Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets (part 2 of 3)

Cyril of Alexandria (c. AD 376–444)

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Book 6

Sow for yourselves unto righteousness, reap unto the fruit of life, enlighten for yourselves the light of knowledge, seek the Lord until the fruits of righteousness come to you. The manner of exhortation is ever twofold. For either, by explaining the punishment that will befall those who wish to be indolent, we are accustomed to frighten them away and very sternly toward choosing to live splendidly; or, by announcing the honors prepared for the decent, we make those who are being instructed more eager for the need to proceed hereafter to the better and more lawful life. The God of all is doing something of this kind now as well. For he has threatened those who have gone astray with wars, the calamities, the leading into captivity to foreigners, the burnings of cities, the savagery of the combatants. But he does not stop the word of exhortation at this point, but behold, again, he also helps them in another way, and indeed, having forsaken what is useless and the cause of all their misery, he bids them choose what is by nature most beneficial, just like farmers, sowing for righteousness, and harvesting for the fruit of life. For as the blessed Paul writes, ”Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. And ”He who sows evil things will reap evil things,” according to what is written; but the worker of righteousness will be full of salvation and life, brilliant and enviable, and will gather in the wine ”that makes glad the heart of man.

And besides this, those who wish to be well-pleasing must house in their mind and heart the light of true knowledge, which those who worship ”the creation rather than the Creator” do not have. And how one might be able to sow for righteousness, and indeed also to harvest for the fruit of life, and to receive the brilliant light of knowledge, he himself indicated, adding: Seek the Lord until the fruits of righteousness come to you. And God would be sought by us, not locally; for this is foolish, since the divine is not in a place; but as in a disposition of soul, and in the eagerness of a mind that has assented to everything whatsoever that is pleasing to Him, and looks to a right and polished knowledge, which has no cause for reproach from any quarter. For having thus found him, we will also be enriched with the possession of other good things. Or does Christ not speak the truth when He says, ”Without me you can do nothing? But I think this is in no way doubtful to those accustomed to think rightly. For this is our possession of every good thing with God, and through God, and from God.

One might say, and very reasonably, that *sow for yourselves for righteousness* and what follows it, is not only for the worshipers of idols, but also for those who turn away from

the right faith, adhering rather to ”deceitful spirits, ”in the hypocrisy of demons, whose consciences are seared,” as, at any rate, the most wise Paul writes. These sow indeed by engaging in labors for knowledge and learning; but not for works of righteousness, but for injustice and impiety, ”Deceiving and being deceived,” and ”Wounding the weak conscience of the brothers, for whom Christ died. Therefore, they do not harvest for the fruit of life; from where? But for punishment and judgment. And at any rate Christ said, that ”Whoever ”causes one of these little ones who believe ”in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around ”his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the ”sea. Therefore, let them love the truth; this is the light of knowledge; thus God is sought; from this, fruits of righteousness will spring up for them unto life; and wine will also be harvested, not physical, but rather spiritual and through the Spirit, which gladdens both heart and mind. Why have you been silent about impiety, and harvested its injustices, eaten false fruit? because you trusted in your chariots, in the multitude of your power, and destruction will rise up among your people, and all your walled cities will be gone.

Again he accuses them, as having chosen from pleasure in wickedness to be quiet about things they should have least been quiet about, and as having been most unwisely silent about things at which it was likely God was not moderately grieved. For it was necessary, he says, with all strength to thrust away impiety towards me and to rebuke those who advise shameful things, and doing this to be in every good thing, they were silent, they accepted the ways of error; there was not among them one who stood against those who innovated those things, not setting against them the things from the law, and bringing to remembrance what had been decreed. For it is written, ”You shall have no other gods besides ”me; and again, ”You shall not make for yourself an idol. But they had very little regard for these things at all. For they were silent, honoring impiety, that is, apostasy. Therefore they have harvested the fruits of their injustice in this matter, they have eaten a false fruit, that is, they have held a hope that is both fragile and unprofitable. For the true fruit, which is able to save and to benefit, is love for God, and the boasts of righteousness; but a false fruit would reasonably be understood as that of impiety; for it certainly brings down to an abominable end. What, then, is the false fruit that has come to them from their impiety, He immediately showed.

For He adds, Because you hoped in your chariots, in the multitude of your power, destruction shall rise up among your people, and all your fortified places shall be gone. For you have acted impiously, not moderately, He says, having served wood and stones, and having dishonored the one God who is so by nature and in truth. Then, when war was announced, and had already come even within your gates, you did not seek help from Me, but you took courage in your own powers and in the multitude of your chariots, and you supposed you would overcome the strength of the enemy, the solicitude and aid of your falsely named gods being sufficient for you for this. This shall be a false fruit for you. For there will be destruction against the peoples, and every brilliant and well-fortified city will be shaken down. For what God does not establish, will in every way and entirely fall. Let these things be said also by us, or rather by God, to those who wish to attend to the unholy heretics, and who

pretend to be disciples of things pertaining to life and understanding. These men pass over impiety in silence. For they endure hearing those who blaspheme, although they owe it to make the greatest possible denunciation against them. They will therefore indeed share in their own ill counsel, and will reap the fruits of injustice.

for they will eat falsehood, receiving spurious and rejected knowledge, and being taught perverted things, and whatever attempts to counterfeit the beauty of the truth. And that all their power will fall, with God overthrowing it, and they will go to ruin and destruction, how could anyone doubt? As the ruler Salmana from the house of Jerubbaal, in the days of war dashed a mother to the ground upon her children; so will I do to you, O house of Israel, because of your evils. In the book of Judges it is written that Israel turned aside after the Baalim from time to time. For this reason they offended God, and were delivered into the hands of Midian, for seven whole years. And they endured such harsh oppression from their conquerors, that they even lived in rocks, and were saved only with difficulty by hiding in them, and making the difficult places a fortress, because they were utterly exhausted for battle. It happened therefore that from time to time those who fell into the hands of the Midianites were cruelly killed, so that children perished together with their wretched mothers, all mercy having been removed. And their rulers were Oreb and Zeeb, and Zebah and Salmana. And the calamity was prolonged until God, having pitied the afflicted Israel, raised up Gideon, who was also renamed Jerubbaal by his father and the locals, for such a reason.

For when God had instructed him by the voice of an angel, he pulled down the pillar of Baal, and cut down his grove, secretly and by night. But when the inhabitants of the town, hastening at dawn to perform their usual rites, were present in the sacred precinct, and saw Baal thrown down, and the oak grove fallen upon him, they at once suspected the piety of Gideon, and ascribed the cause of the matter to him. Then they went to his father, saying, Give us your son, that we may kill him, ”because he has pulled down Baal. To this he replied; ”Will you,” he says, ”avenge Baal? If he is a god, let him plead his own case against the one who pulled him down. From this, Gideon was henceforth renamed Jerubbaal, which is interpreted ”Let Baal plead. Just as, then, he says, Salmana, the leader of the Midianite multitude, from the house of Gideon, that is, of Jerubbaal, dashed a mother upon her children, in this very same way the general of the Assyrians cruelly and inhumanly, and without any pity he will use war against you, and will dash the mother to the ground with her children. And these things will happen because of your wickedness. For he does not punish in vain, being a righteous judge, the God of all. But if the sins of those who have offended him should then extend beyond measure, then he brings on them accordingly the things that come from wrath.

If then we would avert his anger, we must first avert very well both sinning, and, as it were, provoking to indignation the divine and most gentle nature, and perhaps even forcing it unwillingly to this by the excess of our offenses. But it must be known that some of the preceding commentators say that it was not Shalman, the ruler of the Midianites, who

dashed the mother upon the children, from the house of Jerubbaal, that is, of Israel; for sometimes the whole is signified by the leaders; but rather that Gideon dashed the mother upon the children in the house of Shalman. But I think the other would be better, and have support from what is fitting, and not this rather. For just as at that time, when Israel inclined to the Baalim, the children were dashed along with their mothers among them by the hand of foreigners, so also now that Ephraim has turned aside to idolatry, the children will be dashed again by the hand of barbarians, that is, of the Assyrians, along with those who bore them. I think, therefore, that the argument is plausible, and will better preserve the similarity, as from an ancient image, to more recent events, if the force of the preceding is understood in this way. In the morning they were cast off. The king of Israel was cast off.

Again, the other interpreters, and indeed also the Hebrew writing, have clearly said that they were cast off as in the morning, signifying by this that Israel had fallen away from fellowship with God, as it were, in a very short time, that is, quickly and without delay. For the time of the morning is very brief; for as soon as the light of day begins to dawn, it makes the morning; but when the sun has risen and sent forth its first ray, it is immediately dissolved and has passed away. Therefore, as in the morning, that is, in a little, and brief, and very contracted time, they were cast off together with their leaders. For we shall either understand it thus, or we shall take it in another way. For when God does not yet bring punishments upon human offenses, or even makes the extension of his forbearance longer, it is not at all unlikely to compare him to those who sleep at night. And indeed the blessed Prophets have cried out to us in many ways, signifying this very thing. For the most wise Jeremiah says, ”Be not as a man sleeping, or as a man who is not able to save; and the divine psalmist at one time says, ”Awake, why do you sleep, O Lord? Arise and do not cast off forever; and at another time, seeing him awakened for the help of some, says, ”And the Lord awoke as one sleeping.

He seems, then, to call the morning the time of his, as it were, watchfulness over them; for in the morning we rise from sleep. Therefore, when God is watchful over them, and, as it were, now awakened to visit what they have done, they will become cast off and rejected; although because of his very great forbearance he, as it were, even slumbered over them, in the time that has already passed. And he says that the king was also cast off with the multitudes, since the kingdom of Ephraim would very soon be taken away from their midst. For having returned, as I said, to Judea after the time of the captivity, they all came under one king, just as, of course, both in the beginning and before the times of the captivity. For those from the tribe of Judah reigned in Jerusalem, while all of Israel still existed. Because Israel was a child, and I loved him, and out of Egypt I called his children. As I called them, so they went away from my face. In these things the argument seems to us to be contending against an objection from some people. For let someone be conceived of as considering that, or even saying openly: If they were going to fall away, and from the face of God, those of the blood of Israel were to become in due time, and to be both abominable and hated, why were they even called in the beginning?

To these things God, and very fittingly, explains in a certain way, saying, Israel is a child and I loved him, and out of Egypt I have summoned his children. Jacob, he says, was an unfeigned man, who was renamed Israel. For this reason I loved him; for while they were still in the womb, "Jacob I have loved," He says; "but Esau I have hated. Since, therefore, I have loved him, for this reason I also delivered his children from the oppression of the Egyptians. "For I show mercy to thousands of those who love me. What then of those honored and chosen on account of their fathers, those honored by the grace of freedom, and delivered from slavery and toils? Have they shown honor? Have they been eager to gladden with good will the God who protected them? By no means, he says. For they have run away from the Master, they have departed from the one who honored them, they have insulted the one who called them. And how have they departed? Was it one by one and a few at a time, having slipped from right thinking, and being seduced by certain deceits? Not at all. For they departed in the same way as they were indeed called, that is, as a whole multitude and by tribes, every clan and every household. For so they went out of the land of the Egyptians in due course.

And we remember that when Pharaoh was scarcely promising to let Israel go, and wished to learn about the multitude departing from him, saying clearly, "Who are they that are going? Moses answered, "With our young men and with our elders we will go, with our sons and daughters, and our sheep and our cattle. Therefore the call was by whole tribes and by multitude, by clan and by household; and in the same manner was the apostasy, the ugliness of which he particularly signifies when he says *they departed from my face*. For those whom the Master of all might choose to hate, He would not even visit, I mean according to that which is sung in the psalms, "Look upon me and have mercy on me. For it is written that "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous; and He Himself somewhere says "And on whom shall I look, but on the humble and the quiet, and him who trembles at my words? They sacrificed to the Baals and burned incense to carved images. And I bound Ephraim's feet, I took him up in my arm, and they did not know that I heal them in the corruption of men. I drew them with the bonds of my love. He shows the immeasurable and god-fitting gentleness inherent in him. For to bestow good things on those who have already believed and acknowledged him and have chosen to worship him alone would have a fitting reason, and the matter would not be beyond what is likely;

for one honors, if he should choose to act rightly, one who is already his own and who has run to him; but to appear as the provider of every good thing even to the profane who do not yet know him would have an excess of philanthropy and wonder, and a truly god-fitting demonstration of gentleness. Therefore the Savior himself also said, pitying our condition and, as God, bestowing a mercy in no way fitting for the lovers of sin, at one time that "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick," and at another time again, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And the most wise Paul also greatly marvels at the incomparable forbearance of God who rules over all, and says that "Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am first. They, therefore, he says, that is, those of Israel, were wandering in Egypt, they did not yet know the true God, me;

but rather they were detected bringing sacrifices to the Baals, that is, to the idols, burning incense to the carved images, that is, to the objects of worship of the natives. But I, since I am kind and good, although Ephraim was in such a state of perversity—that is, Israel as a whole, as is indicated here by one tribe—I bound his feet, he says. And what this is, He Himself clarified, saying, I took him up in my arm.

But the a similarity of the matter, as from what is done with infants. For those who take up small babies in their hands, as it were, bind their feet, bringing their feet together. For I think the thighs and knees of everyone who is seated must be drawn together; this is what ”I bound his feet” means; just as it is indeed written about Abraham, that he bound the feet of Isaac his son, when he expected to sacrifice him to God. But it is necessary to know that the edition of the Hebrews, and indeed that of the others, does not have ”I bound his feet”; but they have rather put ”I have become as a nursing-father to Ephraim. Therefore, I was such to them, but they did not know, that is, they did not understand, they did not perceive that by destroying others among them I bring about their correction. For this is what ”I heal them by the destruction of men” means; for the Egyptians were first destroyed by the ten plagues, since Pharaoh would not relent. And after the plagues of the Egyptians, the Hittites, Hivites and Amorites, Canaanites and Jebusites were destroyed, whom Israel, having conquered by force, has inherited the land of promise, since God cleared every steep place for them, and bestowed the ability to overpower their enemies. Therefore, he says, they do not perceive that by destroying men of the same race as them, I set their affairs in order.

And I stretched them, that is, I bound them fast and held them as in bonds of love. But if they had been wise, they would surely have understood and reasoned among themselves, why these nations were destroyed by God, and we were brought in to replace them. For understanding thus, that I have hated the sinner, and I do not take into account the worshiper of demons, they would perhaps have ceased from choosing to do similar things. Therefore, it is necessary for those who wish to please God with sound reasoning and a good mind to make the wrath upon others a cause for their own security. But it is altogether terrible that the matter of ingratitude is, and how one who has fallen into this disease, having been convicted of all absurdities, would be justly punished, and from this it is easy for us to see. For the ungrateful man, he says, is as a blasphemer. And I will be to them as a man slapping his jaws; and I will look upon him, I will be able to help him. For since He said that He had loved and taken Ephraim into his arms as an infant, and bound him as if in bonds of love, although he was still profane and sinful, for this reason He says He will also turn him back when he sins; ”For whom the ”Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he ”receives.

But see how He promises that the manner of rebuke will not be devoid of God-befitting gentleness. For He says that the motions against them will be equal to slaps on the jaw by the hand of a man. This would be understood as the motion of a father, who mixes that which comes from wrath with forbearance and love, and as it were, gently, and scarcely

striking with his hand, so that he may not be entirely unreproved. And since He has loved, He also promises to look upon him. For He deems worthy of His oversight those whom He chooses to honor, and He is able towards us, managing with God-befitting skill and power those who choose to be sick with disobedience. For if He does not help by persuading, He of necessity turns them to choose to do the better thing, and by afflictions drives them toward that which is most beneficial for us and necessary for salvation. Let therefore the God of all hear from us, ”O Lord, in a little affliction is your ”chastisement to us; this is the slap; and again, ”Chasten us, O Lord, but in judgment and not in wrath, ”lest you make us few. For to be chastened is not bitter to those who are of a right mind; but to be punished in wrath is both terrible and hard to bear, and rather the matter is full of destruction. Ephraim dwelt in the land of Egypt, and Ashur himself was his king, because he would not return;

and the sword grew weak in his cities, and it ceased in his hands. And they shall eat of their own counsels. That in every way and altogether, to be estranged from God, having refused to unrestrainedly choose to do evil things, and in some way to be insolent with disobedience, even though He was calling him to salvation, the blessed Paul will clarify, saying, ”See to it, brothers, that you do not refuse Him who calls; and it will be no less manifest through the things set before us. For, he says, the all-wretched Ephraim, having abandoned the land that bore him, made that of the Egyptians his own, as it were, fearing the calamities of war. And he came to be under Assur himself, and he brought his neck under foreign scepters; for he slipped into this misery. And if anyone should ask the cause, he will hear the One who knows all things saying: Because he was not willing to return. For when God proposed amnesty and commanded him to go, as it were, without looking back, and thus to return to what seemed good to Him, turning from worthlessness and leaping out of the pits of idolatry, he was terribly negligent and was not willing to return. For this reason, then, he was captured, and came under the hand of those who hated him.

For the sword grew weak in his cities, and it ceased in his hands, that is, in no city of Ephraim was any man found who was skilled in battle and able to wield a sword. For the hands of those accustomed to hold it were paralyzed and, as it were, loosened. But since they have both thought and done evil things against themselves, they will eat the fruits of their own ill counsel. It is a bitter thing, therefore, to dare to dishonor the one who saves by acts of disobedience, and even if it were possible for some to escape transgressions through the gentleness of God, to be negligent is not without penalty. For we shall dwell in Egypt, that is, we shall be altogether and in every way exiles and wanderers, and not by leaving the physical land and migrating to another, but by leaving the inheritance of the saints. And we shall also be under Assur, that is, the ruler of this age, and under him we shall lie as slaves and captives, submitting to his will, on account of the weakening and cessation of the sword among us. For it is not, it is not possible for those who love sin to be able to take up ”the full armor of God,” ”and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And you will understand the sword as, so to speak, the most warlike and God-loving movement of our mind, which, by bringing forth against the passions and setting against the

devilish evils, we travel the pious and blameless path, and we place upon our own heads the boasts of the evangelical way of life. And his people hanging from his dwelling; and God will be angered at his precious things, and will not exalt him. The meaning of the preceding is utterly inexpressible, and the composition of the words is rough, and it would require much clarification for those who wish to understand. But what it wishes to signify, in brief, is this. Ephraim, he says, went away to the Egyptians, and came to be under the king, Assur. Then, as if someone were inquiring and saying, 'For what reason and in what way was it permitted to suffer, or how did Israel come to be enslaved to foreigners?' he sets forth the reasons in order, and says, first, that "he was not willing to return; for with gentleness being offered, he was captured, he says, being in this regard negligent and disobedient; then, that "the sword also grew weak in his cities. For there was not, as I said, anyone to stand against the Assyrians, or renowned in tactics, as God paralyzed their fighting spirit, and perhaps shook even the one exceedingly strong in battles with cowardice. And there is another cause for his falling under Assur. And what is it?

For the people, that is, Ephraim, all but hung from him, that is, from Assur, and wished to depart from his dwelling to that of the Persians and Medes. And we certainly do not say that Ephraim himself would have wished to suffer this, but insofar as it came to what he had transgressed, he all but sought to suffer such terrible things, since, when it was possible to escape the wrath by choosing to turn to better and more fitting things, he all but hung from Assur, and the one that bore him leaving, that is, his own dwelling, he foolishly longed to go to that one's, although God had declared that He would in every way and entirely bring such things upon him, if he would not choose to repent. But since they slipped from this purpose, God will be angered at his precious ones. The precious and select and prominent ones of the peoples, namely, kings and leaders, who were also carried away with the common herd, pitiful and slaves, and in the rank of captives, because they have led astray those under their hand, and have become a snare to those who, if they themselves had willed it, were able to hasten on the straight path. For the leader always guides the subordinate. Therefore, they will be humble and cast off, although they had possessed the greatest glory. For glory is always attached to the thrones of the kingdom. But God would not exalt them.

For the kingdom of Ephraim has ceased, as I have already said many times. Therefore, we especially who are in Christ must be on our guard against the inclination towards evil things, especially when God is holding us back; or if we do not do this, we will willingly place the yoke of the devil upon ourselves, all but hanging from love for him, and proceeding with all eagerness to be under him henceforth, and to fulfill what seems good to him. But if this should happen, we will provoke God, and so henceforth we will be humble, having a low and trodden-down mind, as God weakens us and does not endure to raise us up with courage for what is good. How shall I deal with you, Ephraim? Shall I protect you, Israel? How shall I deal with you? I will make you as Admah and as Zeboiim. My heart is turned within me, my repentance is stirred up together. I will not act according to the anger of my wrath, I will not abandon Ephraim to be blotted out, because I am God and not man; the Holy One in you. He introduced the reproaches, showing that in every way and entirely the sharpest

wrath ought henceforth to be brought upon them for having done unholy things, and having been impious against God beyond measure, so that no manner of sparing was any longer left for them.

But since He is good, the source and origin of gentleness, He checks the impulse, not rebuking it as having arisen irrationally, perhaps, from a better consideration; for the divine and ineffable nature would never miss the thoughts or actions most fitting for it; but, as it were, holding back what is according to their deserts, and through gentleness preventing what is most fitting for them, that is, utter destruction, and their needing to be dug up as from the very root. For this reason He says, How shall I deal with you? What way, He says, shall I use in arranging matters concerning you? Shall I protect you and defend you again, and show you to be unconquerable to those who wish to plot against you? Then how will this happen? For it would be more fitting to be punished than to prosper, for those who have done terrible things against God. Therefore, assigning what is deserved, and decreeing punishments equal to your transgressions, "I will make you as Admah and as Zeboiim. These are cities of Sodom, which the fire from heaven consumed down to their very foundations. But I will not do this either, He says, although it justly ought to happen. But I will postpone it; for I have changed my mind. And I will not use unrestrained wrath; I would not give Ephraim over to complete blotting out, although he has become wicked. For what reason? For were they not worthy to suffer it?

Yes, He says, but "I am God and not man," that is, good, and not yielding victory to the impulses of wrath. For such a passion is human. Why then do you still punish, he says, if you are God not overcome by wrath, but rather following an innate gentleness? I punish, He says, for I am not only good, as God; but besides this also holy, hating injustices, turning away from the polluted, rejecting the God-hated, and converting the sinner, cleansing the profane, so that he may be joined to Me again. Therefore the Prophet benefits us, crying out and saying, "Seek the Lord, and when you find him, call upon him; and when he draws near to you, let the "impious man forsake his ways and a lawless man his counsels, "and let him turn to the Lord, and he will be pitied. For it is necessary for us, if we consider it of great importance to be with God, to refrain from sinning with all our strength, and to remember the one who says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy. And I will not enter into a city. I will walk after the Lord. Sometimes the knowledge of future events runs precisely through the mind of the holy Prophets, as the thing is illuminated in them by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, sometimes in the midst of their own words, that is, those from above and from God, they have cried out in advance the voices of certain ones, either of those repenting, or giving thanks, or leaping for joy at the things which God promises will cheer them. We will find the blessed Hosea to have experienced something of this kind now as well. For the God of all was promising gentleness, and said that He would not utterly destroy the sinners, because He was God, evidently good, and not a man; for the one who is above all creation is not like us. But they, as if having recognized their own transgressions, and now somehow blushing at the very great and unexpected grace, promise to cease from the things they have

devised for themselves, through which they also have stumbled. And what these things are, God has again informed us through the prophet himself. For a little before, accusing both Judah himself and Ephraim, he said, ”And Israel forgot him that made him and built shrines, and Judah multiplied walled cities; and I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour their foundations. For Ephraim, that is Israel, having erected altars and shrines to idols throughout Samaria, slipped into apostasy, forgot God, and considering genuine love for him of no account, they continually provoked him;

But Judah, on the other hand, although trusting in God, being saved by him and through him from ancient times, sharpened him to anger, in many and other ways, but especially through this one. For when God had threatened to send upon them the Assyrian to destroy the land, he fortified his own cities, thinking that, even if God did not wish it, he would be saved by the strong walls of the cities, and would overcome the hand of the one fighting him. Therefore, when God promises good things out of gentleness even to those who have stumbled not moderately, they themselves who are being saved say that they will cease from their absurd undertakings and also indeed their counsels. And indeed let Judah cry out, I will not enter into a city, that is, I will have God as a wall, I will make hope in him my security, I will run under the right hand of the one who saves, he himself alone will suffice for my salvation; I will confess that it is vain and utterly useless to expect that, when war overruns the land, I will be saved by entering a city; therefore I will not enter into a city; but let Israel, that is Ephraim, cry out the other thing; and that is, I will walk after the Lord. I will cease, he says, from my former accusations, henceforth I will follow the divine laws, I will make the God of all my guide.

But if anyone should go towards what seems good to God, he will surely know him alone, and will offer reverence to him, and will worship absolutely no other besides him. He shall roar like a lion, for he himself shall cry out, and the children of the waters shall be amazed; and they shall fly like a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of the Assyrians; and I will restore them to their houses, says the Lord. When the time had already come, and the season was completed, in which Israel was at last to be released from captivity, Cyrus the son of Cambyses, having taken power over the Persians and Medes, with a heavy multitude and an irresistible force, marched against the country of Babylon itself, and of the Assyrians, God having raised him up for this. And indeed the prophet Jeremiah, proclaiming in advance the capture of Babylon, says concerning the Medes and Persians, ”They shall set upon you, and Babylon shall be taken, and you will not know it; you were found and were taken, because you resisted the Lord; Concerning Cyrus, ”A lion has gone up ”from his thicket, a destroyer of nations has set out, and ”has gone forth from his place to make your land a ”desolation, and your cities will be laid waste, so that they ”are not inhabited. But that it was the God of all who gave Cyrus the power to rule, the prophet Isaiah will fully inform us, saying:

”Thus says the Lord to my anointed, to Cyrus, ”whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him; ”and I will break in pieces the strength of kings, I will open before

him ”doors, and cities shall not be shut. I will go before ”you and level the mountains; I will break in pieces the doors of bronze, ”and shatter the bars of iron, and I will give you the treasures ”of darkness, hidden, unseen I will open to you. Cyrus, therefore, having conquered and taken the land of the Babylonians by force, released Israel. And indeed, having returned, they have inhabited their own land. The prophet Hosea interprets this narrative, saying: ”He shall roar like a lion. Who shall roar? Cyrus, evidently. It is as if he were to say, perhaps, ”A terrible and mighty war from Cyrus will strike against the land of the Babylonians. But when he roars, and as some lion cries out against his adversaries, the children of the waters will be astonished. And he says ”will be astonished” instead of ”will be terrified. By ”children of the waters” he means the Babylonians, who, yielding in no way to the children of the waters, that is, to those that swim in the waters, namely fish, in cowardice, having become easily frightened and unmanly by experience itself, will be captured. The race of fish is most prone to cowardice, and it flees from noises, and avoids even the mere shadow of the hunter.

When, therefore, Cyrus roars, he says, and cries out something terrible and dreadful against the land of the Babylonians, the children of the waters will be terrified with fear, that is, the Babylonians, yielding in no way to the fish in cowardice. Then, like a bird and a dove, those who had formerly fled together into Egypt will fly away from it; and those caught in the snares of captivity will flee from the land of the Chaldeans. And then they will return and inhabit their own land. Since it is possible, then, to have good things, by submitting the neck of our mind to God, and acting under Him alone, let us not willingly walk towards what is grievous, drawing down upon ourselves, as it were, a self-summoned chastisement; although it is possible, as I said, to be established in the certainty of prosperity, delighting the Master through a lawful conduct and life, and through genuineness towards him. Ephraim has surrounded me with falsehood, and the house of Israel and Judah with impiety. God, being good and merciful by nature, and having an unwillingness to strike anyone at all, is yet necessarily called to a corrective indignation, whenever the offenses of some go beyond reason and measure. This he teaches us again through the preceding words. For he almost says: Here and there, and as it were in a circle, to one casting and turning about the eye of the Godhead, everywhere it was possible to see the falsehood and impiety of both Ephraim and Judah.

And he calls ”falsehood” the playthings of idolatry and the worship of vain things; and ”impiety,” perhaps, the insolence against God. For how is it not a terrible and most extraordinary impiety to cast off the God who exists by nature and in truth, and to incline ignorantly to wood and stones; that is, to worship creation rather than the creator, and to attempt to crown with masterly honors things that have been brought into being by him? Now God has known them, and he shall be called a holy people of God. The house of Ephraim and Judah has surrounded me with falsehood and impiety, he says; nevertheless, even so I will be gracious, bringing upon them a measured chastisement. For I have known them, that they would not be able otherwise to learn better things, unless they should suffer some of those things that cause grief and call them to an awareness of their sins. God, therefore,

has known them, that is, He has not been ignorant of the way of repentance that benefits them. And the matter will not be unprofitable for them. For from this it will result that they are also ranked among the holy peoples of God. For once the...

has been melted away the wickedness within them through labor and tribulations, they will be both pure and sanctified, and having learned by experience, that genuine love for God will be for them the cause of all delight and prosperity, just as, of course, the crimes of apostasy cast them into the pits of slavery and tribulation. But Ephraim is an evil spirit, he pursued the scorching heat, all day he multiplied empty and vain things, and made a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil was carried into Egypt. The discourse turns again from the common multitude to those from the tribe of Ephraim who had reigned over Israel in Samaria, whom he also calls an evil spirit because of their stubborn disposition, and their extreme and unrestrained inclination to apostasy from God. For he pursued the scorching heat, he says; for although it was possible for him to be under my shadow, he went away as a deserter, as it were, to the scorching heat. He calls the scorching heat the burning that comes from tribulations, and the consuming disaster. And so the wise author of Proverbs enigmatically calls labors thus, and says, "A prudent son is saved from the heat; but a lawless son becomes blasted by the wind in the harvest. Therefore Ephraim, since he is an evil spirit, pursued the scorching heat, that is, he sought and willingly fled to the scorching heat; but the wise say concerning God, "Under his shadow I delighted, and I sat down.

And they call the shadow the protection of the help from God and from above. But Ephraim has not done this. For he sought the scorching heat. How, or in what way? All the day long he multiplied empty and vain things, that is, at every time he both did and planned cold and useless things. And what are these things? He made a covenant with the Assyrians. I have already said before, and many times, that some of the kings in Samaria, and of those in Jerusalem, at one time attempted to buy with money peace with the Assyrians and security from them, and at another time called upon the aid of the Egyptians, trafficking for the promise of their favor, sending the products of their own land, clearly along with other things. The land of the Samaritans was olive-bearing, and oil was prized in Egypt, as their land did not have it. Therefore, hope in men is empty and vain. And indeed let him who trusts in God dance over him who trusts in men, saying that passage from the Psalms: "Behold, the man who did not make God his helper, but hoped in the abundance of his wealth, and strengthened himself in his vanity; but I am like a fruitful olive tree in the house of God, I have hoped in the mercy of God forever and ever.

But it is especially fitting for lovers of equity who wish to live securely to love being under the shadow of God, by provoking him in no way, and so to shun offending him as one would the very gates of hades. And the Lord has a controversy with Judah, to vindicate Jacob; according to his ways and according to his deeds He will repay him. Just as by naming Ephraim, he indicated that we should understand those from the tribe of Ephraim who had reigned, so here also he indicates those from the tribe of Judah who were reigning at various times, by the name of the ruling tribe. Having therefore rebuked Ephraim, that

is, those from Ephraim who ruled Israel, both calling them an evil spirit and saying they multiply empty and vain things by making covenants with the Assyrians and carrying oil into Egypt, he then proceeds to accuse those from Judah in turn, and says that the God of all will indeed enter into judgment with them, as if somehow vindicating Jacob, I mean the Patriarch, as having been wronged in no small measure, because his descendants chose not to think like him, nor to follow their father's mind, but to shake off the desire to imitate him as something utterly improper. Therefore he promises to vindicate Jacob, whose glory has been wronged by the wickedness of his children, by repaying those who have wronged him according to their ways, and according to their their practices.

In the womb he supplanted his brother, and in his labors he was strong toward God, and he was strong with an angel and prevailed. He usefully enumerates the successes of Jacob, setting them forth for the purpose of rebuking those who have chosen to think and do other things; for somehow by the comparison of the good, the wicked is rebuked, and by the exhibition of praiseworthy things, that which is not so is wont to be accused. Therefore, that Jacob was well-disposed from his very swaddling clothes, or rather even before birth-pangs, he tries to show through the supplanting of his brother in the womb. For even if what was done was an operation of divine power; for we do not say that the infant in the embryo and womb supplanted Esau by himself; but rather, according to foreknowledge, as to one who would be good, God put in him the success of what happened. So also He said, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. And this was according to the election of grace, God choosing the one who would certainly be better, as again in foreknowledge. But these things were in the womb. But when he came to maturity, or rather, was now perfected among men, In his labors he was strong toward God. For when God providentially sent him into toils and labors, he was not weak, he says.

For is it not toil, to depart from his father's hearth, and to arrive at Laban's, and to endure servitude, and to bear the labors of shepherding? And how or to whom is this doubtful? Therefore in labors he was strong toward God. Not as fighting against God, but rather obeying, and as it were prevailing by fulfilling what was commanded. For although it was possible for Jacob to grow rich without toil, and to prosper while staying at home, God did not leave him untrained; but rather on the pretext of the fears from Esau, He prepared him, as he went to a foreign land and city, to endure unbearable labor, so that having kept the genuineness of his love for God even in the afflictions themselves, he might rightly be admired. Therefore he was strong in his labors toward God. But he was also strong with an angel, he says, and prevailed. For an angel wrestled with him as in the form of God. Then also his thigh grew numb. Nevertheless, the divine Jacob confessed the greatest grace in the wrestling. For he said, "Because I have seen God face to face, and my soul was saved. Therefore, the mystery concerning Christ was prefigured through the wrestling with the angel. For those from Jacob were destined to strive against Christ, whom the word of the prophets named "the Angel of great counsel"; and some would grow numb, not having accepted the redemption from him;

but others would also confess, that they have seen through him and in him face to face the one and by nature, and truly God. For in himself Emmanuel showed us the Father, saying, ”He who has seen me, has seen the Father. Therefore, the manner of the contest prefigured the mystery. Nevertheless, God records what happened as an achievement for Jacob. They wept and entreated me; in my house they found me, and there it was spoken to him. But the Lord God the Almighty shall be his memorial. He again recalls other histories, showing us Jacob as illustrious and well-esteemed from every side. For it is written in Genesis that Levi and Simeon, the sons of Jacob, cruelly and inhumanly killed the Shechemites, being kindled to anger over Dinah their sister, whom Emmor the son of Shechem had defiled. Then the blessed Jacob was very fearful from this; and expecting to be utterly destroyed immediately with his children and all his household, he rebuked those who had done these things, and so he said, ”You have made me hateful, so that I am odious to the inhabitants of the land, both the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I am few in number, and they will gather against me and cut me down, and I will be destroyed, I and my house. And the young men in no way ceased their audacity, for they replied, saying, ”But should they treat our sister as a prostitute?

But since, as I said, the just man was exceedingly fearful, he fell down again to the God who saves. Then He promised to deliver him from his fears, and not in a long time, so says the righteous God ”Arise, go up to the place Bethel, and dwell ”there, and make there an altar to the God who appeared ”to you when you were fleeing from the face of Esau your ”brother. Then, as the blessed Jacob was about to go up to Bethel, and to come to the divine house—for Bethel is interpreted as the house of God—he spoke to his whole house and to all who were with him, ”Remove the ”foreign gods from your midst, and purify yourselves, and change ”your garments, and rising up let us go to ”Bethel, and let us make there an altar to the God who ”heard me in the day of affliction, who was with me and ”saved me in the way that I went. And they gave to Jacob ”the foreign gods which were in their hands, ”and the earrings that were in their ears, and Jacob hid ”them under the terebinth that is in Shechem, and he destroyed ”them to this day. When this had been done, the divine Jacob was in good hope. For he was completely freed from the suspicion of the Shechemites, as God calmed with His own power those who were travailing with war against him.

For the sacred scripture says next, ”And a fear of the Lord was ”upon the cities that were around them, and they did not pursue after ”the sons of Israel. And when an altar was raised in Luz, which is Bethel, ”God appeared, it says, to Jacob,”and blessed him, and said, I am your God, increase ”and multiply; nations, and assemblies of nations will come from you, ”and kings will come from your loins, and the ”land, which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, to you I have given it; ”and to your seed after you I will give this land. These are the histories he recalls for us in the present prophetic oracle. Therefore Jacob was indeed a supplanter from the womb, but you are always being supplanted, and do not rather supplant sin. And he was very industrious, and well-esteemed in his labors and genuine towards God; but you, delighting in apostasies, act insolently, you have not honored the provider of all good cheer for you. Your fathers wept and entreated me, He says. For if they were ever under

suspicion of suffering from some plot, they wept and entreated me. For they expected to be saved through me alone; but you fortify cities, and think that, even if I should not wish it, you will perhaps be saved, and will prevail over your adversaries. And they indeed found me in my house.

For Jacob went up, as I said, to Bethel, and God appeared to him, and there was spoken to him the promise of blessing, just as we have recently shown; but you, on the other hand, do not seek God in his house, but rather run, and very eagerly, into the precincts of Baal; you seek oracles not from God, but the prophecies from demons. And the divine Jacob, going up to Bethel, that is to the house of God, destroyed the idols, but you, on the contrary, set up a carved god in the house of God; for they set up in Bethel the golden calf, although Bethel is interpreted, as I said, as the house of God. For this reason also God says through the voice of Jeremiah concerning the Synagogue of the Jews: ”What has the beloved ”done in my house, an abomination? that is, an idol. And the divine Jacob, and those going up to the house of God, to be purified and even the garments themselves he commanded to be changed, but you are seen as profane and impure, and going with unwashed feet into the divine house you do not blush, he says. And since Jacob was such, for this very reason the Lord Almighty will be a memorial to him. For he is preserved in the memories of God, and has an ever-flourishing renown. For God glorifies those who love him.

