen one another to be of the same character and like-minded? "For every creature loves its like, and a man will cleave to his like. And if this is true, how could I have accepted the prophets, as it were, into friendship and love, being holy Myself, if they too had not become holy?

How then do you persecute the saints, to whom I have entrusted My words, whom I have accepted as good, as it were walking the same road of My wills? For whatever I might wish, this is also their will. Therefore, to rebuke the prophets is nothing other than to direct the rebuke against Me. The Savior also said something like this to the holy disciples: "He who receives you receives Me; and he who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me. And he commanded those who were cast out to wipe off the very dust from their feet, saying, "That it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for that city. It is therefore necessary to accept those who are ambassadors for God, and who convey to us what seems good to Him, such as was the divine Paul, writing and saying, "We are therefore ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making his appeal through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. Will a lion roar from his forest when he has no prey? Will a young lion give his voice from his den at all, unless he has seized something? Those who study the habits of wild beasts say that the lion, when it is in need of food, roams about powerfully through mountains and glens and forests, turning its eye this way and that, and seeking to catch something of the animals grazing in the woods.

But when it sees something suitable for food, then it comes near and makes its attack, roaring terribly and harshly. And if indeed it should carry back to the cubs things for food, then when it should get near the den, they too leap up, and taking it with a roar, they tear it apart. Why then, He says, do you accuse God, because He makes the threat before the attack of terrible things? And why do you gnash your teeth at the prophets themselves, because they too have cried out against your impiety? For I am like a lion, He says, which is accustomed to roar before the hunt, all but threatening the attack beforehand, and the

prophets are like cubs, imitating my custom; For, as I said, they have cried out against those who are accustomed to impiety. But just as for the animals in the mountains the hunter's shout beforehand is not entirely unprofitable, scaring them to flight before they happen to be caught, so also for sinners the threat and prediction before the terrible things is exceedingly useful, leading them to repentance and avoidance of what is impending. God, therefore, compares himself to a lion that does not leap upon and bring things from his wrath upon some, unless he first makes known the threat, so that by repenting they might be saved, receiving the prediction of the things that will be as a medicine for salvation before the onset of the terrible things. Will a bird fall to the earth without a fowler?

Will a snare be sprung from the earth without catching anything? The discourse is now made by way of comparison. For fowlers most skillfully bring down the sparrows that have settled in the plants, and with snares, on the other hand, some crush what is caught. But the discourse now seems to signify through the sparrows those who are accustomed to think lofty things, the boastful in mind and arrogant in spirit, and not enduring to be brought down with the lowly; and through those caught in snares, the lovers of earthly things, and those who seek only carnal and fattening things. And God again compares himself to a fowler and a snare, bringing the proud down to the earth, and as it were crushing and hunting for punishment those who mind only the things on earth. But those from Israel were boastful, despising God and rejecting prophets and dishonoring the law; and they were no less also exceedingly greedy for the things in the world, and seeking only the things on earth, overcome by whose strange desires they did not accept the word of God, but opposed those who call to virtue. For they said to the holy prophets "But "speak to us and announce to us another delusion.

If, then, it is I, he says, who in the manner of a fowler brings down the proud, and as in the function of a snare am accustomed to crush him who like a fox or a mouse is greedy for the things in the world, why do you persecute the saints in vain, when they only convey words to you, while I fulfill the things from wrath cast upon the impious? If a trumpet sounds in a city, will the people not be terrified? Will there be calamity in a city which the Lord has not done? I indeed, he says, bring on the things from wrath, but the prophets are useful mediators for the words alone. For they convey to you whatever I command them through the Spirit. But you perhaps make light of them, and are greatly vexed even at the mere words from them at times. For in what way at all, tell me, are you profited by these things? what fear has entered you? or what change have you made for the better? For if a trumpet should sound in a city, announcing the war coming and stirred up by enemies, who is so insensible as not in every way and altogether to receive the fear of the evils that will be? But my trumpets have not ceased proclaiming beforehand the things to come.

But you are profited not at all, and though learning that you will be laid waste by enemies, you utterly despise the terrors for this, so as perhaps even to laugh at the prediction as some vain thing, and moreover to shout that which is customary and familiar to the desperate, "The vision that this man sees is for "many days to come, and he prophesies of times far off.

Why then do you consider burdensome those who are as it were trumpeting, if you consider their words as nothing? But perhaps you say that the outcome of these matters grieves you not moderately. Will there then be an affliction in a city, perchance, which the Lord has not done? It is like as if one should say: Will there then be anyone among men able to afflict a city either with diseases or sieges or destructions of crops or even in some other such way? But if no one of men could do such things, and it lies rather in the authority and power of God, why are you angry with those who announce it beforehand? And yet it is necessary to repent, and by inclinations to this to appease him the one who is grieved and has the power to harm those who have sinned.

Therefore, in these matters, we shall understand the 'evil' that comes from God in the cities not as wickedness—far from it!— but rather as an affliction, that is, the wrath and movement for whatever reason, which He might bring upon sinners, persuading them to turn back to what is more fitting. For it is written that, "With bit and "bridle you shall restrain the jaws of those who do not draw near "to you. For since He is good, and "wishes all people "to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth," He somehow compels them by means of wrath toward what is better, and sometimes powerfully moves, with terrors and threats, those whom reason and the guidance of what is beneficial do not persuade. Because the Lord God will not do anything, unless He reveals His instruction to His servants the prophets. A lion will roar, and who will not be afraid? The Lord God has spoken, and who will not prophesy? It is not the prophets, he says, who bring on the things that come from wrath; how could they? For they are also human in nature, just like you, but they have been honored by God by learning all the things that He might wish to fulfill, and to bring upon cities and lands either good things, perhaps, or things that are accustomed to cause pain. But perhaps you say to this: Let them learn, if you wish; let them be enriched by you with the knowledge of future events;

let all the mysteries be made clear to them; but let them speak to no one, nor let them sound anything in the ears of those who reject them. What then is the reply to this from God? A lion will roar and who will not be afraid? For if, he says, when the lion roars, the most powerful of beasts, there would not be anyone so hard-hearted and arrogant as not to receive fear, how, when God, who is above all, speaks and commands them to announce what they learn, would they not fear the one who has commanded them? For they are not, like you, scornful and unyielding, holding in no account the things that seem good to the Lord of all. Therefore, in every way He secures the saints, and wards off from the prophets the harms from those who willingly do evil. And this was nothing other than to deem them worthy of the fitting care. For to remove the physicians from their midst would be nothing other than to render the sick helpless. Indeed, He proclaims this beforehand through the voice of the blessed David, saying, "Do not touch my "anointed ones, and do no evil to my prophets," and to them, He somewhere says, "And he who touches you will be "as one who touches the pupil of His eye. For he will do no small injury to his own soul who gnashes his teeth at the heads of the saints and unholily attacks them, and does not refrain from bringing on some outrages.

Announce to the regions in Assyria and to the regions of Egypt and say: Be gathered together on the mountain of Samaria, and see many wonders in its midst and the oppression that is in it. And she did not know what things shall be against her, says the Lord, they who treasure up injustice and misery in their regions. For this reason, thus says the Lord God: Tyre, and your land round about shall be made desolate, and he shall bring down your strength from you, and your regions shall be plundered. He threatens, then, again to bring upon them what it was likely for those to endure and suffer who had finally arrived at such a point of wickedness, as even to leap away from God, and to rebuke the prophets, and to utterly disregard the things established through Moses. But it must be known that the edition of the Hebrews and the writing of the seventy again differ in these points. For the Hebrews have published: Announce to the regions in Ashdod and to the regions of Egypt; while the seventy have: Announce to the regions in Assyria and to the regions of Egypt. And Ashdod is perhaps a neighbor and bordering on the land of the Jews, but the land of the Assyrians is very distant, that is, of the Persians and Medes, lying as it were at the very borders of the east. We say, therefore, that there is nothing troublesome, even if they should be called Ashdodites, perhaps, or Assyrians;

for according to both the word of the divinely inspired scripture will be true, just as indeed the things in the text before us we will show by making it clear. Indeed, the thing being signified has a recollection of history, lying in the fourth of Kings, and in the second of Chronicles; but I will make the narrative very concisely, so that I might not seem to speak at length among those who know. Manasseh reigned at a certain time in Jerusalem, who was the son of Hezekiah, but very different in character and as far as possible from his father's piety. For he became a wicked man and easily turned to anything whatever that was amiss, abominable and an idolater, and not moderately given to the deceptions of demons. This man built altars and precincts for Baal, he worshipped the whole host of heaven, he passed his own children through fire, he assembled augurs, and those whose practice it is to speak falsely, those who think they know something of what is necessary, but in fact do not yet know it, but rather speak the things from their own heart. And there was perhaps utterly no manner of the uttermost depravity unpracticed by his desires. While he was reigning, God said somewhere through the voice of prophets concerning both Jerusalem and all the land of the Jews, "Behold, I am bringing evils upon this people, so that for everyone who hears them, both his ears will tingle.

When Manasseh died, his son Amon succeeded to the scepter, lacking in none of his father's depravity; for he honored all that he did. He lived for only two years. Then after him his son Josiah was anointed again as king, a wise and shrewd man, and among the most God-loving. The man of God proclaimed him when he arrived in Bethel, while Jeroboam was standing at the altar and inaugurating the feast for the heifers; for he spoke thus: "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: Behold, a son is born to the house of David, Josiah is his name, and he will sacrifice upon you the priests of the high places who burn incense upon you, and he will burn the bones of men upon you. For when Josiah became king, he pulled down the precincts of the idols, demolished the altars, destroyed the groves, burned the chariot of the

sun, slaughtered the priests of the high places in Bethel, set fire to the bones of men upon the altar of the heifers, drove out the soothsayers, I mean false prophets and false seers and ventriloquists, he commanded that the things ordained by the all-wise Moses should be held and be in force in Israel; in his time they sacrificed the lamb, and they celebrated the Passover in Jerusalem.

And since he was good and genuine with God, he sent to Huldah the prophetess, seeking to inquire if the Master of all would cease from his anger, if Israel would be in a good state of prosperity, and if the things foretold against it by the voice of prophets would henceforth be inactive. And she said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Say to the man who sent you to me: Thus says the Lord: Behold, I am bringing evils upon this place and upon those who dwell in it, all the words of the book which the king of Judah read, because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with the works of their hands, and my wrath will be kindled in this place and will not be quenched. And to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord, you shall say this to him: Thus says the Lord God of Israel: My words which you have heard, because your heart was tender and you were humbled before the face of the Lord, when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, to be for a desolation and for a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before me, I have indeed heard, says the Lord. Not so;

behold, I am adding you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and it shall not be seen by your eyes amid all the evils which I am bringing upon this place and upon those who dwell in it. And the promise was fulfilled. For the Master of all postponed his anger for the time of his reign time; and they were thirty-one years. But in the last period, Pharaoh Necho, the leader of the Egyptians, campaigned against the Babylonians, and went forth from his own land with all his army. And since Josiah was suspicious that he had perhaps come to ravage Judea, he armed himself according to the law of war, and wished to go out against him. But he ordered him to withdraw, saying he was hurrying to the Euphrates river, and was being carried off to the land of the Assyrians. But since even after this he needlessly set himself in array against him, he was struck in the war; and having died, he was then carried home and to Jerusalem by his own people, and his son Jehoahaz was anointed as king. But having completed scarcely the third month, Pharaoh Necho removed him from the scepters, and having bound him, held him guarded in Egypt. And for a large sum of money he barely consented for Eliakim, that is, Jehoiakim, who was also a son of Josiah, to reign in Jerusalem.

And he so oppressed Israel, I mean those in Samaria, and those in Jerusalem, as to impose tribute on those throughout the whole land, and to seek taxes from all. While matters stood thus, and Jehoiakim was administering the kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar came up. And he so overpowered Jerusalem, as to take Jehoiakim as a slave, and to levy tribute on him, and to ravage the entire city completely. And God did not measure out the calamity for those who had committed impious deeds only up to this point, but added something else both grievous and most burdensome. For from all the surrounding land and country, from

the Syrians, I mean, and the Tyrians and Ashdodites, Idumeans and Moabites, bands of robbers, running out from place to place, plundered the land of the Jews. For it is written thus in the Chronicles: "Then "the land began to be taxed to give the silver at the command of "Pharaoh, and the silver and the gold was required of each one "according to his ability by the king of the land, to give it "to Pharaoh Necho. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when "he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusa- "lem, and the name of his mother was Zebudah, daughter of Neriah "of Ramah, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord according to "all that his fathers had done.

In his days "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to the "land, and he was his servant for three years and he rebelled against "him. And the Lord sent against them the Chaldeans, "and bands of Syrians and bands of Moabites and of the sons of "Ammon and of Samaria. Indeed, all these things Israel happened to suffer, having been exceedingly insolent towards the glory of God, and having been unholily corrupted to the point of wishing to worship "the works of his hands," as it is written. Since, then, the history has been sufficiently related by us, come let us, going over the saying cursorily, say what is fitting. Proclaim to the lands in Assyria and to the lands of Egypt and say, Assemble upon the mountain of Samaria and see many wonders in her midst and the oppression that is in her. For he as good as says, Let someone announce with all speed to the Egyptians and Assyrians, and let them run down mightily upon the mountains of Samaria, that is, the country itself; for they say it is mountainous. And when they arrive they will see in it many wonders and an unexpected oppression.

For those who once were victorious, he says, will be pitiable and among slaves, those who raised their overweening brow against all, so to speak, of the nations, will lie wretched and cast down and under the feet of enemies, and they will endure such great oppression, as to consider it a desirable thing to be saved, and to live in slavery, and to pay tribute to the conquerors. But Samaria, he says, did not know what will be before it, that is, what will happen against it. Then where, at last, are those who treasure up injustice and misery in their lands? For what did their greed profit, he says, and their heaping up of sins, because they did not wish to know the things of God? Therefore, will the calamity for the impious be confined to the invasion of the Assyrians and Egyptians? Not at all, he says. For this reason, thus says the Lord the God. Tyre and your land round about will be laid waste, and he will break your strength from you, and your lands will be plundered. But the phrase 'Tyre and round about,' you will understand in this way. From Tyre, he says, and from the surrounding and neighboring land your country will be laid waste, with bands of robbers overrunning it, as I said. For then they will break your strength, that is, all your power will be shattered, and not only broken but also weakened.

Therefore, if the Hebrew version should happen to say 'Proclaim to the regions in Ashdod,' and if the Septuagint in turn has 'in Assyria,' what has been said will be true according to both. For not only the Assyrians plundered, but also Syrians and Ashdodites, running out in multitudes and wronging Israel in the manner of robbery. Thus says the Lord: As when

a shepherd snatches from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel who dwell in Samaria be snatched away, opposite a tribe and in Damascus. Observe everywhere, and you will greatly admire the sobriety of the prophecy. For since Israel has not utterly perished, but "the remnant" has been saved, according to the voice of Isaiah, so that the Truth-itself might not seem to speak falsely, it always adds to the predictions of evils the mercy that comes from gentleness. Just as, then, he says, when a lion has been sated, and has completely devoured the animal it has seized, a few remains are barely left, perhaps two legs or even part of an ear, and these the shepherds gather, weeping; so will it be for the sons of Israel, those in Samaria and those who dwell in Damascus, those 'opposite a tribe,' that is, those who have hostile thoughts and always oppose the tribe of Judah.

For those dwelling in Samaria were captured by force and were sacked by enemies, and when the war had consumed almost all of them, a very few were barely saved, and have remained in the land as remnants of the dead. Or also they were snatched away in another way, as from the mouth of a lion. Having been carried away to the land of the Assyrians, and being released at times from captivity, for not all returned, but very few, remnants of those who had been carried away. But that the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser also took Damascus at times and resettled it in his own land, is clear to everyone, I think; for as is written in the fourth book of Kingdoms, he was once called for help by Uzziah the king of Judah, when Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, and also Rezin, king of Syria, were warring against him at that time. And having arrived, he killed Rezin and took Damascus itself. But if someone should choose to apply the meaning of the foregoing to all men, he will not go wide of the mark. For he will understand very correctly, calling that to mind, that Satan has seized and devoured those on the earth like some savage beast, but "The good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep," has appeared and helped, and has snatched us away, both those left among the living and those already dead.

For as the blessed psalmist says, "The Lord has broken the molars of the lions," and as Paul says, "He died and lived, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Hear, you priests, and testify to the house of Jacob, says the Lord, the God Almighty, because in the day when I punish the impieties of Israel upon him, I will also punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be dug up and shall fall to the earth. I will confound and smite the turreted house upon the summer house, and the ivory houses shall perish, and many other houses shall be added, says the Lord. He returns again to a clear narration of the things that will happen to the impious, often expanding upon the same account for the benefit of the listeners. Whence, I think, understanding that this practice is not unprofitable, the divine Paul also writes to some, "To say the same things to you, is not for me troublesome, but for you it is "safe. He therefore commands those serving as priests to almost raise their own voice and bear witness to Israel, and to clearly foretell to them each of the things that are about to happen. And whom then shall we understand, or rather say, are those commanded to cry out piercingly? Is it the priests of the heifers, or those of the idols in another shrine? But I think this is improbable;

for they would not have proclaimed their own evils and those of the others whom they themselves have led astray. Who then, therefore, are the priests commanded to do this? Those of the blood of Levi; for not all had slipped away with those led astray in Samaria, nor did they endure to worship idols, but having leapt away from that of the Samaritans, they returned to Jerusalem. And it is written thus about them in the second book of Chronicles. So the account is about Jeroboam; then explaining the power inherent in him, ”And he had,” it says, ”Judah ”and Benjamin. And the Levites and the priests who were in ”all Israel gathered to him from all their territories. For the Levites left the dwellings of their ”possession and went to Judah, to Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons ”had cast them out from ministering to the Lord. And he appointed ”for himself priests of the high places and for the idols and for the ”vain things and for the calves, which Jeroboam had made; and ”he cast them out from the tribes of Israel who had set their heart ”to seek the Lord God of Israel, and they came ”to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their ”fathers. And they strengthened the kingdom of Judah.

For since these, about whom the account is, were not moderately grieved, being driven out from their kinship and inheritances and from the ministry itself—for Jeroboam had cast them out—of necessity he commanded them especially to proclaim the destruction of both their idols and of Samaria, as if consoling and teaching them that, having chosen to think the things of God and having loved the Master of all, they will not perish with the others, but will lie outside of the wrath. ”For when,” he says, ”I bring upon those of Israel their sins, then I will also take vengeance upon the altars of Bethel; for their horns will be dug up and will fall to the ground. Is then the destruction of Samaria up to this point, and will it be enough for those commanded to ravage it merely to tear down the shrines and to dig up the altars? By no means; ”for I will throw into confusion,” he says, ”and I will strike the winter house upon the summer house. And what he wishes to signify is something like this. Those in Samaria, living too luxuriously and having the breadth that comes from wealth, constructed for themselves both winter and summer houses. And the winter one he calls ’peripteron,’ as if girded on all sides with wings or walls, so that it might be almost unapproachable to the blasts of winter; but the summer one is the one that is open and exposed to the pleasant breezes of the winds.

Therefore with the altars, he says, that have been dug up, I will at the same time throw into confusion and strike both winter and summer houses; and ivory houses will also perish. And we remember that Ahab, having reigned in Samaria, constructed such a house for himself. And many others will be added, he says, that is, those of the lower and more insignificant people, or rather, of the poor and the common herd. Therefore, all Samaria has now perished, every house having been shaken down. What then shall we learn from this again, we who have chosen to think rightly? That worldly splendor will not profit those who have it at all, not wealth, not glory, not anything else for luxury, when love for God is absent, and when righteousness is in no way honored by us. ”For the treasures of the lawless will not profit,” according to what is written, ”but righteousness delivers from ”death. Therefore it would be far better to love righteousness and to store up treasure in heaven, and to yearn

for the mansions above, and to love to be suspended from the hope in God. For the things in this world are both small and temporary, and the profane has no basis for security; but it both always remains and is saved, and accompanies the boundless ages. Hear this word, you heifers of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor and trample on the needy, who say to their lords, Give to us, that we may drink.

The Lord swears by his saints, because, behold, days are coming upon you, and they will take you with weapons, and those with you into cauldrons with fiery plagues, and you will be brought forth naked, wife and her husband opposite each other, and you will be cast away to the mountain Remman, says the Lord God. Out of excessive arrogance and luxury, the most prominent men of Samaria, surpassing all others in the abundance of their wealth, as I just said, were building for themselves houses that were brilliant and most costly, and suited to the seasons, I mean for winter and for summer, and the oracle proclaimed that they would be utterly and completely destroyed. Therefore, these very masters of the houses, who had practiced being fattened by fleeting luxuries, he calls heifers of Bashan. The country of Bashan is good for grazing and verdant, and exceedingly well-suited for abundantly fattening the animals that graze in it. Therefore, as they were living in extreme comfort and were very well-fed, and making luxury their study, God compares them to the heifers from Bashan; and He accuses them, because they oppressed the poor, and almost crushed the needy with their own feet; "For the poor are the pastures of the rich," according to what is written.

And by adding that they say to their lords, Give to us, that we may drink, He showed that they were insubordinate, not even tolerating to yield to those who ruled them, as far as royal honor was concerned, but as it were, out of boundless arrogance, they assigned the measure of a servant even to their own lords. For to dare to say to their superiors and those set over them, Give to us, that we may drink, belongs to those who desire to be served rather than to serve. What then will happen to those who have come to such a point of desperation? The Lord, he says, swears by His saints, that is, by His holy things, or mysteries, which again is Himself; for He has no one greater by whom to swear; that there will come seasons and days, when the fear of suffering will cause even you, who are so luxurious and well-fed and accustomed to extravagance, to be in the toils of war and in arms. But even while you are in this state and equipped, they will take you, he says, together with your dearest friends and wives and flatterers, who, being always with you, applauded with very many praises, and called you thrice-blessed; for these things the tribes of flatterers always shout to those who feed them. But they will be burned up; for they were plagues and approved of nothing else, and admired the shameful and the lovers of sin.

But you, stripped of glory, and furthest from all luxury, and as if unclothed of that former prosperity, will henceforth be carried away as slaves and captives, and will be cast, he says, upon the mountain Remman. This is in Armenia, lying at the furthest outlets of the land of the Persians; for the countries are adjacent and bordering on one another. It is therefore possible to see from this how the pursuit of luxury turns to a bitter end for those who

live luxuriously, as the Savior says, ”Blessed are those who mourn now, for they shall be comforted. For, as I said, luxury ends in a tear, but the end of toils is rest. And someone will testify, saying that ”the fruit of good labors is glorious. It is not implausible to suppose that the heifers of Bashan are the women in Samaria, who, indulging in luxury and delicacies and in ornaments for beautification, and being fattened in the prime of their bodies, were oppressing the poor and trampling on the needy, almost setting on fire for unnatural pleasures those who were weak in this and had a spiritual poverty, who, not having the wealth of strength from above, by the passions by assaults they have a heart easily broken. These heifers, therefore, say to their lords, ”Give to us that we may drink. For the affairs of harlotrous women are always puffed up, and with excessive laziness they almost weary those who have been captivated;

even if they have them as masters, yet seeing them laid low by sensual pleasures, they persuade them to fulfill what seems best to them. But you, he says, O heifers, they will take in arms; that is, not being in the rank of lovers, who persuade by flattering and serve by speaking sweet words, because they are utterly overcome by pleasure in you, but cruelly and fiercely and by the law of war, and they will burn with fire the wanton lovers with you. And you, stripped of those unseemly adornments, will be carried off to the mountain of Remman. You have entered into Bethel and have committed iniquity, and in Gilgal you have multiplied impiety. He immediately sets the transgressions alongside the judgments, and usefully makes the clear demonstration of the unholy deeds a neighbor to the narrations of the terrible things, so that no one might mock, nor indeed blame God, as having imposed a harsher punishment than is necessary on those of Israel. For these things, he says, will come upon you, and these things. And in response to the question of why they will come, he proclaims: you entered into Bethel and committed iniquity, where the god-hated Jeroboam set up the golden calf; there you will be captured, transgressing terribly and outrageously. For I have legislated through the all-wise Moses, ”You shall not make for ”yourself gods of gold and gods of silver,” and ”You shall worship the Lord ”your God, and him only shall you serve.

But you, he says, mocking my law, have worshipped the works of your own hands, and seeing a golden calf and lifeless matter, you persisted, while the one who devised the error said, ”These are your gods, O Israel, ”who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And you have wrought the greatest impiety in Gilgal; this is a city beyond the streams of the Jordan, terribly inclined toward apostasy. And indeed the God of all said concerning it, ”All their evils are in Gilgal, for there I ”hated them because of the evil of their practices. Therefore, as the writer of Proverbs says, ”The ways of a man are before the ”eyes of God, and he looks upon all his paths. And He accepts those who have practiced walking uprightly, but he rejects the one who steps outside the straight path, and who is eager to go where he ought not. And you brought your sacrifices in the morning, your tithes on the third day; and they read the law outside, and they called for confessions; declare then that the sons of Israel loved these things, says the Lord God. Truly dreadful and having reached the utmost limit

of impiety is it to dare to counterfeit the glory of God, and what is fitting for him and him alone, to attach these things to the honors of idols.

For those accustomed to do this, as far as it is in their power, shake the divine and supreme nature from the thrones most fitting for it and it alone, and they send it forth from the sacred seats, and establish in them, as it were, the unclean demons. We shall find, therefore, the frenzied Israel entangled in such frightful accusations. For the God of all ordained through Moses in one place that it was fitting for them to sacrifice two lambs every day in the holy tabernacle, one in the morning, and the other in the evening, as a quasi-continual and uninterrupted sweet odor, signifying clearly the spiritual one of the Church as in riddles and types; and again He further ordained, ”Three times a year every male of ”yours shall appear before me. And at these three appointed times according to the law, they brought tithes, firstfruits of the fields, sacrifices, thanksgiving offerings. For it is written that ”You shall not appear before me empty. But they, transferring what was so rightly ordained through the all-wise Moses to the glory of idols, offered in their precincts to the in the morning the sacrifices, and they brought their tithes also for the three-day festival. By the three-day festival he means the three days of the year, on which, as I said, every male had to come before God.

And the impiety of those of Israel did not stop at these things, but indeed they also read an outside law, that is, they honored the law of foreigners, holding the law from God to be of very little account. For they offered their sacrifices in the precincts of idols at appointed times and kept a very great observance of their customary feasts. That is, he says this, that the things established for my glory, they have offered to outsiders, and they dedicated my law to idols, offering to them the morning sacrifices, and dedicating the tithes to them in the three-day festivals. and they have proclaimed voluntary offerings. And the ’they have proclaimed’ means that they prayed, that is, they made vows; and ’voluntary offerings’ are the voluntary things according to the law, and whatever one might bring to God willingly. Then to the priests he cries out the ’report and testify,’ because these things the sons of Israel have loved, that is, not only have they dared to do them once, but they also loved them, having obviously hated the things of God. For they ought to be single-minded. For to be lame, and to hasten to go on both sides, would receive much outcry from God, and the Savior Himself will testify, saying, ”No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

But it is a very difficult thing to divert elsewhere the things that are for the glory of God, and to deem others worthy of the honor that befits Him. For the things of God are His own and special, and would not befit any other, but Him and Him alone. And I will give you numbness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, and you did not return to me, says the Lord. And I withheld the rain from you three months before the harvest; and I will rain on one city, and on another city I will not rain; one portion will be rained upon, and the portion on which I will not rain, will be withered. And two and three cities will be gathered into one city to drink water and they will not be filled, and not even

so did you return to me, says the Lord. The discourse again providentially meets those who are accustomed to find fault, and to babble most imprudently against the serenity that is in God out of an excessive madness. For on what account indeed, some might perhaps say, does He inflict upon those of Israel a punishment so untamable and completely unbearable, although God is by nature good? He makes a defense, therefore, in a way, through these things and shows that they are in need of a harsh wrath;

and at the same time he shows that at first He strikes sinners more gently, not demanding punishments, but out of innate love for humanity turning them to Himself, and as it were ”with whip and toil” changing them to choose to do what is better. For since they had become as I said, and had committed impieties no longer tolerable, he disciplined them with numbness of teeth, and indeed with lack of bread, that is, famine. And you did not return to me, says the Lord. I withheld the rain from you three months before the harvest, that is, as the Hebrews have more suitably rendered it: three months before the reaping, when the need for watering the crops is most great and necessary for bringing them to fruition. And he says there was such a scarcity of water that by the judgment and decree of God who knows all things, one city was rained on, while another was parched; and again, two and three would be gathered into one, and still be thirsty. And you did not return to me, says the Lord. And it has happened that those of Israel suffered such things both historically and spiritually. For as the disciple of the Savior said, ”Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain on the land, and it did not rain for three years and six months. And there was so harsh a famine in Samaria, that a donkey’s head was sold for many denarii.

But also in the times of the prophecy of Jeremiah, the God of all withheld the rain. And so he has made the pronouncements concerning the drought: ”Judah has mourned, and her ”gates have been emptied, and they were darkened upon the earth, ”and the cry of Jerusalem went up, and their great men ”sent their younger ones for water; they came ”to the wells, and found no water, they returned ”their vessels empty. and the works of the earth failed, because ”there was no rain. The farmers were ashamed, they covered their ”heads. And does in the field gave birth and abandoned ”[their young], because there was no pasture. Wild asses stood in the valleys, ”they drew in the wind, their eyes failed, because there was ”no grass, because of the iniquity of the people. Since, then, those of Israel had acted impiously in no small measure, God held back the rain and gave numbness of teeth and lack of bread in all his cities. But, as I just said, we will find that they suffered this also in a spiritual sense; for food and drink for bodies from the earth are the things from the earth, and perceptible water; but the soul of man is nourished by divine and heavenly words. And its stream is the spiritual one, and the divinely-inspired scripture is a spring that waters it spiritually, speaking the mystery of Christ. But just as if teeth should suffer numbness, they would be somewhat weaker for being able to chew anything, and to grind down food;

so also the human mind, having slipped into weakness, and having suffered the sickness of sluggishness, would not be able to attain spiritual knowledge, nor to take in for digestion

anything of even the exceedingly subtle contemplations. Therefore the heart of Israel was hardened; for it in no way understood the mystery of Christ; for this reason they also have had a lack of spiritual bread and a scarcity of water, since they do not have the nourishing Word who came down from heaven and gives life to the world, the one who waters souls with the grace of the Spirit, the living spring, the Son from God the Father, the exhortation through the law and the prophets. For as the prophet Isaiah says, ”He commanded the clouds not to rain rain upon it. I struck you with blight and with mildew; your many gardens, your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-groves the caterpillar devoured, and even so you did not return to me, says the Lord. I sent death among you in the way of Egypt, and I killed your young men with the sword, along with the captivity of your horses, and I brought up your camps in fire in my wrath, and even so you did not return to me, says the Lord.

For those who are callous about the things that happen from wrath, and are very much supine, and thus fall back further into indifference, so that they do not deign even to consider the need to repent, no manner of being struck would be sufficient, but rather more, and worse than one another, and having an increase towards grieving them yet more greatly. Therefore, since for those of Israel being disciplined by a lack of bread and drink was perhaps in some way a small thing for correction, there was brought upon them to suffer also things yet more burdensome than this, the weakness of their bodies, which happens as in fever and mildew. We will find this said again through the voice of Jeremiah. For he said that ”Thus says the Lord: ”Behold I am bringing weakness upon this people, and ”fathers and sons together will be weak in it, neighbor and ”his kinsman will perish. And since they were overcome by shameful gains, and were looking very much indeed towards avarice, for this reason multiplying their gardens and vineyards, fig-groves and olive-groves, God touched these things also, through which it was likely that, being not moderately grieved, they would return to a sound mind, and choose what is profitable instead of what is worse, heaping up for them so that, being struck from all sides, they might be saved. And when this too was a small thing, the greater was also brought upon them.

For when, he says, dishonoring my hand, and all but defining as weakness the power of God who is all-mighty, you have made your way toward the Egyptians, having chosen ”the flesh of horses” over the providence from me, and ”an Egyptian, a man” having preferred it, then indeed, then, he says, your most warlike race was consumed by the sword of the Babylonians. and all your cavalry was taken captive, as God weakened even those who knew how to succeed, and who were not unpracticed in conquering in battles. You will also understand in another way, I have sent death among you in the way of Egypt. When Josiah was reigning over Judah, Pharaoh Necho, the ruler of the Egyptians, campaigned against Babylon. And as it was necessary for him to pass through the land of the Jews, Josiah, thinking that the way to Babylon was a pretext, and that the Egyptian was armed against him, irrationally led his forces out against him. There Israel fell. Therefore, he says, I sent death among you in the way of Egypt, that is, as in the passing by of the Egyptians, then I also brought up your camps in fire, instead of, I tore up from the foundations your walled

and well-towered cities. And he said this also in the beginning, "And Ephraim went to the Assyrians, and Judah multiplied walled cities; and I will send fire upon his cities, and it will devour their foundations.

Therefore, he says, I shook down your most fortified camps from their very foundations, and not even so did you return to me, says the Lord. I overthrew you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you became like a firebrand plucked from the fire, and not even so did you return to me, says the Lord. Seeing no correction in you, he says, I have added to the tortures things still more harsh than these, and have made my indignation against you more fervent. For I overthrew you as Sodom and Gomorrah, and you did not return. And he seems to indicate to us in these things the final destruction, the one that happened in the times of Jeremiah by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who took all Judea, and burned Jerusalem itself, and its neighboring cities and villages, and tearing down the divine temple itself, having as spear-won captives those who were left from the war, he returned home again, glorious and victorious, together with those who had been captured, who with difficulty returned to Judea, after the number of seventy years had been fulfilled for them. For Cyrus, as I said, having taken Babylon, released from captivity those who remained and were saved from Israel. For this reason, he says, you became like a firebrand plucked from the fire, like a half-burnt piece of wood, and still saved in a few remains.

Therefore, when God disciplines, to be supine is bitter, and it will be the cause of even more grievous evils for those who shake off their perception, from the necessity of ceaselessly going on to choose to do and to think what is not lawful. For in the same way that those who cut short the diseases of bodies, and who have practiced the experience of being able to heal, purify the more insensitive parts of wounds with hot and pungent medicines, and by thinning the thickness of the impurity within them, persuade them to yield to the remedies of their art, so also God, who knows all things, burdens with even harsher plagues those who are unfeeling about small things, the assault of which, if anyone is wise and quick-witted, he would reasonably beg off before experiencing it. Therefore, thus will I do to you, Israel. For since, he says, having done this, and having added that, and having brought upon you, so to speak, every kind of torture and suffering, I have both seen and learned from experience itself that you are unfeeling, for this very reason I will also do thus to you. But how thus? For I was not content with the first things; but I also brought upon you the overthrow like that of Sodom. For, as I said, this sort of plague was brought upon them last through the divine wrath. But because I will do thus to you, prepare to call upon your God, Israel.

But if you should wish, he says, to learn the reason why I will do thus to you, you will surely find out, as he, so to speak, cries out and says to you who are being struck, "Prepare to call upon your God, Israel. He says "prepare" instead of "Be zealous, be unwearying and eager to call upon the not al- alien and falsely named, but your God, O Israel, that is, whom you have known through experience itself, that he is God by nature and in truth, and not invented by the skill of some, just as, for instance, things made from wood or stone. For

behold, I am he who makes the thunder firm and creates the spirit and declares to men his Christ, who makes the morning and the mist, and walks upon the high places of the earth, the Lord God Almighty is his name. By contrast with the preeminent one, what is held in lower esteem is easily exposed. So that, then, the inactivity of idols might be revealed at least to those who thought out of excessive foolishness that they were gods and fitting to be worshipped, the God of all usefully makes himself manifest to us, introducing a maker and creator of all things, and having authority over our affairs, and, as it were, a pilot of human affairs, being beyond all height and every preeminence, and a kind of steward of the whole creation.

For the nature of God is to be beyond all things, and not by local heights but by the eminences of glory, and by incomparable power, surpassing the measure of every created thing. Call upon your God, therefore, he says, O Israel, recognizing his authority, the all-powerful nature of his preeminence. For it is I, and no other, who makes the thunder firm, that is, also covering the sky with cloudiness, and sending down rain, and creating the spirit, that is again, the maker of winds. and declaring to men his Christ. similar to as if he were to say "By me kings reign, and rulers by me rule the earth. for by 'christ' in this context, he does not mean Emmanuel, but rather he means the one anointed as king; and 'spirit' similarly, not the divine and holy one; even if some of those who have practiced perverting what is right should rage; but this one, which is in the air and in the world, about which the Savior himself also says "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound; but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit. I therefore, he says, who gathers the clouds and makes the thunder firm, and "who brings forth the winds from their storehouses," who makes manifest whomever I wish to be exalted on the thrones of the kingdom.

Therefore, King of kings and Lord of lords, the God by nature, he himself is the one who makes the morning, that is, day or light, he himself is the one who makes the mist, that is, darkness or night; he himself is the one who walks upon the high places of the earth, being better than and superior to everything exalted and high, bearing a name that is fitting and very much like his own glory, "Lord Almighty. See, then, how much gentleness and love for humanity the God of all shows towards us. For having suspended the threat, and having foretold some things as though they had already happened, and others as though they would be, he calls to full knowledge, and initiates the one who has turned aside, and brings back to understanding the one who has slipped from ignorance; and to those who do not know the Master by nature and in truth, from the fact that he is able to accomplish all things and to rule over all things, he makes himself manifest. and this was of one chastening "with hardship and scourge," and almost even unwillingly instructing them towards conversion, and usefully bringing on the means by which it was likely they could learn to think better things. Hear this word of the Lord, which I take up over you as a lament. The house of Israel has fallen, it shall no longer rise again. The virgin of Israel has stumbled upon her land, there is no one to raise her up.

The blessed prophets, learning beforehand the evils that would befall certain people, and then being filled with dread from this and grieving exceedingly as for brothers, at times make their rebukes more intense, almost biting out of love, and rousing to sobriety by foretelling the things that are just about to happen. The Prophet accomplishes something of this sort now as well, speaking as from his own person, yet not things from his own mind, but as from divine oracles. For this reason he says, Hear this word of the Lord which I I take up a lamentation for you. For the God of all has spoken in me, he says, and a lamentation has been composed by me for you who depart from him. And what then is the mournful song? What is the lament? And for what reason would my tear fall? Terrible and unadmonished is the calamity. The house of Israel has fallen. For it stood firm while God was honored and loved, but now it has fallen down, provoked by the follies of those who have gone astray. Then who will raise up the one who falls by the divine decrees? The virgin has stumbled, instead of has committed fornication. And who is this? Surely again Israel, that is, the Synagogue of the Jews, to which it was said by God, "Did you not call me as a house and father and the guide of your virginity?

Therefore she who had God as the guide of her virginity has stumbled upon her own land, that is, she has committed fornication and has her sin without excuse. For she once committed fornication in Egypt; but she was in a land not her own, and was subject to the laws of the rulers, and perhaps was even unwillingly forced into their customs, being driven out of necessity, as it were, from her ancestral piety; but now she is wanton with no one pushing her down; for she is on her own land, where the law is the tutor, bringing her to the knowledge of the God who is by nature and truly is, and the path to all that is best is unrestrained and free and entirely without rebuke. What way of defense, then, could be provided for her? For she has committed fornication, not having been forced; from where? But willingly, then. For this reason she is broken; there is no one to raise her up. Let it therefore be said very well, and by us ourselves, to the all-powerful God, "You are terrible, and who will stand against you from your wrath? And in another way the multitude of the Jews has fallen, being forced toward destruction through their drunken violence against Christ, and it lies now with no one to defend it, but waiting again for the grace of the one who has pity, I mean Christ. For she too will be called to knowledge through faith in the last times of the age.

For thus says the Lord: The city from which a thousand went forth, a hundred shall be left; and from which a hundred went forth, ten shall be left to the house of Israel. In these words he makes very clear in what manner it will fall. For the cities, he says, will be left destitute of men, as war consumes those in them, and misery transports them to this state, so that scarcely a tenth part will remain to them. For since they, being provoked, offered their tithes on the third day to the unclean demons, they themselves will scarcely be left as a tenth part, with God, as it were, weighing the transgression, and bringing upon their impieties a balanced justice. It is a fearful thing, then, to be disciplined in wrath; for this reason the prophet also besought God, saying, "Discipline us, O Lord, but in judgment, and not in wrath, lest you make us few. For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek me and you shall live; and do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal, and do not go up to

the well of the oath, because Gilgal shall surely be taken captive, and Bethel shall be as if it did not exist. seek the Lord and live, lest the house of Joseph blaze up like fire and devour it, and there be no one to quench it for the house of Israel.

He does not again allow those who have sinned to slide into despair, although they are entangled in terrible and unbearable transgressions; but he puts forward the things from God, drawing them like a net to repentance; and he has now of necessity brought him in, promising to forgive them their charges, and to release them from punishment and the fears related to it. For the Creator is good by nature, "Long-suffering and of great mercy, and repenting of evils," as it is written, and as he himself says through the voice of Ezekiel, "He does not desire the death of the one who dies, as that he should turn from his wicked way and live. If, therefore, you consider it of great importance to live, and the matter seems to you worthy of acceptance, cease from the deceit, and from such Leaping away from long ignorance, seek me, He says, that is, serve me who am God by nature, the life-giver, the one mighty to save, and the one who places those who revere him outside of all evil. But it is necessary, he says, to wash yourselves beforehand, thrusting out from your own soul the filth of apostasy, and to melt away very well the stain from having been deceived, and thus finally to cleave to the all-good God. And what indeed they who had chosen to repent ought to do, he clarified, saying: Do not seek Bethel and do not enter into Gilgal, and do not go up to the well of the oath.

And by the well of the oath he means Gerar; this is a city of the Philistines, that is, of the Palestinians. For since both the divine Abraham and Abimelech swore to each other, and made treaties of peace at the well, the city was afterward renamed to the well of the oath. Therefore, Gilgal and Bethel and indeed Gerar were cities very much turned toward impiety, and setting before the deceived a multifaceted error. He commanded them to depart from these places of necessity, interweaving a threat with his word, so that from all sides he might drive them toward what is profitable. For Bethel and the rest, he says, will be gone. And one will go as a captive to its enemies, and another will be so burned down, as to seem in a way to have never existed. Therefore, let God be sought, that you may live, he says, before the house of Joseph blazes up and it consumes him, and there will be no one to quench it. So by "blazes up" he means "to be set on fire," and by "house of Joseph" he names Ephraim, that is, those in Samaria; for from Joseph came both Ephraim and Manasseh. Therefore, just as when he calls them Israel, we understand that those from him are called by their father's name, so also if he happens to say Joseph, you will understand it in the same way.

Repentance, therefore, is a good thing, scaring away punishments, and checking things that come from wrath, placing those who practice it outside of the master's movements, and freeing us from every misfortune. The Lord who makes judgment in the height, and has set righteousness on the earth; who makes and remakes all things, and turns shadow into morning, and darkens day into night, who calls for the water of the sea and pours it out upon the face of the earth, the Lord God the Almighty is his name. Who brings destruction upon strength and leads misery against a fortress. The discourse is initiatory, and especially

fitting for those who are called to the knowledge of God, and are eager to go to the light of truth. For it is the Prophet's purpose to teach the erring, first, that power over all things is attached to God, and the universe is steered by his commands, and by a law of righteousness the all-blessed multitude of angels has been subjected; and that in every way and altogether it is consequent and necessary for those who are on the earth to be yoked to the laws of his righteousness. For if the better part among these both serves God, and the holy multitude of spirits on high is subject with fear, how or from where could that which is so inferior by nature and glory have impunity, having inclined to willfulness, that is, man, who is from the earth and to the earth?

Therefore, he says, the Lord of all is he who makes judgment in the height. Which is similar to saying: He who implants the way of righteousness that is fitting for them in the spirits on high and above; for by judgment he means righteousness. He himself has also set righteousness on the earth, that is, he has also established laws for those on earth, according to which it would be fitting for them to live, if being and living well, and partaking of his gentleness and love for mankind, are held in account by them. And that He is almighty and all-powerful as God, and that absolutely nothing is impossible for Him, and that the very nature of the elements yields, and existing things are changed according to His will, he demonstrates, taking as an example the turning of shadow into morning, and again the darkening of day into night; and in addition to these, that also from salt water, by an ineffable power calling it to the height and above, he sends it down sweet to those on the earth, by the commands of the one who rules moving into that which is contrary to nature. He says that the shadow turns aside into the morning, that is, the night, or rather the darkness, changes into day. For as the blessed Moses writes, "There was darkness" in the beginning "over the abyss," that is, the shadow;

but "God said," he says, "and there was light," thus into the morning, that is, into day, we say the shadow, that is, the darkness, was changed. But when day had come, night took over again; this is to darken the day into night. The Prophet therefore helps those who have gone astray, pointing out not lifeless matter, but the God who is by nature and truly is, nor indeed equal to the golden heifers, that is, according to some, gods devised by human art, but also king and lawgiver of the spirits above, and of those on earth likewise, and master of the elements, and bending the nature of existing things to His will. For in this way, he says, and very rightly, the name fitting for Him is the Lord God the Almighty. And since these things are so by nature and in truth, He brings destruction upon strength, and brings hardship upon a fortress; He seizes, he says, the arrogant, and upon those who shake off His yoke He apportions destruction. But even if someone should happen to think himself strong and great out of insolence, upon him too He brings hardship. This was to suggest skillfully that if they should choose to be idle, and to persist still in the charges of arrogance, and to think great things of themselves, they will fall into extreme hardship, being righteously shattered at last by the hand of the one who rules all things.

”For the Lord,” he says, ”opposes the proud,” according to what is written, and He considers the boastful and disobedient and intractable man an enemy; yet He looks ”upon the humble and the quiet and the one who trembles at His words. And the thing is good, and truly worthy of emulation by those who have chosen to live best. They hated him who reproves in the gates, and they abhorred a holy word. The discourse again holds to its proper sequence. For since the divine Prophet named God almighty and all-powerful, and added that ”He brings destruction upon strength, and brings hardship upon a fortress,” for this reason now also, necessarily, lest anyone think He brings His wrath excessively upon those who err in small things, he enumerates the charges, and brings forward the reasons for which He apportions destruction and hardship to some. For they have hated, he says, those who would correct them, they have made nothing of those who reprove and are accustomed to set them right toward what is pleasing to God, they have considered every holy word abominable, that is, the word that calls and urges toward holiness and sanctification. But you will understand ”in the gates” as clearly and openly and with boldness. And he seems now to be mindful of their madness and aversion toward the prophets and the law. For the prophets would reprove, approaching without concealment.

And the law was a holy word, because it is a guide of God and of righteousness, and a tutor unto piety, and indicative of the God who is by nature and in truth. For this reason also the blessed Paul said the commandment through Moses is ”holy and just and good. Therefore, it is the most shameful of sicknesses, and a kind of root and genesis of the passions in the soul, to shake off counsels, and to hate reproofs, and to seem not even to know the divine law. For he who has arrived at this point of wickedness will surely be like a ship destitute of rudders and not having a pilot, which is carried about by every wind, and rushes simply without consideration toward what pushes it, almost as if drunk, and appearing at last as a plaything of the waves. But our wise David blesses that just man, saying, ”The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be tripped up; for the law sets one right toward what is pleasing to God. Therefore, because you struck the heads of the poor, and you received choice gifts from them, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them, and vineyards you have planted desirable ones and you will not drink their wine.

It is true, that in every way and altogether, to abstain from good things has its origin in worthlessness, and turning away from what is useful and by nature beneficial makes us stumble, as by necessity, into things that are not so. For just as when light has been driven away, darkness immediately follows in its tracks and on its heels, so the departure of virtue has the incursion of worthlessness following it. Therefore, since they have hated ”the one who reproves in the gates, and ab- ”horred also a holy word,” they have slid down into multi-faceted sin, and they have turned to greed, and practicing the oppression that is most hated by God, they struck ”the humble with their fists,” and punched the heads of the poor, those who were surely powerful and surpassed others in glory and in wealth; and they plundered in the name of a gift, receiving from the unwilling the more valuable of their possessions. However, he usefully shows that for those accustomed to do such things, greed is unprof-

itable, and being overcome by shameful gains ends in sorrow, and its end brings punishment. For if they will neither enjoy the houses built with such zeal and ambition, and they labor in vain on the things in their fields, and the enjoyment of the beloved things for which their greed arose and the passion for money entered in is gone to an unexpected outcome, how will the way of having to be greedy not appear to some to be vain and profitless?

It is wise, therefore, to consider that, as the writer of Proverbs says, ”Better is a little getting ”with righteousness than many fruits with unrighteousness. And Paul also calls greed idolatry, and very fittingly; for the matter is then godlessness, and those who trample on the law of love for the brethren, which is also the fulfillment of the law, are placed on an equal footing with those who have not known God by nature. And he who does not know the law denies the Law- giver. And Christ himself also made us more prudent and stronger than the unjust love of money, saying, ”For what ”will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, ”but loses his own soul? Or what will a man give ”in exchange for his soul? ”For treasures will not ”profit the lawless, according to what is written; but righteousness ”will deliver from death. For I have known your many impieties, and your sins are strong, trampling down the just, taking bribes, and turning aside the poor in the gates. Therefore the prudent will keep silent in that time, for it is an evil time. That God does not punish those who have offended for small things, nor indeed for common transgressions, but rather, having been patient with moderate faults, he then brings his wrath upon their unbridled inclinations toward worthlessness, he tries to teach.

For he says that those in Samaria will fall away from their houses, and indeed also from their vineyards, and, I think, from everything that knows how to glad- den and contributes to prosperity. Therefore, since the sins committed by them have become terrible and great and no longer bearable; for they oppressed the just, or any man perhaps, that is, looking to unholiness, they deigned to care little for right and just judgment. And this is, in a way, to oppress and unguardedly to be greedy for what seems right to the law. For they also received bribes, that is, repayments and re- wards for unjust judgments; and in addition to this, they turned aside the poor in the gates. And what is this? For either he says that, that they made to be shunned those who persuade others to think moderately, and who advise about this with bold- ness; or that they dared to pervert the judgments of the poor, not secretly; from where? not even as if concealing the impiety, but as it were in the gates, that is, openly and in the sight of many, no longer blushing at all, nor indeed having any reverence for the divine law.

And to this point they have now brought down the time to worthlessness and wickedness, so that even to the wise, and to those able to understand, it seemed better of the economy of things, to neither rebuke any longer, nor indeed to correct those who have chosen to be impious, on account of the fact that those being rebuked are henceforth like those who have no ears, and leap like dogs upon those willing to help them, and consider as enemies those who propose the best things. For they would censure the holy prophets, and sometimes pre- pared to make them suffer things when they came into their midst, and the words conveyed

to them from above. And indeed, Zedekiah at one time bound the prophet Jeremiah when he announced the things from God, and at another time cast him into a pit, and wished to suffocate him in the mire within it. Therefore it is necessary to repent while the stumbles are still small, and not to provoke God, as it were, even unwillingly, by the introduction of greater ones. For if sins become strong and very many, then indeed He will surely repay, and will bring on the flames of indignation. And we say that sins are strong which are terrible and unbearable; because ”not every sin is unto death,” according to the most wise voice of John; although none has the strength to overcome the loving-kindness of God, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Book 3

Seek good and not evil, that you may live, and so it will be the Lord God the Almighty with you; in the manner that you said, We have hated evil and loved good, and establish judgment in the gates, so that the Lord God the Almighty may have mercy on the remnant of Joseph. I have already said many times that there was not one captivity, but different ones at different times, and in parts. For Pul the Assyrian first came to Samaria, and having laid waste the two tribes beyond the Jordan and the cities there, departed; and after him, Shalmaneser did not take all of Samaria, but took some part of it back to his own land with the captives. And God did this providentially, disciplining the wayward Israel "with toil and scourge," and moving them to the necessity of thinking and doing better and more seemly things. It happened, therefore, that those who were able to escape from the wars we have just mentioned, now somehow fighting against their own knowledge, repented of the things in which they had been deceived, and knew and confessed that many and intolerable things from the divine wrath had consequently been brought upon them for their sins, and then they, as it were, promised God the correction of their own habits, saying, We have hated evil and loved good.

Therefore, in the manner you have spoken, he says, seek good and not evil, so that you may gain well-being by living and being saved, and the Lord God, who has authority over all, may be with you. And establish judgment in the gates, that is, become upright judges; not recording an unjust vote against the weaker; not misrepresenting the power of the just; nor indeed striking the heads of the poor; nor turning aside the way of the humble, so that God may henceforth have mercy on those left from Joseph from the captivities that have already occurred. And again it signifies Ephraim, that is, the ten tribes. For as I have already said before, since Ephraim came from Joseph, for this reason he is also signified by his father's name. Therefore, it is necessary to think rightly, and to correct our own minds, so that we must think the things pleasing to God, and achieve virtue, and cling to the ways of justice, and be wise guardians of uprightness; for thus we will have the God of all with us and defending us. Therefore thus says the Lord God the Almighty: In all the broad places there will be wailing, and in all the streets it will be said, Woe, woe! the farmer will be called to mourning and wailing, and to those who know lamentation; and in all the ways there will be wailing, because I will pass through the midst of you, said the Lord.

Having tasted, he says, the evils of war, and having been not moderately grieved by what had already happened, you promised to hate what is evil and to love what is good; but having been freed from those terrors for only a short and difficult time, you inclined toward indolence, and you appeared no less attached to your former evils. Therefore, for this reason, the cities will be full of lamentation and wailing, and dirges and tears everywhere, and there will be a search for those who know how to mourn. And since the city dwellers are not sufficient for this, the farmer will also be taken, so that he might sing a rustic song for you, and in local rhythms mourn the misfortunes of the fallen. For I will pass through the midst of you, he says, now somehow observing your sins, and no longer standing far off from those who have committed intolerable impieties. For as long as God does not yet discipline, he seems somehow not even to be present; but when he brings on things from his wrath, he is, so to speak, present and inflicts punishments. Thus also angels visited Sodom to burn the impious, as though they had been absent when not punishing. Therefore, "I will pass through the midst of you" signifies the visitation, and that the time for being punished is at hand. Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have this day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light.

As if a man should flee from a lion, and a bear should meet him; or go into his house and lean his hand against the wall, and a serpent bite him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Even deep darkness with no brightness in it? When the holy prophets foretold to them the things that would be, and that they would fall into bitter and incurable misfortunes, they turned recklessly to the works of error, laughing and being arrogant, at one time saying that the prophecies would run on into postponements and long periods of time; at another time, being completely desperate, they dared to say, according to the voice of Jeremiah, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come. For they thought that the prophets were speaking falsely and filling them with empty terrors; or, if indeed some war should come against them, they would be stronger than their hand, setting up against them a hard and irresistible defense and zeal. For it is true that, "When a wicked man comes into a depth of evils, he becomes contemptuous," according to what is written. But those of such a disposition, like those with desperate wounds, have all but cried out that they need fire and cutting, and are in desire of such things. For in a way they thirst for the need to be punished, even if they no longer use such a voice.

Woe, therefore, he says, to those who desire and await nothing other than the day of punishment, which he also calls the Lord's; for it is brought on by God. Why then, he says, is this day for you, being darkness and not light, because it is filled with so very much misfortune? For it would not be possible, he says, for any to escape, nor could anyone go outside of the evil; but he who flees this will be seized by that, and the second will meet those who have escaped the first. For this is to escape from the mouth of a lion, but to fall into a bear. But even if someone should think, he says, that he might happen to be in safety and enter into his house, there he will fall into death, unexpectedly subjected to the bites of a serpent. For when God drives someone into destruction and troubles, who is the one who will save? Who is the one who will help and deliver from judgment? Or what way will there be, by which if

one passed through, he might be outside of the evils? None at all. "For who will turn back the high hand? And, "If he shuts a man in, who can open it? according to what is written. I have hated, I have rejected your feasts, and I will not smell the offerings in your solemn assemblies.

For if you bring me your whole burnt offerings and sacrifices, I will not accept them, and I will not look upon your salvation offerings of manifestation. The word would be especially fitting for those from Judah and Benjamin. For the tribes in Samaria to the worship of idols being wholly attached, they were found to be very slothful and greatly negligent of the laws given through Moses; but those in Jerusalem sacrificed on the high places to Baal and offered libations to the host of heaven, yet in addition to this they pretended to take care to show reverence for the law, and to be eager to fulfill both sacrifices and feasts. But that the Creator of all things has hated these things, he also made clear through the voice of Isaiah, saying, "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; attend to the law of God, you people of Gomorrah. What is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of lambs and the blood of bulls and goats I do not desire, not even should you come to appear before me. For who has sought these things from your hands? You shall not continue to tread my court. If you bring fine flour, it is in vain; incense is an abomination to me. Your new moons and your Sabbaths and the great day I do not tolerate; fasting and idleness and your feasts my soul hates;

you have become to me a surfeit. We say that the preceding words depend on this thought. For he says, I have hated and cast off your feasts, and I would not praise your sacrifices, nor would I ever reckon as a fragrant aroma the whole burnt offerings and the offerings for salvation. These are kinds of sacrifices, distinguished according to seasons, and as in their own ways. For the whole burnt offering is one thing, and the sacrifice another, and the appearance for salvation, that is, to come into the sight of God, and to offer sacrifices for salvation. But what we just said would fittingly apply to the Jews who practice the greatest impiety; but God accepts, and very gladly, and receives the sacrifices of those in faith, the spiritual whole burnt offering, the appearances at the feasts. For we offer a sweet smell not of ourselves, but of the one in us through the Spirit, I mean, Christ. And the unacceptability for sacrifice would very fittingly apply also to the unholy heretics and those of whom it is not possible to say, at least according to the genuine in faith, "That we are the aroma of Christ to God. for their smell is in Beelzebul, if it is true that "No one says, Jesus is anathema," except in Beelzebul. But the wretched ones, blaspheming unguardedly and speaking falsely against the glory of the Only-begotten, bear a mind not filled with a spiritual sweet smell, but rather drunk with filth.

Take away from me the sound of your songs, and the psalm of your instruments I will not hear. And judgment shall roll down as water, and righteousness as an impassable torrent. He sends away along with the feasts and the useless sacrifices the praises with instruments, God not assigning the duty of giving glory to soulless materials, but rather transferring the participation of such splendid renown to those who send forth a voice from a pure mind; for

such a doxology is beautiful and pleasing to the Lord of all. And very well indeed he calls the doxologies of the Jews, devised I know not from where, namely the instrumental ones, as I just said, a 'sound of songs,' meaning a sort of superfluous and vain echo, producing an indistinct and weak melody. And that these things have also become inventions of Jewish thoughtlessness, he has shown by saying, 'the psalm of your instruments;' for he all but says, 'Not mine;' for the practice is outside the law, and about these things Moses has said nothing. Therefore, he says, I will not be persuaded, nor will he ward off the accusations with the sweet sounds of instruments; but my judgment will roll down like water, and the righteousness from me, that is, the just sentence hereafter against you, will be like an impassable torrent, sweeping away, of course, what falls in its path, and sparing nothing. For torrents burst down violently from the mountains.

Thus also the divine decree, if it should indeed be against some, will be an irresistible water and an unopposable torrent, and nothing else. Everywhere, therefore, to repent appears useful and necessary, and by returning to what is better to ward off wrath, not sending up a completely useless and indistinct voice to God, but from a good mind a wise truly and rhythmically resounding melody. "For sacrifice, he says, a sacrifice "of praise, and pay your vows to the Most High; and call "upon me in the day of your affliction, and I will deliver you, and "you will glorify me. Did you offer slain victims and sacrifices to me for forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? says the Lord. And you took up the tent of Moloch, and the star of your god Raiphan, the images of them which you made for yourselves; and I will carry you away beyond Damascus, says the Lord, God Almighty is his name. Through the things just interpreted, it was God who was saying to those of the blood of Israel, "I have hated, I have rejected your feasts, "and I will not smell the offerings in your solemn assemblies. "For even if you bring me your whole burnt offerings and sacrifices, "I will not accept them, and upon your splendid peace-offerings "I will not look.

For in order that He might be seen to have saved Israel himself out of his own gentleness, and in memory of the fathers granting mercy to their children, and not making the matter a requital for sacrifices and, as it were, a payment in return, He says of necessity, that they had spent no few years in the wilderness. And their food was manna, and they walked with a cloud overshadowing them by day, and a pillar of fire by night. And the ark went before them as a type of God, going ahead and spying out a place and a rest for them; and they were in want of none of the necessities, with unexpected waters breaking forth for them, and enemies falling. And while all these things were happening, they received the laws concerning sacrifices, and they heard everywhere and in each one, perhaps, of the ordinances, "But when the Lord your God brings you into "the land which he swore to your fathers to give you," you will do this and that, and you will also offer sacrifices. Therefore in the forty-year period during which they were in the wilderness, they offered sacrifices willingly, but no one demanded them out of necessity. But the matter was for them postponed, until they should enter the land promised to their fathers. For this reason he says, Did you offer slain victims and sacrifices to me in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? says the Lord.

But they were saved then even without sacrifices, and as he says through another prophet again, "You did not acquire for me incense with money, nor for me the sheep of your "whole burnt offering, nor did I make you weary with frankincense. But they, on the other hand, having their apostasy without excuse, were fickle at that time, and dishonoring the God who is by nature and in truth, took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Raiphan. And what this is, it is necessary to examine. Therefore, the divine Moses had gone up to the mountain to receive the law; but those of the blood of Israel rose up against Aaron, saying, "Make for us gods "who will go before us; for this Moses, the "man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know "what has become of him. They therefore made a calf in the wilderness. And the visible, and as it were, the idol of all, was the calf; but many other things were also done by each one. For having turned once to their ancient error, and having leaped away from piety towards God, each one made a worship that seemed good to him, and fashioned it for himself, according to the custom from of old and still in Egypt; and they were more devoted to the worship of the stars. And from where might this also become manifest? someone might say. It is no great trouble for those willing to prove it;

for we shall know from the sacred writings themselves. For the divine Moses was displeased, and cried out against Aaron, then he fell down before God, saying, "I pray, O Lord; this people has sinned a great sin, "for they have made for themselves gods of gold," although what had been fashioned was a calf. But he was not ignorant that others also had made carved images. And indeed the blessed Stephen, being once accused before the rulers of the Jews of blasphemies against God and Moses, and warding off the slanders with the appropriate defenses, then showing that they had acted with savage impiety, and had behaved insolently towards the they imitate for Christ the depravity and hardness of heart of their own fathers, he clearly recalls the calf-making in the wilderness, and says concerning the all-wise Moses, "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us; for as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And they made a calf in the wilderness in those days and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: 'Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? says the Lord. And you took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Raiphan, the figures that you made to worship; and I will remove you beyond Babylon.'" See, then, that the divine Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit, testified that they had indeed made a calf, and had also turned to worship the host of heaven; and he also recalls the voice of the Prophet. From this it is possible to understand that, in addition to the calf, they also took up the tent of Moloch. For having made a tent, they set up an idol, and have called it Moloch or Molchom; this is an idol of the Moabites, having a translucent and exceptional stone on its highest brow, in the form of the morning star. And Moloch is

interpreted as their king; for Aquila and Theodotion have translated it thus; but the artifact was an image of the morning star. ”You took up, therefore,” he says, ”the tent of Moloch,” that is, of your king. And who was this king? ”The star of your god Raiphan. And Raiphan is interpreted as darkness or blindness.

For they worshiped the morning star as rising before the gleam of the sun, and bringing the beginning of day to those on the earth; but for those who worshiped, it became Raiphan, that is, darkness or blindness. And not at all as if the star had effected blindness in them, but because this worship became for them a cause of darkness. ”Since, therefore,” he says, ”you emulated the madness of the Moabites and of neighboring Damascus, for this reason you shall also depart beyond Damascus and even the places lying farther away, I mean, of the Babylonians. For the Septuagint version says, ”beyond Damascus,” but the divine Stephen said, ”Beyond Babylon. What then shall we say to this? The blessed Stephen spoke according to the Hebrew version. For it seems that to them, ”beyond Damascus” was the name for the land of the Babylonians. For perhaps the kingdom of the Damascenes, that is, of the Syrians, extended as far as the borders of the cities toward the east and the sun’s rays, and the country and land of the Babylonians was immediately adjacent. Woe to those who despise Zion and to those who trust in the mountain of Samaria. Again the word pronounces woe not only on those from Ephraim, that is, the tribes in Samaria, but also on those from Judah and Benjamin. And having first shown that those who came before them also always had a rotten and shaken mind; for they made a calf and took up the tent of Moloch;

he then convicts them of acting like their fathers, and, following in the footsteps of their ancestors’ impiety, they provoke against themselves the Master of all. He says that those from Judah and Benjamin despise Zion. For having remained in Jerusalem, and having the divine temple, they have made of no account their reverence and love for God, but as the holy scripture says, ”They burned incense in the high places under oak and poplar and a shady tree. And they also worshiped the host of heaven. And so, not moderately grieved, the God of all said to Jeremiah, ”And you, do not pray for of this people, and not worthy for them to be pitied, ”and do not approach me concerning them in supplication and ”prayer, for I will not listen to you. Then he adds the reason for turning away, saying, ”Or do you not see what these are ”doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jeru- ”salem? Their sons gather wood, and their fathers kin- ”dle a fire, and their women knead dough to ”make cakes for the host of heaven; and they have poured out ”libations to other gods that they might provoke me to anger. Therefore, those in Jerusalem have despised Zion. Therefore, he has fittingly brought upon them the ”woe. And such a voice would also befit those who trust in the mountain of Samaria, that is, those who have dwelt in Samaria, and trust in themselves.

For they thought that even without God they would overcome their enemies, and would be in a good state of prosperity, and that whatever was most pleasant to them would have an unshaken foundation. Therefore it is truly a bitter and dreadful thing to slip into such ill

counsel, as to dare to hold love for God as nothing, but to be attached to what is absurd and to do what is not right, and to grieve him, and to think that, without his giving, any good thing will be upon us; ”For every good ”gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down ”from the Father of lights; so then it is good to be attached to him, and to make him our hope and helper. And they despise Zion, that is, the Church, who are leaders of impious doctrines, and who have taken courage in their own eloquence, and are accustomed to be arrogant over the discoveries of their impious reasonings and worldly wisdom. And to them, even before the others, the ”woe” would befit. They have harvested the firstfruits of the nations, and they themselves entered. O house of Is- rael, pass over, all of you, and see, and go from there to Hamath Rabbah, and go down to Gath of the Philistines, the best of all these kingdoms, see if their borders are greater than your borders.

He shows them to be ungrateful, and to have chosen to be unmindful of his great gift, although it was necessary always to confess the greatest possible grace, and to offer up songs of thanksgiving, because not only did he marvelously deliver them when they were burdened by a hard and unbearable slavery, but indeed he also brought them into the land which he swore to their fathers. And he brought them in, after cutting off many nations that were hard to conquer and not unpracticed in winning in battles. For thus also the blessed David said somewhere to God concerning those of the blood of Israel, ”You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations ”and planted it. Therefore they are reproached, and very rightly so, as being utterly ungrateful and grieving the Benefactor with their excursions into every kind of transgression. For they have harvested the firstfruits, he says, of nations, and made their country their own inheritance, with God shaking down those who resisted, and with ineffable power paralyzing the strength of those who rose up against them. But that they have inherited a land that is fertile and good for grazing and rich with every good thing, and better and wider than other lands, he commands them to learn, by investigating the principalities, that is, the kingdoms, of their neighbors or even of those beyond. For go, he says, to Hamath Rabbah and to Gath of the Philistines; for these are the kingdoms that have a more conspicuous glory than the others;

and there inquire, he says, if their borders are greater than your borders. Now there were many individual kingdoms of the nations, that of the Moabites, that of the Idumeans, that of the sons of Ammon. But there was nothing great in them. But more splendid than the others was that of the Damascenes and the Palestinians. And there were two cities under the kingdom of Damascus, situated toward the east, whose name was Hamath; of which one was wider and greater, and the other having the smaller part. And Rabbah is interpreted as ”greater” or ”wider. Go therefore to Hamath Rabbah, that is, to the greater and wider Hamath; for, as I said, it was homonymous with another, having the greater part. And they say that this wide Hamath is the present-day Antioch, and the lesser one also narrower, the neighboring and bordering Epiphaneia; Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, having named one Antioch, and the other Epiphaneia for his own glory. The city of Gath was at that time more splendid than the Palestine of today. In it had remained the Anakim and those called Philistines, the sons of Israel not having destroyed them at that time. For this reason he

says of it, “To Gath of the foreigners; “Go then,” he says, “to Hamath Rabbah and to Gath of the foreigners; and examine carefully, if you do not inhabit a broader land, better and more excellent than all the others. It is necessary to know that the Hebrew scripture has Calneh placed first.

For it says, “Go to Calneh and to Hamath and to Gath; Calneh is under the Persian kingdom, which is now called Lysippon. And since the Hebrew version also mentioned the Persian kingdom, for this reason we say that the blessed Stephen, instead of “I will remove you beyond Damascus,” said, “Beyond Babylon. Therefore, the charge of ingratitude is against those of Israel, because having inherited a land so fertile, easy to plow, and spacious, they did not rather offer thanksgivings to God, but some scorned Zion, while others, trusting in the mountain of Samaria, took no account of reverence for him. Useful, as it seems, also to those who after the faith have admired the wisdom of the Greeks, so as to consider their opinions better than ours, and to those who incline to seek adherence to those who counterfeit the truth and subvert the orthodoxy of ecclesiastical dogmas is the saying, “Go to Hamath Rabbah and to Gath of the foreigners and see if their borders are greater than your borders. For the divinely-inspired scripture is broader than the narrow talk of the Greeks, proclaiming the light of truth and introducing a knowledge of beneficial dogmas, and raising the mind of believers to everything praiseworthy. Again, the discourse concerning truth is broader than the narrowness of the heretics. For those who fight against it are all but suffocated, swimming in cold and unclear reasonings;

but those who agree with the dogmas of piety, and contemplate the brilliant beauty of the truth, run out into a broad sea of contemplations, “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” darting hither and thither, and gathering very well from the divinely-inspired scripture things pertaining to true knowledge. And so to the Corinthians, who chose to depart “from the holy commandment delivered to them,” and ignorantly adhered to those accustomed to teach other doctrines, the divine Paul writes, saying: “Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. Now in return for the same; I speak as to children; you also be enlarged. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Woe to those who pray for an evil day, who approach and hold to false sabbaths. He was saying, “Woe to those who scorn Zion, and to those who trust in the mountain of Samaria. And since he made mention of two groups, I mean those who scorn Zion and those who trust in the mountain of Samaria, we, having necessarily investigated the meaning of the thoughts, applied the charge of scorning Zion to those of Judah and Benjamin, and that of trusting in the mountain of Samaria to those of Ephraim. So the discourse goes back, as it were, and enumerates again the charges against both, bringing upon them the “Woe. It is a custom in the divine scripture to bring the word “Woe” against the nominative case;

as I say, “Woe, those who desire the day of the Lord; and again, “Woe, those who rise early in the morning and pursue strong drink. Woe then, he says, to those who pray for an evil day, that is, those in Jerusalem. For not to endure to repent, nor indeed to accept the fear of

what was foretold would happen, is almost to desire destruction a day to fall. For instance, as if someone might say about one of the lovers of sin, "He desires to die," even though that person does not wish to suffer this, whence? but insofar as he has come to the point of wanting to do, and this unceasingly, things that are contrary to the laws, he all but loves the punishment and justice that is always in some way owed to the lovers of sin. Therefore, being unwilling to repent, they all but desire to fall into an evil day, and to be caught in the already foretold calamities, those who draw near to and touch false sabbaths. For the temple and the altars in it were still standing. And they offered to God the sacrifices according to the law, and they also observed the rests on the sabbaths, yet not at all accurately, but very carelessly and lazily indeed. And so he accused them through the voice of prophets, as not having kept the sabbaths. Woe, therefore, he says, to those who pretend to draw near to God by pretending to still honor the things of Moses, and to touch false sabbaths.

Do you see how he has slandered them as not keeping the rest proper to the sabbath correctly or carefully? And besides; for I think it is necessary to say something more essential on these points; false sabbaths, those among the Jews; since the law is a shadow, and the things through Moses are truly a type. But the type is not the truth, but rather brings in a form of the truth. Therefore the divine Paul also writes to the Hebrews, and says concerning the more ancient things, "Therefore a sabbath rest remains for the people of God. For Joshua did not give them rest, nor indeed have they entered into the rest of God; but we keep sabbath spiritually in Christ, putting an end to and departing from sins, and ceasing from every corruptible and earthly matter. For as the blessed Paul writes, "For he who has entered into His rest has himself also ceased from all his works, as God did from His own. Those who sleep on ivory beds and live luxuriously upon their couches, and eat kids from the flocks and milk-fed calves from the midst of the herd; who applaud at the sound of instruments, they reckoned it as something stationary and not as fleeting; who drink strained wine and anoint themselves with the finest ointments, and felt nothing for the affliction of Joseph. Woe again generally to those who sleep on ivory beds, accustomed to doing this and that.

He strongly blames those in Samaria who were more conspicuous in glory, and who were exalted above others by the abundance of their wealth, as being all but drunk from too much prosperity, and carried away by the breadth of their luxury to the point of not seeing any of the terrible things at all, nor indeed to think that the God of all would ever be provoked against those so disposed, and bring penalties upon the lovers of sin. He describes accurately their unrestrained and unbridled indulgence in luxuries. For their beds were of ivory, he says, their couches both costly and soft, and the choicest of the lambs, and suckling calves were their foods, and odes and songs, and all things that with instruments run together with luxuries, and revels and applause, and what is even more burdensome, that they considered such evils as stationary and not as fleeting. For in general, such things fly by, and worldly deceit does not have permanence. For it is dissolved like shadows, and "the form of this world is passing away," according to what is written; and luxury by all means ceases with the dead. But in the case of those in Samaria, the meaning of what has been said might

be understood in another way. For since they were about to be captured, and not long after, he speaks of the things devised for their luxury as fleeting and not stationary, as things that would pass away almost immediately. So they applaud instruments, drinking perhaps fragrant wine, very finely strained;

and they anoint themselves with myrrh, compounding the choicest ones, and have taken no account at all of the fact that Joseph was about to be crushed. For as I just said, although they knew beforehand the a calamity was all but present, and the capture of Samaria, and the crushing that would befall the descendants of Joseph, they did not neglect their accustomed luxury. Therefore it is truly terrible for those chosen to lead countries or cities or peoples to be overcome by bodily luxury. For when it was necessary for them rather to make very good use of appropriate vigilance, to look out for what is advantageous, and to lead those under them straight toward what is fitting, and in every way to appease a saddened God, how is it not utterly senseless to slip into luxuries and to consider nothing better than profane love of the flesh? Concerning such men, perhaps, he says through the voice of the saints, "O shepherds who scatter and destroy the sheep of the pasture. For that the flock is endangered by the indolence of the shepherds would become clear from God saying again clearly, "Because the shepherds have become senseless, and have not sought the Lord; therefore the whole pasture did not understand, and they were scattered. Therefore now they shall be captives from the beginning of the powerful, and the neighing of horses shall be taken away from Ephraim.

For since, he says, they have lived in luxury, having abandoned love for God, and they have trusted in the mountain of Samaria, that is, in those in Samaria, the leaders being very haughty, as rulers of an unmeasured multitude and having a fighting force beyond number, for this very reason, he says, the time of captivity will indeed come, and very swiftly, against all, and it will make the most powerful its first spoils. For enemies, when sacking a city, always run to the houses of the more notable people, to plunder the things in them. And since it was the custom for the splendid men in Samaria to love to be carried by choice horses, and these, as was likely, went through the middle of the public squares, neighing with a certain intelligence and wisdom and as if from knowledge; for the animal is always somehow ready for notions of good order and for the reception of the knowledge befitting it; and this will cease, he says. for the neighing will be taken away from the horses of Ephraim. It is as if he were saying: The elite of those in Samaria will cease from their arrogance, and they will unwillingly stop making their processions conspicuous, with their horses neighing for them, which, adorned with shining ornaments, perhaps even recognize their rider, and all but puff themselves up with pride, bearing their august and admirable charioteer.

But that it is safe for leaders to be vigilant, while to love to be indolent is harmful, you might learn even from this. For the things that come from wrath will be upon them, and indeed before the others. And they will be cast out from all good repute, and they themselves will lie with the others, having a bitter and grievous judgment, and they will have to account for the fact that not only have they destroyed themselves, but they have also added others

to their own transgressions. Because the Lord has sworn by himself, because I detest all the arrogance of Jacob, and I have hated his lands. He declares the unchangeable nature of the wrath, showing that God has sworn that he has hated the arrogance of Jacob. And we certainly do not say that the divine word makes a denunciation of our forefather Jacob; for it is utterly foolish to think this, since God both loved Jacob from the womb, and made him chosen even while he was in the embryo. But by Jacob he means again those descended from Jacob, whose accursed arrogance; for it is the custom in the divine scripture to call arrogance 'hubris'; he says he has hated it.

For is it not indeed arrogance, I mean, to push aside reverence for God, and to assign to idols the glory that is most fitting for him, and in addition to these things, not deigning to listen to what he might choose to declare through the holy prophets, but to make the threat a sort of plaything, and taking courage in a multitude of allies, to utterly disregard his forbearance and help? Then, how is this doubtful? Therefore, the Lord of all has sworn by himself, he says. And by himself, because "he had no one greater by whom to swear. And what is it that was sworn? "I detest all the arrogance of Jacob," that is, the haughtiness of Jacob, and I have hated all his lands. for there was not in them the one who fulfills the divine will; there was not one who kindled reverence for him, and was pre-eminent in the boasts of righteousness. For God would not have turned away, if there had been any, even if few in number, among them, for whom pleasing him was of account. And so he said through the voice of Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of "Jerusalem, and see now, and seek in the broad places "thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh "the truth; and I will be merciful to it, saith the Lord.

But since the lands of Jacob have come to be in want of every good and God-loving man, for this reason they are given over to desolation, and the cities have perished together with their inhabitants. Great, therefore, is the need for the saints; for they save cities, and deliver lands from impending disaster, by the brightness of their life cutting short the wrath that is indeed boiling against the indolent, and as it were, restraining the movements from divine anger running upon some. And I will destroy a city with all that dwell therein. And it shall be, if there be ten men left in one house, they shall die, and the rest shall be left behind, and their kinsmen shall take them, and shall make an effort to bring out their bones from the house, and he shall say to them that are over the house, Is there yet any with thee? And he shall say, No more; and he shall say, Be silent, that thou mayest not name the name of the Lord. For since He has hated their lands, and abhors all the insolence of Jacob, that is, their pride, for this reason he says that the cities among them have been utterly destroyed, men and all. But how each of these things will happen to those who have transgressed, he explains in detail. For I will destroy, he says, whatever city I wish, and as it were, I will make it vanish along with its inhabitants.

And if it should happen that ten persons from one house escape the sword of the enemy, and enter into the innermost recesses of the house, they will die, fearing perhaps even to peek out a little from the recesses in which they are. Famine, therefore, he says, will

succeed the hand of the smiter, and will kill those who are hidden. And when the enemies have departed, some of their kinsmen by blood and disposition will come, and will make an effort to bring out their bones. But whom will they compel, gathering the remains of the dead? Themselves, clearly. For it is truly burdensome and unbearable to touch bodies already decaying and putrefying, and I think there is need of a nose that is not pierced for those who dare such things; for nothing could be worse than such a terrible stench. They will therefore compel themselves, showing compassion to those who have departed and perished by famine, by deeming them worthy of both burial and care. And those who do this, he says, will then inquire of the one who knows the house, whether there might be another after them, either perhaps still alive and hiding in the recesses, or already dead and stinking. And he answers, saying, No more. And this is nothing other than a clear proof of complete desolation. But if the masters of the house should say this, they will hear in reply, he says, from the one making the inquiry, Be silent, that you may not name the name of the Lord.

And what this is, it is necessary to see. Some, therefore, think and say that when the masters of the house are about to swear, those who ask silence them, so that they may not swear by the name of the Lord. And they add that to this point the mind of those from Ephraim had slipped into the utmost godlessness, so as not even to tolerate some, if they should choose in any way to name the God of all. But I think such an argument is utterly unsound and unseemly. For that those from Ephraim had completely leaped away from the love of God, no one would doubt. But having been in plague and scourge, it is likely that they would rather fear a little and henceforth change towards wanting something of the more necessary things, not on the contrary so savagely become insolent towards piety to God. Besides; for I would add this to what has been said; for what need was there for the masters of the house when asked if anyone perhaps among them, either still living by chance, or already dead is hidden, to add also an oath, that no one is still among them? What then is the meaning of ”He will say, Silence, for the sake of not naming the name of the Lord”? We say that it was the custom for those of the blood of Israel, who have their origin from the legal commandments, to call abuse and blasphemy against God thus.

For it is written in Leviticus, that two men struggled with each other in the congregation, then one of those who fought, the son of the Egyptian woman, blasphemed, and he died by stoning. And God immediately set a law for this, saying thus: ”A man, if he should curse his God, will bear his sin; and he who names the name of the Lord shall be put to death. Therefore, to name the name of the Lord is to blaspheme, expressed in euphemistic words through the sacred letters. Since it is a habit for many, if they should somehow be in grief, to sometimes hurl reviling words against God, he says that the one presiding over the house, announcing that no one is still with him, and having suffered something of an incurable disaster, will silence him, he says, so that he may not name the name of the Lord, that is, so that he may not say anything reviling against God. This is a sign that the scourge was not brought upon them in vain, and that He does not punish them for no reason, but for a useful and necessary purpose.

For it is, it is indeed, and very easily seen from what has happened, that the plague of those who suffered has converted to piety those still living and remaining, and has prepared them to fear offending God anymore, even if only to grieve him with mere words, although long ago they were accustomed to do this unguardedly, adding to their words also insults in their very deeds. Therefore it is much better for those who are truly good and prudent to go in pursuit of what is profitable before plague and scourge, and to anticipate the experience of the movements of wrath by departing from wickedness, and having chosen to do what would truly please the all-holy God. For behold, the Lord commands, and he will strike the great house with fragments, and the small house with fissures. He clearly threatened that cities would be captured, or rather, destroyed along with their inhabitants. And that the matter is from God, and will not happen by chance, is made very clear by His commanding those who have the power to ravage, and their easily doing whatever the divine wrath should decree. He calls Ephraim and perhaps also Judah the great and the small house. For Ephraim was populous, as counted in ten tribes; for this reason also a great house. But Judah was smaller, being of two; for he was in Jerusalem, and the tribe of Benjamin. It follows to understand that what is shattered somehow has a complete fall;

but what is fissured might reasonably be thought of as suffering in part. And it happened that the house of Ephraim, that is Israel, endured a complete capture, and an incurable disaster from the war, but Judah in part, and suffered this as in a small fissure. Therefore the Judge is just and impartial. For He weighs, as He sees, the crimes of cities or regions, and brings upon each a blow that has the power to benefit them accordingly. Let us not then despise God, knowing the all-powerful nature of the supreme hand; for understanding of this is a most excellent thing. Will horses run on rocks? Or will they be silent among the mares? For you have turned judgment into wrath, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness. That indeed He himself again commanded that He will strike "the great house with fragments and the small house with fissures," even if it were done by the hand of the Assyrians, he will again persuade us by saying, Will horses run on rocks? For it is as if he were saying clearly: A horse is a proud animal, and among the swiftest of runners, but the place suitable for it to run is not one that is rocky and full of banks, but that which is clear and smooth. Then how have the Assyrians overrun you, although long ago of a rough being a people exceedingly and as it were rocky, and never yet trodden by any of the enemies?

But it was God who had been dishonored, who makes the hard and impassable things for the warring ones easy to walk on and for horses to traverse. Just as, he says, lustful horses would not stop, and being aroused and mounting the females present by the goads of nature, so the enemies would not rest, making their assault against the impious ones most ardent and irresistible. And what is the cause of this? You, and no others. For my just judgment concerning you, he says, you have turned aside into wrath, and instead of having the fruits of righteousness, you forced the author of all your cheerfulness to anger, having committed impieties worthy of bitterness. For the God of all pitied Israel for having suffered in Egypt, but they did not cease from provoking. And this, I think, is 'you turned judgment into wrath.' The crime of ingratitude is therefore terrible indeed; and it is punished, and very justly so.

For he whom we ought rather still to appease with praises and to gladden with voices of thanksgiving, to provoke him ignorantly, how will this not be for us the cause of every evil? You who rejoice in a thing of no good account, who say, Is it not by our own strength that we have taken horns for ourselves? For behold, I will raise up against you, O house of Israel, a nation, and they shall afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the west.

Therefore you have turned, he says, "judgment into wrath, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness, you," who are proud of yourselves, and who raise a high brow against God, who rejoice in a rotten and foolish word. For you have said that I have not been the provider of the strength that is in you, and of the ability to oppress the enemies, but attributing the boasts to your own powers, you have dared even to say, Is it not by our own strength that we have taken horns for ourselves? And that was similar, then, to be caught thinking proudly and saying foolishly, We ourselves rule and will overcome the enemies, even if God should not choose, he says, to defend us, we have prevailed, and we must take pride in such brilliant achievements, attributing absolutely nothing to God. So it is disdain and insolence against God, this frenzied thought and word. But the divine David was exceedingly wise, attributing glory to the God who has authority over all things, and saying, "For you are the boast of their strength. and again, "In you we will gore our enemies, and in your name we will despise those who rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, and my sword will not save me. For all strength is from him, and nothing noteworthy would be done by us, unless he were with us and presiding. "For the Lord crushes wars," according to what is written.

But since, he says, you are now caught having fallen into such arrogance and loose talk, behold, I bring a nation against you; and it is clear that it is the nation of the Assyrians; and they will afflict you, from the entrance of Hamath even to the brook of the west. Now, Hamath is one of the cities toward the east, lying at that time under the kingdom of Damascus; but it has now been renamed, as I said, Antioch, or rather Epiphania. And by 'brook of the west' he means the river of the Egyptians, since Egypt lies to the west of the land of the Jews. And since it was the custom for those of Israel, when war was about to leap upon them, at one time to ask for aid from Damascus and the Syrians, and at another time to run to the land of the Egyptians, for this reason he says that he raises up a nation against them, and they will come strong, inflicting so much affliction on them, that they would no longer be strong enough either to enter Hamath or to reach the brook of the west, that is, to call upon the power of either Damascus or the Egyptians for aid. "For when God shuts, who will open? according to what is written. What way of salvation will there be, when the Almighty drives them to destruction? Thus the Lord showed me, and behold, a brood of locusts coming early in the morning, and behold, a locust one; Gog the king.

and it shall be when he finishes to eat up the grass of the land, and I said, O Lord, Lord, be merciful; who shall raise up Jacob? for he is small; repent, O Lord, for this. And this shall not be, saith the Lord. What nation would be brought upon those of Israel, or what harm would come upon them, God reveals to the Prophet; and it is suited to his character, and

through what he knows accurately, through these things He teaches him the things that will be done. For to the shepherds the locust and the cankerworm always seem to be, and truly are, a terrible thing; for when the grass is shorn as if by them, the flocks must then be destroyed. Therefore, God indicates the calamities from war to the Prophet as to a shepherd. For as in the form of a locust He signifies the Assyrian, as one in an immeasurable multitude almost eating up and consuming the land. And he calls it the morning locust, almost falling like dew, and poured upon the earth in the manner of snowflakes. But there was, he says, also one cankerworm; and this was indeed Gog the king. Then, when God said, And it shall be when he finishes to eat up the grass of the land; that is, when he consumes by eating the common multitude that is in Samaria, clearly, and in the cities of Judea;

then, as He was about to add something else, the Prophet, interrupting, begs Him to cease from His anger, saying, O Lord, be merciful; who shall raise up Israel? for he is small. For if you should wish, he says, to deliver Israel to the enemies for consumption in the manner I have seen, he will be completely diminished. To this God [says], And this shall not be, says the Lord. I will not grow weary, He says, nor will I relent; for I would by no means cease from chastising the impious. But investigating of necessity who Gog is, we say this, that the blessed prophet Ezekiel also writes a lamentation for him, as God commands. And we think it is Sennacherib, when also Rabshakeh was reviling God, "the angel of the Lord went forth and slew in one night from the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand. And I will of necessity recall the things written about him through the voice of Ezekiel. And it is as follows, "Thus saith the Lord God to Gog: Art thou he of whom I have spoken before days past by the hand of my servants the prophets of Israel, in those days and years, that I would bring thee upon them? Do you hear how he says it is he, and not another, whom He threatened through holy prophets to bring upon those of Israel?

And that he paid the penalty for his unbridled speech, and having supposed he would conquer was unexpectedly destroyed, and has fallen in the land of Israel, He immediately indicates again, saying, "And thou, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn thee back, and lead thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel; and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and thy arrows out of thy right hand, and I will cast thee down upon the mountains of Israel, and thou shalt fall, thou, and all that are about thee, and the nations that are about thee shall be given to a multitude of birds; and to every winged bird, and to all the beasts of the field have I given thee to be devoured; thou shalt fall upon the face of the field, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God; and after other things again, "And it shall be in that day, I will give to Gog a place of renown, a monument in Israel, the burial-place of them that come to the sea; and they shall build round about the mouth of the valley, and there they shall bury Gog and all his multitude; and it shall then be called the burial-place of Gog.

and the house of Israel shall bury them, that it may be cleansed in seven months, and all the people of the land shall bury them, and it shall be to them a renown in the day that I was

glorified, saith the Lord God. For when the Assyrians had fallen, who are signified by Gog, perhaps the multitude of those of Israel buried the dead, so that for the cities and the lands the intolerable [stench] of the so would a thing of such a terrible stench be ruined. Thus the Lord showed me, and behold, the Lord called for judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and devoured the portion. And I said, 'O Lord, Lord, cease, I pray! Who will raise up Jacob? For he is small.' Repent, O Lord, concerning this. 'And this shall not be,' says the Lord. He has seen Gog, that is, the Assyrian, as a locust and a young locust; this he calls the judgment through fire. For it was not enough for the Babylonians to destroy Ephraim with the sword, but they also burned down very many of the cities in Samaria. The judgment, therefore, he says, that is, the vengeance through fire, has devoured the great deep, that is, Ephraim, so named an 'abyss' on account of its great and immeasurable multitude. And it devoured no less the small portion, that is, Judah and Benjamin. For after burning not a few cities of Judea, after this the arrogant Rabshakeh finally besieged Jerusalem itself.

But when the Prophet again appeased him, and persuaded the God of all to repent, that is, to change his mind, 'This shall not be,' says the Master of all. What then shall we learn from this again? That transgressions beyond description, although God is known to be very long-suffering, provoke him terribly, and render the prayers of the saints almost ineffective. And so he said to the prophet Jeremiah concerning those of Israel, "And you, do not pray for this people, and do not ask that they be pitied, and do not approach me concerning them, for I will not listen to you. Thus the Lord showed me, and behold, a man standing upon a wall of adamant, and in his hand was adamant. And the Lord said to me, 'What do you see, Amos?' And I said, 'Adamant.' And the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I am setting adamant in the midst of my people Israel; I will no longer pass by him. And the altars of laughter shall be destroyed, and the rites of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with a sword.' Having shown the Assyrian, that is, Gog, to the Prophet as a locust and as a young locust and as a judgment by fire, God, then shows himself somehow standing upon a wall of adamant, so that through this he might be understood as standing, so to speak, upon an unbreakable power, and having unshakable security in his own good things.

For the divine is all-powerful, and has a firm foundation, because it does not know how to change, but is superior to change, and, as I said, it loves to be always and forever established in its own good things. He is seen, therefore, standing upon a wall of adamant. Adamant among stones is both unbreakable and unconquerable, neither enduring to yield to things that are hard and accustomed to resist, nor indeed giving to other materials the ability to crush its inherent strength, and perhaps also accustomed to disregard the force of fire. And since the one standing on the wall was holding adamant in his hand, he inquired of the Prophet, saying, 'What do you see, Amos?' And when he understood and said what it was—for he said, 'Adamant'—he clearly affirmed that he would set this in the midst of Israel. But you will understand adamant as either the Assyrian, as both harsh and unbreakable, and appointed by God for this purpose; for the Lord of hosts strengthens whomever he might choose; or, the unbreakable and all-powerful Word of God, whom it is not possible to turn

back empty, that is, to render ineffective; for whatever God utters will surely run to its completion, with no one acting against it. Thus also our Lord Jesus Christ says, ”Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. And he said that he would not pass by Israel, that is, he will demand justice for the unholy things transgressed against him;

and he will no longer be long-suffering, but will finally hand it over to those called against it, along with its sacred precincts and altars and idols. For the altars of laughter, he says, will be destroyed. The making of any idol is truly, then, a laughingstock; but it would be fitting, I think, for the laughter to be understood properly and specifically as the Beelphegor, on account of the very ugliness of its form. And it disparages all idol-making, as being from this one thing, the most shameful of all. Therefore, the altars will be torn down, he says, and the feasts of Israel will be removed along with them, that is, the playthings of idolatry, profane and abominable mysteries. That Jeroboam, distinguished by the boasts of his kingdom, will go away to destruction with his own gods, he has clearly indicated. But it is necessary to remember that the one of whom the discourse is now is different from the first one; for the one was the son of Nebat, and the other the son of Joash. And these things for the time being might apply to the words of the history. But it will show the true adamant to be Christ the Lord of hosts, having invincible and irresistible strength, shattering enemies, and conquering opponents, and being broken by no one. He, as a chosen stone, has been placed in the midst of the people.

”For ’He was seen on earth and dwelt among men.’” Therefore He is also called by the voice of the angel ”Emmanuel, which ”is interpreted, God with us. For He became with us, when He became like us. Therefore, having been placed among us by God the Father as a stone of adamant, He shook the tyranny of the devil, He truly made the altars of laughter to disappear. For as soon as Emmanuel shone forth, and spread the light of true knowledge to those throughout the whole world under heaven, He showed Himself to us as the image and likeness of the Father. Then indeed, then the darkness of the ancient deceit was driven away, and profane and God-hated idolatry was removed from the midst, and he himself who presided over the deceit, that is, Satan, has also fallen. And Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos has formed a conspiracy against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. because thus says Amos: ’Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive from his land.’ Falsehood is always unassisted by itself, and the feet of deceit have a rotten support. Therefore it is laughed at, being held up to stand only with difficulty by external aids. Such is this thing, the idolatry of Israel. For their things were playthings of drunkards:

golden heifers, ”the works of a craftsman and molten images,” according to what is written, and the art of a human hand, and the inventions of unholy enterprises. But the blessed prophets call to sobriety those who are held by deceits; but the worshippers of idols, as if their whole stage were being dismantled, are not moderately vexed, they terrify with fears, they bewail the return to sobriety of those who were led astray. For they know that with

a keen and watchful mind it is easy to see the profanation of their worship. The profane Amaziah therefore was greatly afraid, lest those persuaded to worship the golden heifers should be brought by the Prophet's words to a good understanding, and he himself should be deprived of his priestly function, and the statues in the precincts should be destroyed along with them. For this reason he tries to incite Jeroboam, saying that Amos was all but rising up against his kingdom, and was daring to utter some heavy and now somehow unbearable word, that he himself would die by the sword, and Israel would go away captive. The wretched Jews also did something like this, composing slanders against Christ. For since, striking Judea with astonishment by His miracles, He was calling everyone to Himself, they brought Him to Pilate, the miserable ones having taken the flames of envy into their mind, and indeed they said, "If you do not kill this "man, you are not a friend of Caesar.

Therefore, the outrages against the saints by all who always fight against piety come through similar enterprises, with falsehood everywhere suffering from weakness. And Amaziah said to Amos, O seer, go, depart into the land of Judah, and there live your life, and there prophesy; but in Bethel you shall no longer prophesy, because it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house. He is then clearly shameless, and opposes the divine words with the proof of his own malice. For they used to call the prophets seers, but not deigning even to honor him with the name of prophecy, but rather as it were slandering him as one of the false soothsayers, he commanded him to depart into the land of Judah. And adding the words, "There earn your living," he as much as says, "If you desire shameful gains, and seek to collect things useful for your livelihood by chanting little phrases to people, leave Samaria and speak to those from the tribe of Judah, and you shall not prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary. He says sanctuary, instead of offering, that is, a place of offering. For there the first Jeroboam set up the golden calf. And referring the Prophet's crime, as it were, also to the honor of the ruler, he says, "it is a royal house. "But you are confounding the royal affairs, you are stirring up disturbances, recklessly opposing the wishes of the rulers. See clearly, then, how true is what was said by God to Israel:

"And you gave the consecrated ones wine to drink, and you commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'" And Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman, scraping sycamore fruits. And the Lord took me from the sheep, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' And now hear the word of the Lord: You say, 'Do not prophesy against my people Israel, and do not stir up a mob against the house of Jacob.' Therefore thus says the Lord: 'Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be measured by a line, and you shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall be led captive from his land.'" When the practitioners of wickedness bring insults upon the virtuous, they accuse them of their own ways, and bringing forward the ugliness of their own accusations, they think they are mocking them, but they have forgotten that they are

as good as writing themselves on a tablet and showing others what sort of people they are. We will now find that the stupefied Amaziah has suffered something of this sort.

For being a false prophet, and attending the altars of idols, collecting limbs and the remains of the slaughtered victims, and being uncontrollably overcome by shameful gains, he reproached Amos, and said that he ought to depart from Samaria, and withdraw, if he wished, into the land of Judah, and there earn his living. For there, he says, you will easily utter falsehoods, and carrying many away, you will collect things for your livelihood, and you will more readily find the means of life. For "There earn your living," implies some such meaning, as I have already said before. But that the Prophet has no such purpose, nor is he looking for love of gain, but rather submits to the Master's will, for this reason he fulfills the service befitting a prophet, he tries to teach, and very gently, saying that he was neither a prophet, nor indeed had become a prophet's son—that is certainly by discipleship, or rather by spirit, I mean, just as of course Elisha was of Elijah—but he was a goatherd, living a rustic and simple and harmless life, having very few things for food, and being content with things from the fields, which one would not even buy; and these were sycamore fruits. For the overseers of the flocks, being at leisure, run under the shades of the trees, and, as if making sport of the charges of idleness, they pinch off fruits and attend to the needs of the stomach, as best they can.

But he says that while I was engaged in these things, God, according to His good pleasure, made me a prophet, and commanded me to declare clearly to those of the blood of Israel the things that were coming upon them and would very soon be at hand. But you, opposing your own things to the commands from above, command silence. For this reason, then, "Thus says the Lord: Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city," it is clear that this means falling victim to the insults of the enemies, and the unchaste into the licentiousness of those having her, as if she endured it out of necessity; and the children will also be destroyed, having become the work of the sword. And in addition to this, your land will be measured with a line, that is, it will be under tribute, and will pay taxes to the one who has conquered it. But you, in addition to these things, who now think, he says, that you inhabit the holy land of Bethel, and have a king's sanctuary, you will go away a captive, and you will die in evils, not returning again; for how, or from where? having remained a corpse in a foreign and unclean land of the enemies; and Israel itself will also go away captive, the one who chose you as prophet and overseer of the holy things.

It is a grievous thing, then, to act against the divine commands, and to proceed inconsiderately to the point of sometimes even rebuking holy men who interpret the things that seem good to God, of whom it was also said by Him, "And it shall be that he who touches you is as he who "touches the apple of his eye. But observe how the one and admirable purpose for the saints, I mean the duty to serve the words of God without shrinking, and to consider human things as nothing, even if some bring wars and afflictions upon them. For the blessed Amos, completely disregarding the rudeness of Amaziah, not only did not keep silent, but indeed even made the denunciation against him vigorously; and the divine disciples, when

the scribes and Pharisees once commanded them to be silent, said plainly, ”Whether it is right in the sight ”of God to listen to you rather than to God, you judge; for we ”cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Thus the Lord showed me, and behold, a fowler’s basket. And He said, What do you see, Amos? And I said, A fowler’s basket. And the Lord said to me, The end has come upon my people Israel; I will not pass by them any more. And the panels of the temple will wail in that day, says the Lord; the fallen one is great in every place; I will cast down silence.

The word then proceeds again for the Prophet as if in a stream, and with those things once introduced having received sufficient narration for themselves, the order of the visions runs on to its proper purpose. Therefore he has seen the multitude of the Assyrians, like a morning brood of locusts, and with them Gog, that is, Sennacherib, depicted as in the form of a locust-larva, because the creature leaps strongly over much of the land. Such in a way is the boaster, always leaping up high, and refusing to dwell with the humble. And he has seen justice being called as in fire, and indeed also the adamant Israel placed in the midst by the one standing on the wall of adamant. Then what else? It was the fowler’s basket. And what I said in the beginning, I will now say again, that to the Prophet who was raised in a more rustic manner, God reveals mysteries through things that are especially done in the fields. For fowlers, and the things hunted by them, clearly birds, would not be more fitting for city men, but for those whose pursuit and purpose of life would be the fields and the things in them.

But that in every way and entirely they will be caught for slaughter, just as by the hand of those accustomed to fowling, the common herd together with the select race in Samaria, I mean that of the boasters and those who have practiced being carried on high like birds, the power of the visions has shown enigmatically. For what was seen was a fowler’s basket. Therefore the God of all says that the end has come upon my people Israel, and that their crimes would no longer be passed over; and that the temple itself, which had the golden calf in Bethel, will also be burned, he has revealed, saying that the panels of the temple will wail in that day. And he is accustomed to call the roof, or the things about it, ”panels,” skillfully and very well variegated by the arts of the carpenters, according to that in the Song of Songs, ”Our beams are cedars, our panels are cypresses. And he says the panels will wail; and not by emitting an articulate voice, but rather as in crashes and the creaks in being broken. And since there will be many, he says, the one who has fallen in every place, I will cast silence. For since every place has henceforth been brought to desolation, and has no inhabitants, there will be a great silence, that is to say, stillness, just as in the deserts and impassable lands.

Therefore the God of all will in no way be at a loss, if he should choose to chastise those who have sinned, but his manner of punishment will be manifold and various, and no one will withstand him as he inflicts punishments on the one who provokes him, yet he who shakes off the wrath by repentance will escape, turning for himself toward gentleness the Master who is good and compassionate.

Book 4

Hear this now, you who crush the poor man in the morning and oppress the needy from the land, who say, When will the month be over, that we may sell, and the sabbaths, that we may open the treasuries to make the measure small, and to make the weights great, and to make the balance unjust, to buy the needy for silver, and the humble for a pair of sandals, and we will trade from every kind of produce? One of the Pharisees once asked our Lord Jesus Christ which he considered the first and great commandment in the law, and he heard in reply that the first commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength; and the second, which is near it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And one might see the divine Paul himself having hung, so to speak, every kind of virtue from love, and having dared to say that it is greater than faith and hope, and having clearly confessed that he who does not have it is nothing, even if he should give his possessions to those in need, and even if he should deliver his own body to his persecutors to be burned. Therefore whatever is great and worthy of hearing in us will surely come from love for God and for our brothers.

But if anyone at all is carried outside the laws of love, and is seen to be without a share of its blossoms, he himself will be completely useless, and would reasonably be thought to be held fast in every kind of wickedness, since wherever the good is unpracticed, there surely wrongdoing will flourish. See, therefore, the arrangement of the whole argument. For having first accused Ephraim, that is, Israel, of godlessness, and having declared him a worshiper of heifers, and not having love for the one and true God, because he loved to be attached to the works of his own hands, he also proves him truly unholy toward his own brothers, and having completely neglected love for his neighbor. And he makes the charge generally and very clearly, and though still in brief, yet he enumerates the accusations. For this reason he says, Hear this, you who crush the poor man in the morning and oppress the needy from the land. It is as if he were to say, The word is to you, for whom it is a matter of great diligence to, as it were, wipe the weak and poor from the earth and to oppress them in the morning. For the lovers of godliness according to God, as the day dawns for them, offer thanksgivings to God, they worship, they pray, and they turn their efforts toward everything that is praiseworthy;

but those who look only to oppressing certain people, and who think that being on an equal footing is nothing compared to the need to be avaricious, make it their most diligent work to leap from bed as soon as dawn begins, and to proceed to their customary wickedness, and whom they might be able to defraud, almost even blaming the night for passing over them entirely and for delaying, because it does not grant a time sufficient for them for greed. These say, When will the month be over, that we may sell? This is the prayer of those who lend and of petty traders, of shameful and sordid men, who always thirst for the end of the month, so that by collecting little by little, they may make their own wares more substantial, and by impiously collecting interest upon interest they oppress the weaker, although the law clearly says, "If you lend money to your "neighbor, you shall not be an exactor to him, you shall not charge him "interest. But some say, When will the month be over, that we may trade? And others, held by the same or even worse sicknesses, and overcome by shameful gains, say again, When will the sabbaths be over, that we may open our treasures, to make the measure small and the shekel great, and to make the balance unjust?

And what this is, or of what sabbaths they seek the passing, so that they may open their treasures and make the measure small and enlarge the weights, it is necessary to say. For it is written in Deuteronomy, "Every seven years "you shall make a release, and this is the command of the release: "you shall release every private debt which your neighbor owes you, and "you shall not demand it of your brother, because a release has been proclaimed "to the Lord your God. You may exact it of a foreigner as much as you may "have with him; but of your brother you shall make a release of "your debt. And after other things again, "If there is among "you a poor man from one of your brothers in one of your cities in "the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden "your heart or shut your hand "from your brother who is in need; you shall surely open "your hands to him, and shall surely lend him as much as he needs "and according to what he lacks. And he gives further instruction, saying, "Take "care lest there be a wicked, secret thought in your heart, "saying, 'The seventh year, the year of "release, is near,' and your eye be evil against your needy "brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry "to the Lord against you, and it be a great sin for you.

Therefore, since the law has commanded the cancellation of debts, as it were, of sabbatical years; for it commanded it to be fulfilled in the seventh year; then, forewarning that one should not be wicked, but rather lend to those in need, even if the year of release does not seem far off, those who have many and abundant treasures, closing their hand, were eager to wait for the sabbaths of the years that were then at the gates, and then they would lend, so that the debt might not fall under the times of release. These say, When will the sabbaths be over? And it is clear that they mean those of the years; and we will open our treasures. And their impiety does not stop there, but uncharitably preying on the poverty of those who have fared wretchedly, they made their giving with small measures, but received in return with unequal weights, but with those even larger, and much heavier than the first, although God says through the all-wise Moses, "You shall not have in your bag "differing weights, a great and a small; you shall not have in your "house differing measures, a great and a small.

A true ”and just weight you shall have, and a true and just ”measure you shall have; that you may live long in the land which ”the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, because everyone ”who does this, everyone who does unjustly, is an abomination ”to the Lord your God.

But for them there is no regard for justice; but looking only to avarice, they wore out the poor, almost acquiring the wretched, and treating them like footwear; ”For the poor are the pasture of the rich,” according to what is written. But the writer of Proverbs helps us not a little, saying, ”Let the heart of a man devise just things, so that his steps may be directed by God. ”For the ways of a man are before the ”eyes of God, and He watches all his ”paths. Therefore, as God watches over and minutely examines each of our affairs, we should make straight the a necessary course for those who are truly good and prudent, and to esteem nothing above the equilibrium between love for God and love for brothers. And love for God possesses genuineness in faith, and incorruptibility; while love for brothers has kindled the glories of righteousness. For it is true that ”Love does no wrong to a neighbor. And I say that it is necessary for those who have chosen to be well-pleasing, and who live a most lawful life, to put on ”bowels of mercies,” to utterly disdain accursed avarice, and to set forth one’s possessions as common for those in need. For by so keeping the law of love, he will be both glorious and enviable in the sight of both God and men. For it is written that ”He has scattered, ”he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ”ever and ever.

The Lord swears against the pride of Jacob, Surely I will not forget any of your works forever. And for these things shall not the earth be troubled, and shall not everyone who dwells in it mourn? And destruction will come up like a river, and will go down like the river of Egypt. God brings a charge of arrogance against those of Jacob, for disregarding divine laws and completely ignoring the Master’s will, and for trampling on love for brothers itself. He swears, therefore, ’against the pride of Jacob.’ And we are not saying that the God of all makes the arrogance of some the object of his oath; rather, He swears against it, that is, decreeing its deserved punishment. And why does He swear at all? That he will no longer overlook their crimes, nor tolerate them to the end. For this, I think, is the meaning of ’forever’: that which runs to the very end and to a final completion. Then he says that since forgetfulness—I mean, concerning their unholy transgressions—is taken away, how would the earth not become full of tumult as enemies overrun it, and how would they not mourn, having to endure a terrible and inescapable calamity? And what calamity is this? For destruction, he says, will be brought up against them like the river of Egypt, covering everything, and with many and irresistible currents flooding the whole land of Samaria; and it will likewise go down, dragging away everything in its path and sparing absolutely nothing.

For Sennacherib came up against them with armies of myriads, like some river flooding the land and subjugating everything to himself; and he departed again to his own land, dragging with him a very great and countless number of captives. Therefore, whenever we despise God, we will find the hostile powers turned against us, so that we are in tumult and

grief, being plundered by them, as it were, and by necessity falling into servile bondage. For they will be against us like an irresistible flood, dragging us to ruin and sinking us into perdition. ”But rivers will not enclose us,” according to what is written, nor will ”the deep swallow us, nor could a storm sink us” who wish to please God. For then, yes then, having manfully escaped the greedy desires of the demons and having cared very little for their malice, we will say with joy: ”If it had not been that the Lord was with us, let Israel now say; if it had not been that the Lord was with us, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive; and again, ”Our soul passed through a torrent; then our soul passed through the irresistible water. For even if the water of diabolical insolence is irresistible and not to be withstood by our minds—that is, the flood which comes through the passions—yet in Christ we will have strength. For we shall pass through the assault of his perversity as through a kind of torrent.

And it shall be in that day, says the Lord God, that the sun shall set at noon, and the light shall be darkened upon the earth in the daytime; and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth upon every loin, and baldness upon every head; and I will make Jacob as a mourning for a beloved, and those with him as a day of pain. This passage brings forth a twofold meaning. For it is always the custom for the holy prophets at the very end of their own words to remember Christ, and to make the narrative of the mystery concerning him, still overshadowed by obscurities. Come then, looking at both, let us say what is fitting. We will first set forth what follows from what has been said, and then in this way we will adapt the meaning of what has been said to the explanation concerning Christ. On that very day, therefore, on which the consummation shall go over all the land of the Samaritans like a river of Egypt, a terrible and deep darkness will be scattered over all, so to speak, who dwell in it, the sun in a way setting, and this at midday. And we do not say, of course, that the light of the sun truly set, but the calamity from the war became like darkness to those dwelling in Samaria.

For great and excessive grief, when it arises, troubles the mind, and things that happen contrary to hope and unexpectedly darken the heart, and the harshness of sorrows works a kind of mist and fog in the hearts of the sufferers. Therefore they will see darkness, he says, even if the sun happens to be at midday. And those who formerly celebrated splendidly, always using strings and lyres and the sweeter parts of songs, will abstain from such pursuits, but will rather wail, and will make their study the odes for lamentation, and will take on the appearance of mourners, I mean both sackcloth and baldness. For to shave the head completely is very dishonorable. And indeed the divine Job shaved his hair when his children had perished. And I will make Jacob, he says, as a mourning for a beloved, that is, those who see him will be so sad over him, as if a mother or father over one beloved child lying dead; and those with him into a day of pain, that is, the neighboring Judah and Benjamin, who together with Ephraim had served idols, and were with him in this very way, so that they will be found having a day of pain, and being as in birth pangs; and by birth pangs I mean those from terrors and grief and toils. For after devastating Samaria, Sen-

nacherib captured all their cities. Then he sends Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, who threatened terrible things to those in the wall.

And he so crushed those in Jerusalem into despondency, that they expected to perish immediately along with those in Samaria. Then indeed, being very downhearted, King Hezekiah also sends someone to the prophet Isaiah, saying, ”This day is a day of affliction and reproach and rebuke and ”wrath, because the birth pang has come to the one giving birth, ”but she has no strength to bear. Therefore, by a day of pain he means the toils and downheartedness as from a birth pang. Therefore, those in Jerusalem were in a day of pain, expecting to perish, those who were with Ephraim, I mean, in the manner of idolatry. And these things I have said as being likely and fitting for those who at that time were provoking the Master of all against themselves. And one might apply them no less also to those who acted impiously against Emmanuel himself, at the time of the incarnation. For they are ”those who crush the poor in the ”morning,” that is, those who eagerly reject choosing to live lawfully, but proceed for no other reason, perhaps, than to destroy justice, and dare to hold as nothing what has been very well defined by the divine commandments, and to immoderately take advantage of whomever they might choose of the weaker. And they would be those ”who say, When will the month be over, that ”we may sell; and the sabbaths, that we may open the treasures ”to make the measure small and to make the weight great ”and to make the balance unjust.

For that the scribes and the Pharisees were very fond of money and greedy for dishonest gain, we might know in many ways, by applying our mind to the evangelical writings. For to be seen as superior to shameful gains, and to love to be free from all greed for gain that is according to God Christ advised the lovers of moderation, and urged them to go even further, and to assist those in need and to distribute their possessions. But what does the Evangelist say? ”But the scribes and the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard these things, and they scoffed at Him. Therefore it might also be said of them, ”The Lord swears by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget your works. For it is truly arrogance for them to disregard even the divine laws, and what is still more burdensome than this, to even insult Christ Himself. Therefore, their transgressions will not depart into oblivion; but a consummation, as it were, has come upon them, and the war of the Romans like a flooding river. Since they delivered the Lord of all to the cross, the sun set upon them, and the light was also darkened. For ”there was darkness from the sixth hour until the ninth hour. And this was a clear sign to the Jews that the souls of those who crucified Him were spiritually darkened. ”For a partial hardening has come upon Israel;

and as the divine Paul writes, ”To this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. And the blessed David also cursed them out of love for God, saying thus, ”Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever. That they have also mourned, transforming as it were their feasts into dejection, would be clear from Christ Himself saying to the women weeping for Him as He was being led away to the cross, ”Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For

they have mourned for the city and for the divine temple being destroyed along with it, and for the Romans burning everything. Therefore, he says, I will make him; and it is clear that he means Emmanuel; as mourning for a beloved one and those with him as a day of grief. For those who believed mourned for the crucified Jesus, and women wailing stood at a distance, both Mary Magdalene and again Mary the mother of James and certain other women with them; and creation itself mourned its own Master. For the sun was darkened, and the rocks were split, and the temple itself took on the appearance of mourners, with the curtain being torn "from top to bottom. And God signified something like this to us through the voice of Isaiah, saying, "And I will clothe the heaven with darkness, and make sackcloth its covering. Therefore the mourning for him was as for a beloved one.

And those with him, that is, the disciples, were set for a day of grief. For that they also mourned, how can one doubt? For the women announced the resurrection of Christ to them while they were in grief; then indeed, then, having barely recovered, they ran to the tomb. And perhaps somewhere to these women who were proclaiming the good news of the resurrection the prophet Isaiah says in spirit, "Women coming from a spectacle, come here; for it is not a people with understanding; that is, of the Jews; "therefore he who made them will not have pity on them, and he who formed them will not have mercy," he says. Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will send a famine on the earth, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. And waters shall be shaken even to the sea, and from the north to the east they shall run about seeking the word of the Lord, and they shall not find it. It is written, "Lord, in affliction we remembered you, in slight affliction was your discipline to us. And knowing that affliction is an excellent thing and truly beneficial, the divine David sometimes said, "In affliction I called upon the Lord," and at other times, "It is good for me that you have humbled me, that I might learn your statutes.

For afflictions make us more sober, and draw us out of the snares of indolence, persuading us to love the ways of moderation, and the harsh and intractable as if by necessity and fear to the ways of holiness and obedience enduring yokes. So when Samaria has been ravaged, he says, and the Babylonian is burning the cities, even if some should choose then to learn what the will of God is, and what they must do or say to obtain mercy from him, so that they might be carried out of wrath, there will be no one, he says, to teach them. For I will bring a famine of the words from God upon them, so that absolutely no prophet will be found, even if they should run from west to east, even if from south to north. Similar to this is what was said by God to the blessed Ezekiel, "And I will bind your tongue and you will be "made mute, and you will not be a man who reproves them, for it is a "rebellious house. For those who have once spurned the word from God, even if they still wanted to, could not reasonably receive it. And by "agitated waters" he means the immeasurable multitude of the Jews, as being in turmoil, and henceforth resembling the waves in the sea, which are scattered everywhere by the blasts of the winds. And in another way. When Christ was crucified, the wretched Jews have had a famine of the words from God.

For there is no longer among them a prophet, nor an accurate teacher of the Mosaic history who knows how to refine its density and to clarify the mysteries concealed in the letters. For they did not accept Christ saying, ”I am the bread of ”life, who came down from heaven and gives life to the ”world. And for this very reason they also heard him saying long ago through the voice of Isaiah, ”Behold, my servants will eat, ”but you will be hungry; behold, my servants will drink, but you ”will be thirsty. And indeed it is true that ”The Lord will never ”let a righteous soul starve, but he will overthrow the life of the wicked,” not sending down to them the divine word that turns the mind to the pursuit of virtue. For as the Savior himself has said, ”Man shall not live by bread alone, but ”by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst, those who swear by the propitiation of Samaria and those who say, As your god lives, O Dan, and as your god lives, O Beersheba, and they will fall and will never rise again. The word indeed has the sense that their sons and daughters will be carried off by enemies; for this is what the virgins and the young men signify, for we will find that those accustomed to carrying people into captivity especially took those of such an age.

But the word seems to indicate to us something else of the hidden meanings. There were certain virgins who dwelt in the precincts of the idols, and with them youths or prepubescent boys, through whom those more curious about sorcery thought to be taught things from the demons; for, as if invoking them upon undefiled bodies, they prepared them to give oracles with secret whisperings. And they say that even to this day some who wish to perform unholy rites prophesy in a manner similar to them. That therefore Israel will lack not only the word from God through holy prophets, which is useful and necessary for correction, but also the very word from the false prophets or demons, which they produced for some through virgins and boys, he implies by saying, In that day the beautiful virgins will faint. For it is as if he says, Your beautiful virgins will perish along with the others. And the word also mocks, along with the girls, the little boys who swear by the propitiation of Samaria. For it was perhaps a custom for them to love to make oaths by the gods in Samaria, that is, the heifers, and perhaps broadly mocking God, they ascribed his attributes to the carved images, saying, As your god lives, O Dan, and as your god lives, O Beersheba. These are cities of Judea, lying at the very extremities of the country, and as it were defining the measure of the land from south to the sea.

It is therefore as if those swearing were perchance saying, As the god of the land of the Jews lives, that is, the calf; for by the extremities the middle parts are included, and the designation of the whole is woven together. But he says that the virgins and the young men, no longer supplying the false words of demons, because they themselves also became the work of the hand of foreigners, either having fallen by the sword, or having endured the inglorious and unbearable captivity. But when Christ was crucified, and had set for the Jews, along with the sun in the cosmos and the perceptible light, and the intelligible radiance and illumination through the Spirit; for they are deprived of the divine word, and of the comfort from above; the virgins among them have failed, along with the young men, that is, the beautiful and well-reputed souls, of which the undefiled part is signified by the

virgin, while the strong and most valiant part is signified by the young man. For who is holy among them, since the law has power to perfect nothing, nor is it sufficient for them for righteousness? And with whom among them could spiritual robustness and a strong mind be found, when they have not known the splendid achievements of the evangelical way of life? For are not all of them sluggish and in sins and weakened in mind? Then how is this doubtful?

Therefore, they have fainted in thirst, but it was not said to them, ”Draw water with joy from the springs of salvation. But indeed also ”he commanded the clouds not to rain rain upon them,” because they have not been obedient to Christ himself who cried out and said, ”If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. But having forsaken him, although he is ”a fountain of life, they have dug broken cisterns which will not be able to hold water. for they have given heed to teachings, the commandments of men, which know not how to give drink unto life, nor indeed to hold together for salvation those who use them. I saw the Lord standing upon the altar and he said, Strike the altar and the gateways will be shaken, and cut into the heads of all; and their remnant I will kill with the sword. The blessed prophets, by the torch-bearing of the Spirit brightening the eye of the mind, receive not only the knowledge of things to come, but indeed at times also the sight of the events themselves, seeing them as if painted on a tablet, are both themselves amazed, and persuade their listeners to be affected along with them, earnestly striving to make clear the powers of the visions. Therefore the blessed Amos said, ”And the Lord said to me, The end has come upon my people Israel; I will no longer pass by them again. And the panels of the temple will wail in that day, says the Lord;

many are the fallen in every place; I will cast down silence. But behold, he has seen what was foretold being enacted in the events themselves, just as the prophecy holds. for he said he had seen the Lord himself standing by the altar, and as it were beginning the destruction, and commanding this very thing to happen. But God stands by the altar, not bestowing honor; for it is foolish to think this; since it is among the most absurd things to suppose and to say, that God bestows reverence and honor on the altars of idols; how then would he have honored the altar of the calves? But rather he stood by as one about to pull down and bring to the ground. For this very reason he has all but commanded the Prophet to begin the destruction, saying, Strike the altar, and let the gateways be shaken, he says, and let the temple henceforth be reeling, as being about to fall very soon indeed. And cut into the heads of all, that is, begin with the most prominent among them, and strike the leaders, who are also placed in the rank of a head to the others; and the remnant will perish mixed with them, and will follow the calamities of their leaders, they themselves also becoming the work of the sword.

And similar to this is that also through the voice of Ezekiel to the six men, who were coming from the gate that looks toward the north, and carrying their axes they followed the man girded with the long robe, to whom it was said by God, ”Go into the city after him, and cut down and do not spare and do not have pity; slay elder and young man and infants and

women to a wiping out, but upon all on whom ”is the sign, do not approach, and from my holy ones ”begin. Do you see how He made the leading men the first-fruits of His wrath, that is, those who seemed to be venerable and holy, perhaps because they were also kindled with the glory of the sacred ministry, or in other words, were distinguished by certain other honors? For such men are, as it were, the heads of the others. But this has also happened to those who have acted insolently toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

For since the wretched men, having cared little for the law and the prophets, did not receive Christ, who is the end of the law and the prophets, but, although knowing clearly that he is the heir, they cast him out of the vineyard, and finally crucified him, they have been given over to desolation to the Roman generals, and that famous temple has been burned, and the altar in it has been torn down, and the gates have been shaken down, and the leading men have perished along with the common people; for the war spared none of those among them. And each of the faithful, whether he be a temple of God, as having Him as an inhabitant, or whether he be considered an altar, as offering his own life as a sacred rite to God, if then he looks to indolence and provokes God, he will come to nothing, and will suffer a most terrible destruction. For the Lord is no respecter of persons, and ”The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver ”him in the day that he goes astray,” according to what is written. He that flees of them shall not escape, nor he that is being saved of them be delivered. Though they dig down to Hades, thence my hand shall drag them up; and though they ascend to heaven, thence will I bring them down. Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, thence I will search out and take them;

and though they sink from my eyes into the depths of the sea, there I will command the dragon, and it shall bite them; and though they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. In due time, perhaps, then, will be said to those who hear these things what is sung to God through the voice of the blessed David: ”Where shall I go from your Spirit? and ”from your presence where shall I flee? If I ascend into ”heaven, you are there; if I descend into Hades, you are present; if ”I take up my wings at dawn and dwell ”in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand ”shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me. For the divine is all-seeing, and in addition to this, also all-powerful, and no one could escape the unsleeping eye. For He said, ”I am a God at hand, and not a God afar off. Shall ”anything be hidden from me? But one could never go outside the calamity imposed on him as by divine commands, ”For who shall turn back the high hand? according to what is written. For what device will help us? Or what manner of help at all is there for us, when God decrees that we must suffer?

That counsel and thought and every kind of device, therefore, are completely useless to those who have fallen under divine wrath, He makes clear by saying that one could not escape, even if he were hidden in Hades itself. And the saying is hyperbolic: even if he should fly up to heaven, and pass through to the peak of Carmel, yet wherever he might go, he will be caught. And if he should be in the sea, he will fall in with the dragon, that is, according to

the Hebrew version, he will be given to the sea monster. And if he should be among enemies, and at last a captive, and wretchedly held in the yokes of slavery, even this, He says, will be a small thing, and not sufficient for his punishment. For the terror of the sword shall also be raised against him. And He will not cease, He says, the God of all, fixing His eye upon them. a sign of anger and threat. For at times we ourselves also fix our eyes on those who grieve us, looking at them with something fierce and unsmiling. But since God watches over both the good and the just, He clarifies the difference in His oversight, saying for evils and not for good. For he will look upon them, he says, not to bestow any good things, but so that they might have unshakable and, as it were, fixed the penalty and judgment determined for him.

The wretched multitude of the Jews has also endured this, having inscribed the righteous blood upon their own head; for they said to Pilate, persuading him to crucify Christ, ”His blood be on us and on our children. Therefore they perished with their entire households, and their cities were seized along with the men, so that perhaps no one was strong enough to escape. For what and how many things they have suffered, the lengthy writings of those who have composed such things sing. And the Lord, the Lord God Almighty, who touches the earth and makes it shake; and all who dwell in it shall mourn, and its end shall rise up like a river, and shall go down like the river of Egypt. Out of love, the Prophet does not allow his hearers to disbelieve what is said, as if it would not happen. This was to persuade them to choose to learn better things, and to hold what is useful in reverence, so that God might cease from His anger and draw back the calamity, and might receive them when they repented. For He always pities those willing to turn back. He teaches, therefore, that God is all-powerful, and not unable to bring to fulfillment what He has said. For he says, ”The Lord, the Lord God Almighty, who touches the earth and makes it shake. It is as if he were to say, ”Do not think that the one who has been grieved is like you.

For the Master is not as a man, but is Himself the Lord of hosts, who lays his own hand upon the earth—that of the Samaritans, clearly—and makes it shake; and not at all preparing it to endure the usual tremor, but shaking it all with war and incurable calamities and causing it to be convulsed. For this reason he says, ”Every one who dwells in it will mourn, and the end will rise up like the river of Egypt, covering and submerging everything; and so it will recede again, in the same way drawing everything down and carrying it away. And we said that he likens Sennacherib and the multitude of the Assyrians and the war raised by them against Samaria to the streams of rivers. Therefore, for those who offend and grieve God, escape will be impossible, and the smiting hand all-powerful and hard to escape, and for those once caught there would be no help or comfort; ”For if He shuts a man in, who can open? as it is written. But it is surely far better to put away anger by returning to what seems good and pleasing to Him. This would happen, and very rightly, if, forgetting what is behind and rejecting what is base, we were to make ourselves resplendent with progress in virtue. For then we shall swim through the things that come from wrath, and we shall easily change the Creator, who is good by nature, I say, to the point of deeming us worthy of a kind and most gentle oversight.

Who builds his ascent into heaven, and establishes his decree upon the earth; who calls for the water of the sea, and pours it out on the face of the earth; the Lord God Almighty is his name. And with yet more words he terrifies those who depart from God, and drives them toward what is better, skillfully explaining the preeminence and omnipotence of the divine nature, and he tries to convince them that He will in every way and in all circumstances bring His words to pass, with nothing standing in the way. ”For the one who touches the earth,” he says, ”and makes it shake,” in the ways just now rendered by us; this is the very one ”who builds His ascent into heaven; he almost says, ”The one who has all authority, so as to walk upon the heavens themselves and to possess dominion over all, so as to have the creation above and in the heavens laid under Him, that is, the blessed multitude of the holy angels. And we say the ”heavens” are the angels who dwell in heaven. But it should be known that the divine Jacob also enigmatically the matter he has seen. For there was a ladder extending from earth up to heaven, and ”The Lord,” he says, ”was set up on it,” while he saw the angels ascend- ing and descending by it he saw the an- gels. This, I think, is ”He who builds His ascent in heaven.

But also whatever He may promise to those on the earth, he says, this is altogether unshaken and firm and as if founded. For in no way will the Lord of hosts grow weak, nor will a word from him fall through. And the Savior confirms us in this, saying, ”Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. This is He who draws up the water of the sea by ineffable powers, and rains it upon the earth, that is again, He who orders human affairs, and is so powerful as to easily transform the natures of created things to whatever He may choose, and His name is the Lord God, and in addition to this, the Almighty. And this is not to be thought of as a mere name, as it might be in the case of a man, but as one rightly found from truth itself. For from His ruling essentially, and holding power over all things, He has been so named by us and by the holy angels. The purpose, therefore, of the Prophet is through as many means as possible, and in whatever way he could, to strike terror into the deceived, and to persuade them well to go back quickly, as it were, to consider righteousness a splendid thing, and to make piety towards God desirable again, powerfully checking the inclination towards what is more shameful by the terrors of the things to come.

And this, I think, is what was rightly said through the voice of David to the Lord of all: ”With bit and bridle curb the jaws of those who do not come near you. But ”He who builds His ascent in heaven” might also be said of Christ, and very fittingly. For He is from above and from heaven, because He was begotten God from God according to nature; therefore He also said, ”I am from above. And the wise John has also testified concerning Him, saying, ”He who comes from above is above all; but having essentially the ascent to the heavens—for it belonged to Him, as I said, as God—He has shown it to be accessible to those on the earth. For as ”a forerunner on our behalf” He ascended to the Father, and as the divine Paul writes, ”He consecrated for us a new and living way; He appeared as a man ”for us in the presence of God” the Father, who also ”raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places. For since Christ ascended, He has built His own ascent for us also, if indeed the blessed Paul is truthful in saying, ”For this we say to you by the word of the

Lord, that we who are alive and re- maining until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remaining shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. He ascended, therefore, as a man, so that the ascent which belongs to Him and Him alone—because He is God and from God—He might also show to be accessible for us who have be- lieved. He also establishes His own promise on the earth. For He has in no way been proven false, but rather will bring to accomplishment whatever He has promised to achieve for us. For He said, ”It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but when I depart, I will send Him to you. Therefore He also commanded the holy apostles ”not to de- ”part from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father which” they had heard from Him. But He poured out the grace richly upon them. Therefore they also became ”witnesses of his glory both in Jerusalem and in Judea,” and in all the earth. And in another way we will find His promise established; for we have believed that He will also raise us from the dead, and will make us superior to corruption, and ”He will transform the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory,” and he will receive them as participants in his own kingdom.

He it is who calls the water of the sea and pours it out on the face of the earth, that is, the one who transforms the bitter and unacceptable and things unfit for use into something beneficial. ”For the letter,” the legal one, ”kills,” as the most wise Paul says, and the shadow is in itself unprofitable, but it has become most useful to us who understand, for the comprehension that is in Christ, and it has been shown to be like a spiritual rain, watering in a way the earth under heaven; if indeed it is true that the law, once bitter and unbearable to the ancients, has become for us a tutor unto the mystery of Christ, so that we can also bear fruit in him, refining the thickness of the shadow into truth. Therefore we shall take what has been said as an example, bringing forth as proof also the water of Marah, that although it was bitter, it was sweetened, God having shown a piece of wood to the blessed Moses, and having commanded him to cast it into the waters. But the wood was an image and type of the precious cross, through which the law became sweet, and as it were, most drinkable, although the history holds bitterness; ”For, as I said, ’the letter kills,’” or rather as the wise Paul has written to us. Are you not as sons of Ethiopians to me, O sons of Israel? says the Lord;

Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Cappadocia, and the Syrians from a pit? behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Those of Israel, always raising a high brow, continually recounting up and down the nobility of their fathers, and greatly stretching out their tongue, would say, ”We have Abraham as our father. But they heard Christ saying to them, ”If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. ”For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel, nor because they are the seed of Abraham, are

they all children. But the likeness of works and the ability to boast splendidly in the glories of the fathers justly bestows this. And they were arrogant towards all other nations, saying this also, that God made them chosen out of all the nations, and delivered them from the land of the Egyptians, and transferred them to the land of promise. And the statement is indeed true. But they who especially ought to have pleased the one who honored them with fitting returns, being outrageously insolent with complete apostasies and deviations into wickedness, were found to be so in many ways.

And so the wretches have now come to this point of madness, as to think that for their well-being and for glory it would suffice them to be from the root of Abraham, and that they were transferred from the land of the Egyptians into the land of promise. Therefore, so that they might know that such boasts as these would be of no benefit to them, who have fallen into indolence and do not wish to be pious, he necessarily says, I will not consider you thus, even if you should happen to have nobility from your fathers, just as, of course, the sons of the Ethiopians, who do not have Abraham as their root? For the divine is impartial and completely without respect of persons, and it knows no carnal nobility devoid of good deeds; indeed it deems spiritual nobility worthy of all reverence, which would be attended by the love of being resplendent through brilliant achievements. But that also seems to you to be something great and exceptional, to have moved from Egypt to another land. Then what of this? he says, or what benefit will it bring you? Others also have this, having received it from me. For I transferred the Philistines, that is, the Palestinians; for so the Hebrews have interpreted; from Cappadocia; and the Syrians, that is, all those under the kingdom of Damascus at that time, I led from a pit.

But it must be known that instead of 'from a pit' the Hebrews have published, 'of Cyrene.' Therefore the Palestinians have become colonists of the Cappadocians, and the Syrians of the Cyrenaeans. But he called it a pit Cyrene, although very elevated and situated on high, because it lies as if in a deep bay. For all the land of the Libyans, so to speak, has maritime bays, jutting out. Therefore, for me, he says, who looks upon all equally, the purpose is to cut off every kingdom of sinners from the earth. Therefore, fleshly splendor would not profit those who possess it. For nobility before God is judged to be a good character, one that has striven much for the pursuit of virtue, and has practiced contending with the pieties of one's ancestors. But I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says the Lord. For behold, I give the command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, as one sifts with a sieve, and not a pebble shall fall to the ground; all the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, those who say, 'The evils shall not draw near or come upon us. The remnant has again been preserved for Israel "for the sake of the fathers. For they will not endure complete destruction, he says, nor indeed will the race of Jacob be utterly wiped out. But as if scattered by a sieve, he says, they will be scattered among all the nations.

but not a pebble shall fall to the ground, that is, the race of Jacob will not fall in such a way as to arrive at complete ruin, but will be saved in the part that has received mercy; for some were then brought back from captivity; and it has also been saved through Christ; for

not a few in number from the Jews have believed; and the remnant will also be saved in the last times, after the flock of the nations has been called in first. Then, as if someone were saying, If Jacob is saved again, against whom are the threats? he usefully answers, and says, that the wrath will not be indiscriminate against all without distinction, nor will the effects of anger be indifferent, but will rather fall upon those who have sinned unbearably. This is the meaning of, By the sword shall all the sinners of my people die, who say, 'The evils shall not draw near or come upon us. For some came to such a point of madness as to think that the holy prophets were speaking falsely, and indeed they were saying that none of the things foretold would happen. And the wise Jeremiah will also testify to this, saying to God, "Behold, these say to me, 'Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come.'" Therefore, the sin of those so disposed was twofold: for they provoked in many ways, and they also thought that the truth was speaking falsely.

And we shall find that at the time of the visitation the teachers of the Jews did not heed the words of our Savior. Therefore they also heard, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves do not enter, and you do not allow those who are entering to go in; and again, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Therefore, they were justly not counted as children, and having slipped from the nobility of their fathers, they were enrolled as if among the sons of the Ethiopians; and they have also been consumed by the sword, and for their own ill counsel they have paid penalties equal to the judgment. In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that has fallen and rebuild its ruins, and its demolished parts I will raise up and I will rebuild it as in the days of old; that the remnant of men may seek out [the Lord], and all the nations upon whom my name has been called, says the Lord who does these things. He promised, saying that he would not utterly destroy the race of Jacob, but even if they were scattered in a way by a sieve; for they will become both strangers and sojourners, driven from their fatherland and homes, inhabiting a barbarian and foreign land;

but they would not be completely crushed, nor indeed will they go away to complete destruction. For this reason he says that he will also raise up the tabernacle of David, although it has fallen, and he will raise up its ruins, as in the days of old, that is, for many days. He says that this will be a sign and an assurance to the other nations, both those near and those far away, that it is necessary henceforth to turn to God and choose to seek him, having marveled in some way at the greatness of both the gentleness of God and his strength. Therefore, if he should say the tabernacle of David, he signifies the race of the Jews, that is, the house of Jacob. But it must be known that when Cyrus released them from captivity, they then returned to Judea, and rebuilt the temple, and having fortified the deserted cities and repaired the houses in them, they have dwelt securely, although having endured wars from certain ones, such as Antiochus, I say, and Hadrian, they have not become captives again, nor indeed have they been laid waste, as they were by the Babylonians. So then, the historical account is in these things; but the inner and truer one would be in Christ.

For when he rose from the dead, God the Father having raised his tabernacle that had fallen into death, that is, his flesh from the earth, then indeed then all human things were restored to their ancient form, and all our ruined things have been brought to a new appearance. ”For if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation,” according to the scriptures; for we have been raised with him. And death indeed tore down the tabernacles of all, but God the Father rebuilt them in Christ; and this will not be for us for a measured time, but for the days of eternity; for the good of incorruptibility in us is imperishable, and death will no longer have dominion over those saved in Christ. Then indeed then the remnant of men after those who believed from Israel have known the God who is by nature and in truth, having departed from that ancient and profane error. For it was not possible to prove Christ false when he said ”Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. And again, ”When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself. On that very day, therefore, on which I will raise up the torn down and fallen tabernacle of David, all the nations will be called, and my name will be upon them.

And that the things foretold will in every way and entirely come to pass, he has fully assured by adding, Says the Lord God who does these things. For if he is truly the Lord God, he will in every way and entirely do these things also, being weak in nothing. For he does ”Great and unsearchable things, glorious and wonderful, of which there is no number. Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, and the plowing will overtake the vintage, and the grape will ripen with the seed, and the mountains will drip sweetness, and all the hills will be planted; and I will restore the captivity of my people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and dwell in them, and they will plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they will plant gardens and eat their fruit. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up from their land which I have given them, says the Lord God Almighty. He has clearly interpreted the very thing I was saying.

And if someone should choose to make the narrative coarse and historical, he will say that again, that the return is clearly promised to those who have endured the captivity, and that they will possess their own land, having rebuilt cities and houses, and, being henceforth in a good state of prosperity, they will gather the good things from the fields, and will apply themselves to farming with gladness and joy, so that their labor in the harvests of the sweetest things becomes continuous, with the goods from the threshing floor coinciding with their vintage, and the vintage, in turn, extending again to the time of sowing, so that the farmer passes from the winepress and sickle and grape clusters to the plowlands of the plains, and having washed off the dust of the threshing floor, to take up the cares of the winepresses. But if we should wish to approach the contemplation of the things set before us in a more subtle and spiritual way, it would be fitting to reasonably think that. For since, as I said, Christ came back to life; for the Father raised the tent of David, and rebuilt its ruins, a great and abundant participation in spiritual goods has come upon all people, both Greeks and Jews; ”For God is one, who has justified the circumcision by ”faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. Therefore, a very great supply of spiritual fruits is given to those who have believed, which is very well signified through earthly fruits.

For there will be, it says, an abundance of grain and wine. But we will now accept the grain for strength, clearly spiritual strength; for it is written that ”And bread strengthens a man’s heart,” but in some way entirely spiritual and divine and from above; and the wine for gladness; for again it said, ”And wine gladdens ”a man’s heart; and we ”rejoice in hope,” according to the voice of the blessed Paul. And the mountains drip sweetness. Therefore, the mountains, as it seems, here he calls the churches of Christ, on account of the loftiness of the doctrines in them, and the excellence of their piety towards God, and because the mountains appear to be covered with various plants, while the churches of Christ have countless heads of saints, like cedars and the tallest trees, which are established by the outlets of spiritual waters. But just as in the most wooded of mountains, swarms of bees flying about produce the sweet and precious honey; so again also in the churches, those who are more distinguished than others and more mature in virtue and understanding, collecting the sweet honey of the teaching about Christ, practically make it drip even into the hearts of others. Therefore, the mountains will drip sweetness in this way, I think. And he said the hills will be planted together. But hills are like those who are second and have less in virtue than those who are exceedingly distinguished in it.

For there are measures of holiness and righteousness in the churches, and as Paul says, ”According to the grace given to each” by God who distributes such things. Therefore, these also will be planted together, he says, that is, flourishing and fruitful, and bearing a mind richly covered with the orthodoxy of divine doctrines. And that the God of all has restored our captivity, no one would doubt. For Christ proclaimed ”release to the captives,” and He rescued from the greed of the devil the whole world under heaven. Then indeed, then, like farmers, we became caretakers of all the spiritual fruitfulness, we planted gardens and vineyards, and we shall eat their fruit. For we shall receive the rewards for our labors, and we shall also gather the fruits of equity. And that we shall have an unshakable dwelling with God, and that no one could cast out those who are in the lots once given by him, he will make clear by saying, ”I will plant them upon their land which I have given them, says the Lord God. ”For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable,” and we will be established in every good thing, having Christ himself as our leader and festival-president; through whom and with whom to God the Father be the glory and the power with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Of Our Father Among the Saints Cyril on the Prophet Habakkuk

Book 1

It has been arranged for us very wisely and skillfully and of the proposed prophecy's manner, yet we will find it full of a holy economy; for it is fitting for the saints themselves to exclaim and say, "It is not you "who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks "in you. But those who wish to understand need no small intelligence; since one might perceive the purpose of the prophecy laboring with a twofold contemplation within itself, both spiritual and historical at the same time; I will narrate beforehand usefully, and having brought together as in brief, the parts of the prophecy, and I will say for what purpose it was made. For thus the meaning would come to the readers with ease, and will find nothing arduous. Since Israel, then, was not moderately vexed at what was foretold through the prophets; for they knew, they knew, that at times it would be captive, and would fall into the hands of enemies, and lie under the yoke of unaccustomed slavery; this blessed Habakkuk tries to teach that by a just decree of God who rules all things, such things would happen to them at times, and for reasonable causes. For having prized a lawless and most outlandish life, and having inclined towards every falsehood, they did not cease sharpening the undefiled mind against themselves, until their affairs finally descended to this misery.