Therefore, for I will say again something necessary for your benefit, the glories of the fathers will condemn us, for not choosing to think the same as they, and to be adorned through similar manners and endeavors. And we will be condemned, not as having wronged our own only souls, but, as it were, having also plotted against the good reputation of their fathers, and shaming their ancestral nobility. And you shall return in your God, keep mercy and judgment, and draw near to your God always. The promise of grace is mingled with a threat. For the word for the present is rather of one threatening than of one promising purely; nevertheless the threat is out of love, and the oracle calls to correctness of thoughts and to a desire for good order. For, he says, the divine Jacob was wise and most excellent, and had as the fruit of his own mind that which is dear to God. But you did not imitate your father. Nevertheless you too shall return in your God, that is, even if you are an outcast and an apostate and insolent, yet you will return, and not willingly, to choosing to live rightly. And you will return being chastised in God, that is, through God. And since good reasoning has not persuaded you to go on the right path, and to love to think what is right, the scourge will overcome you entirely and in every way, and will quickly bring you over to the choice and knowledge of what is beneficial.

These things, therefore, as I suppose, would fittingly signify to us the saying, ”And you shall return in your God,” containing a threat, as I said, very well mingled with good promises. Then, furthermore, as to one already being scourged, and in the very act of being struck, God exclaims, ”Keep mercy and judgment, and draw near to your God always. For just as if some master to a servant being chastised, and in the very act of being scourged, should say with both restraint and indignation, ”Be temperate and obedient, and do not despise

a master's commands; in the same way, I think, the God of all says to Ephraim, who is in a way being struck and disciplined by the calamities of war, "Keep mercy and judgment, and draw near to your God always. It is as if he should happen to say, "For this reason, know that you are being struck, because you have not kept nor honored the things dear and beloved to me. Mercy therefore signifies love; and love is the fulfillment of the law, "For it works no evil to its neighbor," according to the voice of the blessed Paul. And judgment signifies righteous action, that is, justice, and the observance of the divine will. For the law is called judgment in the divinely inspired scripture.

And to draw near to God always would imply a genuine desire and inclination of the mind towards him, and not to be fond of clinging to others who are not gods, or to creation perhaps, that is, to wood and stones. And he will draw near to God and will be near in disposition, who knows how to be distinguished by good deeds and has kept the faith uncorrupted in himself. For sin often intervenes and separates from God. In the same way, clinging to the voices of unholy false teachers also drives one away again from intimacy with him—a spiritual intimacy, obviously. Therefore, those wishing to be near God must avoid the things through which they would become far off. Canaan, in his hand is a balance of unrighteousness, he loved to oppress. And Ephraim said, 'But I have become rich, I have found rest for myself.' All his labors will not be found for him because of the iniquities he has sinned. For as far as pleasing God was concerned, Ephraim would have kept mercy and judgment and drawing near to him always. But since he has slipped from a good mind, and has made no account of things so venerable and precious, he has become equal to the foreign Canaanites, both godless and impious, and especially rejoicing in the ways of worthlessness, and with a barbarous mind being uncontrollably overcome by the desire for what belongs to others.

Therefore Ephraim should have been seen as an emulator of his forefather Jacob, and loved to walk in the footsteps of his righteousness. But he has become a Canaanite. For a balance of unrighteousness has been found in his hands, that is, inequality and greed. For he has honored, equally with the nations who do not know God, accursed oppression. And that he acted criminally in doing this, he did not deign to consider; but he took pleasure only in being rich and living luxuriously, as if God were not watching, as if He no longer observed those on the earth, and those wishing to do wrong justly rebuking. And it would be a clear proof of the utmost folly, that Ephraim hastens to be rich by every means, and to consider the charges of plunder and violence as nothing, but, as it were, to make a boast henceforth out of excessive madness of those things for which he ought rather to have blushed. For he said, "Yet I have become rich, I have found rest for myself. What then says God to these things? "All his labors shall not be found for him, because of the iniquities which he has sinned. For it is true that, "Wealth unjustly gathered will be vomited up," according to what is written. And indeed, to those who wish to gather from injustice, and to be rich from greed, let someone now proclaim through the voice of a saint, "It were better for you to do judgment and "good justice;

for before the divine tribunal, ”Treasures will not profit the lawless, but righteousness will deliver ”from death. And as the writer of Proverbs says, ”Better ”is a small portion with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures with ”fearlessness. And again the same: ”Better is a little getting ”with righteousness, than great revenues with iniquity. Yet our actions, and the quality of our works, sometimes make us worthy of the nobility of the holy fathers, but also assign us to sinful fathers. For we will differ in no way from those who have lived in impiety, if we imitate their ways. For this reason we say Ephraim is called Canaan; for he has thought the things of foreigners. And the Canaanites are foreigners, and famed for their godlessness. Therefore some were also reproached, hearing fittingly for their own bold deeds, ”Seed of ”Canaan, and not of Judah. But I am the Lord your God who brought you up from the land of Egypt; I will yet make you dwell in tents as in the day of a feast. And I will speak to the Prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and by the hand of prophets I was represented. He called Ephraim Canaan, as I said, proving clearly that he had hated mercy and judgment, and had chosen rather greed and inequality and every form of injustice. But behold, again he tries to show that not only had he become such towards men, but indeed also that he was refusing to draw near to God through his very deeds.

He accuses him, therefore, as one who has ignored the Redeemer, as one who through his follies has insulted Him who brought him out of the house of bondage with signs and wonders, and with great power, and with a high arm. For He says, I brought you up out of Egypt. And in saying, ”I brought you up,” He brings to remembrance the things that happened to them, until they entered into the land promised to the holy fathers. And these things are countless, and beyond all wonder. But that their forgetting of these things was inexcusable, He showed by adding, ”I will yet make you dwell in tents as in the day of a feast. And what is this, you will ask again. The law given through Moses commanded that in the seventh month, on the fifteenth day, the feast of tabernacles should be celebrated. And what the reason for this is, the lawgiver himself made clear to us, saying concerning the feast of tabernacles, in Leviticus: ”In the seventh month ”you shall celebrate it. You shall dwell in tents for seven ”days. Every native in Israel shall dwell in ”tents; that your generations may see that I made the children of Israel to dwell in tents, ”when I brought them out ”of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Therefore, in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt that had happened, they celebrated the feast.

Then how could you, he says, forget me who brought you out of Egypt, while you are still under tents, and making the matter a pretext for a feast? For ”I will yet make you dwell in tents as in the day of a feast. He says, ”I will make you dwell,” instead of ”I cause to dwell,” that is, I make you dwell in tents, in the days of the feast for these things. Therefore the forgetfulness is inexcusable. But perhaps you sought to know some of the things that were to come, and wished to be meddlesome about your own affairs; and why was it necessary to approach the false prophets of Baal, that is, those of the falsely named gods, and to seek such things from them, and not rather to remember wisely, that I speak to the Prophets, and I have multiplied visions, that is, from me will be every word of prophecy, and already has been, not from any other of the falsely-named gods. For to me alone belongs both to know the

future, and to remember the things that are past. But they have imitated me, he says, the false seers and false prophets honored by you. This is the meaning of "I have been likened by the hands of the Prophets. You sought to know the future from them. Then, fabricating my words, and imitating the works of my Prophets, they belched out to you things from their own heart.

And so Jeremiah the Prophet, for instance, placed wooden yokes around his neck, as God commanded the thing to be done. But the false prophet Hananiah, opposing his words, took and broke the yokes, and said "Thus says the Lord, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. This is, as I said, the meaning of "I have been likened by the hands of the prophets. An accusation, therefore, against Ephraim, is that although having a clear reminder from the feast of tabernacles, of the exodus that happened from Egypt, he forgot God, and that he did not rather seek him, as the one speaking to the Prophets, as the one who had multiplied visions; but he was rather attached to the deceptions of the false prophets who fabricate the things of God through both words and deeds. If Gilead is not, were the sacrificing rulers in Gilgal therefore false? and their altars like tortoises upon the fallow land of a field. That they were attached to false seers and false prophets, going up and sacrificing both in Gilead and Gilgal, he convicts them through these things; and he takes for his proof these two cities especially, in which the error was more out of place than in others, and every manner of piety towards God was disdained, but all things that incite were in vogue, and full of the utmost madness. And so, in the passages above, concerning Gilead, God said, "There Gilead has despised me, a city working vanity," that is, idols;

for the people in it were makers of idols; and concerning the other, "All their evils are in Gilgal; for there I have hated them because of the evils of their practices. But it is necessary to add some of the things that happened to the Gileadites, for thus we will understand the meaning of the things set before us. Phul king of the Assyrians, being the first to come against Samaria, made the two tribes beyond the Jordan a kind of first-fruits of the spoil, and he took all their cities, and Gilead before the others. God mentions this, as if in passing, saying, If Gilead is not. If Gilead is not, he says, and is not now saved; even if it has perished, and it is not possible from it to convict the drunkenness of Ephraim, because it is not seen now, were then the sacrificing rulers in Gilgal false, and not real? But Gilgal is a city beyond the Jordan, in which especially, gathering together small and great, they were attached to the defilements of idolatry. Therefore if Gilead is not, who is he that dares to say, that the sacrificing rulers in Gilgal were also false, and not real? But they were not a dream nor shadows, nor some of the obscure, but bright and conspicuous rulers and leaders, raising up high and prominent altars to the carved images, like tortoises in the fields. But he says tortoises, not indeed the animals; do not think this;

but rather the mounds of earth, which some would make, raising the irrigation channels into hills; and countless such things have been zealously made by farmers. And he says sacrificing rulers, either generals and leaders of the troops, or those of the blood of Levi, wearing the leadership from the law. For they also perished along with the others, and not

a few in number have served the carved images. For so it is written in Ezekiel, "Therefore thus says the Lord God, No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my holy places, among all the foreigners who are in the midst of the house of Israel; but the Levites, who have removed themselves from me in the straying of Israel who strayed from me after their own thoughts, and they will bear their iniquity. And Jacob fled into the plain of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept watch. The discourse now returns again to the examination of both the genuineness and gentleness of the forefather, and of the awkwardness and impiety of those who came from him. And it marvels, as it were, at his endurance in small matters, then it brings the matter forward for the refutation of the negligence of the ten tribes in the greatest matters. For how would one not admire Jacob, who endured such bitter and unbearable toil, and did not refuse to serve Laban for wives and marriages? But even if the forefather's wage was very small;

for it was a marriage, as I said; nevertheless he kept watch and maintained his faithfulness to the one who had promised the marriage. And he toiled not in his own city or land or hearth, but being a newcomer, and living in a foreign land. And such was Jacob, but let us also see the charges against those of Israel. He was not sent into a foreign land; but being in the condition of one conquered by the spear, serving the Egyptians, and once enduring wageless sweat, by the power of God he was delivered from the land of the oppressors, and settled in the land promised to the fathers. The marriage of a woman was not set before him as a reward for having kept the law, but rather an abundant supply of every good thing, "a land flowing with milk and honey," the ability to crush those who resisted, glory and wealth, and the boasts from these things, and what of the things for prosperity and luxury was not? But he did not keep watch. For he transgressed, considering the observance worthy of almost no account. It is therefore clear that, being immoderately inferior to the gentleness of the fathers, they will not even be partakers of the forbearance granted to them; for the Judge is just. And by a Prophet the Lord brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a Prophet he was preserved.

In these words He makes clear to us the reason why Israel did not keep the appointed commandment, and despised God when He said, "You shall have no other gods besides me," and why they did not wish to love to vie with the gentleness of the fathers; for He rebukes that those of Israel came to be under the kingdom of men at all, although God reigned over them through holy Prophets, and nothing was lacking to them for being blessed. For we remember that while the blessed Samuel was still living and prophesying, they asked for a king. And indeed at this God was angered, and as one who had been insulted, He was not moderately grieved, nevertheless He appointed Saul. Therefore He strongly accuses, that they came to be under the kingdom of men at all, not enduring to be ruled by God through Prophets. For God, He says, saved Israel, and brought him out of the house of bondage, with Moses acting as mediator, who also was a prophet and the first-fruit of prophets; and not only did He bring him out of Egypt, He says, but He also preserved him. For he remained worshiping the one who is by nature and truly God. But when they came to be under kings,

they ran aground from their love for God. For first Solomon built both altars and precincts for the Baalim; then after him the accursed Jeroboam made the golden calves.

Therefore He accuses them as not having kept a most excellent economy, that of being ruled by God, I say, through prophets, but having instead chosen to fall under the hand of men, which indeed became for them a cause of apostasy. Ephraim angered and provoked to wrath; and his blood will be poured out upon him, and the Lord will repay his reproach to him, according to the word of Ephraim. That it became bitter and perilous, and a cause of ruin for those of Israel, to choose rather to be under the kingdom of men, in these words he tries very well to show us. For behold, He says, Ephraim, that is, Jeroboam from the tribe of Ephraim, has angered and provoked me, the Master of all, and has called me to every form of irritation, by innovating with calves, and my own to them having put on a boast. Therefore, he himself has become the cause of his own destruction; his blood will come upon him. But since, when he set up the heifers in Bethel and Dan, he addressed those of Israel, "Let it be enough for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your "gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt; for this reason, then, and very rightly, he says he will pay to me, the judge, the penalties for the reproach.

For it is outright insolence and admittedly a reproach against God, to dare to attribute to lifeless materials the brilliant and admirable accomplishments that came about through Him. Therefore, in accordance with the reproach of Ephraim himself, that is, in equal measure to his blasphemies and unholy utterances, the things from wrath will be brought against him in return. For just as, as far as his undertaking and words went, God was thrust out from the glory that befits Him and Him alone; so also will he himself be thrust out from his own rule. For the kingdom of Ephraim will cease in due time. For as I have already said before, after the return from Babylon no one from the ten tribes ever again reigned in Samaria, but they were all in Jerusalem under one man, the one from the tribe of Judah at the time. He took His ordinances in Israel, and set them for Baal, and died. And he added to his sinning yet more, and they made for themselves a molten image from their silver according to the likeness of idols, works of craftsmen finished for them. In these things he does not accuse the ten tribes in part, but all of Israel, and says that although ordinances were given to them through Moses, by which they were taught in what manner they ought to serve God, and how they should offer sacrifices, they themselves as good as decreed such things for Baal, that is, for the idols. For sometimes a part signifies the whole.

For they no longer sacrificed to God, but rather they performed the feasts for the works of their own hands, and they brought the worship, the first-fruits, the adoration, the gifts, the thank-offerings; and depriving God of His own glory, they dedicated it to the carved images. But having done this, Israel, he says, died, and again he added to his sinning. It is as if he were to say: The one who did it has been punished, the one who dared has been destroyed, he knew the Master's indignation, who brings the penalty of blood upon those who go astray; and he by no means ceased from his own foolishness, but would rather be caught in other and equal charges. For we have read in Numbers that the sons of Israel

committed fornication, being inflamed with illicit pleasures, and they were attached to the women of the Moabites. Then, for this they were required to pay the ultimate of all penalties. And the things written are as follows: ”And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began ”to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called ”them to the sacrifices of their idols: and the people did eat of their ”sacrifices, and bowed down to their idols. ”And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the ”Lord was kindled against Israel.

And the Lord said unto Moses, ”Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before ”the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be ”turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the ”tribes of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined ”unto Baal-peor. And when this indeed had been brought to completion, a not insignificant multitude of those from Israel had fallen. See, therefore, that by offering the ordinances of God to idols in the time of Moses, Israel died miserably. For the one who went astray was slaughtered by the swords of his own people, not by a foreign hand; but he added to his sinning. For they have made for themselves a golden molten image, and the works of a craftsman, and gods fashioned by the skills of artisans. And the Word, as it were, smiles at their vain counsels. For they have believed them to be gods, whom they themselves fashion. Therefore let the psalmist also exclaim to these, ”May all who make them ”become like them, and all who trust ”in them. They themselves say: Sacrifice men, for the calves have failed. Through For this they will be like a morning cloud and like the morning dew that goes away, and like chaff blown from the threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney.

He accuses them again, that not only have they been impious, fashioning the silver given by God into the image of idols, and ascribing the name of divine glory to things made from wood and stones; but they have also slipped into such ignorance, or rather even of foolishness and inhumanity and beast-like savagery, or even beyond these things, as not even to spare their own children, but to slaughter them for the demons; although God detested the deed, and would never endure the very utterance, either to speak it to others, or to hear it from someone. For the Master is not bloodthirsty, nor indeed does he delight in the destruction of men; far from it; ”For He created all things that they might exist,” as it is written, ”and the generations of the world are wholesome. But since the inventor and agent of death is the apostate dragon, for this reason he delights in the slaughter of men. That, therefore, even the mere word for this is hated by God, He makes clear, saying: They themselves say, Sacrifice men, for the calves have failed. The word is not mine, He says, nor would I ever utter such a saying; but the worshippers of demons themselves say that it is necessary to sacrifice men to them. Then He ridicules the thought and derides the undertaking, adding and saying: For, in all likelihood, they had no calves; for this reason they have honored manslaughter.

But let it be, He says, that you have been deceived, and have honored carved and molten gods. Why did you also drench their altars with human blood? But we have read in the Books of Kings, that there was Jonathan son of Ahaz, who reigned over Judah; indeed he ”walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and offered incense ”in the high places, and

also made his own son pass through ”the fire,” and sacrificed to the demons him who was begotten and born of him. But since they have done such things, they will be, He says, like a morning cloud and like dew, like chaff and like smoke from a chimney, that is, having been seen for a little while, they will go away to destruction and will proceed to nothingness. For a morning cloud, that is, a mist, and dew and chaff and smoke from a chimney, are easily dispersed, and are scattered in a very short time, or rather, even in a single hour. For what substance has either chaff or dew, or the vapor formed from smoke?

Book 7

But I am the Lord your God, who establishes heaven and creates the earth, whose hands have created all the host of heaven, and I did not show them to you that you should go after them. The ugliness of false opinion is somehow always refuted when true knowledge is brought into the midst, and it is as if a light shines in night and darkness, the word which instructs toward the correctness of reasoning. That, therefore, being filled with the utmost of all evil counsel, and reaching the highest end of wretchedness of reasoning, those of Israel have honored a molten thing and the works of carpenters, running past the true God and God by nature, He refutes them, saying that He is the one who establishes heaven, and has fashioned the earth, and is the maker of the stars. But He reproaches them, that, having disregarded as worthless the ability to learn the glory of the maker through the things that have been made, they have made these things a pretext for their own error. But they were not made for this reason, that they might wrong the divine glory, being taken up by those on earth under the assumption that they are gods, but so that, as the sacred scripture said, ”from the greatness and beauty of created things proportionately” the mind of those who understand might leap up to the possible comprehension of the power and skill of the maker. Therefore the Creator did not show us creation so that it might be worshipped by us.

And at any rate he also testified beforehand, saying through Moses, ”And lest, looking up to heaven and seeing the sun and the moon and the stars and all the host of heaven, you be led astray and worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has allotted to all the nations under heaven. But they called gods those things that were allotted for a display of seasons and were stitched into the order of luminaries, and they dared to worship them, and seeking things yet more shameful than these, the wretched ones have honored a molten image and pieces of wood as gods, worshipping the art of coppersmiths and carpenters. And I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but me, and there is no savior besides me. I shepherded you in the wilderness, in an uninhabited land, according to their pastures. In these words there is a great refutation of their insensibility, and the ways of his assistance are set forth in order, demonstrating the magnitude of the ingratitude of those of Israel. And he refutes them, not as being ignorant, as I think—how could they be?—but as having been brought, through their very great awkwardness and a reasoning inclined to insensibility, almost even to a forgetfulness of what they ought always to have

remembered. For the accursed Jeroboam, having set up the calves for them, said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt;

but they, although knowing that this matter was the achievement for them not of any other, but of God, offered thank-offerings to handmade calves, and persuaded one another, I know not how, to attribute to them the pre-eminence of the divine achievements. Therefore, as though they were drunk with the wine of Sodom, he practically pierces them through, saying that he himself is clearly the one who brought them "out of the house of bondage," and commanded through Moses, that "You shall have no other gods but me," and that he alone is the one who saves and effortlessly achieves whatever he wishes, he himself who nourished them in the wilderness, and in a desert and trackless and waterless land, releasing springs of water, and sending down the manna, and bestowing the bread of angels even from heaven, and in the manner of a good shepherd feeding them to contentment, according to their pastures, that is, their departures. For those of Israel were in want of no good thing in the wilderness, although they were always changing places, and encamping in a rough and fruitless land. It is necessary, therefore, to always remember what we have from God, and to be fond of keeping forgetfulness of these things as far away as possible from our own mind, as a cause of destruction, and as provoking to indignation God, the giver to us of all prosperity. For the ungrateful person is like a blasphemer, according to what has been wisely said by someone.

And they were filled to satiety, and their hearts were lifted up; for this reason they forgot me. Just as the most experienced of physicians, by thoroughly examining the causes of diseases, hasten to check them with remedies from their art; in the same way, I think, God of all, looking into the inner mind and heart, investigates the causes of the passions within us, and so then restrains the sickened mind with fitting medicines. He therefore accuses those of Israel of having been brought to a forgetfulness of him who supplies them with all life-sustaining things and all that would appear to make them renowned; although the law clearly foretold, "Take heed to yourself, lest you forget the Lord your God, so as not to keep his commandments and his judgments and his ordinances, which I command you today; lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and dwelt in them, and your flocks and your herds have multiplied for you, and your silver and gold have multiplied for you, and all that you have has multiplied for you, your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, where snake biting, and scorpion, and "thirst, where there was no water.

For luxury always has a powerful ability, and to revel in unexpected honors, both to carry us away into forgetfulness of God, and to be able to shake the human mind toward anything whatsoever that is amiss. But I think Israel, having leaped away, will suffice for a proof, having found in the breadth of prosperity an occasion for this terrible sickness; and since they were stronger than the nations, with the all-powerful God clearly defending them, they have fallen sick with arrogance, ascribing perhaps to themselves and not to the protecting

God the splendor from their achievements. Therefore, then, luxury is precarious and hard to manage, and like a smooth path to apostasy from God; but moderate affliction is by far better. And the voices of the saints will confirm this for us. For one said, ”Lord, in affliction we remembered you; in a little affliction ”your discipline is upon us; but the most wise Paul, set down for us affliction as the root and origin, as it were, of every good, saying, ”For affliction produces endurance, and end- ”urance, character, and character, hope, and hope does not put to ”shame. and the divine David also sings somewhere, ”It is good for me that you have humbled me, that I might learn your ”statutes. And I will be to them as a panther and as a leopard;

by the road of the Assyrians I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her cubs, and I will tear open the covering of their heart, and there the whelps of the wood will devour them, the beasts of the field will tear them apart. For since the breadth of their cheerfulness became for them a cause of destruction and an occasion for apostasy, for this reason, then, afflictions are brought on, and in proportion to their sicknesses. For indeed bodies that are very sick and already decayed would in no way yield any longer to mild medicines, but would rather need both iron and fire. Therefore, since the greatness of the divine gentleness profited the children of Israel little, that I may not say nothing at all, a savagery befitting a wild beast is brought upon them. And he compares himself to the fiercest and most voracious of beasts, and that have a very great tendency towards cruelty. not that the divine and ineffable nature would in any way be subject to such angers, but perhaps he teaches this again, that the Assyrians will use such unrestrained angers, being inhuman and hard-hearted, and what of such things would they not be, when they are captured; but what is done would seem to be of God, since He himself has permitted it to happen, inflicting upon those who have sinned so savagely the anger that is fitting for them. I will therefore find them as a panther and as a leopard;

for they will be carried away to the land of the Assyrians. and I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her cubs, that is, one that is perhaps hungry, or rather, is greatly distressed, her cubs having been taken away; for then they say the beast especially reaches the height of its innate fury. And I will tear open the covering of the heart. By ”covering” here he means their security. And the security of the heart is the courage that one might have against enemies; when this indeed is torn apart, the passions of cowardice enter in, so as even to grant victory to the enemy without a fight. It is therefore as if he might be saying, ”I will bring them down into the uttermost cowardice,” although those who are against them are compared to a hungry and bereaved beast, I mean, to the bear. And that, having been caught in the bonds of captivity, and having been carried away into the land of the Assyrians, they will have no escape from evils, but evils will follow them, as it were, even there, he showed by saying, And there the whelps of the wood will devour them, the beasts of the field will tear them apart. For the untamed races of the Assyrians, he compares to whelps in the woods and to wild beasts, being greatly inclined toward savagery. In your dispersion, Israel, who will help you? Where is this king of yours? and let him save you in all your cities;

let him judge you, of whom you said, ”Give me a king and a ruler. And I gave you one in my anger, and I had in my wrath a band of iniquity. I have already said briefly in the preceding parts, that God was accusing the children of Israel, because I know not how choosing to be yoked rather to human yokes, and rejecting the kingdom under Him, God, although He had reigned over their ancestors through holy Prophets. For He said that ”By a prophet ”the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved. But you, he says, scorning to act under God, cried out against the blessed Samuel, saying, ”Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk ”in your way; now, therefore, set up a king over us ”to judge us, like all the other nations. Therefore, since you think you have deliberated well, having raised up a king over yourself, like the other nations, and you expected to be saved by him, where then is he now? Behold, it is time for a demonstration: let him fight your war, let him arm himself splendidly, let him save the cities, let him defend those under his hand, let him drive back those who oppose, let him vigorously drive away those who wish to ravage homes and cities. But perhaps you will say, ”Although it seems that I asked, you are the one who both gave and anointed Saul in the beginning.

Yes, He says, but in anger I gave the leader, and I had in my wrath a twisting of injustice, as having been wronged by you, He says; and all but thrust out from the thrones of the kingdom, as far as your opinion was concerned, I was exceedingly wroth. Nevertheless, I appointed him, though knowing, He says, that the matter was not necessary for your benefit, but so that experience of the events might fully inform you well that in this you have made a foolish and useless decision. For where is he now, or what benefit could there be hereafter from him for those who are being warred against? But if you had been again under my mercy and hand, you would surely have been seen to be in a better state than your enemies. Therefore, ”Vain is the salvation of man,” according to what is written, and ”A horse is a false hope for salvation,” is the hope placed in rulers; but God rescues very easily those whom He chooses, and those whom He would observe honoring the hope placed in Him. Ephraim, his sin is hidden; pains as of a woman in childbirth will come upon him. This is your wise son, because he will not stand in the destruction of children. This, I think, is what is meant by ”He conceived trouble and brought forth ”iniquity.

For in the beginning, Jeroboam, so that he would not lose the scepters, when Israel wished to fulfill the sacrifices according to the law, and for this reason was traveling up to Jerusalem, devised the golden calves. and he received into his mind a sowing of evil seed, as it were, buried, just as the sin was also hidden. But the time of labor pains, he says, will also come. And this would be understood again as that of the war and the captivity. For even if it did not happen to Ephraim himself, yet it came upon his descendants at times, that is, the successors of his rule, because they became imitators of his impiety. He speaks, therefore, as to the synagogue in Samaria and says, Who will save you? Is it this wise son of yours? And in saying ”this,” he points out either the one ruling at the time, who also received the reputation of seeming to be wise; for this always accompanies those in power; or else he hints at something else, fitting for the time in which the word of the prophecy came. For while Ahaz was ruling over Judah in Jerusalem, ”in the eleventh ”year, Hoshea son of Elah

began to reign in Samaria over Israel, ”who did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. But at that time Shalmaneser, king of the Assyrians, marched against Samaria. ”And Hoshea became,” it says, ”his servant. But the Assyrian was very angry with him for such a reason.

For he sent messengers to him, asking for tribute and the usual things; but he, not enduring to be ordered about by that man, sent an embassy to So, king of Egypt, asking for help from him. Grieved at this, Shalmaneser besieged Samaria for three whole years. Then, having taken Hoshea captive, he made him a prisoner and enrolled him among the servants, and he resettled Israel in the territories of the Persians and Medes. Therefore, the prophetic word seems to us to be pointing out Hoshea son of Elah in these things, whom he also calls wise, not because he was truly wise, but he somehow speaks ironically; for he seemed to be wise among Israel, and to have planned very wisely, for choosing to call for aid for them from Egypt. but he was caught out, having acted and planned in a cold and useless way. Who then, he says, will deliver you from suffering incurable calamities? This your prudent son, because he will not endure in the crushing of children. For with your children being crushed, he says, not even he himself would endure; for he will be taken as a slave and a captive along with the others; he will go to the Assyrians. Wise, therefore, is the one who sings, ”The Lord is my strength and my song. For from him is all power, and all salvation; and there is no savior besides him. From the hand of Hades I will rescue them, from death I will redeem them; where is your judgment, O Death?

Where is your sting, O Hades? Having spoken things out of anger to the sinners, and having foretold the things that would come from grief, he has returned again to a god-fitting gentleness, and he has indicated by adding that the race on earth has not been utterly turned away, nor has it been given over to unbridled and endless corruption, but there will be some forbearance in due time and a recalling to the original state in Christ, that he will rescue from the hand of Hades, and will redeem from death, it being clear that he means those who have come under it, on account of adopted sin, and the transgression of Adam in the beginning. For such a promise has been made again, not to Ephraim alone, that is to those of the blood of Israel, but rather to all upon the earth. For as the divine Paul writes, ”Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? For he has justified the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. For he has redeemed us from the hand of Hades, that is, from the tyranny of death, and the manner of the redemption is understood as the death of Christ. For he willingly endured the slaughter on the wood for our sake, and has triumphed over principalities and powers, having nailed the handwriting that was against us to it. For then, then ”all iniquity stopped its mouth; and the power of death was abolished, since sin was taken away;

for this is the victory of death, and the sting of Hades. Thus also the wise Paul interpreted for us. For he said, ”The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. Therefore, with the sin of all being destroyed in Christ, we ourselves might also reasonably say, Where is your victory, O Death? Where is your sting, O Hades? ”For it is God who justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died” for us, or rather ”who gave himself a ransom

for all," one worth more than all, through whom and in whom we have been enriched to return again to incorruption. Is comfort hidden from my eyes? Because this one will make a division among brothers. We shall read the first verse of the proposed text as a question, and with a pause, and it would suggest some such thing to us if we choose to understand it correctly. Human nature, he says, has fallen sick with manifold sin, and has inclined not moderately towards transgression; for this reason it was justly condemned to death. Then what will be the manner of help for those who have suffered this, or how they might escape what has happened, I myself will consider, or rather I have already determined. Or is there anyone among you, come to such a point of madness, as to think and say that there is some manner of comfort and consolation, which the divine and pure mind has not seen?

For I am a craftsman, and powerless in nothing, but I know all things well, and without delay I accomplish what seems good. And yet, he says, this one will make a division among brothers. And through these words he proclaims to us our Lord Jesus Christ. For he is the comfort of all, the manner of the cure; the Father predestined him before eternal ages as Savior and Redeemer for those held by death. He said that he makes a division among brothers. And what this is, we have heard from Christ our Savior of all saying, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth; I did not come to cast peace but "a sword. For I came 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 man's enemies will be those "of his own household; and again, foretelling somewhere to the holy disciples the things that would be, "Brother will deliver up, he says, "brother to death," and a father will rise up against his sons. For since he has destroyed the tyranny of the devil, and rescued the deceived from the snares of idolatry, he has so bound them to love for himself, that those who have believed disregard even natural affection, and have renounced brothers and fathers and homes and families, and have supposed that to cleave to Christ would be sufficient for them for all joy.

And so indeed the blessed David, as from the person of those who have accomplished this, somewhere sings and says that "My father and my mother have forsaken "me, but the Lord took me in. The Lord will bring a scorching wind from the desert upon him, and it will dry up his veins, it will make his springs desolate; it will dry up his land and all his desirable vessels. He transfers the discourse to the very person of death, and compares Christ to a south and scorching wind, which he says will be brought from the desert at times. But it is necessary to know, and before all else, this, that the country of the Jews has a wide and vast desert, lying in the southernmost parts, and if ever the wind from there happened to blow down violently, they were exceedingly fearful, as the country was being dried up. And it seems to some that the very veins of waters in the earth make their supplies more sluggish, and are checked by the blasts of the violent and fiery wind. Therefore, from what they know and have experienced, he makes his arguments. Therefore, the prophetic word has told us that Christ will be brought against death like a scorching wind, which will dry up all his springs and his veins. He persists, therefore, in the figure, and very rightly, and, as from that which is accustomed to happen, he makes the declaration of the mystery.

And the veins and springs of death, we say are the ways of destruction, that is, the evil and opposing powers. For through them, as it were, the multitude of those who are ever perishing from time to time is supplied. Thus you will understand also his desirable vessels. For vessels that destroy those on earth and are precious to death one might reasonably say, are either the evil and opposing powers, or certain unholy ones on the earth, servants of his wickedness, who also destroy others along with themselves. When, therefore, the scorching wind has blown, he says all the land of death will be dried up. And again the word is made as from a metaphor. For it is as if he might say, Death was grazing on those on the earth as on a field; but it will be dry, death will not find pasture. For corruption has been abolished, since Christ set life before all, and permitted incorruption to be made recoverable. Samaria shall be made desolate, because she has rebelled against her God; they themselves shall fall by the sword, and their infants shall be dashed to the ground, and their pregnant women shall be ripped open. Having very well finished the discourse concerning Christ, and having foretold the mystery of universal redemption, the blessed prophet again wails over the calamities of those who have offended, and all but laments those in Samaria.

For though it was possible, he says, to enjoy, and very richly, the good things from his clemency, they have run as deserters toward the things that would come upon them from wrath, because they chose to oppose God, and to raise their own will against the Lord's commands, and all but to seem to be set in opposition, or even to be in the lot of those who have truly resisted him. Therefore, with all mercy removed, they themselves will be the work of the sword; and strange methods of inhumanity will be devised against both women and children. for together with the newborn infants a premature they will suffer death, and those not yet called to be and to live, and the sword will anticipate the coming forth of the enemies through birth-pangs. Therefore, it is a bitter thing to oppose God, and truly a cause of destruction, as is seen by experience itself. Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have grown weak in your iniquities. Take words with you, and return to the Lord your God; say to him, so that you may not receive iniquity but may receive good things, and we will offer the fruit of our lips. Assur shall not save us, we will not mount upon horses; we will no longer say, Our gods, to the works of our hands. One might greatly admire in this again the skillfulness of the prophet, and the arrangement of his discourse.

For it is composed in a manner befitting a saint, and is full of the mystagogy from above. For he has proclaimed beforehand the future redemption through Christ, and that in due time death will be weakened, and the sting of Hades will be rendered inactive; and in addition to these things, that no manner of exhortation and comfort could be conceived at all, which was not known to God. And what after this? It was necessary henceforth to advise them to think and do those things which lead to their salvation, and, as it were, to hasten to bring back to sobriety those who are drunk; not with wine; from what? but rather from worldly love of pleasure, and from loving to adhere to the deceptions of demons. Therefore, lest, being inclined to indolence by the promises of goodness and love for mankind, they should make no account of him who knows how to discipline, for this very reason he usefully brings them back again to the remembrance of the terrible things, saying that Samaria will be destroyed,

because she stood against her God; then adding to these those other things, which indeed appear not ineffectively to terrify and distress the hearers. for he says that infants will be dashed to the ground; and that the mothers themselves will be destroyed together with the embryos, not yet having brought forth from the womb into the light the much-desired burden.

Therefore, having first terrified them with these dreads, then, at the opportune moment, he sends into the hearts of those being admonished the word that calls to repentance, exhorting them well that it is necessary to turn back, and to return to God. But by saying that you have grown weak in your iniquities, he gives them to understand, that in every way and altogether their weakness will cease along with their iniquities, and if the ways of apostasy should be removed, the terrible things also will depart. And he smooths the way of the return to God; for he says that sinners will indeed be in a better state and under the forbearance of God, not by offering things from wealth, not by dedicating gold, not by choosing to honor with silver vessels, not with sacrifices of oxen, not by pleasing with slaughters of sheep, but if they would offer words, and choose to speak well, propitiating the Master of all. for take words with you, say to God, so that you may not receive iniquity but may receive good things, that is, so that you may not be punished in equal measure to your iniquities, but rather may be enriched by the provisions of good things, and promise to bring to him the things from your lips, thankful odes and confession. For such things are the fruits of the tongue. But cry out that, he says, and promise firmly, that neither shall Assur save us, nor indeed shall we mount upon horses;

nor shall we say any more, Our gods, to the works of our hands. For these were the ways of apostasy. For these things they have offended, because they both served idols, and, having dishonored the ever-saving God, they have assigned their hope to helps from men. And when the Egyptians were at war with them, they called upon the Assyrian; and again when the Assyrians had taken up arms against Samaria, they hired with money the Egyptian horse-archers, that is, those skilled in cavalry warfare. For this reason they also heard God saying clearly, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt "for help, who trust in horses and in chariots; and they were mocked, and very justly, being eager to make their champion "an Egyptian man and not God, the "flesh of horses," as it is written. Therefore they promise to depart both from worshipping idols and from still having their hopes in men. And this is a correction of those who have already stumbled, calling to gentleness the Creator of all, who says through the voice of the Prophet, "Turn away from your iniquities, O house of "Israel, and they shall not be a punishment of injustice for you. In you, he will have mercy on the orphan. This is the voice of the Prophet, urging to repentance, and making the Master's serenity manifest, and cutting away the hesitation of one willing to repent. For do not doubt, he says, O Israel, that you will obtain what you pray for, if you should offer repentance.

For the God in you knows how to have mercy and to pity orphans. Thus says also the divine David, "He will take up the orphan and the widow," from one thing I think, that is, from persons who are by nature most to be pitied, showing the loving-kindness of the divine and

ineffable nature. But if someone should wish to ascribe the matter of orphanhood also to Israel itself; for it was all but lost from God the Father, although He says clearly, ”Israel is my firstborn son; I for my part would say that it is right to understand it in this way too. It is necessary, therefore, being confident that the Master of all is both good and ready for loving-kindness, to repent without hesitation, and by corrections for the better, to release the causes of previous stumblings. I will heal their dwellings, I will love them freely, because my anger has turned away from them. The word from God is introduced immediately as a neighbor, and almost next door, promising to heal the sick, and to love freely, that is, that the effects of mercy and love, and the increase of every good thing, should now henceforth appear to be at work confessedly and openly. And in addition to these things, it shows that His anger towards them has ceased, and that His beloved loving-kindness will not depart.