And this he makes clear, making a condemnation of those who chose to live unholily, and placing this matter as a kind of prelude and hypothesis for the whole prophecy, then having brought in God threatening the despisers with the attack of the Babylonians. And since it was necessary for him not only to appear as a foreteller of grim things and of those which are most accustomed to cause grief, and to come into the midst, and to proclaim beforehand the most shameful of evils that would at times befall them, but also to narrate beforehand usefully something of the things that lead to a cure, and to utter beforehand the things through which it was likely that the sufferers would find respite; he cried out against the cruelty of the Babylonians themselves, and calls despisers those who burned down the divine temple itself, and sacked the holy city, and had no regard for the sacred vessels. "For why," he says, "do you look upon those who despise, will you be silent "when the wicked swallows up the righteous man? Then he adds also very clearly the capture of Babylon itself, and the redemption from unaccustomed slavery of those who had suffered, through Cyrus at the

appointed times. And from the partial redemption he passes to the the discourse cleverly on the universal and most general, that is, that which has come about through Christ for all those redeemed through faith, and laying a- side the yoke of sin, and escaping a bitter and savage master, Satan.

You have in these things the purpose of the whole prophecy for us collected as if in brief; and we will speak, treating each point in turn as is possible. The oracle which Habakkuk the Prophet saw. By ”oracle” he means in this the reception of the vision, or of foreknowledge, which one might take, God giving it; for he multiplied visions according to what is written, and he has spo- ken to prophets, revealing to them beforehand through the Holy Spirit the things that will be, and placing them almost as if already present and in sight. that they are not known to speak from their own hearts, but rather convey to us the words from God, he clearly persuades, by nam- ing himself a Prophet and showing himself full of the grace for this. How long, O Lord, shall I cry out, and you will not hear? I will cry out to you being wronged, and you will not save? The Prophet indeed assumes the per- son of one who is defrauded, and who endures unbearable insolence and drunken violence from those accustom- ed to do wrong; and very skillfully he testifies to God’s love for humanity which is beyond description. For he shows Him as being very patient, although He is accustomed to hating the wicked.

and that he does not immediately inflict punishments on those who stumble, he has shown clearly, say- ing that He has come to such a point of silence and long-suffering as to require henceforth even an outcry, as some are no longer making their greed against others bearable, but as it were are letting loose unbri- dled insolence upon the weaker. For through the things by which he cries out against God’s patience, by these very things he testifies to God’s love for humanity which is beyond measure. For ”how long,” he says, ”O Lord, shall I cry out, and you will not hear? I will cry out to you being wronged, and you will not save? although threatening very many and bitter punishments for those who wish to transgress. Why have you shown me toils and labors to look upon, misery and impiety? From this you might learn the hatred of evil of the saints; for they call the labors of others their own. For this reason also the most- wise Paul says, ”Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who ”is made to stumble, and I do not burn? and He has commanded us ourselves to ”weep with those who weep,” showing that compassion and love for one another are most befitting of saints; But he says that God showed him toils and labors; clearly, of those who are transgress- ing;

and the impiety of those accustomed to do wrong, not as if He him- self had prepared this suffering for him, but as one who has been long-suffering with those who have done these things and for so long a time, that is, as one who could have removed him from life, so that he would not be a spectator of such extremely monstrous things. But it is a custom for the saints in such bitter discouragements to seek to depart, just as indeed the blessed Jonah [says], ”And now, Lord, take, he says, ”my soul from me, for it is better for me to die than ”to live; and the most wise Paul also writes that ”It is far better ”to depart and be with Christ. For the laying aside of labors for those who wish to live holily is to be freed at last from

the affairs in this world, and to be released, as it were, from the dreadful care of this place. Judgment has come to be against me, and the judge accepts [bribes]; because of this the law is scattered, and judgment is not carried out to the end, because the impious man oppresses the just, for this reason judgment will go forth perverted.

That nothing of his own persuades him to be discouraged, but rather he is distressed as a saint and a lover of justice seeing those who disregard the divine commandment, not just any random people, but those who are resplendent with the highest honors, and who are set o- ver the peoples, and who are appointed to the dignity of judges he shows clearly, saying that the votes for righteousness have been subverted, although the law has clearly forbidden, "You shall not show "partiality in judgment, for the judgment is God's. Therefore, to judge is a great thing, and a wise and incorruptible man would become an imitator of the divine pre-eminence and glory a judge, and not enduring to pervert the vote of the just; but exceedingly insolent, and the bribe-taker comes against the divine dignities themselves, since he indeed defaces the beauty of truth, and has practiced perverting what is right, saying "evil is good and good is evil," and impiously reckoning "darkness for light, and light for darkness. Therefore, the Prophet reveals that in this one most excellent and exceedingly renowned commandment, the whole law is immediately trampled. For he who has erred concerning the most important part of what is fitting, how could he be secure concerning the greater? And the Prophet has brought himself in as a witness and spectator of the greed.

But since he says that judging rightly is neglected, for this reason the law is weak, and the correctness of judgments is not carried out according to what seems good to you, O Lord, and the impious man oppresses the just. This is an accusation against the Synagogue of the Jews, and it has been brought by God through the voice of other prophets. For he said that "Her leaders judged for bribes; and again to her through the voice of Isaiah, "Your silver is dross, your wine merchants mix wine with water, your rulers are disobedient, companions of thieves, loving gifts, pursuing rewards, not judging orphans, and not attending to the judgment of the widow. And now the Prophet Habakkuk seems to want to fulfill that which is in the book of Proverbs, "What your eyes have seen, speak; and he further demonstrates that he made a most reasonable outcry against the serenity inherent in God, who is long-suffering in such a way as befits him; for God is good; except insofar as it came to the human mind that his long-suffering was beyond all measure. And against Christ the judgment has gone forth perverted, and the law has been scattered. For him whom it was better to honor as God, and for this reason a wonder-worker, the leaders of the Jews did not cease slandering, and setting everything in motion with their own foul mouths, there is nothing absurd which they have not dared to say against him;

so that at one time they thought he cast out demons by Beelzebul, and at another they called him a winebibber and demon-possessed. Then, when it was necessary to name him Savior and Redeemer of all, they impiously killed him, the wretched ones having brought forth a perverse verdict against him, although the law clearly stated, "You shall not kill the innocent and the just. And Christ also accused them in another way, as not enduring to

think right and just things, but being silent, and as it were closing the eye of their mind to what Moses might say, although he broke the law concerning the sabbath; but leaping up, and very bitterly, at the god-befitting things he himself would do on the sabbath; for he spoke thus: "I have done one work, and you all marvel. For this reason Moses gave you circumcision, not that it is from Moses, but that it is from the fathers, and on the sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I made a whole man well on the sabbath? Do not judge by appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. Behold, you scoffers, and look, and wonder marvelously, and perish; for I am doing a work in your days that you will not believe, if anyone should declare it to you.

When the Prophet had cried out against the greed of the lawless, and almost accused the delay of the long-suffering towards them; for a just and virtue-loving soul is a thing that hates evil; to those who are accustomed to scoff, the God of all then proclaims to see and to look and to deem worthy of wonder all such things as ought to be wondered at. And these were the things that were somehow impending, and about to happen almost immediately, and having a dreadful attack and a hated assault, which indeed he has usefully commanded them to look up at beforehand, not being unable to destroy those against whom it might appear to be coming; but wonderful that they are also unexpected, and beyond hope and hard to bear and, because of their extreme terribleness, apt to strike with terror, and perhaps somewhere even disbelieved. For somehow evils of great magnitude are always very near to having to be disbelieved, especially if they are seen happening to those who had in no way hoped to suffer.

For who would ever have thought that the beloved Israel, the firstborn among children, for whose sake Egypt perished, and countless nations have fallen, of Canaanites and Amorites, Hivites and Perizzites and Jebusites, would arrive at this point of misery, so that their whole country would be driven out, and they would endure an inglorious and unbearable slavery, wandering in a foreign land after the attacks of the war, for which every word is insufficient, if one should wish to explain each thing clearly? For there have been arsons and murders, and the dragging of women, and the dashing of infants against the ground, and as the prophet Jeremiah says, "The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children. And the holy places themselves have been sacked, and by the captors, who had come to the very height of wickedness, nothing was left unattempted. Therefore, they are unbelievable and, as it were, unpersuasive for narration on account of the extreme cruelty of those who committed them. For this reason he says that in their days he will do a work which they will not believe, if anyone should happen to relate it to them. And by saying "in your days," he allows it to be understood that not a long time will gallop past in between; but that the war is, as it were, at the door and immediate and near, and the judgment is not far off.

For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, the warriors, the swift and bitter nation, which goes upon the breadth of the earth, to take possession of dwellings not its own. What the

thing disbelieved is, if the story should be told, he shows immediately. For he threatened to bring upon them the Babylonians, the most warlike and savage race, and one in no way yielding to untamed beasts in cruelty, and always condemned for its unbridled madnesses; and he called it swift, for they are for the most part horsemen; and bitter because it is sharp and very difficult and not unskillful in tactics, having practiced generalship excellently. And strength running together with intelligence for the needs of war would, I think, most easily achieve what seems best to those warring, and will easily overcome those who are eager to resist. But since it was the custom of the Babylonians neither to always stay at home, nor indeed to ward off the attacks of those coming against them by defending themselves, but to spread out as if over all the earth, and to ravage the lands of others, and to be fond of always making their inheritance things which in no way belong to them, he says necessarily "the nation which goes upon the breadth of the earth, to take possession of dwellings not its own. For, as I said, it is fond of raging against the lands of others, and of always extending its own dominion.

And the Jews, having killed the Lord, have suffered something of this kind; for although it was possible to inhabit their own land freely, with no one oppressing them, they have been given over to their conquerors, and have come under tribute and taxes, and have been placed under the scepters of those who are always expanding and have conquered all under heaven. For shaking off for themselves being ruled by Christ, they said expressly, "We have no king but Caesar. But it must be known that the soul of a man also, if it should treat the divine laws as nothing, will be under bitter tyrants, the unclean demons, and will serve wicked powers, which are always thirsting to inherit dwellings that are not their own; For man belongs to God; for He dwells in holy ones, and lodges in the souls of the pious. He is terrible and renowned; from himself his judgment shall be, and his dignity shall go forth from himself. The discourse passes to the leader of the nation, that is, to the tyrant of the Babylonians, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar, who took Judea, and having burned down the divine temple itself, carried away Judah as a captive into his own lands. Therefore, he says that he is terrible on account of his cruelty and lack of restraint in anger and his untamed mind and his harshness in judgments, but renowned again, as ambitious and boastful and an insatiable lover of glory; for those who have reigned in Babylon are always boastful and exceedingly ambitious.

But since they themselves were the source of every counsel, yes, and of undertakings, commanding that what seemed good to them should simply be carried out by their subjects, for this reason he says, From him his judgment shall be; that is, he goes with self-willed impulses toward what moves him, and from excessive haughtiness would not tolerate the opinion of others, even if he did not command something that was possible to be done. For the counsels of the Persians are arrogant. But since it was again their custom to divine beforehand concerning battles, and to try to learn in advance by the art of magic where the matter at hand would end, he said again, that his oracle shall go forth from himself. And he calls the oracle a *lēmma*. For he will not summon those who know divination from other nations or lands, he says; but rather has them living with him, always lying and knowing

nothing of the truth, except that they are always somehow stirring him up and are accustomed to proclaiming in advance that he will be victorious. And the rule of the Babylonians was exceedingly proud of this. And indeed Balak the king of the Moabites, when he planned to curse those of Israel and sought knowledge of the future, had Balaam summoned from Mesopotamia. For he thought that the magi of the Babylonians were clever and precise, and most mighty to accomplish anything whatsoever through the art of magic.

But let us also receive, if you please, the interpretation of the text at hand in another way. For having defined the tyrant of the Babylonians, and having said that he is terrible and illustrious, he immediately added, From him his judgment shall be, and his oracle shall go forth from himself. And it will be possible to understand something like this. For God, the Master of all things, planned to punish Israel, which had chosen to live shamefully and wickedly. This judgment upon it, therefore, will come from him, he says, the Babylonian. It is similar to if he were to say, He will be a vessel of my wrath, and through him I will punish you, and the oracle concerning you, that is, whatever deliberation and will I might take up, will go forth from him again, that is, it will be accomplished; for he will bring to completion the things from my counsel and deliberation. And his horses will leap more than leopards, and will be swifter than the wolves of Arabia; and his horsemen will ride forth and will rush from afar, and they will fly like an eagle eager to eat. He strikes them again with exaggerations of the terrors, and tries to teach that the multitude of the enemies is terrible and unbreakable; and he drives them to repentance and to the need to learn the things which it was better for them to be seen to have accomplished.

That the Babylonians, therefore, are very light-footed for running, all-daring and bold, and differing in nothing from wild beasts, and as it were swooping down on those who can be caught, he again intimates, comparing the horses to leopards; for the leopard is very good at leaping, and very agile in being able to pounce on those it pursues; and them to the wolves of Arabia, which they say are indeed wilder than all others, and dart with a swift run, making an assault on whomever they might choose; and he says they are not only like wolves, but also like eagles that run down upon dead bodies without delay and swoop down, as I said. And the mind of the Jews has become easy to capture and their heart, as it were, trampled by horses, that is, easily overrun, both by the passions of the flesh, and by the unclean spirits themselves, and in addition to these, by the most powerful attacks of the Romans. For they have stumbled against him who says, ”And I will be to them,” says the Lord, ”a wall of fire round about, and I will be for glory in the midst of her. But I think every mind deprived of strength from above is easy to capture and completely easy to overturn; for all our strength and safety is from God; for in him we shall also ”do valiantly, and he will bring to nothing those who afflict us,” according to what is written.

Destruction will come upon the ungodly, who have resisted in opposition to their faces. This indeed is the end and crown of the evils that were foretold. For he says the Chaldeans will come, and they will be of such a kind, and they will do this, and they will add that, and the result of these things, is that the impious will be destroyed utterly and with their whole

household, along with the cities and villages themselves, with God pitying them in no way, but giving up to desolation, as it were, those who had impiously resisted His commands, and meeting Him face to face, as it were, and openly rising up against and clearly opposing what God might wish as His own will. The Synagogue of the Jews has also been brought to an end in this way, thinking things contrary to Christ, and fighting against the Lord's doctrines and for this very reason unreservedly and shamelessly raising its face against Him, and doing and saying, so to speak, the most monstrous of all evils, and indeed nailing Him to the wood, and slandering the resurrection. For not only did they kill the Savior and Redeemer of all, but they also gave money to Pilate's soldiers, after Christ had been raised, so that they might say that He by no means came back to life, but rather the disciples stole Him secretly. And he will gather captives like sand;

and he will revel among kings, and tyrants will be his playthings, and he will mock at every fortress, and he will cast up a mound and take it. Although the holy prophets had proclaimed up and down to the people of the Jews the things that would happen to them, and were almost charming them with such evils, they themselves slipped into such ignorance and unholy thoughts, that they were inflamed with boldness and anger, raising a high brow, and sometimes they thought they would very easily overcome their enemies by their own multitude; and at other times, gathering the surrounding kingdoms for aid, they were confident that the attackers would perhaps concede victory to them even without a fight. But having grown negligent of their ancestral customs, they no longer sought aid from God and from above, but collecting, as I said, that of the neighboring nations, sometimes that of the Egyptians, sometimes that of the Syrians, yes, and that of the Tyrians, they based their hope on unshakable prosperities, and they continued to be delicate and cheerful. That therefore such a thought of theirs is exceedingly vain, and the outcome of their affairs will not proceed in this way, he explains again.

For when the Babylonian comes, he says, even if he should find the race of Israel equal in number to the sands, he will nevertheless be brought back home again, holding the inhabitants of Judea as spear-won captives, even if they should have ten thousand and most valiant defenders, yet he will easily overcome these too. And he will revel among kings and tyrants will be his playthings. For he deported Jeconiah to Babylon in chains, and not a few others of the local rulers, who were also made a laughingstock to their captors. And he will so overpower the cities, even the most well-walled, that the capture of each was reckoned by him as a kind of plaything. And he will also raise up earthworks. And thus he took Tyre, although it was extended far from the mainland into the sea like an island. And Satan also took Israel captive when it disobeyed Christ, and all the leaders became his delight, and those who boasted in the glory of the priesthood, whom I think it is not unseemly to call tyrants, because of their presiding over peoples, and being held in great glory and power over them. But they would not have become playthings of diabolical perversity, if they had followed the Savior's commandments, and had kept the faith, and the sanctification through the Spirit.

For the Savior of all, who places every enemy under his feet, would have said to them too, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and "scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Then his spirit will change, and he will pass through and be propitiated. That the race of Israel will not be utterly destroyed, nor will it be overlooked forever, but there will be for them some season of prosperity, and a release from the incurable disaster having been brought home, and the yoke of slavery having been broken, it allows us to understand, as he says the Lord of all will be in a change of spirit, that is, in a change of mind and a different counsel. And we certainly do not say that he will condemn the counsel already made against them, as if it did not have in itself the quality of having been well made at that time, but rather this, that having exacted sufficient justice, and having inflicted punishment in proportion to their transgressions, He will turn to mercy, and His anger will pass, and He will be gracious to those who have suffered. For I think this is what "he will be propitious" signifies. This is the strength to my God. Are you not from the beginning, O Lord my God, my Holy One? And we shall not die.

God having promised to pity them, and having announced the change of their gloomy circumstances for the better, the Prophet out of great joy all but leaps up and says that it would not be fitting for any other to restore Israel, and to free him from bonds and slavery, and to pity him when crushed, except for God alone, who is able easily to accomplish all things, smoothing the rough, and as it were leveling what is high and steep, to whom it might be said by every saint, "You can do all things, and nothing is impossible for you. Then the Prophet says, Are you not from the beginning, O Lord my God, my Holy One? and we shall not die. For even if Israel has been deceived, he says, and led astray into error and strange false worships, yet you were again the God of all, who as holy also pities those who have long transgressed, and preserves them from destruction, and does not allow Israel to perish completely. Therefore, it is not far from hope, that he will both be saved and will pass beyond his gloomy circumstances, since you pity him, and accomplish things beyond reason. And the saints also rejoiced, learning of the salvation of Israel in the last times, and they offered up prayers, and raised thanksgiving voices and odes.

And indeed the blessed David, having foreknown through the Spirit the clemency that would be shown to them, and all but seeing them released from the bonds of captivity, sings and says, "Lord, you have been favorable to your land; you have turned back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquities of your people; you have covered all their sins. Lord, you have appointed him for judgment, and he has formed me to reprove his chastisement. Your eye is pure, so that you do not see evil, and you will not be able to look upon troubles. The word is again with the Prophet; but about whom he says he was appointed for judgment by God is very obscure indeed. Come now, therefore, let us, out of necessity investigating the meaning of what has been said, consider these things. For if it were said concerning the king of the Babylonians, that he has been appointed by God for judgment, we say that he has been appointed to fulfill the judgment that has come down from above against those of Israel, that is, the sack, the captivity, the burning of the cities, and, in short, the devastation of Judea. But if not this, and we turn the force of the meaning to the person of Israel, we

say this again, that he himself has also been appointed for judgment by God; and we say "for judgment" means for condemnation.

And indeed our Lord Jesus Christ said somewhere concerning the Jews, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind; and he says "for judgment," for condemnation. Israel, therefore, has been condemned as having done wrong, as having been neglectful of the laws, as having grieved the Lord of all not moderately. But me, he says, that is, the Pro- phet, He formed, that is, He made and prepared, for the necessity of reproving the chastisement which He ordained against him; for as a chastisement and a scourge the war has been brought upon Israel, and what happened was a form of punishment, not simply an undertaking of the Babylonians. But if anyone should ask and say, he says, For what reason indeed has the Babylonian been appointed as a punisher, that is, for condemnation and for suffering, Israel, he will hear in reply That the Lord's is pure an eye, and it would never endure to become a spectator of wicked and unholy things, nor would it look upon the toils that come from injustices and greed happening to the weaker ones. For it always turns its eye away from those accustomed to do such things. When this has happened, in every way and altogether dreadful things will happen, and he who has suffered the turning away will be in the last of evils.

And knowing this, the divine David begged, "Turn not your face away from me, and do not "turn aside in anger from your servant. For the things that happen out of anger will surely follow the divine turnings away. Why do you look upon those who despise? Will you be silent when the wicked swallows up the righteous? And will you make men like the fish of the sea, and like the creeping things that have no ruler? Having announced beforehand that the eye of the divinity is pure, and that it would never look upon the workers of wickedness, nor would it look favorably upon any who have chosen to be greedy, and who weave pains for the weaker, the Prophet is immediately seized by thoughts of this kind. For the most savage multitude of the Babylonians has wrought countless dreadful and very difficult evils upon the peoples of the Jews, who also brought the excess of their own savagery to this measure of dreadfulness, so as not even to abstain from the divine places themselves, but to burn down along with Jerusalem also the renowned temple, and together with the common people to seize the priests of the divine altars and to profane the holy things, according to what is written. But when they were at home, they continued to be cheerful, and possessing wealth from plunder, not demanding justice for the unholy things they had committed, not fearing enemies, nor the terrors of war;

but rather rising up themselves against all, and easily overpowering whomever they chose, and prospering exceedingly, and exulting in the misfortunes of the destroyed, and making a matter of boasting their unrestrained anger, their unbridled greed, their superiority over all. The Prophet therefore is astonished, seeing them expanding in prosperity, and he now touches upon divine judgments, and things unsearchable to all, and untouchable by any mind, he attempts to investigate and prays to learn, what then could be the reason for such long forbearance of the all-powerful God, so as to at times cast a mild and gentle eye even

upon those accustomed to despise thus and who have chosen to live unholy lives, and to be silent and to endure a wicked man all but devouring the gentle and just man. From this, he says, that the necessity of being punished does not follow immediately on the heels of the transgressors, but rather wrath has proceeded to a postponement, for this reason those on earth have slipped into planning hereafter, and indeed also to attempt in the same manner as fish to devour the weaker, and as it were to swallow one another with a gaping and insatiable mouth;

and to pursue thus a hard and unsociable and harsh life, so as to differ little from the creeping things in mountains and holes, which through great savagery and excess of bitterness are both untamable and do not imitate the natures of other animals, which at times even in a herd and under one leader and one set over the herd make their pastures, and are seen as if led by a general. And the Babylonians are unsociable, and unapproachable to others, both bitter and venomous and full of destruction and greedily swallowing the weaker. But it does not seem improbable that the voice of the Prophet was against both the devil and the wicked powers with him. For they are truly despisers, completely shaking off the divine fear, and coming to the full measure of all depravity and indeed perversity, although God is very forbearing. But since we have once come under them, we wretches have devoured one another. For the arbiter of peace was not ruling over us, that is, Christ, the lord of earth and heaven and all things; for this reason we have become like fish, most irrational and completely speechless.

For there was not in us a word of piety, nor a voice of doxology to God, but rather killing one another and having a most irrational life, we lived in the world on a par with fish, and the mind in each was so bitter, that we seemed to have become completely bestial, and as far as anger and bitterness were concerned, to be equal to venomous creatures, or even to hasten to surpass them. He drew up the full number with a hook, and drew him with a casting-net, and gathered him in his drag-nets; for this his heart shall be glad and rejoice; for this he shall sacrifice to his drag-net and burn incense to his casting-net, because in them he fattened his portion and his foods are choice; for this reason he will cast his casting-net, and he will not spare to slay nations forever. Having named them fish, he still dwells on the trope, and makes his words as if about one of those who work the sea, that is, of the fishermen. For the fish-catchers engage in their own pursuits in many ways. For either they snatch the fish with hooks, and draw them up struggling from the waves with their lines, or surrounding them with drag-nets they pull them in great numbers, or they enclose them with some other nets. And when they do well, with many gathered, they rejoice in their craft, and almost sacrifice to their nets, as having provided them a very rich portion.

The Prophet says that something of this kind was done by Nebuchadnezzar, who, as with a hook and drag-nets and indeed also his casting-net, having encompassed Israel itself, and other nations with it, gathered them to himself, and as if setting a feast before his own shield-bearers, he commanded them to revel, and that the captured should become the inheritance and richest portion of those who had once seized them. For this reason, he says, perhaps

he will both sacrifice to his drag-net and burn incense to his casting-net, that is, to his own powers, by which he caught the nations in a net, and in addition Israel, he will light the thank-offerings. And since the matter has turned out so very successfully for him, he says he would not refrain from slaying nations, and seizing tribes, and making countries his own, and deeming absolutely no one worthy of mercy; Satan has done this both against the whole human race, and especially against Israel. For with one net, as it were, and a single drag-net, I mean that of sin, he has encompassed all; but especially Israel on account of its impiety towards Christ. For it says his foods are choice. And the Jews are chosen in their way of life above all others. "For when, he says, the Most High divided the nations, as"he scattered the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the nations according to the number "of the angels of God, and the Lord's portion became his people "Jacob, the measuring-line of his inheritance Israel.

Israel, therefore, was chosen above the others, as also the firstborn among the children, as from a holy root, that of the fathers I mean, and as having the law as a tutor, and as being called to the knowledge of the one who is by nature and truly God; but even though possessing glory and grace, he himself was also captured along with the others. And some, because they have been led astray, have become the devil's portion; but others, because having known the God by nature, they have unholily killed the Son begotten of him according to nature, who had come in human form and in a shape like ours, are bound in his drag-nets; and his purpose is to destroy completely all upon the earth and to spare no one. I will stand on my watch and mount upon a rock, and I will look out to see what he will speak in me, and what I will answer to my reproof. In these words he explains to us a prophetic mystery;

for it is a custom for the saints, if they wish to learn the things from God, and to receive knowledge of future things, with him sounding in their mind and heart, to keep the mind far from distractions and cares and all worldly anxiety, and thus having and keeping it at leisure and quiet, just as to some hill and to then leap up to a watchtower and a rock for the contemplation of whatever the Lord of knowledge might choose to make clear to them. For indeed the low and dejected state of the mind is hateful to him, and he seeks hearts able to fly on high, and raised above earthly affairs and temporary desires. For it is written, "For the mighty ones of the earth have been greatly exalted unto God. And again, "And the young of the vulture fly on high. For the mind of the saints is far removed from earthly habits and more worldly affairs. Therefore, I will stand upon my watch, he says, that is, I will again make practiced and customary soberness my own, I will purify my mind, I will rid it of worldly care, and I will fly up as to a rock, that is, to a most firm and, as it were, highly-placed security of thoughts;

having arrived there, as from a summit, I will consider in my mind what words might come to me from God, and what I myself might be about to say, if God should wish to reprove me, as one who has not spoken safely the words, "Why do you look upon those who despise? Will you be silent when the wicked devours the righteous? And the Lord answered me and said, "Write the vision clearly on a tablet, that he who reads it may run. Because

the vision is yet for a time, and it will rise up at the end and not in vain. He commands that the vision be committed to writing, that is, the revelation of things to come; for the matter is worthy to be heard, and among the most wonderful things; and somehow writings directed to what is exceptional are always accustomed to be honored with long and unending remembrance. Write therefore, O Prophet, he says, the vision, so that those in due time might know the things foretold, and encountering your words they may pursue them, that is, desire to understand the power in them, and so they might believe that the prophecy will surely be true. For the vision is for a time, that is, for a delay and a postponement, and a short time will pass in between. But it will end in truth and not after a long time, and not in vain; for the truth will in no way speak falsely;

and nothing spoken by it could become empty and futile. If he should delay, wait for him, because he who is coming will come and will not delay. If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him; but the righteous shall live by faith. Naming no one clearly, he says, ”wait for him,” that is, expect him who is to come, and do not entertain a faltering hope in him, but rather one that is firm and established, even if there should be some extension of time in between. It seems, therefore, that the God of all has whispered in the mind of the Prophet and has revealed mystically that the one foretold will surely come; but he commanded to wait for him, on account of the time of delay in between, as I just said. For if there should be any drawing back and hesitation from the one who has believed, ”I would have no pleasure,” he says, ”in him,” seeing him held fast by the faults of his soul, nor would I be forgiving to such a one; but rather I will count him as faithless and hateful. And it will surely follow for the one who testifies to the truth of my words, that he will also be a partaker of life, and this is a prize for those who honor God, and a good wage for goodwill. Now, as far as the historical account is concerned, it was Cyrus, son of Cambyses, about whom he says, ”if he should delay, wait for him.

For he did take Babylon, having laid waste along with it the other cities as well. But as for the mystical words and for the spiritual narrative, I would say that the power of the preceding words would rightly be understood as concerning Christ, the Savior of all. For he is ”the one who is, and who was, and who is to come,” and the word of the holy prophets has proclaimed beforehand that he would be present in due time. And that having arrived he was about to overthrow the power of the devil, and to drive out the unholy and profane multitude of demons from their greed against us, the sacred scripture has clearly prophesied, and furthermore the outcome of the deeds accomplished will enter as its own witness, except the prophecy is ”for a time. For in the days In the last times of the present age the Only-begotten shone forth, and the one who drew back, and most foolishly rejected faith in him, has offended God and remained without a taste of the heavenly goods, and has been driven out from the sacred multitude of the saints, according to the word of the prophet, ”like the wild tamarisk in the desert, which will not see when good things come.

But the one who is superior to hesitation and drawing back, and who has made love and faith in him to dwell in his mind and heart, has as a recompense for such a disposition,

and as an extraordinary prize, unending life, and the putting away of transgressions, and sanctification through the Spirit. For we have been justified "not by works of the law," as it is written, but rather through faith in Christ. And "The law brings about wrath," for it calls transgressors to judgment, but grace sets aside wrath, absolving their offenses. But the arrogant and contemptuous man, a boastful man, will accomplish nothing. Having foretold that the one who was fore-announced will be present at the proper times, to put an end to sad things and to deliver the crushed from all misery, he then mentions the one who laid waste, and who had fulfilled every kind of inhumanity and beast-like cruelty against them all. And by these things are signified, historically, the profane and God-fighting Nebuchadnezzar, but spiritually, again, Satan. And he calls him arrogant and contemptuous and boastful, and very rightly so. For this is his nature, whether the force of the words is understood of Satan himself, or whether one speaks of the Babylonian man. He says arrogant, meaning one who is presumptuous or stupid concerning himself, and again contemptuous and boastful, as one who from excessive haughtiness and empty puffing up is not willing to consider, so to speak, the incomparable preeminence of the all-powerful God.

And such a one, he says, will accomplish nothing; for the outcome of affairs will not in every case turn out according to his mind, nor will he revel forever and be enlarged and be in brilliant glory. And it is true, which the blessed David also said in song: "I have seen the ungodly highly "exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Lebanon, and I passed "by, and behold, he was not, and I sought him, and his place "was not found. For arrogance always creeps toward humiliation; but a measured disposition is crowned with the highest honors. And the disciple of the Savior confirms this for us, having written and saying, "Let the lowly brother glory "in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a "flower of the grass he will pass away. Who has enlarged his soul like hades, and he, like death, is not satisfied, and he will gather to himself all the nations, and will receive to himself all the peoples. God is in harmony with the Prophet, and has shown him to be speaking truth, sealing as true by his own words the accusations of both the devil and Nebuchadnezzar. For the Prophet was saying, "He has drawn up a consummation with a hook, "and has dragged him with a casting-net, and has gathered him "in his dragnets; but the God of all, referring the causes to something still greater and truer, compares him finally to hades and death. For a thing insatiable are both death and hades.

And it is true that, at least according to what seemed good to the Babylonian, all the nations would have been gathered to him. And such evils might rightly be understood as accusations of Persian ambition. For what is under heaven is small to them, and all the races of men would not be sufficient to serve them. And the inventor of sin himself might also be caught, that is, Satan, striving to place the whole earth, so to speak, under himself, and like hades swallowing up those who are perishing by his perversities. And he himself also said somewhere, that "I will grasp the whole inhabited world in my hand as "a nest, and as abandoned eggs I will take them up, and there is no one who "will escape me or speak against me. For the beast is insatiable and untamable and full of arrogance, truly abominable and misanthropic. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a riddle

as a tale about him? And they shall say, Woe to him who multiplies for himself what is not his! For how long? And who makes his yoke heavy and strong. That his rule is not unshakable, nor indeed that he should revel in the multitude of things gathered, but that he will certainly fall from power and glory, and that when he has fallen he will be a song for many, he has clearly indicated.

For he said that a parable would be taken up against him, like a riddle and a popular saying and on the tongues of many. And what is this? Woe to him who multiplies for himself what is not his and makes his yoke heavy and strong, that is, always making the penalty for his impieties more burdensome for himself, having destroyed nations and brought together whole countries, and always leaping upon those who in no way belong to him, and placing them under his own scepters as if by necessity, and having countless peoples under his hand. And in the midst he has exclaimed, For how long? showing that he is insatiable in greed, unbridled in cruelty, and not hating the limit of injustice. Therefore, the tyrants of the Babylonians were insatiable and terrible in cruelty and accustomed to dare the most shameful things of all. Such also is Satan, always gathering what is not his own, and imposing a more grievous punishment upon himself. And it has been said somewhere to him, "Just as a garment stained in blood "will not be clean; so you also will not be clean, "because you have destroyed my land, and you have slain my people; "you shall not remain for eternal time. For what peoples has he not destroyed? Or what nations has he spared? What of the most odious things might he not be caught having dared to do?

Therefore, the woe will justly follow him, and he will become a parable, his rule having been taken down, and his greed against all having been driven out. And again, the wise Jeremiah alludes to this for us, saying about him, "A partridge cried out, it gathered what "it did not hatch, making its wealth not with judgment, in the midst "of its days they will abandon it, and at its end "it will be a fool. And this has been done historically. For the Babylonian took Judea, and indeed also Samaria, and having depopulated other countries along with them, he carried them away to his own lands; but when Cyrus with the Persians and Medes encamped against the Babylonians, those who had been gathered went away again, and those held in the bonds of captivity, as if flying away, went home again. And the gentiles have departed from the worship under the devil, and having left desolate him who of old cried out and called them to himself, they have run to Christ. For that one gathered what was not his, but Christ received what was his. For he is Lord of all, as God. Because suddenly those who bite him will rise up, and your plotters will awaken, and you will be plunder for them. He says that unexpectedly those who, as it were, bite and devour him will rise up against him, and by the attacks of war will consume the strength under him;

and these were certainly Cyrus, and around him the Persians and Medes and Elamites, who, as if shaking sleep from their eyes, and sobering up as from drunkenness, will barely be stronger than their old fears and taking up the battle against him, will generally overrun him. Then, plotting in many ways, they will easily crush him, leading and carrying off the affairs of the Chaldeans and plundering those of the Babylonians. And we will find that the

accursed Satan has also suffered this. For he gathered to himself all the nations, spreading the net of polytheistic error, and binding them fast with the snares of sin. But those who bite him rose up, that is, the heralds of the evangelical decrees, tearing his body as with teeth, namely those who have chosen to think his thoughts. For just as "He who is joined "to the Lord is one spirit," so he who is joined to the devil is one body with him. They will awaken then therefore counselling him. For understanding that he is finally placed under the feet of the saints, Christ saying clearly, "Behold, I have given "you to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all "the power of the enemy," they will seize those who think his thoughts, and will easily transport them to the knowledge of the truth, teaching who is by nature and truly God, and explaining the mystery of Christ, who indeed is also seen as the first to have plundered him.

For one can hear him saying, "Or how can one enter into the house of the "strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first "binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his goods. And immediately upon being born of the holy virgin, he began to plunder his goods. For the Magi came from the east, "saying, Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? "For we have seen his star in the east, and have come "to worship him. And indeed they have worshipped, and have honored him with gifts, and have become the firstfruits of the church of the gentiles; and being diabolical vessels, and of his members the most honored of all the others, have run to Christ. But that he was about to plunder the goods of the strong man, the prophet Isaiah also proclaimed enigmatically beforehand; for he spoke thus again concerning him, "For "before the child knows how to call father or mother, he will take "the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria before the "king of the Assyrians. Now the force of the saying seems to allude to something of what was done historically; for Samaria had been sacked both by the king of Damascus and by the ruler of the Assyrians. Yet it implies an intelligible mystery. For the prophetic word has shown us that the power of the Savior will easily despoil those who have sacked his people.

Because you have spoiled many nations, all the remaining peoples will spoil you, because of the blood of men and the impiety of the land and of the city and of all who dwell in it. The word is precise, even if it is understood again of both. For the Babylonian sacked many nations; and Satan has done this also. Therefore they have suffered being caught in the same things. And the affairs of the Chaldeans were sacked by Cyrus; but Satan by the saints. For both, the accusations are equal, and the transgressions are kindred, and the savagery and cruelty against all is as if related. For they have slain countries and cities, the one carnally, the other intelligibly, using sin as a sharp missile. But it says very well indeed that all the remaining peoples will spoil him. For as the Babylonian had destroyed all, it says that those who were strong enough to escape became most hostile to him, and that being few they would easily prevail, God apportioning the victory and granting to them to be able to accomplish all things. And the matter would be understood as true, even if it were applied to the enemy of all, I mean, Satan. For he both seized and sacked all those on the earth, and bound them in the yokes of sin. But he himself was also plundered by the

remaining peoples, that is, by those justified in faith through Christ and sanctified in the Spirit. For the remnant of Israel has been saved.

And the divine disciples, being from them, have become the firstfruits of those who have plundered the sinner. Then after them, even until now, the leaders of the peoples plunder, both rightly dividing the word of truth, and bringing back to the path of piety those who have been yoked. Woe to him who is greedy with an evil greed for his house, to set his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of evils. You have devised shame for your house, you have finished off many peoples, and your soul has sinned. The word rebukes the Babylonian again, who wishes to build up his own rule from greed against all, and lifting up his own house on high, and indeed being accustomed to gild it with excellencies beyond measure and to fortify it exceedingly, so that perhaps he might be able readily to be delivered from the hand of evils, that is, to always escape the the evils that occur. For the aim of the Babylonians was always to be fenced in by great multitudes of defenders, and to have innumerable men who knew tactics and were equipped with the law of war, so as to be able to effortlessly repel the harm from those attacking them. But that the matter would be to his shame and disgrace, as his hope fell away to its opposite, he taught by saying, You have devised shame for your house. For you have finished, that is, you have brought to an end, many peoples, having destroyed them with utter ruin.

And since your soul has sinned, you will pay bitter penalties, you who were once glorious and setting your nest on high, pitiful and cast down and unexpectedly found under the feet of your enemies. This saying would be most fitting indeed both for Satan himself and for the inventors of heresies, who, being overcome by love of power and of seeming to lead many, have brought many peoples to an end, and have truly caused an evil greed in their own houses, and have set their nests on high, "speaking swelling words of vanity," and belching out against the divine glory things which would be fitting only for their tongues and minds. Therefore their souls have sinned; for they have acted insolently towards the Savior of all, Christ himself, "sinning against the brothers and wounding their weak conscience," according to what is written. Because a stone from the wall will cry out, and a beetle from the wood will utter these things. Holy Scripture often gives voices even to inanimate and senseless things, not as if they were able to say anything, but as if the things themselves were almost crying aloud. And so the blessed Isaiah says, "Be ashamed, O Sidon, says the sea"; and David indeed, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands. For creation itself, through those things for which it is admired as being well-made, through these very things proclaims the glory of the one who made it.

Therefore, the voices are in the things themselves, even if they do not become words. You will understand something of this sort here also. For it says a stone from a wall, and a beetle from wood will cry out against the Babylonian; and in what way, we shall say: the Babylonian, invading the cities of Judea, or also others, burned down all the houses in them. Then it necessarily happened that stones were also shattered and walls shaken down, and timbers fell with them, and roofs from extreme old age, having small beetles, that is, woodworms.

For this reason, he says the ruined things will cry out against his cruelty; and these, as I said, were scattered stones, and lying in the middle of the squares, and timbers certainly half-burnt, and from their decay testifying at last to the ancient state of the cities. So it is an accusation against the Babylonian for having thus burned the old and most ancient cities, and for tearing down houses as well, the people in them having clearly been killed. But it should be known that instead of saying, beetle, other interpreters have published "a bond of wood. Whence one may understand that perhaps at that time they called the joints of the houses and the interlocking of the timbers in them, that is the bond, beetles, because it holds up the roof laid upon them as if with many feet. Woe to him who builds a city with blood, and prepares a city with iniquities.

Are not these things from the Lord Almighty? And mighty peoples have failed in the fire, and many nations have grown faint-hearted. He pronounces the Babylonian wretched again, as one who raises his own glory on high, and the renown of his rule, being zealous to do so not from things which he ought to have, but rather from things which he least ought to have. For it was not necessary for him to be famous because he destroyed many peoples, but rather to be dignified with a different kind of ornament, and to be seen resplendent in boasts of righteousness. But having abandoned this as useless, he built it with blood and iniquities. For that the rule of the Chaldeans became most cruel, and by leaping upon simply all cities and countries in a beastly manner, has wrought evils beyond all description, would be manifest to all who have the divine to those who have read scripture. But these things are not from the Lord Almighty. For it is not, it is not possible to say that such evils have come from above; nor would it be thought God-given, that one ought to glory in these things. Therefore, they will not be unsupported, or rather not outside of justice. For what the divine and pure mind does not know how to praise, it certainly punishes, as not having what is fitting.

For how is it not dissonant and completely unholy, for sufficient peoples to fail in fire, and for many nations to lose heart, that is, for splendid cities to be burned down along with their inhabitants, and for whole nations and tribes to give up in evils? And one might rightly exclaim this also to the leaders of the Jews, who killed all the holy prophets; indeed they thought to benefit Jerusalem not a little, and to build it in blood and with greed against all; for some they insulted, some they killed, and some they stoned, and finally to the others they added the Son, and the law was their pretext for their madness. For they feigned to be grieved that the commandment through Moses was set aside by Christ. But that their zeal was God-hated, and "not according to knowledge," as, at any rate, the divine Paul writes, the Prophet would easily show, saying, These things are not from the Lord Almighty. Therefore they have also failed in fire and lost heart, as the war consumed them and famine wasted them away. For such things have happened to the peoples of the Jews who have acted violently against the Son, and killed, as I said, the prophets before him. Because the whole earth was filled with knowing the glory of the Lord, as much water to cover the seas. The divine scripture is often indifferent concerning times, and it sets down future things as though they have already been completed.

So then, we shall find this to have happened here also. For whereas it should have said ”will be filled,” it says ”was filled. Therefore, when the divine wrath is cast upon Babylon, and all things in it come to pass through both Cyrus and those with him, and she who was long ago terrible and unbreakable, and always raising up her own difficult-to-meet cruelty against others, appears henceforth pitiable and weak, and utterly desolate and under the feet of her enemies, then indeed, then all that is under heaven will understand how great and of what sort the divine glory is, and will be filled with the knowledge of it. For the rule of the Chaldeans prevailed, and was so conspicuous, terrible and invincible, with God being forbearing and giving it power to rule even over Judea, and to destroy countless cities. But when it considered inflicting its own fitting evils, it was shaken and has fallen and has been given over to desolation. The prophet Jeremiah also says something like this about it: ”How the hammer of the whole earth was broken and shattered? ”How Babylon became a desolation among the nations? ”They will set upon you, and you will be captured, Babylon, and you will not know it; ”you were found and were taken, because you resisted the Lord. The Lord ”has opened his treasury and has brought out the instruments of ”his wrath, for there is a work for the Lord God in the land of the Chaldeans, ”for her times have come.

But it must be known that after the sack of Jerusalem, Christ passed over to the nations, and then all under heaven knew the glory of God the Father, that is, him, as a torrent flooding the earth. For Christ turned toward them like a river, He who also long ago said through the voice of a prophet: ”Behold, I am turning ”toward them like a river of peace, and like a torrent ”flooding the glory of nations. For when Israel once made a calf in the desert, and had for this reason offended God, He promised the manifestation of the Savior and the abundance of grace through him, saying: ”But as I live, and my name lives, ”the glory of the Lord will fill all the ”earth. For all things are full of Christ, who is the glory of the Father. Therefore he also said, ”I have glorified you on the ”earth; I have finished the work which you have given me to do. Woe to him who gives his neighbor a murky overthrow to drink, and makes him drunk, so that he may look upon upon their caves; drink a surfeit of dishonor from glory. He utters again the ”Woe” to the unholy audacities of Nebuchadnezzar, proclaiming what he will suffer, and signifying through this that the blow is full of bitter pain.

He seems to call ”murky overthrow” the unmixed grief or torment, which, by almost giving it as a drink, he caused those who were captured to be seen as differing little from those in wine and drunkenness. And what of that? As if opening a cave, he made the mind of each one transparent to all the others. For, as I said, by inflicting bitter torments upon the more distinguished of the captives, or perhaps even upon the kings themselves, he caused them to lament and to lay bare their sometimes hidden pusillanimity or cowardice, as if from unbearable necessity. But he was so terrible and harsh that, when it was necessary to feel pain for them and pity them, he reveled in their groaning, and made this a boast of his own rule. And this, I think, is what it is to give one’s neighbor a murky overthrow to drink, so that he may look upon their caves, that is, the hidden and secretly inherent things of some. Since, therefore, he employed unrestrained passions and, with all mercy

removed, clothed small and great, illustrious and obscure, with incurable misfortunes, for this reason the Master of all says, ”Drink a surfeit of dishonor from glory. That is, for you were indeed renowned and famous and conspicuous to all everywhere and most well-known for your cruelty; but you shall henceforth be dishonored, and for your preeminence in fame you will endure a commensurate punishment. This would also be fitting to say, if one should choose, concerning the unholy Pharisees themselves.

For they have given their neighbor a murky overthrow to drink; and we say this is their teaching, the commandments of men, and in addition to these, their madness against Christ, and the accusations of their unbridled mouths. For he was calling them to life, but they had slipped into such folly as to say even to their listeners, ”He has a demon and is mad; why do you listen to him? And they did this so that, shaking off the word of salvation which enlightens the mind, they might look into their own caves, that is, into their dark and lightless and dead teachings. Therefore they have drunk a surfeit of dishonor, although they were formerly illustrious and had attained no small glory. For they were leaders of flocks, and they were also priests and judges. And such a saying would also be fitting for the inventors of unholy dogmas, who truly give their neighbor a murky overthrow to drink, pouring the poison of deceit into the souls of the more simple, so that they may look upon their caves. For their mind is dark, full of deceit, truly filled with diabolical mist, and differing, I think, in nothing from caves, which are full of dead bodies and all stench and impurity. But I think it is necessary, for a more accurate clarification of what has been said before, to say this as well.

The Hebrews say—and the account is again from tradition—that after Nebuchadnezzar sacked both Judea and all the other countries, and brought the leaders of the nations to his own land, he would hold drinking parties from time to time. Then bringing in the captives, and making them drunk with exotic drinks, he would compel them to dance; and as they were shaken about and fell down and were stripped bare, sometimes showing even the hidden parts of the body, he would smile and make the affair a luxury and a pretext for merriment. They say that these things were cleverly called caves; and the account has some verisimilitude. For the other translators have rendered ”nakedness” instead of ”caves,” so that what is said is of this sort: Woe to him who gives his neighbor a murky overthrow to drink and makes him drunk, so that he may look upon their nakedness. And you, heart, be tossed and shaken; the cup of the right hand of the Lord has come around to you, and dishonor has been gathered upon your glory. Because the impiety of Lebanon will cover you, and the misery of beasts will terrify you, because of the blood of men and the impieties of the land and of the city, and of all who dwell in it.

Somehow it is always present and seen to be terribly attached to the souls of the arrogant to have the greatest possible insensibility of mind, and moreover, in addition to this, to think that they themselves will have an unshakable share of prosperity, and they shake off, as it were, and very generally, the expectation that there will ever be a change of affairs for the worse. Such is that which is said through the voice of David as from the person

of those who are in comforts and luxuries, ”But I said in my ”prosperity, I shall not be moved forever. Therefore, since the Babylonian was sick with insensibility from excessive arrogance, he almost rebukes him now as being inflexible, saying, ”And you, O heart, be shaken,” that is, do not think you are settled in unshakable prosperity, receive now the thoughts [about] grievous things, come to an awareness of what will happen, and yield to experience, although before it you did not deign to grasp, so to speak, even in mere thoughts, that you yourself will one day be in gloomy circumstances, and your heart will fall into things naturally not moderately distressing. What then is it that shakes it and agitates it into sorrows? A cup from the right hand of the Lord has come around upon you, and dishonor has been gathered upon your glory.

For just as you gave your neighbor to drink with a murky overthrow, in the same way, having fallen under the things to be brought on by divine wrath, you will be loathsome, dishonored by all, pitiful and cast out, and in every way overcome by that ancient renown. But by saying that the cup is of the right hand of the Lord, the blessed Prophet persuades one to think, as it were, that it would not be possible not to drink it, since God himself offers it. For it was necessary by all means to endure the things from wrath; ”For if he shuts a man in, who can ”open? according to what is written, and as the prophet says, ”Who will turn back the high hand? And for what reason, then, these things will happen, he makes clear, saying, ”Because the impiety of Lebanon will cover you, and the misery of beasts will terrify you. And Lebanon is a mountain of Phoenicia, one of the most distinguished, with goodly wood and fragrant as incense-bearing. And the sacred scripture at times compares Jerusalem to it, on account of its being glorified with many holy heads, raised on high and thinking the things in heaven, and submerged in the beauty of piety. The blessed David also remembers these, saying thus to God, ”The cedars of ”Lebanon which you planted, there the sparrows will make their nests.

For like a cedar, each of the saints, as I just said, is raised on high, by not enduring to think on the things that are cast down, that is, the things on earth, and he becomes like a shelter to others, receiving like sparrows those wishing to be discipled under him. Therefore, since the Chaldean sacked Jerusalem, and was impious and offended God, setting fire to the divine temple in the city, and was captured for also having insulted the holy things themselves, for this reason he says that the impiety of Lebanon which was directed against it will cover him. And Lebanon, as I said, he calls either Judea, or Jerusalem; and one might think perhaps that he also means the temple itself, having much fragrance, and adorned with the heads of the priests as with certain cedars. And in what manner the impiety committed against Lebanon was to cover him, he showed by adding, ”Because the misery of beasts will terrify you. And he seems again to call beasts the Persians and Medes armed with Cyrus, as having much untamable spirit, and being whetted for cruelty. But that God does not punish in vain, but brings balanced penalties for whatever one might do, he taught by adding, ”For the blood of men and the impiety of the city and of all who dwell in it. Each of the Pharisees also will hear, who were inventors and composers of the madness against Christ, ”And you, O heart, be moved and be shaken.

For a cup from the right hand of the Lord has come around upon them, and dishonor has been gathered upon their glory. And they have drunk as a cup of destruction the wrath that came upon them, dishonored they have become and as far as possible from all good repute. For they also acted impiously against Lebanon. You will understand Lebanon to be the Church, which is truly fragrant, the conspicuous mountain, and most well-known everywhere. They persecuted the Church after the cross of the Savior. Therefore they have also been terrified as if by beasts that have ravaged them, and having become guilty of much blood of the holy prophets, they added to these also that of those who have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the blessed Stephen became the first-fruits, having been shown to be a kind of first spoils and first-fruit of the holy martyrs. What does a graven image profit, that they have graven it? A molten image has fashioned it, a false fantasy, because the one who fashioned it trusts in his own fashioning to make mute idols. So the proposition of the saying is in this manner. For what, he says, does the graven image profit that they have graven it? And what does the fashioner profit by his own fashioning, that he trusts in it? But what, again, is the Prophet's purpose, we will say as best we can.

Cyrus and the Medes having invaded the land of the Babylonians, and war having at last been announced all around, the magi, doing their customary things, called upon the falsely-named gods for aid to the city in peril, and they brought sacrifices and libations to the senseless things, placing on them their whole hope of being saved. But those things were nonsense and deception, deceit and vain counsel, and nothing else; for it was captured and has been ravaged, though it never thought to suffer this. Therefore, the God of all things laughs at the thought of the transgressors, and their hope in lifeless things. For what, he says, does the graven image profit, being nothing other than a false fantasy having nothing true? For how or from where could divine power at all be believed to be in things fabricated by human hands? Therefore, to trust in them is indeed vain, and the matter is truly ridiculous, at least to those who have a sound mind and an awakened spirit. But it seems someone might unfold the force of the preceding words in another way. For the Babylonian, having taken the cities and, so to speak, having desolated all the lands, turned immoderately to the lofty and unbridled, and was henceforth sick with arrogance, and the wretched one, having placed the glory of God upon his own head, fashions a golden image, just as the divine prophet Daniel has written.

Then he commanded tribes and tongues to worship it, and for those who did not endure to do this, death was the penalty. What then was the benefit from this? Tell me, he says. For he who thought he was also a god has now at last come to the end of all evil, and has fallen into disasters beyond description. Woe to him who says to the wood, 'Awake, arise,' and to the stone, 'Be exalted.' And it is a fantasy, and this is an overlay of gold and silver, and there is no spirit at all in it. But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be reverent before his face. Again, as I just said, the force of the preceding words follows.

For he rightly pronounces wretched the deluded, who, having abandoned the one God who is so by nature and in truth, and running past the path of reverence toward him, proceed

to destruction, crying out to the wood, 'Awake, arise,' and saying most mindlessly to the stone, 'Be exalted.' For it is the custom of the deluded, if any fear should terrify them, to light altars, to open shrines, and to cry out to lifeless idols: 'Have mercy, save us, be exalted you also, O stone, defending as a god the realms of those who revere your power and have chosen to worship you.' Woe then indeed to such people, rightly, because, cleaving to things made of gold and silver, to things that have no spirit, they utter such words, which it were surely better to say to God who inhabits heaven and has the city above as his own temple. For the holy one dwells among the holy, and abides with those who revere him.

Therefore the Prophet utters something useful and necessary to us: 'Let all the earth be reverent before his face.' For those who are truly sound of mind must worship the one who is by nature and truly God, and to him every wise man will kindle reverence, to him he will bring also his supplications, from him he will seek to be saved, and him he will confess as Creator, Lord of all, Savior and Redeemer, all-powerful, all-holy, and the one who transforms the natures of things, to whatever he might choose at various times and by his own commands directing this universe.

Book 2

Having thoroughly completed the discourse on Babylon, and that they will pay bitter penalties who ravaged the holy city, and having very clearly proclaimed beforehand that they would carry off Israel captive, he aptly comes to the mystery of Christ, and as from the redemption which happened for one nation and partially, he brings the discourse to the one that is for all and most general, by which the remnant of Israel was saved, and no less was the whole earth saved. For Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, released Israel from captivity, having overthrown the arrogant and God-hated kingdom, I mean that of the Chaldeans. But what was done was therefore an image and a type of the things accomplished through Christ; who found all humanity as if taken by the spear, and laboring under the tyrannical hand; for Satan had reigned over us as it were through sin; He made them free from bonds and labors, and having released them from that monstrous servitude, he brought them back as if to the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. For we have become, according to what is written, "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of "God," and we have henceforth claimed heaven as our homeland.

Therefore, the Prophet, astonished at the power of the mystery, and exceedingly admiring the ineffable and God-befitting economy of the Only-begotten's coming in the flesh, makes his prayer in the manner of a song, according to that which is spoken through the voice of David, "My tongue shall meditate on your "righteousness, all the day long your praise. O Lord, I have heard your report, and I was afraid, O Lord, I considered your works, and I was amazed. The saying might be understood as addressed to him, if one should choose, who is the Father and God of all, as revealing the Son, and making clear the report concerning him through the Spirit; or also, reasonably, to the incarnate Word himself. And if one should say it was directed to the Father, we shall understand it as something like this: O Lord of all, he says, the given revelation, that is, the report concerning your offspring, has astonished

me; for the accounts are dreadful and beyond speech, and the manner of the economy would henceforth be beyond all mind; but if, sending forth the slender eye of my heart, I should perceive the power of your works, the result will be ecstasy, and nothing else. But with the discourse looking to the Son, we shall no less approach it in some such way as this: O Lord and ruler of all, even though you have become flesh, having received the report concerning you, that is, the hearing and revelation, I have fallen into fear.

And I am astounded, and very reasonably so, at the extraordinariness of the matter. For I learn that, existing in the form and equality in every respect with the one who begot you, you will bring yourself down to a voluntary emptying, and will become a man like us from a woman, and will endure the form of a slave, and with us will call your own Father God, and you will become obedient, even ”unto death, and the death of the cross. Therefore, I have heard your report and was afraid, I considered your works and was amazed. For you preached recovery of sight to the blind, you proclaimed release to the captives, you healed those broken in heart, you turned back the one who was wandering, you bound up that which was broken, you became a light to those in darkness, a door and a way to life and sanctification, you have become peace, uniting through faith into one people those from the circumcision, and also those from the nations, you have become ”a cornerstone, chosen, precious; you have acquired the world for God the Father, you have freed from sins those who were captured by weakness, you rescued from the hand of the devil, by the grace of adoption the servile was made glorious, the man from earth has become a citizen of heaven; and besides these, that is also worthy of hearing, I think; for you, who give life to all things, have endured with us the death of the flesh.

But you have become ”the firstborn from the dead,” and the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, and the first offering of humanity brought back to incorruption. For you rose again as God, having trampled the harsh and irresistible beast, that is, death, you have undone the power of that ancient curse. And in you and through you has ceased ”You are earth and to earth you shall return,” spoken against us. You will be known between two living creatures. This has been interpreted by some in different ways. And one said that the Spirit and the Son are called two living creatures, and that God the Father is known between them. But I think it is ignorant to understand it this way, and has much foolishness in it. For who would dare to say that life is a living creature, that is, the Son or the Holy Spirit? For life is rather that which makes alive, while a living creature is that which partakes of life from another. It is also absurd in another way for the Father to be understood as being between both, who is indeed named first according to the arrangement of the confession of the holy and consubstantial Trinity. And surely we do not say that, being placed before the Son and the Spirit in naming, he has precedence over them; for this is nonsense and false speech;

but rather we hold and have believed that he also has the co-eternal Word who appeared from him, and he was, what he is, not without his own Spirit, but as soon as God the Father is conceived, the existence of him through whom he is Father, and his own divine

and holy Spirit, immediately enters with him. But since he is, as it were, a source of his own offspring, he has been named first economically. How then he will be between the Son and the Spirit, I cannot conceive. But perhaps they will say, as is likely, that the ”between” should be understood in terms of place. But this too is absurd. For the divine is not in a place, because it is neither in quantity, nor indeed according to a body. Others again have said that the two living creatures are the new and the old testament, between which Christ is known. But in such speculations let anyone take whatever path he wishes for himself; but we, turning the discourse once for all to the person of Christ, will make our exposition of the concepts according to the Law. Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ has become a propitiation through faith; for so the divine Paul seemed to think and to say; for through him we have been freed from every accusation, and have found the Father merciful and approachable. And the wise John will testify, saying, ”My little children, I write these things to you, so that you may not sin.

”And if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the ”Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he himself is the propitiation ”for our sins; not for ours only, ”but also for the whole world. And since the things represented of old through riddles were types of things that were to be in truth, let us say something showing the Son to be the propitiatory made in the holy tabernacle by the Father. Therefore the God of all commanded an ark to be made, and a lampstand, and also a table in the holy tabernacle; then in addition to these, a propitiatory of gold and purple and fine twisted linen and scarlet finely woven, and this, raised on four pillars, was hung over the holy ark; then two Cherubim on the right and on the left, made of gold, surrounded the propitiatory, their faces stretching towards it. And the thing was again a riddle of the mystery concerning Christ. For the Word became flesh, although he was God and Lord of all, as from God the Father having been revealed according to nature. But even if he became flesh, and was set forth by the Father as a propitiation, he has not cast off what he was, that is, being God; but even so he is in power and glory befitting God, and again the powers above stand around him, completing the liturgies assigned to them. For this reason the Cherubim stand around the mercy-seat, and look towards it continually.

For it is the custom of the powers above, being holy and all-pure, to always contemplate the things of God, and to look to him, and to be turned continually to the things that seem good and are dear to him. You will be known, then, O Master, he says, who you will be, having become like us; for that you are a propitiation, as from the example of the one in the holy tabernacle, you will be clearly known. For you stand in the midst of two living creatures, that is, the Cherubim, and your name is the mercy-seat. And the saying is true; for as Christ himself says, ”The Father did not send ”the Son into the world to judge the world, but that ”the world might be saved through him. When the years draw near, you will be recognized; when the time comes, you will be revealed. The law has indeed prophesied the mystery of Christ; and indeed also the choir of the holy prophets proclaimed it beforehand; and the mystagogues in various ways establish us more firmly in the faith in him, by usefully connecting the things that happened and were accomplished at the time of his sojourning

with the things written about him long ago, and we will often find them strengthening their own understanding from this; such as that which is through the voice of the evangelists.

For our Lord Jesus Christ cast out of the temple those who sold the sheep and the oxen, and overturned the tables of the money-changers, "And making a whip "of cords he drove them all out, saying, 'Do not make my Father's "house a house of trade'; and what of it? "His disciples remembered," it says, "that it was written, ""Zeal for your house will consume me."" And when Joseph once thought that the virgin betrothed to him had been defiled, and was wanting to dismiss her secretly, "An angel of the Lord appeared," it says, "to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not "be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which "is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear "a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he "will save his people from their sins."' Then he brought forward a sacred oracle for assurance; for he spoke again thus:

"All this took place to fulfill what was spoken through "the prophet, saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child "and bear a son, and they shall call his name Em- "manuel."' And we will find Emmanuel himself strengthening faith in himself from the things foretold by the prophets, and deeming it right to be recognized already through these deeds, and by bringing together the outcome of the results with what had already been said, that one should in no way doubt that he himself was, therefore, the one who was preached through the law and the prophets. For some of John's disciples came to him, inquiring and saying, "John the Baptist has sent "us saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect another?"' But he, although it was possible for him to say, "I am, and not another," persuades them to return to the ancient proclamation, saying, "Go "and tell John what you hear and see: the blind "receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and "the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached "to them, and blessed is the one who is not offended by "me. It is certain, therefore, that, as the Prophet says, when the years draw near, you will be recognized, and that at the times long ago foreordained, according to the will and counsel of God the Father, Christ was revealed.

For in the last times of the age he appeared to us, and was recognized and confessed, just as, indeed, even before the others, Nathanael cried out, saying, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of "Israel. He was recognized, then, when the years drew near, that is, at the time of the economy in the flesh. And he was recognized both by of the saints and of all, now henceforth, that is under heaven. For we have known the one in the midst of two living creatures, prefigured as a propitiation in legal enigmas, that is, Christ. In the troubling of my soul in anger, you will remember mercy. Human nature has offended the Creator through the transgression in Adam, who gave almost no regard to the commandment that was given. Therefore we have been troubled and have been destroyed, we wretches having fallen into a curse and a judgment, and we have been held by death, God having been angered; for our forefather Adam, as the root of the race, heard, "You are earth, and to earth you shall return. Yet the Creator did not overlook us forever, but had mercy as God. For even if "death having grown strong has swallowed up" according to the voice of the Prophet,

yet ”again God has taken away every tear from every face; the reproach of the people He has taken away from all the earth.

For in Christ the power of death has been abolished, sin having been destroyed, on account of which we were also reproached; ”For the Lord has remembered us, and has had mercy on us,” just as the divine David also sings. For he has brought us back to incorruption and life, although we were troubled, as I just said, by the divine anger, so as to be in a departure of the spirit, that is, in the laying aside and casting off of the soul; for thus is death accomplished in us. But that we were condemned to death for having offended God, and have been saved again through mercy, the blessed David will confirm, saying to the Creator of all, ”When you turn your face away, they shall be troubled, and they will return to their dust. You will send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you will renew the face of the earth. For having suffered the turning away on account of the transgression in Adam, we have returned to the dust from which we also came. But since again in Christ and through Christ we have been enriched with the divine Spirit, having become partakers of his nature, according to the scriptures, we are reconstituted to what was in the beginning, and have been made new and have been saved.

For it is true, what the divine Paul himself also wrote to us, that all things ”in Christ are a new creation, and the old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new. Therefore we were troubled from the beginning, having endured the things from the divine anger. But since, when the years drew near, Christ was known, and was revealed according to the times foreordained of old, he then remembered mercy. For we have been justified not ”by the works of the law,” according to the scriptures, nor ”by the works in righteousness which we have done, but according to his great mercy. God will come from Teman, and the holy one from Mount Paran, a thick-shaded forest. The mind has a twofold contemplation of the things set forth, and indeed we shall speak on them as is possible; for Teman is interpreted as the south. And the desert of Paran is very southerly, where Mount Horeb is also said to be, where Moses presented to God the people of Israel as he was defining the laws that determine what must be done. Therefore, applying one understanding to what is set forth, we say this:

God will come, he says, from Teman, from Mount Paran or Horeb, that is, he who of old appeared in the most southerly desert on Mount Horeb to the fathers in the form of fire, he who of old spoke the law, will come, and will be seen with flesh like us, in the role of a prophet and mediator, just as, of course, the divine Moses, to whom it was said by God, ”I will raise up for them a prophet from among their brothers like you, and I will put my words into his mouth, and he will speak to them according to all that I shall command him. But if one should wish to approach what is written in another way, it is also thus. Teman, as I said, they called the most southerly desert. Therefore they say that Bethlehem, in which Christ was born, is situated in the most southerly parts of Judea; for it has been said somewhere to her through the voice of a prophet, ”And you, Bethlehem, house of Ephrathah, you are too little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of you shall come forth to me a ruler,

who will shepherd my people Israel. Therefore God from Teman shall come, that is, from Bethlehem which is to the south. For the Word, the Only-begotten of the Father, who is by nature and truly God, having become as we are, was born of a woman in Bethlehem.

And since it is the custom of the divine Scripture to sometimes liken the Synagogue of the Jews to the more conspicuous of the mountains, because it is seen to be luxuriant with very many and most glorious men, for this reason it now likens it to Mount Paran, saying that he will come from a thick, shady mountain; and it says the mountain is shady and thick because of the fathers from whom Christ is genealogically descended. For it is possible to hear clearly the blessed Luke tracing the reckoning of the genealogy from Joseph up to Adam, and Matthew in turn bringing it down in order from David and Abraham, as I said, to Joseph. The Synagogue, therefore, is a thick and shady mountain, having brought forth in due season many from whom Christ sprang. For that he is from the Jews, how is it possible to doubt? For he was born of the blood of Abraham and David, I mean according to the flesh, and he himself somewhere says of himself, ”For salvation is from the Jews. His virtue covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. For the Only-begotten Word of God became a propitiation through faith for those on earth, when he appeared as we are and in the form of a servant, that is, a man. And for this reason he seemed in a way to be made inferior to the holy angels themselves, and to come after their glory; but he was again supreme as God.

And the most wise Paul will confirm this, saying, ”But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor. For since he became ”obedient unto death, even death on a cross,” for this reason; as the same one wrote again, ”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 things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore the Prophet will indeed speak truth in saying, His virtue covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. For those who inhabit the holy city, and dwell in the mansions above, ”Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? But he is seated on the thrones of divinity; and to none of them was it said by God the Father, ”You are my Son,” but him he both confesses as Son and names beloved, and has as his associate, co-hymned and co-worshipped.

For again the divine Paul said of him, ”And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'And let all the angels of God worship him.'” Therefore, even if he became a propitiation, having descended into humanity for us and on our behalf, he is no less God, and above all creation, I mean both visible and invisible. For thus his virtue covers the heavens; and the earth will be full of his praise. This the holy Seraphim also have cried out clearly, standing around his divine throne, and with praises greatly honoring him as Lord Sabaoth and God of all; for they say that heaven and earth are full of his glory. But if someone should wish to say this, that the virtue of Christ is great and surpassing, so as to cover the heavens themselves, if it were conceived in measurable size, he will accept a

plausible thought; for somewhere the blessed David also said, ”O Lord, your mercy is in heaven, and your truth reaches to the clouds,” signifying the loftiness of his goodness and the excellence of his truth as in a quantity according to body and according to places. And his brightness will be as the light. That the propitiation through faith, that is, Christ, has come to enlighten those in darkness, would become clear also through the voice of the holy prophets.

For one said, ”The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and the rest who dwell by the sea, Galilee of the Gentiles, the the people who sat in darkness, have seen a great light; and ”Shine, shine O Jerusalem, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you,” and God the Father himself has also testified, saying thus ”For Zion’s sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until my righteousness goes forth as light, and my salvation as a burning torch. For Christ is righteousness and salvation, ”who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,” according to the scriptures. Therefore, Christ was revealed to us as a torch for those walking as it were in darkness, through evangelical instruction delivering from that ancient mist, which the enemy of all, casting into our minds, did not permit us to behold the God who is by nature and truly is, nor indeed to contemplate the path of piety and life. The brightness, therefore, which Christ showed us, will be as light, that is, not dim nor as if weak, just as, of course, that which was through Moses; for the law was in riddles and shadows; but as a light pure and unmixed with mist, and entering into mind and heart, and flashing on us the intelligible radiance, and implanting the ray of unadulterated knowledge. Horns are in his hands.

The horn is always taken in the divinely-inspired scriptures either for kingdom and power, or for arrogance. And the blessed David teaches this, saying ”I said to the transgressors, ”Do not transgress,” and to the sinners, ”Do not lift up the horn; do not lift up your horn on high, and do not speak injustice against God. ”For ”uttering” arrogant ”words of vanity,” some, according to what is written, speak injustice against God, falsifying the orthodoxy of the dogmas concerning him, or even insulting in any other way. But the horn is significant of power, when it is said concerning God the Father who revealed the Son to us; ”he has raised up a horn of salvation for us,” and again, ”His horn shall be exalted in glory. And in good repute are all things wondrously accomplished in the power of Christ. So then, the Only-begotten has come in a form like ours, and insofar as he came into flesh and humanity, enduring the appearance of the weakness in us; except, as God, holding in his hands all the horns, that is, all the kingdoms, according to all the power of opposing energies. And when we say ”in his hands,” we mean ”in his authority. And indeed we have been taught to say to God in our prayers, ”In your hands are my lots. That every diabolical power is subject to Christ, and the so-called horns, that is, the tyrannies of the unclean spirits throughout cities and countries; for they divided among themselves the entire earth; how could anyone doubt?

For he cast some out with authority from men, and others came "and begged him not to command them to go away into the abyss. For it is written thus by the holy Evangelists. And that he scared away from his tyranny over us even the overseer of the unclean spirits himself, that is, Satan, we will easily perceive, from Christ himself saying, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Therefore, even if he became man, nevertheless in his hands, that is, in his authority, he has the tyrannies or kingdoms or even powers of the opposing forces. But if someone should wish to understand that more simply, that Christ has horns in his hands, that is, an invincible and unconquerable strength, and one which easily gores and readily destroys whichever of his enemies it should choose, and like a calf leaps upon them unbearably, he will again understand correctly. And he established a strong love of his strength. Christ came to accomplish these two things, to cast down those who are in opposition, who led astray all under heaven; for they carried away from God the creator, stealing the glory most fitting for him and him alone, and for their own kindling on their heads; and that he would save those who had been deceived and had endured a truly inescapable greed.

But that their things are gone and have completely vanished, he taught by saying "Horns are in his hands," that is, those that overthrow their powers, and as it were de-horn their arrogance. But that he was about to save us, he further demonstrates by saying He set a mighty love of his strength. For we have been saved "not by works of righteousness which we have done" ourselves, not by legal boasts; for the law has perfected no one; but by the gentleness of God the Father, who set the love of the Son on our behalf as mighty, that is, strong and great. "For God the Father so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. We have been saved therefore by the love of God the Father, and indeed also of the Son himself, who endured death for us; even though he rose again, having abolished the power of corruption, and having removed sin from us. Therefore he also said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. Mighty therefore, truly, is the love of the strength of God the Father, through which we have been delivered from death and sin and the greed of the devil. A word shall go before his face. A proclamation will go before him, he says, and a rumor will fly ahead, and there will be much talk about him.