And again the word in these things seems to us not to mention only the conversion of Israel according to the flesh, but rather to bring in also the calling of the Gentiles; because not ”all those from ”Israel, these are Israel; but rather those are counted as children who follow ”in the steps of the faith in uncircumcision ”of our father Abraham. Therefore, the calling of the Gentiles is also contributed, and the appropriation to God in Christ through faith and sanctification; and in addition to this is also signified the supply of spiritual things, and the abundance of grace, that is, clearly, of that in Christ. I will be as dew to Israel. In every way enriching and watering the mind of those called to repentance, with comfort from above, that is, clearly, that through the Spirit; for the dew is from above. He shall blossom as a lily. He will give forth, he says, a sweet smell in Christ, and the fragrance of a holy life, and he will henceforth be a choice flower. And he shall cast his roots as Lebanon, his branches shall spread. By this he shows that the mind of believers is not easily shaken, nor as it were ready to be overcome by evil spirits. For it will be so secure and established, just as indeed the plant of Lebanon, which sends its root down to a great depth; and with its branches above, it spreads not moderately.

For as the root luxuriates, the growths of the shoots are in every way vigorous. And he shall be as a fruitful olive tree. Clearly evergreen and fruitful; for such is the plant. And his smell as of Lebanon. The thing of Lebanon is exceedingly fragrant. For this reason also the law of Moses proclaimed it as sacred to God. For it prescribed in many ways that the fine flour offered for sacrifice should be sprinkled with frankincense. Therefore, he says, the fruit of those called will be fragrant, and well-pleasing as a sacrifice to the virtue-loving God. They shall return and shall sit under his shadow. They will cease, he says, from their former accusations, and will return vigorously to worship the ”living and ”true God,” and will be under him in a single-minded way, not expecting to be saved from enemies by another, but from him alone. Fulfilling this well, the Church from the Gentiles says concerning the Savior of all in the Song of Songs, ”In his shadow I delighted and sat down. To those accustomed to do this, let the divine David also proclaim, saying, ”The sun shall not burn you by day, nor the moon by night. This was accomplished for the ancients by God, when a cloud overshadowed them in the desert, and elegantly revealing the tent from above

and from God. And he says ‘they will sit down‘ very well, so that the steadfast and securely established disposition of those who turn may be understood through this.

They shall live and be satisfied with grain. These are the worthy gifts of conversion and of steadfastness. For he says they will be partakers of eternal life, and in an abundance of power, clearly spiritual power. For I think this is what ”they will be strengthened with grain” signifies. And it is written that, ”Bread strengthens man’s heart. For bodies are pleased by suitable foods, but the divine and heavenly Word invigorates the soul of man. For how can it be doubted that one who turns from error to the knowledge of God would pass from weakness to power, and leaping up strongly from the pits of depravity to the pursuit of virtue? If indeed the charge of weakness is truly to fall back into indolence and worldly pleasures, and to love to be attached to the worship of idols; while a glorious achievement of spiritual strength is understood to be to choose eagerly to do good, and besides this to consider nothing better than love for God, and to travel without stumbling and with a vigorous mind the path to this. And his memorial shall blossom like a vine, as the wine of Lebanon to Ephraim. God said somewhere to the mother of the Jews, that is, the Synagogue, ”But I planted you a fruitful vine, wholly true. And our divine David also sings somewhere about it, ”You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out nations and planted it. You cleared the way before it.

It sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the river. Therefore Israel was a vine with goodly branches; but since it has stumbled in many ways, ”The Lord took away its hedge, all who pass by the way have plucked its fruit. A boar from the forest has ravaged it, and a wild ass has devoured it. For it has been set, as it were, to be trampled on by those who wish to do wrong, as pasture for swine and asses, that is, for pleasures and irrationalities. For this reason they have withered. Nevertheless, his memorial flourished anew in Christ, that is, clearly, the memorial of Israel. And he says memorial, because not all have believed, but the remnant has been kept, as it were, for a memorial of him. And the grace from God has become to Ephraim, that is, to Israel, like the wine of Lebanon, that is, fragrant and yielding little to frankincense in its fragrance. Such is the word from Christ, and concerning it the blessed David says, ”Wine gladdens the heart of man,” to which a sacred word urges us to hasten to partake very eagerly; for it goes thus: ”Eat, and drink, and be drunk, O friends. For the things through Christ are not offensive to the saints, and are more useful when taken to the point of intoxication. What has he yet to do with idols?

For if he should come to be, he says, in the fullness and partaking of such venerable and heavenly goods, he will completely depart from the desire to stray, and to be attached to the works of his own hands. For lacking what good things anymore will he seek them from another? Or is such a search also completely unprofitable for those who have gone astray? For what will lifeless matter bestow on anyone? to whom it was also justly said by God, ”Do good, and do evil, and we will know that you are gods. But handmade things could never harm men; for how, or from where? Nor indeed could they give them anything good or beneficial. Therefore let them hear, and very rightly, ”The gods who did not make the heaven and the earth shall per- ”let them be destroyed from the earth and from under this

”heaven. So therefore, he signifies that which is fixed and firm in love towards God, saying What has he to do any more with i- dols? I humbled him, and I will strengthen him. I, he says, am able to afflict those whom I might see disregarding the ways of genuineness toward me; but I will again strengthen those who would choose to practice virtue, and to know the God who is by nature and in truth. Therefore, neither the affliction, that is, the weakening of Israel, was from them;

nor indeed would the transition to being able be thought a gift of demons, but it is a God-given good, just as, of course, being weak was a result of the stirrings of wrath. Wisely therefore, and with love for God, our great David sings in the psalms, ”My strength ”and my praise is the Lord. I am like a dense juniper tree, from me your fruit is found. The juniper is a plant, so dense and with such abundant foliage, as to seem to be in some way a man-made roof, neither yielding passage to the rays of the sun, nor indeed to the downpours of rain, even if torrential ones should ever pour over the earth. That, therefore, being under God they will have unassailable shadowing, that is, help, he implies by saying, I am like a dense juniper tree. But that all fruit-bearing for those under God would come about in no other way than in Christ and through Christ, he himself will fully inform, saying in the evangelical decrees, ”Without me you ”can do nothing. Therefore let him say with good reason to each of the faithful, if one should be brilliant and praiseworthy, and in the boasts of virtue, From me your fruit is found. Who is wise and will understand these things? Or prudent and will know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just will walk in them; but the ungodly will be weak in them.

He says that the one who understands these things is very wise and most prudent. For the comprehension of the divine words is not available for those who wish to readily take it, nor could one understand ”a parable and a dark saying, the words ”of the wise and their riddles,” as it is written, except through the torch-bearing from above, with Christ sending into the mind and heart, as a brilliant ray, the grace from himself. And he teaches that to be able to traverse the straight and pleasing path to God is completely effortless for lovers of seemliness; but the matter is not smooth for those who are not so minded. For the desire and eagerness for everything good strengthens the one group, and persuades them to be carried in an unrestrained course towards the will to be well-pleasing; but for the other group, the inclination and tendency toward worthlessness and sin, would render them cowardly and unmanly, and not having from God the ability to achieve virtue, because they have not honored it in the first principles, nor has their goal been with a view to this. Therefore if we are sagacious and wise, we will ask from God the ability to do what is fitting, and he will grant it in every way, being a lover of mankind, and he will fill us with spiritual strength through Christ, through whom and with whom to God the Father be the glory, with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary on the Prophet Joel

Book 1

The divine Joel prophesies in the times, as it seems, in which those also appointed before him would be thought of, I mean Hosea, and certainly also Amos. For it seems to the Hebrews that he should be arranged not after Micah, but with those ones. And he denounces, as it seems to me, those of Israel, and makes a very great outcry against them, as having come at last to such a point of arrogance, stupefaction and insensibility, as to be checked in no way at all from evils, nor indeed to be overcome by calamities so frequent, and all but brought on them in a row to love, although no time had slipped in, during which any respite from the evil, however brief, might appear to have occurred. And we will find the blessed prophet Isaiah coming through similar words. For he said, "And the Lord Sabaoth was moved to anger against his people, and laid his hand upon them and struck them; and the mountains were provoked, and their carcasses became as dung in the middle of the road. In all these things his anger has not been turned away, but his hand is still high. You understand how they have suffered this and that, and the hand of the one striking them has remained high, as if on the point of inflicting other blows upon them. For in the same way that the most incurable of afflictions sometimes require not one incision, but still more;

so too the human mind, having arrived at the limit of insensibility, needs a more frequent blow, which with difficulty recovers it at least to the point of being able to hasten to relearn what leads to benefit. It seems, therefore, that the blessed prophet Joel, since Israel has remained unadmonished after very many blows, wisely makes the rebuke, advising them at the same time to abandon their shameful ways and choose to turn toward what is pleasing to God. Moreover, he adds the promise of things most dear to them, if they should choose to repent; and he gives them courage that they will encounter a good and most gentle Master. This, then, is the purpose of his whole prophecy; but we will speak of each of the subsequent things in turn, following the contemplations of the things set before us. The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Bethuel. The Prophet says that the word of the Lord came to him, so that we might assign faith to the prophecy, being firmly disposed and confident that what has been foretold will in every way and entirely come to pass. The Savior himself confirms us in this, saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. For truth is not a false-speaking thing, and whatever God might say will surely be

exact. For he is the one who ”confirms the words of his servant, and makes the counsel of his messengers true.

Therefore, most artfully and wisely he demands faith from his hearers, since he is not a false speaker like some, that is, reporting what seems good from his own heart, but speaking from the mouth of the Lord in the spirit, as he has most clearly stated. And Bethuel is necessarily added, so that no other Joel besides him might be thought of. For perhaps many, or rather without a doubt, were called by such a name; but not all of them were from Bethuel. For the sake of security, therefore, as I think, Bethuel has been added again. Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land. Have such things happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about them, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. He refers the aged to the antiquity of times and memory, and has ordered them to consider when indeed, and on what occasions, they have seen similar things, inflicted by divine wrath, upon their own fathers or those even further back, saying that they must now consider whether the tales are not strange and unusual, and perhaps not yet known to any of the ancients; moreover, he says, it is fitting for the others to understand very well if such things have happened among them; and it will be a subject of unending tales, not lasting for one, nor for two or three generations, but rather leaping through, and far beyond.

For just as we say that brilliant narratives are worthy of being heard by the many, and those which might happen to be followed by the need to rejoice; so too, things that reach the limit of disaster and suffering seem to be in some way worthy of memory. For such things all but compel forgetfulness, and having a more burdensome impact, they demand to be remembered out of excessive shamelessness, and contend with the reputations of the most pleasant things; and just as good things have a memory that is not unprofitable, so I suppose do unfortunate and grim. For some things sharpen the hearers toward the pursuit of virtue; while others teach them to shun the experience of evils before their approach; and through the things for which others have been punished, it does not permit some to seek to be caught in the same things. What the caterpillar left, the locust has eaten; and what the locust left, the cankerworm has eaten; and what the cankerworm left, the blight has eaten. The word of the holy Prophets is always somehow hidden, and bringing forth reluctantly the very grim parts of the narratives on account of the untamed tempers of their hearers, they overshadow them with possible obscurities, and by fashioning riddles and parables they provide no small benefit. But their word also proceeds sometimes through useful examples; such as is found in the most wise Ezekiel:

”The great ”eagle with great wings, long in its expanse and ”full of talons, which has the leading part, to enter into Lebanon, ”and it took the choice parts of the cedar, the tips of ”its tenderness it nipped off, and brought them to the land of Canaan. For it cleverly indicated the ruler of the land of the Babylonians, who shears off the choice ones from Israel, and transfers the plunder home. And that there have been failures of fields, and shortages of seasonal produce, and very often harsh and long famines throughout the land of the Jews,

the sacred scripture has said. For already some, when a famine was pressing, have come to such a state of necessity as to buy a donkey's head for fifty shekels. And the women who fought over the children would show the savagery of the want at that time. For when the two had devoured the one, they demanded to be judged by the rulers concerning the living one. Therefore, if in these things the prophetic word signifies for us the failures of fields and the destruction of crops, the matter would be understood even so as unbearable; for to be afflicted in succession and immediately by so many and harsh plagues, how is it not utterly hard to bear, and not unworthy of being remembered?

But if indeed the visions, overshadowed by the more apparent things, also lead us away to other thoughts, it seems to us that the Prophet by caterpillar and locust, cankerworm and blight, and the terrible and unbearable damages from them, signifies the devastations at each time, and hints at the manners of captivities; by which they have been consumed and have perished, just as if those who made the assaults had all but devoured and destroyed them like the plunder in a field. Therefore, there have been many successive uprootings of the land of the Jews, both when the neighboring nations made war at times, and those who had ruled Egypt. For while Rehoboam was administering the royal honor in Jerusalem, Shishak king of Egypt came up, and took the palace, and having emptied all the treasures in it, and having taken the golden spears and the shields which Solomon had made, brilliant and victorious he returned home again. And indeed Hazael the Syrian also brought no small plagues upon them; and Pul king of the Babylonians also took the tribes beyond the Jordan; and in addition to this, Necho Pharaoh king of Egypt, when Josiah was ruling, marched against Samaria, and subjected the land to tribute; for he demanded a hundred talents of gold. Therefore, the things that have happened at various times are very many; but there have been four terrible and noteworthy sackings.

For when Hoshea son of Elah was reigning in Samaria, Shalmaneser the Assyrian came up, and deported Israel to the borders of the Persians and Medes. Then, after a short time had passed, and when Jeremiah was prophesying, Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem by force. And Israel was released with difficulty through Cyrus the son of Cambyses, when the seventy years were completed. Then in due time came Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes. This man, having arrived in Judea, both burned the divine temple, and took the vessels in it, and forced those throughout all Judea to be negligent of their ancestral customs; at which time also the events of the Maccabees happened to become splendid and admirable achievements. And a fourth war came upon those from Israel, that of the Romans, when they were also scattered to every wind. The Prophet, therefore, seems to wish to convey his own message to us obscurely and faintly, and as it were in the form of examples through such narratives; the caterpillar and the locust and the cankerworm and indeed the rust, either signifying obliquely the wars themselves that ran upon them one after another, or else the commanders of the armies, of whom we have just now made mention. But if someone should wish to record a more moral interpretation in these things, he would not fail in what is fitting;

for if a soul were seen being devoured by frequent and successive passions, and, as it were, destroying each virtue little by little, adding this to that on account of indolence, how would it not be accurate to say of it: What the caterpillar left, the locust has eaten, and what the locust left, the cankerworm has eaten, and what the cankerworm left, the rust has eaten? For like rust and the other evils, the good things in us are somehow ravaged by wicked and unclean powers falling upon the mind, and which are accustomed to consume with insatiable teeth. Therefore, vigilance is good; and indeed the Proverb-writer benefits us not a little, saying, "If the spirit of the ruler "rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for healing will pacify "great sins. For passions, when rebuked at the beginning, are both calmed and checked; but if they find a wide and, as it were, unadmonished path to what is worse, they seize the whole soul through and through, and cannot endure the reasoning that would punish. Awake, you who are drunk from their wine, and weep; lament, all you who drink wine to drunkenness, because gladness and joy have been taken from your mouth. Without trouble, I think, one might again perceive clearly from this, how exceedingly wise was the divine Paul, exhorting and saying to those ensnared for salvation through faith in Christ, sometimes, "Awake, you who sleep, "and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you;

and at other times again persuading them to love endurance in suffering, in this way also saying "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with "sons; for what son is there whom a father does not "chasten? For God, as it were, strikes down those who sin, although He is a lover of mankind, not willingly, but as if turning them by necessity, and making this a means of help for them. Just as, of course, those skilled in medicine also apply to the sick even the very harsh medicines, making the need to feel pain a cure for their affliction. For see how, having first shown the scourges and proclaimed the things that come from wrath, he all but "restrains their jaws with bit "and bridle," according to what is written, and commands them to proceed in a human way, changing their mind to choose to do what was better and more fitting. For he says, Awake, you who are drunk from their wine. Do you hear how he then rebukes them as children who are out of their minds and somehow already drunk, as if to say that if they had been sober in the beginning, what came from the caterpillar alone would have been sufficient punishment for them; but since they have remained insensible to the first wrath brought upon them, the second has been added, and after that the third, and it has even proceeded to the fourth.

Nevertheless, he now commands even those awakened and sobered up late, who have, as it were, sent away from their mind a kind of drunkenness—the love of pleasure and the choice to sin excessively—to come to a perception of what has happened, weeping and wailing over their own sins. But it should be known that for each of us also there is, as it were, a private wine, which makes the heart drunk. For we divide up the passions, so to speak, and one of us has turned without restraint to the love of money, while being sick with other things as well; another, again, has thought on the things of the world, and has fallen sick with the love of the flesh, being wholly devoted to luxury and loves of pleasure; while another has fled to some other sin. But we hasten towards such abominable and God-hated passions,

some not very eagerly, but others using their full impulses, and having an unadmonished inclination of the mind. For this reason the Prophet says, "Become sober, you who are drunk with their wine; and he advises that it is fitting to lament those who drink wine to the point of drunkenness. For as I just said, some do not stop their love of pleasure at the point of satiety and sufficiency, but as it were, drink to the point of drunkenness, and stretch beyond all measure; from their mouth, he says, both gladness and joy have been taken away.

For Christ speaks the truth, that in every way and altogether those who mourn now will be comforted; but for those accustomed to live luxuriously, the need to shed tears will follow, because the end of arrogance will be lamentation and wailing, and it brings down those who love it into the pit of Hades. And David also speaks the truth when he says to God, "In death there is no one who remembers you; and in Hades who will confess to you? and again, "For the dead will not praise you, Lord, nor all those who go down into Hades; but we who are living will bless you, Lord. But if indeed the meaning of the preceding things were understood also in a more earthly way, if the causes of gladness have been consumed by both the caterpillar and the others, doubtless the gladness and joy of those who have suffered is destroyed along with the fruitful harvests. For it is necessary to be gloomy at the things that happen grievously and are accustomed to cause pain and are not unable—I mean, with regard to being able—to waste away the heart with bitter and unbearable grief. Because a nation has come up against my land, strong and without number, its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and its molars those of a lion's cub; it has laid my vine waste, and my fig trees into splinters; searching, it has stripped it bare and cast it down, it has made its branches white.

Wishing the tear of repentance to contend, in a way, with the things that have happened, that is, those things expected to be and which are all but present, he subtly narrates the things that will be, and placing the assault of gloomy things almost before their eyes, he gives something to those who are struck, and a lament, and as it were teaches a mournful song to those who have been commanded to wail, and he then persuades them to say that: "A nation has come upon my land, strong and without number, and as for the sharpness of its teeth, it yields little to lions and their cubs. Now, the matter is true, even if it might be understood of the locust, the wingless locust, and the caterpillar. For the thing is invincible, and the assault of such creatures is utterly irresistible, and it is able to destroy root and branch the things in the fields, I mean both fruits and grass; and to destroy fig trees and vines, and to render the appearance of the tilled land bad and uncomely. But if the discourse should turn again to the inhumanity of the ravagers, and the complete desolation of the country, it would signify nothing other than that their whole country has perished, and the prominent among them have also been consumed, those who surpassed the measure of the common herd in glory and wealth; so that they are understood to be in the rank of a fig tree and a vine; before they endured withering;

just as it is surely understood of the perceptible vines themselves, if they happen to fall among the teeth of locusts; for by drinking up the moisture in the plants, and sucking up all

their life-giving power, they do not wither after a long time, but for this reason cause them to appear white. Therefore, the teeth of the consuming enemies have utterly consumed and sent into complete uselessness those who are ranked as vines, or are in the form of fig trees, either striking them down with swords or bringing them under the yokes of slavery. But one might understand, if one should choose to think spiritually, such things again also of sinful men; into whose mind and heart, as in the manner of the locust and the wingless locust, and indeed also of the caterpillar, the wicked demons somehow always enter, and the manifold and multiform passions themselves, and indeed they make them appear useless and most uncomely, having cast off the flower of piety, and having no righteousness in themselves a shoot. And I would say that it would be fitting for them to weep without ceasing, and to lament to God; and to strive to obtain through frequent prayer forgiveness and help, so that they might be, even if late and with difficulty, wise and strong, and able to escape what has befallen them.

And they would suffer this, and most especially, those whose mind has foolishly turned to the need to heed those accustomed to heterodoxy and to undermine the correct doctrines of the Church, concerning whom it might be said, and very appropriately, ”Their teeth are the teeth of a lion, and their molars are those of a lion’s cub; for the nation is hateful to God, counterfeit and sinful, and devouring and consuming the mind of the simpler ones with its seemingly wise words, so that no remnant of orthodoxy is seen in them. These wither the master’s vineyard, they render the garden devoid of figs, and show it bare and laid waste, ”for whom judgment does not tarry,” but ”is just” in due season. Those, therefore, who are accustomed to live in ignorance, will be food for the locust and the beetle and the caterpillar, and will remain destitute of all seemliness, and there will be nothing at all flourishing in them; but the wise and God-loving soul, richly adorned with the doctrines of truth, and having its heart almost teeming and very well-adorned with fruits of righteousness, will surely say with boldness, according to the bride understood in the Song of Songs, ”Let my kinsman come down into his garden, and eat the fruit of his choice trees. For sweet are the fruits of piety, and the choice fruits of true learning are sweet to the Savior of us all, Christ, who is also our kinsman, as born from a sister, the holy virgin.

Lament to me as a bride girded with sackcloth for the husband of her virginity. He commands them not to make their repentance a secondary matter, nor as something done in passing, or simply indolently, nor the grief understood in it, but earnestly striving and contending not moderately with what is most burdensome of other things, so as to make the toils of equal weight with the sins. For a newly-wed maiden is wont to bewail excessively her dead bridegroom, and to receive sharp sorrows for this, so as to set her mind beyond consolation, and to think that no manner of mourning worthily is sufficient for her; for the female nature is confessedly prone to tears and fond of mourning, but most of all she who sees her virginal and youthful bridegroom lying pitifully in his bed, dead and breathless. To her, he says, the multitude of the Jews must indeed be compared, to ward off wrath, and to check with lamentations the divine movement coming, as it were, irresistibly upon them, taking courage that the Lord of all is ”gracious and gentle,” loving mankind, ”and of great

mercy and repenting of evils" according to what is written. Nevertheless, the Synagogue of the Jews has not mourned the bridegroom from heaven, that is, Christ; for she herself killed and treated him with insolence. Therefore, she is excluded from the divine bridal chambers, and is outside the sacred marriage, and completely without a share in the feast, henceforth disinherited, and cast out and furthest from the hope of the saints;

but in her place has been called the new and unwrinkled, the all-holy and wise, and the bride from Lebanon, the beautiful dove, that is, the Church from the Gentiles, who also confesses the very passion of the Lord, and almost weeps over it by suffering with and mourning, and loves to take up her own cross and follow him, and to go through these things for the sake of love for him. And her virginal bridegroom would be understood to be Emmanuel; although she seemed to have been adulterated and to have fornicated with Satan, in the manner of having been led astray; through the regeneration from above, which we have received richly through the Spirit, denying the carnal. For it is written concerning Christ, "He came to his own, and his own did not receive him. But as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become children of God, to them that believe on his name: who were born not of "blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of "man, but of God. Therefore, pushing aside the birth according to the flesh, we appropriate the spiritual one, according to which the church from the gentiles, that is, those who have believed in Christ, would be understood as a pure and all-holy virgin, to whom the divine Paul also clearly writes, "For I have espoused "you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to "Christ.

Sacrifice and libation are taken away from the house of the Lord; mourn, you priests who minister at the altar. Because the fields are ruined, let the earth mourn; because the grain is ruined, the wine has dried up, the oil has failed, they have withered. It is as if he were to say clearly: Eucharists have ceased, and there is absolutely no one left to offer sacrifice, no one bringing an offering and the firstfruits of the crops, that is, the sacred sheaf as a firstfruit of the wheat harvest dedicated to God, according to the law of Moses; and no one, he says, placing the firstfruits of the seasons in a basket, and going to the house of the Lord, and offering up to God also the thanksgiving odes, which it was the custom to proclaim. For this reason, he commands the chosen race to mourn, I mean the priests, not laboring for the sake of gains, but as grieving over the peoples under their charge, and appointed for the sacred and renowned ministry, so that even before others they might propitiate the God of all, and imitate the hierophant Moses himself, who presided over Israel and said to God, "I pray, Lord, this people "has sinned a great sin, and if you will forgive their "sin, forgive it; but if not, blot me also out of this "your book which you have written.

For the office of the priesthood mediates between God and the peoples, and for those appointed to so august a ministry, boldness in supplications would be fitting, I think, and very reasonably so. For they all but consecrate their own life to God on behalf of all, by eating the sacrifices for sin. This also the God of all says through the voice of Hosea, "They shall eat the sins of my people, "and in their iniquities they shall take their souls," that is, when the peoples do wrong, transgressing what seems right to the law, then, indeed then,

he says, the ministers of the divine altars will take their own souls to God on behalf of them. And he says 'they will take' instead of 'they will offer' or 'they will dedicate'. For what was dedicated to God was said to be taken. And what is the reason for their mourning? The fields are ruined, he says, and indeed also the grain, stripped bare by the teeth of locusts, and as if by fire, burned up by the rust. For it burns up and withers what is in the fields. And he says that the land itself must, as it were, lament, since its fruits have perished. For the grain is ruined, the wine has dried up, the oil has failed, they have withered; that is, all things from it are gone, and the things for which it was right to be greatly admired, as the mother and nurse of good fruits.

And let these things be said by us as concerning perceptible matters; but indeed every most approved priest will lament for those who, out of immeasurable delusion, do not accept the purification through faith, and have not loved to be sanctified by Christ. For they will remain entirely and in every way destitute of spiritual fruitfulness, and they will be in want of everything that knows how to nourish and leads them to spiritual manliness, having no grain or wine, and deprived of the need for oil; the saying is mystical. For to those who accept the faith, Christ will present himself as the bread of life; for he said, "I am the bread of life; as wine that gladdens the heart of man; understand again what I say; and he will anoint also with oil, that is, the spiritual and sanctifying oil, and understood as in participation of the Holy Spirit; but those having a harsh disposition, bitter and ungodly, a disobedient and stubborn mind, he will surely show to be in want, and entirely without a share in the good things just now mentioned by us. And it must be known that the most wise Paul also, ministering as a priest to the gentiles the gospel of Christ, almost mourned for the disobedient from Israel. For he said, "Because I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites. But, as I said, the saying in this is mystical and hidden.

Lament, you farmers, for the wheat and barley; because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine has dried up, and the fig trees have become few; the pomegranate, the palm tree, the apple tree, and all the trees of the field are withered, because the sons of men have shamed joy. Truly a mourning, a pain and a lamentation for those accustomed to tilling the land, the utter destruction of what is in the fields, and the inability to gather anything at all from them, and sometimes after long toils. to see the things in the gardens and the choice trees now withered and dead, and the vines together with the crops destroyed, and the very wild wood perishing along with the gardens. For it says, all the trees of the field are withered, because the sons of men have shamed joy; and "have shamed joy" is instead of: the inhabitants of the land have made the season one of shame and disgrace and reproofs leading to punishments and judgment, a season in which it was fitting to rejoice in prosperity, gathering the things from the fields, and to fill the storehouses with grain, to sing the vintage songs to the grape-treaders, and to delight in the flocks of sheep, with abundant and flourishing grass spread before them.

And in this again the word seems enigmatically to call ”farmers” those who at that time presided over the Jewish orders, whom it said must mourn, as all in the country, so to speak, that is, the inhabitants of the land, were about to go to destruction, who might be understood as being in the category of wheat and barley and beautiful trees. But we will apply the force of these thoughts in a more fitting way to the scribes and Pharisees; who, being in the position of husbandmen, acted insolently toward Christ, and killed the heir, that they themselves might have the garden, and become masters of the vineyard henceforth, almost exulting as in crops over the populous multitude of their subjects, and being accustomed to harvest the most distinguished among them, like a pomegranate, like an apple. But the Roman war took them, it consumed great and small, the brilliant and the distinguished, understood as being like fig trees, as I just said, or perhaps like a vine, a palm, and an apple, and in trees, as in barley and wheat; for their ways are different, and the measure of life is not one for all. For since it once compared the land of the Jews to a field, and called the leaders husbandmen, the word has preserved the metaphor throughout, comparing those under them in various ways to crops and trees. But if someone should think that these things must also be transferred to a moral exegesis, he will think well.

For the vine, the fig tree, and the other trees, which are accustomed to be crowned with beautiful fruits, must be compared to virtues and the achievements of the mind. But if someone is wise and quick-witted, and a cultivator of good glories, he will bear a flourishing and well-wooded garden in his mind and heart, nourishing in himself virtue in its many forms, and every manner of goodness. But if he is lazy and a lover of pleasure, and has inclined far too much toward baser things, he will surely lament, as his goodness withers, and his mind suffers great barrenness. Therefore, the prudent must take care of the good things in their hearts, which will certainly be present, if at least they choose by their goodness to gladden God, the giver of heavenly gifts. Gird yourselves and mourn, you priests; lament, you who minister at the altar. Go in, lie in sackcloth, you who minister to God, because the sacrifice and the drink offering have been withheld from the house of our God. Through these words, it as it were exalts what has happened, and places it among unbearable terrors, showing that the matter requires the most fervent prayer, by the fact that even the priests themselves must wail. Nevertheless, the... has something skillful. word.

For since, having most unwisely sat before the precincts of idols, although God was striking them in his anger, they sought help from there, the God of all usefully assigns to his own ministers the leading of the supplication, and to preside with fortitude over the efforts toward repentance, so that those who have transgressed might know that unless they chose rather to seek what is pleasing to God, and offered their prayers to him, they would not escape his anger. He said, therefore, that it was necessary for those who minister, almost to lend to others the labors in prayers, beating of the breast and lamentation and the wearing of sackcloth, by which is signified the putting away of luxury and rest, hardship and toil, and the right and blameless practice of a holy life. Then, making the cause of the toil clear, he says that sacrifice and libation have been withheld from the house of God; the saying is harsh; for he does not say that sacrifice and libation have been reduced, or rather,

diminished, but rather have been withheld, which is significant of a complete overthrow. A terrible and truly burdensome thing for those who preside over the peoples, if in no way God is to be served by those under their yoke. Sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn service, gather the elders, all the inhabitants of the land into the house of our God, and cry out earnestly to the Lord, alas, alas, for the day.

In what way it is fitting for them to make their lament, he again makes clear, and he appears as a wise guide to them of the way to repentance, and he shows clearly the things through which the God of all might become gentle and well-disposed. This was, I think, also of one wanting to check the anger, and to remove what causes pain, and to restrain what is harmful, and to grant them again to prosper, and to be abundant in good things. Therefore he said that, sanctify a fast, that is, you should hold it in the order of a votive offering, and in the manner of a sacrifice the truly all-holy and blameless fast. For it is not fitting for the flesh to be worn down by abstinence from food, but for them, having fasted, to do the things at which God would reasonably be provoked. For if during a time of fasting we are not going to cease from our own wills, but to oppress those under our hand ”for strife and contention, and to strike the humble with the fist” according to what is written, we have not yet fasted holily and purely; but we will reasonably suffer the loss of our labors, God having cried out ”Is not this the fast that I have chosen, says the Lord.

It is necessary therefore to abstain from wickedness, and to follow, and very vigorously, the decrees of the lawgiver, directing the heart toward anything whatsoever of the things pleasing to him, and submitting the neck of the mind, singing and saying ”Behold my humiliation and my toil, and forgive all my sins; and indeed, in addition to this, also that prophetic word ”Behold, we will be yours, for you are the Lord our God. For this is a spiritual offering and a pure sacrifice pleasing to God ”more than a young calf,” more than a lamb from the flocks, more than a kid from the goats, more than fine flour and frankincense. For ”God is well pleased with spiritual sacrifices. And sanctifying the fast, let us proclaim a solemn service, that is, the fulfillment of the divine wills, with which would fittingly follow the uprightness, the good conduct of manner, the readiness for anything whatsoever of the words that pertain to piety; and we will accomplish the ways of the solemn service, the elders having been gathered in the churches, and all the inhabitants of the land having run together, and weeping very intensely for the whole day, and being steadfastly disposed, that in every way and altogether God will have mercy; for he is ”Long-suffering and of great mercy and true,” ”Taking away iniquities and passing over injustices and not holding his anger for a testimony, according to what is written, because he is a willer of mercy.

Because the day of the Lord is near, and as misery from misery it will come. Before your eyes foods were destroyed, dried up, and from the house of our God gladness and joy. He says, the day of the Lord, on which the things from wrath would come to pass, either by the locust brought upon them and consuming the things in the fields and sending the terrors of famine and want, and instilling the very fear of death itself, that is, of the Babylonians destroying everything, attacking both cities and villages, working one evil upon another,

and always heaping misery upon misery for the inhabitants of the land, so that they could not even, so to speak, take a short breath, nor could any good thing come in between, by which it was likely that they could have even a partial and moderate comfort, they who were now unbearably consumed by the frequency of evils. But since, when the fruits were already ripening, and the crops were now all but calling the reaper to themselves, and the grape cluster was darkening and yearning to be pressed, the attack of the locusts happened to occur, he says foods were utterly destroyed from before their eyes, as if those things that were in sight were snatched away, though they were set before them, as it were, and they had the readiest enjoyment of them; and he again affirms that there has been removed from the house of the Lord both gladness and joy.

For they were sacrificing, exulting in the bountiful harvests from the fields, and they practiced the ways of gladness, offering thank-offerings because they were richly showered with the good things of the earth. But we will find that something of this sort has also been suffered by those especially who have acted insolently toward Christ. For the bread of life has in a way already come before their eyes, "He who came down from "heaven and gives life to the world," "the grain "of wheat that fell into the earth," and sprang up manifold, the spiritual wine, that knows how to make glad the heart of man. But since they have not ceased to act insolently with their disobedience, spiritual foods have been removed from their eyes and, as it were, from their midst. For the participation in every good thing has departed from them, and from the house among them gladness and joy have been removed. For they have been given over to desolation, and the wretched ones continue "without a king or ruler, without a sacrifice or an altar, or a priesthood or manifestations. And in another way too we say have been removed from their eyes both the foods and the gladness and joy. For our Lord Jesus Christ said that, "Man shall not live on "bread alone, but on every word "that proceeds from the mouth of God. And that the word is food for the mind, no one would doubt. This has been removed from the multitude of the Jews;

for they have come to be in want of spiritual food; they have not understood the things of Moses. For the divine Paul also writes, "To this day, when the "old covenant is read, a veil lies over their heart; and they have hated the divine decrees given through Christ. Therefore all spiritual food has been destroyed for them, not that it itself suffered destruction, but by no longer being available to those who have suffered, and, as far as they were concerned, not existing at all. But our Lord Jesus Christ distributes to those who believe in him the need to live luxuriously, and to revel in the good things from above. For it is written that "The Lord "will not let the soul of the righteous hunger, but he will overthrow "the life of the wicked. Heifers leaped at their mangers, treasures vanished, wine-presses were demolished, because the grain dried up. What shall we store up for ourselves? Herds of cattle wept, because there was no pasture for them, and the flocks of sheep vanished. And at times the God-inspired scripture attributes speech to irrational animals, artfully diversifying the natures of things into what is charming and elegant, and writing, as it were, in character the dispositions of which it would be fitting to think. Then what is the wonder, even if it should say that heifers happened to leap about, and herds of cattle to weep?

For as famine was unbearably oppressing them, perhaps they would have both leaped up and died, if they had perception of what was brought upon them. And he says that treasures have vanished and wine-presses have been demolished, perhaps of no deemed worthy of concern, because nothing was being gathered from the fields, but the sickle in the vineyard and on the grape-cluster was idle, and perhaps the ear of corn had withered in the fields, dry and fruitless. For this reason they say, "What shall we store up for ourselves? But that, as I said, along with the cultivated fruits, the grasses of the wilderness also perished together, he makes it clear, saying that the very flocks of sheep have vanished, utterly destroyed by famine, and deprived of their accustomed and most beloved pasture. And these things will also apply wisely to the misfortunes of the Jews, who have acted insolently, as I said, toward Christ the Savior of all. To you, O Lord, will I cry, for fire has devoured the beautiful places of the wilderness, and a flame has burned up all the trees of the field, and all the beasts of the plain have looked up to you, because the springs of waters have dried up, and fire has eaten up the beautiful places of the wilderness. By "beautiful places of the wilderness" he means perhaps those things growing of their own accord in the unplowed plains;

and by "trees of the field," the noble plants in gardens and parks, that are accustomed to bloom with the fruitful seasons; these things both the locust and the blight have almost devoured, as it were in the form of fire. He makes the prayer to God usefully and most skillfully, teaching that one must least of all seek the cessation of the misfortune from another, but to offer supplications only to the one who is able to save, and as the one who brings on out of wrath the things that are accustomed to cause grief. For he says that one must by no means think that such evils happen automatically, but rather that they have been brought upon them as from divine wrath; and this the God of all himself says to us through the voice of another prophet, "Shall there be evil in a city, which the Lord has not done? For none of the things accustomed to afflict either cities or countries would happen, if it were not done with God permitting it. For He saves whom He would choose, and delivers from evils. He persuades them, therefore, to seek release from the things that have caused grief from God, casting as far away as possible the notion that they ought to have needed the hand and help of the falsely named gods in their affairs. And he says that the springs of water have been dried up.

For with rain not watering the earth, and with blight added to this, and the locust armed, and the locust-larva jumping, and the caterpillar crawling, how was it doubtful that their means of life would completely and utterly come to nothing? And with the grass also being destroyed, it was somehow entirely necessary for the cattle also to suffer destruction. And I would say that perhaps also for the Jews who turn to God in the last times of the age, it would be fitting to say such words, being afflicted and lamenting in their lack of good things. For the good things for the mind have been consumed for them as if by fire, and a spiritual locust has devoured them, and the springs of water have been dried up. "For he commanded the "clouds not to rain rain upon them," according to what is written, and they have become an impassable and waterless land, which will not be inhabited. But concerning us who have been justified by faith, God proclaimed beforehand, and of the gifts through Christ he

indicated that the supply would be most abundant, saying, ”In that day the mountains shall drip with ”sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the ”springs of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord ”and shall water the torrent of the reeds;

and indeed also in another way, ”I am the Lord God, I will hearken to ”the God of Israel, and I will not forsake them, but I will open ”rivers on the mountains, and in the midst of the plains into marshes, ”and the thirsty land into aqueducts; therefore we are in these things. But if they should walk to repentance and look up to God, and they themselves also say, ”To you, Lord, I will cry,” they will receive the springs of water, and they will draw with us the spiritual water ”from the springs of salvation,” and they will be given to drink ”the torrent of delight” from God the Father, and they will have the fountain of life in their hearts. And there will be set before them for delight also the beautiful places of the wilderness, that is, a good and abundant pasture, to a knowledge of them turning away the divine and evangelical [teaching] understood in Christ. Blow the trumpet in Zion, proclaim on my holy mountain, and all the inhabitants of the land will be confounded, because the day of the Lord is present, because near is a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and mist. The form of the war is again described for us elegantly. And it would be true for both, whether it be understood perchance of the locust and the locust-grub, or whether one might take it of the Babylonians themselves.

For he says that since the war has already stepped inside the gates, and has been all but proclaimed throughout all the land of Zion, that is, in all of Judea, all things will be filled with confusion and fears. For the day of the Lord is present, that is, the matter is no longer only a prediction, but the sufferings are in sight, and they have come into the actual experience of what was long ago announced, from which it was far better to have chosen to turn to better things, and to shake off the experience of evils before the attack and its arrival. Therefore he does not permit them to shrink from repentance, but commands them to put away, as it were, their fallen state of mind and their sloth, and to turn quickly to diligence, and in general to the will to defend themselves, clearly by adding God to their side, and wiping away the charges of their ancient accusations by the practice of better things. For this reason he says the day of the Lord is near, on which they will be as in mist and darkness, fearing the famine from the locust, that is, the misery and disaster threatened upon them by the Assyrians. Like the dawn a numerous and strong people will be poured out upon the mountains; its like has not been from of old, and after it none will be added for years to come, for generations of generations. Before it a consuming fire, and behind it a burning flame;

like a paradise of delight is the land before its face, and behind it a plain of desolation, and there is no one who escapes it. He seems to call ’dawn’ either the dew at dawn, which, whenever it is poured all over the mountains, leaves nothing on them unwatered; or the first rays of the sun, and the immediate and initial shining of the day’s light, which almost spreads out upon the peaks of the mountains before all else, and reddens the hills. Thus he

says the strong people will be upon the mountains, perhaps the locusts, that is, by similarity to them, the Assyrian, understood henceforth as an incomparable multitude; for he says that its like has not been from of old, nor will it ever be. And since in the invasions of the locusts whatever falls in their way is immediately consumed, and if anything by chance should happen to be left over, this too is the work of those that follow the first; he said a consuming fire is what is before it, and a burning flame what is behind and follows. And I think an army of enemies would do this very thing. For those coming a little later will surely follow the arrogance and ruthlessness of those who have arrived first; and they will make the land like a paradise of delight, utterly shearing it bare, and squandering what is found. But the saying holds true also if it were applied to the locust itself.

Like the appearance of horses is their appearance, and like horsemen so will they pursue. As the sound of chariots on the tops of the mountains they will leap, and as the sound of a flame of fire consuming stubble, and as a numerous and strong people drawn up for battle. He says that the locust and the locust-grub, if they should be carried over lands and cities, will be in no way inferior to the most warlike horse; for it will leap upon the land in such a way as perhaps even to imitate the rattling of chariots. For they leap upon all the peaks of mountains, and they fly down upon every hill, and they produce a sound like that of a flame burning up stubble. For they say that the devouring in the fields is not done by them without a noise, but a certain bleating and discordant echo is produced by their teeth, as what falls into them is shattered, as if a wind were fanning a flame. But again to compare it to a crowd of enemies, the unseemly nothing; for it rushes in a multitude, and yields little to those who fight bravely in battle. For the thing is voracious and because of its immeasurable multitude not easily conquered, but rather even difficult to encounter. The same account could also be given concerning the Assyrians;

and if someone wished, perhaps, also concerning the expedition of the Romans themselves, who like locusts devoured Israel for having impiously transgressed against our Lord Jesus Christ, it would not be so bad. From his face peoples will be crushed. For, as I said, the thing is completely invincible and hard for men to conquer, an assault of the cankerworm and the locust. Every face like the burning of a pot. For it is true that by unbearable terrors and griefs at times even the bloom of faces withers and somehow blackens into ugliness, being all but changed in color by the disturbances of the mind. They will run like warriors, and like men of war they will scale the walls. For running down equally with the most warlike, being superior to hesitation and fears, they will even be raised above the walls, as if practicing a bold assault. And each will march in his own way, and they will not swerve from their paths, and each will not keep away from his brother. The locust is kingless, yet it marches out in order from a single command. And they say that they go in rows, and fly as if in formation, and are least of all separated, but so attend one another, as if they were brothers, nature itself awarding the mutual love. Weighed down in their weapons they will march.

And by weapons I suppose he means the teeth, by which they wage war, and the achievements as in battle, with the grass being consumed, and the crop falling, and plants with-

ering. And they will fall upon their darts, and they will not be finished. Locusts do not strike those being warred against with the points of darts, nor is a bow drawn by them; from where would it be? but they strike as it were with the destruction of edibles, and with the terrors of famine and want. But that for those who have fallen under such a calamity the loss of things in the fields would not suffice, but that having invaded their very homes and cities and troubling them terribly, they will have the army of locusts, that is, the Assyrian himself, he showed by saying And they will not be finished. It is as if he were to say, And this will not be the end of the wrath, but it would go even beyond; for he says: They will seize the city, and run upon the walls, and climb up on the houses, and enter through the windows like thieves. Before their face the earth will be thrown into confusion, and the heaven will be shaken, the sun and the moon will be darkened and the stars will not give their light.

You hear that they will fly down even upon the walls, and as if ravaging the grass itself, equally with those accustomed to clothes-stealing, they will burst in through windows, confusing peoples, and all but stirring up everything, so that heaven itself already seems to have been shaken, and the sun and moon, and indeed the stars, to have held back their own light as it were. And again in these things the account has become hyperbolic for us, showing the calamity to be both unbearable and very painful for those who inhabit the earth. But the account is accurate, even if it be understood again as about an army of men, if they should choose to overrun countries and a city. For, pouring over everything equally with the locusts, they ravage the fields, and they also afflict cities, being raised above walls and running into the houses themselves, and rivaling the terrors of an earthquake in their savagery. And the Lord will give his voice before the face of his power; for his camp is very great, for the works of his words are strong; because the day of the Lord is great, great and very manifest; and who will be sufficient for it? I have already said before, that the Prophet's aim is to show the calamity to be terrible and hard to bear, so that they might turn to willing to do better things, and indeed also to deliberate more prudently, those who have grieved the lawgiver by their deviations into wickedness.

For the excess of pain knows, it knows how to easily transfer some, as if by necessity, to choosing henceforth to do what is pleasing to the one who is able to save and has the strength to deliver. Therefore, the Lord, he says, will give his voice before the face of his power, practically acting as a general and inciting them as against enemies. For it would be fitting for no other, except for those who act as shield-bearers and are placed before the others, to stir up the fighting spirit and to consider the army camp their own. And through these things he subtly indicates that the terrors do not have a spontaneous attack, nor indeed have they simply happened by chance, but rather that they have been brought on by God, who is clearly grieved and is now justly punishing. And he terrifies them, saying both that the camp is very great, and that the works of his words are mighty. And it is impossible that what God should command to happen would not in every way and entirely come to pass. And indeed he said to one of the holy prophets—this was Jeremiah: "Are not my words like a burning fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock? For the word of God

penetrates as if through everything, and whatever he might speak, nothing withstands it, but rather even hard and resistant things yield; for it is easily shattered, and it gives way to the master's will, even unwillingly.

Therefore, great and manifest is the day, he says, on account of the report, which runs through all men, of the terrible things that will be brought upon them. And who will be able for it? That is, no one on earth would be so stubborn and strong as to be able to stand against the divine wrath. And the divine David was very wise when he cried out to God, "You are terrible, and who will stand against you because of your anger? And now says the Lord our God, Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and with weeping and with lamentation, and rend your hearts and not your garments; and return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and full of mercy, and repents of evils. Who knows if he will return and repent, and leave behind him a blessing, a sacrifice and a libation for the Lord our God? From this you might learn, and very clearly, that it was for no other reason that he set forth the narratives on high; and that he proclaims beforehand to them a disaster that is harsh and entirely difficult to endure, than so that he might henceforth persuade them to come to repentance. For he does not allow them to despair;

but he affirms, and very clearly, that if they should choose to think better things, and to correct their own ways at least in the second instance to what is pleasing to God, the things from his wrath will cease completely, and their affairs will pass over into the breadth of good order. And what the manner of both their return and of their prayer should be, he makes plain, saying thus, And now says the Lord our God, Return to me with all your heart. Let the things that are past be cast aside, he says, and let the things that have gone before depart into oblivion; appear better than yourselves in the second instance, propitiate God with fasting and toil, with lamentation and wailing. For it will surely follow for those who have chosen to do these things that they must henceforth be in comfort and luxury. For just as the end of ease, and of falling into pleasures, always concludes in wailing and punishment; so the outcome of gentleness and of the toils of repentance comes into the breadth of prosperity. Therefore, it is useful to weep over sins, and to be grieved according to God. For as the blessed Paul writes, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret. And Christ himself also blesses those "who mourn now, for they will be comforted. And indeed our wise Solomon also says something of this sort enigmatically:

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. However, it is necessary to consider this: how great the power of fasting is. It tames the Master, it calms his anger, it overturns punishment. For by tormenting ourselves, we very effectively, as it were, turn away the divine wrath that is raging and savage against us, and we easily restrain the hand of the one who strikes. For if it is true that by merely confessing our sins we are justified by God's pity, how could anyone doubt that by wasting ourselves away with the toils of ascetic practice, and as it were asking for justice, we will gain from God the forgiveness of our sins? Therefore, he commands them to mourn and to rend themselves,

not their garments at all, but rather to unfold spiritually the harsh and hardened heart into which the divine fear does not penetrate. So Paul writes to the Corinthians, ”You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return for the same—I speak as to children—you also be open. Therefore, it is necessary to widen the heart, as it were, for God, and almost to rend the mind, that it might receive what is His. For to feign grief by tearing one’s garments rashly and in vain would in no way benefit those who have chosen to do this; but opening the heart and storing up in it what is pleasing to God would bring no small gain;

for this thing will lead to salvation. And that they will not fail to achieve their purpose by making supplications, he confirms by saying that the Lord of all is both loving-kind and very merciful, compassionate and good, and repenting of evils. For even if He should choose to inflict evil on those who have sinned, yet He will be gentle, and not for long; for He easily changes to willing what is good. This, I say, is what it is to repent of evils. And the Prophet, usefully cutting short the rash counsel of those who despaired of salvation, says, Who knows if he will repent and leave a blessing behind him, that is, he will grant to those who turn back a share in a blessing, so that they may again offer a libation and a sacrifice to him, and rejoicing and being glad may light the thank-offerings. Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, choose the elders, gather the infants that suck the breasts, let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride from her bridal-canopy. Between the porch and the altar the priests, the ministers of the Lord, shall weep, and they shall say, Spare your people, O Lord, and give not your inheritance to reproach, that the nations should rule over them, lest they should say among the nations, Where is their God?

Through these words he very effectively rouses them to repentance, and usefully commands them to leave no means of diligence for this purpose untried. For he said it was necessary, using a clear and loud proclamation, to sanctify a fast, to proclaim a service, and to gather in the congregation those who ought to serve, it is clear that is, the grieved God of all. And these would be ”Young men and maidens, old men with children,” and in addition to these, newborn and suckling infants, and indeed bridegrooms, and newly-wedded brides, perhaps running out of bridal chambers still garlanded and refusing their marriage beds, disdaining luxury and drink, and embracing austerity; with applause curtailed, and songs and words of good omen, which it is the custom for some to utter sometimes for those who have married, being silent; and lamenting along with the bridegrooms. For what one of the wise men among us said is true: ”Music in a time of mourning is an inopportune tale. Therefore, when divine wrath is hanging over us, it is necessary to mourn, not indeed to love exulting in drinking and luxuries. For that reveling at the wrong time would not escape blame and justice, one of the holy prophets will make clear, saying of those from Israel: ”And the Lord of hosts called in that day for weeping and for mourning and for baldness and for girding with sackcloths, but they made for themselves gladness, slaughtering calves and sacrificing sheep, and saying, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

Therefore, one must turn to lamentations and tears when wrath is hanging overhead, and hav- Let drinking be cast aside. But the Prophet says that even the sacred and chosen race must join the mourners, and at the very foundations of the temple, and between the altar to wail earnestly, crying out and saying, Spare, O Lord, your people, and do not give your inheritance to reproach, for the nations to rule over them, so that they may not say among the nations, Where is their God? But if his discourse was only about the locust, why do they not rather ask for deliverance from famine and want? But they are terrified of falling into the hands of enemies, and they beg to be spared mockery and reproach. It is likely, therefore, and I would say even true, that in the riddles concerning the locust the invasion of the Assyrians was written of secretly. But if someone should wish to understand such things even of the locust itself, he would reasonably marvel at the economy of the prophetic decrees. For the very manner of the punishment all but cried out against the folly of Israel, and in addition against the weakness inherent in them. For they exchanged for ”gods that are not gods,” and forsaking the Creator of all things they have worshiped Baal. But behold, they consider the array of the locust unbearable, the locust larva is armed and they have fallen, they have no help from the falsely-named gods;

but those who are defeated by the locust larva and the locust, what cure could they still give to their worshipers if they were to fight against enemies, and were besieged by the phalanxes of the enemy?

Book 2

And the Lord was zealous for his land, and spared his people. And the Lord answered and said to his people, Behold, I am sending you the grain and the wine and the oil, and you shall be filled with them, and I will no longer give you over to reproach among the nations, and I will drive the one from the north away from you. Behold then the mercy running on their heels. For I think the tranquility anticipates the grief, and the grace of the one who pities anticipates the tear of repentance. For he not only pitied those who had acted wretchedly, but was rather zealous and raged against those who had caused grief, who also became ministers of the misery brought upon them. For the God of all somewhere commands the Babylonians, as being harsher than was necessary to those brought under the divine wrath. For he said that ”I gave them into your hands, but you did not give them mercy; and indeed also to the blessed prophet Zechariah, ”Thus says the Lord: I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great zeal, and with great wrath I am angry against the nations that are attacking, because while I was a little angry, they joined in for evil. Being zealous then for his people, he promises to supply them abundantly with the necessities of life, and a cheerfulness somehow equal to the preceding misfortune, and food to satiety;

and in addition to these, security and not being given into the hands of their enemies, nor indeed, having fallen into slavery to them, to live a pitiable life in misery. And in addition to these he promises to destroy the one from the north, that is, the Assyrian; for their country is more northerly and more towards the light. But if anyone should think that the invasion of the locust also came from the more northerly parts of Judea, there is nothing to prevent

thinking that the account is correct in this way too. But if for some the good things in the heart and the wealth of intelligible fruitfulness should be destroyed, as if by a swarm of demons leaping upon them like locusts, and the onslaught of principalities, powers and authorities—clearly of the evil ones—let him practice grief, let him meditate on repentance, let him weep before God. For he will hear at once from his loving-kindness one saying, Behold, I give you the grain and the wine and the oil. For he will show his heart as a land rich in corn, as a garden luxuriant with seasonable seeds, as a vineyard rich in grapes, and indeed He will make it fat with oil, according to what is sung in the Psalms, "You have anointed my head with oil. And He will drive away from it the one from the north, that is, the chilling satan, who does not allow those who have come under him to be fervent in spirit.

And Paul also said that "the love of the many will grow cold because lawlessness will be increased. But the acquaintances of Christ are fervent in spirit; and they in no way endure being chilled towards unseemly pleasures; "For they have crucified their own flesh with its passions and desires. And I will drive him into a waterless land, and I will destroy his face toward the first sea, and his hind parts toward the last sea; and his rottenness shall come up, and his stench shall come up, because he has magnified his works. He still forms the structure of the discourse, as also in the beginning, as if about the locust and the cankerworm, which He says will be destroyed, having been carried away by the will of God to the very extremities, perhaps, of the land of the Jews, and to come to such a stench that its spread would become burdensome to those throughout the whole country; but the discourse in no way changes from the need to understand such things again as being about the Babylonians. For in the southern parts of Jerusalem a deep desert extends, and it is bounded on the east and south by the Indian seas; and on the west and more northerly, by the neighboring sea of the Palestinians, which also washes the coast of the Egyptians. There He says the cankerworm and the locust will be destroyed, and their stench will become offensive, perhaps that of the locust, as I just said.

And the Babylonians were also destroyed, inhabiting the more northern country, and lying towards the east. And they were destroyed as we have often said in the times of the reign of Hezekiah, and the stench of the corpses was unbearable, so that the land was cleansed with difficulty in seven months, and was rid of the rottenness of the corpses. For so says the prophet Ezekiel somewhere. That the land of the Babylonians is inclined to the more northern parts would be clear, as God says through the voice of the saints to those of the blood of Israel who were carried away into captivity: "Ho, ho, flee from the land of the north, says the Lord; be saved to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon. And Christ, having driven out the locust from us ourselves, I mean the spiritual locust, that is, the utterly wicked swarms of demons, has destroyed them, casting them as it were into the depths of the sea; for He has shut them up in Hades and in the recesses of the abyss, and henceforth their rottenness and stench have come up, and have become to us burdensome and hated, although formerly they did not seem to be such; for though satan is foul-smelling,

we have now at last recognized that he is such. For we wretches thought him to be fragrant and lovely, when, entangled in the bonds of wickedness, we had fallen under his hand.

But when Emmanuel appeared to us, crying out and saying, ”I am a flower of the plain, a lily of the valleys,” then at last, having been called to share in the fragrance that is in Him, we condemned the stench of that one. Be of good courage, O land; rejoice and be glad, because the Lord has done great things. Be of good courage, you beasts of the field, because the plains of the wilderness have sprung up, because the tree has brought forth its fruit, the vine and the fig tree have given their strength. And you, children of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the Lord your God, because He has given you food for righteousness, and He will rain on you the early and the latter rain, as before, and the threshing floors shall be filled with wheat, and the wine presses shall overflow with wine and oil. It is a custom for the holy prophets, from particular goods, and as to a few, to carry the discourse to what is universal and more general; and these are the things through Christ. Therefore the discourse now proceeds again to this for us. For when was it given that the earth should be of good courage; and when again did the Lord do great things with us?

If not when the Word, being God, became man, so that by flooding the world under heaven with good things from above, he might be found by those who believe in him ”As a river of peace, as a torrent” of delight, as early and late rain, and a giver of all spiritual fruitfulness. Then indeed then, even for the most foolish, who are also called beasts of the field, a certain spiritual grass sprang up, the word of the teachers; then the fields of the desert sprouted. and he calls the Church a desert according to what was said about it in the prophets: ”Rejoice, thirsty desert, let the desert rejoice, ”and blossom as a lily. And its fields would be the leaders of the peoples and those who know how to teach, who bear the mind as if gushing forth and very well-adorned with flowers with the divine gifts from heaven, and breathing sweetly with the flowers of doctrines, and as if crowned with newly-appeared grass. These nourish the mind of those who have been made like beasts, so that they may ascend to a human-like understanding. And he said that the tree also bore its fruit, the vine and the fig tree to give forth their strength, the solid word, I think, of the teachers, in which there is sweetness, and in addition to this also that which knows how to gladden, comparing it to the fruits of the fig and the vine.

And it would fit very reasonably, for those still thicker in mind and having a beast-like dullness, to be fed the lowlier learning, that which grows as in the form and power of grass among those who teach the small things, but for those already perfect, that which is already understood on high, and the fruit as if blossomed on beautiful trees, that concerning the holy and consubstantial Trinity, or of ethical instruction, that which is in the height of contemplations. Therefore, he calls those ones beasts, but the more perfect ones children of Zion, whom he also commands to rejoice in the Lord their God. For all our gladness is Christ, from whom and through whom is all fulfillment of good things, and an abundant supply of heavenly gifts for those who love him, understood as in early and late fruits and as in wheat filling the threshing floor, and as in wine overflowing the winepress, and as

in gushing oil. And it must be known that indeed according to the manner of mystical fulfillment the promise is true. For it has been given to us as in rain, the living water of holy baptism, and as in wheat, the bread of life, and as in wine, the blood; and the need for oil has also been brought forward, contributing to the perfection of those justified in Christ through holy baptism.

And I will restore to you for the years that the locust has eaten, and the cankerworm, and the blight, and the caterpillar, my great army which I sent among you, and you shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and you shall praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. Therefore, as far as the account suited to historical narratives is concerned, for the preceding attacks of the locust he promises a completely equal-in-strength and equal-in-share bounty, and he says the provision of food will be more abundant than the affliction that happened to them at that time. But if the word of the prophecy should be understood spiritually, we say, that as satan had devoured us, and as in the order of the caterpillar and the locust and indeed also of the blight the sinful spirits had unbearably destroyed us into manifold forms of passions, we have remained dry and fruitless, naked and stripped of all good, not having ethical virtue in our mind, not illumined by dogmatic contemplation, but as if destroyed by famine, and simply deprived of all fruitfulness. but since we have been enriched by Christ to be courageous; for we have conquered the world with him, and "He has given us to tread upon serpents and scorpions;

then indeed then we also had the spiritual rains, early and late, I mean both the instruction of the Law and the exhortation of the Gospel, then we also blossomed into righteousness and had the fruits of life, then also having eaten we are filled and we glorify as Master our own Savior Christ, proclaiming him as a worker of wonders, and as one who bestows on those who love him things beyond word and hope. And we have known absolutely no other besides him. And we have been taught to say from a good mind, "Lord, besides you we know no other; we name your name. But see how the God of all things all but laughs at and mocks human affairs, calling the caterpillar his great power, which he says he has also sent against them. And of course we do not say that the caterpillar is truly a power of God, and a great one at that, but he says something like this to those who could not bear the punishment from it: O terrible and arrogant ones, who take no account of offending me; I am not seen sending down fire from heaven upon you, I have not sent thunder or hail, nor brought on anything else of the things raised on high and especially those most fitting to the glory of God. a wretched multitude of most insignificant worms has risen up against the country, and you have been thrown into confusion by it, you have lamented and been destroyed;

perhaps then the caterpillar is very great, and I will reckon it as my great power also. So then the statement is a characterization, and as it were in laughter, with God all but mocking those accustomed to being contemptuous, as if, should he choose to punish them, even a caterpillar would be sufficient for this instead of great and invincible strength. Let not heretics laugh broadly then, nor let them trifle with the glory of the Only-begotten, as

though, since the caterpillar was also named a great power, even if he himself is also called the power of God, he should be reckoned equal to the worm. For the wretched ones have dared to slip into this wretchedness of thought. And my people shall not be ashamed forever; and you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and I am the Lord your God, and there is no other besides me; and all my people shall no more be ashamed forever. He clearly promises the manner of the economy in the flesh, and that he will live together with those on earth, having sent himself into emptiness, and having become as we are, that is, man. For then he was in the midst of Israel, and we escaped shame and were delivered from dishonor, death having fallen, sin having been taken away, true knowledge having been introduced. for we no longer worship "the creature rather than the Creator," and we have accepted absolutely no other God besides him.

Therefore we have also been enriched, as in sure hope, with both life and glory and a life for long ages, a way of life in sanctification and holiness. And it shall be after these things, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions; and also upon my male servants and upon my female servants in those days I will pour out of my spirit. Behold, he clearly promises to bestow the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, that is, an abundant supply, not selectly upon one or perhaps two prophets, but simply upon all those worthy to receive. which indeed we say was accomplished when Christ was raised, and had destroyed the power of death. For as a first-fruit, as it were, of this venerable and admirable grace he placed in the holy disciples, both breathing on them and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit. For it was necessary, it was necessary for the mystagogues of the Church, and those who would be teachers under the sun, and indeed before others, to be beautified by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and having become, as it were, a first-fruit of those called through faith into sanctification, to be gilded with divine and heavenly grace.

And indeed on the days of Pentecost, when the disciples were gathered together in one house, and were offering their customary prayers to God, it happened "Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and behold, there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed, and it sat upon each one of them, and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. and they spoke forth prophesying, that is, both understanding and speaking the testimonies concerning Christ through the holy prophets, and those things by which it was likely that the hearers, being very well persuaded, would readily come to obedience, that the time of good pleasure is now at hand, and that the things formerly announced concerning Christ through the law and the prophets have now come to their fulfillment. Therefore they prophesied, speaking in every tongue, God proclaiming this also beforehand through the voice of the saints. For it is written, "For with other tongues and with "the lips of others I will speak to this people, and not even so "will they believe. Understanding this, the divine Paul said that speaking in many tongues was given as a sign to the Jews. And that when the Holy Spirit had descended from heaven, there were very many who were filled with the spirit of prophecy, Paul will make clear, writing: "Let two or three prophets "speak, and let the others discern.

But if a revelation is made," he says, "to another who is seated, let the first be silent. "For you can all prophesy one by one. For in the past, because of the great perversity of Israel who was led astray, God said: "Behold, I am sending a famine on the land, not a famine "of bread, nor a thirst for water; but a famine of hearing the word "of the Lord. And they shall wander from east to west, "seeking the word of the Lord, and they shall not find it. And to the blessed Ezekiel: "And I will make your tongue "cleave to the roof of your mouth, and you shall be mute, and you shall not be to them a man who reproves, because they are a rebellious house. But since, according to the voice of the Psalmist, "God is the Lord, and has appeared "to us; for our Lord Jesus Christ has shone upon us, forgiving accusations and delivering from charges, and stopping the mouth of sin; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has now been given, God gladdening human nature, and crowning it with the glory from above and from the beginning, and benevolently bringing it back again to that state in which it was in the beginning, when sin had not yet entered. For we will not find Adam, before he had transgressed the divine commandment, to be devoid of the prophetic spirit; but as one who had walked firmly and was still established, and adorned with the good things of nature.

And indeed when God, having formed the woman, brought her to him, although he had heard from no one who she was or from where she was, or in what way she had been formed, he immediately declared: "This is "now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; "she shall be called woman," or according to the Hebrew version, 'man-ess', "because she was taken out of her man. But the grace given to man was inactive, yet it was renewed in Christ, who is the second Adam. But in what way was it renewed? For inasmuch as the Son is God and from God by nature—for He was truly begotten of God the Father—the Spirit is His own and in Him and from Him, just as it is also understood to be of God the Father; but inasmuch as He became man and appeared as one of us, He is said to have the Spirit as something brought upon Him. Indeed, it descended upon Him in the form of a dove when, having become as one of us, as I said, He was baptized for our sake as one of us. Then His own Spirit is said to have been given to Him from above, because of His humanity, and this is the emptying. And it should be understood in this way, and not otherwise: "Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, so that we by His poverty might become rich.

For, as I said, the Spirit was given to Adam in the beginning, but it did not remain in human nature; for it turned aside to transgression, and slipped into sin, and grew sick with every kind of impurity. But since the Only-begotten, though He was rich, became poor, as I said, and with us as a man He received His own Spirit as something brought upon Him, "it remained upon Him; for so said the blessed John the Evangelist; so that it might henceforth dwell in us permanently, as it had already remained in the second first-fruit of our race, that is, Christ; for on account of this He was also named the second Adam, through whom we are re-created to something incomparably better, and we gain very well the regeneration through the Spirit, no longer having the first, the according to the flesh, I say, which leads to corruption and sin; "For the mind "of the flesh is death," according to what is written; but the one from above and second, the one from God through the Spirit, if it is true that

”Not of blood, nor of the will of man, but we have been born of God. It was necessary, then, it was necessary for those counted among the children of God to be enriched with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

And Christ has worked this also in us, and the divine Peter will confirm it, saying, ”Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the ”Holy Spirit, he has poured out ”this which you see and hear. For as a man He receives from the Father what is in Him by nature; and He pours it out richly upon us, because He is also God by nature, even though He became flesh. And He pours it out upon all flesh. And this is clear, that it is not upon those of the circumcision alone, but upon all without exception who are called through faith, whether they be from Greek error, whether small and great, slaves and free, barbarians and Scythians. For the grace of salvation in Christ is set before those throughout the whole world under heaven, because He Himself is ”the Expectation of the nations. But if some, speaking foolishly, should say that cattle are also called flesh, being delirious, let them now somehow hear, that the scope of the prophecy extends only to the human race, and not ”Is it for oxen that God is concerned? as the wise Paul also said. And he says that sons and daughters will prophesy, indicating through these things the abundance of grace and its equality for all.

For the female sex would not be rejected by God, if it eagerly does the things that seem good to Him, and indeed also chooses to think, nor indeed unhonored, or without a share of holiness, if it is to be approved through faith and goodness in works; Why? For it too has been deemed worthy of grace and mercy, and it receives ”the pledge of the ”Spirit” from God, and has been counted among the children. He says, then, that the old men shall dream dreams, and the young men shall see visions, speaking, as I think, of the older age as that which is preeminent and superior in the quantity of virtue, and as it were grown gray with splendid achievements, and distinguished and admired for its most perfect wisdom, such as was the divine Paul, who saw in a dream a certain man from Macedonia, begging him and saying, ”Come over into ”Macedonia and help us; for so it is written in the Acts of the wise apostles. And a certain Ananias, one of those approved in the faith, saw a vision concerning the blessed Paul himself. For when he had come to Damascus, Christ having appeared to him on the road, then by the flash of light his sight was taken away, he was healed through Christ. And again it is written thus:

”Now there was a disciple at Damascus named ”Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, ’Ananias.’ ”And he said, ’Here I am.’ And the Lord said to him, ’Rise ”and go to the street called Straight, and inquire ”in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul.’” Do you hear how He spoke to Ananias in a vision? For he was perhaps strong in faith, and a young man in disposition, having a vigorous will for what is good, unbreakable in strength, meaning spiritual strength, of course. But in a dream the Macedonian seemed to offer his prayers to the blessed Paul; for he was an old man in mind, aged in intellect, and full of wisdom from above. And the wise John also addressed those sanctified in Christ through faith: ”I am writing to you, fathers, ”because you know him who is from the beginning. I

am writing to you, young men, because "you are strong, and you have overcome the evil one. He promises, therefore, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on those who serve Him. And who might such people be, again? Or surely those who submit the neck of their mind to the evangelical decrees, having departed from the worship in type, and having ceased from Hellenic deceit, according to him who says? And I will give wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. At the impieties of the Jews, those committed against Christ, that is, even the nature of the elements was distressed, and creation, as it were, lamented, seeing its own Master insulted, and the divine temple, almost grieving along with those who mourned, was torn apart; for it is written, that "The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom; and the sun, checking its own light and withdrawing its ray, did not deign to shine any longer upon those on the earth. For it made darkness from the sixth hour until the ninth hour, and the rocks were also split, and perhaps something unusual also happened concerning the circle of the moon, so that it seemed to have been turned into blood as well. Now, such a thing is passed over in silence by the holy Evangelists, but belief from the prophecy is certainly trustworthy. But that the signs occurred not in the sun alone by the commands of the Creator, but that, as it were, the whole creation had shifted to what was for it unseemly and unusual, would be clear from God saying through the voice of Isaiah, "And I will clothe heaven with darkness, and I will make its covering as sackcloth.

And when he says heaven, he means by all means everything in heaven, and that it is clothed as with a sackcloth of darkness, mourning and grieving, and as it were crying out by its appearance. So then, I would say these are the signs in heaven; but as for those on earth, the blood and fire, and vapor of smoke would, I think, probably signify the calamities of the Jews, which the most grievous war, that at the hand of the Romans, heaped upon them. For their entire country was besprinkled with blood. And together with the cities, the famous temple itself was about to be burned down, and the shaken houses to be filled with smoke. And that such things will happen to the Jews even before the great and glorious day, on which the divine judgment seat of Christ will be set before all, who gives to each according to his works, he has indicated by saying, "before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. And it should be noted in addition to these things, that our Lord Himself, when asked by the wise apostles about the end of the age, and about the destruction of Jerusalem, mixed the signs, so that perhaps it would henceforth be unknown which ones, in fact, will happen. And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved;

for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be one who is saved, as the Lord has said, and those preaching the good news whom the Lord has called. He says, then, that there will surely and in every way be signs and wonders in heaven and on earth because of the unholy deeds of the Jews. Nevertheless, even so, the things of God's gentleness will be set before them, namely salvation through faith, justification in Christ, the pledge of the Spirit, sanctification, the hope of the kingdom of heaven, with God forgiving them, without remembrance

of evils, even their crimes against Christ. And indeed the divine Peter strongly accused the people of the Jews, crying out explicitly, that they had killed the Savior and Redeemer of all by hanging him on a tree, and "denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to them. And he added to these things, "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. Repent therefore, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; for the promises are for you and for your children. Therefore, even if signs and wonders should occur, he says, everyone who would profess the Lord of heaven and earth as master will be saved.

And that the word of salvation was destined to be spoken first in the very Lord-slaying Jerusalem, and would thus also be carried to all the nations through the holy Apostles, would be clear, from the Prophet saying, In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be one who is saved, and one who preaches the good news, whom the Lord he has been called; for as the divine Paul writes "No one takes the honor upon himself, "but he who is called by God. Therefore the blessed disciples were called, chosen from all, and they did not come to the apostolate as deserters, like that frenzied Pharisee, that is, the lawyer, who, thrusting himself into the boasts of discipleship, added, saying, "Lord, I will "follow you wherever you go. For this reason the Savior himself pushed him aside, as he was troubling him in vain and was not even close, so to speak, to the evangelical practices, saying, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have "nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to "lay his head; but to those who were fit for the apostolate he called out, saying, "Come after me, and I will make you "fishers of men. Indeed, he raised up Matthew from the very workshops of greed, commanding him to follow; and he has called, according to his own will, those who were likely to be most able to accomplish, and very vigorously, what seemed good to him, even if the inventor and father of lawlessness snatched away the betrayer.

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there for my people and my heritage Israel, who were scattered among the nations, and they divided up my land, and they cast lots for my people, and gave the young boys to prostitutes, and sold the young girls for wine and drank. After the ten tribes broke away from the kingdom of Rehoboam, and they and all of Israel were divided into both Ephraim and Judah, the blessed prophets came to be. And they spoke on behalf of both, as the whole kingdom extended for them until the times of the captivity. But after the return from there to Jerusalem, and the return that happened in due time, Haggai and Zechariah and indeed Malachi prophesied to Israel; and Ezra also appears to have foretold a few things of that time, and of what happened in his own times. Therefore, the account mentions the aforesaid matter, which happened not in the time of the ancient prophets, but when they had just returned to Judea, after Cyrus had released the people. And what the noteworthy matter is, and what indeed happened, we will say as we are able, bringing forward the writing of Ezra as proof.

Therefore, since those from Israel had just returned to Judea and had a respite from the tributes and the labors of slavery, they turned to indolence, and were not secure observers and guardians of the things decreed through Moses. For though the law forbade anyone to lie with the daughters of foreigners, they took little thought of the oracles given to them from God and mingled with foreign women. And Ezra, being very distressed at this, tore his garment, and lamented over those of Israel, and urged them to separate from the foreign women. And they were persuaded to do this, fearing perhaps the things that come from wrath, and they made the experience of past events their teacher concerning what would happen to them if they did not choose to honor the law. But when the multitude of foreign women had been cast out and had departed from Jerusalem, then necessarily the neighboring nations were embittered to anger, since they had been not moderately insulted through these things, and in addition to this they perhaps reasoned that other thing among themselves.

For since they were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and were also eager to raise up the divine temple itself, they were inflamed to anger by the arrows of envy, and they attempted to hinder them, considering this, as was likely, that if Israel should again be in its former powers, and have its cities walled, and the God of all defending them, since indeed for those worshipped in a temple according to ancient customs, will again prevail and will be unbearable to all everywhere, and will impose tributes on some of its neighbors, and they will certainly be captured, their lands being ravaged, if any should choose even late just to look against it. For this reason some prepared to restrain them from the constructions both on the temple itself, and on the walls. But since their effort was fruitless, God making straight the way of their undertakings for those from Israel, they armed themselves then and wished to wage war; but they were captured and have fallen with God defending them. The gathering of those assembled for this purpose took place in the valley of Jehoshaphat; this is a place not many stades distant from Jerusalem, in the eastern parts. They say it is bare, and suitable for cavalry. That some of the more powerful envied those from Israel who were raising the divine temple, but profited nothing, the blessed Esdras will teach, saying ”But in the times of Artaxerxes the ”king of the Persians they wrote against the inhabitants ”in Judea and in Jerusalem:

Belemus and ”Mithridates and Tabellius and Rathumus and Beeltethmus ”and Geeltethmus the scribe, and the rest of those ”allied with them, living in Samaria and the other ”places. The meaning of the writing was something like this, that Jerusalem was a city having an unbreakable power, yielding in no way to the kings of other lands; but rather rising up against them and very vigorously, which if it should happen to return again to its ancient state, it would heap up cares even for the successive rulers of Babylon. But, as I said, those who had written such things profited absolutely nothing. And some of those in Samaria urged those who had been resettled from Babylon to work with and build with them. But they were not willing, and for this reason they grew exceedingly weary, resisting their plots. For it is written thus in Esdras again ”And the enemies of ”Judah and Benjamin heard that the sons of the captivity were building ”a house to the Lord God of Israel;

and they drew near to Zoro-"babel and to the heads of the clans, and said "to them 'We will build with you, because we seek your God "as you do, and to him we sacrifice from "the days of Sarsathus king of Asour who brought us "hither.' And Zerubbabel and Jesus and "the rest of the heads of the clans of Israel said to them "'It is not for you and us to build a house to our God, "for we ourselves together will build to the Lord our God, "as Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.' And "the people of the land were weakening the hands of the people of Judah, "and hindered them from building, and hiring counselors against "them, to frustrate their purpose. But they plotted, but their attempt was also unsuccessful. And that when the secret plot was then failing, all the neighboring nations went to the law of war, campaigning, and were captured and have fallen, you may learn from this. For he writes thus again also in the second book. "And "it came to pass when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs "and the Ammonites heard that the restoration went forward on the walls of Jeru-"salem, and that the breaches began to be stopped, "it seemed very evil to them. And they all gathered together "to go out and to fight against Jerusalem. "And to the Lord our God, he says, we prayed, "and we set a watch against them day and night "because of them.