For as soon as Christ was born of the holy virgin, the Magi came immediately from the east, with the star that miraculously appeared in the sky all but announcing his birth to them according to the divine plan. But when, as time went on, he began signs and to be a worker of miracles, then "the report of him went out," as the evangelist says, "into all Syria. And in other ways he became famous in all truth under heaven. For who has not known the glory of Christ? What nation or country has remained unheard or unexperienced of the strength that is in him? For as he himself said again, the gospel has been preached to all the nations, and the splendor of the things done by him has traversed the whole earth like the sun. And his feet shall go out into the plains. It is as if he should say again, Nothing is steep for him or impracticable; but he will walk as if on each matter by a bare and smooth road. For the bare

parts of the plains are passable and easy to travel; but those rising into hills are difficult and not fit for horses. All things therefore are easy for Christ, and whatever path he should wish to traverse, I mean in respect to each of the things being done, this is surely completely free of all difficulty. For what could he not accomplish, and very effortlessly, being God by nature and Lord of hosts?

Therefore he makes the declaration from the likeness of those going in the plains to the consideration of things. But if someone should wish to understand ”plains” as the humble in heart, who are also called a ”delightful land” and ”God’s tillage,” since they receive the seed from above and from heaven, and produce fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty, he will again understand correctly. For the Son will go out as if to farm such plains, according to that which was certainly said by him in the form of a parable, ”A sower went out to sow his seed. And David also sings somewhere, ”And your fields shall be filled with fatness; and he added that ”And the valleys will abound with grain. But that the valleys are again to be understood spiritually he allowed us to understand by adding immediately, ”They will cry out, and indeed they will sing hymns. For it is not for the unfeeling valleys to sing hymns, or to have cried out, but for the spiritual ones; and on these the divine and heavenly word would settle like dew. He stood, and the earth was shaken. The word ”he stood” may often be understood in the divinely-inspired scripture as concerning some matter that has come to its completion. For example, as if someone should say perhaps, ”This matter stood,” that is, the word concerning this, which is to say, it has been determined and done.

So also the Zipporah the wife of Moses, circumcising her child with a stone, said to the destroying angel, ”The blood of the circumcision of my child is staunched. For she did not mean to signify that the flow of blood had ceased, but that the deed of circumcision had been done, and what was sought had been accomplished; for he who is circumcised with the spiritual stone averts death; and this is the Spirit of Christ, just as indeed Joshua, who after Moses led the sons of Israel across the Jordan, commanded them to be circumcised with stone knives, fulfilling the type of the circumcision in the spirit. For just as Christ is called a rock, so also a stone, that is, a stone knife, is His Spirit. Therefore ”it stood” often signifies also the fulfillment of a matter. Therefore Christ ”stood”; that is, the things concerning him have come to fulfillment, and he appeared to those upon the earth; and the earth was shaken. And by ”earth” he means the inhabitants of the earth, who were also shaken. And in what manner, then, let us say as far as we can. For those who formerly had their minds, as it were, unshaken in the will to do evil things, those who were firm in impieties, fixed in love of the flesh, established in error, have been shaken and moved, having been transferred to the knowledge of God and to the desire for virtue.

And likewise those of the blood of Israel have been moved from the worship according to the law, having accepted faith in him; for they have passed over to choosing to live according to the Gospel, and to be governed by the Savior’s laws. And that ”to be shaken” sometimes signifies a transfer from one thing to another would be clear from the blessed David, who

psalmed and said, ”You who are seated upon the Cherubim, let the earth be shaken. For we do not say that he was entreating him for the earth to be shaken violently—I mean this perceptible one under the feet of men—but rather he was seeking the transition to occur from the worse to the better. And this is one meaning of the proposed text, but one might also accept another for it in some such way. He says, ”It stood and the earth was shaken. The earth has experienced these two things, for it both stood and has been shaken. And what again might be the explanation for both, it is necessary to make clear. It stood, therefore; for being drunk, as it were, and easily shaken toward anything whatsoever that is amiss, and, as it were, carried about by every wind, it now has a firm and established position, with Christ making it firm, according to that which was in some way said through the voice of Isaiah to the Synagogue of the Jews, ”Establish yourself, Zion.

And it has been shaken again, as I have already said, having departed from the ancient deceit, and honoring the transfer to anything whatsoever that is pleasing to God. It is truly paradoxical, therefore, that at one and the same time the earth both stood and was shaken. For Christ is the one who both makes it established for every good work, and persuades it to practice the movement from the worse to the better. He looked, and the nations melted; the mountains were shattered by force. For God to look upon sometimes signifies a consideration as in meekness and love, but at other times one in anger and threat. ”And indeed, upon whom,” he says, ”will I look, but ”upon the one who is meek and quiet and who trembles at my ”words? And somewhere the divine David also besought, saying thus, ”Look upon me and have mercy on me; but through the voice of Ezekiel he said concerning someone, ”And I will set my ”face against that man, and I will make ”him a desolation and a ruin, and I will cut him off from the ”midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the Lord. and this was of one threatening anger and destruction and the fitting justice for those who provoke. Therefore as soon as Christ looked, that is, he brought his eye in anger upon some, and immediately they melted like wax, and as if by a consuming fire the mountains were shattered by force.

And by ”nations” and ”mountains” he means the unclean spirits, and those among them who are lofty and exalted and standing like mountains above the others; but the preeminence is entirely in worthlessness, and the advantage in arrogance. or perhaps also according to the strength, the measure of the ferocity inherent in them. For the demons are arrogant, and indeed he sets in opposition to God, and they hasten to claim for themselves the glory that is fitting for Him. But they were violently shattered. For they are crushed by the power of Christ, and have come to nothing, and have been placed under the feet of those who have believed. And elsewhere again satan has been called a mountain, to whom God spoke somewhere through the voice of the prophet, as from the person of Nebuchadnezzar, ”Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth. The eternal hills melted. Having mentioned enigmatically the evil and opposing powers, which also work against the glory of Christ, casting down to sin those on the earth, he has necessarily introduced also the leaders of the Jewish Synagogue, whom he also calls hills, because they seem to be raised up high and to be above the others, at least according to the order of the

priestly ministry and the honor from it. And he calls them eternal, because of the perpetual nature of the matter; for the liturgy of God is unceasing; for he is glorified in every season and time.

For even if the power of the worship in shadows and types has perhaps ceased, yet the nature of the matter has passed over to something better. For the leaders of the holy churches minister to God no less, and perform for him the bloodless sacrifice. Therefore the hills are eternal because of the perpetual and unceasing nature of the liturgy. But they were crushed together with the spiritual mountains, and melted together with the nations. For since they have thought what is pleasing to demons, and have fulfilled what seemed good to the devil, by delivering the author of life to the cross, and having behaved insolently toward him in many ways, for this reason, justly enduring the same punishment as they, they have been deposed and have fallen, and as the prophet says, ”The house of Israel has fallen, there is no one who will raise it up. They saw his eternal ways as toils. Sometimes the sacred writings are accustomed to call the divine commandments ’ways’ and ’roads’ and ’paths’, such as what is said through the voice of Jeremiah, ”Stand by the roads and ask for the eternal paths of the Lord, and see which is the good way, and walk in it and you will find purification for your souls; and indeed also through the voice of the blessed David, ”I ran the way of your commandments, when you enlarged my heart.

The hills melted, he says, that is, those among the Jews who had received the glory of leadership, and the boasts attached to the priestly ministry according to the law. For they saw the ways, that is the commandments of Emmanuel—clearly, the evangelical decrees, and the incomparably better and more manifest instruction of the ancient oracles—as toils, that is, they considered it burdensome and full of sweat, although Christ the Savior of us all says clearly, ”Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. And in another way some made his ways unbearable, through which it was possible to pass easily into eternal life. For our Lord Jesus Christ was clarifying what the power of the mystical blessing is, saying, ”Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. But those who heard such sacred words spoke deliriously, saying, ”This is a hard saying; who can listen to it? How can this man give us his flesh to eat? And the Evangelist testified, saying that ”After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

when Christ added this to the disciples themselves, if they also chose to depart from him, saying, ”Do you also want to go away? But the divine Peter answered, crying out, ”Lord, to whom shall we depart? You have the ”words of eternal life. For they did not see the journeys as labors, but the word was truly sweet and worthy of being heard by them. And he says that the journeys are eternal. For it will in no way cease, but will rather extend into the present age, and the evangelical and saving proclamation will stand forever, even though the older and legal commandment has grown old and does not have blamelessness, as the

most wise Paul says, and for this reason the second has been introduced, "which is said to have been enacted on better promises. And so the divine David cried out beforehand in the spirit, saying to our Lord Jesus Christ, "Your righteousness is a righteousness for "the age, and your law is truth. For, as I said, the things in shadows have not remained, but the types have ceased, while the things of Christ have been firmly established, and have their unshakeable nature forever. The dwellings of the Ethiopians will be terrified, and the tents of the land of Midian. The better of the narratives somehow always has what is worthy of being heard, and an unobjectionable promise, even if one should go through the same words.

Therefore, having previously narrated the rush to cowardice of the opposing powers, and having shown them as melting in the likeness of nations, and indeed also as being crushed like mountains, he again compares them to the foreigners who campaigned against the land of the Jews. These were the Ethiopians to the east and south inhabiting the Indian sea, and indeed also the Midianites, themselves inhabiting the neighboring desert. Therefore, he says, those who fight against the holy city will be terrified, that we might understand the spiritual Zion, which is the Church of Christ, which the saints inhabit, and the chosen race, as in a type of old, Israel, just as Israel is also interpreted as Mind seeing God. And Nathanael was also admired, as "truly being an Israelite, in whom there is no "deceit. Therefore, as in an image and in types in the Ethiopians and Midianites, who always wished to harm the chosen race, that is, Israel, we will understand the hordes of demons that stand against the saints. And one might say in another way that the idolaters are called Ethiopians, whose life is carnal, earthly and in impurities; and such are the Ethiopians; for they do not have the divine light in their mind, but are, so to speak, black in heart and darkened in their minds, to whom the dragon is also said to have been given for consumption.

For David somewhere sings and says to the God of all, "You crushed the head of the dra-"gon, you gave him as food to the Ethiopian peoples. For just as we have made the life-giving Word of God our spiritual and holy food, so also the lovers of sin and those who have not known the God by nature, so to speak, feed on Satan, having him in mind, and thinking and saying his things. And the Midianites again would be, as I said, those hostile to the saints. But if someone should choose also to investigate the power of the name, Midianite is interpreted as judged, or rather condemned; and such a name would be fitting for Satan himself and for the wicked powers with him, "For whom the gloom of darkness has been kept for "eternity. Are you angry with the rivers, Lord? or is your wrath in the rivers? or your assault in the sea? For you will mount your horses, and your riding is salvation. Bending you will bend your bow against the scepters, says the Lord. The Prophet's purpose is to show that the second economy is better and more manifest than the ancient one and has come about with incomparably greater goods. For long ago through Moses he led Israel out of carnal slavery, having changed the rivers of the Egyptians into blood, and having performed signs and wonders; then parting the Red Sea, and bringing across the redeemed, but drowning in the waters the most warlike of the Egyptians.

But when the Only-begotten Word of God became man, he delivered the whole world under heaven, which was yoked to the greediness of the devil, not rivers having changed [it] into blood, not pouring out His own wrath upon waters, not dividing the waves of the sea, not bringing destruction upon men; but rather killing the blood-guilty serpent himself, and casting down the sin found by him and through him, and destroying the irresistible power of death, and calling everyone to the knowledge of God, through the holy Apostles, who, running all over the world under heaven, and carrying the name of Christ, and very justly, were admired. O then Master, he says, very worthy to be heard are the things of which You Yourself have become the author, and the things accomplished again by You are much better than those through Moses. For You will not bring wrath upon rivers; You will not rush against the sea; not in those things; from where? The wonder of Your God-befitting authority will shine forth; but You will rather mount upon Your horses, and Your riding is salvation. And who might the horses be, again?

The blessed disciples, both Apostles and Evangelists, who were wholly yoked to His divine will, who were gentle and easy to rein and ready for anything whatsoever that seemed good to Him, who had Christ as both rider and charioteer, of whom the blessed Paul is one, concerning whom He Himself says, ”For this one is a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles. And very swift indeed are the horses, traveling all over the world under heaven. Thus also ”The chariot of God is said to be ten thousandfold, having thousands of prospering ones. For very many who from time to time, and after them, have become leaders of peoples and have submitted the neck of their mind to the yokes of the Savior, and carrying His glory everywhere, and rightly dividing the word of truth, and, as it were, making the whole earth resound with the clatter of hooves. And the riding of the horses is salvation. For they ran not in vain, but so that they might save cities, and countries and nations alike, as Christ was overthrowing the principalities of demons, who had divided the whole earth, so to speak, subjecting its inhabitants to their own wills. But since the ancient principalities of the demons were about to fall, for this reason he says fittingly, Bending you will bend your bow against the scepters. For he will rush, as I just said, not in rivers or seas, but will rather overthrow the scepters of the demons.

The land of rivers will be rent, peoples will see you and be in travail; scattering the waters of his course. He remembers again the achievements of the Savior, and to the other nations, against which the bow is bent, or rather, will be bent, he says that the land of rivers will also be added, perhaps indicating that of the Babylonians; for under it at that time was also the land between the rivers; so that through this, again as by an image of perceptible enemies, the multitude of the intelligible and invisible ones might also be signified, against which is the struggle for the saints. But in some way the word of the prophets is always hidden. Therefore, as from a part of the land between the rivers, the land of the Babylonians is signified, and through it, enigmatically, the herd of demons. Or perhaps the prophetic word hints at something else for us. For he seems to call Judea the land of rivers, because of the many prophets who arose in it, watering the nation like rivers, and, as it were, flooding it with divine streams. concerning whom, I think, the blessed David also says, ”The rivers

will clap their hands together; and indeed also through the voice of Isaiah, God [says]: ”The beasts of the field will bless me, the sirens and the daughters of ostriches, because I gave water in the desert, and rivers in a waterless land to give drink to my chosen race, my people whom I have acquired to declare my virtues.

For our Lord Jesus Christ has perhaps been named a torrent of delight, and He truly is, and indeed also a river; for He said somewhere concerning Him through the voice of the saints, ”Behold, I am turning upon them like a river of peace, and like a torrent flooding the glory of the nations. And it was also said through the voice of David, ”The streams of the river make glad the city of God. And it in no way harms, in likeness to Him, the saints themselves to be called rivers, since indeed they have become conformed to him spiritually. For just as he is the true light, he said somewhere to the holy apostles ”You ”are the light of the world; so also, being himself a river and indeed living water, he grants to the saints to be glorified by the same titles. The land of the spiritual rivers, therefore, that is, Judea, not having endured to drink the living water, and not having received the word of the holy prophets, nor indeed that through Moses; for if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Christ, for he wrote about him; it will be broken, that is, it will thirst. For thirsty land breaks apart. The Prophet therefore marvels, and as if in character says: The land that formerly had many rivers, and a most abundant supply of the divine streams, will be thirsty and unwatered land.

But since, he says, O Master, the peoples have seen you appear spiritually, that is, those from the nations who understood the mystery concerning you, they immediately received the good in birth-pangs, and have become fruitful. And it would be fitting for them to say ”Through ”fear of you, O Lord, we have conceived in the womb and have been in travail ”and have brought forth. We have wrought the spirit of your salvation upon the ”earth. For those who have inscribed Emmanuel as Savior and Redeemer travail with the divine fear, and every conception of their mind will be a fruit of virtue, and their endeavor will result in a spirit of salvation; therefore peoples will see you and will travail, drinking your stream, and having become drunk with the streams of the gospel. For they eagerly approached him as he said ”If anyone ”thirsts, let him come to me and drink,” for you were, he says, so bountiful and good, as to scatter waters even in your journeys, that is, the life-giving word of evangelical instruction. For as Matthew says ”Jesus went about all the cities and villages, ”teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the ”gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease ”and every infirmity among the people. This, I think, is the meaning of scattering the waters of his journey. But that the word of divinely inspired teaching is called water everywhere in the sacred writings, how can it be doubted? The abyss gave its voice, the height of its appearance.

The sun was lifted up, and the moon stood in its order for a light. He calls the peoples who have been in travail and have now become fruitful an abyss, showing that they are many and innumerable; for such is the abyss. And by such a name the multitude of the holy angels is also called through the voice of Ezekiel. And so God said somewhere, as from the person of

the prince of Tyre concerning Satan, When I cast him down into Hades, the abyss mourned for him. For with him who was beyond all and preeminent in glory, who was also placed with the Cherubim, according to the voice of the prophet himself, having been cast down and having fallen, it is not at all unlikely that the spiritual abyss, that is, the hosts of the spirits above, was greatly grieved, and as it were, became sad for him who had suffered and had offended the God of all. Therefore the abyss, he says, that is, the immeasurable and incomprehensible multitude of those who have believed, and indeed also the height of the appearance in it, that is, again, all that is splendid and exalted in it, and adorned with the appearances in this world, or rather with vain glories, gave its voice. For Christ is glorified by every nation of men, and one may see small and great, illustrious and obscure, and those more distinguished than others, having pre-eminence either perhaps in glory, or in wealth and splendor in life, doing this eagerly;

which he very rightly called appearances or the height of appearance. For to them it is nothing other than an opinion, because ”All flesh is grass ”and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. And that the abyss gave its voice, and that small and great honor our Lord Jesus Christ with praises, the blessed David will also make clear when he says ”Praise the Lord ”from the earth, you dragons and all deeps. And having added to these mountains and hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and cattle, creeping things and winged birds, he adds again ”Rulers and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old men with younger men, let them praise the name of the Lord. And somewhere our great Isaiah also said concerning him ”Kings shall see him and be afraid; rulers and they shall worship him. And he gives as it were the reason for the deep, and indeed the height of its appearance, to give its voice, adding immediately: The sun was lifted up, and the moon stood in its order for light. And just as we have understood the deep, not according to the sensible account, for it is too crude, but rather spiritually and intellectually, so also now we will not fix the eye of the mind on the elements, I mean the sun and the moon; but by the likeness from them, darting toward better things, we shall perceive the power of the concepts.

Therefore, we say the sun is the luminous and brilliant initiation into the evangelical ordinances, and the moon, in turn, the lesser and dimmer light of the Law, shining, as in night and darkness, in the time before the advent. For it is called day in which Christ shone forth, the sun of righteousness, the spiritual morning star, rising in the hearts of those who have believed. And indeed the divine David says, ”This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. And just as the physical sun, while still low and barely rising from the earth, does not yet have a broad and brilliant light, but has its own light as if contracted within itself, but leaping up on high, it makes the emission of its ray most brilliant to all everywhere; so also the instruction through Christ, that is, the evangelical, was contracted in the beginning, and was unknown to many; but like the sun, all but rising, and going on high little by little, and sending forth the gleam of the knowledge of God everywhere, it stuns the deep, that is, the whole race of men; for this reason it also gave its voice. For it gives glory, as I said, and names God, and confesses Emmanuel as Lord and redeemer of

all. Therefore, the sun was lifted up, and no less the moon, that is, the Law, stood in its order for light.

For the instruction through Moses comes after the evangelical instruction, and this is its order, because it is both a shadow and a type. But since Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, the Law also shone forth. For by comparing the things that have come to pass with those formerly announced through it, we have already marveled also at the light of the Law itself prefiguring to us elegantly in many ways the mystery of Christ. It stood, therefore, for light. And Christ himself also blesses those who have brought together in themselves both the legal and the evangelical instruction. For he spoke thus: ”Therefore I say to you, that every scribe,” that is, one who knows the law, ”who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like a rich man, who brings out of his treasure new and old things. But we will also accept another meaning for this, not an implausible one, as it seems to me, but rather one that approaches what is likely. For we say, and very rightly, that Emmanuel is the sun. For so he has been named, and so he truly is. And it must be supposed that the Church of God is called the moon, by likeness to the element, shining for those in darkness, and gleaming as if in the night.

When, therefore, the sun was lifted up, according to the voice of the Prophet—for Christ ascended the precious cross for us—then also the church from the gentiles shone forth and stood in its order for light, that is, like a full moon, and preserving the order of its own cycle, it became a light for those in darkness, just as I said a moment ago. And that when Christ was lifted up and endured the cross for the life of all, the Church was then established, he himself will teach again: ”Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, fruit bears more fruit. And again, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to my- self. Therefore, the sun being lifted up, surely signifies either the passion on the cross, or the ascent to the heavens; for indeed we also say that he is lifted up in this way. Your missiles will go forth into the light of the lightning of your weapons. Here he calls missiles those who went throughout the whole earth, and as if sent from a bow, that is, from a strong hand, the holy apostles and evangelists, about whom the blessed David also said somewhere, “Like arrows in the hand of a mighty one, “so are the sons of those who have been cast out. For the nation of the Jews was cast out and expelled, for insulting Christ who was calling them to life;

but their sons, who are also of the blood of Israel, the chosen disciples, became missiles and arrows, as if running from a most mighty hand, and easily piercing everything struck for death. Such missiles are sent, as from the hand of Christ, and are fixed in the entrails of the devil, and destroy the dragon. And so the blessed David also sings somewhere, saying to our Lord Jesus Christ, “Your arrows are sharpened, O mighty “one, peoples will fall under you, in the heart of the king’s enemies. Therefore, by such arrows the hordes of demons are destroyed, and they become a means of destruction to the enemies; but for those who have recognized his epiphany and honored him through faith, they fulfill another need. for they make them wounded with love, according to the bride who says in the Song of Songs, “For I

am wounded “with love. And they are found in another way to be the light of the lightning of his weapons; and his weapons could be understood as those with which the blessed Paul commands that we ourselves must be armed, saying, “Put on the whole armor of God. And this is the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, having shod your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace, the sword of the Spirit. Therefore, such are the weapons of Christ, not clothing himself, but rather being given by him to the worthy. And the weapons are bright, and as if full of lightning;

for virtue is most manifest; therefore, the missiles will be a light of the lightning of your weapons. For because the weapons flash, they themselves will give light, teaching those who were ignorant. For among lovers of sin, virtue is a kind of unadorned thing, and not yet bright; but among those who know it, it is nothing less than lightning, making a person bright and transparent, and most well-known everywhere. Therefore, the divine disciples, having the lightning of your weapons first, will also be a light of it for others. For just as experts in the medical art, when they free those who have fallen into diseases of the eyes and who flee the light of the sun’s ray from their suffering, they then persuade them to endure the assault of the light, and having become a kind of light for them, they would be taken, and very reasonably so; so also the divine disciples, admiring and praising the virtues, which have also been appointed as weapons of Christ, are found to be a kind of light of the lightning in them, that is, of their radiance, for others. In threat you will make the earth small, and in wrath you will bring down nations. Through these things, the Prophet subtly indicates to us the devastation of the land of the Jews, and the destruction of the nations dwelling in it.

For since they did not accept faith in Christ, but rose up against him, and killed the author of life, for this reason they have been given over to desolation, and Isaiah foretold this to them, saying, “Woe to the lawless one; evil according to his works will “befall him. You went out for the salvation of your people, to save your anointed ones; you cast death upon the heads of the lawless, you raised up bonds to the neck forever. Again he explains to us, as it were, the whole economy of the incarnation of the Only-begotten. For he has saved those through faith justified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, and shown to be partakers of his divine nature; but he has permitted those who have chosen to disobey to be consumed in their sins, to whom he also said clearly, ”Amen, amen, I say ”to you, that if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your ”sins. You went out, therefore, it says, as a king coming against the hordes of the enemy, and armed with the law of war. And the purpose of the departure was to save your anointed ones; clearly meaning those anointed with the Holy Spirit, concerning whom he also long ago commanded through prophets, saying ”Do not touch my anointed ones, ”and do no evil to my prophets; but to prepare death for the lawless, which they, having drawn it down upon their own heads, would be caught in, by not accepting the justifying faith.

For this reason they are also bound with unbreakable bonds, and are tightened by the chains of their own transgressions; and not partially, but as it were through the whole body, and

up to the neck. But if indeed the bonds are said to be of Christ, let no one be disturbed. For always somehow the things that happen to some by the permission of God are said to be his; such as the saying, "There is no evil in a city, "which the Lord has not done. For he himself does not do the evil, but rather he often permits it to happen to the sinning cities. But if indeed the bonds spoken of here might be understood as things to be praised, again we say this, that death is indeed cast upon the heads of the lawless, but the God of all binds, as with bonds of love, those who approach him, and have been justified by faith and sanctified in the Spirit, in accordance with that which was certainly spoken through the voice of the prophet concerning those of the blood of Israel, "And I bound the feet of "Ephraim, I took him up on my arm, I drew "them with the bonds of my love. But the bond upon the necks is here understood also as the easy rein of those who have submitted to him the neck of their mind, and have taken upon themselves the truly good yoke of our Savior.

You have cut off in ecstasy the heads of rulers, they will be shaken in it. The name of ecstasy is understood in different ways in the divinely-inspired scripture. For sometimes it means astonishment, as if it might be said, for example, concerning the sins of those of Israel, "Heaven was astonished at this; and again, "Astonishment and horrible things have happened in the land; and then again at other times the removal from an earthly way of thinking to a certain divine and spiritual state of character and of life. And so the divine Paul writes to some, and says, "For if "we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. And just as we say that the turning from worse things to better things is an ecstasy beloved by God; so also we maintain that the change from useful things to shameful things is an ecstasy that is wicked and reproached. In such an ecstasy, therefore, he says, you have cut off the heads of the rulers. and he indicates those of the leaders of Israel, certainly scribes and Pharisees, and of the priests according to the law. for they were truly driven out of their senses and out of right thinking and a good mind and of the love for God, not receiving the Son, but rather even killing him, although they both knew and said, that "this is the heir. And what, then, might the manner of the cutting off be understood to be?

The divine David will fittingly clarify, saying to the Savior God of all, "Divide them in their life; for "Israel" was both the "portion" of God, and "the line of his inheritance. But since they have wickedly provoked the Son, the beloved has become sent away, and has been divided, and has been separated from the hope of those who have believed, disinherited and cast off, and has been put out of his presence, and in a second portion, and after the nations, who indeed also say of themselves that, "Blessed "are we by the Lord who made heaven and "earth; "God is the Lord, and he has appeared to us. Therefore Israel was cut off, and having fallen from the blessing, a portion... no longer of God, but rather diabolical and most dishonorable and profane. Then concerning the ecstasy he says that they will be shaken in it, that is, they will fall. For what is in vibration and agitation is near to falling. And the prophet laments for them, as if they were destroyed in many ways, saying, "The house of Israel has fallen, there is no one who will raise it. They will open their bridles, like a poor man eating secretly. The difficulty of both its syntax and its wording is very great

indeed; nevertheless we will speak as we are able, distinguishing very well the meaning of the thoughts.

Having narrated, then, the situation in which the heads of the rulers absolutely had to be, that is, those who had been chosen to lead the Synagogue of the Jews, he moves on immediately to the holy apostles, who in the beginning had great fear of their persecutors. For they were scourged in the councils and commanded to speak to no one in the name of Christ; and coming together secretly they made their supplications to God, saying, ”For in truth both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together in this city against your holy child Jesus, whom you anointed. And now, Lord, look upon their threats; clearly, those of the Jews; ”and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness. Therefore, those who were, so to speak, constrained by fear as by a bridle and forced to be silent, those who were scourged and afflicted, who spoke to some secretly and with difficulty, and who resembled a poor man eating, will open their bridles. It is as if he were to say, they will by all means be broadened into the boldness that is most dear and fitting for them. For they will in no way care about the Synagogue of the Jews; but spitting on the threats, and, so to speak, breaking the bridle cast upon them, like some noble and proud horses, they will henceforth neigh, with no one rebuking them, and will fill the whole world with their voice.

The divine Isaiah says something similar to those who minister the evangelical proclamation: ”Go up on a high mountain, you who bring good news to Zion; lift up your voice with strength, you who bring good news to Jerusalem. Lift it up, do not be afraid; behold our God, behold the Lord comes with strength, and his arm with dominion. Therefore, he says, those who were formerly like a poor man eating secretly, that is, those who had no boldness, those who were secretly and with difficulty nourished by the faith of the believers, will open their bridles to cheerfulness, in the manner already stated. And that the faith of those who are saved is a kind of food for both God and the saints, Christ himself confirms when he says concerning the conversion of the Samaritans, ”I have food to eat that you do not know. And again, ”My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. And you mounted your horses into the sea, troubling many waters. The discourse has again maintained the figure of a trope. For having named bridles, he called the holy Apostles horses, on whom Christ himself also rides, having settled as it were into their mind and heart. Therefore, he tries to teach that they were destined to lead to faith not only those of Israel, but also the very great and countless multitude of the other nations.

For he compares the world to the sea, according to what is sung in the Psalms, ”This is the sea, great and wide; there are creeping things without number; and to many waters the herds of the nations, throughout all the earth; and indeed, as I said, the holy Apostles to horses, who, travelling about the whole world, usefully troubled the idolaters who were, so to speak, snoring and resting in error; for they have caused a disturbance, summoning to fear those who were proceeding to punishment, and who would undergo the judgment by fire, if they did not choose to repent and to know the God who is by nature and truly

God. And indeed the divine Paul, speaking to the Athenians, and then to all the others having called them more supersti- tious, he has disturbed them not a little, adding this, ”The times of ignorance God overlooked, but ”now he commands all people everywhere to re- ”pent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the ”world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, having offered assurance ”to all by raising him from the dead. Therefore the trou- bled water is the multitude throughout the world; for at times it is compared to waters, and very fittingly; since the life of men is like the sea; because great is the turmoil of the affairs in it, and the pouring forth and movement upwards and downwards and towards everything whatsoever; and the troubled water is much, at least in comparison with Israel;

for they were one nation; but these are greater than any number. I watched, and my heart was startled at the voice of the prayer of my lips, and trembling entered into my bones, and under- neath me my frame was troubled. I will rest in my day of affliction, that I may go up to the people of my sojourning. It is a custom for the holy prophets to call the watchfulness in heart and mind, which they might happen to make, when the Holy Spirit proclaimed to them beforehand the knowledge of things to come, a ”watch” or a ”hearing. Therefore the same Habakkuk says, ”I will stand on my watch, and mount upon ”the rock, and watch to see what he will say in me, ”and what I shall answer to my reproof; and another again, ”I have heard a report from the Lord, and he sent a message to the ”nations,” and indeed in addition to this the divine David also says, ”I will hear,” he says, ”what the Lord ”God will speak in me. The Prophet now implies something of this sort, saying, ”I watched and my heart was startled. ”I have observed,” he says, ”the power of the things that were said; then I have been terribly startled at the voice of the prayer of my lips. For he made his supplication to God with an ode, and the manner of his prophecy was a song;

but his aim and mind were not on the rhythmic utterance, but he was rather embittered into grief, and was exceedingly fearful, as the Spirit articulated in him the things that would happen to those of Israel in the last times. And that which especially disturbed him and persuaded him to fear was, in all likelihood, perhaps this alone, lest he somehow be left behind in the evils, and witness the crushing of the people, and see death cast upon the heads of the lawless, and them being cut off in ecstasy, and shaken in it, according to the sense already explained. Then, learn- ing that the vision would be for appointed times, and the things foretold for a long postponement, almost recovering from his ut- ter despondency from then on, he says, ”I will rest in my day of affliction, that I may go up to the people of my sojourning. ”For I will not be held fast,” he says, ”in such evils, nor will I be found in this life, when the time is at hand in which such evils will surely befall those of Israel. ”For I will go from here, and I will depart to the people that has become such a sojourner in this life, just as, indeed, I myself am. For all the saints are sojourners and strangers in this world. Therefore they say, ”Here we have no lasting ”city, but we seek the city that is to come.

And David also sings somewhere to the God of all, ”Spare me, for ”I am a sojourner in the land and a stranger, as all ”my fathers were. Therefore the aim of the saints is worthy of

admiration, not even bearing, so to speak, to see those things on account of which God might happen to be provoked; and having practiced making their depar- ture from this world more pleasant than life itself, if the things for the glory of God were not saved by us. And indeed the divine Paul said that to depart is better, and to be with Christ for those who have come to this mind, so as to consider life in the body a sojourning. Because the fig tree will not bear fruit, and there will be no produce on the vines; the work of the olive will fail, and the fields will produce no food; the sheep have failed from the food, and there will be no oxen at the stalls from their healing. Just as to one who was asking and wishing to learn, for what reason he made it of great account to die, or rather to ascend to the people of his sojourning, he overshadows with much obscurity the abolition of the Synagogue of the Jews, and all but seems to lament the barrenness that would befall it. And he indicates it to us in many ways, saying that it would be like a fig tree, from which no fruit would come.

For the Savior Himself also named it thus, speaking as in a parable: ”A certain man had a fig tree planted in his ”vineyard. And since it was barren, He said that it must finally be cut down, lest it render the ground useless. And somewhere He also cursed the fig tree before Jerusalem; for not finding fruit on it, ”May no fruit,” he says, ”come from you ”forever. He also compares it to a vine devoid of grape clusters. For it is again, as the prophet Isaiah says: ”The ”vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth is a man of Judah, a new plant, ”beloved. But ”he trenched it, and put a hedge ”about it, and built a tower in it, and dug a ”winepress, and waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced ”thorns. For this reason, then, it was laid waste, as David says, ”A boar from the wood, and a wild solitary beast has ”devoured it; and he took down ”its hedge, and all ”who pass by the way have plucked its fruit. And the produce of the olive also failed, that is, again, of the Synagogue of the Jews. For the prophet Jeremiah also indicates it thus, saying, ”A beautiful olive tree, shady in appearance, ”the Lord called your name. At the sound of its pruning ”a fire was kindled upon it, great is the tribulation upon you, its ”branches were made useless, and the Lord of hosts who ”planted you has spoken evil against you. But since, as the Prophet says, its produce failed;

for though they were tutored for Christ through the law and the prophets, they did not accept the faith; for this reason it was also cut off, and its branches have fallen, and those from the wild olive tree, that is, those from the Gentiles, were then grafted in, ”and have become partakers of the root ”and of the richness of the cultivated olive tree. Then he says that the fields will not produce food. He again compares Israel to ruined crops, I think, from which the farmer could not even gather enough for food. And this would be a clear proof of the utmost barrenness. And he clarified that they were about to suffer a famine of divine teachings and fall into the last of all evils, adding that the sheep have failed from food, that is, from having no food; and that there are no oxen at the manger. By this is signified the complete failure among them of the sacred and chosen race, that is, those from the tribe of Levi, who, like oxen, thresh the spiritual threshing-floor and strip the word given through the all-wise Moses of the veils of obscurity, and set forth a kind of grain of wheat to others for understanding and as a sort of spiritual food. But they themselves were feeding at mangers on the offerings from the people, tithes, first-fruits, thanksgiving offerings. Therefore, the

sheep have failed from food; and there were no longer oxen at the manger, that is, the guides and teachers of the peoples.

For this reason also the divine Paul applies the saying, ”You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” to the heads of the teachers, clearly interpreting for us the things in the law. Moreover, he says the oxen have failed from their healing. And the saying is obscure; yet it signifies this, as I think again. For since they foolishly spurned being healed by Christ, although He strengthens the weak and justifies the ungodly, for this reason they have also failed, that is, they have been completely weakened and have come to nothing. It is a terrible thing, then, to stumble against God, and it will be the cause of the utmost barrenness. And we shall lack spiritual food, and as a result we shall be in a state beyond all evil. But I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be glad in God my Savior; the Lord God my strength, and He will set my feet for a consummation; He will make me walk upon high places, that I may be victorious in His song. Here then either the very person of the Prophet is clearly introduced, saying such things; or one might say the words belong to those justified in faith, who make Christ their delight, and rejoice in Him, and they record him as the provider of their inherent strength, and say that they can do all things in Him, just as, of course, the divine Paul also says, ”I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

And somewhere the blessed David also sings, ”For you are the boast of their strength; and they expect to be well and truly enriched by Him alone with a firm standing in piety. For ”He will set my feet for a consummation” surely indicates to us nothing other than this. And indeed the Hebrew edition has put ”security” instead of ”consummation”. But feet being set for security, what else would it signify to us, than a firm standing, as I said, in piety, and the unshakable in virtue, and being fixed in faith and love for Christ? And that the life of those justified in Christ is not lowly and groveling, but is both lofty and removed from every earthly and carnal matter, he makes clear by saying ”He will make me walk upon high places”. For the boasts of the evangelical way of life are truly lofty before God. And that we shall overcome those who oppose us, and shall be superior to our enemies, glorifying Him, he will persuade by saying, ”That I may be victorious in His song”.

Commentary of the Same on the Prophet Haggai

The purpose of the prophecy of Haggai having come about for certain other reasons we might observe, and not for the reasons one might suppose the words of the others came to be. For the divine Hosea and indeed those who follow, up to Zephaniah, foretold what would happen to the Jews at various times, and as the times of the captivity were all but upon them, they tried to frighten Israel, naming up and down the phalanxes of the enemies, the destructions of cities, the burnings, the plunderings, and usefully foretelling the devastation of the whole land to those who had chosen to be contemptuous. For they thought that even if they did not choose to fulfill what is pleasing to God from a good disposition, and to be engaged in efforts for the better, they would at least be such as to shudder at the magnitude of the disaster. But Haggai, as the times of the captivity were already completed, and Israel had been brought back to the holy city from the land of the Persians and Medes, makes his speeches, for such reasons. For Cyrus released them from captivity, and together with the sacred vessels he commanded them to go home, and to build again the divine temple, the one in Jerusalem, and in addition to this also to wall the city itself, if they chose.

When this had happened, and the temple was in its first foundations, certain men in Samaria, Belemus and those with him, being envious, wrote against those from Israel, feigning goodwill toward the rulers of the Babylonians, saying that Jerusalem had become warlike and hard to encounter, and unbearable even to the kings of the Persians. Then they persuade them to order the Jews to be quiet, and neither to raise the temple any longer, nor indeed to apply themselves to the diligent work on the city. After a short time had passed, Darius succeeded to the kingdom, and it was the second year of his reign. And when some of the Jews in Babylon fell down and besought him to finally permit them to raise the divine temple, Darius ordered, and wrote to those administering the governments throughout all Phoenicia, not to hinder the Jews if they chose to rebuild the temple; but even to lavish upon them a supply of money, and to allow the cedars in Lebanon to be brought down by them unhindered, so that, lacking nothing for their need, the things for the honor and glory of the God who rules over all might finally be easily completed. But since the history has been told subtly and clearly in the first book of Ezra, I think it superfluous to speak slenderly of these things for the present.

Therefore, since it was now possible for those of Israel to labor, and to build the divine temple, and to offer sacrifices and prayers, and to live according to the customs of the law, those of Israel were neglectful, each one setting his own affairs in order, and having turned completely to what was pleasant and dear to themselves, and holding the things for the glory of God in very little account, they were afflicted again, as God struck them, not with war, but rather with famines and barrenness and destruction of cattle. For He wished to make them better, not by subjecting them to punishments equal to their offenses, but at once pitying them as weary, and again correcting them out of love. This, in brief, is the occasion of the prophecy of Haggai. The word is mixed, and with the things done and spoken historically, the mystical and innermost and fitting contemplation for spiritual people is infused. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, saying. I said before, that the laziness regarding the temple had a good excuse for those of Israel, their authority having been taken away, and those in Samaria being very envious of this, and having made a great denunciation of Jerusalem before those directing the Persian powers.

But when Darius was now in his second year in the kingdom, and then he had given them unimpeded and free authority for their love of work, and commanded them to do what seemed good, and to hold to holy endeavors, and had also assigned resources of money, their laziness no longer had a good excuse, but seemed beyond all reason, and the pretext was utterly implausible. Therefore the word comes by the hand of Haggai; and "by the hand" you will understand as "by the administration of," that is, by one ministering the words from God, and carrying out the service of prophecy. He also usefully points out the very times in which Darius commanded such things, cutting off beforehand, as I said, the foolish pretexts of those of Israel for choosing to be lazy again. Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the tribe of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jozadak, the high priest, saying, Thus says the Lord Almighty: This people says, The time has not come to build the house of the Lord. Shealtiel was the son of Jeconiah, being of the tribe and blood of David. Therefore, while this man was exercising the royal rule in Jerusalem over Judah, the city was sacked, and all Israel went away captive, Nebuchadnezzar at that time burning down the divine temple itself, and Jeconiah himself was taken, and was a captive along with the others. And Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel.

Therefore, when Israel returned to Jerusalem, since he was indeed of the blood of the tribe that had obtained the kingdom, he reigned over Judah. But Joshua, being of the tribe and blood of Levi, and as from the root of Aaron, held the honor that was pre-eminent and select from the others, and was high priest. For thus the law named him who was appointed to lead the sacred orders, saying that those in the cities of refuge should not be released from their flight, but wherever each one might be, to remain there, "until the high priest dies," that is, the chief priest. Therefore the word came to both, I mean the king and the one who presided over the sacred orders. For it was fitting for them to announce to all the others what was prophesied. Not to those ignorant, I think, of the peoples' excuses did the God of all command to report it, but as if smiling at those who fall back into laziness at an

inopportune time, and at those who had immoderately neglected the very things of which they ought to have taken earnest care. For it was better to consider that, if the things of God were of more urgent account to them, they would certainly, being maintained in well-being by His forbearance and grace, have lived in prosperity and wealth, and had the necessities of life in abundance.

Therefore, as it were, somehow he bears witness through the voice of the Prophet, how impiously Israel had neglected those things which were most useful for it and looked to the glory of God. For concealing, as they think among themselves, their accusations with specious pretexts, they say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the temple of the Lord; but the time for being willing to do rightly is always present, and for the good and upright to fulfill the things that tend to the glory of God, is always in their power. And if indeed that which hinders and seems to stand in the way should somehow be removed, then truly the postponement is very grievous, and the accusations are henceforth of sloth and of extreme indolence, whatever arguments might be made about this. And this, I think, is what is said through the voice of David, "Incline not my heart to words of wickedness, to make excuses in sins. 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 your paneled houses, while this house lies waste? A second oracle from God to Haggai, condemning Israel with a clear reproof, and showing that they placed things for their own rest and luxury above the glory of God.

For is it, he says, that the time has not yet come when the God of all should be honored by the raising of the temple, but your own affairs have reached such a point of timeliness and glory, that you live luxuriously in richly furnished homes, and take pride in paneled courts? Then does it not seem burdensome and unbearable to you, to see the temple so dishonorably outraged, overturned and in a most unseemly state, and almost crying out against the impiety of the Babylonians and those ancient conflagrations? And yet how is it not better to see it in good condition and in its former state? For thus it would be possible hereafter both to sacrifice to God, and to make prayers for whatever you might choose. And paneled houses, he says, are those whose doorposts, that is, the posts of the doors, might be hollowed out with iron, with carpenters, I suppose, carving them around, and engraving intricate designs from their own skill. This is a sign of those who are already living in luxury, and are henceforth taking pride in their wealth. For such ambitious construction of houses beyond what is necessary would be a very clear proof of an abundance of possessions. It is truly terrible, then, and has the sin without excuse, if we should put the things of God in second place and after human things. And now thus says the Lord Almighty: Set your hearts on your ways. You have sown much, and brought in little;

you ate, but not to fullness; you drank, but not to drunkenness; you clothed yourselves, but were not warmed in them; and he that earns wages has earned them for a bag with holes. Having been sparing, as I said, of the more urgent things, those of Israel, and having neglected the things pertaining to the glory of God, turned to concerns for themselves, raising up luxuriously furnished houses; then saying ignorantly, "The time has not come to build

the house of the Lord. For since it was necessary for them to contribute to the construction of the divine temple, and then they were unwilling to do this, for this reason, alleging a lack of money, they said that it was necessary first to gather it, and as it were, to first rub off their poverty, by farming for the time being, or by trading, or by gathering herds of cattle, or by practicing some other such thing. But it was better to be of good courage in God, who finds ways even out of impossible situations, and has the power to enrich and to bless those who farm, and who discovers the paths of holy provisions. But since, lacking pious reasonings, they have fallen away from favor from above, having in no way acted rightly, for this reason he necessarily says, Set your hearts on your ways.

which is like as if he said, Consider carefully what paths of life you have walked, or what things for the sake of love of gain having undertaken it, you acted according to your wish. you sowed much and brought in little. But it was better, with God blessing, to sow little, but to gather in much. But since that which was necessary was absent, the labors were many, but the fruits very few. You ate, and not to fullness. This is a terrible thing, and holds the proof of both the utmost want and misery, if the things sown are many, but the fruits so few, that for those who have toiled the penalty of famine is attached, and their food falls short of satiety. You drank, and not to drunkenness. For the vineyard was not rich in grapes. And the trees, though having very fine branches, were sick along with the crops. You clothed yourselves and were not warmed in them, a plague perhaps having fallen upon the flocks of sheep, so that even those who possessed many were in want of clothing. But also he who gathered wages, gathered them into a bag with holes. And through these things he indicates those who have a commercial practice, who in a way collect the wages of commerce, always adding extra charges to each of the things bought, and making their purses fat with the increases in prices. But not even for these was there benefit, he says, from their love of gain.

For falling, perhaps, into unexpected losses and shipwrecks, they seemed to differ in no way from those who put money into a bag with holes. It is better, therefore, and wise to seek to be blessed by the God who offers all things to us. And this would easily come to those who have chosen to mind His things, and have preferred the things for His glory over their own. Thus somewhere the Savior Himself has also said to us ”Do not be anxious ”for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put ”on. But seek rather the kingdom of God and ”His righteousness, and all these things shall be added ”to you. Since I think the story contains its own narrative sufficiently, come, let us apply our mind to spiritual contemplations and consider this: that what happened to the Jews might be a type, and a very clear one, of the universal and most general economy which came to be through Christ. For they were in Babylon, weighed down by the yoke of involuntary servitude, and paying the penalty for their sins; and for this reason they were placed and acted under the hands of their enemies, but they were redeemed at times when God took pity, and they were brought back home again, and inhabited the holy land, with Zerubbabel and Joshua leading and presiding.

And Darius, although still attached to the worship of idols, is seen to have commanded that the divine temple should be rebuilt, also providing timber from Lebanon and resources of money; but they were still lazy and slow concerning the need to fulfill what was pleasing to God. And they were also found making excuses, saying, The time has not come to build the house of the Lord. And the whole earth was also subject to the deceiving and tyrannizing Satan, and it was captive, ensnared for this through sin, and by not knowing the God who is by nature and truly, and the Creator of all. But God in Christ delivered it, having broken the bonds of servitude. For through Him we have been guided, and leaving our sojourns among enemies, and having abandoned the polytheistic error like some foreign land, we have run up to Zion, that is, the spiritual one, that is to say, the Church. For observe how Christ is prefigured for us in Joshua and Zerubbabel. For, as I said, Zerubbabel was from the tribe of Judah. And from it also has sprung our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore He has also reigned over Israel. For thus somewhere he says through the voice of David "But I "was appointed king by Him on Zion His holy "mountain, declaring the Lord's decree. And Joshua indeed was from the tribe and blood of Levi, and was also named high priest;

and Christ has also become our high priest, ministering Himself on our behalf, as a spotless sacrifice, as a true lamb, offering Himself to God the Father for a fragrant aroma. And somehow he will confirm the one upon this for those choosing to speak with lean words, also the clarification of the names themselves, that is, the interpretation. For Zerubbabel signifies a flow transferred; and Salathiel, a Turning Away of God. And Christ said somewhere, "Behold, I turn upon them as a river of peace, and as a torrent flooding the glory of the nations. For He is confessedly himself the torrent of delight, and, as it were, the flow of peace. But he has turned to us, and is all but transferred, having left Israel. And he has gone, as I said, to those called from the nations, very well bestowing an abundant outpouring of good things from above and spiritual things. And Jesus again signifies "Iao salvation," and indeed Josedec "Iao righteousness; and Iao is the God of all. And Christ has become for us both salvation and righteousness from God the Father. For in him we have been saved, having fled the net of death, and we have been justified through faith, having shaken off the sin that tyrannized over us. Therefore; for I will bring the discourse back again to the beginning; we shall contemplate him as king in Zerubbabel, and as high priest indeed in Jesus.

But let the eager learner see again the Jews' relapse into sloth concerning choosing to labor for the things for the establishment of the divine temple, that is, of the Church of Christ; and let him observe in addition to these things also the eagerness of the nations, and their being very greatly stirred up to a love of labor. For Darius, as I said, had commanded the temple to be raised, and the things for the glory of the God who rules over all to be fulfilled; but they were slothful and most unwilling to work, and preferring their own things to the things pleasing to God, and very greatly inclined toward more earthly things. for it says they were building wainscoted houses. Therefore, the divine David says concerning the nations, "You have heard the desire of the poor, O Lord; your ear has attended to the preparation of their heart. For those from the nations were more ready to believe, but those from Israel were

very slothful. And you might see what I am saying also in the evangelical writings, that is, the parables. For the servants inviting to the supper were running, gathering people to the wedding feast; but they did not wish to come, but made "excuses in sins. For one said, "I have bought a field; and another, "I have married a wife; and others went to their business.

Therefore those in the roads were called and ran in to the wedding feast, those found by the hedges, and truly the first have become last, and the last first. Thus also Christ spoke through the voice of David concerning both those of the blood of Israel and the nations: "A people whom I did not know has served me; at the hearing of the ear they obeyed me. Alien sons lied to me; alien sons have grown old and have limped from their paths. Thus says the Lord Almighty: Set your hearts on your ways. Go up to the mountain and cut timber and build the house, and I will be pleased in it and will be glorified, said the Lord. You looked for much, and it became little; and it was brought into the house and I blew it away. He makes a frequent reminder, knowing that the matter contributes to the benefit of the hearers. Thus also the divine Paul writes to some, "To write the same things is not tedious for me, but for you it is safe. Consider therefore, he says, your own ways, which you have now made. And what these are, he immediately makes clear: You looked for much and it became little, and it was brought into the house and I blew it away. For they have missed their hope, I mean, the one in choosing to till the earth. For having spent long sweats, they barely gathered little. But they have been deprived of these things too;

for they have been blown away, that is, they have become others', and are by no means for them, but have rather been spent by those accustomed to be greedy. Therefore, then, their effort and toil was in vain, because they were not more willing to accomplish what was pleasing to the Master, and they made their care for the baser and more earthly things more important than the love of labor for better things. Did he then leave Israel unadmonished, not has he shown to the erring the way of correction? And indeed we shall immediately observe this very thing happening. For he said, "Go up to the mountain and cut wood and build the house, and I will be glorified in it again, and I will be well pleased," that is, I will both accept and praise the efforts and zeal of those who have labored for this. It is, therefore, good and pleasing to God to hasten to fulfill whatever things might appear useful and necessary for the establishment of the Church and for its building. And we shall do this, and very prudently, gathering, as it were, the most necessary material, and cutting wood, as from a forest, the spiritual insights in the divinely-inspired scripture; by which one might make the glory or understanding concerning God secure and well-founded, and show that the manner of the economy in the flesh is well-ordered and excellently made;

and in addition to this, he will bring to an accurate knowledge of spiritual craftsmanship, and of the gentleness understood in character and manners. Through these things, we say, the house of God is built and the establishment of the Church is accomplished. And I will say in addition to this, that each of us might be understood as a temple and a house of God. For Christ has dwelt in us through the Spirit; and we are temples of the living God, according to the scriptures. Therefore, let each of us build his own heart through right faith, let him

have as a foundation Christ himself, the Savior of all, who is truly precious; and let him add to these other material, I mean obedience, and compliance in everything whatsoever, courage, patience, self-control. For being thus joined together "through every joint of the supply," "we shall grow into a holy temple and into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. But those who are slow to faith, or even having believed, are yet somehow sluggish towards turning away from passions and sin and worldly love of pleasure, for this very reason have all but cried out, "The time has not come to build the house of the Lord; for this reason they also fall into shortages of heavenly goods, and into spiritual barrenness, their mind wasting away within them, like some piece of land, so as to have neither grain, that is, strength, nor indeed wine, which is a symbol of gladness.

For it is written that "bread strengthens a man's heart, and wine gladdens a man's heart. Therefore thus says the Lord Almighty: Because my house is desolate, while you each run to your own house, for this reason the heaven will withhold dew, and the earth will hold back its produce from you. And I will bring a sword upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the wine and upon the oil and upon all that the earth brings forth, and upon men and upon cattle and upon all the labors of their hands. He does not permit those who are utterly negligent of divine things to put their own affairs in a better state, and to place earthly things before those that are for his glory; but rather he persuades them to consider that if the incomparably superior things are not well-ordered, then the lesser things, in which they wish to be, could never be well-ordered. For this reason he says, "Because my house is desolate, while you each run to your own house," for this reason this and that will happen, by which the things in the fields would immediately be destroyed, heaven no longer sending down dew, the earth checking its own strength, and indeed a sword, or wrath, being brought upon them, with crops and vines and olive trees withering together, and in addition to this, men and cattle being devoured.

Therefore, for those who are slow to fulfill the things for the glory of God, and those things by which his house would be seen to be established, that is the Church, there would be neither spiritual dew, that is, the comfort from heaven that enriches souls and hearts; nor indeed fruitfulness from the earth, that is, the achievements through the body; no grain, no wine, no use of oil. For they will be entirely and in every way powerless, and far from being gladdened, and they could in no way be enriched by the spiritual oil of gladness, and they will remain altogether without a taste of and without a share in the blessing through Christ; and in addition to these things they will be subjected to the sword, and they will endure a completely unrewarded labor, even if some manner of equity were practiced for them. For no one is crowned, "unless he competes according to the rules," as it is written. Therefore, let us consider zeal for better things to be especially important and among the most venerable of things; and let our own affairs be considered of less account, and let them come after things for the glory of God. And not only hearths, and possessions, and things for empty glory, but indeed also kindred, and brothers, and fathers. For thus Christ also says somewhere, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

and he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. And Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua the son of Jozadak, the high priest, and all the remnant of the people heard the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him to them; and the people feared the presence of the Lord. That He does not make His threats in vain, and that fear is not an unprofitable thing for those accustomed to be idle, one might easily perceive from this. For behold, behold, as soon as they heard the divine words, they turn immediately to diligence, and henceforth they obey those appointed to lead, I mean both Zerubbabel and Joshua, and they treat the prophet's words with the greatest possible reverence, and they are moved by his mission, although previously they had considered the matter worthy of very few words. Therefore it is true and is seen through the events themselves that "Whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; and He scourges every son whom He receives. For the fear of being punished sometimes changes the mind for the better; and the onset of gloomy things shifts us into the fear of God; and what is in the book of Proverbs is true, that "He who fears the Lord, this man is healthy," and again, "The fear of the Lord is life for a man.

and likewise Wisdom, "The fear of the Lord is glory and a boast; and "The fear of the Lord will delight the heart, and will give, in addition to these, gladness and joy and length of days. But see how gently God strikes us, and as would be fitting for Him. For He does not immediately bring the things of wrath upon human bodies, but rather He terrifies with external and small fears, and by losses of foodstuffs He refashions them for the better and for choosing henceforth to work at His things. And Haggai the messenger of the Lord said to the people, I am with you, says the Lord. See philanthropy immediately accompanying the changes for the better. For the God of all in a way changes along with those who have chosen to repent, and He promises to be with them, and what could be equal to this? For with God being present, all harm will depart from us, and good things will certainly enter, and the ways of prosperity will immediately appear established, and whatever is most pleasant will happen. But if the sacred Scripture calls Haggai the messenger of the Lord, let no one suppose that he is an angel by nature, but was born as we are, a man from a woman; for to think thus is utterly senseless. But we shall rather suppose, if we are of sound mind and an intellect that sees what is true, that he was called and named a messenger from the act of announcing a message.

Since nothing prevents us from falling into another absurdity, confessing that those who announced to Job the things that happened in the fields from the horsemen are also angels by nature, and indeed also that his children died when the house collapsed. And the Word of God is also called "Messenger of great counsel. For He announced to us the will of God the Father. Therefore, a messenger is from the act of announcing a message, and not at all, if the title should happen to be said of men, from being by nature not what we are. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel of the tribe of Judah and the spirit of Jesus the son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the remnant of all the people, and they went in and did the works in the house of the Lord Almighty their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. The children of Israel feared the presence of

the Lord. But consider again for me, how they had not previously proceeded to choose to do the things pleasing to God, unless He was with them, and stirred up their spirit. We shall know then from this, that even if one should choose to voluntarily do good;

and even if he should happen to be in such readiness, yet he will accomplish nothing at all, unless God is with him and rousing him to courage, and sharpening him for patient endurance, and cutting off the sloth that hinders industriousness. Therefore the divine Paul also says concerning those entrusted with the divine preaching that "I labored more "abundantly than all of them; but he added with all wisdom, "Yet not "I, but the grace of God which was with me. And indeed the Savior Himself says to the holy apostles, "Without me," He says, "you can do nothing. For He is our desire and our readiness for anything good whatsoever, He is our strength, and when He is with us we will prosper, building ourselves up "into a holy temple, into a dwelling place of God "in the Spirit; but when He departs and withdraws, how could anyone doubt that we will accomplish nothing, being overcome by sloth and cowardice, and shaking off the labor as unprofitable? But see those who formerly fell under wrath on account of much disobedience, at last running into the house of the Lord and working, with Zerubbabel and Jesus the high priest being with them. And this affair would again be a type of the calling of Israel which will take place in the last times of the age; who were indeed disobedient in the beginning, and for this reason they have remained fruitless, without dew and grain and wine and indeed also oil; and they have also fallen by the sword.

But since they at last feared the presence of the Lord, and were put to shame by the words of the holy prophets, they will have the God of all with them, and their spirit will be stirred up, and they themselves will also work on the things for the temple of the Lord, that is, the Church. And these things are in Christ; for He is prefigured, as it were, in Zerubbabel and Jesus; for He is at once king as God, and again high priest as man, and mediator between God and men; for the priest mediates. And the phrase, On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, was necessarily added, clearly showing the quick-turning of the mind of those of Israel. For the word came to them by the hand of Haggai in the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, but they rushed into the labors on the temple on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month; so that the days in between for delay, that is, for deliberation, were twenty-three in number.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the Lord spoke by the hand of Haggai the Prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the tribe of Judah, and to Jesus the son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, saying, Who is there among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do you see it now, as though it were nothing in your sight? They were entering the house of God and taking charge of the works on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month; then immediately on the twenty-first day of the following seventh month, the word of God came to the blessed Prophet Haggai. What then shall we reckon upon this, and what is the reason, it is necessary to say. Having begun to endure hardship, and

having taken up the cares for the divine temple, having now completed the twenty-seventh day at this, they were found to be fainthearted, and perhaps whispering that very thing either among themselves, or to one another, that they were laboring in vain; and even if it should happen that the temple be rebuilt, it will in no way be like the first one. For the one was exceedingly splendid and constructed with an ambitious hand, beautiful with gold and silver offerings; but the other was unadorned and lacking all ornament and deprived of the ambition that comes from wealth.

For that first one, those who had reigned at various times in Jerusalem, still boasting in their wealth, lavishly adorned, and before all others, Solomon; but they were commanded to build the other, having barely recovered, and still dripping with the sweat of captivity, and having absolutely nothing in their homes. Swimming in such reasonings and being distressed, they worked, but having become unenthusiastic and sluggish, they were again found out. For this reason God strengthens the weak, and brings a most useful question to them, if indeed there is anyone among them who has seen the former temple in its first glory. But they were very few and aged. For the temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and Israel was in captivity, and was released only after seventy years had passed. Therefore, it was hard to find and a very old man who was alive before the destruction, and had lived in captivity, and returned again to Jerusalem. For this reason he says, ”Who will be the man among you who saw this house in its former glory, then will see the future and new one as not existing at all? And indeed, there is a rebuke in the question, as though they did not think that even if they themselves were very poor and in want of money, yet God would not be weak, but he himself would again suffice, I say, to make his own temple all-praised and glorious.

”And now be strong, Zerubbabel,” says the Lord, ”and be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and let all the people of the land be strong,” says the Lord, ”and work, because I am with you,” says the Lord Almighty, ”and my word which I covenanted with you when you came out of the land of Egypt, and my spirit stands in your midst. Take courage. He does not allow them to be shaken by despondency, nor indeed to be overcome by fears leading to sluggishness; but rather he widens them to diligence, and produces in them a vigorous zeal; and at the same time he trains them for faith, and shows them to be steadfast, having said that they must take courage, and that which is beyond these things and truly most desirable, he promises to be with them; and in what manner, he added, saying, ”My spirit stands in your midst. Take courage. No one with a good mind and a sound understanding would doubt that to those who labor generally for the building of the divine temple, that is, the Church, he bestows both strength and gives courage, because he will be with them through the Holy Spirit, and will accomplish all things for them through which they might be able to show their own life to be splendid and of good repute.

Thus also our Lord Jesus Christ, to the holy apostles who were about to build the Church and to gather the believers into a holy temple, necessarily said, ”Behold, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age. That he was about to be with them again through the

Spirit, he himself will clarify again, at one time saying, ”I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you; and at another time making the manner of his arrival clear, by saying again, ”It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you. Therefore he is with those who build his house, but he departs again and completely withdraws from those who shake it. And these would be, again, those who in Beelzebul say, ”Jesus be anathema,” and who pervert all that is right, and pour the poison of destruction into the souls of the more simple. ”Because thus says the Lord Almighty: Yet once more, I will shake the heaven and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all the nations, and the elect of all the nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord Almighty; ”mine is the silver and mine is the gold,” says the Lord Almighty.

He brings the discourse back to the the church from the gentiles, and to the times of the coming of our Savior. Then indeed he promises to shake both heaven itself and the earth, and also the sea, and in addition to these, all the nations. For he said, ”Yet once I will shake. This seems to imply some such meaning, at least according to what seems right to me myself. Therefore, when he planned to free Israel, which had worshiped idols and been brought up in the customs and laws of the Egyptians, and wanted to transfer it to the knowledge of the truth, he is seen having all but shaken all things: the waters having been turned into blood, the heaven sending down hail, the sea being parted and its waves being solidified in the form of walls, heaven dripping manna. And the psalmist implies something of this sort, saying, ”O God, when you went forth before your people, when you passed through the wilderness, the earth shook, for the heavens also dropped. And we say that the earth was shaken at that time, not by enduring its usual tremor, but as the exodus of the sons of Israel became a sign and escaped the notice of no one on the earth. He says that a certain shaking of this kind will happen again at the time of our Savior’s coming, as no one will be ignorant of the achievements through it.

For heaven knew the mystery, and Paul is a witness to this, saying, ”That now to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. And likewise the whole earth also knew, and the sea, that is, the islands. For who at all is seen to be deprived of this knowledge? What sea, what nation, what portion under heaven? The gospel ”has been preached to all the nations,” according to the Savior’s voice. So then, he says, ”Yet once I will shake the heaven and the earth, and then the chosen of all the nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory. For very many, from every nation, and illustrious and chosen, have become believers, and have been gathered into the house of God as in the order of splendid offerings, and through this attaching glory to him, rendering it renowned and celebrated, and having been glorified by Christ. For they have learned both to pray and to say, ”And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,” and again, ”We are blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth. And that God does not need inanimate matter, but intelligible comeliness, he implies by saying, ”The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord Almighty.

For it is as if he were to say, "Do not consider the temple inglorious because it may happen to lack gold and silver and the splendor from wealth. I have not needed such things; whence? For all the silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord Almighty; but I seek rather genuine worshipers, with the splendor of such I will gild my temple. For just as, when he was putting Israel away from the sacrifices according to the law, he necessarily said, "I will not accept calves from your house, nor goats from your flocks; for all the beasts of the field are mine, cattle on the mountains, and oxen; so also here, rejecting adornment from matter, but seeking rather the intelligible, he says, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," that is, "I have received in full and am filled, and I have needed none of these things; but let him rather come who has right faith, who is distinguished by the boasts of virtue, who is resplendent with love for me, the pure in heart, the poor in spirit, the compassionate and good. For being so gathered into my temple, that is, the Church, they will render it renowned and conspicuous. Because great will be the glory of this house, the latter more than the former, says the Lord Almighty, and in this place I will give peace, says the Lord Almighty, and peace of soul for a possession to everyone who builds to raise up this temple.

For according to the at the time of the coming of our Savior, the divine temple was shown to be incomparably more glorious, and so better than the former and superior, by as much as one might think the worship in Christ and according to the Gospel differs from the worship according to the law, and the truth from the things in shadows. And besides; for I shall think it necessary to say that other thing usefully; there was one temple of old, and only in Jerusalem, and there was one nation from Israel performing the sacrifices in it. But since the Only-begotten, being God, became "Lord and has appeared to us," according to the scriptures, the world under heaven has now been filled with holy houses and innumerable worshipers, who honor the God of all with spiritual sacrifices and intellectual fragrances. And this, I think, is what was proclaimed beforehand through the voice of the prophet Malachi, as from the person of God: "For I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is glorified among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice. Therefore, the saying is true, that the glory of the latter temple, that is, of the Church, will be greater.

But that to those who have taken care to build it, Christ will be given as a kind of gift from the Father and a present from heaven, he who is the peace of all, through whom "we have access in one Spirit to the Father," he will make clear by saying that I will give peace in this place and peace of soul for the preservation of everyone who builds to raise up this temple; for Christ himself also said somewhere, "My peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you. And how this thing benefits those who have loved, Paul will teach again, writing: "The peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your bodies; and the wise Isaiah also pleaded somewhere, saying, "Lord our God, give us peace, for you have given all things to us; so that for those who have once been deemed worthy to receive the peace of Christ, it is possible easily to save their own soul and to direct the mind toward the achievement of virtue. Therefore, he says that peace will be given to everyone who builds. For whether one builds a church, and is appointed as an initiator into the mysteries over

the house of God; or whether he benefits his own soul, presenting himself as a living and spiritual stone "for a holy temple, for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit," such a one will in every way and entirely gain the ability to save his own soul easily.

On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Haggai the Prophet, saying: Thus says the Lord Almighty: Ask the priests concerning the law, saying: If a man carries holy flesh in the hem of his garment, and the hem of his garment touches bread or cooked food or wine or oil or any food, will it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No. And Haggai said, If one who is defiled by a dead body touches any of these things, will it be defiled? And the priests answered and said, It will be defiled. And Haggai answered and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, says the Lord, and so are all the works of their hands, and whoever draws near there will be defiled. This is another oracle through the Prophet to Israel, and we say it came about for such a reason. For in the second year of the reign of Darius, in the seventh month, when God was reproaching those who had been redeemed from captivity, and accusing them of hesitation, I mean concerning the need to work on the temple, they had scarcely run to it, and were then laying claim to the sweats of industry. Then God praised them for having done this, and promised to be with them, and to bless them, and commanded them to be of good courage, as the Spirit was standing in their midst;

but they were no less hesitant and reluctant to work, and when scarcely two months had perhaps passed, they relapsed into idleness, and were again caught being terribly distressed. for toward the works of commerce terribly and strangely having turned away, and being incontinent towards avarice, they admitted listlessness, as if it were not permitted for them as in ample leisure to be occupied with the cares of commerce; then bringing sacrifices, they said the matter would suffice for them for it to be necessary to be sanctified, even if by chance the divine temple had not yet been built. The Prophet, therefore, is commanded to wound them with clever reproofs and to teach that even if they should choose to fulfill vows and sacrifices, but being slothful were found to be so concerning the need to complete the house of God, it will not be for their benefit, but rather for both wrath and judgment, this not wishing to sacrifice oxen at the proper time and to approach the divine altar; and he makes clear in addition to these things, that on account of the commercial enterprises set before them, mingling with wicked and foreign men, and certainly also with idolaters, they are utterly defiled. But the question is exceedingly legal and indeed difficult to interpret; however, as is possible, I will make it clear, presenting what is meant through what words I am able. Therefore the Prophet asks the priests for a law;

for it is written, "That the lips of a priest will guard judgment, and they will seek the law "from his mouth; and what is the question? If a man carries holy flesh in the corner of his garment and the corner of his garment should touch bread or cooked food or wine or oil or any food, will it be sanctified? And the priests answered and said, No. And holy flesh, he says, is that taken from an animal offered for sacred service to God; but he wishes to teach them this: the priests, when at times performing the sacrifices according to the law,

touched, also through their garments, the flesh that was about to be burned as incense. Therefore, he says, if a sacred garment, sanctified perhaps by holy flesh, should touch some other thing, that has not been offered to God, will that also be holy? The priests denied this according to the law. Therefore, let us proceed from the example to what is more true: Will the one who offers a sacrifice, if he should provoke God in other ways, be sanctified by it? By no means, but rather he is condemned, as not yet having been cleansed, but having offered a sacrifice. And that the word is true, hear what the lawgiver says in Leviticus: ”And ”the flesh that touches any unclean thing, shall not be eaten; it shall be ”burned with fire.

Every clean person shall eat the flesh, but the ”soul who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of ”salvation, which is for the Lord, and his uncleanness is upon ”him, that soul shall perish from his people. And ”the soul who touches any unclean thing, either from ”the uncleanness of a man or of unclean four-footed animals ”or of any unclean abomination, and eats of the ”flesh of the sacrifice of salvation which is for the Lord, that soul shall perish ”from its people. You see how useless, but rather even a cause of wrath and death, it is to offer sacrifices with unwashed hands. Just as, therefore, the garments of the priests, although having been sanctified through the flesh of the sacrifice, would not sanctify anything touching them; so, he says, the act of sacrificing to God would not make holy those who have chosen to grieve Him in another way, and who wish to be idle concerning what is pleasing to God. And that, as I said, on account of commerce and the profits from it, mingling with profane men, they themselves will also certainly be in participation of their abomination, he makes clear through the other question; for he said again, If one who is defiled by a dead body should touch any of these things, will it be defiled? And the priests answered and said, It will be defiled. For the law through Moses has commanded those who are consecrated not to touch a dead body, nor indeed to approach dead men.

And at any rate he said it is necessary for the priests not to be defiled, except only for a father and mother and brothers, but for the one who presides over and is pre-eminent in the sacred orders, not even for these at all. But what was commanded was a riddle; for the law is a shadow; for a dead person would again be a type of dead works and worldly uncleanness. But I think it is necessary for those who have practiced a sacred and all-holy life, of dead works to be separated and to love to stand aloof from worldly corruption. But if it happened at that time that one who had visited the dead touched some one of the others, or a man perhaps, or even food, this was altogether according to the law in a state of pollution. The Prophet therefore asks, if when someone has touched a dead body, and then, having remained unwashed, should happen to touch something else, whether he defiles it in every way and altogether. And when they said, 'He will defile it'; God then adds: So is this people, and so is this nation before me, says the Lord, and so are all the works of their hands, says the Lord, and whoever approaches there, will be defiled. For since he touches dead works, he says, not only is he himself defiled, but he has come to such a point of worthlessness, as to be fit to be able, and that very vigorously, to defile others.

Therefore, one must take care of good works, and let us be zealous to fulfill that which is most truly dear to God, and let us thus sacrifice spiritually. For then He will accept it, and not for condemnation the prayer, but we will have it rather for benefit and blessing; and let us shake off dead desires, and as it were lifeless pleasures and worldly impurity. For God will be with those who are thus cleansed and sanctified. Because of their morning gains they will be pained because of their wickedness, and you hated those who reprove in the gates. They say that neither the Hebrew edition, nor indeed the other interpreters, either say or know these things; however, the meaning appears to be consistent with what has gone before. For since, as I said, they were excessively obsessed with love of gain and greed; and this proved to be a pretext for their laziness, although they had been commanded to build the divine temple; He therefore necessarily accuses them for these things. And He calls them 'morning gains' because for no other reason did they make their early morning journeys and efforts, except for this alone, I mean, for the sake of desiring gains. And He says that they will be pained on account of these things, since their desired goal does not come to fulfillment for them.

For when God does not direct, and does not smooth the path of what must be done by us, a man's zeal for anything is surely altogether in vain and unprofitable. For it is written that, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Therefore, having preferred the gains as it were at dawn and in the morning to raising the divine temple, and putting the baser things before the better, they were found to be afflicted with another terrible thing in addition to this. For they hated those who reprove in the gates. And you will understand 'in the gates' as 'clearly'. But why did they hate them? For to those once overcome by evil pleasures, and who have slid unrestrainedly into choosing to do what is not lawful, those who have the strength to correct them would not be pleasant, but rather burdensome and hated; and what of such things would they not be accounted? A completely terrible sickness of the mind, therefore, is to be inclined to wicked things, and to abhor those who know how to help, and to be sick most pleasantly with what has happened, even if what is occurring is seen to be one of the exceedingly outrageous things. But it is better and wise to repel generally the harms that pour into the soul and mind.

But if it should happen that one suffers something, to seek physicians with all speed, and to love those who reprove, and to prostrate oneself as it were before God, saying "Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me, and I will be saved; for you are my praise. And now, set your hearts from this day and forward, before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord, what you were like, when you put into a bin of barley twenty satas, and there were ten satas of barley; and you went into the winepress to draw out fifty measures, and there were twenty? I struck you with blight and with mildew and with hail all the works of your hands, and you did not turn to me, says the Lord. From necessary reasonings He persuades them that they have acted rightly, having chosen to build the divine temple, and they are better than long ago, having undertaken the zeal for this. For consider, he says, and remember who you were, that is, how and in what manner you were disposed, before you placed a stone upon a stone in the temple of the Lord.

For then, he says, what was gathered with difficulty by long toils from the fields and the threshing floor, twenty satas of barley—and I think the saton is a measure—you would store in a bin—and this could be understood as a type of storehouse for produce—and it would become ten satas of barley, clearly with the moth consuming them perhaps and reducing the grain to dust out of divine wrath. And if indeed someone came to the winepress, intending to draw and pour out fifty measures, finding the measure unexpectedly reduced, he was then astonished. You were struck indeed, he says, with other plagues, with barrenness, with blight, with hail; and again you were stubborn. For you did not return to me, he says. What then shall we know from this? It is manifest that for those who are unwilling to build the house of the Lord, that is the Church, or who are excessively lazy in making their own souls a temple of God, even the good things already acquired will vanish into nothing, and there will surely be harm from unclean spirits, and barrenness and hail, that is, unbearable visitations of temptations shaking down every sort of evil, and things from divine wrath will happen. Set your hearts now from this day and onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, and from the day the temple of the Lord was founded;

set in your hearts, if it will be known on the threshing floor, and the vine and the fig and the pomegranate and the olive trees that do not bear fruit, from this day I will bless. Having well convinced them through what we have just said, that for those choosing to neglect the divine temple a very great assault of troubles has occurred, he says they will be fully assured by him who knows how to cheer, that they will have prosperity as the fruit of their zeal for the things that please him, and as a reward for their goodness toward his house, they will be broadened in every good thing. And he promises that he will especially supply them with fruitfulness from the fields, so that the matter comes close to disbelief, and the heaps from the threshing floor appear beyond all expectation, and of the trees growing in the gardens, the vine is seen as rich in clusters, and the fig, and the pomegranate, and simply that the seasonal produce will have blossomed richly for them, and indeed also the olive yielding its own fruit to them in unexpected abundance, on account of being blessed by God. For just as for those who choose to neglect building the Church, that is to present themselves as a holy temple to Christ, everything collapses for the worse; and indeed it is seen to happen that they are in temptations and spiritual barrenness;

so also is the opposite true, that for those willing to build and who have honored the toil of goodness, it will be given by God to be seen in every good thing, and to be enriched with spiritual fruitfulness, and to have the innermost garden, as it were, blooming with various boasts of virtues, and almost laden with ripe fruits, so as to be able henceforth to cry out with boldness what is in the Song of Songs, "Let my kinsman come down into his garden, and eat the fruit of his choice trees. For the sprouts of virtues are like food for God, and the grace of spiritual fruitfulness. And the word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai the Prophet on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, Say to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel of the tribe of Judah, saying, Yet once I will shake the heaven and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will overthrow the thrones of kings, and I will destroy the power of the kings of the nations, and I will overthrow chariots and riders, and their horses

and riders shall come up, each one by the sword against his brother. The prophetic word for us always proceeds somehow from the particular, and from the matters at hand it makes an excursion to the universal and most general things. for if it somewhere makes mention of the redemption of some, it often departs to the one through of Christ.

The prophetic word now hints at something of this kind to us; for these things have necessarily been added to what has already been said, subtly introducing the proclamation of the mystery concerning Christ as if still in riddles and shadows. For the Prophet is sent to Zerubbabel of the tribe of Judah, to say that the heaven and the earth and indeed the sea and the dry land will be shaken, and the thrones of kings will be cast down. And the most wise Paul, applying himself to the contemplations of the preceding matters, says that word "will be shaken" means that there will be a removal of the things that are shaken, "so that the things that are not shaken may remain. But these things had to be accomplished through Christ, for in him all things are new and "the old things have passed away," things drunken and shaken, and new things have come to be through him, that is, things that are firm and established and abiding. See, therefore, the economy of the word; for having promised them an admirable fruitfulness, and having said he would provide all things for cheerfulness and delight in abundance, he immediately introduced the time of true fruitfulness, that is, the lavish provision of the spiritual and heavenly blessing. For "I shook," he says, "the things under heaven when I led Israel out of the land of Egypt;

but I will shake them yet again," that is, "I will do something notable and famous again for those throughout the whole world, as if shaking all things. And I will cast down the thrones of kings, and I will destroy all their power, and I will cast out, as it were, certain horsemen charging over all under heaven with greed against all, but I will raise up other horsemen, that is, warriors, drawing a sword against family and brothers. Through these things he seems to hint to us of the wicked and opposing powers cast down through the strength of our Savior, the principalities and authorities which he triumphed over on his own cross, and having cast out the greed against all, he came to the aid of the wronged, that is, us. And indeed the holy and blameless virgin, while still conceiving Christ, since she bore a mind full of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed beforehand such things, saying: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. And after other things again: "And holy is his name, and his mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. Therefore the mighty have been brought down, and they have fallen from their own thrones. Yet the accomplishments of our Savior's coming do not end here; but a swarm of horsemen has been raised up, men who are fighters and experienced in war and know how to command, and who generally lead out against the perversities of the devil. These would be, in turn, the divine disciples, who have intellectually

drawn the sword of the Spirit; that is, the word of initiation, which is living and active and very sharp. They went forth against every person and against family and against brothers, not inflicting deadly blows, but rather destroying the ignorance in them, and, as it were, making them dead to the world, and preparing them to be dead to sins, so that they might live to God, having loved the glorious and blameless life, that is, the life of the Gospel. But that for the sake of love for Christ sons were destined to be set against fathers, and indeed daughters against mothers, and brothers against brothers, how can one doubt? When the Savior says clearly: ”Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Enemies, therefore, insofar as they are of a different mind; friends and not for long, as in one accord of faith and as in unity of the Spirit and of the love that is in Christ. In that day, says the Lord Almighty, I will take you, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, my servant, says the Lord, and I will make you as a seal, because I have chosen you, says the Lord Almighty. This word is not truly to Zerubbabel, but it came to be rather as to our Lord Jesus Christ, as being very well depicted in Zerubbabel; because he is both from the tribe of Judah, and indeed also a king, and a leader of those redeemed from captivity, and as it were an overseer of those building the house of the Lord. you, therefore, He says, taking you my servant; that is, the one who appeared in the form of a servant, yet by nature free; at that time, in which I would choose to cast down the mighty from their thrones and to cast out principalities, I will make you as a seal. For the Son is the seal of God the Father, having His whole and pure likeness, and in His own beauty flashing forth the nature of the One who begot Him. And in Him God seals us also into His own likeness; if indeed being formed into Christ, we gain the image that is toward God.

The Son is therefore the exact seal of God the Father, and He has chosen Him, that is, made Him chosen and elect. And indeed He confessed Him at the streams of the Jordan, saying ”This is My Son ”the beloved, in whom I am well pleased, hear Him. For God the Father was pleased to restore all things, and to bring them back to the beginning, and as the divine Paul writes, ”to sum up all things in heaven and on ”earth” in Christ, through whom and with whom to God the Father be glory with the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Introduction

Someone might think it somehow superfluous and ill-advised, and not at all especially necessary for benefit, to attempt to all but dig up again things already said by many, and to add other labors to the labors of those who have gone before; even though theirs are very sufficient to be able to make very clear the writings of the holy prophets; but I would say the matter is not so; far from it. For I will recall Paul exhorting those instructed by him, "To write the same things to you is not tedious for me, but for you it is safe. But consider how true the saying is. For if something necessary for knowledge should be set forth, and then many discourses by many people are made on this very thing, there will be no harm at all; but it would benefit the hearers as much as possible. For if those accustomed to interpret make their discourses agree with one another, a more secure knowledge certainly enters into those eager to hear; but if something novel appears in each, and what was perhaps not very clearly discerned correctly and blamelessly by one person should come to the mind of another, what is the harm? Or rather, how is it not better that the presentation of the thoughts becomes richer and clearer? Therefore, even if many have written before us, interpreting the things in the holy prophets, we will not be silent for this reason;

but rather we will drive away hesitation as inactive, and the grace which the one who reveals deep and hidden things might grant to us ourselves, this we will make manifest to others as well, remembering Christ who says, "Freely you have received, freely give. Beginning, therefore, the clear interpretation of the blessed prophet Hosea, I will set forth first those things also concerning the writing of the other prophets. For it is the custom for all of them to easily reshape the discourses they make according to what seems good to the Holy Spirit, so that sometimes from history, that is, from sensible things and matters that are, as it were, in plain sight and have happened, they pass easily to the innermost and spiritual things; and at other times, again, to come back down, and very obscurely indeed, to matters of sense; and among them there is also a very great introduction of persons, complaints and exclamations, and the remembrance of things already past, and the foretelling of things to come. It is necessary, therefore, for those who love to judge each thing clearly as far as possible, to observe the order of the thoughts and the difference of the persons; for thus our discourse will surely be clear and unconfused, and free from all difficulty.

But I think it necessary to narrate beforehand some of the things that happened to those of the blood of Israel, so that the mind of the readers may not be disturbed, when hearing at one time of Ephraim and Israel and also Samaria, and at another time of Judah and Benjamin; for the mention of such names among the holy prophets is very great. In order, therefore, that they may know each thing clearly, let them hear that Solomon, administering his father's kingdom at times in Jerusalem, did indeed build for God that famous and admirable temple; but although he had become very distinguished both for the splendor of his wealth and his abundance of possessions, having come to old age, through his regard for women he offended God. And what the manner of his transgression was, the holy scripture will relate to us; for it runs thus: "And the king took foreign wives, and the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians and Idumaeans, Hittites and Amorites, from the nations of which the Lord forbade the sons Israel. You shall not go in to them, and they shall not go in to you, lest they turn away your hearts after their idols. To these Solomon cleaved in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. And it came to pass in the time of Solomon's old age that his foreign wives turned away his heart after other gods;

and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. And Solomon went after Astarte, the abomination of the Sidonians, and after Baal, the idol of the sons of Ammon. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not go after the Lord, as David his father did. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the idol of Moab, and for Baal, the idol of the sons of Ammon, and for Astarte, the abomination of the Sidonians. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their idols. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because he turned away his heart from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not at all go after other gods; and to keep and to do what the Lord God commanded him. Therefore, the audacious deeds of Solomon in his old age were beyond all impiety. For what could be more grievous than such outrageous transgressions? Or how is it not beyond all reason, to neglect the honor and love for the one who is God by nature and truly, and to assign the dignity that belongs to him and to him alone to herds of demons, or rather to attach it to stones and wood?

But since he was caught having thought and done things which it is not even lawful to say, and was detected being guilty of such shameful transgressions, the God of all then said to him: "Because these things were done by you, and you have not kept my commandments and my ordinances that I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from your hand and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, in your days I will not do it, for the sake of David your father; from the hand of your son I will take it. Yet I will not take the whole kingdom; I will give one scepter to your son, for the sake of David my servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen. For since, as I said, being overcome by desire for women, although Solomon was exceedingly wise, he all but tore asunder the kingdom of God, so to speak, as far as the power of his undertakings went, by attaching to idols the honor and glory that is most fitting to Him alone, for this reason, and very fittingly, God

threatened to tear apart his kingdom, repaying him with like sorrows, according to what is written in the prophet Ezekiel: ”As you have done, so it shall be to you; your recompense will be returned upon your own head. And when Solomon died, his son was called to the kingdom, that is, Rehoboam.

Then indeed Israel was finally torn apart, and the ten tribes departed from Jerusalem, and the half-tribe of Ephraim. For the sons born of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, were counted as one tribe, since the forefather Jacob willed this to be so. For it was said to Joseph: ”Now therefore your two sons, who were born to you in Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. Therefore the ten tribes, and the half of the one, that is Ephraim, departed to Samaria, and were outside the kingdom of Rehoboam; but those from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin remained in Jerusalem. But since those in Samaria, remaining without a king and without a general, were suspicious of attacks from Rehoboam, and expected to be utterly destroyed along with their dearest ones, they sent for Jeroboam. And he was a servant of Solomon who had fled to Egypt to king Shishak. And indeed when he came they immediately appointed him as leader, and they honored with the scepter of the kingdom the sinner. And Jeroboam was from the mountain and tribe of Ephraim. But when he had been appointed king, he then contrived in what manner the affairs of the kingdom would be established for him, and would remain secure, so that the opinion of those who appointed him would not shift to some other counsel and consideration.

Then, fearing lest Israel, brought to remembrance of the worship according to the law and of the feasts celebrated in Jerusalem, might choose to return to its original state, and be brought under the yokes of Rehoboam, he made two golden calves, and leading Israel back to the worship in Egypt, he commanded them to worship them and to offer whole burnt offerings. ”And he placed,” it says, ”the one in Gilgal, and the other in Dan; and these were cities more conspicuous than the others, which were in the land of the Samaritans. Therefore the apostasy of the ten tribes and of the half-tribe of Ephraim became twofold. For they departed not only from Jerusalem, but also from piety towards God itself, worshiping golden calves, sacrificing and serving ”the works of their own hands,” as it is written. But those who remained in Jerusalem, I mean Judah and Benjamin, had some respect and regard for the ordinances given through Moses. For they sacrificed in the temple; yet they did not entirely hold to the love of God, but were themselves also divided towards apostasy. For they sacrificed to idols ”on every high hill, and under every ”leafy” tree,” according to the voice of the prophet. Therefore, whenever you hear the holy prophets naming Israel or Ephraim, then understand me to mean those in Samaria; but when Judah and Benjamin, those who remained in Jerusalem. And there were also prophets among them, prophesying indiscriminately concerning both those in Samaria and those in Jerusalem;

and some were in Jerusalem, while others, inhabiting the land of the Samaritans, delivered the words from God to their hearers. But it must be known that after the ten tribes and the half-tribe of Ephraim had broken away from Jerusalem, both those in Samaria and those

in Jerusalem had their own kings. And this prevailed until the time of the final captivity, when they returned to Jerusalem, Cyrus having conquered, and having granted them their return, with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, who was of the tribe of Judah, leading, and Joshua the son of Jozadak serving as priest. Then they also rebuilt the temple, and came under one rule, and dwelt in Jerusalem, all division having been removed. But as many captivities as occurred from time to time among the ten tribes, and indeed of the half-tribe of Ephraim, and of those in Jerusalem, I mean Judah and Benjamin, the discourse will clearly show as it proceeds. And the times in which each of the holy prophets spoke have also of necessity been recorded, so that we might know precisely in what state of affairs, and in what condition they were, the words from God came to them.

Book 1

The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah and Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel. Therefore the blessed Hosea prophesies in the days of Uzziah and Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel. And the time of the prophecy is understood to have been extended up to this point. But I think it is necessary to narrate clearly what happened in each case, so that we may understand, as I have already said, what sort of men these were, whether they were good and well-disposed towards God, or had turned aside to what was not so; and what things happened in each case, both to those in Samaria and to those in Jerusalem. For we shall know in this way, and very easily, wherever the scope of the prophecy is looking. Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, was therefore named last; but he came before Azariah, who is also Uzziah. It should be known, however, that he is different from the first one, who lived in the times of the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon; however, he was of the same character as that one and similar in impiety. For it is written thus about him: ”In the fifteenth year of Ama-”siah son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Joash ”reigned over Israel in Samaria, for forty-one years.

”And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not ”turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who ”caused Israel to sin. Do you see how he became an imitator of that one’s ways, following the same path, as it were, and coming, so to speak, in the footsteps of that one’s impiety? Then, what does the sacred scripture say? ”In the twenty-seventh year ”of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah son of Amaziah, ”king of Judah, began to reign. He was sixteen years old when ”he began to reign, and for fifty-two years ”he reigned in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was ”Jecoliah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the ”eyes of the Lord, according to all that Amaziah his ”father had done; except the high places were not removed, the ”people were still sacrificing and burning incense in the high places. ”And the Lord struck the king, and he was a leper until ”the day of his death. Uzziah was pious and God-loving, but not entirely; for he did not remove the high places, it says, but they burned incense in them and those who were deluded offered sacrifices to demons. Then Azariah, that is, Uzziah, being carried away into improper thoughts, thought it fitting to the glory of his kingship also to perform what was ordained for God, and to undertake

the sacred liturgy; and indeed he sacrificed by himself, having disregarded the laws given through Moses.

But when he ascended to the liturgy that was in no way fitting for him, I mean the sacred one, ”The Lord,” it says, ”struck him, and he was a leper until ”the day of his death. The leper, then, is unclean according to the law, and those seized by such an affliction were sent out of the camp. For God once said to the hierophant Moses, ”Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them ”send out from the camp every leper and everyone with a discharge, ”and everyone unclean on account of a soul. And he was rebuked by the disease, having dared what was not lawful, and God decreed dishonor for the king who had seized the sacred glory. But since the power of the prophecy does not look only to Judah, that is, those in Jerusalem, but it comes also upon Israel, that is, the ten tribes in Samaria, come, let us speak of necessity of those who reigned over it in the days of Azariah, who is also Uzziah, and what calamities it befell them to be caught in, having been grievously sick with profane idolatry. Now therefore in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Uzziah, who is also Azariah, another Azariah, son of Jeroboam, had reigned over Israel for six months. And since he also walked in the way of his father, and did evil in the eyes of the Lord, he was given over to some of his own household for slaughter, and so he is destroyed.

Then as time went on, in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Uzziah, Shallum is anointed again over Israel, and had reigned for a month of days; for he was immediately killed by Menahem son of Gadi from Tirzah. And the sacred scripture noted that they became sons, and both were from the blood of Jehu, who killed Ahab and his sons and Jezebel, to whom God also promised, saying ”Sons to the fourth generation shall sit on ”your throne. Menahem therefore had reigned over Israel, having killed Shallum. ”And he did,” it says, ”what was ”evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not turn away from all ”the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. And while he was reigning, I mean Menahem, and offending God, because he was excessively devoted to the false worship of idols, Pul king wages war against Samaria of the Assyrians; whom Manaim, being unable to ward off with weapons, persuaded with much money to depart from the land and to end the battle. But when Manaim died, then in the fifty-second year of the reign of Ozias, Jotham was again anointed over Judah in Jerusalem after the death of his father, concerning whom it is written, that ”He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, ”according to all that his father Ozias had done; except ”he did not remove the high places; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on ”the high places; and over Israel, Pakeas the son of Manaim.

”And he reigned,” it says, ”two years, and did ”what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. Then conspired,” it says, ”against him Pakee the son of Romelias, his third-in-command, ”and struck him in Samaria, and reigned ”in his place over Israel, and he did what was evil in ”the eyes of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins ”of Jeroboam the son of Nabat, who made Israel to sin. While he was reigning, Theglaphalasar, king of the Assyrians, came up, who, having taken all Samaria by force, deported Israel to the Assyrians. And Pakee also died, when Osee, the son of Ela, formed a conspiracy against him, who also reigned

in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Azarias. But ”In those days,” it says, ”the Lord began ”to send against Judah Raason the king ”of Syria, and Pakee the son of Romelias. The account goes back in these matters; for we said that Pakee died, when Osee the son of Ela formed a conspiracy and a plot against him; but it brings forward a narrative that happened in his times. ”For the Lord began,” it says, ”in ”those days to send against Judah Raason the ”king of Syria, and Pakee the son of Romelias. For Pakee the son of Romelias made war on the people of Jerusalem as being his neighbors.

But when he saw their resistance was formidable and unbreakable, he persuaded Raason the king of the Syrians to become his ally and helper, and to besiege Jerusalem with him. So, when the war was underway, Jotham the son of Azarias died; and Achaz his son succeeded to the kingdom, being exceedingly wicked and an idolater, and so drunk with the error of idolatry, that he even made his own son pass through the fire, and inclined to every kind of abomination, and burned incense ”on the high places and under every leafy tree,” as it is written. Achaz therefore, being troubled, gathered all the wealth found in the house of the Lord, and sent it by messengers to Theglaphalasar king of the Assyrians, and begged to be saved by him. The Assyrian therefore took up arms against the kingdom of Raason, and took Damascus, which is the metropolis of Syria, and killed Raason. Then Achaz went down from Jerusalem to Damascus to see the Assyrian. And having seen in the precincts of the idols an altar having a certain new and unusual design, and being greatly pleased with it, he took a copy of it and sent it to Urias the priest in Jerusalem, and ordered one to be made according to it. And having brought it into the house of the Lord, and all but dishonored that which was made by Moses according to the will of God, he ordered the customary rites to be performed on it;

and besides these things he made other innovations in the temple, according to what seemed good to him, thoughtlessly and displeasingly to God. But also in his times, while Osee son of Ela king of Israel was still living, Salmanasar king of the Assyrians came up against Israel, who, having laid waste Samaria, resettled Israel in the mountains and rivers of the Medes; and he also killed Osee himself. And for what reason? Because he had not brought him the manaa, it says, which was a symbol of submission; but rather called upon the ruler of the Egyptians for aid. Then after this, when Achaz died, Ezekias his son reigned over Judah in Jerusalem. This man became devout, and one of those who especially cared for righteousness, as to have an incomparable difference in this compared to the others. ”He himself tore down the high places, and the groves,” he says, ”he cut down; and the Lord was with him. While he was reigning, Sennacherib king of the Assyrians went up against the fortified cities of Judea; and having besieged them, he took them without effort. then also the Rabshakeh leaps upon Jerusalem itself, and opening his ungated mouth against God, he sends forth those all-blasphemous words; then also one hundred eighty-five thousand have fallen from the camp of the Assyrians in one night, being consumed by the hand of an angel. These things have been usefully said for the present; for the word of the prophecy would skillfully apply to each of the things that have happened.

for sometimes he rebukes those in Samaria, and at other times he threatens those in Jerusalem with invasions; he foretells the captivities; he forewarns of the fear; he promises assistance; he calls to repentance; and no word or manner of things necessary for benefit has been left out of the prophecy for those who at that time were led astray. Therefore he says; The beginning of the word of the Lord in Hosea; and the Lord said to Hosea; For God begins in the prophet to reveal mysteries surely in that way, which was clearly spoken through another prophet, ”I will stand on my watch and ”I will set myself on the rock, and I will look out to see what ”the Lord God will say in me. for he reveals to the saints, putting into their mind the knowledge of things to come, the God of all things. And so the blessed David says, ”I will hear what ”the Lord God will speak in me, for he will speak peace to ”his people; and no less the blessed prophet Zechariah comes to us through similar words; for he said, ”And the angel who was speaking in me answered. for it was the custom for the holy prophets to call the Word of God an angel, as announcing to them and making clear the will of God the Father.

And the prophet Isaiah will also bear witness concerning him, saying, ”Because every garment ”gathered by deceit, they will repay with a change, and ”they will wish they had been burned with fire; because a child ”was born to us, and his name is called Angel of Great ”Counsel. But that the revelation in the saints was subtle and indistinct, and not accomplished by tongue and words such as ours, Paul will assure us, writing, ”Or ”do you seek proof of Christ speaking in me? Therefore, that the word of God came to be in Hosea, would be, as far as I can understand, signifying nothing else to the hearers, than that a revelation occurred in Hosea, and the knowledge of things to come flashed like light, not illuminating the eyes of the body, but the mind and heart. But to say again, And the Lord said to Hosea, leads us to such thoughts. for indeed the command was not common to all who would encounter it, nor was it set forth for those willing to carry it out from time to time, but it was spoken specifically and to Hosea alone. For it is not, just as the command, ”Thus says ”the Lord, Do not learn according to the ways of the nations, and from ”the signs of heaven do not be afraid,” is common and beneficial, so would it be understood as good and profitable to take a wife of fornication, and children of fornication; but that one would usefully apply to all;

this however would be fitting to be said to the prophet alone by God. This, I think, is ”and he said to Hosea,” just as if he were to say, this sort of word is not for everyone simply, but for Hosea alone. for it was not necessary for what was spoken providentially to one person at a certain time to become for many an excuse for a shameful and pleasure-loving life. What then did God say to the blessed Hosea? Go, take for yourself a wife of fornication and children of fornication, because the land commits great fornication, departing from the Lord. And he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. No argument will persuade us to dismiss the letter, and to condemn the narrative as random, and to define the ugliness of the matter itself, or even to suppose, according to some, that it was not done this way, nor that Gomer was taken in marriage, that is, marital union, where the sacred letter says that a conception took place, and indeed also a birth,

and it mentions the name of the child, and it speaks of the woman's father, and in addition to these things, the name of the woman herself.

But since it was necessary to confess, for those who choose to agree with the truth of what was done, that these things truly happened in this way, come, let us set forth the arguments of those who are accustomed to mock, and then finally let us introduce in due course the narrative of the divine plan. I happened upon a treatise, therefore, of a not-insignificant man who wished to clarify the things concerning this passage; who made no moderate condemnation of the history, and of those who say it happened this way; and he said that on this very point especially, fearing nothing, the lovers of self-control must clearly cry out The letter kills. For as if condemning the letter in its absence, and coming down as if from a steep place, he composed certain arguments of this kind. "For Moses," he said, "the divine, was once commanded to lead Israel, redeemed from the slavery of the Egyptians, "to the holy land long ago promised to the "fathers, I mean that of the "promise; but also the prophet Jeremiah heard God saying "clearly, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew ""you, and before you came forth from the womb I consecrated you; I have appointed ""you a prophet to the nations. How then are they not worthy of admiration," "he says, "who refuse so august and all-beautiful a ministry, "and do not refuse to delay? For the one "said, "I pray, Lord, appoint another who is able, ""whom you will send;

and the other, putting forward his youth, "tried to dissuade God. But also the prophet," he says, "Ezekiel, "having been ordered to make bread for himself with cakes of human dung, "was not a little displeased, and for this "reason he heard, "Behold, I have given you cakes of cattle in place of human ""cakes, and you shall bake your bread on them. And "indeed also the divine Peter himself, when the sheet was let "down from heaven, on which all the four-footed animals and "the beasts were written, heard God saying, "Rise, Peter, kill ""and eat," refused, he says, speaking thus, "By no means, ""Lord; for I have never eaten anything common or unclean; nor ""has any profane meat entered my mouth. But Hosea, "having heard that he must be joined to a woman who is shameful and has been "prostituted and has an accursed life, does not refuse the matter, "does not admit hesitation, does not bring supplication, "asking to be released; but like one of the most licentious, most readily "and without delay, he all but snatches the thing, perhaps "being overcome by pleasure for the woman. Then, concluding his arguments into absurdity, he added to these a few insipid things. For he pretends to advocate for the prophet, and again he says, "that he would have made the greatest possible "refusal, if he had known that God commanded a bodily union;

"but since what was being done was something spiritual, out of exceedingly great "love for God, he all but comes as a volunteer to do what was "commanded. Besides," he says, "the God of self-control "would not have wished such a thing to happen, that so great a man "should be defiled by such shameful and most abominable "unions, I mean those with a woman, and that a lewd and "prostituted one. And reshaping, as it were, the force of the "history into spiritual concepts, he said that Gomer "was a type of a soul that has chosen to live shamefully and indecently; "and that the prophet fulfills the image of the one from

above and from ”heaven, that is, of the Word of God from the Father, who, being joined to ”our souls intellectually, implants the seeds of a life that loves ”virtue. And these are the findings of his plausible reasoning; but I have been not moderately amazed, first, that disregarding the concepts that lead to truth, he has dared to say that the letter kills; Then in addition to this, that he has presented Moses and those we have just now mentioned, as having spoken against what was divinely revealed from above; but that those who dared to look against the divine decrees were not without blame, he has wrongly kept silent.

For when the hierophant Moses excused himself, and hesitated at his mission, and put forward his slowness of speech, God rebuked him as being weak in faith, saying thus, ”Who has given a mouth to man? ”and who has made the dumb and the deaf? the seeing and ”the blind? Is it not I, the Lord God? And now go, and ”I will open your mouth; But when after this he still drew back and hesitated, ”the Lord,” it says, ”was angry with Moses,” and said, ”Is not Aaron your brother? I know ”that he will speak fluently for you; And again, when Jeremiah had said previously, that I am younger, and I do not know how to speak, God no less replied, saying, ”Do not say, that ”’I am younger,’ for to all to whom I shall send you, you shall go, and according to all that I shall command you, you shall ”speak. For it was not at all without danger to say, or even only to think, that the highest counsel had erred from proper reasoning, in calling a young man to prophecy. Likewise the divine Peter heard, when the sheet was let down from heaven, ”Arise, Peter, kill and eat; but when he cried out in a Jewish manner, ”By no means, Lord; for I have never ”eaten anything common or unclean,” he was immediately rebuked, and as one who dared to oppose the divine decisions, he heard clearly, ”What God has cleansed, you must not call common.

For even if the God of all wished to reprove gently, and was not immediately embittered against them for speaking against Him immoderately, yet their refusal was not without blame for them. But I say that it is necessary to assign to the decrees from above the quality of being right and blameless without delay, and to hasten to carry out what has been commanded, even if the matter is not very pleasing to our souls; for instance, what I mean is, the God of all commanded Saul to slay Agag, as one who had committed unholy deeds against the people of Israel. But he thought to decide what was good for him, and deemed worthy of sparing the one who had been condemned by the decrees. And so in this he offended God, and greatly. For he took care of the one commanded to die, all but crying out and saying through the very deed, that God had not made a just decree against him. For this reason the blessed Samuel was greatly grieved and indignant with God, and he himself slew Agag, proclaiming the reasons; ”Because,” he says, ”your sword has made women childless, so shall ”your mother be made childless among women; and he foretells to Saul that he will also be driven out of the kingdom, and will pay a bitter penalty for his disobedience.

And if it is necessary to adduce besides this the narrative of other histories, it is written in the third book of Kings, that Hadad, the leader or king of the Syrians, once made war against those of Israel. And while Ahab, who was king of Israel, was not a little dis-

tressed, and feared the attack, expecting to be captured before long with his whole army, God promised through a prophet to deliver the enemy to him; then that man, having taken him, deemed him worthy of sparing, contrary to what seemed good to God. And what after this does the sacred writing say? ”And one man from the sons ”of the prophets said to his neighbor in the word of the Lord, ”’Strike me, I pray’; and the man was not willing to strike him. ”And he said to him, ’Because you have not listened to the voice ”of the Lord, behold, you are departing from me, and a lion will strike you’; ”and he went away from him, and a lion finds him and struck ”him. And he finds another man and said, ’Strike ”me, I pray’; and the man struck him, striking and ”wounding him. And the prophet went and stood for the ”king of Israel on the road, and he bound with a bandage ”his eyes; and having said a few things in between to Ahab as he was returning, he added again, ”Thus ”says the Lord:

Because you have let a man of destruction go out of your ”hand, and the shall be your soul for his soul, ”and your people for his people. Do you hear how he who refused to strike the prophet was miserably destroyed, having fallen prey to a terrible beast? And yet how is it not true to say that it was the fruit of reverence not to dare to strike a holy man and a prophet? But it was by the word of the Lord, and disobedience became an inescapable offense. Ahab also unreasonably spared Ben-hadad, although God had commanded to destroy him, and he himself was given for his soul. Therefore it is necessary that what may please God be carried out by us without hesitation or delay; but to do anything else than this, or even to choose to think it, brings the charge of contempt. For such people have all but resolved to rebuke God at last, as one who at times does not deliberate correctly. We say therefore to those who do not place the story outside of slander, and who unwisely criticize it: Does it seem unseemly to you, O sirs, for a prophet to have become a table companion to a lewd woman? But what of this, is it not much more unseemly for some to be slaughtered by holy prophets? How then did Samuel slay Agag, and Elijah the prophets of Baal, although they were many in number?

And what of this, tell me, the prophet Isaiah, having removed the sackcloth from his loins, running about Jerusalem naked and barefoot? For would not one immediately mock a man in such a state as being indecent and out of his mind and deranged in his wits? And how is this doubtful, if it is full of praise that all things be done by us in a fitting manner? But you will say that, yielding to divine commands, they did such things at that time. But what, tell me, is one to think of the blessed Hosea? For does he go of his own accord to a harlot and make one so shameful his wife, or was he commanded by God? And I have marveled no less at that one who wishes to scoff at the things written about him, and who has dared to ridicule the unpleasantness of the story. For in explaining away the matter because of its absurdity, and insisting very clearly that the prophet did not have fellowship with a harlot, but that the divine Word is at times joined to souls that have committed fornication, he has not likely understood what nonsense he has fallen into. For he wishes, it seems, for the prophet to be more reverent, at least, than the all-holy God. For would not one say, tell me, that for the prophet to be joined to a wicked woman is on the same level as for the Word of God to choose to have fellowship with an unclean soul?

But I think there is absolutely no difference. Either, therefore, let them explain this away along with that because of its absurdity, or let them allow human things to follow after the divine will. But I think it is necessary to adduce something from the evangelical writings as well. Our Lord Jesus Christ reclined with tax collectors and sinners, but the fault-finding Pharisees criticized him again, and went to the holy disciples, saying openly, ”Why does your teacher eat and drink with sinful men? What then did Christ say to this? ”Those who are well,” he says, ”have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. That God, therefore, out of his immeasurable love for mankind, receives even those who are defiled and have not yet washed away their sin, one would in no way doubt. But it is especially necessary not to define as unseemly the story that took place concerning the blessed Hosea, since it writes for us most beautifully in itself, that even while we are still abominable and unclean, the divine Word grants us spiritual fellowship from himself. So then the God of all said to the blessed Hosea: Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry. And he takes Gomer, not making the matter an occasion for pleasure, but fulfilling a work of obedience and ministry, and becoming a servant of the type, which we will indeed fully explain, forming, as is possible, spiritual things in carnal and more earthly ones.

And no one, I think, would henceforth fittingly blame the prophet’s purpose. For to choose to marry, and to be joined to a wife, and to desire children, the word of the divinely-inspired scripture does not forbid; rather, of blame and it frees from slander everywhere; ”For marriage is honorable, and the bed ”undefiled,” according to the voice of the blessed Paul; and it was permitted for those willing to live rightly, and to achieve a virtuous and pious life, even if they longed for the generation of children. For thus lived the blessed Abraham; and those after him were also well-pleasing to God. What then, tell me, is absurd, or how could it at all be slandered, not to refuse marriage, when God commands something spiritual and necessary to be written for the benefit of those who will read it in bodily and perceptible things? And I would say, fearing nothing, that the prophet also saved Gomer. For a woman so shameful and common, he persuaded to be attached to one man alone, and her who formerly grieved nature itself; because she was not subject to the generation of children, but selling her beauty to the pleasures of those who happened by, she was a springboard of death, and a door and a way leading down to the deep and final darkness itself; he persuaded her to abstain from such utterly detestable incantations and undertakings, and made her a respectable mother of children.

But indeed, not to care greatly for his own affairs, but rather to choose to accomplish what is useful and necessary for another’s salvation, would appear to be a holy and admirable endeavor. For shall we not thus deem the blessed prophet Isaiah worthy of all praise, if, having taken off his tunic, and untied his sandals, and esteeming propriety of almost no account at all, he walked naked, in order to show the image of the coming captivity to those of Israel, to prepare them to adhere to God and persuade them finally to love the cessation of sins? And what, tell me, did not our wise Paul say clearly, ”For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ, ”for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh? And does he not also say that he ”became all things to all men, that I might by all means ”save some,”

and became to the Jews as a Jew, ”to those who are without law as without law (not being without law to God, but under law ”to Christ), that I might save those who are without law? And why do I say these things, omitting what is still greater? That even the Only-Begotten Word of God Himself, in order to save the human race, ”did not consider it robbery ”to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, ”and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance ”as a man, He endured the cross, despising ”the shame. Therefore, it is not at all surprising if, having departed a little from what is proper, the prophet saved Gomer, and brings back the lost woman to propriety. But that God commanded him to be joined to the woman for the sake of a useful and necessary matter, he has immediately made fully known, affirming that He commanded those things for this reason. Because, he says, the land will certainly commit fornication, departing from after the Lord. And he speaks to the prophet not of a fornication of the land that will be, but of one that has already happened. For indeed the heifers were in Dan and Bethel, and the precincts of Baal had been raised, and the rites of Israel were practiced throughout the whole land of the Samaritans. Therefore the God-inspired scripture makes no distinction in the tenses, or rather, as is more true to say, those who have interpreted it for us; just as, for instance, the very person of Christ is introduced through the voice of Isaiah, saying, ”I gave my back to the scourges, and my cheeks ”to blows. And the prophet himself says of him, ”He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before ”its shearer is silent, so He opens not His mouth. ”In His humiliation His justice was taken away.

Do you see how the word of prophecy has brought to us what is to be in time as if it has already happened? Therefore, ”The land will certainly commit fornication,” must be understood as, ”the land has committed fornication. And in what way has it committed fornication? ”From after the Lord,” that is, having rejected the following that one would make, as toward God. For it is written, ”You shall walk after the Lord,” that is, you shall follow without turning aside to the by laws from above and from God. She has committed fornication therefore, away from the Lord, not enduring to follow. For she has become an apostate and profane, and having been added to the worship of idols, she has offended the Master. For this reason, therefore, the prophet Hosea is joined to Gomer, because the land has committed fornication away from the Lord. For what is done might be understood, as I said, as a type of a mystical matter. Then Gomer gave birth; And the Lord said to him, ”Call his name Jezreel, because yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Judah, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel; and it will be in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. In these things the discourse travails with a twofold contemplation for us.

But another reading is also offered by some, which is necessary to mention now for the sake of accuracy; for it is of no small benefit for us to mention both accounts. Our version then, that is, that of the Seventy, says, ”And I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Judah; but the other says, ”And I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu. And

if some should choose to understand it thus, it is necessary to make the narration more historical. And it is thus: Ahab became king in Israel, who also had Jezebel as his consort. But since he was seeking the vineyard of Naboth, the latter responded to this, saying, "Far be it from me to give you the vineyard of my father; he was murdered, having fallen into the wicked ways of Jezebel. Since, therefore, he had been murdered, Ahab inherited the vineyard of Naboth, and he was also otherwise devoted to the worship of demons, and this excessively, so the God of all was indignant. Then he commanded Elisha the prophet to anoint Jehu king over Israel. And the prophet, having sent the young servant, fulfilled the divine oracle. Then Jehu, having been anointed, goes down to Samaria and fulfilled the divine wrath upon those who had caused grief. For having killed Ahab, he cast him into the vineyard of Naboth; then after this Jezebel, and he also killed seventy sons of Ahab, who were throughout all Samaria. And to these he added Baal;

for he burned his pillars, and shook down the precincts, and he slaughters the priests themselves. For these things God accepts him; and indeed he also promises, saying that "sons to the fourth generation shall sit on your throne. But Jehu, who had thus become well-pleasing, nonetheless offended God. For he did not remove the calves, but was himself also caught walking impiously in the sins of Jeroboam. Then there came from Jehu a first son, Jehoahaz, a man who was also an idolater, and who worshiped the calves. But in his time, it says, "the Lord was angry with Israel, and he gave them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad son of Hazael. A second from Jehoahaz reigned, Joash; and this man was wicked. A third, Jeroboam, during whose reign the prophecy of Hosea begins. A fourth, Azariah from Jeroboam, also an idolater; Shallum killed him. Therefore, since Jehu was anointed to avenge the blood of Naboth, who was from Jezreel—this is a city of Samaria—and so that having removed the idolatry of Israel, he might then persuade them to be devoted to God, then he himself also became a worshiper of the calves, and his children who came from him were no less impious, "I will avenge," it says, "the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu. For just as he avenged the house of Ahab through the kingdom of Jehu, so he will also avenge the house of Jehu.

For in the days of his sons, Hazael king of Syria warred, and indeed also Ben-hadad, and they conquered Israel, and they sacked very many of the cities in Samaria. Therefore a child is born to the prophet, whose name is also Jezreel; as if God were somehow recalling the sin committed against Naboth; for a just and pious man having been unjustly killed, how could the champion of the just remain quiet? he will break therefore he proclaims the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. For the tribes of Israel were conquered, as I said, by both Hazael and indeed by Hadad. And so the account is in these things, of what has been done historically; but come, let us say what is fitting for the other writing, bringing now to a spiritual contemplation the things spoken by God. The synagogue of the Jews is noble on account of the fathers. For those around the divine Abraham served a living and true God; and indeed they became caretakers of righteousness, and very well crowned with all good works, and excelling in genuineness; and unshaken in faith, and having practiced every form of gentleness. But when, with a famine pressing down, they mingled with the

Egyptians, and then spent long periods of time there, those from them became different in manner and different in mind, choosing henceforth to follow the customs of the inhabitants; and they cared very little for the piety practiced by their fathers and uniquely accomplished.

For they worshipped the creation rather than the creator, and the works of their own hands, as it is written; and they descended to such a point of abomination and profane life, that there was perhaps no manner of wickedness at all unpracticed by them. And they seem to me to have suffered something such as a wise and noble woman might suffer, who has abandoned her own way, and all but bid farewell to the practices of decorum; but choosing rather to be seen in the appearance and gestures of prostitutes. For in the same way that such a woman fulfills the pleasures of all upon herself, with all difficulty removed, so too the soul of a person, turning away from the pursuits of piety, and disregarding love for God, and inclining towards Satan, fulfills the desires of the evil spirits. Therefore, the synagogue of the Jews has committed fornication in Egypt in a spiritual sense; for it was set before, as I said, the desires of the demons for anything whatsoever that was pleasant to them, being easily carried away; but God visited and had mercy on her who was so cast down, and wished to make her temperate again; and the all-holy and pure one all but made the profane woman his spouse, and made her a mother of children, and deemed her worthy of love, on account of the firstborn who came from her, that is, Jezreel, which is interpreted seed of God.

See, then, how Hosea is set as an image and type of the things so wisely arranged by God. A holy prophet is joined to Gomer, a prostitute. And she bore him Jezreel. Thus also God called the synagogue of the Jews to intimacy through the all-wise Moses, and into spiritual communion, on account of the firstborn who would be from her, that is Christ, who is the seed of God according to the truth; for the Son has been begotten of the Father, even if he became flesh. But since the presentation of the spiritual contemplation would not otherwise become clear and most distinct, unless the historical events were brought into the middle, come, I shall mention them again. That Jezreel is a city, the account has clearly announced to us beforehand, but as from the city of Jezreel it signifies Naboth. And he himself would be a type of the economy understood in Christ; and he himself is also interpreted, The Coming One. And by such a name the holy scripture most often signifies Emmanuel. For it was said to the blessed prophet Habakkuk ”Yet a little while, the one who is to come will come and will not delay; and David also sings somewhere, ”Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; and indeed the divine baptist himself sends some of his own disciples to our Lord Jesus Christ, and he inquired, saying, ”Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect another?

And that he was in the image of Christ, we will know this clearly from the things written about him. For Ahab desired to acquire his vineyard, and to convert the so excellent plot into a vegetable garden. But he was indignant at this, and said that he would never give up the vineyard of his father, he was affirming clearly. ”For far be it from me,” he says, ”to give to you the vineyard of my father. But when the god-hated and profane Jezebel, she who

persecuted the prophets and plotted against the righteous, learned this, she contrived the murder of the righteous man with wicked devices; and indeed, having arranged for him to be killed, she commanded her husband, I mean Ahab, to inherit. At these things God was rightly indignant, and indeed He promises to avenge the blood of Jezreel. For Ahab was killed by Jehu, as we have already said before; and to him was added the all-wicked Jezebel. Come now, therefore, let us refer to Christ the things that happened to those of old as in a type. For the prophet Isaiah says that "A vineyard came to be for the beloved on a horn in a fruitful place. "and the vineyard was the man of Judah, a new plant, beloved. But the leaders of Israel, of whom the ruling Ahab would be a type, desired to have his vineyard; not that it might be a special inheritance, that is, a vineyard;

but that it might become a desolate garden of vegetables, that is, that it might be brought down to something incomparably less; for very great is the difference of a garden of vegetables compared to a vineyard. And what is still greater in these things is not unclear. For having become the peoples of the Jews under Christ, how were they not destined both to be and to appear equal to vines with goodly branches, and indeed most fruitful? But living by the customs and ways of the Pharisees, and learning doctrines that are the precepts of men, they in no way differ from the lowliest vegetables, which also very easily fall and wither. Therefore the teachers of the Jews coveted to have Christ's vineyard as their own inheritance, and for a garden of vegetables; but they did not persuade him to betray to them the vineyard of the Father. Then, what did the god-hated Jezebel do, that is, the common multitude under the hand of the leaders, or the Synagogue, running together with the griefs of the leaders? She pursues the righteous one, the holy Naboth, with deceit, that is, the one who is coming, and indeed arranged for him to be killed. For Emmanuel was killed, being falsely accused. But that the matter was not tolerable to God would be clear from what was said by the prophet Hosea:

Because yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Judah, and I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. For, as I said, the blood of Christ has been avenged on all Israel. For since at that time, in which the prophecy also occurred, they were named separately, Judah being those who remained in Jerusalem, and Israel again those in Samaria, in order that he might be seen to signify "from all Israel," he says that he will necessarily avenge the blood of Jezreel from the house of Judah; and that he would also cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. This also the divine Jacob foretold, saying, "A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until he comes for whom it is reserved, and He is the expectation of nations. For when Emmanuel shone upon us, the expectation of the nations, then indeed then also the kingdom of Israel was taken from the midst. And indeed Herod, the son of Antipater, an Ascalonite, was leading the country of the Jews when Christ was born. And he promises to shatter the very bow of Israel on that day, that is, at that time. "For the bow of the mighty has grown weak," according to what is written, although they supposed they would overcome Emmanuel. and "the swords of the enemy have failed forever; and the sinews of their arms were loosed; for they have not conquered the unconquerable.

But as if preparing the depth of the spiritual contemplation, he comes down immediately to the things done historically, saying that I will shatter the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. For there Hazael the king of Syria conquered Israel leading out their forces against him. But since I suppose it is fitting not to divert the discourse from the necessary and spiritual contemplation, I say this: it is in no way distressing, as I think, for the valley of Jezreel to be understood, that is, of the seed of God, or of Christ, the tomb in the garden, in which the resurrection, following upon the passion, has conquered every kind of Jewish audacity. For through the resurrection, their perverse and God-hated and murderous audacities have been undone. For they thought they could do away with the Son, so that they might also have his vineyard as their own inheritance. But having been placed in a tomb, he lived again, rendering the plots of their scheme ineffective, and all but shattering their bows, by being able to suffer no more. And he casts them out of the vineyard as God-hated and wicked and killers of the Lord; but he gives it to other husbandmen, good and well-disposed and most diligent, according to the parable of the Gospel. And she conceived again and bore a daughter. And he said to him, Call her name, Not-pitied, because I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but setting myself against them, I will oppose them.

But I will have mercy on the sons of Judah, and I will save them by the Lord their God, and I will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by war, nor by chariots, nor by horses, nor by horsemen. After Jezreel was born, a little daughter is born to the prophet from Gomer, to whom he also commands a name must be given, Not-pitied. And he immediately adds the reason for this, and straightway makes the cause clear, saying that Israel would no longer be deemed worthy of any mercy; but would, as it were, rise up against them, and be in the ranks of the most hostile, and nobly oppose their successes, so that they would slip into the utmost misery, and truly endure an unbearable misfortune. For with God opposing, there could be no help from anywhere for those who suffer. ”For if he shuts a man in, who can open it? he says; and as the prophet says, ”His high hand, who shall turn it back? or who will have mercy on one condemned by the decree from above? For all things follow the divine nods. And whatever the Master chooses to accomplish, this is achieved without delay in every way and manner, with creation working together with him, and following the decrees of the one who rules.

Thus he has punished the Egyptians, with the waters being transformed into blood, and the soot into gnats, and an unbearable hail coming down, and for a short time a three-day darkness poured down, and all the other things brought upon them. Therefore the name for the little girl, Not-pitied, is useful and necessary; so that, by always eagerly inquiring into the cause of the matter, and indeed by learning it, those who at that time had offended God through the error of polytheism, might be persuaded to think and to do better and more fitting things, and for the future might turn to choosing wisely, and at least in the second place shake off the wrath, having rendered the grieved God of all well-disposed and gentle toward them. But again the prophetic word seems to indicate to us in these things the captivities of Israel that happened, both under Tiglath-pileser, and also Shalmaneser, kings of the Assyrians, who deported Israel from Samaria to the borders of the Persians

and Medes, having destroyed the cities in Samaria. But they would not have fallen into such terrible misfortunes, if God had been willing to defend them; or rather, if He had not, as it were, led out against and stood in the ranks of the enemy. For He said clearly, that "Setting myself against them, I will oppose them. But he promises to have mercy on the sons of Judah, and to save them, not by the law of war;

for this is the meaning of, 'not by chariots, nor by horses'; which indeed was also fulfilled, when Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem, at which time Rabshakeh also spoke foolishly against the divine glory, saying that God would not be strong enough to save both Jerusalem and those in it; and he brought forward as proof that they too would in every way and manner be captured, the fact that the gods in Samaria had not been able to rescue their own people, but Judah was saved miraculously, that is, the two tribes inhabiting Jerusalem. "For an angel of the Lord went out, he says, and he destroyed from the "camp of the Assyrians in one night, one hundred and eighty-"five thousand. And so those who were saved sang; and they recounted the ways of the mighty work that had been done for them, saying "Some in chariots, and some in horses; "but we will be magnified in the name of the Lord our God. "They were entangled, and they fell; but we have risen, "and have been set upright. But let these things be said by us historically; let us go again to other thoughts, I mean again those concerning Christ Himself. For after Jezreel was born, that is, the seed of God, that you may understand Emmanuel, whose blood He promised to avenge, a daughter is born to Gomer, that is to the prostituted synagogue of the Jews, that is, a multitude, whom it would be fitting to call Not Pitied; for she killed Jezreel, that is Christ.

For this reason she justly finds God an enemy and most hostile; and she immediately endured incurable misfortunes, being sacked by the Roman forces, and having undergone the infamous war, when women even laid hands on their own children, and as the prophet Jeremiah says, "The hands "of compassionate women have boiled their own children," and having disregarded the laws of human nature, with the famine compelling them to be neglectful of unconquerable affection. But all these things have happened to the impious; but he promises to have mercy on the sons of Judah, that is, those who have become sons of Christ of the tribe of Judah through instruction and regeneration through the Spirit. For if some are born in Christ to the holy apostles through the Gospel, how much more so through Christ Himself? concerning whom he also says "Behold I and the children whom God has given me. Therefore they are saved in Christ the Lord and God of all, not moving earthly and carnal weapons, but in the power of the one who saves and casts down principalities and thrones, who triumphs by his own cross over the hosts of the adversaries, and destroys wicked powers, and gives to those who love him "to tread on serpents and scorpions, "and over all the power of the enemy. And he very aptly compares the disobedient and stubborn and deicidal multitude of the Jews to a woman, I mean to Not Pitied.

For a woman might be understood as a sign of weakness and a type of an unmanly and broken spirit, and very clearly so. And such are all those who did not receive the instruction through Christ, nor indeed endured to follow after his divine and holy ordinances. And so

the prophet Hosea says, ”Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, ”because you have grown weak in your iniquities; and again concerning the commandments of the Savior, the same one says, ”Because the ways of the Lord are straight, and the righteous will walk in them; but ”the ungodly will grow weak in them. And the same Hosea somewhere says concerning those who killed Jezreel, that is Christ, ”And the pride of Israel will be humbled to ”his face; and Israel and Ephraim will grow weak ”in their iniquities. And she weaned Not Pitied, and she conceived again, and bore a son. And he said, Call his name Not My People, because you are not my people, and I am not yours. Another child is born to Gomer immediately and not long after, whom God said must be called Not My People. And a reason is immediately set next to such a name again. For you, he says, are not my people, and I am not yours. And it should be clear from this hereafter, that such things were done historically for the reproof of those who had sinned, and for the sure correction of those who chose to be contemptuous and had inclined to error.

But they were types of the things that would happen in due time to those of Israel, when the Only-Begotten had already become man, and endured the precious cross for us. But if it is necessary to narrate the historical things before the spiritual, we say that when Israel was relocated from Samaria, to the borders of the Persians and Medes by Tiglath-Pileser king of the Assyrians, and indeed also Shalmaneser, those who still remained, and the remnant of those who had been in peril, completely slipped away from being called the people of God, because of holding to the same endeavors toward apostasy from God. For they in no way ceased adhering to the most abominable worships of demons. But you will understand otherwise with respect to the meaning and the true word concerning Christ. For after that unholy multitude, which rightly has not received mercy; for it has killed the Lord; those who became sons immediately after them, or who were already of the Synagogue that has committed fornication, have clearly fallen away from being and being called the people of God. For the Roman war did not destroy the entire multitude of the Jews; but a very great multitude, and one beyond number, was destroyed; but those of them who were saved, and who fled the net of death, were scattered to every wind, as it is written, and were dispersed in the lands of the nations, no longer being called, as I said, the people of God.

For grace has passed over to those from the nations, with whom the remnant of Israel was also mixed, that is, those who were saved through faith in Christ. For not a few in number from this group have also believed. And that when Israel kicked him away, God himself, the God of all, departed from his kinship with them, he showed by saying not only, ”You are not my people,” but necessarily adding to this, ”and I am not yours. But concerning us, who have been justified in Christ and sanctified in the Spirit, and have been enriched with kinship to him, through the voice of the prophet he says, ”And I will be their God, and they will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. And to the Jews Christ said, at one time, that ”Yet a little while I am with you,” and at another time, ”Behold, your house is left to you; but concerning those from the nations, ”My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life. And the number of the sons of Israel was as the sand of the sea, which shall not be measured, nor shall it be numbered. The blessed

Isaiah explains this to us in another way: ”And if,” he says, ”the people of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved.

For he is bringing a word to completion and cutting it short in righteousness, because God will make a shortened word in the whole inhabited world. But whether it be perhaps understood thus, or otherwise, though Israel be numerous and countless, and equal in measure to the sands of the sea, they are of little account with God, since they have chosen to be impious; and yet even one righteous and pious person is specially deemed worthy of love and mercy from him. For he looks upon even one humble and quiet person and who trembles at his words. And this is not enough for the good and gentle, and those who fear him, and genuinely serve him, but indeed they are also able to benefit others, and to deliver those who have offended from the punishment that is sometimes impending. And you might take as proof of such a matter the words concerning the Sodomites, when the all-powerful God promised to relent for them from the judgment by fire, if only five righteous men were found among them. And so Lot was saved together with his wife and children. And why do I speak of five righteous and good men? When, having threatened Jerusalem with wrath, ”Run to and fro,” he says, ”in the streets of Jerusalem, and see and know and seek in her broad places, if you can find a man, if there is one who executes judgment, and seeks faithfulness, and I will be merciful to them, says the Lord.

Do you see, then, how he holds on to even one righteous man, and does not overlook him praying for a whole city? But he has no regard for even a countless multitude, as I said, if it is seen to be profane and has turned aside to what is evil, and is fiercely entangled in the deceits of demons. And it shall be in the place where it was said to them, ”You are not my people,” they themselves shall be called sons of the living God. Very near indeed to the most severe angers is the release from grievous things, and the end of gloomy things, insofar as he came to speak, not at length. For that Israel would be rejected in due time, he clearly foretold through what has just been said by us; but that he will not be gone for ever, nor utterly perish, but there will be a time for them of return to their ancient state, and a recovery of love for God, that is, through faith in Christ, he has again fully assured us. For it was necessary, it was necessary for those who were to hear the prophetic words, to know clearly the whole mystery, and not to be ignorant of the ways of the divine economy. It shall be, therefore, he says, in the place where it was said to them, ”You are not my people,” they themselves shall be called sons of the living God. What the ”in the place” might mean, let us say precisely.

For those of Israel became captives at times, and were carried off, as I said, to the land of the Assyrians. but there they were weeping and wailing and inactive concerning the law; and this the blessed David made clear to us, saying, ”By the river of Babylon, there we sat down, and wept when ”we remembered Zion; and he said again, ”How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? But having returned to Jerusalem, by God’s pity, they were no less and were called the people of God, and continued in prosperity, serving freely, and performing the sacrifices according to the law. For it was not at all permitted to fulfill the

appointed rites anywhere else, but only in Jerusalem and in the temple, as the law through Moses clearly commanded, ”Take ”heed to yourself, that you do not offer your whole burnt offerings in ”every place, but in the place which ”the Lord your God shall choose, for His name to be called upon there, ”there you shall bring your whole burnt offerings. Therefore, returning at times to Jerusalem, and leaving the land of the foreigners, they again fulfilled what was established by law through Moses, and were called the people of God; but after the cross of the Savior, and the siege and sack that happened to them, they were scattered with their whole households in the cities and countries of the gentiles. How then shall they in time become the people of God?

Will it be by returning again to Jerusalem, and being gathered in the temple? Or by being in those places, wherever each of them may be scattered? What does the prophet say? In the place where it was said to them, ”You are not my people,” they themselves shall be called sons of the living God. For they lost their state of being God’s people, and were scattered in the lands of the gentiles, which one can see preserved to this day. But in the last times of the age, ”when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,” then indeed then also the rejected Israel himself will be received as sons of God, even while dwelling in the places wherever they may happen to be and be found; for there is no compulsion to go up to Jerusalem, and to still seek the temple made of stones; because he will not honor God with the ancient customs, I mean with sacrifices of oxen and slaughters of sheep; but their manner of worship will be faith in Christ, and his ordinances, and sanctification in the Spirit, and the regeneration through holy baptism, which procures the glory of adoption for those worthy of it and called to this by the Lord. And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land, for great is the day of Jezreel.

And we shall find this to have come to pass both historically and spiritually. For in the territories of the Persians and Medes were those who had been taken captive from Samaria, that is, Israel, and in addition to these also those from Jerusalem, that is, Judah and Benjamin. But when Cyrus son of Cambyses, having taken Babylon and transferred the rule of the Persians to himself, released both Israel and Judah from captivity, and commanded them to go home together with the sacred vessels, they arrived in Jerusalem, and dwelt there from then on not divided, as they were before the captivity; nor indeed did they each have their own kings; but they lived all with one mind only in Jerusalem, led at that time by Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, who was from the tribe of Judah, and with Jesus the son of Jozadak the high priest officiating, when they also rebuilt the divine temple, and were occupied with the concerns of the house. Therefore, he says, the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one head, and they will go up from the land; that you may understand the land of the foreigners, to ”which they were also carried away having become captives. But the phrase *For great is the day of Jezreel* will not fit the historical account. Therefore we say this:

for when Israel is called the people of God, although named 'Not-my-people' on account of so much impiety, as we have already said before, then they and the sons of Judah will be gathered together, that is, the whole multitude of the Jews found in the last days, and they will all be under one head, that is, Christ. And the God of all has proclaimed something of this sort through the voice of Ezekiel, saying about Christ, "And I will raise up over them one shepherd, and he will "shepherd them, my servant David, and he will be their shepherd. And he calls David the one born from the seed of David according to the flesh, Christ. Therefore, when the flock of the nations has already been called, Israel will be brought in last, and all will be under one head, and they will go up, he says, from the land. And this, I think, indicates to those who understand correctly, either that in every way and altogether those who have accepted the yoke of the Savior will henceforth cease from thinking about the things on the earth, and will be superior to carnal thinking; for such are all who have come to be under Christ; and the blessed David will confirm this, saying, "For the mighty ones of the earth of God "have been greatly exalted," and indeed also Paul, "But those who are of "Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its "passions and desires;

that is, that they themselves will also attain to the resurrection of the dead. For Christ said somewhere, "Amen I say to you, that everyone "who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. And yet, how is it not necessary to say: for those who do not believe, tell me, will they remain dead, and not be brought back to life along with the others? What then is the abundance for those who have believed, the Savior himself has shown us, saying thus, "The thief does not come "except to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come, "that they may have life, and have it more abundantly. Therefore, all will be raised, both the evil and the good; but not all have the abundance. For those who are not of Christ, because they are seen to be entangled in the crimes of disobedience, will have in the last days a life more grievous than death; for they will give an account both for their transgressions and for their disobedience. But those who are his, and through the Spirit have been enriched with intimacy with God, and are good in their ways, in addition to the common resurrection, and to returning to life, will in every way and altogether have the things that follow, that is, the gifts, the honors, the crowns, the rewards, the splendor. And Paul will testify, saying, "Behold, "I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep;

"but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at "the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be "raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Therefore, he says, they will go up from the land, that is, they too will live the life of the saints. For great is the day of Jezreel. For truly great is the day of Christ, on which he will raise all the dead, and will descend from heaven, and will be seated, as it is written, on the throne of his glory, and will repay each one according to his works. But if someone should wish to understand 'day' as the time of his advent, in which the remission of sins was given by Christ to both Greeks and barbarians, and to the Jews who had sinned against him, this person too will walk straight in the paths of truth. Thus also David indicates the time of our Savior's advent, saying, "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice

and be glad in it. Say to your brother, My people, and to your sister, Having obtained mercy. He very necessarily adds these things to what has already been said.

For since he has said that all will be under one rule, with nothing any longer walling them off or dividing them into discord, but rather with unanimity prevailing, and with faith in Christ gathering all into the unity that is in the spirit, then the Spirit necessarily commanded those who had already been enriched with the faith and had come under Christ, no longer to be fond of rejecting peace with those who were justly called Not my people, and Not having obtained mercy. For once Israel had been received, and had obtained remission, and had come under Christ, how was it consistent to still be in discord, and not rather to continue in harmony, those who had been called into brotherhood by the one Spirit of adoption? O then, he says, you who have been made radiant by faith in Christ, and have received the boasts of authenticity, say now to your brother who was formerly and justly called Not my people, the words My people; and to your sister, Not having obtained mercy, say the words Having obtained mercy. For it is necessary that the peoples under his hand appear to be of one mind with the master, and that those called to sonship through grace wish the same things as the father;

and rather to rejoice that the remnant of Israel has been saved, and that those formerly cast off because of great disobedience have now become acceptable and are now sanctified in Christ, through whom and with whom be glory to God the Father with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever, Amen.

Book 2

Plead with your mother, plead, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Having said before that Israel will be justly cast off, and in addition will be called Not a people; and indeed that the Lord-slaying multitude will surely be in every way Not having obtained mercy, and very reasonably so; then, having added to these things, and not at great length, the return through faith in Christ that will take place in the last times of the age, by saying, "And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one ruler," and having narrated the entire economy from beginning to end, he proceeds in these things to lay bare the accusations of those justly cast off, and clearly brings to light the things for which it happened that they suffered those things. Therefore he says to those who have obtained mercy and have been received and have become the people of God, but who have sprung from the Synagogue as from some harlot, Plead with your mother, plead. For if you wish, he says, to learn the reasons for which you became and were called Not my people, and Not having obtained mercy, in the times before your return, you will not find me to have been harsh toward you or neglectful in affection; but plead with your own mother, because she did not preserve the genuineness of love for me, but denied our relationship;

and she considered the purity of spiritual communion with me to be of very little account; and she was not willing to bring forth the fruits of my desires. She has become not my wife, and I therefore am no longer her husband; she did not bear you for me, but for others; for otherwise I would have recognized my own; the one who is by nature a father is not slow to mercy, but he hesitates to be good to an illegitimate offspring. And these things, one might perhaps say, are as from the person of God; but one will consider again, and reflect well, that since the Synagogue had turned to apostasy from God, and had chosen the worship of demons, and, just like a harlot, was spreading her legs for them, those born of her became neither purely and steadfastly God-loving, nor indeed gentle in their ways; but rather, having been reared in the customs of those who bore them, they heedlessly went on to things that grieve God; on the one hand sacrificing to Baal, and to the heifers golden ones; and this they do, rushing heedlessly into every kind of impurity. They will therefore blame, and very rightly so, their own mother, and not rather the truly virtue-loving and all-holy Master, who does not deign to have as a consort the one who has committed fornication. But the manner of the fornication is in every way spiritual, even if it is spoken of physically.

And I will take away her fornication from my presence, and her adultery from between her breasts, so that I may strip her naked, and restore her as in the days of her birth. For those who do not turn to God of their own will, nor endure to fulfill what is pleasing to him, but cling fast to a depravity that is honored by them I know not how, a certain penalty and punishment is devised, which then transfers them by necessity and fear to that very thing to which it was better to be brought of their own will. For just as difficult and hard-to-treat wounds on the body, even if they do not yield to the power of medicines and accept some change for the better, are either cut with a knife, since the experience of physicians calls for this manner of remedy, or else are overcome by fire; so also the soul of man, having inclined much toward apostasy from good things, even if it does not yield to the voices of those who admonish, nor chooses to migrate from baser things to the better, is overcome by judgments, and being caught in the snares of punishment, makes its return a matter of necessity. Such is that which is said through the voice of Jeremiah, "By pain and by scourge you will be disciplined, O Jerusalem.

And the divine David also sings something of this sort concerning those who have loved to be exceedingly led to sin, "With bit and bridle you shall restrain the jaws of those who do not draw near to you. For those who are accustomed to breaking colts turn the hard and unruly irrational animals with bridles toward what seems to be good; so also does God usefully deal with those who are very fond of sin. Therefore, prophets and righteous men advised the Synagogue to depart from the worship of idols, and to abstain from the error devised I know not whence. And not only this; but God himself also threatened to inflict upon them the most shameful of all evils, if they did not choose to return to thinking and doing the things that are pleasing and dear to him. But they were still terrible and unyielding, and inflexible in their mind. For this reason, having become captives to the Assyrians and Medes, they spent long periods of time. Being there, and burdened by the yoke of slavery, they no longer sacrificed to the heifers; for how, or from where could they? But they were already in inescapable evils; nor did they call upon Baal himself, but rather they continued, bewailing their own misfortunes. For this reason the Master of all says, And I will take away her fornication from my presence, and her adultery from between her breasts.

For she will go away captive, he says, and I will no longer see her sacrificing to Baal, nor offering whole burnt offerings to the golden heifers, almost baring her breasts to her own lovers out of excessive arrogance. But I will rather take pleasure in her being distressed and wretched, and having an incurable misfortune, in a land not her own, and having come under terrible and bitter masters. And I will do these things, having stripped her of my help, and leaving her disgraced, just as she was seen to be in the beginning, when, bearing the yoke of the Egyptians' oppression, she was continually bare of my grace and love, and of legal wisdom. Therefore the Synagogue came to a turning back, and as it were going backwards again into the state she was in, forfeiting through ignorance the honor and glory that was in between. This the Savior himself also taught us, saying, "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finds none. Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds

it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it ”seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they enter and ”dwell there, and the last state of that man becomes ”worse than the first. So shall it be also to this ”wicked generation.

For while the children of Israel were still sojourning in Egypt, the wicked spirit dwelt in them as idolaters, but it was cast out in the meantime; for they were called to the knowledge of God through Moses. But since they became killers of the Lord, and guilty of countless crimes, their last state has become worse than the first, a herd of demons, not just one any longer, dwelling in them. For a soul that has cast off the protection of heavenly grace will be in every way and altogether vulnerable to Satan. And I will make her as a desert, and set her as a waterless land, and I will kill her with thirst, and I will have no mercy on her children, because they are children of fornication. Because their mother has committed fornication, she that bore them has brought shame. He says that the one who has committed fornication will be fruitless, dry and thorn-bearing, thirsty and waterless, deprived perhaps not of earthly waters, but of the richness from above and from heaven, that is, of the provision through the Spirit, which he distributes to every wise and good soul. For somewhere the blessed David sings to God, and says ”But the sons of ”men will hope in the shelter of your wings. They will be ”inebriated with the richness of your house, and you will give them to drink of the torrent ”of your delight. For with you is the fountain of ”life.

Worthy of such a venerable and abundant provision would be those who are genuine and have lived rightly, and have put nothing before the love for God; but he says that the one who has committed fornication will become both waterless and will indeed die of thirst. And this, I think, is what was said about her through the voice of other prophets; for one said, ”Behold, the days ”are coming, says the Lord, and I will send a famine upon the land; ”not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing ”the word of the Lord; and they will run to and fro from east to west, ”seeking the word of the Lord, and they shall not find it; and Jeremiah again, as from the person of God, ”With pain and ”scourge you shall be disciplined, O Jerusalem; lest my soul depart ”from you, lest I make you a trackless land, which will not be inhabited. For to each of us, as I said, God sends into the mind words through the Spirit, which have the power to turn us to eternal life, or he often makes them drink through the voice of saints. He said, then, that the children must perish along with the mother who has committed fornication, and without pity. For what reason? Because they are children of fornication.