And Judah said, The "strength of the enemies has been broken, and the great multitude. And in these passages the memory of the valley is passed over in silence; but the account of tradition brings this back to us. And the prophecy is worthy of belief, naming for us the very place of the war. We say that he is mindful of this history, when he says that he will gather all the nations into the valley of Jehoshaphat. And it is clear that he will not lead them unwillingly, but that he will not prevent them from coming willingly. but to be judged against These things are concerning Israel and his own inheritance, which they divided among themselves, plundering perhaps the remnants of the Babylonians, and attacking them in the time of their affliction, and giving the little boys to harlots, and putting the girls forth to unusual fornication, and as it were prostituting them to the licentiousness of others, then collecting the wages from this for luxuries and drunkenness. But we say that something of this kind has also happened to us, having understood the redemption through Christ.

For he delivered us who were captives, and serving under a tyrant, I mean the bitter Satan, and he brought us back as it were into a holy land, into an evangelical commonwealth, into a most docile state, into a walled city, the spiritual Jerusalem, "which is the Church of the living God," having prepared it to be built, like precious stones "into a holy temple, into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. But by the toils of envy the unholy multitude of demons was inflamed, and in addition to these, those who fight against the doctrines of the truth, and they have made many assaults against the saints, but they have done no harm, as God was their champion, and Christ encouraged them saying, "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. There is, then, among the Jews a baseless and old wives' tale, that at some time in the valley of Jehoshaphat there will be a judgment from God against all, after the dead have been raised. They suppose that those throughout the whole world under heaven will render an account for what was done to them. But their notion would by no means fail to deserve ridicule, since the divinely

inspired scripture says that the things of the prophecy have been fulfilled, and that the neighboring nations have paid the penalty to God, when the war occurred in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

For, as I said, they leaped upon the remnants of Israel, although they had endured a very great deal of affliction; for they had been given over to the Babylonians. And what have I to do with you, O 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 quickly I will return your recompense upon your heads, because you took my silver and my gold, and you brought my choice and beautiful things 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 own borders. Therefore every nation was gathered together against Israel, Moabites, Idumeans, Jebusites, Ammonites, and the rest. But I think the Damascenes and Tyrians and those called Philistines took the lead in counsel and undertakings, even as far as Gath itself, which is also called a city of foreigners. Therefore also to them the God of all says, And what have I to do with you, O Tyre and Sidon and all Galilee of the foreigners? For what pretexts for savagery, he says, having, do you unholily add to the burden of afflicted Israel, already immoderately weighed down by the calamities from the Babylonians, attacking them bitterly and as it were mocking me, who am perhaps saving them, and defending yourselves, and daring to speak the words of enemies against me, or rather even to do so now?

Therefore not long hence you will receive your recompense. It will come upon your own head; for you will pay the penalty to me who will judge you in the valley of Jehoshaphat. And he accuses them of having plundered the choice things of the temple, and having despoiled the golden vessels, and having dedicated them to the honor of their own gods. An intolerable and bitter thing, and not without power to grieve God. For he said, "My glory I will not give to another, nor my praises to graven images. For what else could it be to adorn the temples of idols with divine offerings, than all but to cry out and say that the God of all is in second place, while they are in the position of preeminence and know how to save their own worshippers? And it is not enough, he says, for your impiety to strip my temple of its divine offerings, but you also the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel you have sold to the sons of the Greeks. And it is likely that something like this happened, that some from Israel were carried away into the lands of the nations, sold by Tyrians, perhaps, or even by others, for whom trade is their pursuit, and love of gain their practice.

The saying would also be fitting, as it seems to me, for the leaders of impious heresies, who, all but snatching away the sons of the Church, sell them to the wisdom of the Greeks, so that being filled with complex ideas, they might become bitter seekers, or rather, disobedient and wicked, and perverters of what is right, although they ought to live with a simple nature and study the unadulterated word of truth. Therefore, they cause the deceived to be outside their own boundaries. But the boundaries, as it were, and the country of the children of the Church, are the knowledge of the truth and that which tends toward the correctness

of anything precisely examined. And they might rightly be called golden and silver vessels, and the chosen of God, who are truly resplendent with faith, and gilded with the boasts of good works, and shining with the beauty of piety. But if any of these brilliant ones should be caught in the snares of deceit, the inventors of the deceit will certainly hear: You have taken My silver and My gold, and you have brought My chosen things into your temples. And this is a terrible and inescapable charge. "For by sinning against the brethren, for whom Christ died," they wrong Christ Himself, to whom they will by all means and in every way pay the penalties for the offenses committed against Him. Behold, I will raise them up from the place where you sold them, and I will return your recompense upon your own heads.

And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them into captivity to a nation far off, for the Lord has spoken. He says most clearly that the schemes of the Tyrians and the inventions of their wickedness against those from Israel will be ineffective, and that the calamity will, as it were, turn back upon the wrongdoers, and they will be caught in equal evils, with an equivalent punishment all but falling upon the heads of those who have committed impious offenses. For just as they captured the race from Judah and then gave them to the slave-traders, telling them to carry them off to a distant nation, so, he says, their own children will be sold by the hand of the Jews; and that such things will by all means and in every way come to pass, he confirms by saying, For the Lord has spoken. And in no way is anything that God utters unfulfilled. And indeed Christ said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. And these things historically;

but if someone should choose to examine the spiritual things and be filled with the hidden meanings, he will understand again that both the children of the Greeks who are puffed up with their pseudo-wisdom, and indeed heretics who, with complex inventions of deceit, attribute some seeming importance to themselves, lead away some of the more simple from the right and blameless faith which they would have from God, and all but binding them with the snares of deceit, and taking them as their spear-won portion, they carry them as far as possible from the boundaries of truth. But the God of all renders their evil deed ineffective, and releases the deceived, but brings the sons by learning of the deceivers to those from Judah; and these again might be understood as the divine disciples, and all who speak the mystery of Christ; and delivering them from their error, they lead them into a good and lovely servitude, that under Christ, obviously, and they seize them like captives, transferring them into their own state and mind, which is most distant from that of the others. For a great distance is seen between the mind of the saints and that of such men. And Christ is also said to have taken as captives those who were transferred from Hellenic deceit to the knowledge of the God who is by nature. For the blessed David said, "Having ascended on high, You led captivity captive, You received gifts among men.

Proclaim these things among the nations, sanctify war, rouse the warriors, bring forth and come up, all you men of war, beat your plowshares into swords and your sickles into spears; let the weak say, I have strength. Assemble and enter, all you nations from round about,

and gather there; let the gentle be a warrior. Let them be roused, and let all the nations go up to the valley of Josaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations from round about. Having threatened the nations with calamities in return, and a punishment equal to their unholy deeds, he now turns his discourse to his own worshipers, whom he commands to be by no means cowardly and unmanly, but rather vigorous, and, so to speak, to use a piercing proclamation, to gather the nations for battle, and to urge them on eagerly to this, even if they should happen to choose a quiet and peace-loving life. This was to show them as most courageous, and to persuade them to trust in him, because they would be superior to their enemies with him as their shield-bearer. Therefore, he says, Proclaim these things among the nations, and sanctify war. And what, again, is sanctify? Consecrate it to me in a way, for I will be the warrior, and what is done will be for my glory; for they will die who have ascribed my glory to wood and stones. For everything that is said to be sanctified is always brought to the glory of God.

For this reason he says, sanctify war, rouse the warriors, and indeed you cry out, he says, Bring forth all you men of war. Let the farmer cease from his most beloved cares and labors; let him reforge the plow into a sword, and the sickle into a spear. For it is not the time for farming, but for giving satisfaction to a dishonored God. And if anyone should be weak, he says, let him not make cowardice an excuse, but let him even lie, if he wishes, and say that he is able. For let him not be far from his weapons. Therefore, gather, all of you, he says, who are around Judea, and let the gentle be a warrior, that is, even if one is among the meek, let him also be a warrior. It is as if he were saying, with absolutely no one left behind, whether he is a farmer, or cowardly and unmanly—for this is the weak man—or if he is gentle and unwarlike, let him be sharpened for battle. For I will excuse no one; but I judge everyone in the valley of Josaphat. And I judge means that I will be a powerful Judge, inflicting punishments and sentences on those who plundered my land, who cast lots for Israel, and gave the little boys to prostitutes, sold the little girls, and drank them down like wine.

Our Lord Jesus Christ might proclaim such things again to the enemies of the Church, who, though they should come in great multitudes and campaign against the saints with all their force, will surely fall with him as their shield-bearer, as he overthrows them, and fortifies his own worshipers with faith and hope and love, and with the good things from his own gentleness. Send forth sickles, for the harvest is at hand; enter, tread, for the winepress is full; the vats overflow, for their evils have multiplied. Sounds have resounded in the valley of judgment, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of judgment. The sun and the moon will be darkened, and the stars will withdraw their light. But the Lord will cry out from Zion, and from Jerusalem he will give his voice, and the heaven and the earth will be shaken. As for the neighboring nations of the land of the Jews, I mean the Arabs and Tyrians, the Gittites and Philistines, the Moabites and Idumeans, the Ammonites and Gergesenes, he commanded them, as if using a trumpet, to gather in the valley of Josaphat, as those who would very soon die and suffer bitter penalties from the one judging;

but now he incites those of Israel to an invincible zeal and an irresistible courage, and indeed he commands them, as it were, to leap upon those who have been gathered, that it is necessary he says that they are seen as most bold, courageous and youthful, not terrified by the fears of war, nor indeed as going into battle at all, but rather considering the matter a luxury, and recording it among their delights and rejoicing equally with those who gather the good fruit from the vines. For this reason, he says, Send forth sickles, for the harvest is at hand; using "send forth" instead of "send out" and "stretch out," just as, of course, those who are accustomed to harvest grapes do; for they will lie ready for destruction, prepared for being cut down. Let the enemy be shorn, he says, like a cluster of grapes from a vine; let him be trodden as in winepresses, lying in a heap underfoot. For go in, he says, and tread. Because the winepress is full, that is, the multitude of the nations has been gathered for destruction, there is nothing to prevent them from being under your feet. the vats overflow; and by this he signifies the great abundance of those gathered to be trodden down. For in the abundance of grape clusters, the wine often overflows even the presses themselves. Therefore, by saying The vats overflow, he indicates the multitude of those lying underfoot. Sounds have resounded in the valley of judgment. And what is this?

It is the custom for the holy prophets to announce future events, and at times to be in the very visions of the events, so as to seem to already see what is being done and to hear voices. And so the divine prophet Jeremiah, proclaiming beforehand what would happen to the Jews, and that Nebuchadnezzar, stirred to battle, would utterly destroy them, was caught up into the grim spectacle of the war itself, and as if having seen an countless multitude of the dead, said, "Woe is me, for my soul faints over the "slain. Having experienced something of this sort, as I think, the blessed Joel perhaps received into his ears the din of war; for this reason he says, Sounds have resounded in the valley of judgment. And he calls the place of the war the valley of judgment, as if the nations were gathered in it for no other reason than to pay bitter penalties; and by "resounding sounds" he means here either the wailings of the falling, or the shouts of the victors. For it happens in wars that the falling groan, while the conquerors exult over the fallen, and boast very much. And he says that the sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars themselves will be without light. And not at all as if the elements themselves will suffer this at that time, but as if the war creates darkness, and puts a kind of mist before the eyes of the vanquished.

For the terror of death always darkens, and the magnitude of unexpected calamity dulls the mind, and like gloom it blackens the heart with excessive sufferings. And he says that the Lord will cry out, as one who is present and fighting alongside, and like a general urging the men of Israel against the enemy. It would be especially fitting for the time of the resurrection to say that the Lord will cry out from Zion. Because, as the divine Paul says, "The Lord "Himself will descend from heaven with a command, with the voice of an archangel, and with "the trumpet of God, and the dead "in Christ will be raised incorruptible. The law of Moses also prefigured this, for it commanded the men of Israel to blow the trumpet at the new moon. And the new moon might be understood as a type, and a very clear one, of the future and new age after the first; but the trumpet, of the piercing sound of the archangel's

voice, of the trumpet from God, which will raise all who lie in the earth, sounding something extraordinary and vocal. It should be known that the Lord Himself also, performing the miracle concerning Lazarus, came to the tomb, and as the Evangelist says, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come "forth. But how might this be understood, when God says through the prophet, "He will not quarrel, nor cry out, nor will his voice "be heard outside?

Therefore, a sign of the piercing trumpet, and of the sound from it at the last times, I say, and from heaven, was the Savior's use of a loud voice when raising Lazarus. But he The Lord will spare his people, and the Lord will strengthen the sons of Israel. and you will know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion in my holy mountain; and Jerusalem will be holy, and foreigners shall no longer pass through her. When the crimes of apostasy were charged against those of Israel, and they were worshipping the golden calves, and saying impiously "These are your gods, O Israel, who "brought you up from the land of Egypt," then they were both weak and vulnerable, and were set forth as the readiest prey for their enemies; for this reason they were also sent into captivity. But since they have been shown mercy, and have inhabited their own land, with God relaxing His wrath, they have henceforth become invincible and irresistible to their enemies, and they have prevailed effortlessly, although all the nations were gathered for battle. Therefore, he says that they will know from having prevailed over their adversaries, that he is both among them and henceforth rests upon Zion as a holy city. For this reason, he says that he will spare his own peoples, and will show them to be most valiant, and that they will learn that, as I just said, he is with them.

And he says that Jerusalem will be holy, having been delivered from its ancient godlessness in every way; not bestowing its modes of worship on falsely-named gods, nor with false prophecy and sorcery still being honored in her, but rather with a lawful life prevailing, and the best practices having become their pursuit. And since she is thus disposed and has chosen to live this way, he says that none of the nations shall pass through her, meaning she will not be easily conquered by anyone nor seized in passing by those who wish to, as before, but rather she will be secure, and very well fortified by my powers and assistance. And the matter is true even if it is understood of the Church of Christ itself. for he cares for his own worshipers, and makes them superior to their enemies, strong and most valiant, and full of spiritual robustness, knowing and believing that God is in them through the Spirit; for he dwells in our hearts through faith, and as the Evangelist John says, "By this we know "that he is in us, from the Spirit which he has given us. And holy in truth is the intelligible Jerusalem, that is, the Church, where the orders of the saints are. For they are not a passage for foreigners; "For those who are of Christ have crucified the "flesh with its passions and desires;

and they remember one of the wise men saying, "If the spirit of the ruler rises up against you, do not leave your place, "for healing will pacify great sins. For they have a secure heart, not one that can be trodden upon, not one that can be ridden by unclean spirits, not one that yields easily to the assaults of passions, not one defiled by the false opinions of

those who teach other doctrines, not one shaken by the deceptions of reasonings; but rather one that is steadfast and very well fortified by the dogmas of truth. And it shall be in that day, the mountains will drip with sweetness, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the springs of Judah will flow with water, and a fountain will come forth from the house of the Lord and will water the torrent of the reeds. Jerusalem having been shown to be holy, and no longer trodden by foreigners, because the Lord of all has dwelt in her, and has spared His own people, and made them strong, and shown them to be superior to their opponents, then indeed, then he says the mountains will drip with sweetness, and the hills will flow with milk, and the springs of Judah will give forth their own stream. And I think 'springs' (apheseis) means the outlets of fountains, or in another way what might be called water channels.

And 'mountains' could be understood as those who are lifted up to the height of virtue, and who in the boasts of a virtuous life surpass the measure of others, the conspicuous and renowned, such as the disciples were, and before all others the Baptist, concerning whom the Savior says, "Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the "Baptist. These, then, the great and most famous, will drip sweetness, and as if anointing with honey they will make their discourse about the Savior, so that each of those who have partaken cries out from exceeding joy, "How sweet are your words to my throat, more than honey and the honeycomb to my mouth. For the word of the saints is always sweet, at least to those who love to please God. Therefore, such men might be understood as mountains, and very fittingly. But we say that the hills are those who are slightly inferior to their pre-eminence and are lower in the measure of their way of life; but they too are raised up, and far surpass others. These men pour into the souls of those who have just believed the rational and pure milk, providing nourishment fit for infants; for solid food is for the mature; but milk is most fitting for infants. And we do not at all say that the measure of their understanding is in being able only to pour milk for infants.

For having, and very skillfully, the ability to distribute, if they should choose, to those of a more solid constitution the richer kinds of nourishment, they remember the sacred writing saying, "You shall diligently know the souls of your flock. And so the divine disciples, although Christ had given us countless commands to those who believed from the Gentiles, write with wise management, that they must abstain "From fornication and what is strangled and from blood. For it seemed good," he says, "to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay no greater burden upon you. Do you hear how the command is fit for infants, and like milk is administered to those of a weaker constitution? But that the spiritual water will also be abundant for those "planted in the house of the Lord," so that "they might flourish in the courts of our God" being watered, of course, by divine streams, and enriched by words from above and from heaven, he hints at, saying that all the springs of Judah shall flow with water. For the blessed disciples confessed that they were comforted by God. But the first springs of the spiritual waters, these springs would surely be the provisions of good things given by God to the saints through the Spirit; and second, as it were, springs of wa-

ter are found to be the words from them to us, filling us with spiritual gifts. But the spring proceeding from the house of the Lord, who could it be again but Christ?

For so the blessed psalmist named him, saying to the Father and God in heaven, ”How you have multiplied your mercy, O God; and the sons of men will hope in the shelter of your wings. They will be inebriated with the fatness of your house, and you will give them to drink of the torrent of your delight, for with you is the spring of life. Therefore Christ is both the spring of life and a torrent. But a torrent of rushes. The Prophet therefore mentions a certain torrent beside which many rushes have grown. They say that it is the same as the torrent of the Cedars, near which the Evangelist says our Lord Jesus Christ was found, when the traitor disciple was seeking him with the cohort. The saying is not uncomely, if we were to compare the Church to the torrent of rushes, upon which our Lord Jesus Christ has ”turned aside like a river of peace,” which he, as it were, ever flows beside, watering the ever-green rushes, that is, the souls of the saints. For the rush is somehow always water-loving and ever-green. But if indeed it were seen to be prickly, it would be well even so. For the virtue of the saints is not entirely without a sting. For they are lovers of gentleness, but along with this, they are also fighters. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Idumea shall become a plain of desolation for the injustices against the sons of Judah, because they shed innocent blood in their land.

But Judea shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to generations of generations. And I will avenge their blood, and I will not acquit, and the Lord will dwell in Zion. Insofar, therefore, as it pertains to what is shown from history, the land of the Egyptians has paid the penalty, for it was deprived of its kingdom, when Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, overthrew it, and Idumea also endured desolation, as also The facts themselves bear witness. But in these things the prophetic word seems to show us a hidden dispensation, which the Only-Begotten fulfilled when He became man. For somehow the divine scripture has always practiced likening to extreme idolaters and those greatly inclined to this, both the herds of demons and those who have always opposed the saints. Therefore it says that every enemy will be destroyed, being compared to Egyptians and Idumeans. For sure is the promise of Christ who says concerning the Church that ”the gates of hades shall not pre- ”vail against it.

And that the evil powers, and as many as dare to do things similar to them, either carrying some away to Hellenic deceit, or else perverting them to a reprobate mind, by hastening to teach perverse things, would in every way and altogether be required to pay the penalty for the things they have committed against men, he makes clear, saying that for this reason those who have warred against Zion will be destroyed, because they shed innocent blood, and have wronged unbearably the sons of Judah, that is, the saints who are children of confession. For Judah is interpreted as con- fession. And the blessed David said somewhere concerning those who were unholily slain, ”For he who seeks their blood has rem- ”embered; he has not forgotten the cry of the poor. And to Satan, as if pictured in the Assyrian, ”As ”a garment stained in blood will not be clean, ”so you also shall not be clean, because you have

defiled my land ”and destroyed my people; you shall not remain for all ”time. Therefore he says that those who have warred against Zion will go down to destruction.

but that Judea will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem for generations of generations, not the one that was sacked and burned, if indeed the Lord and God is infallible as truth, but rather the spiritual one, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Zion above which is divine, the glorious and beautiful city ”whose artisan and maker and builder is ”God,” to which may we also arrive through Christ, through whom and with whom be glory to the Father with the Holy Spirit, for ever. Amen.

Commentary on the Prophet Jonah

The divine Jonah was the son of Amittai, and he came from Gath-hepher; this is a small town in the land of the Jews, or a village, according to the probable account. It seems that he made his prophetic utterances at that time when those before him did, I mean Hosea and Amos and Micah and the rest. And one might see that he had prophesied very many things to the peoples of the Jews, and had conveyed the words from above and from God, and had clearly announced things to come. Therefore, there is no other written account of his prophecy besides this one. But that he continued to proclaim to the assemblies of the Jews the things that were to be at various times, the divinely inspired scripture has testified. For in the fourth book of Kings, the sacred writing speaks about Jeroboam, not indeed the first one in the beginning, who was the son of Nebat, who also made Israel to sin, as it is written, by persuading them to worship the golden calves, of course, but of another Jeroboam who came after many others; and what the blessed Jonah foretold, it clarified saying, ”He restored the border of Is-”rael from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, ”according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spoke by the hand of ”His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from ”Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, ”that it was very bitter;

and that there were very few shut up and left ”destitute and forsaken; and there was no one to help ”Israel; and the Lord did not say that He would blot out the ”seed from under heaven; and He saved them by the ”hand of Jeroboam son of Joash. And it says ”by the hand” instead of ”through the hand. For Jeroboam, as I said, the son of Joash, had warred against the foreigners, and again brought under his control cities of the land of the Jews that had been seized, and helped those of Israel not a little, with God defending and willing to save them, although they had reached the end of the uttermost misery of all. Therefore, there were indeed also other prophetic words at various times for the blessed Jonah, but the things concerning him have now been written down both usefully and according to the divine economy. For the matter is worthy to be heard, I mean, the proclamation to the Ninevites, and to suffer the things in between. And it somehow records, as in shadows, also the mystery of the economy of our Savior. And so Christ himself said, speaking to the Jews, ”An evil ”and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign will be given ”to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For just as ”Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days

and three ”nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart ”of the earth for three days and three nights.

Therefore, the mystery of Christ is in a way represented and formed for us in the things concerning the divine Jonah. However, I think I must say that to those who will read this. When an account of spiritual contemplation is formed, with a person set forth, and taken as a type of our Savior of all, Christ, it is necessary for the wise and knowledgeable person to discern, which things are consequently to be regarded as useless for the proposed purpose, and which, on the other hand, are useful and necessary, and are by nature most able to benefit the hearers. For example, let us say: let the blessed Moses be proposed, who presented Israel to God at Mount Sinai, and became a mediator between God and men. For those of Israel, being afraid, begged, saying, ”You speak to us, and let not God speak ”to us, lest we die. But that the matter prefigured the mediation through Christ God the Father himself clearly taught, saying thus: ”They have spoken rightly in all that they have said. I will raise up for them a Prophet from their brothers, like you,” evidently mediating and presenting the human race to God and announcing to those throughout all the earth the ineffable will of God the Father. ”For I will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

Therefore, the divine Moses was taken as a type of Christ, but we will not apply all of Moses' characteristics to him, lest we be caught doing and saying something absurd. For Moses confessed that he was of a weak voice and slow of tongue and ill-equipped for the mission; for he said that ”I am of a weak voice and slow of tongue; and I am not eloquent, neither yesterday nor the day before, nor since you have spoken to your servant; and he pleaded, saying: ”I pray, Lord, appoint another you are able to send. But Christ is not slow of tongue, nor indeed of a weak voice like him, but he himself is the great trumpet. For so the blessed prophet Isaiah named him, saying, ”And it shall be in that day, they will blow the great trumpet. For the word of the Savior is proclaimed, and has been heard by those throughout all the world under heaven. And knowing this, the blessed David said, ”The God of gods, the Lord, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Therefore, Moses mediates as a type of Christ, but he is slow of speech, in this no longer showing the type in himself. Again, the blessed Aaron was taken as a prefiguration of Emmanuel, crowned with the glories of the high priesthood, and entering into the holy of holies, and clothed in that glorious and admirable vestment. But again we will not attribute all his characteristics to Christ;

for he was not completely blameless. For he was once rebuked, having spoken against Moses together with Miriam. And he was also otherwise not without fault, when Israel made the calf in the wilderness. Therefore, not all things in the letter and types are useful for spiritual contemplations, but if a person is introduced who prefigures Christ for us in himself, we will reasonably pass over the human aspects, and we will focus only on the necessary ones, turning in every way that which is naturally beneficial to the proposed aim. For so indeed in the case of the divine Jonah we will understand. For he forms for us, as it were, the

mystery of Christ. Yet not all the things that happened to him would be understood as useful and necessary for this purpose; for example, he was sent to preach to the Ninevites, but he sought to flee from the presence of God, and is seen hesitating at the mission. The Son was also sent from God the Father to proclaim to the nations, but he was not unwilling for the ministry, nor indeed did he seek to flee from the presence of God the Father. The Prophet pleaded with those on the ship, saying, "Take me and throw me into the sea, and the sea will be calm for you; he was swallowed also by the great fish, then he was cast out after three days, and after this he went to Nineveh and fulfilled the ministry.

But he was greatly grieved that God had mercy on those from Nineveh. Christ also willingly underwent death; he remained in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, and rose again, and after this he went to Galilee, and commanded that the beginning of the preaching to the nations be made; for he commanded his disciples to make disciples of "all the nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Yet he is not grieved at seeing them saved unto repentance, as indeed was the blessed Jonah. Therefore, if we do not turn the entire account of the story to the aim of spiritual contemplation, let no one blame us. For just as bees, flying around meadows and flowers, always gather what is useful for the construction of honeycombs, so also the wise interpreter, searching the holy and divinely-inspired scripture, the always collecting and composing that which contributes to the clarification of the mysteries of Christ, will produce a discourse that is both skillful and irreproachable. From here, therefore, we must begin the exegesis. And the word of the Lord came to Jonas the son of Amathi, saying, Arise, and go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach in it; for the cry of its wickedness is come up to me.

Having considered the ministry and mission of Jonah's prophecy, one might say very fittingly for the occasion that which is sung through the voice of the blessed Paul, "Is God the God of the Jews only, and not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith. And the divinely-inspired Peter himself, having learned this by experience, proclaimed to us, saying, "In truth we perceive that God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is acceptable to him. For he himself created the earth and the heaven and all things in them, and he made man in the beginning according to his own image and likeness, so that, cleaving to the pursuits of virtue, he might live resplendently in holiness and blessedness, and might have a rich share in his gifts. Then he was brought over to sin, being deceived by the evil deeds of the devil; for this reason he also became accursed and subject to corruption. Christ was therefore predestined and foreknown before the foundation of the world for the restoration of all things. For God the Father was pleased "to sum up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. But such achievements as these were being kept for the Only-Begotten, who became like us and shone upon the world in the flesh.

But that God made his care for those who had gone astray a necessity, even before the times of his coming, and bestowed his visitation upon those who had slipped out of ignorance, he wished to fully convince through deeds. For this reason, he commanded the blessed Prophet to go to Nineveh. Now Nineveh is a Persian city, situated towards the east, and famous, and, as the prophet Jeremiah says, "It is a land of graven images. For very many of the neighboring cities of the Jews were also devoted to the worship of idols. "For both Tyre and Sidon and all Galilee of the Gentiles" worshipped the works of their own hands, and among them were seats and altars and precincts of innumerable demons. Why then, tell me, passing over the neighboring cities, does he send the Prophet to Nineveh, which lies furthest away, in which especially, as I have already said before, there was a savage multitude who had unrestrainedly consented to the necessity of worshipping the sun and stars and fire? For it was stirred up beyond all reason to a God-hated sorcery. For it was said to her through the voice of Jeremiah, "A beautiful and graceful harlot, mistress of sorceries.

I think, therefore, that the all-knowing God usefully willed to show even to the ancients that even those who are utterly deranged and entangled in the snares of error will at the appointed times be caught in the net for the knowledge of the truth, even if they should be exceedingly terrible and stubborn and have gone very far into unruliness. For the word of God is not without power to nourish the mind and to persuade it to learn the things through which it might become wise. And you will hear him saying to Jeremiah, at one time that, "Behold, I have made my words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them; and at another time again, "Are not my words like a burning fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, the divinely-inspired Jonah was sent to the Ninevites not in vain, but so that there might be a pre-demonstration of the gentleness inherent in God, which would be given at the appointed times even to those who had erred out of ignorance. At the same time, what was being done was also for the condemnation of Israel; for it was being convicted as difficult to lead, as disobedient, as having cared little for the laws of God. For the Ninevites, when one prophet preached, are transformed without delay to the necessity of choosing to repent, although they were exceedingly sick with error;

but those who disregarded Moses and the prophets, have also despised our Savior of all, Christ, although He added miracles to His teachings, through which it was likely they would be persuaded, and very easily, that being God by nature, He became man, to save all under heaven, but them before all others. But that this matter would have the power of refutation for those of Israel, and very likely so, Christ Himself will make clear, saying, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. But how is that which is in Christ greater than Jonah? For the one only threatened the Ninevites with destruction, but our Lord Jesus Christ, striking them with awe through unspeakable miracles, was marveled at; for a miracle always running concurrently with the word is a drawing towards faith. Most providentially, therefore, the blessed Jonah is sent to preach to the inhabitants of Nineveh that the cry of their wickedness has gone up

to the God of all. For He is ignorant of absolutely nothing; but if He is moved to visit the things that some have transgressed, then He says the outcry from their works has come up to Him. For He is judge of all things as God. And it is said that the blood of Abel cried out against the murder of Cain, and the wildness of the shameful deeds of the cities in Sodom.

And Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish, and he paid its fare, and went aboard it, to sail with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Joppa, then, is a city of Palestine, situated on the sea itself; a convenient seaport for those from Judea going on a voyage, and especially to the cities towards the east. So the Prophet goes down, then having found a ship sailing to Tarshish; for this course had likely been set for the ship there; he paid the fare, and sailed away with the others. But by Tarshish he means those now called Tarsians, or rather Tarsus. Some, then, think that by this is signified the city among the Ethiopians and Indians, and admittedly there is a Tarshish among them; indeed, the entire country of the Indians is signified by Tarshish; however, for the present, I do not think the text wishes to indicate that one; because for those wishing to sail to the nations of India, the voyage would likely not be through Joppa, but rather through the Red Sea, unless someone should happen to think that the Prophet planned to make his escape through Persia and Assyria to innermost Ethiopia. But I think this is utterly foolish; so it seems he calls Tarshish, as I said, what is now Tarsus;

this is a city of the Cilicians, drinking the stream of the Cydnus, and situated at the very foothills of the Taurus; and this is a very great mountain of the Cilicians. So the Prophet sails away, and his pretext for the journey is to flee from the presence of God. Here, then, the matter is not unexamined by us, or rather, the manner of his flight. I think, then, that to refuse the mission and, as it were, to shrink from the ministry, this is to flee from the presence of God. But for what reason he departs for Tarshish, and what he had considered, I cannot understand. Unless one might consider this for himself, that there was a certain small conception of God in him, as also in the more ancient saints; for some thought that the power of the God of all was attached to the land of the Jews alone, and was, as it were, confined within it and departed from other land. And indeed the divine Jacob at times departed from his ancestral hearth, and hastened to Laban, and into the midst of the rivers. Then he camped in a certain country, and putting a stone under his head as was his custom, he slept. Then he saw the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, and the Lord standing upon it. And he said upon rising, ”Surely God is in this place, and I did not know it.

Therefore I think, indeed, that having considered some such thing within himself, the blessed Prophet also was estranged from Judea, and withdrew to the cities of the Greeks. And we shall know from his own words the reason for his hesitation and for not choosing eagerly to fulfill the ministry. For he went away later and proclaimed; but since the things of the prophecy did not come to pass for him, he was greatly grieved, and indeed he even said, ”O Lord, were not these my words when I was still in my own land? For this reason

I made haste to flee to Tarshish, because I knew that you are merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and of great mercy and repenting over evils. And now, O Master Lord, take my soul from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. For as a prophet he was not ignorant of the outcome of the ministry; yet he feared lest, if the proclamations made through him were not brought to fulfillment, the Ninevites might be ignorant of the goodness of the God who had pitied them, and they might destroy him and consume him, as a buffoon, as a deceiver and a liar, and one who had persuaded them to labor in vain. For the barbarian is always prone to wrath, and very ready to be enraged, even if it has no reasonable pretext for its madness.

And the Lord raised up a great wind upon the sea, and there was a great tempest on the sea, and the ship was in danger of being broken up. And the sailors were afraid and cried out each to his own god, and they cast forth the goods that were in the ship into the sea to be lightened of them. The storm rises up against the ship, God so ordering it and stirring up the sea with the wild blasts of winds; and fear falls upon the sailors, and their speech was already of their last moments, as the vessel, as was likely, was creaking, and all but threatening already in some way that it was about to be broken apart. And the crowd of sailors used their customary aids, and they lighten the ship, so that it might be high above the waves, and so for the future might ride more easily upon the waters. And it is a great proof of the storm that even the mariners themselves were struck with fear, and most earnestly entreated their own gods to come as saviors to them, as they had already despaired of their salvation. But Jonah had gone down into the hold of the ship and was sleeping and snoring. And the shipmaster came to him and said to him, Why are you snoring? Arise and call upon your god, that perhaps God may save us and we may not perish.

Indolence in prayer would least of all befit prophetic sobriety, with dangers impending, and the love of lying on one's back, when time and circumstance call to labors, in which it would be more fitting to propitiate the God of all. From this it is possible to understand that the sleep was before the storm; for being accustomed to be very quiet, he had gone down even into the hold of the ship. For it is always dear and greatly desired by the saints to withdraw from turmoil, and to be separated from crowds, and to continue in solitude, just as the divine prophet Jeremiah says, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth; he will sit alone, because he has taken it upon himself. And again he cried out concerning the multitude of the disobedient, "O Lord Almighty, I did not sit in the council of those who make sport, but I was in awe of your hand; I sat alone, because I was filled with bitterness. But to sit alone, I think, somehow signifies the quiet life, and being freed from worldly care and anxiety, and not going intermingled with others, who have honored the pleasure-loving and flesh-loving life. So then the Prophet dozes off, not disregarding what was fitting, but, as I have already said, before the onset of the storms. Yet the shipmaster makes an end of it, saying that he should rather call upon his God.

For it somehow always grieves those in danger that some seem to be above fear, and honor indolence at an inopportune time. And each one said to his neighbor Come, let us cast

lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. and they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. The sailors, indeed, are most curious and devise something unusual and strange: to hasten to learn by lot the one on account of whom God is grieved. Nevertheless, this also is usefully arranged, so that he who thought he could flee from the presence of God might be made manifest; for the lot falls on him, and he is seen enduring the refutation from the event. For he was afraid, as was likely, to make the accusation more readily than his own reflection. It is therefore a good and wise thing for those who are willing to keep it, that: "Do not be ashamed to confess your sins. And they said to him, 'Tell us, for whose cause this evil is upon us;

what is your occupation, and where do you come from, and where are you going, and from what country, and from what people are you?' and he said to them, 'I am a servant of the Lord, and I worship the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.' And the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this that you have done?' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. They question usefully, as having already recognized the culprit by lot, but not yet having a clear understanding of the nature of the transgression. And since they were idolaters, they command him to say what was his occupation, what country and city, and from what peoples he came, seeking, I think, to learn which god he had offended. For each of those sailing had his own, and there was not one God of all. They thought that by appeasing the demon that was angered at him, they would ward off the harm from the storm. But when the Prophet called himself a servant of the God who fashioned earth and heaven, and said that he himself worshipped him, they immediately understood that he was fleeing from the presence of God. But how did they understand? Because it was not lawful for Jews to depart from the country allotted to them, nor indeed to visit foreigners, nor to enter cities accustomed to idolatry.

And the matter was a reproach among them, and not unsuspected of apostasy; it indeed seemed to be both outside the law, and among things of blame and judgment. And so our Lord Jesus Christ clearly affirmed that they would be deprived of his salvation—I mean that which is in faith—unless they chose to lay hold of it while he was still present and dwelling in the world; for he said, "Yet a little while I am with you, and I go to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come; but those who reproached the apostasy of the Jews to the Gentiles, said ignorantly, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion of the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? For as something faded and outside the beaten path, and very far from their custom, they considered it a reproach to mingle with the peoples of the Greeks. Therefore, because he had not remained within the borders of Judea, but was sailing with them to Tarsus, they entertain suspicions, and they infer that perhaps he is also rejecting the life in the law, and having given himself over to the customs of the Greeks, he has practiced the flight as from the presence of God.

And they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm for us?' for the sea was proceeding, and was stirring up a greater surge. And Jonah said to them, 'Take me and cast me into the sea, and the sea will be calm for you; for I know that it is because of me that this great surge is upon you.' They fear the sea raging against them intolerably; but they shudder no less at the God of the Hebrews; for they were not ignorant of the power and glory inherent in him, although they were foreigners. And since he said he was a servant of God, they are now perplexed and divided in their opinions. For they hesitate at the murder, suspecting the wrath of the all-powerful God. But as the sea leapt upon them no less than before, they make necessary provision for themselves. For this reason they ask him to say, what would be done by them, and the surging will be calmed, and the wave will be stilled, and they themselves will escape the ultimate danger. What then does the Prophet do? He confesses his offense, and having stumbled, is ashamed, and condemns his own ill counsel; For he says, 'Take me up and cast me into the sea. For he as much as said that they must exact punishment from him for having shrunk from his mission.

For he knew that the raging sea would somehow be reconciled to the ship if it took the one it was seeking, and the sea would cease its battle, now having the one who had offended. And the men rowed hard to return to the land, but they could not, for the sea went and grew more and more tempestuous against them. and they cried out to the Lord and said, 'By no means, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and do not lay on us innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as you pleased. and they took Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. The Prophet for his part was condemning himself to death, and he thought it right that they should end their terror by the danger to his own life. but they were still very fearful and reluctant to commit murder, and wished to save one who was a servant of God, and to deliver him alive to the dry land; and thus rather to discharge the wrath. For this reason they tried hard to bring the ship to shore, but the goal of their attempts was unattainable, as the wind stirred up an irresistible wave against them, and rushed upon the vessel with wilder assaults.

For this reason, then, they propitiate through prayer, and they entreat God to be merciful to them, not wishing to kill, but as ones yielding to His judgments, being forced at last to give Jonah to the sea, and indeed they gave him. And it, having received him, is with difficulty appeased, and spreads a calm, and gives the sailors the hope of being saved; and everywhere yielding to the divine nods, and swiftly serving the master's commands, it was evident from the events themselves. And the men feared the Lord with a great fear, and they offered sacrifices to the Lord and made vows. They have profited greatly, and believe that there is one God by nature, although they were divided towards an absurd error, and believed there to be countless gods throughout the world. Therefore they sacrifice to the one who is by nature and alone truly God, leaving their own gods, and bidding farewell to those honored out of deceit, who steal the glory due to God. And they promise vows, although they were accustomed to do this to the sea-demons. For it seems to the children of the Greeks that the power of the sea is also attached to a certain Poseidon; for all things among them are myths, and nonsense, and terrible folly. But we, glorifying the God who is by nature,

say to Him truly, "You rule the power of the sea, and you calm the raging of its waves. The heavens are yours and the earth is yours;

the world and its fullness you have founded. And the Lord commanded a great fish to swallow Jonah. and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. God commands the fish by his nod; for to will something to come to completion, this is both law, and fulfillment, and has the power of law. For we do not say, as he does for us, or for the holy angels, that the God of all gave a command to the fish, somehow sounding what must be done into its mind, and putting into its heart the knowledge of what he might choose. For it is utterly foolish and not far from madness to think that the God of all deals with monsters in such a way, but if he is said to command at all either irrational animals or the elements or a part of creation, we say that what seems good to him is law and command. For all things yield to his nods, and the manner of their obedience is completely ineffable to us, but is certainly known to him. Therefore he is swallowed by the fish, having suffered no harm, and was in it for three days and three nights. But perhaps the matter might seem to some to be in a way unseemly, and beyond fitting reason. For they will disbelieve, and before all others, those who do not know the God who is by nature and truly, but are given over to the deceits of demons. And they will say:

How could he have been saved, being in a whale? And how would he not have been destroyed being swallowed? Or how did he endure the natural heat? And being surrounded by so much moisture, I mean, in the belly, how did he survive, or rather how was he not consumed like food, being digested? For the flesh is altogether weak and all too ready for destruction. We say then, that the event would rightly be considered truly paradoxical, and beyond reason and custom. But if God is said to bring it to pass, who then will disbelieve? For the divine is all-powerful, and easily reshapes the natures of existing things to whatever it may choose, and to its ineffable commands nothing offers resistance. For what is by nature corruptible, might become stronger than corruption, if He wills it, and what is solid and unshakable, and resistant to the laws of corruption, would easily suffer corruption. For I think nature for existing things is what seems good to the Creator. Moreover, this too must be known, that even the children of the Greeks, in the myths composed among them, say that Heracles, the son of Alcmene and Zeus, was swallowed by a sea-monster, and given forth again from its natural heat, with his head made bare, having suffered the loss of his hair alone. Lycophron mentions the story; and he is one of their famous writers; for he said concerning him, "Of the three-nighted lion, whom once the jagged dog of Triton mangled with its jaws.

But we do not confirm divine things from their mythologies, we make mention of them usefully, refuting those who disbelieve, that the account of their own history does not reject such narratives. But since I suppose it is necessary to add to what has happened paradoxically also from the things still done according to the will of God, come let us say, that also in the womb the embryo swims in natural moisture, and is as it were enclosed in the belly of her who bears it, and it does not have breath, and yet it lives thus, and is preserved, being paradoxically nourished by the commands of God. But no such reasoning could attain to

it, nor could the things of God be comprehended by anyone. ”For who has known the mind of the Lord? as it is written; or who could know the ways of paradoxes? Or whose mind would not be surpassed at all by things that run beyond the power of reason? Therefore it is precarious to disbelieve, even if God should do something that is far beyond reason; and we shall accept it as true, putting aside untimely inquiry.

And I say that it is necessary, since the blessed Prophet was taken as a type of the ministry understood in Christ, to add of necessity, that the whole earth was in peril, human affairs were storm-tossed, the waves of sin all but leaping upon it, with terrible and unbearable pleasure surging around, and corruption rising up like a flood, and savage spirits breaking forth, I mean both the devil and the evil powers under him and with him. But when we were in these circumstances, the Creator had mercy, God the Father sent us the Son from heaven, who, having become in the flesh, and having come to the endangered and storm-tossed earth, willingly gave Himself over to death, so that He might stop the raging surge, and the sea might grow calm, and the wave might be stilled, and the surge might cease. For we have been saved in the death of Christ. And the storm has passed by, the rain has gone away, the waves have been calmed, the violence of the spirits has been broken, and now a deep calm has been spread, and we are in spiritual fair weather, Christ having suffered for us. You have something similar to this in the evangelical writings. For once the boat of the Apostles was sailing across the sea of Tiberias. Then a violent wind having come upon the waters, they were unbearably storm-tossed; and enduring the utmost danger, they wake Christ who was with them sleeping, saying expressly crying out, ”Master, save us, we are perishing.

And he, being awakened, it says, rebuked the sea, saying with authority, ”Be silent, be muzzled,” and he saved the disciples. Therefore, what was done was a type of what has happened to human nature. For through him, as I said, we have been delivered from both death and corruption and sin and passions, and the storm of old has been driven away, and our affairs have turned to a calm. And Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the sea monster, and he said, ”I cried out in my affliction to the Lord my God, and he heard me; from the belly of Hades, from my cry, you heard my voice. Having been wronged in no way, but using the sea monster as a house, being in his right mind, and having been harmed in no way, either in body or mind, he perceives the assistance. He knows that God has become favorable; and not ignorant of what had happened from his shrinking from the ministry, he turns to prayer, and offers up prayers of thanksgiving, at the same time he confesses the glory of the one who saves, and marvels at the authority, and proclaims the gentleness. For he said that his prayer was received, and this, I think, he understood by the prophetic spirit. And the ”from the belly of Hades,” he says as if from the stomach of the sea monster, cleverly comparing the beast to Hades and death;

since it also knows how to kill, and to swallow savagely the one who is caught. You cast me into the depths of the heart of the sea, and rivers encircled me; all your surges and your waves passed over me. And I said, ”I am cast out from your sight. He explains in many ways

what happened, carrying up the grace, as it were, on high, and bearing witness to the divine commands that He can easily save from every evil. For he says he was in the very recesses of the sea, and in the confusion of many waters, with river-like waves overwhelming him, and to have slipped into such a calamity, that he then thought he had endured the complete turning away of the divine eyes, and had come to a despair of salvation. But it is a most dreadful thing and a cause of ruin, I mean, to be out of the sight of God. Therefore, the divine David also besought, saying, "Do not turn your face away from me, and do not turn away in anger from your servant. For the necessity of suffering the divine wrath surely follows the turning away, or rather, anger somehow rises up before and precedes the turning away. Shall I look again toward your holy temple? He knows that he has been kept by the power of God, and having been deemed worthy of help from above, he has lived and been saved;

and this in a sea monster and in the belly of a beast, miraculously and beyond reason. He doubts, however, as is likely, whether he will be released and come into the light again. He makes it truly thrice-desired and much-prayed-for to enter the divine temple itself, and to offer up doxologies to God who saved him, and he prays to receive such a grace, bearing witness to God, as I said, that He is able to accomplish all things. Water was poured around me to my soul; the uttermost abyss encircled me, my head went down into the clefts of the mountains; I went down to a land whose bars are eternal bolts. And let my life come up from corruption to you, O Lord my God. Having been saved by the ineffable power of God, he wished to send up more splendid odes of thanksgiving. He surely recounts in some way what happened, and he teaches subtly with what calamity he was encompassed, and again he proclaims how he was saved. That he was, then, in the sea, and in a great abyss, and in the clefts of mountains, as the sea monster likely plunged down among rocks and the caves in the sea, he was not ignorant as a prophet; but he says he reached a land whose bars are eternal bolts, that is, Hades, not that he had been there; for we shall not find him to have died;

but that the greatness of the danger and the weight of what had happened was in no way short of seeming to have died completely, and to have arrived in Hades itself, from where no one could depart, and one who had once been entrapped would in no way return. For I think this is what "the" signifies to have its bars as possessors forever, as it were unbreakable and never overcome or loosened by anyone. But that he did not die, but lived, as I said, in the sea monster, and was in it, having suffered nothing that leads to death or corruption, would easily show that he was also in hope of being saved again. For this reason he says, "Let my life come up from corruption, O Lord my God. For he prays to be given to the light, and to be brought up, as it were, from Hades, from the belly of the sea monster. When my soul was fainting within me, I remembered the Lord; and let my prayer come to you, into your holy temple. For those who wish to be well-pleasing, toil is not without profit, nor would affliction be considered burdensome. And the blessed David will bear witness, saying, "In my affliction I called upon the Lord; and another of the holy prophets, "O Lord, in affliction we remembered you. And it seemed very fitting to the divine Paul to accept and praise affliction, that is, the affliction that happens for the sake of virtue.

For he said, "Because affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put to shame. So then, as the Prophet's soul was fainting, that is, enduring the toil that leads to danger and to the last extremities, something profitable was again being done. For not, as some, having immediately slipped into despondency, did he make a denunciation of the divine judgments, but he remembered the one who saves. For he cried out to him, he thirsted for help, not ignorant of his gentleness and the preeminence of his strength, he made his supplications to him, begging that his own life be delivered from death and corruption. It is therefore a great and admirable thing not to be despondent in toils, but rather to appease the Master with supplications and prayers, and to seek from him the postponement of the evil and the dissolution of the misfortune. Those who keep to vain and false things have forsaken their own mercy. But I with the voice of praise and thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay to you for my salvation by the Lord. For others, he says, being ignorant of you, the Master of all, the Creator, then being entangled in the snares of vanity, and assigning reverence to falsely-named gods, and chasing flying birds—that is, the hope in them—and shepherding the winds, do not ask mercy from you, nor have they ever come within such a hope. But I am not like them; how could I be?

But I know you as the helper, the good and merciful one. Therefore with voice and supplication I will confess to you, he says, and just as some of the most fragrant incenses I will offer up odes, that is, I will bring to you thanksgiving and spiritual sacrifices, doxology, praises. And I will complete, and very eagerly, the vows for salvation, that is, whatever things work out my salvation and benefit my soul. And this was obedience to anything whatsoever that seems good to God, and the fulfillment of the prophetic ministry, with all hesitation and faint-heartedness removed. So the Prophet, being in the sea monster, prays. And the type is human, but the true image of the matter, that is Christ, was shown before the precious cross, when he was all but entering his passion, saying to the Father in heaven, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me," and he became very fearful, and as one in distress. And if indeed, having arrived in the regions under the earth, he spoke any human things, he himself would know; for it is precarious to say. However, we will find the divine Peter attributing to him the words through the voice of David, "For this reason you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor will you let your Holy One see corruption. For his flesh did not see corruption.

For on the third day he rose again, inasmuch as it was not possible for him, being Life by nature, to be held by the bonds of death. And the sea monster was commanded, and it cast out Jonah upon the dry land. The sea monster is again commanded by a certain divine and ineffable power of God, being moved toward what seems good to him; and indeed it releases from its bowels the A prophet, for whom suffering was not without profit, but rather was sharpened by the experience, and had come to know clearly how perilous it is to contradict the decrees of the Master. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying: Arise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim in it according to the former proclamation that I spoke to you. So then, now using a warmer zeal, God again

commands him to go to Nineveh, and to use the same proclamation that was spoken to him at the beginning. And this was "Because the cry of its wickedness has come up to me. Now, I have already spoken of the things concerning Christ, but I will speak again, hesitating in nothing. For it is written that "To say the same things is not tiresome for me, but for you it is safe. Therefore, before the precious cross we shall find Christ still somehow hesitating, I mean with respect to the need to set forth the word of the evangelical ordinances also to those from the nations.

And indeed he says most clearly, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and he commanded his holy disciples, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But he was "in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights; and he came "to the springs of the sea, and walked in the tracks of the abyss. And he went down as if into the clefts of the mountains, and descended into the earth, whose bars are eternal holders. Then, having plundered Hades, and having proclaimed to the spirits there, and having opened the immovable gates, he came back to life again. For his life has come up from corruption, and thus he was seen, even before the others, by the women seeking him in the garden. Then, having said "Rejoice," he commanded them to announce to the holy disciples that he goes before them into Galilee; then his word was finally also to the nations through the blessed Apostles; then he preached to those who were astray according to the former proclamation. For he did not instruct Israel with one set of commandments before his death, and those from the nations with another set after this; but the Gospel is one for all;

and the knowledge of the divine disciples is completely one, and not different for those from Israel and for us who from the nations are called through faith into sanctification. And Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, as the Lord had spoken. Now Nineveh was a great city to God, about a three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city, about a one day's journey, and he proclaimed and said: Yet three days and Nineveh will be overthrown. The Prophet is sent, and girded with irresistible zeal he begins what must be done. For indeed he enters, and very vigorously, into the foreign Nineveh, to serve the divine commands. And the city being wide, and extending to such a size as to require a journey of three days, if one should choose to travel around it, he himself goes through it in one day; that is, as it seems to others, having completed a journey of one day within it, he delivered the message of the divine proclamations. The Prophet was surely in every way a marvel, a Hebrew man, having come from a foreign land, and perhaps known to none of those there, walking through the midst of the city, crying out and saying: Yet three days and Nineveh will be overthrown. Here again, observe and consider this subtly with me. For the God of all commanded to proclaim concerning Nineveh "That the cry of its wickedness has come up to me;

but the Prophet, having come into it, cried out, "Yet three days and Nineveh will be overthrown. What then shall we say? Does he speak falsely, and has he spoken things from his heart, and not rather from the mouth of the Lord, according to some? We do not say this, but rather that, that the prophets often signify the manner of their own mission; but they

do not in every case report to us all the words that came to them from God, nor indeed those from them to God; for the Master had spoken to him, "Arise and go to Nineveh and proclaim in it that the cry of its wickedness has come up to me," we heard clearly at the very beginning of the prophecy; but that he himself had spoken something to God, we did not know. However, we shall find him saying, "O Lord, were not these my words, while I was still in my land? For this reason I made haste to flee to Tarshish, because I knew that you are merciful and compassionate. Do you see that most things have been kept silent, and have been spoken secretly by God and to God likewise through the Prophet's voice? Therefore, it is fitting to confirm the truth by the voices of the saints, for they will least of all speak falsely, having been enriched with the spirit of truth. And the men of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloths, from the least to the greatest of them.

The saying is emphatic, for he says the people of Nineveh have believed, that is, those from a city always condemned for all its absurdities, in which there was a great and countless swarm of idols, and innumerable shrines, and secret rites were eagerly practiced. For sorceries and false divinations were honored among them, and he was considered very wise who cast a curious eye upon the stars, and he came to the height of good repute who was amenable to any absurdity whatsoever. But they have believed in God from the least to the greatest, that is, the distinguished and the obscure, the brilliant and the downtrodden, and those who reveled in the luxuries of wealth, and those who were drunk with the burden of poverty; and the one concern for all was to obey the words of the Prophet. Great is the wonder, and very great the praise of those who believed. For they follow immediately, without delay, him who at last calls them to what is better, and they submit their tender neck to the divine proclamations, and this from a foreigner and a single man, not long known, calling them to repentance. But such were the matters of the Ninevites. But apoplectic Israel disobeys the law; it laughs at the things of Moses, it considers the things of the prophets as nothing. And why do I say this? It has even become a deicide, not even obeying Christ, the Savior of us all.

Therefore the matters of the Ninevites were in a better state, and the God of all has shown this to be true, saying something like this to the blessed prophet Ezekiel, "Son of man, go, enter the house of Israel, not to many peoples of a foreign speech or a foreign tongue, nor of a harsh language, whose words you will not hear; and if I had sent you to such people, they would have listened to you. But the "house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, because they do not want to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel are contentious and hard-hearted. For those of a foreign tongue and deep lips and stately words, that is the Ninevites, honored the oracle, and proceeded without delay to what was necessary to repent; but contentious Israel has not honored, as I said, not even the Lord of the law and the prophets himself. And the word reached the king of Nineveh, and he rose from his throne, and took off his robe from himself, and put on sackcloth, and sat on ashes. And it was proclaimed and spoken in Nineveh by the king and by his great men, saying: Let neither men nor beasts, neither herds nor flocks, taste anything, nor let them graze, and let them not drink water. And the men and the beasts put on sackcloth, and they cried out

earnestly to God, and each one turned from their wicked way and from the injustice that was in their hands, saying:

Who knows if God will repent and turn from the anger of his wrath, and we shall not perish? He greatly intensifies the praise of their ready obedience, and he marvels the more at the readiness for obedience of those who were called to repentance. For since they were hearers of the Prophet's words, even he who was honored with the scepter and crowned with the highest glories immediately withdrew from the thrones of the kingdom, and having bidden farewell to the robes that befitted him, and taking off the purple, he put on sackcloth, that is, he was in the attire of mourning; and sitting on ashes, a signal to the he was giving to others the need both to fast and, appeasing God with unceasing prayers, to beg for mercy. But the Ninevites were very wise, combining with their fast the turning away from wickedness; for this would be the one and only true and blameless manner of repentance. But since Israel, not having skill in these things, at times displayed a most irrational and profane fast, God commanded the prophet, lifting up his voice on high, to announce to them that, "I have not chosen this fast, says the Lord. And for what reason He Himself has made clear, adding immediately: "For in the days of your fasts you find your own wills, and you oppress all your subordinates; you fast for judgements and quarrels, and you strike the humble with your fist.

Why do you fast for me, so that today your voice is heard with a shout? I have not chosen this fast, and a day for a man to humble his soul. Therefore the Ninevites were better, accomplishing for God a pure and blameless fast. For the sacred scripture has testified that each one turned from his wicked way and from the injustice that was in their hands. And what was being done was within reason and good sense. For they believed that God would repent and would turn away the things that came from His wrath. But he says "He will repent" instead of "He will change His mind," and if He should see them having changed from wickedness to the good, He Himself also will move to that calm and love for mankind that is most dear to Him. For He is good by nature. However He brings punishments upon those who transgress, and upon those who have unrestrainedly inclined towards the unruly, He brings the things from His wrath, like some bridle that generally checks and converts them towards obedience. But see how the Ninevites say, "Who knows if God will repent and will turn away from the wrath of His anger and we shall not perish?"; but wise Israel, who was instructed by the law that the Lord is kind and gentle, does not endure to think thus. for in their ignorance they would say "Our errors and our iniquities are upon us, and in them we are wasting away, and how shall we live?

But they would hear God saying clearly, "Turn ye, turn from your wicked way, and why will you die, O house of Israel? which indeed the Ninevites did, by their changes to better things averting the wrath that was hanging over them, however they commanded that the beasts also should suffer along with the people, being deprived of food and drink, and forced, as it were, to mourn. and the matter is an exaggeration, not as having happened of necessity, or as God seeking the suffering from the beasts. And the sacred scripture noted this too,

making manifest, as I said, the exaggeration of the Ninevites' repentance. I know, therefore, that some blush at this, and they say that by "beasts" ought to be understood the most irrational among men. and the saying is true, and it might be well at times, if it were understood in this way by some. but as to the sense of the matters at hand, that would perhaps somehow fit, I mean that the exaggeration of the repentance is signified through the suffering of the beasts themselves also being specified. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways; and God repented of the evil which He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it. The Lord is quick to mercy and saves those who repent. He immediately frees them from their old accusations, and as the sin among them ceases, He Himself also lays aside His wrath, and decides on good things.

and since He sees them changed towards the good, He moves towards gentleness, and postpones the destruction, and deems them worthy of forbearance. For He is true when He says, "And why will you die, O house of Israel? says the Lord; because I do not desire the death of him who dies, says the Lord Adonai, but that he turn from his way, and his soul live. but when it says 'evil', do not understand it as wickedness, but rather the punishing wrath. For it is not of the Our virtue-loving God, a worker of evils. And Jonah was grieved with a great grief, and was confounded; and he prayed to the Lord and said: O Lord, were not these my words, when I was yet in my land? For this reason I made haste to flee to Tarshish, because I knew that you are merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and of great mercy, and repent over evils. And now, O Master Lord, take my soul from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. When God pitied those who by their repentance were warding off the things that come from wrath, and when the appointed time had already come to its end, after which it was likely that the thing foretold would happen, and then when none of the expected things had happened, the blessed Jonah was greatly grieved, and not because the city had escaped destruction;

for this would be the mark of a wicked and envious man, and in no way fitting for a saint; but because he seemed to be a liar and a buffoon, and to have disturbed them in vain, and to be speaking things from his own mind, and not at all the things from the mouth of the Lord, as it is written. However, some others think that the Prophet was grieved for certain other and secret reasons. For since he knew, they say, that when the flock from the Gentiles was called, Israel would certainly slip from its hope in God, as this kind of time was already coming to an end, he was exceedingly downcast, and, so to speak, he frowns upon those of his own blood who are perishing. But he himself dissuades us from thinking this, saying most clearly that he fled to Tarshish; and he was caught hesitating in his mission, precisely because he knew clearly that the Master is kind and compassionate, and repents over evils. For since you were such a one, he says, why did you command me to proclaim to them in vain the destruction? And he is faint-hearted as a man, using these words for himself and affirming this in the land of the Jews, and he now begs to die, and, so to speak, he makes no small outcry against the divine economy. But the matter is precarious and not worthy of a holy mind.

For if no one, if he has any sense, would find fault with physicians of the body who change the medicines to ones more useful for the wounds, how could anyone reasonably cry out against the all-knowing God, who devises for our minds the cure that is always fitting and truly most necessary? For He is a physician of spirits, and sometimes by pains, and at other times by the good things that come from gentleness, He soothes the wildness of the passions within us. And the Lord said to Jonah: Are you greatly grieved? And Jonah went out of the city and sat opposite the city, and he made for himself a booth there, and he sat under it in the shade, until he might see what would become of the city. He does not allow the Prophet's mind to be choked by despondency, but He strengthens it as though it were weakened, and though very kindly, He profitably rebukes him because he was grieved. For I think that to inquire and say, "Are you greatly grieved? would signify absolutely nothing else; but it is as if He rebukes the one who is grieved and who does not understand the purpose of the divine judgments. But when the days had already passed, as I just said, after which it was likely that the things announced would be accomplished, and then, with the wrath still not taking effect, he understands that God has shown mercy, yet he has not gone entirely outside of hope;

but he thinks that a postponement of the evil has been given to them, who chose to repent, yet there will be something from wrath anyway, since they have not shown labors in their repentance equal to their offenses. For what would a three-day sweat profit those buried in every absurd deed, and held fast by such terrible transgressions? Pondering these things to himself, as is likely, he departed from the city, and waits to see what will happen to them; for he expected it either perhaps to fall, being shaken down, or to be burned up by fire, just as Sodom was. and a shelter is built by him, and what was made was a booth. And the Lord God commanded a gourd, and it came up over the head of Jonah, to be a shade over his head, to shade him from his evils; and Jonah rejoiced over the gourd great joy. God then commands the gourd again, just as also the sea monster, clearly by nodding and merely willing it. And it springs up immediately, both beautiful and flourishing, and straightaway covered the whole booth, and, as it were, anoints him to cheerfulness by shading him very well. And the Prophet rejoices exceedingly over it, and is truly glad as if for some great and noteworthy matter. Observe, then, from this also the inclination of his mind toward simplicity. For he was grieved with great grief because the words of his prophecy had not come to pass;

but then he rejoiced with great joy over a vegetable and a plant. And the guileless mind is very susceptible both to sorrows and to delights. And you will see the truth of this statement by observing the habits of infants, who are often pained by nothing, and cry exceedingly over small things; but then they are glad, and make a sudden transition from being sad to being joyful, being sometimes charmed again by a small thing. For just as in human bodies those that are not accustomed to be very strong fall easily when someone pushes them, even if he does not do this vigorously, but touches them as if with a more delicate hand; so also the guileless mind is easily carried away by whatever is naturally able to delight or to grieve it. And the Lord commanded a morning worm on the next day, and it struck the gourd,

and it withered. and it happened that "at the same time as the sun rose, the Lord God commanded a scorching east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah. And he grew faint and gave up his soul, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' He calls the caterpillar a morning worm, because it has the beginnings of its generation from the dew that falls before dawn. Indeed, God commands it and also the scorching wind in the way that He might be understood to have commanded both the gourd and the sea monster, as we have already said.

And it unexpectedly withers; and the scorching wind strikes violently, and sends forth a hot glare upon him as he is distressed, finding him deprived of shade, from which his despondency was especially intensified. And he had already come to such a point of faintheartedness, as to make death itself much prayed for. And the Lord said to Jonah, 'Are you very grieved over the gourd?' And he said, 'I am very grieved, even to death.' Observe again the God of all, out of his immeasurable love for mankind, all but playing with the especially guileless souls of the saints, and yielding in nothing to the fond affections of fathers. For the gourd provides shade, and the Prophet is exceedingly gladdened by it; but after this the caterpillar providentially attacks it, and the scorching wind also strikes, showing the shade to be most useful and necessary for his benefit, so that he might be all the more pained at being deprived of the best things; then, being grieved over a small thing, and that terribly, I mean the gourd, he might no longer blame the divine love for mankind, if it chose to dispense forbearance and gentleness to the most distinguished of cities, filled with an innumerable multitude of inhabitants. So he skillfully asks if he is very grieved, and that over a vegetable. And he admits it, and the matter was thereafter a means of defense for the philanthropic God.

And the Lord said, 'You have had pity on the gourd, for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night; and should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, in which dwell more than twelve myriads of people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?' O, the incomparable and inconceivable gentleness! What speech would suffice for us for hymnody? Or opening what mouth shall we offer up songs of thanksgiving to the merciful and good One? For he removes our iniquities far from us, and as a father pities his sons, so the Lord has pitied those who fear him, because he himself knew our frame. For see how he shows Jonah to be grieved not at the right time, nor for the things he should have been, although it was necessary to applaud in a holy manner and to praise as the good Master. For if you, he says, were sullen, or rather are even brought to extreme grief, because the gourd plant has withered for you, which grew up in one night, and perished in the same way, how could I myself neglect a populous city, in which there are more than twelve myriads of people, who are not able from the time and their age to know which is their right hand, and which their left?

For these things are somehow indistinguishable among those who are still infants, to whom it was fitting, even before others, to grant kindness, having sinned in nothing. For one who does not yet know his own hands, with what faults could he be charged? And if he names

also the cattle and deems them worthy of being spared, this too is from love of goodness. For if ”a righteous man has mercy on the souls of his ”cattle,” and this is to his praise, what is surprising, if the Creator of all things himself bestows sparing and pity upon these as well? Thus indeed Christ saved all, giving himself as a ransom for the small and great, the wise and unwise, the rich and poor, Jew and Greek, to whom it would be rightly said, ”You will save men and beasts, O Lord, as you have ”multiplied your mercy, O God; and the sons of men will hope in ”the shelter of your wings,” to him be the glory and the power with the eternal Father and the all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Commentary on the Prophet Malachi

Book 1

It is necessary to say a few things beforehand about the prophecy of Malachi, for the easy understanding of those who will read it, and so that they might know each of the things contained in it. Therefore, when the times of the captivity had ended, Israel was brought back from Babylon to Judea, and arrived again at the holy city, having thrown off the yoke of slavery; and indeed the divine temple was raised, with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, who was from the tribe of Judah, and Joshua the son of Jozadak, the high priest, overseeing the works. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied at that time to those redeemed from the captivity, with Ezra and Nehemiah being with them the ministers. And contemporary with the aforementioned holy prophets, or a little and briefly after them, was the divine Malachi, who is also called Angel, for Malachi is thus interpreted. But we must not accept the accounts of some concerning him, who have idly fabricated, thinking and saying that he was an angel by nature, but was embodied according to the will of God and became a prophet for those of Israel. For he is called an angel, as I said, especially because his name has this interpretation in itself; then, because by announcing the words from above and from God to those of Israel, he might not implausibly be called an angel.

And indeed the Prophet Malachi himself in the following says concerning every priest, ”For ”the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law ”at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty. And concerning Emmanuel, the prophet Isaiah says, ”And they shall wish, he says, that they had been burned with fire, because a ”child is born, a son is also given to us, and his name is called ”the Angel of Great Counsel. Do you see that announcing to others the will of the highest nature has caused some to be named even angels, although they are not angels by nature? For men are those who interpret the divine law for us, that is, the priests; but the Son is God and from God by nature. So then, according to us, the Prophet Malachi was a man; and the whole scope of his prophecy tends toward these two things. For when the divine temple had been raised, and the time was calling the leaders of the peoples to their priestly duties, that is, those of the blood of Levi, and allowing even those of Israel themselves, if they wished, to fulfill their vows according to the law, they made use of the commandments through Moses, but not blamelessly and

properly. For the people brought the customary things for sacrifice, yet not with much care, but rather slothfully and neglectfully. For they brought the more shameful of the flocks, the sick and unacceptable, to the altar.

And the priests received them, no longer inspecting for blemishes according to the law, whether the offering was lame, or had its ears cut, or had its nose slit, or had its tail docked, or had the scab, or had lichens, or was a monorchid. For the law made these things rejectable; and the matter was an insult, and nothing else. And the priests were neglectful in another way also towards the people under their hand, not rightly introducing the things from the laws, and gracefully instructing them in what is pleasing to God, but allowing them to decline into improper dissoluteness, and to be carried outside the straight path. And this is one manner of rebuke; and another in addition to this for those of Israel, for such reasons. For some, having bidden farewell to their affections for their wives, then cast a bill of divorce at them, even when they were sometimes condemned for no fault, and were joined with others, thinking that they in no way grieved God, even if they should choose to do this. And others again were mad for the daughters of foreigners, although the law clearly cried out, "You shall not give your daughter to his "son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son; "for he will turn away your son from me, and going he will serve "gods to others. And there was a long discourse about this also in the books of Esdras. whence some suppose him to be Malachi. But the truth is not so.

And so much for the rebukes in these things; but at the end of the prophecy he makes his discourse about the manifestation of our Savior, since at that time a pure and bloodless sacrifice was about to be offered to God, and the accusations of all were to cease, sin having been taken away, and those on earth being reformed into a newness of life; for the things in Christ are a new creation, the old things having passed away, according to what is written. The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of his angel. He calls the "burden" of the word of prophecy from God, as it were, the "reception. For the blessed prophets received through the Holy Spirit the knowledge of things to come, and they offered counsels and indeed rebukes to certain people, not from their own heart, plucking out perhaps whatever words they chose, or speaking falsely like some, but interpreting the things from God, and purely and blamelessly conveying the words from above to others. Therefore he says the reception of the prophecy came from the Lord. And through these things he implies that the word of the prophecy contains neither a prediction of some wicked and grievous thing as about to happen to those of Israel, nor indeed praises as for those who have lived rightly; but rather a rebuke for both priests and peoples. And you will understand "by the hand of his angel" in this way:

for as the one called "angel" was managing, that is, carrying out, the ministry of the prophecy, the burden came upon Israel. And Malachi is called an angel for the reasons I have already mentioned. Lay it then to your hearts. I have loved you, says the Lord. He commands not to make the hearing of what will be said a secondary matter, but rather with earnestness and in the greatest attention and understanding. For it is fitting for those

who are about to hear divine words to be disposed in this way, from which the benefit will be very great and most abundant, whenever they pour their mind into it. For somewhere the divine David also sings, "In "my heart I have hidden your words, that I might not sin against "you. For it is possible for one who hears to seem not even to hear, if the words do not touch the mind, but having flown as it were from the speaker's tongue, then dash only against the hearing of the body, they might be counted as equal to vain whispers. Such were those about whom one of the holy prophets said, "Behold, a foolish and heartless people; they have eyes and do not "see; they have ears, and do not hear.

Therefore the Prophet necessarily exhorts, saying, Lay it then to your hearts, that is, by depositing the divine words within your mind and heart, and understanding the power of the oracles from above, by all means agree, that I have loved you, says the Lord, and I deemed you worthy of all gentleness and forbearance and the honor befitting those who are loved. But this again is a very strong reproach, that they returned evil things to him instead of good, although it was necessary, as those deemed worthy of love, to reciprocate with fairness and with zeal and eagerness in everything whatever that is pleasing to him. For if it is one of the absurd things, not to be willing to give rewards to those among us, what argument could be made concerning God who distributes all things for cheerfulness to us richly, if someone did not wish to repay to him the rewards of what has been given; even if it would be especially fitting for those who are truly sound of mind to say that, "What shall we render to the Lord for all that he has "rendered to us? And you said, In what have you loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother, says the Lord, and I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau, and I appointed his borders to destruction and his inheritance to the dwellings of the desert? The Jews are indeed struck at times by the things that happen from divine wrath, having been impious in many ways.

For they went into captivity, their land having been ravaged, their houses desolate, and together with the divine temple consumed- of the burning of Jerusalem. And the pretext for their suffering such things was their choosing to depart from genuineness towards God, and to esteem reverence for the law as worth very little indeed. Therefore, since God said that He loved them, and very much so, it was likely that they would remember the evils of the captivity, and perhaps say this: In what have You loved us? Most economically, the God of all passes over the events that occurred in between, and runs past the narrative concerning them, but he brings back the proof of love to the beginning of the race, I mean, to Jacob, whom He maintains He loved, but had made Esau hated, although by the laws of nature he was bound in brotherhood to the one who was honored. For as the divine Paul writes, "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad," He made Jacob the chosen one, from whom the race of the Jews sprang, but He cast out Esau. And we certainly do not say this was out of partiality; for God is not unjust, nor does He execute an unequal or biased judgment upon each of those on the earth; but having foreknown as God the future things of both and the character of each, He deemed the better and more holy one worthy of love.

Just as, of course, He says He had known the blessed Jeremiah before He formed him in the belly, and consecrated him before he came forth from the womb. For He knew, He knew he would be a prophet and be fit for the ensuing mission of making the proclamation of things to come. So also the divine Paul says that we ourselves, who have been justified by faith, have been sanctified, "For those whom God the Father foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son," these He is said to have both called and sanctified. Therefore, according to foreknowledge, Jacob was deemed worthy of love, but Esau was justly hated. Therefore, O Israel, He says, I have loved you. For I would in no way speak falsely, if I were to say this to you, and you will know all the more that the word is right and true, by tracing the manner of the love back to the beginning of the race. For both were from Isaac, but Jacob was good in his ways, and a lover of God, whereas the other was harsh and difficult and ready for profanity. For this reason I have inclined to Jacob, and the inheritance assigned to Esau I have destroyed, and I have given it over to desolation. But I have held together by my own forbearance that of Jacob, that is you, or the land which you have inhabited. And it should be known that Esau is interpreted as Oak;

and Esau was hard and unbending, yielding little to the wood from an oak, and having sold his birthright for a single meal, he was also named Edom, which is earthly. For this reason holy scripture says the country of those descended from Esau is called Idumea, which the Jews conquered at times, and rendered completely impassable and uninhabited. And what would the meaning of the prophecy wish to declare to those of Israel? This, I suppose. For it says He loved Jacob, and for no other reason than that he became a "plain man, dwelling in a house; but He hated Esau, for he became earthly and "profane" according to the voice of the blessed Paul. It was necessary, therefore, for the Jews to know that it would not have happened that they should suffer desolation and the flight from their motherland to foreigners, if they had imitated Jacob. But since they have become zealous and like-minded with Esau, and were detected going in the track of his awkwardness, they have consequently been given to their enemies. But if someone should wish to apply a spiritual contemplation to what has been said, let him understand clearly, that Jacob is interpreted as 'Supplanter;' and he would be a type of everyone who supplants sin. But Esau, as I said, is 'Oak' and Edom is indeed 'Earthly;' and this one would also be a type of everyone who minds only the things upon the earth.

Therefore God loves the supplanter Jacob, but He has hated Esau the unbending and hard, that is, Edom, which is to say, the one who has inclined to earthly things, and has foolishly chosen temporary and perishing things over spiritual goods. our virtue-loving God will destroy the inheritance of those accustomed to live thus. For the things upon the earth are not secure, nor indeed does it have an unshaken state. But that it will surely fall, the inheritance of the Idumeans, completely desolated, will make clear as in a type. But he who is devoted to God will have a safe and secure hope, and will address the Giver of good things, God, saying "In your hands are my lots. Because if Edom should say, 'It has been overthrown, and we shall return and rebuild its desolate places;' thus says the Lord Almighty, 'They shall build, and I will overthrow; and it shall be called to them the borders of iniquity, and

a people against whom the Lord is arrayed forever.' The composition of the diction is indeed very difficult, but the meaning is not remote from the matters at hand. For I have given, he says, the inheritance of Esau to destruction and desolation, since you who are from Jacob have plundered it.

But perhaps the Idumean will say, 'Even if the country we inhabited has been completely overthrown and has come to an end of evils, nevertheless returning we will raise up the desolate cities and villages, and we, the survivors, will inhabit them.' What then does he say to this? Thus says the Lord, 'They shall build and I will overthrow.' And Edom will certainly be called 'Borders of iniquity,' as having been overthrown because of its exceeding great sin; and 'a people against whom the Lord is arrayed forever.' Therefore, the literal meaning is, I think, none other than this. But I would add that the inheritance of those who have a carnal and earthly mindset—for 'Idumean,' as I said, is interpreted as 'earthly'—will in every way and entirely fall, since God overthrows it; for the affairs in this world do not have security, nor indeed perpetual possession. For temporary desire bypasses those who have it, and it changes like a shadow, either when someone is extinguished by death, or when an unexpected disaster has been brought upon them. But even if one of the spiritual Idumeans should choose to build up his own inheritance, either by collecting wealth from injustice, or by reveling in empty opinions, and wishing to preen himself on the powers of this life, he will find the God of all all but resisting and fighting him. For as the divine disciple has written, "If anyone wishes to be a friend of the "world, he becomes an enemy of God.