And we do not say, surely, that a child is subject to the transgressions of the mother, for that which is through the voice of Ezekiel will apply to us wherever it may be: ”Fathers shall not die ”for children, nor shall children die for fathers; each ”shall die for his own sin. But it should rather be understood that even if the person of a fornicating mother is conceived as a type of the Synagogue, nonetheless they themselves would again be those from her. But by saying that they are children of fornication, he showed clearly that they have become guilty of the crimes of spiritual fornication; and this, having been impious from their very swaddling clothes and womb, as it were, and having never at any time touched the works of

piety, and having virtue completely unpracticed, and not having honored the path pleasing to God. So also the psalmist says, "Sinners were estranged "from the womb, they went astray from the belly, they spoke lies; although every pious person, and one nourished in the works of righteousness, is able to cry out clearly to God, "On you I was cast from the womb; from my mother's belly "you are my God. And just as sons of light and sons of day would rightly be understood as those who live their lives splendidly and becomingly as in light and day;

so also if some are called children of fornication, you will again understand those who live as in fornication and a most exceedingly strange life, whom he does not deem worthy to pity, Because their mother has committed fornication, she that bore them has brought shame. And she brought shame, clearly, on herself and on the children that sprang from her. For just as it is among boasts the righteous one for those tending to virtue; so every impious person is in shame and disgrace. For she said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water and my garments and my linens and my oil and all things that are due to me. He says her lovers are the unclean demons, concerning whom the manner of fornication might also be said to be practiced. For to follow their opinions, and to fulfill what seems good to them, this, I think, is to be licentious in sins, and to live shamefully, and to be filled with the utmost worthlessness; and all but to be in labor with every form of uncleanness. For just as those who are in labor with the divine fear have cried out to God, "Through fear of you, O Lord, we have conceived in the womb and have been in travail and have brought forth, we have brought forth the spirit of your salvation upon the earth;

so also those who have given their mind to the desires of demons immediately have it full of all impiety, those who depart from the divine laws and are practitioners of all worthlessness. Therefore, wicked and sinful lovers of those who have inclined to impiety are the apostate demons, to whom if anyone should choose to pay attention as to gods, he will be terribly impious. For he ascribes to them the grace even of what he might have, and often honors them with praises, and offers thank-offerings, having abandoned the one God by nature, the one who supplies the means of life, who clothes us with grace as with garments, and overshadows both mind and heart with help from above, who fattens as with oil, and nourishes with the spiritual bread for a glorious and unending life, who nourishes us with the life-giving water for spiritual well-being. But he who has inclined to impiety, just as, of course, also the Synagogue that has committed fornication, said that one must follow her own lovers, and to them attribute the gifts, and to consider that from them he has received what is for food and clothing. For this, I think, is the meaning of For she said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water and my garments and my linens and my oil, and all things that are due to me.

But the wise and good, and those known to God and most intimate with him, would surely ascribe to him both the provision of heavenly goods, and the supply of earthly ones. For they will say, and very wisely, "Is there among the idols of the nations one who gives rain? And if the heaven will give its abundance, are you not the one? And we will wait for you, because

you have made all these things. And they will cry out together with the divine David, "You visited the earth and watered it, you enriched it abundantly. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build up her paths, and she shall not find her path; and she shall pursue her lovers and shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them and shall not find them. For since she has planned, he says, evil things against herself, and has left out none of the things that are by nature unjust; for she said one must choose to follow her own lovers, that is, to give the inclination of the mind to the unholy opinions of those who have deceived her, so as to fulfill only their things; and since, in addition to this, of the things gifted to her by me, she attributes the thank-offerings to the demons who have helped in nothing, for this reason I will show her thought to be vain, and I will oppose her completely.

For I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will wall her path, so that she might neither follow her own lovers, nor indeed find useful those who deceived her, even if she should perchance choose to pursue them, that is, to press on zealously in the honors and worship toward them. And he says the thorns are the difficult things that have happened to Israel, I mean the wars, the captivities, the famine, the dangers, the wearing away in slavery. For once they were under the Medes and Persians, they did not approach Baal at their leisure, nor the golden calves; but there was in a way a necessity, that, being deprived of their most cherished freedom from above, and seeking the things at home, but being poor, and by the pressed by the greeds of those in power, they are no longer able to fulfill their usual obligations; but rather to lament, and to be intoxicated with incurable misfortunes, now condemning those who led them astray, as they had no part in enjoying any of the things in their vain hopes. For they were not helped at all, either by Baal defending them; for what could the voiceless wood have done? or by the heifers contriving some kind of help for them; for it was gold, "the works of men's hands," according to what is written. Therefore the roads are blocked up;

God not smoothing for the lovers of sin the path to wickedness, but usefully making it rough, and not permitting them to rush with ease towards what seems trivial; so that they might be unwillingly thwarted, and might turn to what is better, having learned from experience itself that for everyone to transgress is not without penalty. And she will say, I will go and return to my former husband, for it was better for me then than now. The discourse still preserves the manner appropriate to it; for it has been composed from beginning to end as about a harlot woman. For this reason, he says, that she will repent and will say, I will go to my former husband, for it was better for me then than now. Yet observe in this also the God of all chastising even in wrath, and helping in various ways, and by the inflictions of terrible things drawing back those who have gone astray, and transforming them for their benefit. For when, he says, she sees her own ways blocked up with thorns, then indeed she will change her mind, and what it was better to choose to do before the grievous things had invaded, she will seize, even if late, and after the experience;

for then she will love the things from God, and having disregarded the intervening transgressions as from a sober mind, she will at last turn to willing what was in the beginning, and will marvel at the things from God, and she will perceive, as if having sobered up from drunkenness, that they differ by incomparable differences. Therefore, to be chastised is not without benefit, even if it happens to be grievous for the moment. And knowing this the prophets say, "Chasten us, O Lord. And the divine Paul also writes, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? And he shows what is sweet and beneficial from chastening, saying thus, "Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. And she did not know that I gave her the grain and the wine and the oil, and multiplied silver for her; but she made silver and gold things for Baal. That she would not choose, he says, to still follow her own lovers, no one would doubt. For she will achieve this, and very easily, since her road is being blocked up, and her paths are being walled up, and she is prospering in absolutely no way.

But since, in addition to supposing that Baal is a god, she has also dedicated to him the thank-offerings for the things supplied to her by me, for this too I will devise what is fitting, so that she may learn who is the giver, and has authority over all things. For I have given the things that sustain life: grain and wine and oil and I have multiplied silver for her. But when it was necessary to give thanks for my bounties, these things have been made for the glory of Baal. which indeed is a clear proof of the utmost insensibility and ingratitude alike; and the matter is not unable to justly and strongly provoke God, even if he were thought to be the source and origin of all gentleness. It is therefore altogether terrible and not without punishment, to seek to attribute the bounty of God's gifts to those who destroy his glory, that is, to the unclean demons, which indeed some in the world do; and these are Greeks, and heretics. For the ones, though God gives wisdom and reason to man, grant the power of eloquence to the opinions of the demons; while the God-hated and unholy hordes of heretics by the discoveries of complex notions harm some, and subvert that of the more simple mind, "and they set snares to corrupt men," according to what is written. Therefore both have honored Baal; and they almost offer things concerning God as a splendid dedication to his glory, as if from intelligible wealth.

And this, I think, is what is very well understood spiritually, I gave her the grain and the wine and the oil, and I multiplied silver for her; but she made silver and gold things for Baal. Therefore, one must dedicate to God the things that are his; for it is fitting to adorn with gold the giver and provider of every good to us through the things we have from him, whether it be a splendid word, or a mind well-suited to be able to understand true mysteries. Therefore I will return and take away my grain in its season and my wine in its time, and I will take away my garments and my linen cloths so as not to cover her shame; and now I will uncover her uncleanness before her lovers, and no one shall deliver her out of my hand. Do you see how he threatened the removal of the things that are known to bring gladness, and this usefully. For just as the roughening of her way with thorns led her to choose to think

better things, and prepared her, as it were, though unwillingly, to say, I will return to my former husband, for ”it was better for me then than now; for she knew through experience what leads to benefit, and in what things it was better to be engaged;

so if I take what is mine, he says, then she will certainly seek the provider, she will cease from having to offer thank-offerings to demons, and from thinking that they are truly gods, able to save those who have come under them. And he says that he will take the grain and the wine and the linen cloths in their season, perhaps when the fruits fail at times, and the ripe produce is late for them; so that even the labors of farming are endured in vain. But if someone should choose to understand that the Jews will be deprived of grain and wine at times, having fallen from the mystical blessing, he will understand well. And he says linen cloths, meaning as it were the clothing and the help from above, under which one will be decent. But if he is carried outside it, he will no longer be beautiful, but will continue to be very unseemly and, as it were, naked in the world. Thus then you will understand the removal of the linen cloths, so that her shame might not be covered. And he promises to reveal her uncleanness, and before her lovers, in what sort of manner? We were just saying that having fallen into thorns, that is, into the evils of war, and calamities most capable of terrifying, she will neglect even the supposed gods, not being at leisure to offer them sacrifices, nor indeed being able to perform the customary rites for their glory;

but rather mocking them, as having no benefit from them, and somehow reproaching their utter powerlessness, ”I will return,” she says, ”to my former husband, because it was better ”for me then than now. When, therefore, he says, I strip her of my help, and she, having fallen into terrible things, neglects the honor and love for them, then she will appear unseemly even to them, having spurned them with a corrupt and faltering mind. For as far as it concerned what was pleasant and dear to them, she ought to be seen as more enduring, and not even in the most extreme calamities forgetting what seemed right to them. Therefore, as far as their will is concerned, Israel is unseemly even in their eyes, having chosen not to love to the end those whom he considered to be gods. And the blessed Elijah seems to me to say something like this: ”How long will you limp ”on both your hams? If the Lord is God, ”go after him; but if Baal himself, go ”after him; which he says elsewhere, ”Either Baal, Baal, or to God, God. And that no one would deliver those who have once fallen under divine wrath, nor could anyone set upright one cast down by God, he has shown by saying, no one shall deliver her out of my hand. And I will turn away all her gladness, her feasts and her new moons and the her sabbaths and all her feasts.

For those who are altogether caught up in such harsh and inescapable evils, as to fall under a barbarian hand, and to serve enemies in the lot of the spear-won, how could they celebrate a feast? or what season of gladness could they have, who are weighed down by such bitter cares, and steeped in unbearable griefs? And yet, how is it not better to think this, that it would be more fitting for those brought into this state of misery, to cry out what is so well recited to the psalmist’s lyre, ”By the river of Babylon, there we sat down, and we wept when we remembered Zion. And having the celebration of feasts as something completely

unsuitable, they nonetheless say, ”How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? since the Babylonians, I suppose, did not permit them to perform their customary acts of worship, and the things dear to them at home and as was their custom. But perhaps someone will say this: If Israel had inclined to the worship of idols, how could they not also fall away from the feasts according to the law, both sabbaths and new moons? To this then we say, that they had indeed slipped from the love of God, and had worshipped Baal and the golden calves, but they did not entirely cast off the things given through Moses;

but rather they continued going on both feet and limping, according to the prophet’s voice, so as to choose to worship neither Baal completely, nor yet the God of all purely. Therefore, he has fallen away from feasts and festive gatherings and seasons of gladness and sabbaths, being permitted neither to fulfill for God the things in the law, nor yet to celebrate for Baal the customary festivals. And in another way it would be true and very likely, that it is necessary for those who depart from God, and who have despised the love for him, to be gloomy, and to continue outside of all that knows how to rejoice; ”For there is no joy for the wicked,” says the Lord; for whom the worm has been kept for eternity; but for the gentle, and those having a pious and God-loving purpose, it would be fitting that they should rejoice over all good things; ”For everlasting joy shall be upon their head,” as it is written, ”sorrow and pain and groaning have fled away; to whom also the divine Paul writes, saying, ”Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, ”rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all men. For just as it follows that sinners must be punished, so also for those to be enriched with good things from above, whose purpose it would be to live splendidly. And I will destroy her vine and her fig trees, of which she said, ’These are my wages which my lovers have given me’;

and I will make them a testimony, and the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the earth shall devour them. This, again, is another way of saying, ”I will take away my ”grain in its season, and my wine in its time. For since Israel, assigning the fruitful seasons to the powers and ambitions of demons, and acting most foolishly, offered thank-offerings to them, and not rather to God, for this reason he says that I will destroy and ruin the things by which she has been more wickedly deceived, saying that she has received them as wages from her own lovers. And the saying is cleverly crafted as if about a wanton woman, whereas in truth for Israel, the reward and payment for the honor and worship of idols was the abundance of ripe fruits and encountering a fruitful land. And that they thought that the participation in all other gladness was available to them for this reason alone, one might know very easily by encountering the words of Jeremiah. For Jerusalem was captured, and some who had escaped the height of the war went down to the land of the Egyptians, and with them the prophet, according to a divine oracle. There, at any rate, he advised them, saying that they should cease from the pollutions of idolatry, and choose to return to God.

Then a wretched and most foolish multitude of women again contradicted the prophet’s words, and indeed said shamelessly, ”The word which you spoke to us in the ”name of the Lord, we will not listen to you, because we will surely ”do every word that proceeds from

our ”mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out ”libations to her, just as we and our fathers and ”our kings and our rulers did in the cities of Judah ”and outside Jerusalem; and we were filled with bread and became ”prosperous, and we saw no evil. And when we stopped ”burning incense to the queen of heaven, we all ”were diminished, and perished by the sword and by anger. Do you understand then how he says he has obtained the necessities of life, and in addition to this prosperity, almost as a reward for having gone astray? Therefore, he says, ”I will destroy what she said, 'These are my wages, which my lovers have given me,' and I will make them into a witness. For these things, having been taken away, will bear witness, as it were, against the wickedness of Israel, and will make their punishment more conspicuous, and will make the wrath manifest. And the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the earth will eat them. But this might be understood not just in one way; rather, what is signified will be taken in three ways.

For either he means that the things in the fields will be food for beasts, since there is no longer an inhabitant of the land, because very many people have been driven from their homes and cities and fled unwillingly to Babylon and Media, and as many others have been consumed by the war, so that the land is now inhabited only by the beasts and creeping things of the Samaritans, or again, that the Babylonians, like certain beasts, will feast upon the fruitfulness of the land, while the inhabitants of the land are held within the walled cities, not daring to go beyond the gates, so to speak, even though famine is destroying them. But if it seems good to someone to understand spiritually, one might also go by another path. For the instruction through the law that brings one to Christ should indeed be compared to a vineyard and a fig tree. For it acts as a tutor to this end, according to the saying of the blessed Paul. And the vine might be understood as a symbol of gladness, and the fig tree of sweetness. And how could anyone doubt that for a God-loving soul the law of God is truly sweet and knows how to give great joy? Therefore Israel has of necessity remained without a share in the good things from above and spiritual things;

but they have been given for participation to those who are like beasts and creeping things, I mean, those from the Gentiles, who before the advent of the Savior might have been supposed to differ little from beasts and venomous serpents, on account of the brutishness of their ways. However, they have not remained in these things, having chosen to follow Christ who says, ”Learn from me, 'for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find 'rest for your souls.'” And I myself would add this to what has been said: that it is necessary for those who lead an accursed and God-hated life both to be deprived of every good thing and to be in the uttermost miseries. And I will punish her for the days of the Baals, in which she burned incense to them, and she put on her earrings and her necklaces and went after her lovers, but forgot me, says the Lord. He immediately brings forward again the cause of such a terrible, or rather, and exceedingly fitting, indignation against them. For since they have spent long periods of time in going astray, in equal extensions of time, he says, they will suffer the wrath. This, I think, is the meaning of 'I will punish her for the days of the Baals,'

that is, of the idols. For, he says, the things from punishment and justice will by all means be equal in measure to the days of wandering in which she burned incense to Baal.

For she has not ceased beautifying herself and pleasing her own lovers in many ways. And the adornment for souls that have chosen to worship idols is to fulfill those things which seem good to the unclean demons. For just as we say that a human soul is admirable, in which is seen the quality of excelling in virtues; so also the sin-loving soul must be supposed to be exceedingly beautiful to the hordes of demons, having chosen to think and to do everything that is both pleasant and dear to them. It might be compared such a soul would be like a woman of no good character, or even is fadedly gilded; and she almost bewitches the heart of her lovers with ornaments for the ears and neck. Therefore, every form of impurity makes the wicked respectable. That it is both customary and necessary for those whose aim is to look to those things to slip away from the very memory of God, he has shown by saying, *but she has forgotten me, says the Lord.* For since she became sick with clinging, he says, to demons, or rather with completely departing from the desire and zeal for the good, she also slipped from the very memory of God; and this is a clear proof of complete impiety. Therefore, behold, I will cause her to wander and I will set her in a desert. For since, he says, she has gone astray in many ways, I have sought the penalties of her apostasy quite rightly;

"for I have taken vengeance on her for the days of the Baals," and I have inflicted a wrath equal to her transgressions; for this reason, I will hereafter turn to mercy, and I will transport her to what is better, and to being able to fulfill the things by which she might become beloved of God. What then, he says, will be the manner of healing? Behold, I will cause her to wander, not from what is necessary and useful for life to what is not so, but from the more shameful things and those by nature harmful to that which results in benefit. For just as a soul wanders from virtue to depravity, in the same way, I think, going backward as it were from the ways of depravity, it would seem almost to have wandered, having been turned aside from its own purpose, and no longer traversing the path set before it. And just as her ways were usefully blocked with thorns, that she might not overtake her lovers, so also now, running as it were headlong into ruin and destruction, by the mercy of God she seems to be made to wander, being changed towards the desire of virtue, and receiving the light of the true knowledge of God into her mind and heart, and no longer finding, as I said, her former path. But it must be known that the phrase "I will cause her to wander" is spoken differently by the other interpreters; however, it ends up with one and the same meaning.

For some have rendered it, "That behold, I will lead her away; others, "That I will deceive her," signifying, as I said, in another way this very thing, I mean "I will cause her to wander," understood beneficially. And being an accessible and, as it were, a well-watered land for the hordes of demons, he promises to set her as a desert, teaching that he will render her hard and untrodden and waterless to their wills, so that they, finding no longer any place of rest, both refuse and depart. So also our Lord Jesus Christ says that the unclean spirit that has gone out of a man passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it.

For just as a waterless place is not habitable for men, so also to unclean spirits, the soul beloved of God and holy might reasonably be thought a wicked and hateful and, as it were, an impassable and waterless land, not tolerating to think or do the things that are pleasing to them. Therefore, the wandering spoken of here is a manner of assistance, and indeed also the being set as a desert land, according to the arguments just stated by us. And I will speak to her heart, and I will give her her possessions from there.

In these words, the Word clearly promises us salvation through Christ, and mentions the times of His sojourn, in which we say was fulfilled, ”In those days, and in that time, I will put my laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will write them. For so also the most wise Paul writes to those who had been enriched with such a truly brilliant and noteworthy grace, saying, ”You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all men, showing that you are a letter of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. For we who have believed have been taught by God; and indeed the divine John has addressed, saying ”And you have an anointing ”from the Holy One, and you have no need that anyone ”should teach you; but as his Spirit teaches you about ”all things. Therefore, having received the Spirit, and henceforth having Christ himself dwelling within our hearts, the guide of things necessary, we are at once enriched with the form of every virtue, and the abundant and inalienable possession of spiritual gifts. And indeed, Paul confirms us in this, writing: ”That which eye has not seen, ”and ear has not heard, and has not entered into the heart of man, ”what God has prepared for those who love him. Therefore he promises to speak to her heart;

for the Synagogue of the Jews will be called to knowledge, receiving the divine laws engraved on her mind through the Spirit, just as the church from the Gentiles did; and her possessions will be from there, instead of from here, that is, of this thing. For indeed from God speaking in us and sounding through the Spirit whatsoever things are necessary for life and the knowledge of God conceived in Christ, through whom and in whom we have seen the Father, we have been enriched, as I said, with the unfading hope, the glory, the boasts of adoption, the grace, and reigning together with Christ himself; these are the possessions of the saints; this is the heavenly wealth. For they endure thinking nothing of earthly things; but they have hated the world and the things in it. And the valley of Achor to open her understanding. ”I will give” follows the word again. For ”I will give,” he says, ”her possessions from there; and likewise I will give the valley of Achor to open her understanding. And what it wishes to signify is this: we who have believed, being eager to make what happened to the ancients a certain pattern of things to be done, we on the one hand avoid offending God as a cause of destruction; and on the other hand we rather seek and have made it our care to accomplish what is pleasing to him. For the most wise Paul also urges us to this, saying thus:

”Now these things ”happened to them as a type; and they were written for our instruction, ”upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore, it is a way of instruction into virtue, to think it necessary to observe the things that happened to the ancients. That, therefore, the disobedient and unruly, and those who despise the divine commandments, will fall into

a terrible and inescapable judgment, when Christ judges, could be shown, and very easily, as in the types, the things done concerning Achar at that time, who, having disregarded the divine command and stolen from the devoted thing, was punished with his whole household, Joshua the son of Nun having inflicted the ultimate penalty on him, who fulfills the image of Christ. For he was general after Moses, and he himself brought the sons of Israel across the Jordan, and he himself gave them the land of promise as an inheritance. The things written about Achar are as follows. For when he was caught having stolen, and confessed the sin, "And Joshua," it says, "took "Achar the son of Zarah and brought him to the valley "of Achor, and his sons and his daughters and "his calves and his donkeys and his sheep "and his tent and all his belongings, "and all the people with him, and they brought them up "to Emekachor. And Joshua said to Achar, 'Why have you "destroyed us? May the Lord destroy you, even as today.

"And all Israel stoned him with stones, and they raised "over him a great heap of stones. Achor, then, is interpreted as troubling; and with the addition of "Emek," it is again understood as valley of troubling; there the sons of Israel killed Achar as one hated by God and a lover of wealth, adding to him also all his things; for it is written that "The wicked "shall be utterly destroyed from the earth. Thus it will also be in the last times of the age, when Christ comes down to us from above and from heaven, to render to each according to his works. For those who have chosen to disobey the divine commandments, and have loved the things in the world more, having brought Hades down as into a deep ravine, he will miserably destroy the wicked. Therefore, "I will give," he says, "the valley Achor or Emekachor, to open her understanding. For it will be, he says, one of the most useful things for her to become sober and to finally open the eye of her mind from its ancient hardening, the things done from time to time in the valley of Emekachor; he called the place the valley of perversion, for there not a few of those from Israel fell, when those from Gai pursued them, and a great perversion happened to occur, when Jesus thought that Israel had slipped away from God's care and help.

The things done, therefore, he says, in the ravine of perversion against the one who dared to transgress the divine commandment will open her understanding so that she may know clearly what sort of end will result for those who wish to despise the undertaking. But observe how the valley, Achor, is not given to open her understanding until he has spoken to her heart. For the peoples of the Jews would not understand the divine commandments, nor would they perceive in types the mystery of Christ, unless indeed, like us who have already believed, they should be enriched with the participation of the Holy Spirit, and be shown to have partaken of the illumination from above. And the blessed Paul writing about those of the blood of Israel will convince us of this: "For to this very day the same veil remains at the "reading of the old covenant, not being unveiled, "because it is taken away in Christ. But to this day, "whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their "heart. But whenever one turns to the Lord, "the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. First, therefore, he promises to speak to her heart, inscribing on them the divine laws and the instruction from above of the Holy

Spirit; then thus she will understand also the things done typically and historically in the valley of Emekachor, which are not unable to open her understanding and finally deliver her from her ancient hardening.

”For a hardening ”in part has happened to Israel,” as the wise Paul also writes. And she will be humbled there according to the days of her infancy and according to the days of her coming up out of the land of Egypt. When I speak to her mind and heart, he says, and give the valley of Achor to open her understanding, there, that is, at that time, she will be humbled, not being subjected to or sinking under any of the things that are accustomed to cause pain, but rather finally abandoning her disobedient and stubborn manner, which is liable to the charges of arrogance; for the disobedient one is arrogant, and as it were steep and unbridled, and has practiced holding in no account the reverence for fulfilling the law; but the one who is inclined toward obedience is very humble, and as it were approachable, and greatly beloved by God. And indeed, he said somewhere through one of the holy prophets, ”And upon whom shall I look but upon ”the humble and quiet one, who trembles at my words? When, therefore, I speak, he says, to her heart, then indeed, then she herself will be humbled, just as in the beginning, when Moses was calling, and the merciful God had commanded them to depart from the land of the Egyptians, they were very eager to do this, and fled from the land of their oppressors.

And when he was establishing the laws in Horeb, having gathered with Moses on Mount Sinai, they promised, saying, ”All that the Lord our God has said to us, we will do ”and we will hear. Therefore she will be humble and obedient, just as in the beginning, when having received her birth into the knowledge of God through the law, she gladly accepted what was pleasing to God. The days of infancy, therefore, he says, is the rebirth into the knowledge of God through the law; wherefore he also said, ”Israel is my firstborn son. And it shall be in that day, says the Lord, she shall call me, My husband, and she shall no longer call me Baalim. And I will remove the names of the Baalim from her mouth, and their names shall no longer be remembered. Day, therefore, in these things, the one of the he calls the time of the visitation of our Savior. For the time of the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten will be called a day, properly and truly, during which the mist in the world is dispelled, and the darkness has vanished; and brilliant rays, as it were, rise up in the mind for those who have believed, and the sun of righteousness has shone, sending the light of true knowledge of God to those who know how to open the eye of their understanding. At that time, therefore, he says, having been called to the knowledge of the God who truly is, she will cease from that ancient and hateful levity;

and she will no longer be easily carried away to apostasy. From what source? Rather, having stepped correctly and soundly, she will have a mind unshakable in piety, so as not even, so to speak, to bring the names of the idols into use in speech. For she will call me, he says, My husband, and will no longer call me Baalim, that is, she will cease from being wanton, and she will refuse to fornicate any longer, but will greatly value being legitimate, and will confess the relationship, that is, clearly, the spiritual one. And she will in no way call

upon the Baalim, thinking that things made of stone are gods, and things skillfully forged by certain people into a human form. Therefore, he says, she will call me My husband. For like a prudent and most gentle woman she will make her turning to me, and she will henceforth love no other, and will no longer call upon the Baalim. And in another way, if it seems so to anyone, what was said may be understood. For Baalim is admittedly signified by the idols. But it was a custom for Hebrew women to call their own husbands by the names of the falsely-named gods, and this was an extraordinary way of honoring them. And they say that Ninus the Babylonian began such a practice, who renamed his own father Belus, after the idol among them, I mean Bel.

That she will cease, therefore, even from such a shameful custom, he has indicated by saying, She will call me My husband, and will no longer call me Baalim. For if she should choose, he says, to name me as husband, she will by all means say, My husband, and will no longer call me with the names of idols, honoring me. For this reason, he says, I will also take away the names of the Baalim from her mouth, and their names shall be remembered no more. And I will make a covenant for them in that day with the beasts of the field and with the birds of the air and with the creeping things of the earth; and I will break the bow and the sword and the war from the earth. In the passages already read before, he said, ”And I will destroy ”her vine and her fig trees, of which she said, These are my wages ”that my lovers have given me; and he added to these that ”the beasts of the field and the ”birds of the air and the creeping things of the earth will devour them. And interpreting the saying, we said that beasts and birds and creeping things were obliquely indicated as the enemies, who were plundering the land of the Jews, Persians and Medes and Babylonians, and the motley crowd of other enemies, who would be thought to differ little from wild beasts, on account of their bloodthirsty manner, and indeed birds on account of the swiftness of their running;

and creeping things, because they are terrible and exceedingly wicked and sharp in evil. These men, when Israel was shut up in the cities of Samaria, devoured everything in the fields, leaving nothing of the outlying places unworked. But when, he says, I cast out the names of their idols from the land, then I will also make a covenant of peace for them with every cruel and barbarian race. For the things from enemies will then be inactive, and they will remain inexperienced of war and terrors. For I will break the bow and the sword, which indeed we will find has been brought to a conclusion historically. For when the most illustrious generals of the Romans obtained rule over all, and made the world under heaven subject to their hand, with God providentially assigning glory to them, the Persians were concerned only for their own rule, and the incursions of the other barbarians against lands and cities ceased. and he remembers clearly of such a matter the blessed Isaiah says ”And they shall beat their swords ”into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: and nation shall not ”lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn ”war any more. For as though already under one yoke, they turned rather to beneficial industry and refashioned the instruments of war into things useful for agriculture. There will be peace, therefore, he

says, and the terrible fears of old will cease, as God calms them, and gladdens those who love him with the good things that come from peace.

But I think it will be necessary to add that as well. For formerly when we continued in error, and were called children of wrath, just as certain evil beasts and flesh-eating birds and indeed the most grievous dragons, the evil and opposing powers, were destroying us. But when in Christ we came to know God by nature, and through faith washed away the accusations of the ancient deceit, then we were saved, and received authority "to tread on serpents "and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy," then we also stepped upon the asp and the basilisk, and we have trodden upon the lion and the dragon, with Christ defending us, and with unconquerable power fortifying his own, and sending his own peace into our mind. "For my peace," he says, "I give to you; my peace I leave with you. And Paul also writes, "And the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, "will guard your hearts and your minds. And I will make you dwell in hope, and I will betroth you to myself forever. Not only, he says, will I deliver from the terrors of the enemy, but I will add to this also that the remainder of hope for good things be in a good state, so as to have a secure and established and unshakable cheerfulness. For I will betroth you to myself, and this forever. And what is this?

For in a way he was betrothed to ancient Israel, that is, the Synagogue of the Jews, and called it to a relationship, I mean through the law, with Moses ministering and angels mediating. But the manner of the betrothal was not perpetual, nor indeed forever, far from it; for the types were not going to prevail forever, nor the things "imposed until the time of reformation; but at the time of reformation, that is, of the coming of our Savior, another manner of betrothal has been revealed, perpetual and unshakable, and much more splendid than the first, and of the shadow in better things. For the God of all bestowed as a bridal gift to the bride the putting away of carnal slavery, and through shadow and types called her to spiritual cleansing. However, he set a time for the betrothal; for the first was not blameless, according to the voice of Paul, nor was it ageless and far from abolition. For this reason also a place was sought for a second, that is, for the new, I mean the gift and grace through Christ, bringing us not a temporary, nor a carnal freedom. For it enrolls among the children of God, and lavishes "the pledge of the Spirit," and establishes perpetual laws. And indeed the divine David somewhere said to him, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your word is truth;

openly, I think, declaring that neither do the things in the law remain forever, since the shadow will be transformed into truth, nor indeed can one behold the beauty of the truth in the letters of the law; for, as I said, the law was a shadow and a type. Therefore he betroths her, having set aside the first and original marriage. For the law is not able to unite to God perfectly and purely; but we approach him through the Son, and through his ordinances, that is, those of the gospel, which also have a spiritual union or connection; for we are united to God in the Spirit, and we are enriched with the participation of his divine nature. But it is likely that the phrase "I will betroth you to myself" elegantly suggests

something else to us; for you will understand it thus again. For either he says ”to myself” instead of ”through myself,” not, as in the past, with angels mediating, nor indeed with any minister being employed for this, according to the of the in the manner of Moses. ”For not an ”ambassador, not an angel, according to what is written, but the Lord himself,” the Word from God the Father who became man according to us, presented the church to himself, and ”created the two ”peoples into one new man, making peace, and ”reconciling them both in one spirit to ”the Father,” according to the voice of the blessed Paul. Or, if you wish, you may understand what was said in another way.

For, as I said, he once betrothed the Synagogue of the Jews in Egypt; but in a certain way to another rather than to himself, I mean to the divine Moses, to whom he said somewhere, ”Go, go down quickly from here; for your people, ”whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have transgressed. Do you hear how he has assigned to Moses the betrothed, that is, the people, not yet deeming them worthy of intimacy with himself; for the law, that is, Moses, as I said, was not sufficient to join them purely and completely to God; for it was truly reserved as the best and most God-fitting of achievements for the mediator between God and men, that is, Christ, through whom and in whom we are united to God. For ”he is our peace,” according to the scriptures, who removed the sin lying in between, and joined us, clean and washed and sanctified in the spirit, to himself, and through himself to God the Father. And I will betroth you to myself in righteousness and in judgment and in mercy and in compassion, and I will betroth you to myself in faith, and you shall know the Lord. He explains clearly what the manner of the union would be, and through what things the mystery of the economy would proceed. For it will be, he says, in righteousness and in judgment, and moreover also in mercy and in compassion.

What, then, is righteousness, and what is judgment, and indeed also mercy, it is necessary, as it seems, to say. Therefore we wretches were taken advantage of, with satan snatching us like a wild beast, and carrying us off into error, and casting us, as he pleased, into the pits of sin, as we were unable to defend ourselves at all. For the beast is truly most difficult and very violent and a murderer of men. And since human affairs were brought down to this misery, the blessed prophets made frequent prayers to him who is able to help, and fashioning for themselves, as it were, the common mask of humanity, they called upon the Son to come from heaven as a helper and an assistant. For example, the divine David said, ”Arise, ”O God, judge the earth; and again, ”O God, in your ”name save me, and in your power you will judge ”me. God therefore judged in righteousness, and saved the wronged, but drove away the blood-guilty and wicked satan, and repelled his advantage over us, and brought down the arrogant and hard to encounter rule of demons. And he himself clarified this mystery for us through himself, saying, when he was about to endure the cross for the life of all, ”Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler ”of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from ”the earth, will draw all people to myself.

And we certainly do not say that he said that the judgment of this world would happen by him at the time of his sojourn. For as he himself said again, ”God did not send the Son into

the world to judge ”the world, but that the world might be saved through him. But he says that judgment is, as it were, the right and blameless proceeding. For, as I said, he has judged rightly and in a God-fitting manner for both us and him. And he has saved us, by drawing us to himself; but he has cast out from his tyranny over us the one who took advantage of us and destroyed us in various ways. We have been saved, then, by God having mercy on us and pitying us. For we have been justified, ”not by works of ”righteousness which we have done, but according to his great ”mercy,” as it is written; and we have been called to spiritual intimacy through faith; and being so called, we have known the God who is God by nature. For this reason, he says, and I will betroth you to myself in faith, and you shall know the Lord. Therefore faith has entered beforehand, And thus we have been enriched also in the knowing of Christ. And this, I think, is what was said to some: ”For if you do not believe, you will not understand.

And that brilliantly understanding the mystery of Christ provides participation in eternal life for those worthy to choose it, the Son Himself will confirm, saying to the Father and God in heaven, ”And this is ”eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, ”and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. And it will be in that day, says the Lord, I will answer the heaven, and the heaven will answer the earth, and the earth will answer the grain and the wine and the oil, and they will answer Jezreel. So then, in these things he again calls ”day” the time fitting for the calling; for this is the custom of the divinely inspired scripture. Therefore, that Israel itself, at the proper times, will be in participation and abundance of every good thing, and of the gifts from above and from God, made glorious by faith in Christ, he indicates enigmatically. For he says there will be an abundance of rains, by His assent; for this, I think, is ”I will answer the heaven”; and indeed also on the earth below, that the most useful and necessary fruits will be given forth for us. For without God and the will from above, neither would the heaven itself ever rain upon those on the earth, nor would the earth bring forth its own fruit at the proper times. And knowing this, the prophet Jeremiah entreated, saying, ”Is there among the idols ”of the nations one who brings rain? And will the heaven give its ”abundance?

Are you not the God? And we will wait for you, for you ”have made all these things. For with the Creator assenting, as I said, and stretching out His hand to those on the earth, the heaven will be the giver of rain, and the earth the mother and nurse of necessary fruits. Therefore, he says, ”I will answer the heaven,” instead of, I will assent to send down rains upon those on the earth; and when this has happened, it too will answer the grain and the wine and the oil, that is, it will give forth abundant fruit to its inhabitants, with nothing lacking of what is necessary and life-giving. But these things historically; but from the corporeal things, it is necessary to pass over to the spiritual, as from a most clear image. For as long as Israel was still unruly and disobedient and fighting against God, the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth, ”the ”beloved new plant,” God commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. And by clouds we must understand the holy and rational powers, those from above and from the heavens, through which the word of comfort would come to us, clearly from God.

For they are ministering spirits, according to the voice of the blessed Paul, running up and down, and ”sent forth for service, for the sake of those ”who are to inherit salvation.

But since the time of judgment has passed, the one who was formerly a lord-killer has been saved through faith, was then received in righteousness and in judgment and in mercy and compassions, God, who richly distributes all things to all, sent down to him the blessings from above. For He commanded the clouds to send down the rain, I mean the comfort for the mind and heart. Except that the very nature of angels has nothing of its own, but is rich in all things from God, He taught by saying, ”I will answer the heaven,” that is, I will make the heaven full of things from me, that is, those who are in heaven, clearly the rational and holy powers, so that they too may be able to comfort those who have received mercy, and then certainly the earth will answer the grain and the wine and the oil; instead of, those on the earth will bear the fruit of hope for life and gladness and cheerfulness. And grain is a type of life, wine of gladness, and oil of cheerfulness and well-being; for indeed there is in those who have believed a good hope, both firm and established. And one departs from wickedness, and longs for every good thing, and bears his neck under the yokes of the Savior, being nourished by a good and indubitable and truly certain hope of the life to come, and that he may rejoice mixed with the other saints, and have a most cheerful heart.

he said For somewhere concerning the saints the prophet Isaiah says that ”And ”everlasting joy shall be upon their head; for upon their head ”shall be praise and exultation, and joy shall overtake ”them, pain and grief and groaning have fled away. Therefore, in hope of life and cheerfulness, and indeed of joy, the earth will certainly obey the consolations from above, that is, the spiritual rains; that is, the people who inhabit the earth. But that the fruit of the life of the saints will also be for the glory of Christ; ”For one died for all, that those who live ”might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died ”and was raised; he has made clear by saying, and these things will hearken to Jezreel; for to him, as I said, we shall bear fruit, owing our own life to him. And it has been said many times, that Jezreel is interpreted as ”seed of God,” and this is the Son, as begotten of God the Father by nature and ineffably, even if the matter is spoken of in a bodily way. And I will sow her for myself on the earth, and I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to that which was not my people, ’You are my people,’ and he shall say, ’You are the Lord my God.’ The ”for myself” you will again understand in two ways. For I will make, he says, as it were, both flourishing and fruitful;

clearly the Synagogue of the Jews, no longer fulfilling the law against my will, nor indeed choosing to cling tightly to the types; but choosing to accomplish that which is especially dear and pleasing to God, and is considered to be right. Therefore, I will sow for myself; for she will receive my seed ”that we might understand the evangelical decrees, and no longer that through Moses, as also in the beginning; for of old she was cultivated by the types. Or rather, the ”for myself” you may also understand in another way. For I myself will be the worker, he says, for her care, and as a certain rich and well-ploughed land, not through another but by myself will I sow. For God the Father has spoken to us in the Son; although

in former times He spoke through the holy prophets ”in many portions and in many ways. And to the crops in a field the Savior himself also likens the countless multitude of those who have believed. And so He said to the holy apostles, ”Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then ”comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your ”eyes, and see the fields, that they are white ”for harvest already; and he who reaps is receiving wages, and ”gathering fruit for eternal life; and again in other places; ”The ”harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the ”Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his ”harvest.

Therefore, when our Savior Jesus Christ sent down for us the spiritual rain, we became a ”delightful land,” according to the voice of the prophet. For he sowed us for himself, and Israel has been called ”God's field. For he will have mercy on her who had not received mercy, and he will call him who was once Not-a-people, a people. And he himself, ceasing from the ancient error, will recognize the true God, and will say, 'You are my God,' although formerly crying out from immeasurable madness, ”We know that God has spoken to Moses; ”but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. Therefore, not knowing the Son, they did not know the Father either; and the Savior himself will testify, saying, ”If you knew me, you would ”have known my Father also. But since they have been called to knowledge, and have confessed the Son, they have therefore seen the Father through him and in him. For it is true, that as the wise John says, ”He who denies the Son, does not have the Father ”either; but he who confesses the Son, confesses the Father ”also. And the Lord said to me, Go yet and love a woman who loves evil things and is an adulteress, just as God loves the sons of Israel, and they look to other gods and love raisin-cakes. Fitting. For I think it necessary to investigate such things and to examine them in detail.

For after the first one, the lewd and driven one, another woman is introduced to the prophet, being liable to the charges of adultery. And what is the reason? For the multitude of the Jews, the one before the coming of our Savior, since indeed also more unguardedly and very readily going towards error, and worshipping the golden heifers, and bowing down and sacrificing to Baal, that is, to Baal-peor, might be compared to a harlot, and very fittingly, as if exposed to every wicked and unclean spirit, wanting to fulfill its own pleasures; for they also accepted the objects of worship of the neighboring and surrounding nations, according to what seemed good to each, impiously and without examination. But she, for readily going towards apostasy, was justly punished, being sent into captivity and falling under the feet of her enemies; yet God made it clear to the prophet, that in the time of the day of Jezreel, which is truly great, they will come up out of the land, that is, they will flee from the country of the foreigners. And this was to suggest again in a riddling way, that they will cease to be strangers and sojourners, or rather, captives of the spear, and dwelling in a foreign land not freely. For the Savior proclaimed ”release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,” according to the prophet's voice.

And that they will also be received through faith in mercy and compassion, and will be called the people of God, and indeed also 'having obtained mercy,' he has clearly signified. For after

the advent of the Savior, and the passion on the cross, and the resurrection from the dead, the remnant has been saved; for no small number of those from Israel have believed; but again the disobedient multitude has remained, which must be compared to an adulteress, because of not choosing the bridegroom from heaven, and rejecting the one who courted her in faith, but giving up her mind as to certain adulterers, to the scribes and Pharisees. "For they were teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Just as, therefore, the prophet was with the harlot, as a type of God enduring the fornication of Israel, and punishing moderately for their conversion, and bringing them back to knowledge; in the same way, I think, through the preceding things the mystery is elegantly fashioned for us again. For as a type of God the prophet takes the adulteress who loves wicked things; and he cherishes her, as it were, fattening her well with promises and good hopes, not allowing her to fall into despair. For that the whole mystery is in these things, God showed by speaking thus to the prophet: Love the adulteress who loves wicked things, just as God loves the sons of Israel; and they look to other gods, and love cakes with raisins.

For although, he says, they choose to disobey, and assign their love to falsely-named gods, and wish to fulfill for them things that are pleasing, from his innate goodness God loves them, "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And somehow the Word of God gives us to understand, that even at the time of his advent there were perhaps many among the Jews still wavering, and neither adhering purely to the commandments through Moses, nor indeed being entirely free from the filth of error, but rather also looking to other gods, to whom they also brought cakes with raisins, perhaps sacrificial cakes, and honey-cakes. For they offered such cakes as a sacrifice to demons, and experience is a witness. So I bought her for myself for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer of barley, and a skin of wine. And I said to her, "You will stay with me for many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you be for another man, so I will also be for you. The prophet therefore hires the woman, and makes her sit at home, and commands her to abstain from her customary baseness, and to cease from the pollutions of adultery;

and he promises, if she chooses to be chaste and is chosen to look to him alone, that he himself also will be for her, that is, he will make her his own in marriage, and will be one with her, "For the two," he says, "shall become one flesh. And what is the riddle? The multitude of the Jews, the disobedient and deicidal, the adulterous and profane, after Christ ascended into the heavens, God makes to sit, without a husband, indeed; unless she should still commit fornication, that is, unless would walk again towards the necessity of choosing to honor foreign gods, he promises to join to himself in due time, the multitude of the Gentiles having evidently been judged beforehand. For those from Israel have been placed at the back, that is, as a following and behind and in the last things. But observe how no marital union at all took place for the prophet with the adulterous and wicked woman, but a promise of the matter after many days, if she would not again belong to another man, that is, if she would abstain from the crimes and defilements of spiritual fornication. For, as I said, in due time the bridegroom from heaven will receive the adulterous multitude, not having worshipped idols. For indeed after the Savior's cross, Israel is attached only to the laws through Moses,

very unsoundly, however, and negligently, yet it has not turned aside to choose to honor the false worship of demons.

But what is the way of life for the one who has committed adultery and is awaiting in due time the fellowship of the prophet? or what were her wages? fifteen [shekels] of silver, he says, and a homer of barley and a nebel of wine. For Israel has continued through the time between its last calling, being fed with a worthless word, and paying attention to mythical and truly old-womanish teachings of their own teachers; and its life has become beast-like, and its mind in drunkenness and darkness. And the silver would be a very clear type of a teaching word, according to what was said to them through the voice of Isaiah, "Your silver is worthless," and according to the voice of the Savior justly rebuking the wicked and lazy servant and saying, "You ought to have deposited my silver with the bankers. Therefore you will take the silver to mean the word of the teachers. But if someone should choose to refer it also to the law itself through Moses, he will say it is fifteen, either because the law is at once both perfect and imperfect; and perfect, if it is understood spiritually; for it speaks to us the mystery of Christ; but imperfect, on the other hand, if the mind of those being instructed goes only as far as the letter. for in a way the denseness of the history is in a half-knowledge.

But the number ten is a symbol of perfection, being all-perfect, according to, " Be over ten cities," and, "To whom he gave ten talents; but of that which is not so, five would be understood; for, as I said, it is half of ten. Or also in another way you will approach the things that have been said. The number fifteen is comprehensive of the seven, and indeed also of the eight. and in a way it is always signified in the God-inspired scripture, through the seven, the whole time of the law up to the holy prophets, because of the sabbath-rest on the seventh day, and through the eight, again, that of the new covenant, according to which is the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, which happened on the eighth day. And I think this is what is shown by the enigmatic saying, "Give a portion to the seven, and also to the eight," that is, let them have a place with you, both the law and the prophets after it, honoring the sabbath-rest on the seventh day; and let the eight also have a place, that is, the Apostles and Evangelists after the resurrection day of the Savior. and with this agrees what is indirectly indicated through the voice of a prophet, "And there will be raised up against him seven shepherds, and eight bites of men. For when our Savior Christ shone upon us, both the legal and prophetic proclamations and the apostolic instruction rose up in a way against Satan who had paralyzed us.

For indeed through these things he was in a way bitten down and has been plundered. and according to the voice of the Savior his goods were plundered, as those who were once deceived have departed from slavery under him, and have come to know the one who is by nature and truly God and Lord of all. Therefore "seven shepherds and eight bites of men" rose up against him, that is, those before the advent, and those after the eighth day, through legal and new writings calling the deceived to salvation. So Israel has continued, as I said, with the worthless voices of its own teachers, that is with the bare being nourished by the

letter of the law, although it also contains the things of the eighth day, that is, the mysteries of Christ. But that his life is also like a beast's, and has inclined only to fleshly things, the barley being given to the adulteress for food would indicate very well. For the food is fit for beasts, and the wine would be a sign of drunkenness. And it was said to them, "Hearing you will hear, and you will not understand; and seeing you will see, and you will not perceive. These are the afflictions of the drunk, and the crimes of the debauched, to neither see while seeing, nor be able to understand anything while hearing; but to have a mind that is, as it were, thickened, and filled with hardness.

For the sons of Israel shall sit for many days, with no king and no ruler, with no sacrifice and no altar, nor priesthood nor manifestations. And after these things the sons of Israel will return and will seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they will be amazed at the Lord and at his good things in the last of days. Clear then and having it without dispute, as at least in these things, is the declaration that the adulteress was taken, and to remain at home for many days, until the prophet should be with her; for it is written thus. And what was done was a prefiguration of what was to happen in due time to the adulterous Synagogue of the Jews. For since our Lord Jesus Christ willingly endured the cross for the salvation of all, when those from Israel had acted insolently toward him, then indeed, when their land was ravaged, they were scattered as if to every wind; and to this day they are inactive regarding the law, since the temple in Jerusalem was burned, and the altar taken away, and sacrifice abolished, and the priesthood idle, and the manifestations not seen. For with no high priest sacredly attired according to the law, how was it still possible to see the manifestations? And what might the manifestations be considered? Perhaps the eager learner knows, but it is not unprofitable to recall it briefly.

When the God of all commanded the things for the adornment of the high priest to be made, then he said to the sacred Moses: "And you shall make a breastplate of judgment, a work of a weaver, a span in "length, and a span in width; it shall be a square. Then he commanded twelve stones, named for the tribes, to be skillfully and artfully woven into the work; and indeed two others among the rest, whose names were the manifestation and the truth. Then this breastplate of judgment hung from the ephod by golden chains; and it was laid upon the breast of the high priest, and the manifestation and the truth were a type of Emmanuel. For all the things that he heard from the Father, he announced to us. and he has manifested the will of the one who begot him; and he has made clear the way of salvation. That he is also the truth, how could anyone doubt, when he himself says clearly, "I am the truth? For this reason it also hung upon the very heart of the high priest, the type all but shouting and openly crying out that the priestly race will have the Savior and Redeemer of all, the truth and the manifestation, in mind and heart. that is, that there is every necessity for the ministers to always be mindful of Christ, and to bear him dwelling within through the Spirit; and his house is a pure mind, and a cleansed heart.

So then, he says, the sons of Israel will sit for many days with no king and no ruler, that is, without a king and without a governor. For neither will those from the tribe of Judah reign

as kings, nor indeed will the rulers who preside according to the law, that is, the priests. But neither, he says, will there be an altar or a sacrifice, a priesthood and manifestations. Yet not in these things forever, nor will Israel be utterly sent away; for it will be called in due time, and it will return through faith, and it will know the God of all, and with him David, that is, Christ according to the flesh from the seed of David, the king and Lord of all. Then indeed they will be astonished at the greatness of the honor, and the immeasurable grace of his gentleness. they will partake for of the hope prepared for the saints, and mixed with the flocks of the faithful, they will be pastured in a good pasture and in a rich place. For the time of this so brilliant and admirable grace is for them the last and in the last times, and in Christ, through whom and with whom to God the Father be glory with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen.

Book 3

Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God upon the earth. Cursing and lying and murder and theft and adultery are poured out upon the land, and blood touches blood. It is necessary for us, wanting to make clear the meaning of what lies before us, almost to take up again what was in the beginning, and as it were to ruminate on the whole scope of the prophecy. Therefore, as far as possible, and bringing it together in brief, I say this. For it was ”the beginning of the word of the Lord in Hosea. But in interpreting such things, we rightly said that the words came from God to the blessed prophet Hosea, as though initiating him and foretelling what was to come through types and words. For this reason Gomer was taken in the beginning, and she bore both Not-my-people, and She-who-has-not-obtained-mercy. Then after her a second adulterous and wicked woman was taken, and on each of these things the prophet, as I said, was instructed subtly and accurately.

As he had therefore gathered within himself a sufficient power of the mystery, he begins at last to proclaim to those of the blood of Israel the things that are to come, and to make plain the reason for the disaster that would all but befall them, and to make very clear the things at which God was grieved, so that those being punished might know that they justly suffered whatever should happen to them. For since they were about to be captured by enemies, and to be set forth as a laughing-stock to those who had the highest opinion of them, and who thought Israel to be the most difficult of all other nations to conquer, lest they should think in themselves that the hand which defends and saves had grown weak, but should rather repent, and choose to return to better things, understanding that they had foolishly offended the one who knows how to save, for this reason they had also fallen under divine wrath, he necessarily proclaims their charges to them even before the expected events, and says Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. But God judges men, rebuking, not being judged, and setting forth the bare charges to those who have acted impiously against him, according to that which is sung somewhere in the psalms:

”I will reprove you, ”and set before your face” your iniquities, so that they may not say that the wrath was brought upon them in vain, but rather as in the order of a debt, and as

necessarily befalling those who are accustomed to transgress in the greatest matters. And what does he say, judging or rather refuting? There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God upon the earth. Therefore, to say that there is no truth would very likely imply that among all at that time there was much false accusation, and perjury and deceit and treachery, the most shameful of all evils; and that they were without love for one another and without compassion, unyielding and relentless, and had hardened their minds, would indicate that there is no mercy; and that they were lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, and were wholly devoted to falsely named gods, he will again make clear by saying that there is no knowledge of God upon the earth. And besides, it would be fitting for those entangled in such terrible absurdities, to seem somehow no longer even to know God; if indeed we say we know him by thinking rightly those who follow his divine will. He adds to this, that cursing and lying and murder and theft and adultery are poured out upon the earth, and they mingle blood upon blood.

Do you hear how those of whom the discourse is have come to the end of all evil, and henceforth beyond unholy undertakings, leaving nothing of the most exceedingly outrageous things unpracticed? And what is still more unreasonable than this, he says they mingle blood upon blood. And this would be a clear sign, that neither is any respite introduced for their evils, nor indeed do the perpetrators come to a repentance of what they have dared; but sin is drawn out, as it were, continuous and in succession. But let these things have been said for the more readily available clarification. But again the blessed prophet seems to make for us a more mystical narrative, and to accuse Israel for its drunken outrages against Christ, and its murders against him and the saints. For the Lord has a judgment against the inhabitants of the land. For what reason, and on what grounds? For our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to us, and was sent, as he himself says, ”to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” that by the torch-bearing of the Spirit he might enlighten those in darkness, that having delivered them from the shadow of the law, he might set them on the ways of true worship, that having justified by faith those entangled in sins, he might unite them through himself to God the Father. But it did not seem right to those of Israel;

for they cast out, they rejected the one who had come from heaven for these purposes, they were not willing to have among themselves the truth, the mercy, the knowledge of God the Father. For that Christ is truth and mercy, I think will not require long arguments for proof, since the God-inspired scripture is sufficient for this, from top to bottom naming for us Christ as mercy and truth. But that he is also the knowledge of God, one could learn quite effortlessly, since he cried out most clearly and plainly, ”He who has seen me has seen the Father. Therefore, he says, the Lord has a judgment against the inhabitants of the land; and it is clear that he means the land of the Jews; because truth and mercy and the knowledge of the Father are not among them. He is judged, then, against those who do not have such things; but those who have accepted the faith have escaped being judged by him, or rather from him. And this itself would be clear, from Christ saying again, ”Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes in me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment. What

then is poured out upon the land? Cursing and lying and murder and theft and adultery; and they mingle blood upon blood. And what is the cursing? Slander and insult;

for the peoples of the Hebrews in no way ceased insulting Jesus, assailing him with an unguarded and unbridled tongue, so as to call him at one time a Samaritan, at another a drunkard, and one born of fornication. For in their view they supposed the holy Virgin had committed adultery; therefore, the cursing is in these things. And they also lied against his glory, saying that he had a demon, and attributing the divine signs to the powers of Beelzebul. But that they might be convicted of also having a murderous disposition against him, one would know from the fact that Emmanuel was often stoned by them; and was taken even to the very brow of the mountain, that he might be cast down. And the accusations are not limited to these things. And the matter of theft was also held in very high esteem. For they hired against him the traitor Judas, the one most greedy for base gain and most thievish. And the Pharisees, having become like certain wicked adulterers of the Synagogue of the Jews, drove away from it the bridegroom from heaven, that is, Christ; and committed fornication with it, persuading it to serve their own pleasures. And they also mingled blood upon blood. How, or in what way? For having killed the holy prophets, they added to them the very Lord of the prophets. And so the blessed Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles rightly reproaches them, saying, ”Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?

And they killed those who foretold about the of the coming of the Just One, of whom you have now become betrayers and ”murderers. But the Savior also, reproaching the Pharisees and scribes for their bold deeds, said, ”You also fill up the measure of your fathers. Therefore the land will mourn, and will be diminished with all who dwell in it, with the beasts of the field and with the creeping things of the earth and with the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea will fail, so that no one may judge and no one may reprove. For since, he says, they have lived such a God-hated and very harsh life, impious and unbridled, and have thought and done what is not lawful, acting insolently toward God; for this reason, and very justly, they will go away to destruction, with the land, as it were, mourning; for it will be laid waste, and will change its form, and will wear a joyless look, with cities having been burned, and houses shaken down, and fields cut down; and the inhabitants will be disposed along with the land, both lamenting together and wailing together. For they too will mourn, that is, they will become very far removed from all cheerfulness and prosperity. And who are the inhabitants? Both beasts and creeping things, and in addition to these, flying creatures. And surely we will not think, if we understand correctly, that the prophetic word cries out to us against wild beasts, or creeping things, or birds;

for it is utterly simple-minded, and full of foolishness to think in this way; for we think rather, having decided to think correctly, that the ways of the Jews are likened to the things just mentioned by us. and through the beasts, the word might signify the most powerful and those sufficiently able to terrify others, the savage and aggressive, and those accustomed to commit murder, and having very much that is uncivilized; but through the creeping things, those who have practiced bitterness in their ways to the extreme, and have already reached

the end of all wickedness. For in this way, I suppose, the wise John also reproved the most wicked crowd of Pharisees and scribes, crying out and saying, "serpents, brood of vipers; and through the birds you will understand well those readily stirred up to apostasy from God, or else suffering from accursed arrogance, and being carried aloft somewhere and being accustomed to think lofty thoughts. And he seems to call fish the rabble and the herd-like, those submerged in the cares of life, and having a mind as if underwater, the voiceless and most irrational; for the creature of the fish is most voiceless. And in another way, those who, as it were, swallow the weaker; for eating one another is especially honored among fish. Therefore, he says, the land will mourn together with its inhabitants. And what is the reason for this? So that no one may judge, nor may anyone reprove.

For since curse and falsehood, For since, he says, they have lived such a God-hated and very harsh life, impious and unbridled, and have thought and done what is not lawful, acting insolently toward God; for this reason, and very justly, they will go away to destruction, with the land, as it were, mourning; for it will be laid waste, and will change its form, and will wear a joyless look, with cities having been burned, and houses shaken down, and fields cut down; and the inhabitants will be disposed along with the land, both lamenting together and wailing together. For they too will mourn, that is, they will become very far removed from all cheerfulness and prosperity. And who are the inhabitants? Both beasts and creeping things, and in addition to these, flying creatures. And surely we will not think, if we understand correctly, that the prophetic word cries out to us against wild beasts, or creeping things, or birds; for it is utterly simple-minded, and full of foolishness to think in this way; for we think rather, having decided to think correctly, that the ways of the Jews are likened to the things just mentioned by us. and through the beasts, the word might signify the most powerful and those sufficiently able to terrify others, the savage and aggressive, and those accustomed to commit murder, and having very much that is uncivilized;

but through the creeping things, those who have practiced bitterness in their ways to the extreme, and have already reached the end of all wickedness of wickedness. For in this way, I suppose, the wise John also rebuked the most wicked multitude of the Pharisees and scribes, crying out and saying, "O vipers, generation of vipers; and through the birds you will understand very well those who are readily stirred up to apostasy from God, or those who are sick with accursed arrogance, and are accustomed to be carried aloft and to think lofty thoughts. And he also seems to call fish the rabble and the gregarious, those immersed in the cares of life, and having, as it were, an underwater mind, the voiceless and most irrational; for the nature of fish is most voiceless. And in another way, those who, as it were, devour the weaker; for devouring one another is especially honored among fish. Therefore, he says, the land will mourn together with those who dwell in it. And what is the reason for this? So that no one may judge, nor may anyone reprove. For since a curse and falsehood, and theft and murder, and adultery have been poured out upon the land, and they mingle blood with blood, for this reason falsehood and deceit and slander will henceforth mourn and be idle. For groaning at what has happened contrary to hope, and weeping for the disaster at hand, they will unwillingly abstain from such transgressions.

For to judge and to reprove would be nothing else, as I think, than to accuse and condemn some, that is, to bear false witness. This is what another of the holy prophets of the blood of Israel cried out to us, saying, ”Woe is me, O soul, for the godly man has perished ”from the earth, and he who acts rightly among men is no more; all ”are judged for blood, each oppresses his neighbor with ”oppression. But these things in a historical sense; but directing the word of the prophecy to the innermost meaning, we say this. For since in the land of the Jews, that is, among the Jews themselves, there is ”no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God; and we have said that Emmanuel is and is called these things; but rather a curse and falsehood have prevailed, and theft is honored, and they mingle blood with blood; for having killed the prophets, as I said, they also killed Jesus himself; therefore the land, being burned by Roman hands, will mourn together with its inhabitants. And these things will be, he says, so that no one may judge, nor may anyone reprove. which is clearly blaming the Jews, as having judged unholily and convicted, or rather, borne false witness against Christ. For the leaders brought him to Pilate, judging and accusing him. And some came forward and testified against him, and they all but dared to convict him; the wretched ones speaking falsely, at one time, that he perverts the people;

at another, that we have heard this man say that in three days he will destroy the temple of God, and raise it up again. Therefore, he says, justice will be taken away, and conviction, that is, testimony against, and a vote that is not true; there being no king, nor a ruler accustomed to judge. For this reason, as I think, the prophetic word also likens the peoples of the Jews to the kingless animals, I mean beasts and reptiles and birds and fish. Thus also the blessed prophet Habakkuk said somewhere to the God of all, ”Why do you look on those who despise? ”Will you be silent when the wicked swallows up the righteous? And ”will you make men like the fish of the sea, and ”like the reptiles that have no ruler. But my people are as a priest spoken against, and he shall be weak for days, and a prophet shall also be weak with you. Observe for me, then, the blessed Prophet bringing forth in another manner the things said to him by God. For he heard clearly that ”For many days the sons of Israel shall sit, ”with no king and no ruler, with no sacrifice and no ”altar, nor priesthood nor manifestations; but he himself, as if anticipating the unbridled anger of his hearers, reproves covertly, and overshadows his word with measured obscurities. For that they will continue for times without leaders and a king, and will remain untutored, slightly he hints, comparing them to the ungoverned among animals.

But that they will also be cast out from sacrifices and sacred ministry, he suggests, saying, that they have become equal to the contested priests. And who might these be again? Or who is the contested priest? The one having a blemish, and a bodily infirmity; for this very reason also being excluded from the ministry. For either on account of a leg, or an injury of the eyes, or on account of a broken foot, or for another reason, some were sent away from the duty of being a priest, although they were from the tribe and blood of Levi. For thus the law through Moses has prophesied. Thus therefore, he says, shall my people be. For although being holy on account of the fathers, and deemed worthy to sacrifice, he will sit outside the holy tabernacle, outside the ministry and sacred rites. For he will not

offer sacrifices, nor indeed will he offer a sweet-smelling savor to God; for he has no longer moderately suffered the injury to his mind, and his heart has been maimed, and he has justly become already rejected, and detested. But that it will also befall those of Israel that the prophets will be silent, he has indicated, saying, And a prophet will also grow weak with you, surely according to that which was said by God to the blessed Ezekiel: ”And I will bind your tongue, and you shall be mute, and ”you shall not be to them a man who reproves, that is, who rebukes, because ”it is a rebellious house.

But all these things will happen because of their impiety toward Christ, and the crimes against the prophets. Yet he says that Israel will not be weak forever, but for days; for a time of salvation and of repentance as in faith has been reserved for him. I have likened your mother to the night, my people has been likened as one having no knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being my priest; and you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The word, therefore, is as if to the immoderate and unholy multitude of the Jews. Indeed, he calls her mother the Synagogue, just as indeed also the Church of those justified in Christ. Therefore, he justly compares the Synagogue of the Jews to darkness and gloom. For this reason also the most wise Paul says very well concerning himself and those who have been enlightened in the faith, ”We are not of the night nor of ”darkness, but sons of light and of day. But my people, he says, is like those who have no knowledge, although it was enriched with the guidance through the law. For it has been called to the knowledge of the truly existing God, it has been fully convinced by miracles, and nothing at all has been left out of all that is able to enlighten those in darkness, and it is not unable to impart admirable knowledge to the more teachable.

But since, he says, you rejected knowledge, that is, Christ, through whom and in whom the Father is both accessible and known, you will henceforth be cast out from being holy, and from offering sacrifices, as profane. And since you slipped into forgetfulness of the divine laws, neither understanding the things of Moses spiritually, nor indeed applying a keen and quick mind to the teachings through Christ, I also will be brought into a kind of forgetfulness of your children, that is, I will no longer remember, at least so as to deem them worthy of forbearance and care; for to those whom God deems worthy to remember, to these he bestows his own loving-kindness. But Israel also in another way forgot the divine law, and rejected knowledge by practicing idolatry. According to their multitude, so they sinned against me; I will turn their glory into shame. The divine and ineffable nature is the source and origin of all gentleness, and goodness itself; yet it does not entirely endure those who transgress; but upon those who proceed unrestrainedly to this, it inflicts the punishments that are fitting for them. He insists, then, that Israel has come to this point of depravity, so that their desperation is no longer bearable, and their sin is seen as equal in number to them. For they were ”as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand which is ”on the seashore,” according to what is written; but he said that their transgressions were in no way less than their multitude.

This, I think, is the meaning of *According to their multitude, so they sinned against me*. But since they had slipped into this of misery and ill-counsel, and they have not ceased to offend God, I will turn their glory into dishonor, that is, in that very thing in which they have decided to take great pride, in this very thing they will be put to shame. How or in what way? For they will fall from their boasts in their great multitude, as war consumes along with the fighting men also every other age group; for houses and cities will remain empty of men. And for this very reason the prophet Jeremiah lamented Judea, saying, "How the city that was full of peoples sits alone! She who was ruler among "the provinces has become a tributary. And in another way, by offending God, we will be laid as far as possible from all good repute by doing what is not lawful; and in those very things for which one ought to be ashamed, in these very things we are at times boasting, and raising a high brow, so that it is justly said also concerning us, "whose glory is in their shame. Therefore, according to this sense you may again understand what was said, I will turn their glory into dishonor. For that some are delivered over "to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting," how can one doubt, since the blessed Paul has clearly stated it.

They will eat the sins of my people, and in their iniquities they will take their souls. And it will be, as with the people, so with the priest. Having written the causes of the wrath against the multitude, he transfers the discourse to the sacred order. And what has just been said by us would fit the discourse, I think, "I will turn their glory "into dishonor. For the glory of the Jewish Synagogue is the renowned priesthood, and the preeminent and holy race in it, that is, the Levitical; for some ruled from the tribe of Judah, but human affairs were secondary to the priesthood and very much inferior. Therefore, the glory of the Jewish Synagogue is the sacred and chosen race. It will therefore be clothed with dishonor, he says, and will change to what is unseemly. And for what reason? Because having neglected what was most fitting for them, they were carried away to apostasy. They have not kept their own authority, they did not know the way of the priesthood, they have not understood that they will eat the sins of my people, and in their iniquities they will take their souls. But since the saying has much obscurity, come again, let us say as best we can how it ought to be understood. A male goat from the goats was therefore slaughtered for sin; and for this reason the sacrifice was also called sin.

But the priests of the time, bringing the male goat to the altar, offered up the entrails and the fat, but ate the rest themselves, as the divine law commanded this. Therefore the priest is taken as a mediator, as it were, between God and men, receiving the gift-offerings from the peoples, and sharing them with the altar, as it is written; performing a sacred service, as it were, for the trespasses of the people, just as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ also did. That what I say is true, I will set forth the law concerning the male goat itself. It is as follows: "And Moses diligently sought the male goat for "the sin, and behold, it had been burned up. And Moses was angry with Eleazar and "Ithamar the sons of Aaron who were left, saying, 'Why did you not eat the sin offering in a holy place? "'For it is most holy, and this He has given you to eat, that you might "take away the sin of the congregation, and make atonement "for them before the Lord.'" Do you see how those who stand by the divine

altar mediate by eating the offerings for sins, and with purest prayers assuage the wrath against sinners, and almost consecrating their own souls for the trespasses of the people to God as a fragrant offering? Just as indeed the divine Aaron did, when the destruction of the people began. For it is written thus:

having seized the censer, and put on the incense, ”he stood,” it says, ”between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed. Thus mediating also, the blessed Moses was appeasing God, when the children of Israel had made a calf in the wilderness; for he, as it were, submitted himself to the with justice, beseeching and saying, ”If you will forgive their sin, forgive; but if not, ”blot me out of this book which you have written. They shall therefore eat the sins of my people, that is, the sacrifices offered for sins. and in their iniquities, that is, in the time of their iniquity; it is clear, that of those from Israel or of the peoples; they themselves shall take their own souls, instead of, they shall offer to God. For the divinely inspired scripture accepts the word as signifying such a thing; for what is offered to God, and prepared for sacrifice, was said to be taken. And the word is especially set to signify this, as I just said. And indeed in Numbers, when he was setting the laws concerning the red heifer, God said somewhere to the hierophant Moses, ”This is the ordinance of the law, which the Lord has commanded, saying: Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them take for you a red heifer without blemish. Do you hear ’let them take’? that is, let them offer or let them bring. But concerning the leper who is about to be cleansed, he says again thus:

”And the priest shall go forth out of the camp, ”and the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague of leprosy is healed from ”the leper. And the priest shall command and they shall take for the ”one who has been cleansed two living, clean small birds. Therefore, when it says ’they shall take’ also of the priests, the word would reasonably be understood instead of ’they shall offer’. Therefore in the time of iniquities, clearly of the people, they themselves shall take, that is, they shall offer as a spiritual sacrifice and a sweet savor to God their own souls, clearly living rightly, and having a most lawful life, and having been most zealous to think and do what is fitting for priests. For such a one is sufficient to save peoples who have offended God and wronged the law. But those chosen for this, he says, have slipped down with the others. For this reason the sacred rites will justly cease, the chosen and honored race will be stopped, the people shall be as the priest. For there will no longer be anything between the people and the priest. And this then was, ”Their glory I will turn into ”dishonor. And I will punish him for his ways, and I will repay him for his plans. Ways, it seems, he calls the goings as in works; and plans, in turn, the stumblings from strange reasonings.

Since, therefore, he says, he has not walked rightly, having departed from the straight path, and having driven, as it were, on a path of all unholiness, and has planned the most shameful and outlandish things of all, dishonoring the God of all, and turning aside himself to worship idols, I will punish him, that is, I will bring a punishment that is of equal weight to his transgressions And that for those who depart from the love of God, to be in every evil will in every way and entirely come to pass, how is it possible to doubt? For he will neither travel a straight and blameless path, nor would he ever plan wisely, not having the divine

wisdom and power to assist him. And they shall eat, and shall not be satisfied; they have committed fornication, and shall not prosper. He has again kept the remnant for those of the blood of Israel. For that the matter will not entirely disappear for the priests, he makes clear, saying: that they will eat, but they will not be filled. For whether someone should consider those ancient migrations and captivities of Israel, or the desolation of Judea at the time of Christ by the hand of the Romans, he will find both Israel itself and the worship according to the law preserved in remnants.

For when at that time they were carried away both by Shalmaneser and by Tiglath-pileser to the Assyrians and Medes, no less did the few and small and remaining of those from Israel bring the customary things to the priests, honoring those at hand; and not being entirely outside of what was customary. In the same way, also in the final war, I mean the one under Caesar Augustus, when their country was laid waste, they were scattered to every wind, and in every country and city; yet still moderately honoring the sacred and chosen a race, they offered according to their ability; and they are still in these things, although the ancient sacrifices have been overturned; for to those who are outside Jerusalem it is still unlawful to sacrifice. Therefore, he says, they will eat and not be filled, that is, they will receive little and with difficulty, and what is not sufficient for satiety. And this shows no less the removal of their ancient honor, and the loss of their former cheerfulness. But since they have committed fornication, he says, they shall not be guided aright. For it is impossible, as I said, for those who depart from God; for this, I think, is the name and substance of spiritual fornication; either to have a full supply of divine goods, or to be able to gather the foods from heaven and from above, or to be guided aright in counsels or in deeds.

For God is the giver of every good thing to us, and the rudder of the mind that is in us. Because they have forsaken the Lord to keep, fornication and wine and drunkenness, the heart of my people has received. Here he states the reasons why the ministers will neither be filled with food, nor yet be guided aright. For since, he says, they themselves also departed from the Lord, and the teachers slipped away with those being taught, those appointed to lead with those under their hand and authority, for this reason they will justly be under divine wrath, and will suffer punishment for their incessant transgressions. For they have kept fornication, that is, they have arranged for error to be preserved for those under their hand, although they ought rather to cast it out from their midst and make it disappear. For the sobriety of teachers is to eagerly remove from the midst what harms the people, and to destroy without delay what is hateful to God. But if they do not endure to do this, and they themselves allow the works of error to remain and be preserved, as it were, or rather they even establish them from the opposite things, then certainly the mind of those being instructed will receive wine, as it were, and drunkenness.