For He will not cease, as I said, to oppose those who have chosen to mind earthly things, nor will He stop the fight against them. For He always hates the sinner, and sends away the lover of sin. And your eyes shall see, and you shall say, 'The Lord has been magnified beyond the borders of Israel.' When, he says, you have observed the nature of things, and all but with initiated mind you clearly perceive what I just said, then indeed you will surely say in agreement that the Lord has been glorified and magnified in the borders of Israel. For those who have come from Jacob, that is, the Jews, having stumbled, as I said, because of great impiety, have become exiles and captives and conquerable by their enemies. But when God had mercy on them who had fared miserably and been sufficiently punished, they were brought back to their original state, their affairs having brought them to a better condition. And the country was in a good state, and they inhabited the cities, they rebuilt the temple, they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and they were again in a state beyond hope and according to their prayer; but the country of the Idumeans has been desolated, and has remained in evils, not recovering for the better. Therefore God has been glorified in the borders of Israel.

But it must be known that even according to the innermost meaning, even if some of those who know God should be in offense, even if they are disciplined for their sins, it nevertheless does not happen that they perish completely. But God has compassion after disciplining sufficiently, and brings them back again to cheerfulness. But as for those who love an

earthly mindset, and look only to the things of the flesh, He fights them continually and prolongs the times of His wrath upon them; ”For it will be called to them,” he says, ”the borders of the lawless and a people against whom The Lord is arrayed for battle for ever. A son honors his father, and a servant will fear his master. And if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is he who fears me? says the Lord Almighty. He shows them everywhere as going outside the bounds of proper speech, and as choosing to neglect things which they ought least of all to have neglected. For it would be fitting for decent sons, and quite reasonably so, to lay strong claim to the glory of the one who begot them, so that he may be called the child of a most glorious father. And if one were a genuine servant, he would surely pray for his own master to become illustrious and renowned, not insignificant and despised.

For in this way he himself will also share in the prosperity in these things, and he will make the matter a boast, and will consider it a cause for the highest delight. But you, he says, who ought to honor me as a father and also to fear me as a master, will be caught having erred immoderately in both respects of what is fitting, attributing neither honor to me as a father, nor indeed fear as a master. For where is my honor? And where is the fear, if you do not endure to do any of the things that look to my honor, nor indeed, fearing to be punished, do you yield to my master’s laws? He said something of this sort also through the voice of Isaiah: ”Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken: I have begotten and brought up sons, but they have rejected me. Therefore we must seek the things that are for the glory of God, and indeed hasten to achieve them, knowing what is written: ”As I live, says the Lord, I will honor those who honor me, and he who despises me shall be despised. God, the God of all, will be glorified by us as a father, not by our being eager to accomplish what is pleasant and dear to ourselves; but rather by our having dedicated our mind to him and following his commands everywhere.

And we will fear him as Lord, checking our inclination to wickedness out of reverence for offending him, and welcoming the judgment at the divine tribunal. ”For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. You priests who despise my name. And you said, In what have we despised your name? by bringing to my altar polluted bread. And you said, In what have we polluted them? in that you say, The table of the Lord is despised, and the food placed on it is despised. He strongly blames the indifference of the Jews, to whom the law also proclaims: ”Make the sons of Israel devout. For the multitude under their hand generally follows the goodness of its leaders, but it is wronged not moderately when it sees them neglecting their reverence towards God. For indifference to piety is immediately established and becomes sick along with them, and is shaped by the supineness of the teachers. And that the saying is true, the God of all will confirm, saying: ”Because the shepherds have become foolish and have not sought the Lord, therefore the whole pasture did not understand and they were scattered. Therefore, the ministers of the divine mysteries are generally found to be a cause for others of a reputable life, if they should choose to live rightly, and to offer worship to God in the fitting manner;

but of shameful and abominable practices, if they before others should be found to have been made sick by such evils. For this reason also the divine Paul wisely proclaimed to those engaged in teaching that it was fitting for them to become examples to their flocks. You, therefore, he says, are the ones who are distinguished by the boasts of the priesthood, who despise my name. And if you wish to learn the manner of this despising, you will hear him crying out: By your offering polluted bread upon my altar. And if indeed you should say to this again: In what way have we polluted them? I will say to you: As you perhaps think, or rather you even cry out by your deeds, that the table of the Lord is despised and the food placed upon it is despised. Since it is necessary to chew over each of the things that have been said and to interpret clearly, come let us say, what then the defiled bread means to signify. It calls defiled, then, that which is polluted and unclean. But it is necessary to know that, according to what seemed good to the lawgiver, loaves were also brought for the sacrifices that were offered; however, they were unleavened and clean; And He commanded that only the sacrifice of praise be performed with leavened loaves. And what the mystical meaning of these things might be, we have said sufficiently in other places;

but I will now relate it briefly, so that I might not seem to be sluggish in matters so very profitable. Therefore, the unleavened bread would be a sign of an unleavened and pure life. Thus also the divine Paul writes to those justified in faith, saying, ”Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. And again, ”Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. And Christ instructs the holy apostles, saying thus, ”Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Therefore, the bread is a sign of a pure, sanctified, and unleavened life. Therefore, those who brought unleavened loaves and received unleavened bread according to the law were offering them in place of themselves, as still in types and shadows. And since we do not send away from the churches those who are still catechumens and have not yet washed away sin through holy baptism while we are glorifying God, but rather make them partakers, fulfilling the sacrifice of praise, for this reason, he says, the law also says that they should do this ”with leavened loaves,” speaking enigmatically of leavened bread as one not yet purified, as I said, through holy baptism, but having in himself, as it were, a certain leaven, the remnants of ancient depravity. You therefore, He says, are the priests who despise my name by offering defiled bread on my altar.

Therefore, those who hold the divine priesthood must take great care that nothing of the sort be done in the churches; and to know that precise observance pleases God, but to choose to be negligent and to be careless of such holy things will greatly grieve Him; for that the matter is not without penalty for those who are negligent, how is it not easy to see, when they hear, ”You are the priests who despise my name”? For the negligence of the priests is like a contempt for God, and the transgression is referred to the glory that is fitting for and owed to Him. For if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame or the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to your governor; will he accept you, or will he show you favor? says the Lord Almighty. Although the law commanded to inspect the

sacrificial animals for blemishes, and to reject the flawed but consecrate the unblemished, at that time they were bringing them to the altar indiscriminately and without distinction, and there was very little regard at all for the glory due to God; but there was very earnest care to gather as many victims as possible, and to have an abundance of meat both at home and perhaps even in the holy tabernacle itself. So then, O guardians of the law, if someone offers a blind animal for sacrifice, is the victim not evil?

And if indeed a lame or a sick one, will it escape the blame of being flawed? For will you not indeed reckon such things as evil and not suitable for sacrifice? But if you think it is not so among yourselves, let someone bring them as a gift and in the manner of a present to one of the leaders. But he would not accept it, he says, nor, out of respect for the person of the one offering it, would he make the thing bearable, but he will be very angry as if insulted. It is therefore among the most absurd things, to dare to offer to God what not even one among you would choose to receive; and this transgression is great among us. For if we are about to offer something to God, we wretches seek out the baser and second-rate things of what we have, not considering that He did not make Cain's sacrifice acceptable, because he offered rightly, but did not divide rightly, for himself the first and having kept the choicest for himself, but thinking to honor God with the second-best. But the God of all did not accept his sacrifices. For He will not count as an honor the negligence of those who offer. Indeed, the law made unacceptable for sacrifice the blind among the flocks, and also the lame and the sick, with the blind enigmatically signifying those who do not have the divine eye in their heart;

the lame, those who do not know how to walk uprightly in good works; and the sick, those who do not fulfill their service to God very robustly, but feebly and negligently. And He said somewhere through the voice of a prophet, "Woe to those who do the work of the Lord negligently. Therefore, we must have our mind enlightened, and walking uprightly and strong. For then we shall be acceptable to the Lord and holy before the philanthropic God. And now entreat the face of your God, says the Lord Almighty, and pray to him; these things have happened at your hands; shall I accept your persons from you? says the Lord Almighty. He calls to repentance those who have been impious, and says very well that they must shake off beforehand the wrath for their offenses by changes for the better. For He is good and raises up the broken, and heals the contrite, and turns back the straying. And in saying, Entreat the face of our God, He would suggest, and very reasonably so, that God turns away from those who do not scruple to offend Him, and that He averts His own eyes, as it were, from those who do not seek His glory, deeming them worthy neither of mercy, nor of love, nor yet of oversight. "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous," according to what is written.

And He said to some of the sinners through the voice of Isaiah, "When you stretch out your hands to me, I will turn my eyes away from you; and if you multiply your prayer, I will not listen to you, for your hands are full of blood. Therefore, those who have sinned must make propitiation, if indeed they might somehow turn back upon themselves the face of

God, and might ward off the harm that will come from His turning away. For it defines the transgression of the priests, and refutes their denial. For he would not speak falsely in saying, At your hands these things have happened. For it is as if he says, You have not been silent when others sinned, but you yourselves, as if by your own hands, have become the perpetrators of the impieties against me, and the charges would be of your negligence, with no one in between. But even if some have perhaps feared to make these reproofs against you, still I myself will not be as one of you, nor will I accept the person of the impious. Similar to this is that through the voice of David, "You thought iniquity, that I would be like you. I will reprove you, and set your sins before your face. For the Judge knows no person; but He is upright and incorruptible as God. Because among you also the doors shall be shut, and you will not kindle my altar for free.

Very aptly, as in a prophecy, he for the present reveals beforehand the beauty of the life in Christ; for since the shadow in the law was just about to cease, as was that ancient priesthood, and since the ministers of the truth were destined to be revealed in due time, who would also be liturgists of the worship in spirit, and would seek very eagerly the glory of God, he says that the doors will be shut against them, or that there would be no sweet savor for those who ministered according to the law; "For if he shuts against a man," he says, "who will open? that is, when the truer tabernacle was revealed, that is, the Church, some who still kept the priesthood according to the law would not enter into it, but being shut out as if through unbelief, they would remain outside and would not touch the holy things. For that they have fallen from the priestly ministry would be clear from God saying through the voice of Hosea, "Because for many days the children of Israel shall sit, there being no king, nor ruler, nor there being no sacrifice, nor altar, nor priesthood, "nor declarations. Therefore, the virtual abandonment of the worship in the Law, and the shutting up of the priesthood according to it, would be signified, as it seems to me, by saying that the doors should be shut upon them, as if the Church would not admit them;

for it is no longer the time for sacrificing sheep, but the God of all is now honored with bloodless sacrifices. But since he adds to this, 'You shall not kindle my altar for nothing,' we say that the word was spoken in a moral sense. for he wishes now to make clear that they have been called to priestly service, and to put fire on the altar, not that they should undermine the glory of him who called them, but that they should honor him in the proper ways, and have the rewards of the priesthood. But those who have not taken thought for such sacred duties, nor yet out of reverence for the sacred ministry refused to offend God, would justly now be punished. for it would be no small crime, and very reasonably so, to count as nothing the participation in the things given by God, and to shake off and very foolishly reject the honors from God. And so Esau was called earthly and profane, because "for one meal he sold his birthright. Therefore when he says, 'You shall not kindle my altar for nothing,' he wishes to make clear that the priesthood is not without its reward; yet it is not beyond judgment, if someone does not approach it in the fitting manner and way. But it must be known that the Hebrew version has another rendering of the meanings, and even the very construction of the wording. for it said:

That you Levites, and indeed the priests, who have the lowest rank in the temple, and are appointed by you to shut the doors, you will not kindle my altar for nothing, that is, you do not perform your service, that is, the priesthood, without a wage, since the people bring you tithes, first-fruits, and thank-offerings. Because of this, therefore, the things of God have been neglected, and the most necessary thing has not been a concern,- I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name has been glorified among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord Almighty. He therefore clearly rejects the offering of sacrifice according to the Law, and all but departs from his love for the Jews, and makes the priesthood unwanted and the shadow unacceptable, I mean the slaughter of oxen and the smoke, because this was not his purpose in the beginning either. And this he made clear to us through other prophets also, saying through the voice of Isaiah: "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 if you come to appear before me. For who has required these things from your hands? You shall not continue to trample my court.

If you bring fine flour, it is in vain; incense is an abomination to me; and through the voice of Jeremiah: "Gather your burnt offerings with your sacrifices and eat the flesh, for I did not speak to your fathers about burnt offerings and sacrifices, in the day that I brought them up from the land of Egypt. For the Law was, as it were, a type and a pre-announcement of the worship in spirit and in truth, and "regulations for the flesh," as the divine Paul writes, "imposed until the time of reformation. And the time of reformation would be none other, I think, than the coming of our Savior. For the first covenant also, because it was not faultless, is said to have vanished; for it grew old. But a place was sought for the new and second one, which is beyond all blame and reproach. For it has been spoken through the Son himself, who has also been named the angel of Great Counsel. Therefore he also said, "I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who sent me, he has given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. He said, therefore, clearly to those who served as priests according to the Law, that And they are unwanted by him, or rather that he has no will in them who fulfill the sacrifices in shadows and types, and that he would not accept the things sacrificed by them.

But he foretells that his name will be both great and glorious among those throughout all the world under heaven, and in every place and nation pure and bloodless sacrifices will be offered to his name, the priests no longer belittling him, nor indeed negligently offering to him the spiritual services; but being eager to offer up the sweet fragrances of spiritual incense in diligence and fairness and sanctification, that is, faith, hope, love, and the boasts from good works, the heavenly and life-giving sacrifice of Christ having been clearly set forth, through which death has been abolished, and this corruptible flesh from the earth is clothed with incorruption. But you profane it in your saying, The table of the Lord is defiled, and the food placed on it is despised. That those called from the nations will be better and more reasonable than those from Israel, he makes clear to us also through these things. For

among them the sacrifices are pure, and the incense is fragrant, and the name is great from the rising of the sun to its setting; but among you, he says, the altar is not in great glory and that which is fitting for God. For you profane it, saying, The table of the Lord is defiled, and the things on it are despised. And it is likely that the priests did not use such words, but that they cried this out by their very deeds, just as indeed also, "The fool says in his heart, There is no God.

For through the things by which he is seen to be contemptuous, even if he does not say it with his voice, but nevertheless by his very deeds and the wickedness of his life he has all but cried out, "There is no God. For those accustomed to live thus, as if God were not watching, and to do all things without concern, and to act impiously in an extraordinary way, deny God by their very deeds and actions. In this way, therefore, those who have not been diligent to preserve for the holy altar the reverence most especially fitting and due to it, say by the very things they do, The table of the Lord is defiled. Therefore negligence in these matters must be rejected; and if anyone should not choose to do this, he will certainly hear God saying, "I have no will in you, and I will not accept a sacrifice from your hands. But that offending God is a most terrible thing, how could anyone doubt, if he is of sound mind and senses? And you said, These are from hardship. And I have blown them away, says the Lord Almighty. And you bring stolen things and the lame and the troubled; and you offered them as a sacrifice, shall I accept them from your hands, says the Lord Almighty.

He greatly accused the sacrificing priests, as having by no means chosen to inspect for blemishes the victims being brought forward, but rather accepting both negligently and without examination the lame and blind and sick, although the law had clearly commanded that the blemished victims must be rejected. But if indeed any of the priests drove away, holding to the law, the one bringing the useless thing for sacrifice, those bringing it would insist, putting forward the captivity over and over again, and asserting, and very vehemently, that they were not of poor quality, but rather had suffered hardship on the journey, as they were returning from Babylon to Judea. And they brought what was stolen and what was lame and troubled. For when wild beasts come upon them they sometimes ravage the herds, and if they should happen to seize something, then the shepherd, running up, snatches what was seized from their teeth; either by scaring them with the barking of dogs, or by throwing a staff; this I think is what is meant by "stolen". These they brought along with those whose feet were maimed, and were no longer able to pasture with the others; and they brought the troubled, that is, those that were finally dying, insulting rather than honoring the God of all. But I have blown them away, he says, says the Lord Almighty.

And since you have decided to sacrifice impiously, not at all, he says, I would accept the things from you, nor would I reckon as a fragrant aroma such lawless and unclean offerings. Therefore, we ought to sacrifice, and that very suitably and diligently, and to offer to God simply, not the despised and most dishonorable things, and those worthy of no account, but the prominent and choice things. But if anyone should offer himself to God; for we remember the blessed Paul having written thus: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

”acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship; let him examine the things concerning himself, and let him become as it were a precise fault-finder of his own soul. Let him see whether he is somehow blind, that is, not having the light of truth in his mind; whether he is lame in the foot by not being able to walk uprightly toward any good thing whatsoever; whether he has seizures and sicknesses. for we must not always sleep, ”for our adversary ”the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour. When therefore we are found sleepless and watchful, the beast runs by. But if he should see us drowsy and neglectful, he makes us his prey, and renders us sick, that is, dead, and altogether inactive regarding the ability to practice virtue. Let him also be far from being vexed, that is, superior to faint-heartedness and excelling in patience.

For just as the way of patience leads to life, so also faint-heartedness leads to death. For we say this thing is a weakness of mind and a paralysis of heart. Therefore also the blessed prophet Isaiah advises us to be rid of such passions, saying ”Be strong, you weak hands and feeble ”knees, encourage the faint-hearted in mind, ”be strong, do not fear. Behold our God, behold the Lord ”comes with strength, and his arm with dominion. And cursed is he who was able, and had in his flock a male, and his vow was upon it, and he sacrifices a corrupt thing to the Lord; for I am a great King, says the Lord Almighty, and my name is glorious among the nations. He then defines the curse of the one who sacrifices impiously, and very fittingly. For if, he says, someone should make a vow, and have in his own flocks the male and unblemished animal, why does he not offer this to God, but rather gathers what would be worth nothing at all; for this thing is an outrage and nothing else. For we have not, like some who are devoted to darkness and errors and profane idolatries, been enslaved to stones and wood; but rather to God the Almighty, and to the Creator of all things, before whom the heavens tremble, and the earth and all who are in it shudder.

He testifies again to the exceeding fairness of those from the nations, saying that the name of the Godhead is glorious among them, august and worthy of admiration; for we shall be disposed in no other way than in this manner. And our Lord Jesus Christ also accepted the centurion, who was an idolater, and indeed said, ”Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in ”Israel. Cursed, therefore, is he who sacrifices to God what is corrupted, although it is possible for him to honor with better things, if he has in his flocks, as I just said, the unblemished and male animal. But it should be noted that he asks for the male for a sacrifice, although the law had commanded to sacrifice females also to God. We say, therefore, that sacrifices according to a vow, that is, the voluntary ones, accepted an unblemished and male victim, and this was a type of the one offering, the law all but instructing that those willing to ascend to God as a fragrant aroma must be courageous and superior to passions and very far from every blemish. But the sacrifices offered for sins always accepted the female from the lambs, and from the kids. And this too was an enigma of the weakness of those offering. For the female is weak, and second to males in strength. And every sin would be done by a weakened mind, and by one no longer preserving spiritual strength. And now this commandment is for you, O priests.

If you will not listen, and if you will not take it to your heart to give glory to my name, says the Lord Almighty, and I will send upon you the curse, and I will curse your blessing, and I will curse it; and I will scatter your blessing, and it will not be among you, because you do not take it to your hearts. He kindly passes over the charges for what has already happened, and grants mercy, setting up those who have sinned, as it were, at the beginnings of clemency. For I think this is what it means when it kindly says, "And now this commandment is for you, O priests. But it threatens for the future, that if they should not choose to do what they ought to be seen doing, and to take into their inner mind and heart the sense of the divine oracles, and become better than they were before, and seek the glory of God, no longer belittling the altar, nor indeed performing the customary rites simply or unexamined, he will in every way and altogether declare them accursed and under divine wrath. And I, for my part, think that "I will curse your blessing and I will scatter it," perhaps signifies this. For when God bestows prosperity on some, the things in the fields will be fertile, and they will be fruitful and in abundance, and the flocks will increase to an immeasurable number, and they themselves will be superior to bodily corruption.

But when he removes his blessing, matters will change to the complete opposite, and prosperity will be entirely absent, but rather those things will prevail over which one would rightly grieve. And the Word says these things as in reference to sensible and temporary matters; but it is necessary to know that if someone does not choose to keep the divine commandments in mind, the good things in his mind will completely vanish into nothing, and he will have no fruit from a life that loves God; but he will be bereft of the blessing from above and from God; and he will fall into curses and the penalties resulting from them. Therefore, one must seek the gift of God; and in what way we shall accomplish this, the Savior himself taught us, saying, "Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Then we shall receive the full blessing and unshakable joy, and we will delight in spiritual fruitfulness, and having become full of every good thing, we shall live a truly honorable and praiseworthy life. Behold, I am setting apart the shoulder for you, and I will scatter dung upon your faces, the dung of your feasts, and I will take you away to the same place; and you will know that I, the Lord, have sent this commandment to you, for my covenant to be with the Levites, says the Lord Almighty.

Something is again hidden in the preceding words, which I think I must clearly explain for those who love to listen; for thus they might understand very well what is being shown. The law, therefore, through Moses, crowning with the highest honors the attendant and minister of the divine altars, has placed him, as it were, in the rank of God. For it said that his inheritance is the offering made by fire to the Lord. And somewhere the divine Paul also said, "Behold Israel according to the flesh. Are not those who approach the altar partakers of the altar? For it was the custom from every sacrifice to set apart for God the breast and the shoulder, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys, and indeed the stomach, that is, the belly, the letter of the law enigmatically indicating that all our inner parts, of us who offer ourselves as a fragrant aroma to God, ought to be both sacred and sanctified. For the inner parts are offered, freed from the impurity within them. The shoulder, however, might

be understood as a sign of strength. And I say that we, being strong and courageous for every good work, ought wisely to sing that which is through the lyre of the psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. And concerning the inner parts and the sacrifices performed according to the law, a very meager account has been made by us in other writings;

therefore, refraining from saying these things for the present, of the we will hasten to make the clarification of the things set forth, as far as possible. Therefore, since the law commanded that the sacrificial victims must be inspected for blemishes, and that an unexamined victim not be offered at the altar, and that the portions from the victims be set apart for those appointed for the sacred ministry, they neglected the duty to inspect for blemishes, but they kept the commandment of the so-called portions, not putting what is more pleasing to God before their own desires, and strengthening and hastening to confirm what seemed to profit them, collecting the meat from the sacrifices. This He brings for reproof, and says, Behold, I set apart for you the shoulder; and now he has put "I set apart" instead of "I have already set apart and I wish the custom to be observed hereafter. And I have thrown, as it were, or rather I throw, the stomach against your faces. For since they themselves dishonor the altar, for this reason God says, "I will scatter," as if insulting in return. "For he who despises me," he says, "will be despised. I will therefore take you to the same place, that is, in this very thing I will prevail and convict you as you act impiously.

For whereas you have kept the law concerning your portions, and in no way do you tolerate being negligent of the share given to you, but it seems to you to be a vain thing that one must inspect for blemishes, you will therefore know when the doors are shut upon you, that is, being shut out and sent away from the sacred ministry. That I have given this commandment, that is, the covenant, which I made with the Levites. What then is from this? It is fitting for those who minister in the divine mysteries to know that what seems good to God must be accomplished, and that everything which seems to profit them otherwise must be cast behind the master's commands. For in this way they will be sacred ministers, and not lovers of temporal things and overcome by shameful gains. My covenant was with him of life and of peace. He brings back the discourse to those who were holy and who served as priests with good repute, and shows the sacred ministry to be a truly admirable thing, at least as far as it pertains to law, and the benefit and security from the divine oracles. For as the most wise Paul writes, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Therefore, when he seems to be making his argument concerning Levi, we must consider well the force of the thoughts, not, of course, entirely to him who was descended from Jacob, and was numbered among the twelve sons;

for he did not serve as a priest at all; but we will understand the matter of the priesthood, and this very thing which is the sacred ministry almost being formed, as it were, in the person of Levi; Therefore, he says, my covenant of life and of peace was with him. For the written law had been spoken, as it were, to the most holy Moses, ministered through angels; and it was established through the mediator Moses for those of the blood of Israel, having

a promise of life and peace for those willing to live rightly, and to make what seems good to the lawgiver the rule of their own life. And the discourse seems for the present to hint at something of the more necessary things for contemplation. For the law was given to the ancients, that is, to those of the blood of Israel, introducing the tutelage that leads to Christ, and a certain image and a clear prefiguration of the truer things; but the truth is Christ, who is life and peace, and the shadows through Moses depict him to us. Therefore he also said, speaking to the Jews, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me. The lamb being slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month signified him, and wishing to save by his blood those willing to anoint the doorposts of their houses; him the red and unblemished heifer, whose ashes with water sanctified the defiled "for the purifying of the flesh," as it is written;

him the unleavened bread, the turtledoves, the young of the pigeons, and in a word the law was full of the contemplation of Christ. Therefore it is fittingly called a Covenant of life and peace. For having been made alive in him, through him again we have had access to the to God and the Father, and we are at peace with him through obedience and faith. And I gave to him to fear me with fear and to stand in awe of my name. He usefully enumerates the glorious boasts of the priesthood, set forth through the mystical teaching of the law. for it especially instilled in the priests the fear of God, persuading them to stand in awe of his name, that is, preparing them to regard with suspicion and to shrink from the Lord's name, persuading them that the reverence due to it should be not casual, but earnest; for what could be more honorable than this? for it is written, that "He who fears the Lord, this one is healthy. and again "The fear of the Lord is glory and a boast. He has therefore testified to those who have ministered piously and truly the steadfastness unto security. For he does not say that they feared simply, but that they feared with fear, that is, as having received the divine fear in their whole soul and heart. For the intensifications in these things, and the reduplication of the words signify to the hearers the steadfastness in virtue of those who are praised.

A law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found on his lips. For the law commanded also to depart from falsehood, to speak right and just things and to love to make the judgment upon each matter true and unperverted. But again he seems to call our Lord Jesus Christ "truth," whose law he says was carried on the lips of those who lived in a priestly manner. For even if the law was, as I said, in shadows, yet in it was the form of truth, and the outline, as it were in letters, of the evangelical ordinances. For we will find in the types the power of worship in spirit. But that the law formerly given as an oracle to the ancients through Moses was also the law of Christ, the Savior himself will persuade us, saying "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For amen I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota or one tittle shall pass from the law, until all things are accomplished. Walking uprightly in peace he went with me, and turned many from iniquity.

To be at peace with God, what else could it be understood to be, both by ourselves and by others who might be knowledgeable of the divine oracles, than to choose to think and to do what he wills, and in no way to offend him, but rather to be eager to achieve aright the glorious conduct and the admirable and most lawful life? Thus also the divine Paul has spoken to us, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God. For thus indeed, knowing the Lord by nature and in truth, we honor him. But by attaching reverence to creation, and with profane and filthy sin overpowering our thoughts, we have stood against the Lord, and as it were we rise up against him for battle, lifting a stiff neck, and still practicing what is disobedient and stubborn. And the disciple of the Savior will confirm it, saying "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. But having turned to the God of all through faith, and sin having been taken away, there is nothing in between, nor could anyone shut us out from intimacy with him, but we are joined to him, as it were, through all gentleness, and we will walk by a straight path, and we will truly travel the good road, directing both ourselves and others to it.

And it would be most fitting for these holy priests, concerning whom it might be said, most fittingly, Walking uprightly in peace he went with me and turned many from iniquity. For in a way the flock follows the tracks of the gentleness of their leaders, and those who go by a straight path save many, and they easily persuade them to abandon the licentious and accursed life and the ways of iniquity, and to choose and to love the better and admirable things, and those things for which one ought to be praised both by God and to men. For the lips of a priest shall guard knowledge, and they will seek law from his mouth, because he is a messenger of the Lord Almighty. In what manner indeed he turned many from iniquity, and has walked, directing in peace with God, he clarifies by saying, that he bore on his lips, that is, on his tongue, the knowledge of everything necessary for life, and he became "a teacher of the foolish, a master of infants," and to those willing to learn what seems good to the law a true and most unerring interpreter, not turning the meaning of the divine oracles elsewhere, nor indeed teaching "doctrines, the commandments of men; but as a messenger of God making very clear to the people under his hand what was at times dimly prophesied. For he reports not his own will, nor indeed does he utter words from his own opinion; but rather he serves the Lord's decrees.

And I would say, that in these matters it is also true what is said in the book of proverbs: "A desirable treasure will rest on the mouth of the wise, but foolish men devour it. And it would be to the praise of those who report something from God, to add nothing more to what they report, nor indeed to dare to make any subtraction. Holding this of almost no account at all, the unholy crowds of the Pharisees foolishly sank down to this nonsense, so as to teach "doctrines, the commandments of men," and through their own tradition to nullify the divine commandments. For such were the accusations made against them by Christ. Therefore the law concerning the divine oracles is sure; for it is not possible to add to them, and it is not possible to take away from them. Therefore the lips of the priests will guard the knowledge of the law, and he will report it, adding nothing. For this reason he is also

called a messenger of the Lord almighty, although being a man by nature, because he clearly reports what seems good to God, and the movement of his tongue has law. But you have turned aside from the way and have made many stumble in the law, and have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord Almighty. He contrasts, in a way, the accusations of the indolent with the moderation of the esteemed, and by comparisons with the better ones he exposes what is base.

For just as light shines in darkness, ”and power is made perfect in weakness; so also the beauty of virtue makes the lack of it more manifest, if some baseness or sin should lie beside it. Therefore some lived in a manner befitting priests, in peace directing both themselves and others, and were with God, and turned many away from iniquity. For they bore knowledge on their lips, and became accurate interpreters of the divine words. But those after them, to whom the discourse is addressed, have turned aside from the way; for they slipped from what is proper, and have wronged both themselves and others not moderately; and they have made many stumble in the law, that is, they have made them weak and most inactive concerning the need to choose to live according to the law. For if the leadership goes outside of what is fitting, how was it possible for the subject not to follow away in every way and in all things, and for that which is in the inferior lot, and as being deficient in understanding, to slip down together with the leaders? For just as a lawful and holy priest will make the people under his hand imitators of his own right actions; so also the opposite. For if they themselves have corrupted the covenant of Levi, how was it likely that those initiated by them would consider the law venerable?

And I have made you despised and abased among all the nations, because you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in the law. He goes back to the sins of the fathers, and reminds them also of the ancient accusations. And since they were not secure concerning the keeping of the law, for this reason he says they were given to those who carried them into captivity, pitiable and cast down and having fallen from all mercy; for what of grievous things did not happen for them to suffer? Or in what calamities have the wretched ones not shared? but if you wish, he says, to learn the causes of the wrath that has come upon you, you will hear him saying ”Because you did not keep my ways but showed partiality in the law. This, I think, is what it means to corrupt the covenant of Levi: to choose not to keep the way of life in the law, but to make exceedingly strange judgments on each matter, although God clearly says, ”You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall judge the small and the great alike. And by what he says, that for this reason they have been given to their enemies and have become rejected, through these very things he skillfully makes the threat, that if they should not choose to live rightly, he himself would not refrain from punishing them, and the fitting and most suitable justice for those accustomed to do this will follow those who outrage the law.

Did not one God create you? Is there not one father of you all? Why does each of you forsake his brother, to profane the covenant of your fathers? Judah has been forsaken, and an abomination has occurred in Israel and in Jerusalem. At the beginning of our writing on

the Prophet, we said that after the return from Babylon and from the land of the Assyrians, those of Israel, caring little for the commandment of the law, were entangled with foreign women. And indeed their practice proceeded to this point of depravity, that even the priests were carried away with the others, and to consider the women they had already married, who were of the blood of Israel, as most dishonorable, and to send them away from their hearths, but to bring into their homes rather the foreign women, both Ammonite, Moabite, and Idumean women. And from this resulted a great profanation of Israel. For those women did not cease from their ancestral customs, but still served idols, and worshipped the host of heaven, and it was somehow necessary for those who had unlawfully married women so corrupted in mind to be defiled along with them and to offend God. And very much has been said about these things in the books of Ezra. Therefore the God of all accuses them, as dishonoring the women of the blood of Israel, that is, of Judah, while impiously devoting themselves to the daughters of foreigners, although the law forbids the union.

But they, having I know not how despised such venerable things, were either carried away by the beauty of the women to licentious pleasures, or perhaps they wished to gain an advantage through friendships with foreigners, so that they might not fight against them as they were now acquaintances and had a close relationship from the marriages. This was nothing other than to insult God through little faith, as if he were unable to deliver from their hand, or to make them superior to the greed of the foreigners. Therefore, indeed, the matter grieved God in every way. For this reason he says, seeing them disregard their innate affection, ”Did not one God create you? Is there not one father of you all? Why does each of you forsake his brother? For there is one Creator of all, and all belong to one Master, who wishes that which was made to be bound together in unity and concord by the laws of love. For if there were two gods and lords, or even more, it would be nothing unlikely for their creations to be constrained by the opinions of their makers, and to harmoniously adopt a hostile stance toward one another, according to what seems best to those who rule. But since there is one God who is through all, and in all, and over all, what pretext could there be for dissension?

And since, in addition to this, there is also one father of all the Jews according to the flesh, that is, the divine Abraham, what is it that persuades one to embrace the disease of lack of love for one another? Or how is it not fitting for those who are near in blood to render love as if by way of a debt? And how is it not near to madness, to be mad for the daughters of foreigners, dishonoring those at home and of your own race, so that you might profane the covenant of your fathers; for they kept the things prescribed by the divine laws concerning foreign women. For they heard, ”Your daughter you shall not give to his son, and you shall not take his daughter ”for your son; for he will turn your son away from me, and ”he will go and serve other gods. But they, having made nothing of the oracle, have trampled upon the law, and as far as it depended on them, they have rendered the covenant ineffective and profane, grieving the Most Excellent One by the transgressions of the laws. And as if astonished at what was being done, and seeing the nation of women from the blood of Judah being taken advantage of with a most unjust hatred, he adds and says, Judah has

been forsaken, and among those who dwell in Jerusalem; O, he says, what a paradoxical thing!

Not to Assyrians, not to Medes, not to Persians, not to Elamites, not to the enemies from the neighbors, but to Israel itself and to those who dwell in Jerusalem has Judah become abominable and hated, that is, the race from Judah and the wretched multitude of related women. It must be known that by 'Israel' he names the ten tribes, which had dwelt in Samaria before the times of the captivity, whom Shalmaneser first deported to the Assyrians and Medes; but by 'those dwelling in Jerusalem,' he means those whom Nebuchadnezzar took during the last captivity, when he burned Jerusalem and the divine temple itself, whom he also carried away to Babylon. He accuses them, therefore, or rather, he makes no moderate outcry against them, because having abandoned the women of Judah, they unlawfully took in those of the foreign tribes, even though, as I have already said, they were clinging fast to their ancestral customs, and were still wallowing in the filth of idolatry. We must also be on our guard ourselves, who have been justified in Christ and through faith in him have obtained a share of the Holy Spirit, from intermingling with any who may be perverted in mind, profane in thought, and not holding the right faith. For these are of a foreign race and of a strange tongue and "speaking perverse things; with whom if anyone intermingles, he will be utterly and completely defiled. For it is written, "He who touches pitch will be defiled.

Since, then, it is possible to bear fruit spiritually in the Church of Christ, what reason could there be for wishing to be joined, as it were, to others, and to have communion with profane synagogues, and to sharpen the God of all against themselves? Because Judah has profaned the holy things of the Lord, in which he delighted, and has practiced strange gods; the Lord will cut off the man who does these things, until he is even humbled from the tents of Jacob and from among those who bring sacrifice to the Lord Almighty. He says that Judah was hated, not by any of the foreigners but by Judah himself, who profaned the law, by being inclined to love foreign women, and choosing to emulate their ways, and to love the apostasy from God, and to be devoted to the worship of idols. For, as I said, some were being carried away to this, following those unlawfully joined to them, and 'letting out every sail' to their wishes, just as indeed at Shittim those who had been redeemed from Egypt were joined to the women of the Midianites, or Moabites. And they slipped little by little into this foolishness and unholy mind, so that they were even initiated to Baal-peor. For this reason the wretched ones utterly perished. Therefore, the God of all curses the one who does these things, and the unholy lover of such outrageous practices;

and if anyone is acting so among the peoples, until he is destroyed from the tents of Jacob, that is, until he should utterly perish, and lose the memory of his having been born; but if anyone should be of those appointed to the sacred ministry, until he is humbled from among those who bring sacrifice to the Lord almighty, that is, until he should perish and be cast out from the priestly rolls. For, as I said, some of the priests also slipped along with the others into the crimes of the peoples, and were overcome by foreign women, having

utterly disregarded the divine oracles. Therefore if he is accursed who provokes God, and attempts to oppose his ordinances, the things in worldly delights, let us reject the curse, and let no account be made of them, but let us rather hasten to brighten our souls with boasts of obedience. For thus the things of the curse will be ineffective, and with the good things from His own gentleness the Master of all will enrich us. And these things which I hated, you did; you covered the altar of the Lord with tears and with weeping and groaning from weariness. Is it still worthy to look upon a sacrifice or to receive an acceptable offering from your hands? The types of sacrifices according to the law were very many. For some were offered for a voluntary vow, others were thank-offerings, and indeed also for sin.

And again tithes and first-fruits, and the tribute of the didrachma, as from legal commandments were offered to the accounts of the priests. Therefore, bringing voluntary things as a sacrifice to God, they brought, as I said, the lame and the blind and things seized from captivity, always recounting evils, calling the devastation this way and that, and the poverty brought upon them from it, although after the return from Babylon the all-powerful God was gladdening them with incomparable gentleness, and richly bestowing those things in which it was likely for them to delight not moderately. Therefore they brought them dejected and in tears, all but lamenting over the sacrifices and saying to the priests, These are from our toils, that is, not procured without labor, but found with difficulty as from sweat and toil. Then, how, he says, is it still worthy for me to look upon a sacrifice, or how could I still make acceptable what is from a disposition that is not good? For it is fitting to sacrifice cheerfully, celebrating and rejoicing. And this, I think, is what was rightly said through the voice of Paul to those collecting the offerings: "Not from grief, or from necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. Therefore, if we should sacrifice cheerfully, God will both look upon it and accept and praise it, and having accepted it, He will honor and bless it. But I say it is one of the necessary things for benefit to apply another interpretation to the preceding words.