For from where, or how could the disciples be sober, and be able to open the eye of their mind to the true God by nature, if their instructors and the proposers of what is advantageous also still confirm them in the need to wander? And this, I think, is what was clearly said through another prophet: ”The priests did not say, Where is the Lord? And those who

held to my law did not know me, and the shepherds acted impiously against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal; and again, "My sons and my sheep are not, there is no place for my tent, a place for my skins. For the shepherds have become foolish, and have not sought the Lord; for this reason the whole pasture did not understand, and they were scattered. They inquired by signs, and by their staves they reported to him. In what way they have forsaken the Lord, and have kept fornication, he makes clear. For he shows the teacher to be a fellow-willer with those who are led astray; and those whom it was fitting, or rather even necessary, to follow the divine laws, and to bring those under their yoke to this, these, as I said, he clearly shows as fulfilling the crimes of error. For some went to them wishing to learn, he says, either things to come, perhaps, or things concerning themselves, and in what times or situations they might be.

But they impiously persuaded those who came to them no longer to wish to seek such things from God, but they inquired by signs, that is, they sought to learn through certain signs and observations from unclean spirits; just as, indeed, Balaam once attempted to divine against those of Israel. For Balak son of Beor ordered him to do this. And he said, "Make for me here seven altars, and slaughter for me seven bullocks and seven rams," and I will go to meet the omens. For either they examine the smoke rising from the sacrifices, where and how high and upwards they shoot; or the wretches examine the twitchings in the liver; or they curiously observe the flights of birds of omen. And augury, and divination, and such things of the accusations of the evils of the impiety that has come to an end, and they come into the lowest recesses of idolatry. And in their rods they reported to him. To those from Israel who came to them, he says, and were eager to know something of their own affairs, they reported to them not only in symbols, but also in their rods. This is another method of deceit; the matter is rhabdomancy; and perhaps it is an invention of the meddling of the Chaldeans. For thus Nebuchadnezzar divined against Jerusalem, as the inspired prophet Ezekiel also says. For setting up two rods, then enchanting them with some of their secret spells, they caused them to incline by the energies of demons;

and they watched them as they fell, to see where they would be carried again, whether forward or backward, or to the right or to the left; and so then they reported what seemed best to the ones who approached. This is what "they reported in rods" means. Truly terrible, then, when the instructors of others, who were able to lead them to what is dear to God, also caused them to wander, and as the prophet says, "They have fixed madness "in the house of the Lord. For he calls false divination madness. For those accustomed to doing this pretend not even to know, then, where they are. For some said that they were mad and possessed, as if filled with the divine. For they did not know that the heart of the deceived is like a house, and a cave of unclean spirits. They have been led astray by a spirit of fornication, and they have gone whoring from their God. Upon the tops of the mountains they sacrificed, and upon the hills they burned incense, under oak and poplar and a shady tree, because its shade was good. That such things are not done without unclean and wicked spirits, he teaches clearly. For every form of depravity comes from them, and nothing of the most

shameful things is left unpracticed by those who have chosen to fulfill what seems good to them.

Therefore, he says, they have been led astray by a spirit of fornication, and have become as far away as possible from God, being lovers of pleasure, and making the works of idolatry an occasion for love of the flesh. For they sacrificed, occupying hills and mountains, and on earthly high places they served the groveling nature of demons. Then, raising altars under oak and poplar, they offered libations, sending honors to nymphs, perhaps to the hamadryads, according to the myths of the Greeks. For the poets and prose writers of the Greeks say that the unclean demons, whom they named nymphs, love plants and trees, according to what seemed good to them, I know not how. Therefore it seemed good to them, he says, to accept the shades, and to revel under the most flourishing groves; and to praise and say, ”because its shade was good. Therefore, the lover of pleasure cannot also be a lover of God. And Paul will testify, saying of some, that they are ”lovers of pleasure ”rather than lovers of God. ”Blessed therefore are those who mourn ”now,” as the Savior says, and who have been zealous to honor and love especially patient endurance in beneficial labors. Therefore your daughters shall commit fornication, and your daughters-in-law shall commit adultery. And I will not visit upon your daughters when they commit fornication, nor upon your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; because they themselves were mingled with harlots, and sacrificed with the initiated.

For since it seems admirable to you, he says, to revel under a plant and in shades, and you have made a pleasure of what grieves me, that is, the accursed error and impurity; for this reason your daughters shall commit fornication; and your daughters-in-law, that is, the wives of your sons, shall be adulteresses. And even if these things should happen, he says, I too will be quiet, and I will not visit. And through these things he seems to foretell the harms that would come from the war upon those who had sinned, and the things that follow captivities. For those who have once conquered and been victorious do what they please to the captured, using unbridled authority, and with unreprovable impulses proceeding to anything whatever that comes to them according to their pleasure, and neither taking law into account, nor enduring to consider what is reasonable or fitting; but as if hardened, and having a mind much inclined towards savagery, they deem those who have acted wretchedly worthy of no pity. It has therefore clearly indicated that the children of those who have fornicated will be set before their enemies for insolence and shameful acts. But if someone should choose, he will also understand it in another way. For the God of all visits those whom He might wish to honor and to love;

and if He sees them carried away into indolence, and willing to do what is not right, He rebukes them moderately, persuading them to return to better things and to what is necessary for their benefit; for this reason the divine Paul also says to those called to an approved life: ”If you endure discipline, God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? and indeed the most wise writer of proverbs testifies and says, ”For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; and he scourges every son whom he receives. There-

fore those whom He disciplines, He also deems worthy of His oversight, as being in every way good and beloved; but He in no way watches over those who have greatly offended Him, almost saying, "I do not know you. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous," as it is written. Therefore, even if they sin, He says, I will not visit, that is, I will not care for, I will not turn them to myself, I will consider them worthy of nothing. For what reason? For you yourselves, He says, who are in the rank of fathers, have stood so far from wishing to rebuke both yourselves and your children, even if they should lay claim to the utmost depravity, as to mingle with prostitutes. For you have sacrificed together with the initiated. And he calls prostitutes specifically the priestesses of Beelphegor. Beelphegor is the one called Priapus.

And the women who honor so shameful an abomination are consequently prostitutes by confession. And again he calls "the initiated" the hierophants of Beelphegor, and they were men not enduring to be what they are, but rather changing to an effeminate mindset, being unholily effeminate in words and ways. And some call such men womanish and soft, who, using women's ululations and cymbals, and running around certain ones together with little torches, pretended to initiate, fulfilling the shameful rites of Beelphegor. Therefore, he says, they sacrificed with the initiated, that is, they have been initiated into their rites, and together with those so corrupted they offered sacrifices to Beelphegor. And the people that understands was entangled with a prostitute. He transfers the discourse to Judah, that is, those from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, who still inhabited Jerusalem, and had the divine altar; for the temple still stood; they claimed to keep the commandments of Moses, and to have the understanding that comes through the law. But they themselves also have served "Astarte, the abomination of the Sidonians. And they say that Astarte is the one among the Greeks called I know not how Aphrodite. And the statue stands naked, and as in the form of a prostitute, shamelessly exposing to the eyes of all even the unseemly parts of the body. Therefore not only, he says, Israel, although sick with the greatest folly. "mingled with prostitutes, and sacrificed with the initiated;

but also the people itself that understands, that is, the one pretending still to preserve the understanding from the law, was entangled with a prostitute. For they have worshipped, as I said, Astarte. For Solomon built a sanctuary for her, fulfilling what was pleasing to a wanton and foreign woman. But you, Israel, do not be ignorant, and Judah, do not enter into Galgala, and do not go up to the house of iniquity, and do not swear, "As the Lord lives. I have already said many times that the words of the prophets call the ten tribes in Samaria, Israel; and sometimes they call the two tribes in Jerusalem Judah and Benjamin, I mean the tribe of Judah, and that of Benjamin. The discourse therefore at present has been about both, and it refutes the disease of the multitude of each. For see how he rebukes Israel as utterly without understanding and foolish, for this very reason having become also an apostate, if indeed the crime of utmost lack of understanding might be reasonably thought, to love being devoted to the worship of idols, and to be estranged from the love of God. Here, therefore, "do not be ignorant" means, "do not be foolish," nor be full of a senselessness that has reached its end. And again he rebukes those in Jerusalem, that is,

Judah, as a hypocrite and one who acts impiously, by going on both, or rather by limping on both hams, according to the prophet's voice.

For he pretended to practice and to love piety towards God, and he performed the sacrifices according to the law; but he was by no means free from hastening to worship even the demons themselves, even if not very openly, yet at least secretly and covertly. And so the blessed prophet Ezekiel was commanded to dig in the wall; then he saw all the idols of the house of Israel depicted on the walls. And what does the God of all say to him? "Have you seen, son of man, what the elders of the house of Israel are doing here? Each of them in their secret chamber, because they said, 'The Lord has forsaken us, the Lord does not see the land.'" And the prophet says that he saw women sitting and mourning for Tammuz, who is Adonis in the Greek language. See, then, how although they frequented the divine temple, and pretended to partake in the worship according to the law, they were secretly defiled, being divided towards strange and demonic worship, and things hateful to God. Therefore, you, Israel, who have completely turned aside, he says, "do not be ignorant," that is, refrain from ignorance, cease from such a vain and profane mind; receive the understanding that is through the law and the prophets, that is, the one that is through Christ and is evangelical. And, Judah, do not enter into Gilgal; for it is a city that greatly practices idolatry;

and do not go up to the house of iniquity, and do not swear, "The Lord lives. For it is one of the absurd things to make God an oath, and to have on the tongue "the living Lord," but also to be devoted to idols, and to choose to worship lifeless heifers. For Jeroboam placed one in Bethel, and the other in Dan. Therefore, he does not permit them to pretend piety towards God by naming the Lord, but to be carried away to strange false worship, by going up to Gilgal, and to the house of iniquity. And he calls Bethel the house of iniquity. For what reason? For Bethel is interpreted as "house of God. But it became a house of an idol, with both the thing itself and its very name having been, in a way, wronged. For, as I said, the house of God has become the house of an idol. And so he said somewhere through the voice of Jeremiah concerning the multitude of those from Israel: "What has the beloved done in my house? An abomination? And the God of all might rightly say concerning those of Judah and Benjamin, "This people draws near to me, with their lips they honor me, but their heart is far from me. For as a gadfly-stung heifer, so was Israel stung by a gadfly; and now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a wide place.

One of the saints wisely leads us to the pursuit of what is profitable, saying, "Son, let not your heart envy sinners, but be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For whom one would blame, how could he choose to emulate? The God of all says something of this sort to Judah: Let not Israel's being stung by a gadfly become for you a pretext for apostasy, and as it were to run away from the herd like heifers, upon which if a gadfly, that is, a horsefly, should settle; this is a type of insect that bites intolerably; it carries one away from the herd, and then causes it to be carried away in a swift course, wherever it may happen. Or shall we not find that Israel has suffered this? For he departed from Jerusalem, and leaving his own shepherd, that is, God, he made a terrible and accursed apostasy. Therefore, do not be

envious, O Judah, he says; for even if Israel, stung by a gadfly like the heifers, has gone off to apostasy, yet the attempt will not be without penalty for him. For he will go away captive, and leaving the land that bore him, that of the Persians and Medes he shall no longer be grazed insolently, and as it were, unbridled and herd-despising; for such a goaded heifer always is. But he will be on equal terms with the most gentle lambs.

For the state of captives is always humble and very fearful, and not far from the expectation of suffering ill, and burdened by the greed of the conquerors. He calls the land of the Persians and Medes spacious, as if saying something like this: he will be grazed in a wide and incomprehensible land, and he will change many countries, not always having the same master, but being removed to that of the one who receives him. The soul of a man might suffer this very thing, having disregarded the love for God. For it will be carried about to anything whatsoever that is loved by demons, captive and cowardly and weak, and indeed it will justly hear God saying, "Your apostasy will chastise you, and your wickedness will convict you. Ephraim is a partaker of idols; he has laid stumbling blocks for himself. He chose the Canaanites; committing fornication, they fornicated exceedingly. They loved dishonor from their snorting. You are a whirlwind in her wings, and they shall be ashamed of their altars. Still the prophet's word is to Judah, pretending, as I said, to be concerned with the law, and not holding piety towards God in small account, but having secretly assented to the necessity of honoring the images of demons. Therefore, he says, Ephraim, that is, Israel, has become an admitted partaker of idols. And he is named thus from the ruling tribe among him, I mean that of Jeroboam; for he was from the mountain and tribe of Ephraim.

And just as he calls the one in Jerusalem Judah, having kept the name for the royal tribe, so also in the case of Israel, when he names Ephraim, he makes the designation from the royal tribe. So then, he says, Ephraim partook of idols. For he worshipped the object of reverence of the Egyptians; and their object of reverence was Apis, that is, a calf. And he partook no less of the impiety and immeasurable madness of the Canaanites, who are known to attend to and worship the shameful idol, Baal-peor. But by doing this also, Ephraim has set stumbling blocks for himself. For he has offended God, who defends and knows how to save. He chose the Canaanites, instead of, he has made the customs of the Canaanites electable and worthy of being taken up; and these are neighbors of the land of the Jews, impious and idolaters. And in addition to these things, they of Israel, committing fornication, fornicated exceedingly; it is clear that it is because they practiced spiritual fornication beyond measure and beyond what is reasonable, and the charges against them come to the end of the shamefulness of their apostasy. And they have loved dishonor out of their snorting, that is, out of their high boasts, which they had in God and in the glory from him. Therefore they have truly become dishonored and cast down, pitiable and trampled, having slipped from their ancient boasts;

for they will no longer be called free, but will rather walk into insolence and dishonor, and will be under bitter masters. But even if, he says, the most senseless multitude of Ephraim was subjected to all these things, yet, O Judah, you have become to it like a whirlwind in the

wings of a bird. And it is surely clear to everyone that in every way whatsoever things that fly, when a violent wind pushes them, and not just forcing them, then make a swifter flight. Therefore Israel, having inclined towards apostasy, ran aground, but you became for him a whirlwind in the wings. How, or in what manner? For since he has seen you who are still being instructed by the law, who sits at the divine temple, and who performs the sacrifices according to the law, being lazy and falling back, and being held in the same offenses, he made his departure swifter. But to their shame; they will find, their altars to be the cause of disgrace and dishonor. Therefore, when those who seem to stand, who ought to live well and irreproachably, are sluggish and lazy about this we are found; or rather, having chosen equally with others to reject what is pleasing to God, we shall not only wrong ourselves, but by also destroying others, we shall endure a double punishment.

For when it was necessary to be set before those who have been led astray, or those who are unwilling to live rightly, as an image and model of virtue, we have become an occasion of stumbling. What then does Christ say? "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe "in me to stumble," He says, "it would be better for him if a millstone "were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the "depth of the sea. Hear this, O priests, and pay attention, O house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king; for the judgment is for you, because you have become a snare at Mizpah, and like a net spread upon Tabor, which those who hunt the prey have fixed. He had previously accused Judah of having become a perversion of spirit to Israel, in the manner just mentioned by us; but now he shifts the word of rebuke to the inventors of deceit and error, and those who caused them the disease of madness. And these were the falsely-named priests, not of the blood of Levi, but holding a purchased priesthood, and having bought with money the right to officiate for idols. For it is written concerning Jeroboam, that "Whoever wished filled his hand, and became "a priest of the high places. The argument, therefore, rightly proceeds against both the priests themselves and against the house of the king, with Israel itself also being included in the charges.

For some of them both said and did things for the establishment of idolatry, setting up altars, offering libations and sacrifices, and widening the path of destruction for the deceived; and the kings were the inventors of the error. Therefore he says to them, that you have become a snare at Mizpah. And by Mizpah he means the multitude overseen both by the priests, if they were indeed priests, and by the leaders themselves; for they watch over their subjects; or they are looked up to by those under their hand, and wherever it might seem good to the rulers, they turn aside their subjects; and what is yoked under them follows the wills of the leaders. You have therefore become, he says, like a snare to the multitude overseen by you, or perhaps to the one looking to you. And you have become like a net spread upon Tabor. This is a very conspicuous mountain located in Galilee, having a very large and abundant catch of beasts and birds, because it is raised high and is extremely overgrown with oaks and thickets. But I am your instructor; I have known Ephraim, and Israel is not far from me.

The priests, therefore, and indeed those of the royal blood, have become a net and snares and a prey to the peoples, commanding them to burn incense to demons, and doing so themselves before others, and persuading them to think what is not lawful, and leading others to the impiously invented ways of error, I mean the high places, Baal-peor, the abomination of the Sidonians, Baal, Chemosh; and He promises that He Himself will be their instructor, and not for long, as He is about to inflict upon them evils from His wrath and anger. And the word has its accuracy. For those of the royal house, being held in terrible and inescapable calamities, some have utterly perished, according to the testimony of the sacred writings; while others departed to be subjected to the greed of the Babylonians and Medes. And the falsely-named priests and those who were priests for money have died miserably, or rather even piously, some by Jehu, others by Josiah, who was of the tribe of Judah, that is, of David. For this the man of God also prophesied, when Jeroboam was once sacrificing and standing at the altar, saying: "O altar, "altar, thus says the Lord: Behold, a son shall be born "to the house of David, Josiah by name; and he shall sacrifice "on you the priests of the high places, who burn incense on you, "and he shall burn the bones of men on you.

Therefore, He threatened to discipline in wrath and anger those who had become a snare at Mizpah, I mean both the priests and those of royal blood; But in no way did he leave the deceived one unblamed, that is, Israel. For this reason he says: I have known Ephraim, and Israel is not far from me. This is indeed equivalent to that, "Who is this that hides counsel from me, and holds words "in his heart, and thinks to hide from me? For I have known Ephraim, he says, and I have not departed from Israel. "For I am a "God who draws near, says the Lord, and not a God from afar. "If a man shall hide himself in secret places, shall I not see "him? And again, "Shall anything be hidden from me? "For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than "any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of "soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner "of the thoughts and intentions of the heart; and no creature is "hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and laid bare "to his eyes, to whom we must give account. Because now Ephraim has committed fornication, Israel has been defiled. They have not directed their plans to turn to their God, because a spirit of fornication is in them, and they have not known the Lord.

For since the God of all sees into the reins and hearts, and nothing is at all hidden from him, he has known that Israel, that is, Ephraim, has indeed committed fornication and has reached the extreme of worthlessness; yet not so much as to say did he admit into his mind and heart that he ought to repent, on account of being overcome by the spirit that persuades him to fornicate, and not being willing to seek the true Master. It is true therefore, as the Savior says, "No one can serve two "masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, "or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. And the pride of Israel will be humbled to his face, and Israel and Ephraim will grow weak in their iniquities; and Judah will also grow weak with them. He here calls pride the cursed arrogance; for the arrogant man is insolent. Therefore he says that the arrogance of Israel will be humbled when he suffers those things, and very justly, which were going to show him to be humble, pitiful and cast down, and bereft of boasts in God, and deprived even of their ancestral freedom

from above. But that the pride will be turned to his face must be understood because every form of dishonor is somewhat like blows to the face. And he says that those of Israel will grow weak together with Judah.

For after the kings of both Syria and the Persians had ravaged Samaria, they did not permit Judah to remain unscathed, adding to the cities of Israel also some of those belonging to the men of Judah and Benjamin. And that their impiety and pride towards God was confessedly the harbinger of every misfortune for them, he has taught by saying that the suffering of weakness would not happen to them otherwise, but only because it was in their iniquities. Therefore piety towards God is indeed useful and most precious, through which one might be able to rule over nations, and to be strong to accomplish all things easily. And the Savior spoke truly when he said, "Without me you can do nothing. And David, having chosen to think rightly, somewhere also sings, "The Lord is my strength and my song. They shall go with sheep and calves to seek the Lord, and they shall not find him; because he has withdrawn from them; because they have forsaken the Lord; because strange children have been born to them. Now the rust will devour them and their portions. It is seen to be true through events, that as the divine Paul says, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away "sins," and God is unapproachable through the law. And by law I mean the worship according to the law, through blood and sacrifices.

Therefore, even if those of Israel should offer the customary sacrifices, asking for forgiveness for their unholy offenses, that is, seeking reconciliation with God, they would not attain it, he says, nor would they accomplish being able to find God, nor would he be accessible to those repenting in this way. For he is found only through the life in Christ, which Let the word of faith be understood as a first assault, and in addition to this the saving baptism, which brings about familiarity with God in the Spirit. Therefore Israel would not find the Lord through the worship according to the law. For he has turned away from them, because they also have abandoned him, leaping away so far as to become fathers of strange children. And by strange children he means those who, as it were from the womb and from their very swaddling clothes, are dedicated to the opinions of idols, with their parents perhaps offering thank-offerings and sacrifices for their birth-pangs to demons. Therefore, strange children are those not in God; or also in another way, those from foreign women. For the men of Israel mingled indiscriminately with the daughters of the nations, who were still idolaters, although the law clearly said that one must not be joined in marriage to foreigners. "For your daughter," it says, "you shall not give to his son, and his daughter you shall not take "for your son. For he will turn your son away from me, and "going he will serve other gods.

But since they have done these things, the blight will devour them. And through this it signifies again enigmatically the mistreatment and harm that will come to them from the attack of war, which is not incapable of destroying terribly, like a blight, both them and their possessions; for this is what their lots are. But that the war is not for postponement and truce, but immediate and at their heels, he has fully informed them by saying, Now the blight will devour them. It is as if he were to say, The experience of grievous things will

come after the words; the disaster is already near and at the gates. Therefore it will remain for those who grieve God neither to be able to find him, even if they should choose to seek; and to become fathers of strange children, that is, not to have noble and genuine fruits; and these would be the fruits of virtue and a holy life; but rather to be destroyed, as if shattered by some blight of their own evil and misery, and in addition to these things to be deprived of their lots from God; concerning which the divine David also sings in psalms to God the Savior of all, "In your hands are my lots. For all our lot and every portion is in the power of God, and he himself is the distributor of crowns. Blow a trumpet on the hills, sound it on the high places, proclaim it in the house of On. Benjamin was distraught;

Ephraim became a desolation in the days of rebuke. Among the tribes of Israel I have shown faithful things. It has been clearly stated before that, in addition to the golden calves, the accursed Jeroboam introduced other ways of idolatry, destruction, and error to those of Israel. For they worshipped on mountains and hills Chemosh, Baal-peor, "under oak and poplar and a shady tree; and there were, as I said, also in Bethel and in Dan the golden calves. But this was the error of Israel; but Judah, that is, Benjamin, that is, those from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, had erred no less, and had served "Ashtoreth "the abomination of the Sidonians; and they also worshipped the sun. And this will be clear to us again through the voice of Ezekiel. For he was brought, as he himself says, to Jerusalem, "in a vision of God; then he beheld the error of the inhabitants. "For I saw," he says, "about twenty-five men, their backs "toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces opposite, "and these were worshipping the sun toward the east. See then how they divided destruction among themselves, offending in many ways and grieving God. Therefore, to those wishing to ravage, and who were expected at any moment, Samaria, and who were about to disturb Jerusalem not moderately, I mean both the Assyrians and the Persians, and those from Damascus, I mean the Syrians; for both attacked at times, being provoked to this at different times and in different ways;

he all but reproaches the delay of the attack, and has now commanded the war to begin, sounding the trumpets, and instilling the first fruits of terror into the souls of those who have gone astray. Since For he said, "Now mildew will devour them and "their portions; and we said that the ill-treatment and devastation from the war was called mildew; teaching that it has come to the gates, and will happen, and not long from now, he has commanded to sound the trumpet well, as I said, and before all else against the places of the idols, either as being about to be burned down and shaken at any moment, that is, because they themselves have become the pretext for the war and for the incurable calamity for those who have been led astray. When, therefore, he says that it is necessary to sound the trumpet against the hills and against the high places and in the house of On, you will understand the places of the idols. It should be known, that the Seventy did not agree with the other interpreters regarding "in the house of "On. For some have said, to the house of the useless, that is, of any idol; but others, "in the house of On.

We shall suppose, therefore, that the prophetic word now wishes to signify this to us, that they must sound the trumpet, not only against the hills and the high places, that is, not only against the idolatry of Israel, namely of the ten tribes in Samaria, but also against that which is in Jerusalem among both Judah and Benjamin. For they were worshiping, as I said, the sun; and On is the sun; casting God behind them, and turning away from his things. For this, I think, is what is meant by having their backs to the temple of the Lord, and their faces opposite, clearly, to the sun. When, therefore, you hear "in the house of On," you will understand the house or precinct of any falsely-named and man-made god, that is, of the sun. And it would not seem absurd or incredible to anyone for those who worship the sun to be understood and named the house of the sun, just as, of course, those who think and do His will and offer worship to Him would be understood as the house of God. But if someone should wish the golden calf also to be called On, in this way too the argument will bear a plausible meaning. For the God-hated Jeroboam made the calves after the worship of the Egyptians, I mean Apis. And the Egyptians have honored Apis, saying that he is the child of the moon; therefore he also had a crescent-shaped sign on his forehead;

and they believe him to be, as it were, the offspring of the sun, because, according to their opinion, the moon is illuminated by the sun. Therefore, they honored Apis as the child of the moon, and the offspring of the sun; and the resourceful dragon, that is, Satan, led them away into this error and wretchedness of reasoning. Therefore, he has commanded to sound the trumpet against the hills and the high places and in the house of On, that is, of the golden calf. And what the charges against both were, and the reason why they must be punished, he makes clear, adding immediately, "Benjamin is beside himself," instead of "He has departed from his own customs," that is, "He has lost his best mind; for this is what "being beside oneself" would truly be understood to mean in the case of evil things. And Ephraim has also been destroyed. But he does not say these things in this way. For in the days of rebuke for the transgression of both, I have shown faithful things, having declared my words to be firm and true. For what I have already foretold has happened to them, and none of my words have been proven false. For since they departed from their ancient customs, and went out of their good mind, they were also driven out of their own country, and have fallen away from the love of God, and from all prosperity at the same time.

And in another way, it follows for those who abandon God that they must also depart from every good thought, and indeed from every deed turned toward virtue. And they will go to destruction, as God reproves and rebukes them, and demands punishment for their negligence. It is useful, therefore, and necessary for life, to be with God, and all but cry out that verse in the psalms, "My soul clings close behind "you. For then the right hand of the one who is all-powerful will readily take hold and help, from which no one will snatch, according to the voice of the Savior. The rulers of Judah have become like those who move boundary markers; upon them I will pour out my wrath like water. This is, enigmatically, the meaning of "Benjamin is beside himself. For they have become, he says, equal to those they move boundaries, and wish to transgress those established long ago. For those who transfer to others the things fitting for God alone, and justly dedicated to him, I mean love,

honor, and worship, by worshipping the sun, for example, or the moon and the stars, would likely be doing nothing other than in every way moving boundaries. That Judah, that is, Benjamin, has dedicated to the sun and moon and stars the glory fitting for God, would be clearly understood, from God saying to the prophet Jeremiah, "Or do you not see what these are doing in the "cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? Their sons "gather wood;

and their fathers kindle a fire, and their wives "knead dough, to make cakes for the host of heaven, and they poured "libations to other gods to provoke me to anger. Therefore, the leaders from the tribe of Judah have moved the boundaries, that is, those who are clothed with the highest and royal glory, whom the common multitude was likely to choose to follow when they were led astray. But he says, like a most violent flood, I will pour out my fury upon them. For the things from divine wrath are intolerable and unbearable and completely irresistible, just as, of course, the great and abundant flow of waters is also something hard to withstand. Ephraim oppressed his adversary and trampled judgment, because he began to walk after vanities. And I will be like confusion to Ephraim, and like a goad to the house of Judah. In what way Benjamin went astray has been clearly shown. For he said that "the rulers of Judah have become like those who move "boundaries. And how "Ephraim came to ruin," he explains again, adding, "Ephraim oppressed his adversary. And the word now seems to have been composed for us with a certain character. What, then, is the accusation against those from the tribe of Ephraim, or what adversary does the divine oracle say to us that Ephraim oppressed? I will try to explain as far as possible. For those from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin still had some reverence and regard for the laws given through Moses, and practiced righteousness.

For not all had turned aside, but there were not a few weeping and lamenting the apostasy of those who had gone astray, and being not moderately distressed, since some, dishonoring the God of all, practiced the ways of idolatry. And indeed, as the blessed prophet Ezekiel says, some were sent against Jerusalem, with axes raised, and they clearly heard God saying that they must follow the one girded with the linen robe, and spare no one. And I saw, he says, "And behold, six men "came from the direction of the gate which faces north, and "each had an axe in his hand, and he said to the man," he says, "who was girded with the linen robe, 'Go through the midst of Jerusalem, "and set a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh "and groan over all the iniquities that are done in its midst.' "And to these he said in my hearing, 'Go into the city after him, "and strike and do not spare and do not pity; and kill "old man and young man and infants and women to destruction, "but do not go near anyone on whom is the mark.'" Do you hear that some were marked as being outside of judgment and wrath and every accusation, on account of choosing to think rightly, and indeed to live according to the law, and to lay hold of righteousness, and to love the love for God blamelessly?

But in Samaria, Israel ran completely aground, not even, so to speak, deeming the things of Moses worthy of memory, but practicing a life as if at war, and in every way set against them, so as to consider the law of God an enemy, so to speak, as not even wishing to know it, but

dishonoring the tutor, even though he knew how to save, and was well able to bring them to a straight and blameless life. This, then, it seems, the prophetic word hints at to us, and it is composed with character, as I said. 'For Ephraim,' he says, 'oppressed his adversary,' instead of, 'a victory' Ephraim has conquered a most strange thing and a harbinger of destruction, he has oppressed it as his own enemy, that is, he has generally contended against the law which he has hated. But since the meaning is obscure, he clarifies it in another way, saying: he has trampled on judgment, that is, he has not cared at all for the righteousness in the law; for what is trampled upon is always somehow understood to be in dishonor, and is found to be worthy of no account. And so our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, with what will it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. Therefore when he says judgment, you will understand the law.

Thus also the divine David, naming it, cries out to God, "You have executed judgment and righteousness in Jacob. For the law is of God, even if spoken through angels. But what the pretext was for both considering the law an enemy and trampling on judgment, he showed again, immediately adding that he began to go "after vain things. The beginning of such a disease, he says, is to choose to honor vain things, and to follow idols. For it is impossible to be able to follow God and at the same time the wicked and unclean spirits; for this reason the divine Paul also writes: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. For the God-loving man is single-minded; but the two-faced and shaken one who knows how to walk on both sides, is insecure, and walks easily wherever he may happen to go. Therefore the rulers of Judah have become, he says, like those who move boundaries, and Ephraim has oppressed his adversary, and he has trampled on judgment; but I will henceforth be like a disturbance to Ephraim and like a sting to Judah. And what this is, it is necessary to investigate. Now, some of the other interpreters, instead of "disturbance," have said "devourer"; and instead of "sting," "rottenness"; but the Seventy have named it "disturbance" and "sting.

For when Ephraim, that is, the ten tribes, was not moderately troubled by the war that had burst upon them, on the one hand by the neighbor from Syria, I mean, and on the other by the Persian one coming from the land of the Assyrians, Judah was in pain and not in moderate fear, but rather also in great agony. For he expected, and not in the distant future, to be caught in the same, or perhaps even much worse, evils; for as the war weighed heavily, and descended upon the cities around Samaria, there was every necessity that the neighboring ones should be destroyed along with them, I mean those of Judah and Benjamin. Therefore, the "disturbance" indicates the attack of the war, and the "sting" in these things indicates the pain from grief and despondency, from which those who are willing to think the things of Christ would surely be free; through whom and with whom to God the Father be glory with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Book 4

And Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his pain; and Ephraim went to the Assyrians, and sent ambassadors to king Jareb, and he was not able to heal you, and will not stop the pain from you. When God had become like a disturbance to Ephraim, and indeed also like a sting to the house of Judah, Ephraim indeed saw his own sickness, that is, his lack of strength and his weakness; and indeed Judah also his pain; for, as I said, the borders of Benjamin were also ravaged along with those in Samaria; then Ephraim, having despaired at this, and with his own powers not being able to oppose the things that had happened, nor indeed being able to shake off the damages from the war, he has once again offended the all-powerful God, not having considered what was expedient even in the scourges themselves, so to speak; but when the time had come, in which he ought rather to have returned to God, then indeed he chose especially to grieve him and to depart more fiercely. For he was not ignorant of the provider and ruler of all their glory, God, the eternal giver of the ability to overcome those who oppose; but he considered the matter of no account, although the all-wise Moses had cried out, ”The Lord shatters wars, ”The Lord is his name,” and teaching clearly that through him and in him ”One shall chase a thousand, and two shall move ”ten thousand.

Then, when it was necessary to ask for the customary help again from him and him alone, and with prayers to persuade the savior to come to his aid, he plotted bitter things against his own head. For he sent embassies to foreigners, and called for alliances from enemies, that is, persuading the invading Assyrian with money, they thought they had been delivered from the impending evils. And so, when Menahem was reigning in Samaria, Pul king of the Assyrians came up against Israel; then with money and embassies they persuaded him to keep away from the land. This is the meaning of *Ephraim went to the Assyrians*. But again Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, once hired Rezin king of the Syrians and made war on Judah and those from the tribe of Benjamin, when Ahaz the son of Jotham was reigning, who, fearing the attack, with embassies and money persuades the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser to aid Jerusalem; and he, taking Damascus by force, also did away with Rezin himself. But even if, he says, Ephraim has gone to the Assyrians, and with money and prayers has purchased a postponement of the attack; and even if Judah sent ambassadors to king Jareb, that is, an avenger or vindicator; for this is what Jareb means; but they have

not conquered the divine wrath, nor indeed will they overcome God as he demands justice for so terrible an apostasy.

For he was not able, he says, the one persuaded by money to be quiet for a little while, nor any other of the mercenaries, to heal you; but the sting of pain will in no way cease. It is therefore a most terrible thing not to desire rather to be saved through the gentleness from above, but to take courage in helps from men; although the Spirit cries out through the voice of the blessed David, "It is good to trust in the Lord rather than "to trust in man. It is good to hope in the Lord rather than "to hope in princes; and again through the prophet Jeremiah, "Cursed is the man who has his hope in "man, and shall make the flesh of his arm his support, and whose "heart departs from the Lord, and he shall be as the wild "tamarisk in the desert, which shall not see when good things come. "And blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, "and the Lord will be his hope; and he shall be as a thriving "tree by the water, and he will cast his roots toward moisture, and he will "not be afraid when the heat comes, and upon it will be "woody branches, in a year of drought he will not be afraid, "and he will not cease bearing fruit. It is better, therefore, to be reconciled to God, and to say that wise thing from a good mind: "I am yours, save me, for I have sought your statutes.

Because I am as a panther to Ephraim, and as a lion to the house of Judah; and I will seize and will go, and I will take, and there will be none to deliver. I will go and will return to my place, until they are made to disappear. He makes clear the reason why those who aided Ephraim benefited him not at all, and their pains will not cease. For I am, he says, as a panther to Ephraim and as a lion to the house of Judah. It is therefore manifest that, when God weakens, there is no one who can save; "For who will turn back the high hand? according to what is written. But that also, with all gentleness removed, the things concerning them have come to pass, he has shown enigmatically, to those who are especially terrible and comparing his own impulse to the most valiant beasts. For the panther rushes with an exceedingly swift course against whomever it may choose, and it leaps with feet so light that perhaps no track is seen, nor is anything marked upon the ground; but the lion roars in the mountains a terrible and heavy sound, similar to thunder, and is able to strike terror into those who hear. "For a lion, he says, will roar, and who will not be afraid? It has an irresistible attack, and a very difficult impulse to withstand. And if it should seize something, this is immediately destroyed, and no one could rescue what has been seized.

But that the panther is a swift beast, and flies away as it were, having seized what it chanced upon; but the lion is an unbreakable thing, and fearless and difficult to withstand, as I said, he himself showed by adding And I will tear and go away, I will take away, and there will be no one to deliver. For this will be fitting for the might of lions; but 'I will tear and go away,' the panther might do, as I said. But that the Lord will also depart from those who have grieved him, and will all but withdraw his help and remove his favor, he has declared by saying I will go and return to my place until they are consumed. For the divine is completely unlimited by place; but it is said to be present to some, when it bestows favor; and again, to be absent from sinners, when it turns away from them, and cuts off its gentleness. For

things concerning God are spoken of in a human way; but they are understood, as would be fitting for him. And they will seek my face when they are afflicted. That the terrible things from God are not brought upon those who have an unbridled inclination to what is more shameful, or even upon those accustomed to sin unceasingly, for no reason, but rather for their benefit, and as in the manner of a cure, he teaches again.

For the despisers of the divine gentleness, and those who are ignorant that the greatness of forbearance calls to repentance, will not escape the motions of wrath; from where? But being rather broken by the savagery of calamity, they recognize what is beneficial, and those whom philanthropy did not help at all, being tormented by labors leads to the knowledge of what is beneficial. For in the way that the savage passions in bodies, and as many as do not yield to gentle medicines, are often overcome by fire and steel; in the same manner and way, I think, also the passions that occur in human souls, if they are not driven out by good words, nor overcome by sober reasoning, yield to labor and scourge and incurable calamities. Being afflicted, therefore, then indeed with difficulty, he says, they will seek my face. For when good things are in their power, there is not much perception of that which brings joy for the foolish; but if it should happen that they are deprived of such most desirable things, then indeed especially we come upon them with keener desires, and we receive a great and irresistible perception of that which causes pain. When, therefore, they are afflicted, then they will seek my face. And the word seems conveniently to ascend to the mystery of Christ, and to declare very well the redemption through him and the return to God.

For the face of God that is sought would be understood to be, and very rightly so, the Son, ”Who is the image and the radiance and the character of the Father’s substance. The Son, therefore, is the true face of God and the Father, if indeed he is known in him; and ”he who has seen him has seen the Father. Thus also the divine psalmist names him, crying out to the God of all and saying ”Make your face to shine upon your servant; and indeed also as from the person of those who have believed and have now been formed into the Son through the Spirit, ”The light of your face has been signed upon us, O Lord; for as the prophet says, ”The light of our face, Christ the Lord. They will rise early to me, saying Come and let us return to the Lord our God, for he has torn and he will heal us, he will strike and he will bind us up, he will make us whole after two days; on the third day we will rise, and we will live in his presence before him, and we shall know; we shall pursue the knowledge of the Lord, as the morning we shall find him ready, and he will come to us as the early and late rain to the earth.

The ’rising early’ in these words seems to signify, that as if awakened from the sleep of their inherent folly, and somehow brought forth from night and darkness into light and day, they will henceforth eagerly exclaim to one another that it is now fitting to return to the Lord. And this is a return to soberness for those who had slipped into deceit, and were entangled in the worship of idols. For it is already the fruit of sobriety to seek to be outside the mist, that is, the demonic one; and, as if filled henceforth with the divine light, to press on with a right purpose toward the knowledge of the God and Lord who is so by nature and in truth,

although they were long disposed to believe that there are also ”many gods and many lords” in the world, so as to arrive at such a degree of folly as to even ”say to the wood, You are my Father, and to the stone, You have begotten me. But the discourse persists in the figure of speech. For see how, as if speaking of a lion, or some other beast, they say, He himself has torn and will heal us.

For since he had said, ”And I will be as a panther to Ephraim, and as a lion to the house of Judah, and I will seize and go away and take, and there shall be none to deliver,” they have kept the form of the metaphor, and say that the one who seized will surely heal. For just as anger has caused grief, so the good things that come from gentleness will surely bring gladness to those who have suffered. At the same time we shall also understand this, that when God afflicts someone, no one else could help; but the affairs of those who have suffered would need him and him alone for their restoration. But if it is necessary to extend the power of the prophecy to all who are on the earth, we shall understand this. For in the beginning Adam seized human nature. For He immediately declared it accursed, subjecting it to death and corruption. Therefore wrath struck, but grace applied a bandage. For he healed in Christ, he has called us to the knowledge of the true vision of God, he made us steadfast through the Spirit for the keeping of the commandments, he showed us to be zealous again, both placing us beyond corruption and delivering us from our ancient infirmities, I mean sin and the passions. And such things have happened to those on the earth, not so much in the first, that is, or in the second time, but as in the third, that is, the last and final one.

For all times are numbered as three: first, middle, and last, in which Christ appeared to us. For this reason they say that the things of our bandaging will be for us, as if from medical experience, after two days; with the prophetic word measuring a day for us as a season. Then, it says, we shall pursue the knowledge of the Lord; and they say ’we shall pursue’ is used for ’we shall hasten’; then we shall both rise and live before him. For we have been raised together with Christ. And since ”one died for all,” we live his life, no longer lying outside the eyes of God because of the transgression, nor indeed cast behind because of sin, but henceforth brought into his sight, and having confidence before him, through the righteousness that is in Christ. And that through him we have also known the Father himself, and that the Son, having become as we are, is for us the fulfillment of every good thing, they confess, saying, We shall find him ready as the morning, that is, as a light rising, as the sun, as the dawn, when the darkness has passed away. And he will be to us as the early and late rain. For he waters us who have received the faith, and have rightly understood his appearing, in a twofold manner, I think. For in the Spirit he reveals the knowledge of the ancient and legal and, in addition to these, the prophetic teachings. And this, I think, is the early rain;

but as the late rain following that he gives the understanding of the evangelical teachings, and the much-desired grace of the apostolic proclamations. And we have become, as the prophet says, a land of delight. And perhaps the blessed David sings about us, saying, ”You

have visited the earth and watered it; you have abundantly enriched it. and so it has given its fruit of her a hundred, sixty, and thirty, according to the Savior's voice. What shall I do to you, Ephraim? What shall I do to you, Judah? My mercy is as a morning cloud and as the early-morning dew that passes away. The word is not of one who is at a loss; for God would not be ignorant of what is useful for those who have gone astray; nor would he be too weak to accomplish what is naturally beneficial for those caught in the devil's snares. Rather, he accuses them because nothing was lacking for their healing, but they rather turned away with willing impulses to do what is not right. For it is as if he were to say, for instance: "What way of sparing and assistance has not been devised? And what shall I do after that? How will you ward off the sickness? Or with what medicines, then, will you be healed? For it was possible for you, as of a fattening cloud, and very richly, and as of a watering morning dew, to be able to partake, and this abundantly, of my gentleness and incomparable love for humankind.

But you deemed the matter, he says, worthy of no account; you have made of no account such a venerable and much-desired grace. The power of the prophecy would fit especially well with the gift through Christ. For he is the watering cloud, the fattening dew; and morning, because after a kind of night, which is conceived as being in a diabolical mist and darkness, he has come down from heaven; for the Word has come to us from above and from the Father. And "that passes away," because it comes over all that is under heaven. For the saving proclamation is very broad, and it extends over almost all that is under heaven, although the law was in a way constricted, and patrolled only the land of the Jews. "For God was known in Judea," according to the voice of the psalmist; but the whole world has known the Savior and Redeemer of all, that is, Christ. Therefore I have hewn your prophets, I have slain them by the word of my mouth. The destruction of those who lead astray is proof of sparing and love towards them. For there have been false prophets at times in Israel, who attended at the precincts of Baal, leading astray and being led astray, according to what is written. But they were destroyed at times, as God foretold this also, and pronounced a holy sentence upon them; for some Elijah destroyed beside the altar of Baal, as they were talking nonsense and saying, "Hear us, O Baal, hear us;

and others Jehu killed, whom the blessed prophet Elisha anointed king over Israel through one of the young men, with God commanding that this also be done. He, when he was anointed, with God being wrathful against those who lead astray, first destroyed Ahab, and after him Jezebel, then his sons who were in all Samaria. And pretending to want to hold a feast for Baal, he gathered all the false prophets, and pretending to sacrifice, he slaughtered to a man those gathered in a house; and he tore down Baal himself, and burned his pillars; for so it is written. Therefore, that the destruction of the false prophets was a proof of sparing and love for Israel, as I said, he taught by saying, "Therefore I have hewn your prophets. And he says "I have hewn" very well indeed. For they have fallen in a multitude, being reaped like ears of corn. And my judgment shall go forth as the light. For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than whole burnt offerings. He explains to us another way of sparing and love towards them, which if it had

been accomplished according to what seems good to him, all Israel and Judah would have been saved.

For not only did he cut down the multitude of the impious false prophets, defining the death fitting for them, but God the Father also sent his own Son at times to make clear, and before all others to those of the blood of Israel, his good will, and to make his judgment manifest. Therefore he also said through the voice of David, ”But I was appointed king by him on Zion his holy mountain, proclaiming the Lord’s decree; But he, having become according to us through himself, that is, a man, ”Of myself ”I do not speak; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment ”what I should say and what I should speak. Therefore my judgment, he says, will go forth as a light, that is, my will is not overshadowed by riddles, but will be placed nakedly and unconcealedly in the minds of all. But that Emmanuel, having arrived in due time, will not transfer the erring ones to legal worship, nor will he persuade them to honor the things that are still in types and shadows, but will rather bring them to gentleness and kindness and compassion, and to love toward one another, and to a true and unadulterated knowledge of God, makes the purpose of the judgment clear, and he says, that I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than whole burnt offerings. For what did the Savior say? ”Therefore, whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them likewise;

and showing that love is a thing most honorable with God, ”By this all will know, he says, that you are my ”disciples, if you have love for one another. But that he brought back the mind of those who approached him to the knowledge of the God who truly is, how could one doubt? For he presented himself to us as an image of the one who begot him, saying to his genuine disciple; this was Philip; ”Do you not believe that I am ”in the Father and the Father is in me? He who has seen me, ”has seen the Father. I and the Father are one. But if someone should choose to say that the Son himself is the mercy of the Father, which is above sacrifice and whole burnt offerings, he will understand well. For he is so called in the divinely inspired scripture. For God the Father himself said somewhere concerning him to us, ”My righteousness is near to come, and my mercy to be ”revealed; and the prophets to him: ”Show ”us, Lord, your mercy, and grant us your salvation, Lord. For Christ is truly the mercy from the Father, as taking away sins, as pardoning transgressions, and justifying by faith, and saving the lost, and showing them superior to death; and what of all good things does he not grant? Therefore, the knowledge of God, as perfected in Christ, is better than sacrifice and whole burnt offerings;

for through him and in him we have known the Father, and we have been enriched with justification by faith. But they are as a man transgressing a covenant. Since we are diligent in investigating the truth from all sides, it is now necessary to say that the Hebrew version, instead of ’as a man,’ has said ’as Adam’ transgressing a covenant, so that the transgression of those of Israel might be understood as being of the same kind as that which happened in Adam. For although it was possible for him to have fellowship with God, and to abide in incorruption, and to delight in the pleasures of paradise, he neglected the divine com-

mandment; then he slipped into worse things, being unexpectedly deprived of his former state. So also they; I mean again, those of Israel; though having the God of all as benevolent and friendly, saving and presiding over them, and setting forth his mercy to them as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, and bringing forth his judgment as light, and crowning them with a worship beyond the law, they became indifferent about what was necessary and useful for their own prosperity and glory, they too despised the God who rules over all, although he spoke clearly through the all-wise Moses, "You shall not make for yourself "an idol, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven "above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters "under the earth.

And again, "You shall have no other gods "but me. But since they slipped into apostasy in the same way as the first, that is, Adam, they too will surely fall outside of him who knows how to make glad; for they have transgressed a covenant. But if the oracle should be understood more mystically, as concerning Christ, we will say that again, making the sense of what is said manifest: God the Father sent the Son from heaven to enlighten those of Israel, and to make his judgment manifest, and that he might cease persuade you of ancient sacrifices and whole burnt offerings according to the law; but He will rather have mercy, justifying by faith, and will call you to the knowledge of the truly existing God; for through Him and in Him we have beheld the Father, and we have had access, as sacred scripture somewhere says. But those of Israel have become as a man transgressing a covenant. And what this is, I will say again, as best I can. He who transgresses a covenant written by another, either does not himself approach the inheritance assigned by the one who wrote it, or he deprives others who are inscribed of what is owed to them. The Jews have done some such thing, and this with respect to Christ. How, or in what way? For God the Father bestowed upon the Son, as a certain brilliant and choice inheritance, the leadership over the nation.

For He cried out, as I said, "But I was appointed king by Him on Zion, His holy mountain; and He has given to the Son the spiritual vineyard, that is, Israel; "For the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth," according to what is written, "is the man of Judah, a beloved new plant. But, as the blessed evangelist John says, "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. For they cast Him out of the gate and delivered Him to death, saying, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him and have the inheritance. See, then, how they have become as a man transgressing a covenant. Have you recognized the heir? Then give Him the inheritance that has been assigned. They have therefore transgressed the covenant of the Father, as far as it was in their power, by depriving the heir. But neither did they themselves approach grace, nor did they accept the inheritance given to them by God. For God said through the prophet, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But if the new were to be compared with the first, a very great difference in the things promised will be understood.

For there He promised them the land of the Amorites and Gergesites and Hivites, and indeed also of the Jebusites; but the new covenant, that is, the ordinances through Christ, called them through faith to sonship with God, to glory, to incorruptibility, to unending life, to a sharing in God through the Spirit, to the kingdom of heaven. But they were not willing to have the inheritance assigned to them through the Son from God the Father. Therefore, they have grieved in both ways by transgressing the covenant, both by thrusting out the heir, as I said, as far as it was in their power, from the inheritance given to Him by the Father, and by having themselves fallen away from the gifts bestowed upon them by God in Christ. There Gilead despised me, a city working vanity, troubling water, and your strength is as that of a robber. The discourse returns again to the narration of accusations, for which the impious multitude of their false prophets has been rightly destroyed. For it says ”there,” that is, at that time when Israel turned away, and came to be in such a state as to choose to worship demons; for this is what ”there” is to be understood as referring to in fact, and not rather topically; Gilead has utterly despised me; this is one of the cities beyond the streams of the Jordan, which was also assigned to the Levites, according to the law of Moses; it was therefore a city of Priests and Levites.

But those who ought to have brought the others away from error, and to have instructed them in truth and in the knowledge of what is profitable; ”For the lips of a priest,” it says, ”shall keep judgment, and they will seek the law from his mouth; they themselves have become the inventors of idols, and the craftsmen of vanities. For they worked vanities, that is, idols. And they troubled the water, that is, again they became a cause of confusion to the common people. For it is a custom in holy scripture to compare the countless multitude of people to water. And so, since Babylon was exceedingly populous, and Nineveh, he says, ”Her waters are like a pool of water,” instead of, as a pool full of waters, so is her multitude. Or also in another way they troubled the water, setting forth to those who approached a teaching as it were turbid and muddy, and dulling the mind of the more simple; for they taught to worship idols. And so through the voice of Ezekiel the God of all again accused them, and as to rams and leaders of the flock, He addressed them, saying, ”And you, ”sheep, thus says the Lord: Behold, I will judge between ”sheep and sheep, and between rams and goats. And is it not ”enough for you that you fed on the good pasture, and trampled the remainder ”of the pasture with your feet? and you drank ”the settled water, and troubled the rest with your feet?

”And My sheep fed on what was trodden by your feet, ”and drank the water troubled by your feet. For those of the blood of Levi, being learned in the law, and having as it were the finest pasture, and fine and clear water, the instruction through Moses which was not incapable of leading to truth, they trampled the pasture in a certain way; and they also troubled the water, setting forth a certain thick and muddy teaching, full of earthly impurity, to those who follow them as rams in the order of sheep. Therefore the citizens and inhabitants of Gilead are accused as troubling water, and they are also convicted as having the strength of a pirate. But how it is fitting for us to understand this, we will make clear, by interpreting what follows. Priests have hidden the way of the Lord, they have murdered Shechem, be-

cause they have wrought iniquity in the house of Israel. I have seen a horrible thing there, the fornication of Ephraim; Israel and Judah are defiled. The word of the holy prophets sometimes makes mention of certain histories, which if one chose to be silent about, he could not make clear the meaning of what was said. Therefore, it is necessary for those who wish to interpret such things clearly to be superior to hesitation, and from all sides to love to work out for the hearers that which contributes to their benefit. For this reason we will now come to something of this kind.

Shechem, then, is a certain small city beyond the streams of the Jordan, a neighbor and bordering on Gilead, which we said before was given to those of the blood of Levi, when Joshua son of Nun was dividing the land of promise. It happened then, when there was a holy feast, I mean the Feast of Tabernacles according to the law, when it was the custom for all to go up from everywhere to Jerusalem, and the law commanded this to be observed, that some of those from Shechem, either having been pricked in the heart, and repenting of their error, or even called to sobriety by God, finally wished to obey the divine laws, and sought to go up to Jerusalem, and wished to offer sacrifices, and to complete the feast there according to the laws. And this was a kind of beginning of a turning, and of ceasing to wish to adhere to the worship of idols. For so that some of those from Israel, that is, from the ten tribes, might not go up from Samaria to Jerusalem for the sake of sacrifices and feasts according to the law, and then little by little change to their original state, and come under the kingdom of Judah, Jeroboam devised the calves in the beginning, and commanded them to fulfill the accustomed rites upon them, that wretched man assigning the glory due to God to his own inventions; so that he himself might have his kingdom securely, and God might be deprived as it were of His own.

Therefore, some from Shechem attempted to go up to Jerusalem; but those from neighboring Gilead prevented them from doing this, although, as I said, they were of Levitical blood, and appointed according to the law for priestly service. But since they worked at vain things; for they were craftsmen of idols; as their craft was all but gone to nothing, if Israel should henceforth refuse to worship idols, they were embittered to anger. But when they did not persuade them with words, they came to unholy counsels and deeds. For they prepared some in the middle of the road with robber-like to use ambushes, and to murder savagely the people of Shechem, if they chose to go up to Jerusalem contrary to their will. And very many were utterly destroyed; and those who were saved at all, and were strong enough to escape their hand, having been deprived of what they were carrying for sacrifice, returned with difficulty to their own land. Therefore the Master of all accuses those from Gilead, because although they, as Levites and Priests, and having been allotted the leadership of the others, were rather obliged to show clearly to the straying the way of piety according to the law, on the contrary they hide it, not allowing those of their own counsel, that is, also from the good will from above, who were moved to choose at last to cast off the error of demons, to think rightly. Therefore, he says, priests have hidden the way of the Lord.

This again is another way of what was clearly said through another prophet: ”The priests ”did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' and those who handle my law ”did not know me, and the shepherds sinned against me. But the crimes of the Gileadites do not stop here. For in addition to hiding the way of the Lord they have also killed the Shechemites, bringing to bear the hands of robbers. For because of this he also said to Gilead, ”And your strength is as that of a pirate. But see how God brings us to the memory of the ancient history, and recalls the old crimes of Levi. And what I am saying is something like this again. For Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, that is, of Israel (for Jacob was renamed Israel), once went out of her father's tent; for she desired to see the daughters of the natives; and she was in Shechem. Then Hamor, the son of Shechem, finding the virgin, unexpectedly violated her; for he deflowered her. Therefore, the maiden's brothers, Levi and Simeon, being greatly distressed at this, devised a plot; for they persuaded the men of Shechem to be circumcised. When this had happened, while they were still in pain and overcome by suffering, they killed them utterly, saying this to their father who was accusing them of their unbridled anger, ”But ”should they treat our sister as a prostitute?

He now brings us to the memory of such a history, saying with a certain moral tone, they murdered Shechem, because they committed iniquity in the house of Israel. This, he says, they alleged at that time, that they had sinned against the house of Jacob, that is, of Israel, by deflowering the maiden. For this reason we too killed the Shechemites. But now, he says, they resolved to turn to God, to love the things in the law, to fulfill sacrifices, to celebrate feasts, to depart at last from the defilements of idolatry. What then of the Levites? They hid the way of the Lord and murdered the Shechemites. Or perhaps do they now have cause to accuse them, that they committed iniquity in the house of Israel? What maiden has now been violated? Against what Dinah have they sinned, what are the crimes of the Shechemites, of those who have honored God, of those who have loved to choose at last to think rightly, and to hasten to carry out the things in the law. Therefore I have seen, he says, the most horrible fornication of Ephraim there. For one would be amazed, and very rightly so, seeing the sacred and chosen race so far turned away from the love of God, as not only to become inventors of idols for the others, but also to hinder them, if they should choose to love the things of God. Therefore, he says, Israel and Judah are defiled.

So that if they should suffer any of the expected things, let no one blame God for being indignant. Begin to harvest for yourself when I restore the captivity of my people, when I heal Israel. Again the word is to the inhabitant of Gilead. And it teaches that I, as God, began to both heal and restore Israel. And so the Shechemites desired at last to submit their neck to God, and to celebrate feasts, no longer those of Jeroboam, but rather those according to the law, and to escape the deceit that was devised I know not how; but you, O Gileadite, all but sheared them, or rather, harvested them, and made unjust wealth from robbery. And again he exclaims with a moral tone 'begin to harvest for yourself', saying something very much like this, Or rather, even if He does not say it, subtly implying that, 'I also will make you the first-fruits of those who are punished.' For when I begin to shear Israel, and to harvest those who practice such terrible impiety, I will make you the first

victim of my wrath. For it is necessary to know that Pul, king of the Assyrians, was the first to come against Samaria and Israel, and he carried off into captivity first the tribes beyond the Jordan. And one of the cities there was Gilead. Therefore, just as when I was turning Israel back and beginning to heal it, you, O Gileadite, harvested for yourself the fruits of banditry;

so I, when I hand Israel over to the Assyrians, will make you the first-fruits of those who are sent away. And the ancient crimes are related to the charges of the Jews against Christ. For God the Father was calling all of Israel to choose at last to think better things, and to cease from the worship in the Law, and instead to choose the new and evangelical worship. But they opposed not moderately those who were turning back and being called to healing. For it is written that, 'The Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.' And their leaders also heard, 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves do not enter, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.' Therefore, they have been given over to enemies, and have paid a bitter penalty for their drunken insolence against Christ. And the iniquity of Ephraim shall be revealed, and the wickedness of Samaria, because they have wrought falsehood. And a thief shall enter in to him, a robber stripping him in his way, so that they may sing in harmony as those who are in accord in their heart. Good by nature and long-suffering, 'long-suffering and of great mercy' is truly the Lord of all. But while He is still long-suffering with those who sin, their crimes are somehow still concealed;

but when He now proceeds and brings justice and no longer tolerates inaction, then they are manifest, and seem now to be revealed, and are wont to be seen brought into the midst, all but before the eyes of all. This, he says, will now also happen against Ephraim and Samaria. And Ephraim here you will understand as the royal tribe in Samaria, from which came Jeroboam and his successors; and Samaria, those in Samaria, that is, the ten tribes. And he says their sins will be revealed, for such reasons as these. That they also wrought falsehood, practicing a cold and stale worship, and having become, as I said, craftsmen of idols, and that a thief, that is, a robber, shall enter in to him, instead of: a thief entered and rested and lodged with him, stripping him in the way; so that from this it might be shown, he says, that they have a heart that is in accord, that is, clearly, harmonious and of one mind. For some robbed those wishing to go up to Jerusalem; and others shared the crimes with them, having impiously partaken of the things that were stolen.

And the teachers of the Jews also rejoiced when those who believed in Christ were fiercely warred against, and they became partners in the assault and robbery of others, gloating over the persecuted faithful, and receiving a certain robber, as it were, Satan, into their mind and heart, who strips their mind of all piety, so that they might have a heart in harmony with him. For just as 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' in the same way, I think, he who is joined to Satan will have one heart with him. I have remembered all their iniquities; now their own counsels have surrounded them, they have come to be before my face. As

long as we sin in ways that are tolerable and measured, as human beings, having a nature prone to slip into sin, God passes it over out of his innate love for mankind. For he knows 'our frame, he remembers that we are dust,' according to the voice of the psalmist. But whenever something great and extraordinary and truly unbearable is done by us, which and sometimes it finally sharpens the very gentleness of the judge, and all but forces it, even unwillingly, toward anger; then it runs to the recollection of all, so to speak, of the sins committed by certain ones. For this reason, he says concerning Ephraim and Samaria, that I have remembered all their wickedness. And it is likely that in these words the prophetic oracle again wishes to indicate to us that very thing.

For I have benevolently overlooked, he says, the slaughter of those in Shechem who were destroyed by Levi, on account of the violation of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. But since now they have also killed, I will remember their ancient injustice as well, and as now a murderer and cruel, I will demand punishment for their former sins. For their own counsels, he says, have surrounded them; just as if he were saying, They are finally besieged by their own thoughts and unholy considerations. For they once killed those from Shechem by deceit and trickery, but now by robberies, although they were turning to God. But since their transgressions have now become beyond description before My face, for I will not overlook, he says, such evils, nor by putting them out of sight any longer will I be slow to punish. Their own counsels have surrounded the Jews, especially in the things concerning Christ. For they killed the prophets, while God was still forbearing; but since they also became slayers of the Lord, their own counsels surrounded them, and the God of all remembered all their wickedness. In their wickedness they have made kings glad, and in their lies, princes. They ought rather, he says, by doing good and choosing to live according to the law, to have appeased the redeemer for themselves, and to have gladdened the one who saves, who has invincible strength for this.

But this they have not done, but having become exceedingly slothful concerning what is necessary for their own life and useful for their well-being, they have made it a matter of no account to offend God; and they acted hypocritically with their own kings and rulers, gladdening them by their compliance with whatever seemed good to them, and offering the things that grieve God as pleasure and delight to those who lead them astray. And again he accuses them, as having run together with Jeroboam and the rulers under him, and as having without delay consented to the profanation he devised concerning the golden calves, and to his wishing to impiously lead them away to another worship. For they should have, they should have, in response to their schemes and utterly outrageous undertakings, generally brought forth the genuineness of their love for God, and tried to restrain them in their folly, not gladdening them by readily going into agreement. And the saying is true, even if it is understood again of those who crucified Emmanuel. For by lying and slandering him, they caused Herod and Pontius Pilate and the leaders of the Synagogue to rejoice. For somewhere the divine Peter also said to the Father and God of all, "For truly in this city there were gathered together "against your holy child Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod "and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.

All of them are adulterers, like an oven heated for baking, that ceases from burning from the flame, from the kneading of the dough, until it is leavened. a day of your kings. In what way they gladdened kings in their wickedness, and princes in their lies, he explains clearly to us in these words. The account of the history is as follows, which if someone should happen to know it, he will certainly understand the meaning of the prophecy. When, therefore, after the ten tribes had broken away, the accursed Jeroboam reigned over them, he was greatly afraid, lest somehow by going up to Jerusalem for the feasts according to the law, they might be persuaded little by little to choose the scepter of Judah again, and being brought to the remembrance of their ancient customs, they might either kill him, or rather, drive him out, and not willingly then, from ruling over them. For this reason the god-hated and wretched man planned to dedicate the golden calves to them, and devised the manner of the impious false worship, and he undertook to innovate the feasts for the heifers, as the account of the Hebrew tradition has it.

Therefore, in the beginning he was exceedingly fearful, lest, agreeing with the worship that had come to them from above and from their fathers, they might either thrust him from the throne, or even destroy him, as I said, and, rejecting the undertaking, choose to return to their former state, being grieved and justly indignant, as though Moses had been insulted and the divine commandment given to them had been trodden underfoot. For this reason, being bitter in deceits, he sent many throughout Israel to spread rumors and say that they should also make calves, and innovate their own feasts, and to ask this very thing from the king. And when he learned that the crowds were very readily disposed to this, consenting and rejoicing with those who had advised such things, he gathered everyone together and clearly proclaimed that it was fitting to worship the golden heifers, and he revealed the day of the feast, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, as it is written. When Jeroboam said these things at that time, the people acclaimed him and cried out, "This is the king's day; we too will follow this purpose"; and they wished to cheer him with certain other such praises. And those chosen to be leaders were carried along with the crowds, echoing and consenting with them. The word of the prophet reminds us of these things at present. For he says, all are adulterers, like an oven burning for the baking of a burnt offering from the flame.

For having inclined towards spiritual fornication, that is, apostasy from God—for this is fornication—they were like ovens already fired and ready for baking whatever one might cast in; for they were filled with flame, that is, of a hot and, as it were, burning desire. And they were like a lump of dough, already having the leaven, but completely leavened on the day of their king; when, as I just said, Jeroboam had openly declared that it was necessary to sacrifice to the heifers and to celebrate the feasts for them, they themselves cried out, "This is the king's day," just as, as I said, the account of the tradition has it. Then it was also completely leavened, that is, it was entirely possessed by impiety. Therefore, with their minds pre-heated by hot and unrestrainable desires for transgression, and pre-leavened as it were in this very manner on the king's day, they slid into the limit of wickedness. The Jews did something like this again in the case of Christ. For by speaking falsely against his glory, and little by little drawing the crowds away from their love for him, the scribes

and Pharisees committed spiritual fornication, causing the common multitude to apostatize from him. The rulers began to be angry from wine; he stretched out his hand with plagues, because their hearts were kindled like an oven. Wine, as it seems, he here calls that from the vine of Sodom, which intoxicates hearts, and clouds the mind and fills it with a destructive and abominable mist.

Therefore, when some were displeased with both the innovation of the heifers and indeed of the feasts, certain of the rulers were provoked to anger. And so that the more sober multitude of those who were silent and did not tolerate the acclaim might not be seen, they themselves stretched out their hands with the crowds, and cried out even more loudly, "This is the king's day," and they approved the ways of impiety. Therefore, he says, they were enraged, being drunk with an unholy drunkenness, and they gnashed their teeth at those not running along with such shameful things, stretching out their hands with plagues. And he calls the crowds plagues. For he says they applauded, as I said, although they were obliged to lead them to piety and to reveal the path of what is profitable. But, he says, they themselves were also hot in heart, having received into their mind the destructive flame of the desire for transgression. While they were dashing them down all night, Ephraim was filled with sleep; in the morning it happened, he was kindled like the light of a fire. I said that the God-hated Jeroboam was exceedingly fearful, in being still only in the thoughts of his unholy undertakings. For he thought, and very reasonably, that Israel would be indignant if it should learn of such a thing, and would not make small account of the transgression of the ancestral customs.

But when he himself had addressed the crowds, that they must worship the heifers, and they gladly accepted the thought, and together with the rulers applauded, as men who had chosen to think and to do things right and expedient, he was free from fears, he departed from suspicion, and was thereafter cheerful, and was full of luxury. Therefore, in their being dashed down, that is, at that time, when they were falling into ruin and destruction, assenting and consenting to him, and holding in honor the transgression of the love for God, then, it says, Ephraim, that is, Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim, slept the whole night. As if it were to say, although formerly he had been kept awake by fears and suspicion, he was without care, he lived luxuriously thereafter, and was in soft beds, sleeping the whole night. But when morning came, he was more fervent than the others. For he was kindled like a flame of fire, and was heated along with the crowds, not deeming the matter worthy of any delay, so to speak, but bringing to fulfillment, and very eagerly, the display of his unholy undertakings. They were all heated, their hearts were as an oven, and it devoured their judges; all their kings have fallen, there was none among them that called unto me. True, then, are the things I said; for those around the accursed Jeroboam were heated, and "were kindled like a flame of fire.

Has then the matter of impiety advanced only as far as what was dared by him? By no means, it says; for they were all heated, both those after him still, and the destructive fire of such heat consumed all their judges; and it also destroyed all those who reigned in succession

after him. For there was not among them one who wished to worship me, and deemed it worthy to supplicate the God of all, and who had for himself the boasts of the true knowledge of God. Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. He strongly blames those of the tribe of Ephraim who have been invested with the royal honor over Israel in Samaria, as being accustomed to think nothing better than those under their hand and the common herd; but running with them and being easily carried away with them in everything, although it was necessary, as leaders, to guide them to the good, and with higher considerations to see what would contribute to their salvation. But this they did not do; instead they were mixed up with the crowds, all suffering one and the same sickness of folly, and in addition to this, persistence in wickedness, and the unchangeable nature of a mind that in no way gives up what it has chosen to do, even if these things are agents of ruin and destruction for them.

Therefore, he says that Ephraim has become a cake not turned, as from the image or example of breads baked on stones, which if someone does not turn, there is every necessity that they be burned and be seen as useless thereafter, and that what is edible is lost by the abundance of the flame. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knew it not; yea, gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, yet he knew it not. He calls strangers those of other tribes and different races, I mean Persians, and their bordering and neighboring Moabites and Idumaeans, and the nations of the Syrians, who have all but devoured Ephraim. For since he called him a bread, a cake, he has remained in the figure of speech. And by his strength he means the multitude that is beyond number; for the tribe especially of Ephraim, being very populous, and on this account raising a high brow, thought perhaps it would be terrible and irresistible even to the leaders or generals of the Assyrians. But when they arrived, having taken up the war against them, they were consumed without a struggle, and were led into captivity. But 'he knew it not,' it says, that is, he did not understand the cause of the calamity, although it was necessary for him at least through what had happened to come to his senses. which For what is not seen, trials often, by foresight, place it before their eyes. And it is better to consider what is expedient, without waiting for the trial.

But if one should fail in this, at least for those who have suffered, it will then remain to be able to understand from the trial itself what is necessary and beneficial. Ephraim, he says, therefore did not know, although grown grey, that is, after a long time had passed, and it was not unable to teach and persuade him to learn, in what way such things had happened to them. And because he had offended the one who is able to save, they slipped into terrible and unexpected evils. And the pride of Israel shall be humbled to his face, and they did not return to the Lord their God, and they did not seek him in all these things. He interprets clearly what he said; for what Ephraim did not know, although grown grey, he again makes plain. For the pride of Israel, he says, that is, the apostasy, which he has contracted from contempt, because of which he has also turned away to foreign gods, dishonoring the God who is by nature and truly God, will be turned against his face. It is as if he were to say, it will prove to be a cause of pride and dishonor for him; for this is what it means for something to be turned against someone's face.

But although he suffered such things, again he did not know God, nor indeed did they, being hard and unyielding, and very sick with the lack of love for God, and seen in the midst of terrible things, make account of returning to him. This is an accusation of the utmost insensibility, and a clear proof of a foolishness that has reached its limit. And Ephraim was like a senseless dove, having no heart; he called upon Egypt, and they went to the Assyrians. As they go, I will cast my net upon them; like the birds of the sky I will bring them down; I will chastise them by the hearing of their affliction. It is necessary to recall again what is written in the fourth book of Kings; for we will thus easily understand the meaning of the things before us. Hoshea, therefore, son of Elah, reigned in Samaria over Israel. Shalmaneser the Assyrian sent messengers to him, demanding the customary gifts more tyrannically, and all but wishing to exact tribute from Israel. But he refused the servitude, and rather planned resistance, even if he should happen to choose to impose the law of war on Israel. Then he sent an embassy to So, the tyrant of Egypt, asking for aid; for he thought that with him he would overcome the hand of the Assyrians. But he being very grieved at this, takes up war against Israel. Then Hoshea became his servant, and Israel itself, taken captive by the spear along with him, was removed from Samaria.

Therefore Ephraim became like a most senseless dove, not having innocence for a good purpose. Therefore Christ also says, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. For simplicity of character, and a free mind, would rightly be worthy of all account; but in the absence of understanding, simplicity is harmful, and the thing is then foolishness. Ephraim, therefore, is senseless; how, or in what way? For he called upon the Egyptians; but they went captive to the Assyrians, since So was weak in providing aid. Then how was it not better for him to seek not rather the care from men, but that which is from above and invincible? Therefore the God of all also said through the voice of Isaiah, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who trust in horses and in chariots. And that not without God did the hand of those who came to their aid also weaken, he has shown by adding that wherever they commit fornication, he will bring them down like sparrows, casting a net or a snare upon them, and not allowing them to be boastful, but bringing them down as from on high to the earth, that is, from a very high and lofty brow to a pitiful and humble mind, and to that which would be fitting for those who have fallen under the hand of their enemies. Then he says, that I will chastise them by the hearing of their affliction, wishing, I think, to signify that.

For the rumors of what was to come preceded for them the experience, and a dreadful report surely terrified those in Samaria. Therefore they were being chastised, hearing of the affliction that was all but upon them. But if they had been wise, this would have been enough for their conversion; but being exceedingly insensible to pain, they were not even shamed by the experience itself, having a disobedient mind that was hard, unbreakable, and very sick. Woe to them, for they have strayed from me; they are wretched, because they have acted impiously against me. That the pretext for their calamities was their apostasy from God, He makes clear to us through these words. For just as those who are physically ill would be found to be the cause of the severity of their diseases, if they did not accept the physicians and the things by which the pain could be soothed, so also we, by removing ourselves from

the love for God, will do no small injustice. For nothing saves the one who offends God. Therefore, because they have fled from God, for this reason they are wretched and accursed; and having acted impiously, by worshiping the falsely-named gods and offering reverence to them, they will be subject to the woe. ”For if God shuts a man up, ”who can open it? according to what is written. But I redeemed them, yet they spoke lies against me, and their hearts did not cry out to me, but instead they wailed in their beds;

over wheat and wine they gashed themselves. That He brings punishments commensurate with each one’s transgressions, He intimates again. For they spoke against the God who redeemed them, who had led them out of the house of bondage ”with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm,” as it is written, and had delivered them from the oppression of the Egyptians. They spoke against His glory, assigning the praises for the good things they had received to the unclean demons and to the works of their own hands, just as when they had carelessly made the calf in the wilderness, all but impiously insulting the Redeemer, they said in their madness: ”These are your gods, O Israel, who ”brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Therefore it is indeed insolence and drunken violence against God, and a most manifest contempt, to attribute reverence to carved images and demons, and to offer them thank-offerings, and to bring down the excellence of the highest glory to them. And not only did they speak against God, as I have just said, but they also turned away completely from even thinking at all that things which sustain life in the world are from Him. For their hearts have not cried out to me, He says, that is, they sought nothing from me, although being disposed and having believed that I am the provider and giver of every good thing.

And that God does not require a shout, but rather a disposition of the mind and heart, we shall know also through these things. Therefore, they have not cried out to God. But indeed they have also turned away unbridledly to extravagant love of the flesh, so as to wail upon their beds. And this is a demonstration of shameful ways, and of an unrebuked inclination to fornication, and of a mind broken towards pleasures. And it would be fitting only for those who have practiced forcing the distinctives of men towards the habits and appearances and voices of women to slip into such a shameful and most abominable state. But these are effeminate, and very exceedingly enervated, and having come to the end of uncleanness among men. Moreover, to say that they cut themselves over wine and wheat, seems to me somehow to signify that. For giving thanks to their own idols for the fruitfulness of their fields, I mean both of wheat and of the vine, they wished to practice the so-called rites; as if being possessed and raving, and cutting their chests and both their hands with iron, so that also perhaps by sacrificing, as it were, their own blood on the spot to the carved images, they might at last be convicted of the ultimate godlessness. At these things perhaps another prophet also smiles, saying, ”Sacrifice men, for calves have failed.

And such things are sufficient to grieve most exceedingly the God who has authority over all, to whom they ought rather to have brought thank-offerings, and not to have foolishly assigned the glory due to Him to wood and stones. They were disciplined in me, And I strengthened their arms, and against me they devised evil things. They turned away to

nothing, they became like a bent bow. He adds another manner of their ingratitude to them, showing them to be unholy and senseless. For I, he says, although formerly they differed in nothing from irrational beasts and were utterly without understanding, have both instructed them by law, and I have shown them to be wise, knowing what is profitable and the way of righteousness, and not ignorant of the accomplishment of all good order, so that they even now say, rejoicing in themselves, "Blessed are we, Israel, because the things pleasing to the Lord are known to us. And the generosity towards them did not stop at these things; but indeed I also made them most valiant, and sufficiently equipped to be able to subdue anyone willing to make war and resist. for they have conquered many and great nations, and this without toil; but towards me, the God who was the giver of such things to them, they have become wicked, that is, scornful and apostates; and the manner of their turning away has become for nothing. For a man-made image from tangible matter is nothing at all.

But if they had found something better, their transgression might reasonably have some justification. But since such things are absolutely nothing compared to God, but are absurdity and foolishness and whatever is close to these, there is no reason for their turning away, having a plausible cause. Therefore they have turned away to nothing, and in addition to this they have become like a bent bow, not relaxed towards repentance, not slackening the tension that carries them to such shame and folly. It should be known that others, interpreting this, have published, they became like a treacherous bow, so that Israel might again be understood as having done such a thing. For those who should have rather, like a bow, been bent against enemies, and vigorously shoot those who practice resisting, have unwittingly struck themselves bitterly as if with the points of bows. For by offending God, at least in the ways already mentioned, what else could they be found doing, than arming their own hands against themselves? The passage at hand might be understood, if it seems good to anyone, in another way also. For the God of all bent Israel, as it were, like his own bow, fighting against the tyranny of the devil, and leading them out against the deceit of idolatry; for Israel alone, out of all the nations in the whole world, at least according to what seemed right to the law, shook off the worship of idols, and was devoted to the one who is by nature and truly the Lord of all;

but they turned to the opposite. For those who were obliged to do that, have warred against God for the glory of idols; they have therefore become like a treacherous bow, using their archery in the opposite way. Their rulers shall fall by the sword because of the unruliness of their tongue. The things from wrath will not come only upon those who are subject to the leaders, he says, but it will seize, and very swiftly, also those who are accustomed to revel in the highest honors. for they will fall by the sword, and the pretext for their suffering will be the licentiousness of their tongue. For it is truly unruliness to say to the wood, "You are my God; and to the stone, "You begot me. And it would be very fitting to say such things to Emmanuel, against whom the scribes and Pharisees have moved their unruly tongue, although he was both instructing and strengthening, it is clear that this is spiritually; taking none of which into account, they also turned away to nothing. For they turned to "teach-

ings, the commandments of men. and they have become like a treacherous bow, impiously shooting their own Lord, for whom they should rather have striven universally, and hasten to conquer their opponents, just as did the true disciples of those who believed. This their derision in the land of Egypt to their bosom. as earth, as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they transgressed my covenant, and acted impiously against my law.

These things have been said very obscurely, with the Hebrew language, as I suppose, causing the interpreters much difficulty; but we, following the order of the thoughts, will say what comes to mind. This disparagement of them, therefore, he says in the land of Egypt, that is, since me, who am always saving and chastising and rendering unconquerable to those who oppose them—for I strengthened them—they impiously scorned, allotting their worship to demons, and growing bold in the land of the Egyptians, and thinking that the aids from there would suffice them for prosperity, for this reason their undertaking will also turn back into their own bosom, and they will find no good rewards for their own foolish counsel. But they will receive their just dues as if into their bosom. For he will come, he will come, he says, the one who will ravage them, the tyrant of the Assyrians, having a multitude of warriors greater than can be numbered. And he will come to them as a whole land and country and fatherland, so that one might think that the entire land of the Persians and Medes had moved from its place and come to Samaria; this is what "as the land" means. And he will come also as an eagle to the house of the Lord, that is, he will fly up swift and terrible even against the temple of God itself, and will overrun the kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem, seizing without toil, and carrying it off to his own land.

For first the country of the Samaritans was sacked, and in it somewhere, certainly, was Israel, and later, finally, the renowned city itself was taken, over which the prophet Jeremiah also lamented, saying: "How the city sits solitary, that was full of people! She who was great among the nations has become a tributary. For that the temple was also burned with the city is in no way doubtful. But these things will happen to them, he says, because they have transgressed the divine covenant and have acted impiously against the spoken law. For holding in very little esteem the things decreed through the all-wise Moses, they were eager to live according to their own wills, and each made what seemed good to him both his mode of worship and his law. They shall cry to me, O God, we know you; for Israel has turned away from good things, they have pursued an enemy. Those who cut themselves over grain and wine, and who celebrate feasts to unclean demons, those who have not cried out to God with their hearts, nor indeed have they acknowledged the giver and governor of all cheerfulness to them, but neither have they honored him with fitting thanksgivings, since in the breadth of their prosperity they have ignored him, yet they will know him when they have suffered what they must, and when they come to a bitter and abominable end of their own ill counsel, they will cry out and will call upon him with difficulty, having slipped into terrible and incurable calamities.

But having received, as it were, the experience of their own terrible things as a counselor, they will then accuse their own foolishness, saying something like this: Israel has turned

away from good things. For when it was possible to have them, and that richly, being established with God, and having been very zealous to carry out the things that seemed good to him, they pursued an enemy, that is, they themselves have almost voluntarily run to their enemies, and have come under the hand of those who hate them, having grieved by their apostasies the God who always saves and makes them superior to their opponents. It is therefore all-wise and truly beneficial not to await the experience of terrible things, but rather to refuse it while it is still absent, and to hasten to contemplate what is profitable before it comes. They have made kings for themselves, and not by me; they have ruled, and they did not make it known to me; their silver and their gold they have made for themselves idols, so that they might be utterly destroyed. He denies the kingship of both Jeroboam and of those who reigned in succession over Israel in Samaria, although he himself had expressly said, "For this thing is from me; and he threatened Solomon himself, who had followed the opinions of foreign women and had impiously dedicated precincts and altars to their objects of worship, that "I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. What then shall we say?

That the God of all is a liar? May it not be so; but we will turn rather to what it is necessary to think rightly, considering that. For it is written, "Shall there be evil in a city, which the Lord has not done? And by evil he means the affliction. For some things He does according to His own will, but others He allows to happen, punishing some, even if it happens somehow against His will. Since, being able to prevent it, He often allows something to happen providentially, He is said to be the author of these things as well. For example: for we shall now proceed to Solomon himself; for He gave him the ability to build the temple of stone in Jerusalem, He made him wise, and distinguished for incomparable understanding; this was a work of His own will. He allowed his kingdom to be broken, not Himself bringing matters to this point according to His own will, but as it were being silent, even at what was not willed, because of His indignation against him. Therefore, although Jeroboam reigned, and those after him, it was not at all with God's assent. For things that happen as a punishment out of anger toward some have a different character, and would not by chance be understood to be of the same sort as those that are truly according to His will. Therefore they have made kings for themselves, and not through me. And since they ruled, it was almost as if God did not know it;

for what is against His will He seems not even to know; their rule became weak and easily overthrown, and unable to resist, and not such as to save those subject to it. "For through him kings reign, and tyrants through him hold the earth. But that they suffer from great insensibility in this, and used the things given by God to grieve Him, or rather even for the destruction of their own souls, He taught by saying: Their silver and their gold they made into idols for themselves, that they might be utterly destroyed. For from where it was possible for them to prosper by having compassion on their brethren, from there they offend God, and unwillingly change the way of salvation to the necessity of being destroyed by Him. Cast off thy calf, O Samaria; my wrath is kindled against it: how long will they be unable to be cleansed in Israel? A craftsman made it, and it is not God; because your calf, O

Samaria, was a deceiver. How very well he says ”cast off,” as if of a stain and pollution and of the utmost impurity. For this is truly the nature of idolatry, rendering the soul of man abominable and foul and hateful before God. He therefore counsels as one compassionate and good, to change for the better, and to put away wrath, and henceforth to curtail the causes of what is to come, and by repentance to cut short the terrible things, even if they have sobered up late.

For He says He was provoked clearly by the calf, showing that, being philanthropic, He sometimes overlooks the failings that arise from human weakness, but He always punishes apostasy, and considers the turning away of the insolent to be unbearable, I mean the need to worship demons. For how long will you, having been in impurity, remain unchanged? What time will be sufficient for you to put away your foolishness? For what a craftsman has made, you believe to be God; and what is of no help, but rather leads to ruin and destruction, you consider venerable and worthy of acceptance; for the calf deceives, and nothing else. Because they have sown the wind, and their destruction shall receive it: a stalk having no strength to make meal; and if it should make any, strangers shall devour it. By a comparison with those who labor in vain in agriculture, He shows the fruitlessness of their inherent ill counsel and their zeal for vain things. For for some to choose to labor over these things, and sometimes to worship them diligently, to honor them with offerings and sacrifices, would be nothing other than to gather seed that has been ruined by the wind, which is completely unable to benefit the one who labors. For what is the reward for zeal in idolatry? Or what benefit from carved images? Or in what way will those things delight anyone, which must certainly come to destruction?

Therefore, those who are accustomed to do such things and devote their zeal to the honors of idols are like those who sow what is ruined by the wind, and to a handful of grain stalks to one who has no wheat, and has not prepared it for the need of flour. But if anything should come from them, that is, even if they should seem somehow to be zealous and genuine concerning the works of error, this also will go from them to strangers, and will in no way please God. And by strangers he means the falsely named gods. Therefore our zeal is utterly without reward in those things that grieve God, and the ways of equity will be wholly and completely slandered before him, falling short of the pursuit of the good.

Book 5

Israel is swallowed up, now he has become among the nations as a useless vessel, because they went up to the Assyrians; Ephraim blossomed by himself, he loved gifts, therefore they shall be delivered to the nations. He says that Israel is swallowed up, as having endured a miserable shipwreck, and drowned in the waves of his own sins, and as if shattered against some rock by the movements of divine wrath. Or, in another way, he says he was swallowed up, as by a terrible and insatiable dragon, Nebuchadnezzar; for another of the holy prophets also spoke thus to us, taking on the persona of Israel, being already captured by the spear and serving his captors, ”He has devoured me, he has divided me, a subtle darkness has seized me, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has swallowed me like a dragon, he has filled his belly from my delicacies. And in another way it is true, that the many-headed dragon in a way swallows up those who fall away from the love of God, and makes them his own food, whom the voice of the psalmist also says was given as food to the peoples of the Ethiopians. ”For you,” he says, ”shattered the head of the dragon; you gave him as food to the peoples of the Ethiopians. For those who have a most black and lightless mind within themselves, are fittingly both thought of and called Ethiopians both by ourselves and by God. these feed the many-headed dragon, and they in turn are fed upon by him.

Therefore Israel is swallowed up, and has become among the nations as a useless vessel. for having been carried away to the Assyrians and Medes, he was made completely useless, having been forced, perhaps, to think the things that seemed right to them. or, because he became a useless vessel, for this reason he was also swallowed up, and leaving the one who bore him, he migrated to the nations. The Master of all says something of this kind also through the voice of Jeremiah concerning one of those who had reigned in Samaria over Israel: ”Jeconiah has been dishonored as a vessel for which there is no need, because he was cast out and thrown forth into a land which he did not know. O earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord, write this man down as a proclaimed man. Therefore Israel was made useless. For what need has God of a soul that is wandering, and sin-loving, and easily turning aside to anything whatsoever that is amiss and to that which is beyond all evils, the turning away from slavery under God? What then is the cause of Israel suffering such things? That they themselves went up to the Assyrians. For he all but says, they have run as deserters to the enemy. how or in what way? For fearing their attack, they did not rather seek God’s help by repenting, but rather persuaded them with gifts to be quiet for a short time.

Then he in a way mocks this kind of consideration, as being rash and useless for them, speaking about those who had reigned from the tribe of Ephraim, who also sent gifts to the tyrants of the Assyrians, Ephraim blossomed by himself. It is as if he were to say: the one from the tribe of Ephraim, about to be cut down like some tree trunk having reigned, and as it were withered by the fire of divine wrath, he sprouted up again by himself, that is, without me, and not having my accord, he thought, it says, that he would live and put down a root deep, and would not slip from his own thrones. For he purchased a temporary and short delay of the evil, by loving gifts; not rather to receive, but to give. And what was the result? No benefit at all, but they will be handed over to the nations, and through the very things that will happen, he might learn that no one can sprout up again by himself; nor would it profit those who offend God to give gifts to their enemies. For they will be subject, and not for long, to justice. Now I will receive them, and they shall cease a little from anointing a king and rulers. Those from the tribe of Ephraim who reigned over them have been, so to speak, the cause of all the depravity of Israel.

For first the accursed Jeroboam became the inventor of the apostasy, setting up for them golden calves, and of the so-called high places, that is, of the precincts on mountains and hills, appointing priests, those not from the tribe of Levi, but rather whoever "filled their hand," as it is written. Then after him, when the Assyrians were expected, in the time of the reign of Menahem, they sent money, persuading them to keep away from the land. For this reason, the divine threat has been justly made against the kingdom from the tribe of Ephraim that was established over Israel. For 'now I will receive them,' he says, not as having a good character, nor as having chosen to live best, nor indeed as desiring the polity according to the law, but as a disciplinarian, and demanding justice, and already calling them to judgment. For out of gentleness I allowed the things from divine wrath to be postponed, during the past time, but 'now I will receive them,' he says, so that by the experience of terrible things they may scarcely learn that they are also under a Master, and not outside my hand. And that the things from wrath are no longer postponed, he has confirmed by saying 'now.' Therefore, having been received so that they may be disciplined, they will henceforth cease from anointing a king and rulers. For while serving the Assyrians and Medes, what leisure would they have to perform the works of apostasy? They who indeed were continually lamenting and bewailing the unexpected disaster.

But it should be known that after Cyrus son of Cambyses released Israel from captivity, they no longer anointed in Samaria those from the tribe of Ephraim, but all came under one yoke, with those from the tribe of Judah reigning in Jerusalem. For they dwelt no longer dividedly, but all in Jerusalem. And the first to rule after the times of the captivity over the kingdom of both, I mean, of both Israel and Judah, or rather of all twelve tribes without exception, was Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel from the tribe of Judah, with the Levitical orders being led and the ministry of the high priesthood being administered by Jesus son of Jozadak the high priest. Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sins, beloved altars have become his; I will write for him a multitude and his statutes. His beloved altars were accounted as strange things to him. He explains the reason for which he now justly brings upon the

rulers the necessity of falling from their rule. For Ephraim has made very many altars for sins. And the discourse rushes also to the first Jeroboam, who reigned from the tribe of Ephraim, and after him to his successors, who, on every mountain and hill setting up altars to demons, persuaded those of Israel to sacrifice.

Then, when it was necessary to be grieved at such outrageous undertakings—for they multiplied altars for sins—he says they made them also beloved, and in addition to these things, the beloved altars were accounted as strange to him, it is clear that to Ephraim. And it certainly indicates the things in the ancient tabernacle, that is, in Jerusalem, located in the divine temple. And these were two: the one for burnt offerings in the first tabernacle, and the other, the golden one, for incense, in the second and innermost. Therefore many of those from The crimes of Ephraim when they were kings; first, that they multiplied altars for sins; then that they have also made beloved the things for which it was fitting to lament and mourn, as ones who have given offense; and what is yet greater, as one having turned to despair, he has made alien the beloved altars, which one truly ought to love and hold in all esteem. and he cast in the midst, the "I will write for him the multitude and his laws. and it implies something of this sort: for he says the multitude of the altars made by them for sins, and their laws, that is again, the sacrifices customary for them, or the times or manners of the sacrifices, according to which they offered their profane rites; for they cut themselves over wheat and wine, and were eager to do certain other things like these; "I will write down for them for sins and for crimes.

It is therefore a saving thing to hold to the divine altars, and to partake of the things from God, and not to seek the things of others, which are indeed for sin. This is what those who are not genuine Christians do, falling away after the saving baptism to Greek customs and observances, to whom it is fitting to say through the voice of Paul, "You cannot "partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons; and indeed also those who attach themselves to the unholy heretics, and partake of their altars, for whom in truth the beloved altars have become alien. for they have multiplied for themselves things for sins, sacrificing the lamb outside the sacred and divine court, that is, the Church. Because if they offer a sacrifice and eat meat, the Lord will not accept them; now he will remember their iniquities and will avenge their sins. That the altars for sins have come into being and have been multiplied by Ephraim, he makes very clear also through these things. For what they sacrifice, he says, is offered by them not to God, but rather to the precincts of idols; and even if they celebrate at the sacrifices, filling themselves with food or drink, the matter is nothing to God. For they do not perform the festival for him, because the divine and undefiled nature would in no way accept what is done for the glory of demons, but rather is provoked as having been insulted;

and she is all but unwillingly forced to bring down the judgments of wrath upon those who call for this, and to proceed to the remembrance of all, so to speak, of the things committed by those who offend. And when this has happened, sharp is the anger, judgment is at hand, and there is no one who is delivered. "It is therefore a fearful thing "to fall into the hands

of the living God. But it is more fitting, and incomparably better, and for us the cause of all prosperity, to offer sacrifices to God, spiritual ones, that is, and for him to fulfill festivals, choosing to live rightly, and earnestly avoiding to fall away at all in any respect. But they returned to Egypt, and in Assyria they will eat unclean things. He again accuses them, as wishing to live in a completely senseless and unholy manner, and as having entirely ignored the path of what is expedient. For I, he says, threatened to bring under my wrath those who had come to this opinion, and to avenge their sins, and to remember all their lawlessness. And in the beginning what was expected to happen was this, with the war already terrifying Israel, and all but attacking the country.

Then, when they ought to have been propitiating God with prayers and repentance, and to be re-educated in what seemed good to him, and to put his wrath to shame by their recourse to what is better, as to something exceedingly useful, and able to deliver them, they turned back to Egypt, calling for aid ”an Egyptian man ”and not God, the flesh of horses,” according to what is written. But, ”A king is not saved through great power, and a giant ”will not be saved in the multitude of his strength. A horse is false for ”salvation. It is good to trust in the Lord rather than to trust in ”man. It is good to hope in the Lord rather than to hope in ”princes. that for them the things of such a kind, he says has resulted from foolish counsel, they will know from experience itself; for being carried off to the Assyrians and Medes, there they will eat unclean things, that is, they will live having cast off the remnant of reverence for the law, and eating whatever is at hand without guard. But perhaps someone will say: then how would this have grieved the from Israel, who chose to worship idols? To these things we say, that they have admittedly been deceived, but there was still in their minds some small care for the law, and they had not completely lost the Jewish customs, even though they worshiped in the temples of idols.

For this reason also the blessed prophet Elijah once accused them of limping on two houghs, and of being willing to adhere neither completely to Baal, nor indeed perfectly to God. Therefore Israel, having become captive, has completely cast off reverence for the law, following out of necessity the customs and laws of their rulers. And this I think is what Christ himself said, that ”To everyone ”who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance; but from ”him who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away from him. Therefore we must not despise the divine gifts; but whatever we have from God, we should take the greatest account of; for the gift will dwell with those who care for it; but if we become lazy and negligent concerning it, it will surely fly away. And Israel forgot him who made him, and they built shrines; and Judah made walled cities; and I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour their foundations. He rebukes both kingdoms, I mean the one in Samaria, and that of Judah, that is, the one in Jerusalem. For what both have done, it is necessary to observe and to say at the same time.

For when the war was expected to happen, and when the terror was practically already at their very gates, when it was necessary for them, both those in Samaria and the kings from the tribe of Judah, to seek help from God the Savior, they turned to strange and use-

less opinions and, when they ought to have healed with repentance, they provoked against themselves even more greatly the God who rules over all. For Israel, that is, the ten tribes and those who held their power, offered yet more acts of worship, as if to aggrieved demons, or rather to those able to avert the capture and to overturn the phalanxes of the enemies; and as if appeasing them and making them benevolent, they built shrines, and they set up altars, and they honored them with still more sacrifices; but Judah made his own cities more fortified, trusting in stones rather than in God, although He says clearly concerning Jerusalem, that "I will be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for glory in her midst. But this thing did not help Israel at all; and for the future God threatened to bring fire upon the cities of Judah, the Babylonians clearly burning them, who became ministers of His wrath against them. Therefore, nothing at all will save the one who offends God; and it is admittedly a loss and a charge of ignorance for the future, or rather of the highest impiety, to trust in the powers of demons;

and with God being grieved and rendering them powerless, it is no less ignorant to be deceived by earthly aids. But rather one must ward off His wrath with prayers and repentance; for He is "merciful "and good and repents of the evils" according to what is written. Do not rejoice, Israel, nor be glad like the peoples, because you have committed fornication against your God; you have loved gifts upon every threshing floor of wheat. The threshing floor and the winepress did not know them, and the wine deceived them. They did not dwell in the Lord's land; Ephraim dwelt in Egypt, and in Assyria they will eat unclean things. They did not pour out wine to the Lord, and they were not pleasing to him; their sacrifices are to them like bread of mourning, all who eat them will be defiled, because their breads for their souls will not enter the house of the Lord. To the to the herds of the nations, since indeed they suffer from the greatest folly; for they had admittedly gone astray; it was the custom for those beginning their farming and about to plow the earth to offer sacrifices to the demons, and to ask from them the fruitfulness of the fields; and reaping again, when the season called for it, and indeed also putting the grape cluster in the wine-presses, they poured libations, they sacrificed to the seasons, they sang the wine-press songs, offering up their thank-offerings, and they continued rejoicing and making merry.

God finds fault with those of Israel for doing this. For he clearly insists that he should not rejoice, just as the rest of the nations. For what reason? For those who were completely ignorant of the God who is by nature and truly is, but were rather born in error, perhaps have a not implausible reason for their weakness or ignorance; but Israel, though instructed by the law, and having known the Master of all, has committed fornication into apostasy. Therefore, he might be understood as being reasonably under a heavier charge, and having an inescapable accusation of impiety; for knowing the will of his Lord, he neglected it, he did not do it. He shall therefore be beaten with many stripes; while the one who did not know, and then did not do it, will be beaten with few, according to the Savior's voice. Therefore, do not rejoice as the peoples, he says. For they have gone astray from the womb; but you, having been instructed by the law, have committed fornication away from God. And what was the manner of his fornication? He loved gifts, he says, not from God rather, but those

from the heifers and Baal; although they give nothing to those who ask. And for what things did he seek gifts from them? On every threshing-floor of wheat. For it seemed unholy and foolish to them to ask for the fruitfulness of the fields, as I said, from their empty objects of worship. So, then, did Israel seek gifts from the idols;

and did his requests turn out according to his prayer? Not at all; for the threshing-floor and the wine-press did not know them, and the wine failed them. And it is not debatable to any of the more eager students that there were famines in Samaria, and crop failures and long droughts. He therefore missed his hope, not receiving his requests; and in addition to this, they also departed from the holy land, and entered Egypt, as into a land fortified and with even more gods; for there were countless objects of worship in Egypt, and a certain wonderful reputation for power among those who served them, as being able to accomplish all things easily through magical experiences. They therefore gave up dwelling in the land chosen by God, and they exchanged it for the land of idols. But even if they have done this, they will go to the Assyrians. They did not pour out wine to the Lord. For having gathered the fruit of the vine into the wine-presses, they poured out the first-fruits to the demons, and not to God who gave it. And they also offered up loaves, as a first-fruit of the harvest. But the thing will become for them a pollution and a profanation, he says, and what is brought will be reckoned as bread of mourning, that is, detestable and profane and hateful. For what reason? For the law made unclean the one who approached a corpse; approaching, that is, either through blood relationship, or even through physical contact itself.

It was therefore necessary for those who were near in kinship, or friends of the deceased, to be defiled in their mourning, attending to the corpse, and wishing to perform the customary rites over it; and all things which they happened to touch were unclean. Therefore, the bread of mourning is that which is set before those who mourn a corpse for food; and to taste of it seemed utterly dreadful to those who had practiced avoiding the pollution associated with a corpse. Therefore, defiled and rejected, he says, are the loaves themselves, which might be brought as a first-fruit of the harvests, and those who eat them will be defiled. But they will be useful rather for their souls, that is, for their own eating. For they will not enter the house of the Lord. But one must know that the law also commanded to bring a first-fruit of the harvest, both sheaves and bread, as a sacrifice. But Israel transferred what was for the glory of God to the carved images, even though God says clearly, ”My glory I will not give to another, nor my praises to my carved images. Therefore it is necessary to ask from God the things that give life, and to confess him as the giver and provider of all bodily and spiritual fruitfulness to us.

for there is no other besides him who sends rain, according to what is written, but by his commands, the seasonal crops also spring up in the fields, and we are filled with the blessing from above, being nourished by the spiritual bread, and having the wine from heaven, ”which gladdens the heart of man. Having chosen to think these things, we will inhabit the holy land. For we will be with God, and we will not eat unclean things among the Assyrians. For ”the world-rulers of this age, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”

feed in uncleanness those who approach them. What will you do on the day of a festival and on the days of the feast of the Lord? For since, he says, you have arrived at this point of ill-counsel and impiety, and have become so abominable and hateful, what manner of help will there be for you? or what will you have done and planned to escape so terrible and savage a calamity, when my festival is celebrated, with war consuming those who have caused grief? Therefore God names his own feast, clearly the time in which Israel would be required to pay the penalty for the sins committed against him. Therefore one must not simply and thoughtlessly do what seems best, and take pleasure in present things, being carried away by desires into offending God, but rather to look around at what is to come, and to hasten to escape the things that come from divine wrath.

For in this way we will be wise, and knowledgeable of what is beneficial. Therefore behold, they shall go forth from the misery of Egypt, and Memphis shall receive them, and Michmash shall bury them. And destruction shall inherit their silver; thorns shall be in their tents. When the Babylonians were ravaging Samaria, those who were strong enough to escape barely fled to the land of the Egyptians; but also when they captured Jerusalem itself, in the times of the prophecy of Jeremiah, a very small number were left from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin. These entered into Egypt, although God was commanding them through the voice of Jeremiah, and saying clearly, that they should not go to the land of the Egyptians, having abandoned the land that bore them, and he had threatened that if they should do this against his will, they would fall into equal, or even more burdensome things. For what is written is as follows: "Thus says the Lord: If you set your face "toward Egypt and enter there to dwell, the sword "which you fear on its account "will find you in Egypt. For since, taking courage in the help of the Egyptians, they opposed the Babylonians, for this reason being grieved, after the capture of Jerusalem and Samaria, the Babylonians turned against the Egyptians, and conquered them without a struggle, then it happened that the remnants of the Jews perished along with the Egyptians.

And indeed those who were strong enough to escape the misery in Egypt, barely fled beyond, going to the land of the Arcadians, and they dwelled in Memphis and Michmash as in a most fortified city; and this is another neighboring city, surely, and more distinguished than the others; and there they died, having clearly passed long periods of time, and not being able to return to Judea. And again the prophet Jeremiah spoke thus: "Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I am setting "my face to destroy all the remnant "in Egypt, and they shall fall by the sword and by famine, "they shall fail, from the least to the greatest, and they shall be for "a reproach and for destruction and for a curse. And I will "visit upon those dwelling in the land of Egypt as I visited "upon Jerusalem with sword and with famine and with "death, and there will be no one saved of the remnant "of Judah who are sojourning in the land of Egypt, to return "to the land of Judah, for which they hope with their souls "to return there; they shall not return. Do you hear that they died in to Egypt, and there the divine wrath was brought upon them? When therefore, shunning the misery in Egypt, they should arrive at Memphis as if to a famous city, it will receive them, but in Machmas they will die. For this is the meaning of "Machmas will bury them.

When therefore God pursues, no one will save the one in danger, but wherever one might go, there he will encounter His anger. And he says these things will happen to them in Egypt. But since they have also grieved him with their own wealth; "For their silver and their gold they made for themselves idols," he says; for this reason justly destruction will inherit it, that is, it will be an inheritance for the destroyer. For he calls the Assyrian "destruction," as one who has savagely and cruelly destroyed and fought. and thorns, he says, will grow in their tents. for the cities have come to such a state of desolation as to become full of thorns; and this is a sign of land impassable and uncultivated. When therefore one does not use rightly the good things given by God, whether physical or spiritual, nor indeed for His glory, but thoughtlessly does things by which he might give offense, and is caught grieving Him, he will depart into destruction, and will be an inheritance for the plundering Satan, and a dwelling-place of thorns, that is, of savage and misplaced desires; and he would not have cultivated fruits in his mind. And heretics, before others, would suffer this, impiously spending the use of reason to lead brothers astray; and "to strike their weak conscience," although Christ suffered for us.

The days of vengeance have come, the days of your recompense have come, and Israel will be afflicted like the prophet who is out of his mind, the man who is spirit-borne. It was the custom of those of Israel to cast off the words of the holy prophets, and to consider the things from God as nothing, although many times He had foretold that terrible things would happen to them. And indeed the God of all has addressed the prophet Ezekiel somewhere saying, "Son of man, behold the rebellious house of Israel, they are saying, 'The vision which he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies of times far off.' Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord Adonai: None of my words which I shall speak shall be prolonged any more; for I will speak a word and I will do it, says the Lord Adonai.'" He says something like this here also; for he says the days of vengeance have come. It is as if he were to say, The judgment is near, and the contest is already at the very doors, disaster is a neighbor, and the war is before our eyes. The day of recompense is at hand.

And when you are afflicted, he says, O Israel, every false prophet in you will certainly be afflicted with you, and in like manner will partake of the judgment, the man who is out of his mind, that is, the inspired and mad one, and who has lost his senses, whom you have considered to be spirit-borne. For along with the others have perished both the priests of the high places, and the worshipers of idols, and all who were false speakers and false prophets in Israel. For since they pretended to be mad when making their prophecies, and feigned to be inspired, for this reason he also calls such a one a man who is out of his mind. By the multitude of your iniquities your madness was multiplied. He speaks of a multitude of iniquity as it were, the manifold and multiform religion of Israel. For in one word, they were deceived, and all were idolaters. But they divided the ways of their error, some brought their rites to some, others to others, and for those who came to them they made false prophecies. For some served the heifers; others Chemosh, the idol of Moab; and others Astarte. And there were those who served both Baal and the host of heaven. For this reason God reproached them, saying through the voice of Jeremiah, "For according to

the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah. For each city among them confessed to having its own god. This very thing he rightly calls a multitude of iniquity.

For it is truly an iniquity and an outrage against God, to depart from him, and to adhere to wood and stones, and "to the by the works of their own hands," as it is written. But by madness he means divination. Therefore, since a multitude of iniquity is found in you, he says, for this reason madness has also multiplied in you, that is, false divination, with each of the false diviners likely having his own way by which he prophesied. Truly, therefore, it is absurd and unlawful and profane, and not incapable of grieving and terribly provoking the God of all, to love to adhere to the false words of those accustomed to speak things "from their own heart," as it is written, and not "from the mouth of the Lord. Therefore Christians must guard against this transgression. For to suffer from such things would be fitting only for the servants of demons. A watchman of Ephraim is a prophet with God, a crooked snare over all his ways. It is the custom of divine Scripture to call watchmen those who preside over and are set before the people, and are lifted up high on account of honor, whom one might also look to, if indeed he wished to live a straight and blameless life. And indeed, God said somewhere to the blessed prophet Ezekiel, "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel, and you will hear a word from my mouth, and you will warn them from me.

For it is the custom for such watchmen not only to set forth their own life to those being instructed as a model of virtue or lawful conduct, but also to introduce useful things and to interpret rightly what is pleasing to God. But those under good watchmen, going straight toward what is fitting, were saved; but those assigning the inclination of their own mind to wicked and vile men, continued "deceiving and being deceived," and had a mind alienated from all good work and true knowledge. He now also accuses those from the tribe of Ephraim, that is, Israel, of having suffered this. For, he says, a prophet with a god has become a watchman for him. It is as if he were saying, for each of the falsely named gods, there is also a particular false prophet. For as I have already said, they were divided into a manifold error. And some have served Baal; others Chemosh, that is, Baal-peor; and in each sacred precinct something was fabricated, and there was a man-made statue and image, and attending each was a particular false prophet. And the manner of divination among them was varied. And they simply belched out to those who came to them whatever seemed useful and necessary. Therefore, since a particular prophet with each of the falsely named gods has become a watchman for those from Ephraim, for this reason they have now turned aside unrestrainedly to everything that is most shameful. This has become for him also a crooked snare.

For it was not possible for those who had slipped into such great polytheism ever to be directed and to be able to walk rightly, so as to have a particular prophet with each god; and in addition, to make a watchman of one who carries them away from piety toward God and casts them into the pits of destruction. Therefore those who wish to live lawfully must pay attention not simply to those who teach, nor to those who speak things from their own

heart, but to those for whom the divine and heavenly grace bears witness to the genuineness of their love for God. Therefore Christ also says, ”Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. For speaking truly, we say that the inventors and leaders of unholy heresies differ little from wild beasts, ”Those who devour Israel with their whole mouth. For they consume, as it were, the souls of the more simple, crushing them with the teeth of deceit. Let it be said, therefore, also by us, ”God will break their teeth in their mouth; the Lord has shattered the molars of the lions. They will be regarded as nothing, like water that passes by; he will bend his bow until they are weakened. Like melting wax they will be destroyed. They have planted madness in the house of the Lord. They were corrupted according to the days of the hill; he will remember his iniquity, he will avenge his sins.

Here too, by madness he usually means false divination. And the house of the Lord He names Israel. And so it is said somewhere through the voice of Jeremiah to the Synagogue of the Jews, as from the person of God ”Have you not called me as a house and a father and the guide of your virginity? He is astonished, therefore, at the magnitude of the frenzy, and the excess of their absurd undertakings. For they have reached such a point of impiety, he says, as to establish madness in the house of the Lord, that is, false prophecy, and to transgress what is forbidden by the divine laws. And he says well ”they have established”; for what was once dared has not ceased, but the matter of impiety has, as it were, become fixed and entrenched. For Israel has not ceased having false diviners and false prophets. But since they have dared such things, being justly called to account for what they did, they were destroyed in the days of the hill. For He will remember their iniquity, and will avenge all their sins. And what this is, ”they were destroyed in the days of the hill,” come, let us briefly recall. Something of this sort is written in the book of Judges; I will make the whole narrative cursorily, as is possible, and I will condense it, since it is rather long. ”In those days,” he says, ”there was no king ”in Israel; a man did what was right in his own eyes.

”And there was a young man from Bethlehem, of the tribe of Judah, and he was ”a Levite, and he was sojourning there. And the man went ”from Bethlehem, the city of Judah, to sojourn wherever he might find ”a place, and he came to the hill country of Ephraim, and to the house of Micah, ”to make his way. And Micah said to him, ’Where ”do you come from?’ And the Levite said to him, ’I am from Bethlehem ”of Judah, and I am going to live wherever I might find a place.’ ”And Micah said to him, ’Stay with me, and be a father and a priest to me, ”and I will give you ten pieces of silver ”a day and a change of clothes and things for your life.’ ”And the Levite went, and began to sojourn with the ”man. And the young man was with him as one of his sons. ”And Micah consecrated the Levite, ”and he became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Micah, then, was an idolater, and yet he hired the one from the blood of Levi, and made him a servant of a graven image, and assigned him to the services of the idols. And what happened after this? The sacred scripture again spoke thus: ”And in those days the tribe of Dan was seeking for itself ”an inheritance to dwell in, because an inheritance had not fallen to it until ”that day among the tribes of Israel.

Then selecting five men, they persuaded them to go before them, and to spy out the land which they might be able to take and make their own inheritance. And they came, he says, ”to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. While they were in the house of Micah, they recognized the Levite, as their kinsman, because he used their language. For since they were Hebrews, he spoke as a Hebrew. And having asked the reason, and learned how Micah had hired him, though he was from the tribe of Levi, and had appointed him a priest of his own objects of worship, instead of sympathizing with him as a captive and a deceived and wandering man, they immediately slipped into the snares of deceit, and thought it right for him to speak, inquiring of the idol if their enterprise would turn out according to their mind, I mean the conquering of the land they had come to spy out. And he spoke what seemed good as from God. And when the messengers had spied out the land, they reported to those who had sent them that it was good and fertile, and could be taken without sweat. And when those from the tribe of Dan heard such words, six hundred in number, being in arms, went up. And they themselves also came to the house of Micah.

”And the five men,” he says, ”who had gone to spy out the land ”of Laish answered and said to their brothers, ’Do you know that ”in this house there is an Ephod and Teraphim and a graven image ”and a molten image? And now know what you will do.’” Now Ephod is interpreted as redemption, and Teraphim again as release or one who heals them. For it was an idol, having a false notion about itself, that it was able to heal some. For sometimes the children of the Greeks invest handmade objects with such opinions. Having learned this, those from Dan take up the graven image, and they also persuade the one from the bloodline of Levi to follow them, departing from Micah. And having drawn up for battle and conquered, and having taken the land in hand, they built a city, which they named Dan, inscribing upon it the name of their forefather. For they were of the tribe and blood of Dan, as I said. And having also set up the idol in it, they brought sacrifices, and along with the land they also acquired a god. To this their mind was brought down by foolishness. For this reason God was henceforth indignant, and very rightly so, as having been insulted.

Then, when it was necessary for all those of Israel to consider those from Dan as enemies and most hostile, and to demand an account for their impiety towards God, they perhaps even colluded with them, and saw fit to praise them, as having not sinned at all. And what wages came to them for this indifference, come, let us say in order. When Israel remained without a king, a certain Levite man, dwelling in the hill country of Ephraim, took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem. And when the woman ran away to her father, the Levite followed; and he persuades her again to return with him, and to be at home from then on. When this had happened, while going along the middle of the road, he lodged with the woman in Gibeah, which is interpreted as ”hill. Now those from the tribe of Benjamin inhabited Gibeah, that is, the hill. And when he was lodging with a certain old man, lawless men from the tribe of Benjamin, coming in the middle of the night, as it is written, wanted to force both the Levite himself and others to lewdness. But having been shamed with difficulty out of the excess of their absurdity, they seize the Levite’s concubine, and indeed

they killed her, committing lewd acts against the woman all night long. And he, having divided the body into pieces, distributed it to those of the tribes of Israel, making manifest both the sin of those from the tribe of Benjamin against strangers, and their unbridled licentiousness;

and that they had imitated the sins of the Sodomites. From this, all Israel, being indignant, was gathered together, and they marched against the tribe of Benjamin in Gibeah, that is, in the hill; and so they destroyed it, although it was very populous, so that very few who were saved barely escaped into the wilderness. And not a few of the fighting men from all Israel also perished. But God would not have allowed those of Israel to clash with each other, if those from Dan had not honored the graven image from Micah's house, and those from the other tribes had not been unreasonably quiet. Something of this sort also happened when God was grieved by the golden calves. For the two tribes of Judah and the ten of Ephraim clashed with each other; and as in the days of the hill, countless numbers fell, and the defeated were destroyed along with the victors, as divine wrath called them to this. And these things were done when Amaziah was reigning over Judah, and Joash over Israel, who so captured Jerusalem as to also tear down a part of the wall for four hundred cubits. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, and I saw their fathers as the first-ripe fruit on the fig tree; they went in to Baal-peor, and were estranged into shame, and the beloved became as the detested. That their being destroyed did not happen to them in vain, but in justice, he now attempts to teach.

For I, he says, chose them, as one finding grapes in a desert, and as one plucking a ripe fig from a fig tree; for I brought them out of the land of the Egyptians, which was entirely idolatrous and deluded, and suffering a great lack of every good thing. What then of the chosen ones, those snatched by my hand? They have attached themselves to Baal-peor, they have departed from intimacy with me into shame. This is the meaning of "they were estranged into shame. And he calls shame the Baal-peor. for he was in the most uncomely form of all the others, and indecent to behold. Therefore, loving to be with God, and honoring him as one who has called and chosen, and as one who has snatched from a desert and thorn-bearing land of the condition in this world, as having loved a grape and an early fig, we will preserve unbreakable the union with him, that is, clearly, the spiritual one. But if there should be some turning away to what is uncomely, and to what grieves him, we will in no way differ from the nations. for we who were loved will be as those who were detested who also have been reasonably hated. "For the righteousness, he says, of the righteous man "will not deliver him, in the day that he sins. and very wisely the blessed Paul writes "Therefore let him who "thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. Ephraim has flown away like a bird.

Such birds as are not tame and domesticated, when caught are kept, and delight their owners. but if an opportunity to escape should arise, without delay it departs, and is carried in swift flight to its accustomed habitat. Therefore Israel was hunted in a certain way through Moses like a bird, and was brought to God, and was in a good state of prosperity, being instructed by the law and enjoying the care and providence from above. But it flew away

again to what it was in the beginning, all but escaping the hand of its captor. Or you will also understand what was said in another way. Many birds, not bearing the local winters, migrate to other lands, untaught, having the knowledge of what is beneficial, according to the will of the Creator. But in the same way Ephraim also, fearing the calamities from the war, flew away to the Egyptians. Their glories are from births and pangs and conceptions; because even if they should raise their children, they will be made childless from among men; because woe also is to them. Israel fled to the Egyptians, having left the one who bore it, and called upon the ruler of the country to assist it. Was it because God was weak, and not able to save them? Not at all; for the divine is all-powerful, and not unable to ward off the war of the Assyrians.

It happened that those from Ephraim, that is, Israel, suffered such things, because, having abandoned God the Savior, and mocking as stale the idea of being proud in him and in him alone, they thought that on their own they would become terrible and invincible to their enemies, because they had expanded into a great multitude, and had an innumerable abundance of children. For their women gave birth according to the promise, and in the order of blessing, Moses having said before, ”There shall not be a barren man or a barren woman among the sons of ”Israel. But it was utterly foolish, on account of a multitude of bodies, to disregard the help from God; but they should rather have understood, thinking rightly, that with him and through him ”one will chase a thousand, and two will move ten thousand. Therefore, he says, they pride themselves not in God rather, but make their glory the births and conceptions and pangs of their women. Let them know, therefore, that even if they should bear sons, and even if they should labor raising children, they will repent, having labored in vain. For they will in every way and altogether lament their childlessness. And the Babylonian sword will suffice to easily destroy all of their offspring. Because woe also is to them. This is as if he should say, When God casts woe upon them, who will bestow cheerfulness? ”For if he shuts up a man, ”who can open? as it is written.

”It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; and it is necessary to appease the one who has been grieved with gentleness, and to seek salvation from him, trusting in no one, but rather crying out, ”I will boast in God my Savior; ”the Lord God is my strength. My flesh is from them. As God was threatening and indeed saying concerning Ephraim, that is, all of Israel, that it would be utterly destroyed, root and all, and would lament its childlessness, and would labor in vain in the rearing of its children, the prophet withdraws himself from the judgment, and prays to be outside of the wrath, saying My flesh is from them. and you will understand ”from them,” instead of far from them. For outside of them and far away, he says, may I myself be, and my entire race. For sometimes ”flesh” also signifies race. For thus we will correctly interpret what was said through the voice of Paul. For he wrote thus: ”But I say to you, the Gentiles: inasmuch therefore as I ”am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry, if somehow ”I might provoke my own flesh to jealousy and save some of them. It is a custom for the holy prophets, when they often see the accusations of some to be terrible and unbearable, to then separate themselves from their abomination.

And so the prophet Jeremiah, seeing the Jews had fallen into so many accusations and had offended God, says, ”O Lord ”Almighty, I did not sit in the council of those who jest, ”but I was in awe before your hand; I sat alone, ”because I was filled with bitterness. Therefore, we must indeed marvel at the blessed Paul, when he commands us, saying, ”Keep yourself pure, and do not share in the sins of others. Every pious person, therefore, might reasonably say concerning those who offend God and are about to be punished, My flesh is from them. Ephraim, as I saw, has presented his children as prey, and Ephraim to bring out his children for the slaughter. And now the prophet pronounces Ephraim, that is, Israel, wretched, saying that he himself has become the cause of his own childlessness and incurable disaster. For as I have seen, he says, both from your words, O Master, and from the events themselves, Ephraim himself has presented his own children for hunting and for slaughter. And he would not blame others for this, nor would he cry out against the divine wrath, if he should choose to think reasonably; but he will rather blame his own ill counsel and apostasy. For since he has grieved not moderately the God who defends and saves, he has all but willingly handed over his own seed with his own hand to the savagery of the nations, and has presented it for deportation and captivity.

For this is ”for hunting,” and indeed also ”for slaughter,” that is, for massacre; for some of those from Israel the Babylonians killed, and others they carried away to their own land. Therefore, when we sin, thinking rightly we will blame ourselves rather, and not the divine wrath. For we have despised what is fitting, and have become slothful concerning what is pleasing to God. But it is necessary for the insolent and unbridled one to be punished, the one who all but says to the Master of all, ”Depart from me, I do not wish to know your ways. Give them, O Lord; what will you give them? Give them a childless womb and dry breasts. If indeed, he says, those of Israel are not to know God, but are rather to be carried away toward a useless and unprofitable hope, and to think that they will overcome their enemies because of the multitude of their children, and that the fighting race among them is numerous, and for this reason it is not necessary for them to be helped by your hand, let the women among them not give birth at all. For this is the childless womb. And even if they should give birth, let them not be raised, that is, let them be destroyed before their time, and before they come to puberty, let the offspring fall.

For with the arrogance that is in them from this cause thus being cut away, and the hope in the multitude of fighters being finally removed, they will have recourse to your mercy, and will acknowledge you as Savior and redeemer. But the prophet says such things even now out of love for God. And at the same time he seeks both the glory of his own Master, and the return out of necessity of those of the blood of Israel, if they do not have the fruit of a good choice. But a childless womb and dry breasts might be fittingly understood also for the workers of evil, and for everyone who deceives and leads astray from the straight path those who are accustomed to walk uprightly, in faith I mean, ”and who go straight in their ways. For their mind giving birth to nothing, neither false word nor spurious doctrine, nor could they nourish in error their own children, I mean those in respect to learning, with the breasts of those who practice evil being dry churches, they would not become mothers of the

deceived. All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them because of the wickedness of their doings; I will cast them out of my house, I will no longer love them. Again the God of all begins to recount the accusations, and he remembers Gilgal. This is a city, in which the handmade idols were worshipped in a most terrible and strange manner. And what he says is something like this again.

For in many ways those of Israel are abominable; but one might see the excess of the worthlessness within them, having considered Gilgal. There I have seen all their wickedness, there I have hated them, not because of the place; for that is foolish; but rather hating the things that happened in it. Therefore, he says, I will banish them, and I will drive them from my court, and I will cast them out of my household. And having hated them justly, I will henceforth oppose them, and I would not change my mind again to choose ever to love those who have committed such sins. But I suppose someone will say, 'How then did he bring them back to Judea from the land of the Assyrians, or how did he release them from captivity?' Was he not changed to gentleness, and deemed them worthy of forbearance and love? Yes, I myself would say that the statement is true. For they have been shown mercy out of gentleness, admittedly. But those against whom the word was spoken went away into captivity, and have died in their judgment, after a long time had passed. And just as he promised through Moses in Egypt to those of Israel, to bring all of them into the land which he swore to their fathers, but some did not enter because they were disobedient, 'whose limbs also fell in the wilderness,' but rather the land was inherited by those born of them; so you will understand it here also.

For those against whom the word was spoken have died, but at the appointed times those from among them returned to Judea, when Cyrus reluctantly permitted it, when their seventieth year of dwelling in a foreign land was fulfilled. But they will be cast out of the house of God, or rather have been cast out, both those who dared terrible things against Christ, and impieties beyond all reason, and those who loosed a bitter and blasphemous tongue against him; and they will endure an unchangeable wrath. For they are caught having behaved insolently not against one of the prophets, but against the very Lord of the prophets. Therefore, with their other sins which they have committed against themselves being passed over in silence, one might see all their wickedness and the excess of their depravity, as being in those things alone that were done against Christ. All their rulers are disobedient. Ephraim is afflicted; his roots are dried up, he shall bear no more fruit; wherefore even if they should bear children, I will slay the desired fruit of their womb. God will reject them, because they did not listen to him, and they shall be wanderers among the nations. He says that no one good, that is, obedient and tractable, was found among them, not small, not great, not a leader, not one under authority and subordinate.

For this reason he strongly affirms that it must utterly perish, as if uprooted, having henceforth become like withered and stricken trees, which need only to be cut down, as if openly confessing their fruitlessness. And that it is fitting for fruitless trees to be cut down, the Savior himself also taught, commanding that the fig tree which had no fruit, as a type of

the Jewish Synagogue, must be cut down; 'For why,' he says, 'does it even make the ground useless?' Therefore Israel, having been found fruitless, he says, would rightly be cut down; for it will not produce fruit. But even if this should happen, he says, I will destroy what is born from them. And this is the desired fruit of their womb. But I think it is also necessary to consider that point, what the matter of the statement is; and why does he say, that all their rulers are disobedient? For why at all did it require the submission of the rulers? Therefore the statement has a reference to a certain history of the ancients. And what this is, I will say again. Israel made a calf in the wilderness, when Moses was absent; for he had gone up on Mount Sinai, to receive the law. Then having come down, he was greatly grieved by the trespass, he smashed the calf, and he in a way appeased an indignant God by his own sincerity and virtue. For he fell down and begged, saying, "If you will forgive them "their sin, forgive it;

but if not, blot me also out of "this your book, which you have written. And God granted to the prophet clemency for all, and indeed he said, "I am merciful "to them according to your word. Do you see how much the love of God of the one presiding profited Israel, and one being sufficient on behalf of all to persuade God, through submission and obedience? Therefore he reasonably accuses Israel as having completely turned aside. and then having none of the leaders among them, to rebuke those who stumble, to turn them from error, that is, one able by his own brilliance in manner and virtue to turn away wrath, God having been entreated, just as indeed happened in the times of Moses, for this reason also he says they will be cast out and will be wanderers among the nations. This happened to them both then, when they were carried away to the Assyrians, and now no less, being detested for their outrageous deeds against Christ. For those from Israel continue in the world homeless and as strangers everywhere, and having no city. "For I will scatter them to every "wind," God also said through the holy prophets. If, therefore, we have a care and concern for intimacy with God, let us submit our neck to him, and let us approach Christ who says from good obedience, "Come to me "all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you "rest. Take my yoke upon you.

For thus we will be both fruitful and unstricken, our root not withering, our fruit not falling to nothing, not wanderers and far from God, but near him and with him, and having the city that is above and in the heavens, the mother of the first-born, the nurse of the saints, the pure dwelling-place of the spirits above. A luxuriant vine is Israel, whose fruit is abundant; according to the multitude of his fruits he multiplied altars, and according to the goods of his land he built pillars. They have divided their hearts, now they shall be made to disappear; he himself shall tear down their altars, their pillars shall suffer. Having said that the roots of Ephraim were diseased, and that he would be fruitless and like those who have never borne at all, since the savagery of the Assyrians consumes what is born, he shows necessarily both what he was of old, and that he had been fruitful, when he wisely partook of the life in the law. For being seen by the surrounding nations like a beautiful and luxuriant vine, he was reasonably admired. And somewhere concerning it the blessed David says in the book of Psalms to the Savior God of all, "You brought a vine out of Egypt,

you cast out nations and ”planted it; you prepared the way before it. It ”stretched out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the ”rivers. For it was planted ”on a horn ”and in a fertile place,” according to the voice of the prophet.

But it did not produce grapes, but rather brought forth thorns. For with the multitude of good things given to it, it showed an injustice as it were concurrent and equal; and it is clear that this was against God. For he multiplied altars and built pillars; and as much as he abounded in the good things from above, so much was he eager for profanation, by worshipping demons and raising altars and as it were dividing his own heart into a polytheistic error. But he says these things will not be so; whence? For he himself will tear down their altars, and their pillars will suffer, that is, being smashed and pulled down. And you will wisely refer ”he himself” either to the God who has power over all, or to the person of the Babylonian, as has already been shown many times. For it happened in the cities in Samaria that the temples themselves were burned down along with them, and the carved images were plundered. Therefore we ought, rejoicing in what we might have from God, to kindle the thank-offerings, and not in the breadth having slipped from cheerfulness, to be carried away somewhere toward what is discordant with him; but rather to seek and to hasten to accomplish, and very eagerly, the boasts of virtue, not being divided toward the passions in the world, and submitting the neck to Satan. For what Christ said is true, ”No one can serve two masters;

for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other; but if we are divided, we will also be ”portions for foxes,” according to the voice of the psalmist; and we shall be in every way and altogether in want of him who knows how to make us glad. Therefore now they will say, We have no king, because we did not fear the Lord. And what will the king do for us? Speaking words, false pretexts, he will make a covenant. He said not only that their altars would be shaken, and their pillars would suffer affliction, but adds that they will also repent and lament over their own evil counsels. And having missed their hope, and been deceived by the falsehoods of their rulers, late and with difficulty will they understand. For those among them who administered the thrones of the kingdom used to say that the golden heifers and the security from other idols would be sufficient for their aid, even if they did not have the divine law, even if they did not choose to do the things through Moses. But experience has shown them to be speaking falsely. For they have seen those who long ago arranged such things for them, and spoke foolishly, fall under the hand of enemies. For this reason they say, We have no king, because we did not fear the Lord.

For behold, behold, they say, there is no one to defend us, that is, to stand against the invasions of the Babylonians; but all have become weak, the leaders are undone and have fallen. And the pretext of the weakness for them and for us is not having feared the Lord. What then is the benefit from the rulers? he says. There was nothing then in them, except false words, and the vanity of covenants, that is, of promises. For it is a custom in the divine scripture to call promises covenants. It is wise therefore and full of all praise, to trust rather

in God, and not to be carried away by the words of deceivers to the point of offending God, but rather prudently to depart from wrath before experiencing it, and not to lament late after suffering, coming with difficulty to unprofitable afterthought. Judgment shall spring up as couch grass upon the fallow of a field for the calf of the house of On. Couch grass grows in fields, especially in unplowed and fallow ones, and it seizes, and very vigorously, the chance neighboring land. For it somehow spreads out widely, and is moreover difficult to combat for those who wish to check its ever-onward course beyond the adjacent lands. Judgment therefore, he says; and it is clear that it is from God himself; just as couch grass springs up on a fallow field for the calf of the house of On. It is as if he should say:

A decree of destruction and a punishing nod will be from me, and it will seize like couch grass upon the calf, that is, of the objects of worship of the existing temple in Bethel. For this is what the house of On signifies. For other interpreters have again rendered it, of the calf of the house of Bethel; but the Seventy, instead of the house of Bethel, have said the house of On. And we have already stated the reason above, but we will not hesitate to remind you. For the Egyptians in their myth-making said that the Apis was a child of the moon, and an offspring of the sun. And according to them, On is the sun. And the heifer which Jeroboam made was a type of the Apis among the Egyptians. Therefore, like couch grass seizing, he says, and overcoming all that lies nearby, judgment will come from me upon the calf of the house of On, that is, Bethel. For the divine is always all-powerful, and to its nods nothing will be able to resist. "For who will turn back the high hand? according to what is written. The inhabitants of Samaria shall sojourn, because his people mourned for him; and as they provoked him, they shall rejoice over his glory. Behold, he now makes clear the judgment that seizes the calf, and of couch grass punishment is wont to be extended, against whomever God wishes; and now he recalls a story, which it is necessary to tell;

for thus, and not otherwise, shall we understand what is prophesied. It was the custom for all idol-worshippers, when time was pressing and enemies were at hand, if they came to be in need of money, to lay hands even on the votive offerings in the sacred precincts. It is written, therefore, in the Books of Kings, that when the king of Syria was besieging the cities in Samaria, Menahem, who was at that time ruling over Israel, then being unable to oppose him with equal forces, sent an embassy to Pul, the king of the Assyrians, and with gifts persuaded him to come to his aid and to make the Syrian withdraw, which indeed was also accomplished. For that one took Damascus by force, and he also slays Ader himself. They say, then, that when a very great weight of gold was sought, matters came to such a necessity for Menahem that he even took one golden calf and sent it along with the ambassadors. And Israel indeed lamented, seeing sent away that which it considered to be a god. Yet he thought, consoling himself with cold reasonings, that it would be in greater and more splendid temples that the Babylonian would enthrone it. And besides these things, he was disposed to think that it would be worshipped also by more nations; for countless are the nations of the Persians and Medes. Menahem, therefore, sent the calf as if it were entirely of gold through and through; but Pul, upon taking it, smashed it to pieces;

for among them the object of worship is different, and they do not tolerate a calf. Then, they say, it was found not to be golden, but rather bronze underneath, gilded over with gold. From this, he says, the Assyrian laughed at Ephraim, that is, Menahem who was ruling from the tribe of Ephraim. And in addition to this, he despised the foolish counsels of Israel. Having therefore related the account of the history, that is, of the Hebrew tradition, let us now of necessity run through the text; for the composition of the saying is very difficult to perceive and extremely troublesome. He said therefore that the inhabitants of Samaria will sojourn; the word ”will sojourn,” instead of ”will be removed,” that is, they who are now in Samaria will be removed, he says; and he speaks of the calves, or the heifers. For they were sent away, as I said, to the Babylonians. And his people indeed mourned over them. But whose ”his”? Is it not clear that it is of the ”being,” that is, of Apis? Nevertheless, just as they were seen, he says, provoking and dishonoring it by sending it to others, so also they will rejoice over its glory. For they will think that it will be very much more famous, being worshipped by more nations. But they have missed their hope; for it was shattered, and it was an occasion of laughter for the Babylonians. Therefore their monument has suffered miserably according to the voice of the prophet himself.

And they provoked the calf, not that it was provoked in truth; for how could insensible matter have suffered this? But because the force of their undertakings would have angered it, if it were truly God and had the sensation to suffer the things that happened. For it was removed from him, and they carried it away bound to the Assyrians as a gift to king Jareb; in a gift Ephraim will receive, and Israel will be ashamed of its counsel. The prophetic word interprets itself for us. For what it has said obscurely, this it attempts to make clear. For the calf was removed from Israel, and having bound it; and the word is being witty; they carried it away as a gift to king Jareb, that is, to an avenger. For he was called for aid, and as it were to avenge Samaria which was being destroyed by the Syrians. But Pul will receive the calf as in a gift from Ephraim. And by Ephraim he means the king of Israel. Nevertheless, he says that Israel will be ashamed of its own counsels. For because, as I said, it had turned away from the all-powerful God, and chose rather to worship calves, it was ridiculous, and was caught having fallen into an old-womanish and cold and unprofitable foolish counsel.

Therefore the prophet, or rather God, speaks the truth, if he should say through of the voice of the saints concerning those who have served the works of their own hands, ”Behold that their heart is ashes and they go astray. But the saying would also be fitting for those who pervert the correct doctrines of the Church. For just as the heifer, being ground to powder, exposed the foolish counsel of Israel, so too their doctrines, being ground down by investigations and shattered by the power of the truth, will be for the shame and dis- grace of those who composed them, and impiously devised them, and most foolishly receive them into their mind and heart. Samaria has cast off her king like a twig upon the face of the water, and the high places of On, the sins of Israel, shall be destroyed; thorns and thistles shall come up on their altars. This again would easily show both the instability and the unseemliness of the manner of those of Israel, that is, of those in Samaria, even concerning those whom they supposed to be gods. And it is no wonder. For those who impiously insulted

the one and true God, God by nature, with apostasies and with running away to everything that is most shameful, how could they have become genuine concerning many and falsely-named gods made of stones or wood? He says, therefore, that the calf was cast off by those in Samaria, the one in glory among them of both God and king;

and that it was cast off in such a way, as if a twig, having fallen into the eddies of the waters, would then be carried away to wherever seemed best to those pushing it away. And that the shrines will perish along with their objects of worship, and the altars will be destroyed, and they will become places of thorns, with their whole land having been ravaged—how could it be doubtful? But he calls the altars the sins of Israel, and very appropriately, as they were impiously raised as a memorial of their impiety toward God; and again by On, he named Apis, that is, the heifers in Bethel and Dan, for whose glory the altars also were. Therefore, what God does not establish, this will in every way and altogether be destroyed. And I suppose that what was clearly said through another prophet indicates something of this sort: "They shall build, and I will tear down. And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us. The carved images were not worshipped in the two cities alone, I mean Dan and Bethel, but here were the golden heifers, and on the mountains and the hills, the objects of worship of the neighboring nations: Baal, Beelphegor, Astarte, and Chemosh. Therefore, through these words he indicates that not only will the altars of On be shaken down, that is, of Apis, or of the heifers, but that in every way and altogether the shrines on the hills and mountains will also fall.

For their affairs will be reduced to such a state of misery and terror, that they would choose rather to be under the mountains and hills themselves, than to live to see what they were necessarily, and not willingly, to suffer. But it must be known that Christ himself, announcing to the Jews the calamities that would be brought upon them because of their outrages against him, used the same words. "For then," he says, "you will say to the mountains, Cover us; and "to the hills, Fall on us. For evils that have reached their limit, and the excesses of terrors, although death is bitter, sometimes show it to be most desirable to the many. Therefore, indeed, to the very mountains and hills, in which were the false worships, and where the crimes of impiety against God were committed, he says they will all but say, Fall on us, and anticipate the savagery of the Babylonian sword, and the inglorious and unbearable misery of the captivity. From the time of the hills, Israel has sinned; there they stood. War shall not overtake them on the hill; he has come to chasten them for the children of iniquity; and peoples shall be gathered against them when they are chastened for their two iniquities. He says that the apostasy which took place on the mountains and hills is older than the error concerning the heifers. And indeed, when the ten tribes had taken Samaria, having shaken off the yoke of the kingdom of Rehoboam, then Jeroboam brought in the heifers;

in But those in Jerusalem practiced the error in the mountains and on the hills, as Solomon yielded and consented to foreign women, at that time also raising altars and finally precincts for their objects of worship. From the time, therefore, that the hills were devised and the

playthings on them, and the false worships, from that time Israel has given offense. And this would be a not-unclear indication of the divine gentleness, which does not endure to punish the impious in a long time, but rather holds back and awaits perhaps the repentance of those who have gone astray. But they were harsher and were found suffering from even worse things. For they added to the hills also the inventions concerning the heifers. And sacrificing to demons in mountains and on hills, and seeming to be pious concerning vain things, perhaps they also thought to themselves, or rather even steadfastly believed, that they would be established in the certainty of prosperity, and would be better than their opponents, and unconquerable by their enemies. And this is a customary sickness for those who go astray. And indeed when they went down into Egypt, after Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonian, the prophet Jeremiah advised them to abstain from sacrificing to idols, so that there might be some mercy upon them from God who is able to save. But they claimed to have fallen into terrible things for this reason, that they had ceased being willing to fulfill the customary rites, and were convicted of neglecting the honor for vain things.

And it is written thus: ”And all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other ”gods, and all the women, a great assembly, and all ”the people dwelling in the land of Egypt, in the land of Pathros, ”answered Jeremiah, saying, 'The word which you have spoken to us in the name ”of the Lord, we will not hear. For we will surely do every ”word that shall go forth from our mouth, to burn incense ”to the queen of heaven, and to pour out libations to her, ”as we have done, we, and our fathers and our kings ”and our rulers in the cities of Judah, and ”outside Jerusalem; and we were filled with bread, and we were ”well, and saw no evil. And when we left off ”burning incense to the queen of heaven, we all were diminished, ”and perished by the sword and by famine.'” He accuses, therefore, those of Israel of both their frivolous talk and the rottenness of their hope, and he says concerning the hills, that there they stood, that is, that just as they themselves say, or rather think to themselves, by worshiping the carved images there, they have held the security of prosperity, and have stood in unshakable good things. And as they think again, that which is accustomed to cause any grief at all will not seize them on the hill, if they should choose to fulfill the customary rites for the carved images.

But he says they have been deceived and have missed the mark of their hope. For war has come upon them, being children of injustice, and through experience itself they will be disciplined, that their unbridled will is bitter. And who would they be, the ones through whom their disciplines will come? A very great assembly of enemies. For this is what it is: 'peoples will be gathered against them,' and the terrible things from the war will certainly happen, when they are disciplined for their two injustices. And what these are, he showed us more clearly through the voice of Jeremiah, saying, ”Heaven was astonished at this, and ”shuddered much more exceedingly, says the Lord, because two ”evil things my people have done: they have forsaken me, a spring ”of living water, and have dug for themselves broken cisterns, ”which will not be able to hold water. Ephraim is a heifer that has been taught to love victory, but I will come upon the beauty of her neck; I will mount Ephraim, and I will pass over Judah in silence. He compares Ephraim to a calf, very harsh and arrogant,

and not knowing how to be checked from its own impulse, which it might happen to make for any reason, that is, not tolerating being tamed, but rather always seeking to win, and to rush with unreproved impulses toward what seems good to it. But even if it is such, he says, it will yield and not willingly.

for it will be subdued by the with the onsets of calamities, God bringing them under the yoke, and all but working this Himself, and paralyzing the beauty of its neck, that is, the part in Israel that was especially rebellious. This was the kingdom among them, provoking to apostasy the peoples under their hand. Therefore it will be cast down, with God weighing it down. For I think this is what is indicated by "I will ride upon Ephraim. But he says providentially, that "I will pass over Judah in silence," instead of, "I will postpone Judah for a little while," not submitting them to punishments; not yet bringing on the things that come from wrath; but rather persevering, and gently yielding. And for what reason? For Ephraim, that is, the ten tribes, as I have already said, have completely inclined to choosing to fulfill the works of error; but the two tribes in Jerusalem, I mean Judah and Benjamin, have often been under upright and pious kings, who cast down the trinkets of idolatry, who persuaded them to live reasonably and lawfully; such was Amaziah son of Joash, a pious and just man; likewise Hezekiah, he too admired equally with the aforementioned, zealous and beloved of God. For this reason the ten tribes suffered captivity first;

but when the Babylonian campaigned against Jerusalem, he did no harm, but rather went away to his own land, a fugitive and in great fear, at which time also fell in one night by the hand of an angel one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians. Since God, then, is forbearing, and bears our weaknesses, let us not be indolent, nor be taken captive by falling back with regard to the need to fulfill the things that seem good and dear to Him. Jacob shall be strong against him. I said that the Assyrian, having campaigned against the multitude under his hand, and having removed all of Samaria, and having burned both the cities themselves and the temples, after this besieged Jerusalem, but in no way took it, since God was its defender. For by an angel in one night one hundred eighty-five thousand were destroyed. This, I think, he now announces beforehand, saying, "Jacob will be strong against him. Against whom, then? Is it not clear that it is against Rabshakeh, who was about to besiege? And he has called "Jacob" those of the blood of Jacob, I mean Judah and Benjamin. The phrase could also go, if one should choose, against all of Israel. Again, the meaning of the prophecy seems to refer us to the memory of an older matter, with God all but fulfilling the promise to the divine Jacob.

For when, as a man, he had wrestled with him in the night, beyond the torrent Jabbok, then when dawn finally came, and the day was breaking, God wished to depart, saying, "Let me go, for the dawn has come up," but he said he would not let him go, unless he blessed him, he heard then, "Because you have prevailed with God, and with men you will be powerful. This perhaps the word of prophecy signifies to us for the present, most clearly setting forth the phrase, "Jacob shall be strong against him. But observe the precision of the promise;

for not that Jacob will overpower the Assyrians, but ”he will be strong,” it says; for he was strong in God, not through himself.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator’s own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.