For the God of all made accursed, and very justly, the one who profanes the covenant of the fathers, by being joined to foreign women, with those of their own race being cast out and often condemned for no reason at all. And in addition to these things he accused certain of the priests, as showing partiality in the law, and indeed He said: "The Lord will destroy the man who does these things, until he is humbled from the tents of Jacob, and from among those who offer sacrifice to the Lord Almighty. Then to these things he immediately added: You covered the altar of the Lord with tears and with weeping and groaning from weariness. But "You covered" must be understood as: You caused the divine altar to be filled with lamentations and wailing. For both the women who were unreasonably cast out, and those who have strangely endured an unjust judgment from you priests, stand around the altar, bewailing the ways of injustice and from the toils brought upon them, weeping uncontrollably. Then how is it worthy, he says, to look upon a sacrifice or to receive an acceptable offering from your hands? For just as it is true what is written in the book of Proverbs: "Vows from the hire of a harlot are not pure;

so a priest would not be considered pure and blameless, if, having all but said farewell to the divine ordinances, and having trampled upon the fitting law of the sacred ministry, as if having given offense in no way, he should offer the sacrifice. It is a fearful thing, therefore, to minister to God with unwashed hands, as it were. For I myself say it is necessary for those purified with all strength, at least as far as is possible, to undertake so august a liturgy. For such a one is found outside of all blame and of the movements that come from anger. And you said, ”For what reason? Because the Lord has been a witness between you and between the wife of your youth, whom you have abandoned, and she is your partner and the wife of your covenant, and he did not make another, and a remnant of his spirit. and you said, What else does he seek but seed God? When God frequently blamed such things, and persuaded them to love women of their own race, but to turn away from foreigners, and to abstain from marriages which the divine law itself had forbidden, they, lacking understanding, would say, What else but seed does God seek? it is said, he says, through the commandment of Moses, ”There shall be no one ”barren or sterile among the sons of Israel. And somewhere the God of all said to Abraham, ”I will greatly multiply your ”seed, as the stars of heaven in multitude.

Therefore, he says, the divine purpose looks to multitude and procreation, so that the grace of procreation promised to Abraham might be brought to its fitting conclusion; but whether this is done by us with foreigners or with our own people, it makes no difference to God, for what was promised is brought to completion. Tell me then, he says, For what reason did the Lord bear witness between you and the wife of your youth whom you have forsaken? But if you should choose to say this, ”For what reason did he bear witness” and command that the one who lives with you ought not be sent away, I too will say in response to this: Consider that she is your partner and the wife of your covenant, that is, one flesh with you and joined to you according to law, and God has not created her otherwise. And she is also, I think, a remnant of his spirit. Practically speaking, the man is somehow mingled both carnally and spiritually with the woman joined to him according to law; and just as they have become one body, so in a way they are also one soul, as love binds them and divine law gathers them into a union of soul. Therefore, he calls the wife a remnant of the man’s spirit, and as it were a part of his own soul, on account of the union, which, as I say, lies in the oneness of soul according to love.

Do not, therefore, going beyond proper reason, accuse God, as though perhaps He unjustly rebukes those who send away from the hearth the wife of their youth, their partner in covenant and spirit, who has been united to them carnally. And I think that the most wise Paul, moved by this, wrote to those who had believed in Christ, ”Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. And the Savior Himself also said somewhere, ”Whoever divorces his wife, ”except on the ground of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; ”and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. And when the Sadducees, who were fond of inquiry, asked, For what reason ”did Moses ”command to give a bill of divorce” and be rid of a wife? He said again, ”Because Moses, for your hardness ”of heart, commanded it; but from the beginning it was not so. ”For he who created them made them male and female.

What therefore ”God has joined together, let not man separate. And guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not forsake the wife of your youth; but if, having hated her, you send her away, says the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, impiety will cover your thoughts, says the Lord; and you shall guard yourselves in your spirit and you shall by no means forsake the covenant.

Since the law clearly and openly prescribed that it was permitted for those who wished to serve a bill of divorce on their spouses and be blamelessly rid of the one who lived with them, the words spoken through the Prophet seemed somehow to oppose what had been long ago established, as he brought to judgment and recorded the crime of transgression for one who dared to expel and get rid of his wife. Most providentially, therefore, through the preceding words, he neither renders the ancient commandment inoperative, nor does he permit some to make it a pretext for unholy undertakings. For it is not because the law permitted the bill to be given that you who give it are therefore also without accountability, so that you may cleave to foreign women. But even if it is permitted to leave a wife, and to do this by legal decrees, guard yourselves in your spirit from forsaking the wife of your youth. For this is better, even if the law has permitted divorce to those who wish it. But if, having hated her, you send her away, says the Lord the God of Israel; that is, if making the dismissal plausible and well-reasoned, you should write on the bill, ”Because I have hated her, I will send her away”;

then, impiety would cover the your thoughts, that is, if an impious and profane pleasure should prevail over your thoughts, and the pretense for hating is a vain one, but you find yourself overcome by the beauty of others, and wanting to attach yourself to foreign women, beware, lest you abandon [her], or you will be accursed in every way and manner; for I said that ”The Lord will cut off the ”man who does these things, until he is humbled from the ”tents of Jacob and from those who offer a sacrifice to the Lord ”Almighty. And this much is for the obvious and ready interpretation; but those called to sanctification through faith must also be on guard, lest they somehow be carried away, as if to women hateful to God and of another race, to the profane heresies. For the pure and blameless teaching of the doctors of the Church is sufficient for them for spiritual fruitfulness, and it makes them, so to speak, fathers of noble children, spiritually begetting from a good heart the boasts of love for God; to whom be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Book 2

You who provoke God with your words, and you said, ”In what have we provoked him? in that you say, ”Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and in them he has taken delight, and where is the God of justice? I have already said that not in one way, but rather in many, the God of all was embittered against those of the blood of Levi. and charging them with the negligence of the priests he said, ”And you brought what was stolen and the lame ”and the diseased,” and to this he added, ”And you ”show partiality in the law. For honoring not as was fitting, and through misplaced respect for some of those who approached, they unrighteously condemned the weaker, and they brought greed upon some,

not judging what was just, according to the law, but bringing forth a biased and unequal verdict; or perhaps also seizing the inheritances which in no way belonged to it; delighting also in bribes, and abusing the honors of the priest- hood, and lording it over those under their authority. Some of those who had endured injustices, observing those who had this way of life, so disreputable and utterly lawless, were, so to speak, astounded. For there was no rebuke upon them from God, nor the things which at times happen from wrath to those accustomed to show contempt; but rather they were in comfort and luxury.

So, being distressed at such things, and perhaps no longer able to bear in mind the incomparable gentleness of God, they, so to speak, cried out from faint-heartedness, saying, ”Everyone who does evil is good in his sight and in them he has taken delight,” that is, perhaps the worker of evil is good in the eyes of God; and he takes pleasure in those who have chosen to live so shamefully. For if this is not true, they say, where is the God of justice? For it was necessary, necessary for the ruler of justice not to be so forbearing towards avaricious priests, and who defile the altar, and are especially zealous to do unjust and unholy and unlawful things. And these would be the charges of the faint-heartedness that had come upon them. But it must be known that, according to the force of what is set forth, those who use such uninstructed voices provoke God. For they have decided, so to speak, to rebuke a forbearing God, who waits, and very kindly, for the return of the straying and the conversion to better things of those who have slipped into sin. And so the divine Paul rebuked those who hesitate and still shrink from repentance, saying, ”Or of the ”riches of His goodness and forbearance and ”longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of ”God leads you to repentance?

But in accordance with your hardness ”and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath ”in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of ”God. Therefore, they who are overcome by such cold faintheartedness and let their tongue loose against God, stumble in every way and altogether, but those who give them the occasions for their weakness would be liable to the charge of transgression. It is necessary, therefore, for the chosen ministers, that is, those called to the priesthood, to live holily and to walk uprightly in the Church. For in this way they will be a pattern of good order and all virtue to the people under their charge, who also honor the God of all when they behold the splendid and excellent beauty of the priests’ way of life. And this, I think, is what was rightly said through the voice of the Savior: ”Let your ”light so shine before men, that they may see your ”good works and glorify your Father who is ”in heaven. For just as peoples are scandalized when the ministers choose to live disorderly; so they will gain very great and abundant benefit, if they see them fulfilling what is good, and choosing to live as is pleasing to God. Behold, I send my messenger, and he will survey the way before my face, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom you desire.

Since they were saying, ”Where is the God of justice?”, the word of the prophecy before us has very opportunely passed over to the mystery of Christ. For Emmanuel has become for

us from God the Father ”righteousness ”and sanctification and redemption,” and cleansing from all filth, and a putting away of sins, and a rejection of what is more shameful, and a way to things better and more fitting, and a door, as it were, and a leading to eternal life, and through him has come all correction, and an overturning of greed and a finding of righteousness; for what wonderful things have we not been enriched with through him? Behold, therefore, he says, I will send my messenger, and he will survey the way before my face. And through these words, he seems to be making a pre-announcement of the ministry of the holy Baptist. For Christ himself also said somewhere, ”This is ”he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger ”before your face, who will prepare your way ”before you.'” Thus also the divine Isaiah signified him to us, saying, ”The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ”'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths ”of our God.'” When this had happened, he says, and he who was commanded to announce such things had run a little ahead, Suddenly, he says, the Lord whom you seek will come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire;

and the blessed John also affirms, saying to those coming for the baptism of repentance, ”I baptize you with water, but a ”man comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to ”stoop down and untie; he will baptize you with the ”Holy Spirit and with fire. Do you understand, then, how immediately and, so to speak, on the heels of the one announcing him, Christ walked, making himself manifest to those throughout all Judea, and appearing, as it were, suddenly and unexpectedly. But we say that the divine Baptist was called a messenger, not indeed on account of his nature; for he was born of a woman, and was a man like us; but because the ministry of proclaiming and announcing such things to us was entrusted to him. Therefore the name is from the deed, and will not be significant of the substance of an angel. But he says that he will come to his temple, either because the Word became flesh, and dwelt, as in a temple, in the all-holy body from the holy virgin; that is, was believed to be united immediately and economically to a perfect man, I mean of soul and body. or he simply names as a temple the city that is, as it were, sacred and dedicated to him, clearly that is, Jeru- Salem; that is, as in a type towards that Church.

And he proclaimed his own coming by working wonders in many ways, ”preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and ”healing every disease and every infirmity among the people,” as it is written. The Lord whom you seek will come, therefore, he says, you who say out of faint-heartedness, ”Where is the God of justice? And he will come teaching the things that are above the law and beyond shadow and types. For he will be the angel of the covenant long ago foretold through the voice of God the Father. For he said somewhere to the hierophant Moses, ”I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers like you, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he will speak to them according to all that I command him. And that Christ was the angel of the new covenant, the blessed Isaiah will also make clear when he says concerning him, ”Because every garment gathered by deceit and ”every cloak with a price they will repay, and they will wish if ”they had been burned with fire. For a child is born to us, a son ”is also given to us, whose government is on his shoulder, and his name is called ”Angel of Great Counsel,” it is clear, that is, of God the Father. Therefore he

also said, ”I do not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me, he gave me ”a command what to say, and what to speak.

For the word of the Savior was not human, but as from God the Father it came to us through the Son according to nature; For he is the Word of the one who begot him; and he will confirm this, saying through the voice of David, ”My heart has brought forth a good word. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord Almighty, and who will endure the day of his coming? or who will stand in his sight? Similar to this and very much like it is that through the voice of Isaiah, ”Be strong, you weary hands and feeble knees, ”be encouraged, you of fainthearted mind, be strong, do not ”be afraid; behold, the Lord is coming with strength, and his arm ”with dominion. For showing that he would indeed be very near, or rather, that he was already present, he states clearly that the time of his visitation in this world would not be for a long postponement. And that the power of the economy will not be contemptible to some, nor would it be bearable to the disobedient, he teaches, saying, And who will endure the day of his coming? or who will stand in his sight? And he calls his coming the entry of the Only-begotten in the flesh into this world; and his sight as it were a manifestation. For though he is invisible by nature as God, he became visible, having taken on our likeness.

And the psalmist had clearly proclaimed this in the spirit, saying, ”God ”will come manifestly, our God, and will not be silent. ”For the Word became flesh,” as the divine John says, ”and dwelt among us,” and he was in the form of a servant. And ”to those who loved his appearing” he was in no way burdensome; but rather he became mild and gentle, and the giver of eternal life. And God the Father said somewhere concerning him, ”Behold, my beloved servant will understand, ”in whom I am well pleased. He will not strive nor cry out, ”nor will his voice be heard outside. A bruised reed ”he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not quench; ”but he will bring forth judgment to truth. But to those who dishonor the salvation through him, and do not accept the purification through faith, it happened that they suffered the most shameful of all evils; for the wretched have perished. Therefore he also said to the crowds of the Jews, ”Truly, I say to you, that unless ”you believe that I am, you will die in your sins. And John said somewhere, ”He who believes in ”him is not judged; but he who does not believe is already judged, because ”he has not believed in the name of the Son of God. And the baptist also proclaimed to those from Israel, ”And already the ”ax is laid at the root of the trees;

therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit, is cut down and cast into the fire. Therefore, to the disobedient the time of his coming and of his appearance has become unbearable and not very tolerable. for they were convicted, as they themselves the destroying their souls, and being dead in their own sins, because of not choosing to think rightly, and to receive into mind and heart the purification through faith. Who then, he says, will endure the day of his coming? Or who will stand when he appears? That is, who then will be so terrible and harsh, as in the time and day of his entry into the world; clearly, that which is with the flesh, through which he would be both tangible, that is, visible; to stand and remain unbroken? For he will be punished in every way and altogether, and will pay the

bitter penalties for his folly. For he comes in like a refiner's fire and like the launderers' soap, and he will sit refining and purifying as silver and as gold, and he will purify the sons of Levi and will pour them out like gold and silver. The discourse in these things is made as from a likeness of our own affairs, but it would bring an ineffable revelation of a mystery to the more intelligent. For those wise in these matters test silver and gold, melting down in fire all that is counterfeit and most unbeautiful in them.

But the divine fire from heaven, that is, the grace through the Holy Spirit, by which it would happen that we, even while living, are perfected in the spirit, when it should come into our mind and heart, Christ sending it in, then, yes then, it wipes away all the filth from sin, and consumes the defilement from what was already transgressed; and so it makes those who have it purified and most approved, and, so to speak, spiritually reforges them to newness of life, and henceforth shows them to be bright and sanctified vessels, prepared for honor, useful to the great house, that is, the Church. This divine and spiritual fire the wondrous John indicated, saying, "I baptize you in water, but after me comes a man whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and untie; he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. We remember also Christ himself saying, "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what do I wish, if it is already kindled? Therefore, since those of the blood of Israel made no small outcry against the impurity, or rather iniquity, of the Levites, or rather, because of them, they continually provoked the God of all, speaking certain contradictory things and daring to say, "Everyone who does evil is good in his sight, and in them he has taken pleasure, and where is the God of justice?

He usefully foretells that in due time Christ will shine forth, who puts all our sin out of the way, and makes his own priests all-holy, and testing them like gold or silver in the fire, that is, making them approved and brightened. For such, for the most part, are the ministers of the Church, to whom it would be fitting, and very reasonably so, to say that which is through the voice of David, "For you have tested us, O God; you have refined us as silver is refined. For to those of Aaron the vestment according to the law was a garment; but for the chosen in Christ and those appointed to the priesthood, the bright, sacred, and holy vestment will be Christ himself. Therefore God the Father also said through the lyre of the psalmist concerning the church of the Gentiles, "I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall rejoice with exultation. For salvation, Christ himself, is the admirable vestment of his own priests, or rather, also of all who have believed. "For as many of you," it says, "as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. And they shall be to the Lord, offering sacrifices in righteousness; and the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in the former years. They will be dedicated, he says, to God; for this, I think, is the meaning of *And they shall be to the Lord, offering*.

And we will be dedicated to God, living no longer for ourselves, but cleaving in every way to love for him, and having chosen with all our strength to do right in those things that seem good to his divine commands. The wondrous Paul also said something of this sort concerning the of Christ, the Savior of us all "For one died for all, that they who live should

live no ”longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and ”was raised. and describing to us, as it were, the beauty of his own way of life, and making manifest the power of the mystery according to Christ, he said again, ”I have been crucified with ”Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I ”now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who ”loved me and gave himself for me. Therefore, he says, they will be bringing offerings to the Lord, that is, they will be devoted to his will alone, not ”minding earthly ”things,” not loving the defilements from injustice, not choosing to honor greed against some, but rather bringing sacrifices of righteousness. And it seems to me that Paul spoke very wisely, ”For when the priesthood is changed, ”there is of necessity a change of the law as well.

For we who are called in Christ approach the sacred ministry no longer through blood and smoke, nor indeed do we bring lambs or kids to God, but rather we fulfill in the churches the holy and spiritual sacrifice understood in Christ, and setting him forth for sanctification, and indeed also for participation in life eternal, as a choice incense, we bring the sweet smells from good works, and sacrificing to him righteousness, we are confident that we shall be accepted. For it is written that, ”Honor the Lord from your righteous ”labors, and offer to him the firstfruits of your fruits of righteousness. For God is not pleased, I think, with other sacrifices, except with such as these, the God of all. He said, therefore, concerning those called in Christ to the sacred ministry, that they will be better than the first ones, not slaughtering sheep like them, nor indeed defiling the altar by offering polluted bread; but as in the order of incense, offering righteousness to God, and the spiritual fragrance of the evangelical life. And they will so perform the acceptable worship, as in no way to fall short of the fitting sacrifices in the days of eternity, that is, in the life of the holy spirits in heaven, who spend continuous and long days, or times; and to be equal also to the times of old, that is, to the worship of the saints, who have been in the times of old. For approval came to the ancients through obedience;

thus Abraham offered his son to God, ”and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was ”called a friend of God. So also Noah ”prepared the ark ”for the salvation of his household,” as it is written. Therefore, he says, the sacrifice of Judah will be pleasing, that is, of the people bearing the circumcision in heart and spirit, and indeed of Jerusalem, the spiritual one, that is, of the Church; just as that of those who have the days of eternity and that of the saints who lived in former times, who became well-pleasing through obedience and faith. And the divine Paul enumerates these in the epistle to the Hebrews, saying many are justified by faith. And I will come near to you in judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulteresses and against those who swear by my name falsely, and against those who defraud the hireling of his wages and those who oppress the widow and those who strike orphans and those who turn aside the judgment of the sojourner and those who do not fear me, says the Lord Almighty. According to the purpose of the matters, our discourse proceeds again even in these things. For those from Israel were saying ignorantly, ”Everyone who does evil is good in his sight, ”and he has

taken pleasure in them, and where is the God of "justice? and what the pretext was for such terrible loose talk, has already been said; nevertheless it will be said again.

For since some of the priests heedlessly, and indeed of the others who were more distinguished and eminent in the highest honors, went to every kind of wickedness and evil deeds, and he appeared beyond measure forbearing- God having care for them; for He is good, kind, gentle, and loving to humanity; for this reason some were belching forth words from unrestrained faint-heartedness. But that there will be in due season a transition to the better for those appointed to sacred service, Christ transforming them into newness of life, and transferring them to good order and to a glorious state and life, he has clearly indicated. But that He would not then accept the practitioners of wickedness, nor would He deem them worthy of praise and account; but rather He will judge them, and will demand justice for their outrageous lives, he makes clear by saying And I will draw near to you in judgment, that is, I will be brought forth as a judge, and I will be a swift witness, that is, a volunteer and called by no one. For I will pronounce sentence against the wicked. And I will bring out the judgment against them; not with another revealing the things in them, but as God knowing the unseen and hidden things, and bearing witness through the conscience of each of those who have sinned.

And the divine Paul said somewhere that in due season those throughout the whole earth will be presented before the Judge, "their conflicting thoughts accusing or even defending them on the day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men through Jesus Christ. Observe, then, how he says that those who have transgressed both in secret and in public will be brought to judgment. For first he names sorcerers and adulteresses, then those who swear falsely; and these things are hidden and done secretly; for who would ever practice magic openly? Or how would an adulteress choose to be seen by anyone? And I think being hidden is a concern also for those who choose to swear falsely. And the blessed David will refute such foolish people, saying, "Understand, you brutish among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does He not hear? Or He who formed the eye, does He not see? For absolutely nothing is unseen by God; He alone knows the hidden and the manifest evils. But those things are done secretly and as if in darkness; yet he adds to them also the manifest things, I mean defrauding a hired worker of his wages, and greed and oppression, which some might do against the weaker, I mean widows and orphans. And he adds to these also those who pervert right judgments and those who do not fear him.

And these would also be those who in some other way, besides those just mentioned by us, grieve God. I will be, he says, therefore, a judge and a swift and volunteer witness against sorcerers and adulteresses, and the practitioners of other evils. It is likely that such things were dared by some at that time, and because of them the blasphemy of the many against God occurred. It is necessary, then, with all one's strength to shun evil things, and to run towards better things, and to hasten to accomplish those things by which one might become full of all praise and gentleness. For in this way he will not share in the things brought by

divine wrath upon those accustomed to transgress, but will be within reach of the rewards and glory which God would give to those who love him. Because I am the Lord your God, and I have not changed; and you, sons of Jacob, have not refrained from the sins of your fathers, you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Again he removes them from unholy thoughts and, moreover, words. For to suppose somehow, either that the God of all has been turned away from willing good things to the contrary, or that He no longer loves righteousness, but accepts the lovers of wickedness, how is this not ignorant, but rather discordant and utterly unholy, and filled with the highest impiety?

When, therefore, you see called to judgment, he says, the sorcerers among you, that is, enchanters—these are certainly whispering and scurrilous women—and the practitioners of other evils, then, he says, you will recognize through the events themselves, that I am the Lord your God, who of old and now is both good and a lover of virtue. For I know no turning or change. But I am always and unchangeably that which I am; but you, he says, although being descended from Jacob, a man who loved God and was good and always hated wickedness, and served God, you have not become zealous for his ways; but you have rather imitated the disobedience and intractability of your fathers, who for this very reason went away as captives, leaving the land that bore them, and have been enslaved to the enemies who captured them. And you also have turned aside from my laws and have not kept them. Therefore God is always unchangeable, and as it were fixed in goodness, and unshakable in righteousness; but they have become, so to speak, ones who have kept unchangeableness in evil, and the best imitators of their fathers' impiety. Christ is also found saying this somewhere. For He rightly pronounces woe upon the workshop of the uninstructed scribes and Pharisees. And He spoke thus: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you bear witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets; and you, fill up the measure of your fathers. Therefore it is necessary for us, if we are truly sound of mind and in a stable mind, to emulate as much as possible the most approved of the fathers, and to shake off the imitation of those who are not good. Or if someone should not choose to do this, but should follow simply and without examination those who have gone before in time, he will surely be like the children of the Greeks, whom if one should mock because, having abandoned the knowledge of the truth and left behind the God by nature, they worship stones, they always bring up the custom of their own fathers. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty. And you said, "In what shall we return? Will a man supplant God? because you supplant me. And you will say, "In what have we supplanted you? Because the tithes and first-fruits are with you. and you who look are looking at them, and you supplant me. The year was completed, and you brought all the produce into the storehouses, and in his house will be its plunder.

Having very well put a stop to the slander against himself, and having shamed them as much as possible with fitting defenses, he calls to repentance those who have sinned, saying

that he will again grant them his usual gentleness, and very readily. For just as he inflicts fitting penalties on those who wish to live wickedly; so to those who, as it were, go backwards, and indeed also refuse to sin any longer, he truly rejoices, everywhere cutting off despair as a cause of destruction. From this it is possible to see what a terrible disease they bring into life, those who counterfeit the grace of repentance, and ignorantly claim for themselves the name of purity. And yet how is it not better to understand, that thinking and having to say that they are pure brings upon them the charge of the utmost impurity? For it is written, ”You tell your sins first, that you may be justified. And our divine David also sings somewhere, ”For I know my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. ”For no one is clean from filth,” according to what is written. Therefore, those who are so feebly sick are in need of the good things that come from repentance, and of the gentleness from above that thoroughly washes the defiled one and justifies the ungodly. Therefore he calls to repentance out of gentleness those who have sinned. But to those who in turn ask and wish to learn the manner of their sin, he says, ”Will a man supplant God?

For you are supplanting me. Now to ”supplant” is to snatch away, or to cheat, and to think that one might escape notice when lying, perhaps, or even when doing some of the most wicked things. And so Esau was indeed angry with Jacob, and explaining the reason for his murderous intent he said, ”For he has supplanted me now this second time; he has taken my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing. Will it then survive, he says, a man of God, or will he plunder the one who knows all? Why then do you trip me up? But I think it is necessary for a precise clarification of the concepts before us to say now a few things which are also written in the books of Ezra. For when those from Israel returned to Judea, having left the land of the Babylonians, they dwelt in Jerusalem; and the divine temple had been raised, and the orders of priests were finally in order, with singers and sacred psalmists and those set over the gates. Then what happened after this? The redeemed became slothful with regard to the necessity of holding to the divine ordinances. For they did not keep the law, and the transgression of the divine commandment was considered as nothing by them. And they brought for sacrifice, with difficulty and reluctance, the blind and stolen and lame and afflicted.

Then, having harvested in the fields at the proper time the ear of grain and indeed the other seeds, and gathering grapes from the vines, and pressing the fruit of the olive, they did not bring tithes, and the firstfruits according to the law, so that the orders of priests, having self-sufficiency, might apply themselves without distraction to the worship of God, and might remain at the liturgies appointed to them by the law. Therefore, since nothing was being brought, the sacred ministers of the divine altars were scattered, and the temple thus remained desolate, with no sacrifice being performed, nor anything else being done of the things that lead to the glory of God. Therefore, everything in the fields was then being destroyed, and they were oppressed by famine, and indeed they had slipped into such necessity and want, as even to wish to sell their own children to those who had food, until Ezra, having been called to a perception of the divine wrath, charged the leaders of Israel concerning these things; and thus with difficulty they brought tithes and firstfruits, and

then the sacred ministers ran in and stood performing their usual duties in the temple. Why then, he says, do you trip me up? The year was completed, the fruits were gathered, and yet the tithes and the firstfruits according to the law are still with you. And in his house, he says, shall be his plunder. It is as if he were to say:

You have gathered the fruits from the fields into your houses, and perhaps you think they are safe for you and lie very well, but in the very houses they will disappear, and the matter will be no different from plunder. For you will be oppressed by famine, even though you have gathered, he says, with sweat and difficulty what was found. We shall know, therefore, from this, that it will be counted as a great fault, not to offer thanksgivings to God and not to render sufficient gratitude for what he has bestowed for his glory. But if we do this, he will bless us in every way and in all things, and will lavishly bestow good things; but if indeed, having drawn back our hand, we keep what was given for our own luxuries alone, he will neither give more readily, but will scatter, as it were, even that which was gathered with difficulty. For it is necessary to be generous and willing to share, and to set before others for participation the gifts from God. Test me now in this, says the Lord Almighty; if I will not open for you the floodgates of heaven, and pour out for you my blessing, until it is sufficient; and I will set apart for you what is for food, and I will not destroy the fruit of your earth, and your vine in the field will not fail, says the Lord Almighty.

And all the nations will call you blessed, because you will be a desirable land, says the Lord Almighty. Again he lets go of the accusations, and frees them from every charge, and promises to graciously and without remembrance of wrongs grant their wishes, and to delight them with honors beyond description. And he wishes them to learn by experience itself and by facts, that bearing fruit will be in every way beneficial for them. And if they should choose to do this, he promises to bestow an abundant supply of rains, and to distribute the blessing lavishly, so that they may have an abundant sufficiency of edible things, and simply a satisfactory share of the good things from the earth. For I will set apart for you, he says for food. But you will understand *I will distinguish* as *I will set apart*, that is, that each of the things that grow from the earth has its own season, in which it might happen to grow or ripen. And He clearly promises that the fruit of the earth will be free from all harm, and that the vine in the fields will be full of clusters and exceedingly productive of good wine, and when these things have been brought to fulfillment, He says they will then be blessed, and be called a desirable land, that is, one worthy of love because of its fruitfulness and fertility.

Therefore, if anyone has bowels of compassion, he will surely encounter such a God, and will lay up treasure in heaven, and will eat the fruits of his own labors, according to what is written, and will not be like that harsh and foolish rich man, whose land, the Savior says in the gospel parables, had brought forth plentifully. For he said, "What shall I do? I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, be merry. But while he was thinking such things and being foolish, God says, "Fool, this night your soul is required of you; and the things you have

prepared, whose will they be? Therefore, as I said, the one who shares is full of blessing. Such a one will also have spiritual rains watering the heart, and sufficiently making it glad, and he will bring forth the fruits of piety, in different ways at different times, and as it were distinguished, excelling now in love, now in kindness and brotherly love, in courage and patience. And he will be like a fruitful and most fertile land, illustrious and renowned and truly thrice-blessed. "For a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches," as it is written. You have spoken harsh words against me, says the Lord. And you said, "How have we spoken against you? And you said, "It is vain to serve God;

and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked as suppliants before the face of the Lord Almighty? And now we call strangers blessed; and those who do lawless things are built up; they have resisted God and have been saved. These things those who feared the Lord spoke, each to his neighbor; and the Lord gave heed and listened. When God wishes to correct some of his own who have slipped into sin, He brings their transgressions into the open, and clearly convicts them, and as it were strikes them with reproaches, so that, blushing at their own offenses, they might choose to turn to better and more useful things, and thus be saved, having sought mercy from Him. Therefore, he also accuses those of Israel on another account, and weaves a rebuke that is, as it were, common also to those after them, knowing the matter to be beneficial and salutary for all. For whatever happened to those before us as types, "These things were written for our admonition," as the most wise Paul says. Therefore, he accuses them of unbridled speech, and of choosing to grieve him with slanderous words. For he says, you have spoken harsh words against me. And what then was the manner of the slander? You said, he says, "It is vain to serve God," and that there is no profit in wishing to keep his charge, that is, the ordinances of the law.

Besides this, you say, it is futile also to beseech him, that is, to offer prayers for whatever you might choose. And the God of all is surely true, if he should both say these things and accuse those of Israel. But what indeed was the pretext for the sinful speech of those who had spoken nonsense, it is necessary to say. For countless nations grazed the earth; but from all of them God chose one, the nation of Israel, and it has been called his portion and his measuring line and his inheritance. And having made them his own, he instructed them by the law, he helped them through the prophets. And what did the frenzied Israel do in response to these things? It has worshipped the host of heaven, it has served idols, it said to the carved images, "You are our gods. The God of all, being reasonably indignant at such terrible impieties, disciplined them in many ways, calling them to repentance by famines, by blight, by scarcity of fruits, by the locust and the cankerworm, by mildew and by caterpillars. For he did not yet wish to strike with a mighty hand, but rather, so to speak, to scare them away with terrors and still measured motions to choose to do what is profitable, and to love the God who is by nature and truly God.

But since they had no regard even for being struck with measure, and went away unbridled into every form of impurity, he sent them into captivity, and caused them to fall under the

hand of the Babylonians. But when they were called back to Judea, God having compassion on them, and they rebuilt the walls of the city, and they built up the temple, they again turned to indifference, not fulfilling their vows, not following the ordinances of the law, not bringing tithes or firstfruits; but sluggish and scarcely coming to sacrifice, and slaughtering the lame, the blind, and the diseased, and doing these things improperly, God no less disciplined them with famine and barrenness. But they, although it was necessary, if they were good and knowledgeable of what was profitable, to heal the grieved God of all by returning to what is better, made an unintelligent outcry. For when they saw the neighboring nations, although not knowing God, but rather worshipping carved images, and sick with the ultimate error, were in comfort and luxury, they said foolishly, "He who serves God is vain," and "what profit is it that we have kept his commandments? For we, he says, the keepers of the law are in barrenness and plagues, and we have gone into captivity, although always falling down and becoming suppliants to the Lord Almighty; but those who do none of such things have no plague, no pain.

Therefore we call strangers blessed, and they who do lawless things are built up, they have resisted God and have been saved. For in truth those who wander act against the glory of God in many ways, both offering sacrifices to molten images and "saying to the wood, 'You are my God,' and to the stone, 'You have begotten me.'" These things, he says, those who fear the Lord spoke among themselves. The accusation is again blasphemy, and a clear proof of the worst sicknesses. For the words are of a sick mind, and to say anything against God is the God-hated filth of a drunken intellect. And that he listens to such words not as it were incidentally, but with diligence, he has assured us, saying: "And the Lord gave heed and heard. "For the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together has knowledge of the voice. And if any word should be spoken against his divine glory, this will be heavy and as it were unbearable, although he is accustomed to be exceedingly patient; for this very reason he also said, "You have made your words heavy against me. Therefore it is necessary, then, even if we are in troubles, while God disciplines us for our benefit, not to be exceedingly despondent, nor indeed to think that one who so loves virtue would be unsparing of good things; but rather to examine carefully the things for which we have given offense, and thus to appease, and to ask for mercy.

And if indeed some lovers of sin are in worldly comfort, having the enjoyment of temporary things, it is fitting to attribute the reason to the ineffable economies of his long-suffering toward them. And he wrote a book of remembrance before him for those who fear the Lord and revere his name. and they shall be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in the day that I make for my special possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him well. While those of Israel were mocking him, and speaking unholy nonsense against him, "he gave heed and heard. Then, though it was necessary to impose the fitting penalty on the sinners, and to exact an account for their loose-tongued words, as God he passes over even this, forgetting injuries; but he writes a book of remembrance for those who fear him, concerning whom I think somewhere David himself also said to the one writing the book, "And in your book all shall be written. And we will find our Lord Jesus Christ saying to the

holy disciples, "Do not rejoice that the demons are subject to you; but rejoice rather, that the names of yours has been written in heaven. And the divine David very fittingly curses the people of the Jews who killed Christ, saying thus, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and let them not be written with the righteous.

Therefore the book of remembrance is written for those who fear God, whom He says will also be His own and most well-known at the time of acquisition, when Christ sits upon the throne of His glory, attended by angels, "and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on His left, and He will say to those on His right, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" For then He will choose them, that is, He will make them chosen, yielding nothing in affection to our fathers, who dote on their own children, especially when they are wise and obedient, and hold their parents in the greatest reverence. And you will turn and see the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, and between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve. Then indeed, he says, ceasing from such rotten idle talk, and checking your unrestrained and undisciplined tongue, you will no longer revile the God who loves virtue, but having almost cast off your drunkenness, and as it were turning from error, you will see very well what and how great is the difference between the righteous and the lawless, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve. For the lawless and unruly, and those who shake off the yoke of slavery under Him, will go away to destruction and into endless punishment; "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," as it is written;

but the good and God-loving, and those knowledgeable in the divine laws, and cultivators of every virtue, radiant and sanctified, will be crowned with the crown of incorruptibility, and being in the mansions above, they will live together with the holy angels, and being shown as partakers of the glory of Christ, they will delight in the good things for an eternal life, "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and has not entered into the heart of man," as it is written. Yet seeing the lovers of wickedness prospering in this life, some of the saints have had doubts, but they did not fail to know that they will have the end of their life in destruction. And so the blessed Jeremiah says something like this: "Righteous are You, O Lord, that I may plead with You, yet I will speak judgments to You. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? All who deal treacherously have thrived. You have planted them, and they have taken root; they have borne children and produced fruit. You are near in their mouth, but far from their reins. And You, O Lord, know me; You have tested my heart before You. Then again he says, "Consecrate them for the day of their slaughter. How long will the earth mourn? You see how he has fallen into a difficulty of thoughts, but he did not fail to know the end of the wicked.

"Because all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," as it is written. For behold, a day is coming, burning like a furnace, and it will burn them, and all the foreigners and all who do lawless things will be stubble, and the coming day will set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty, and neither root nor branch will be left of them. For it is consistent to understand that the day of judgment will be in fire, "in which the heavens will

pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements will be dissolved, being burned up, and the earth and the works in it will all be burned up. But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises; for thus said one of the holy disciples. Therefore, he says, the day of the Lord will come like a furnace, and it will burn up all the foreigners, and to these it will add those who do lawless things; for the judgment will be one for both. But see how cleverly he now makes mention of the foreigners. For since they were calling them blessed, saying, "And now we call the arrogant blessed, and they are built up doing "lawless things, they resisted God and were saved," for this reason he says they will be burned up, as having warred against the glory of God, and having chosen to worship the creation rather than the creator.

And we also consider in another way that idolaters are called foreigners and those who in some other manner have been alienated from the holy and chosen race, such as I mean the heretics, concerning whom it might be said, and very appropriately "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. these, having cast off their divine noble birth, and being separated from the holy and chosen race which has come to be for a possession; clearly through faith in Christ; such people, at any rate, will be food for the all-consuming fire. and those who do lawless things will lie in equal portion before God, even if they happen to be numbered among those who have believed and have been chosen, and know the God who is by nature and in truth. for this is not enough for them for the washing away of sin, if it is true that "faith without works is dead. For faith in Christ justifies, and frees from the stain of previous sins. But if after this someone should be found lazy and fallen away, inclined toward the passions of the flesh and of the world, he has, as it were, put faith to death in himself, adding none of the praiseworthy things, but rather relapsing to the old worthlessness of life.

concerning such people the divine disciple also says "For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. For what the true proverb says has happened to them: 'The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.'" Therefore, those who do lawless things are on a par with the foreigners, and they will be as stubble, and will be burned up just as if fire were brought upon it. For the wheat is gathered into the barn, as the Savior also says concerning the holy reapers; but the chaff is burned with unquenchable fire. and there shall not be left for them a root or a branch, that is, they will have no hope of growing again to life, and by life I mean that which is lovely and in glory with God, that which is understood as in holiness and blessedness. For if the root is not entirely cut off, nor the branch, as it were, removed from the depths, some hope is saved of growing again; "For there is hope for a tree," according to what is written; "for if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its shoot will not fail.

But if indeed from below and from its very root, as I said, it should be dug up, and endure a savage cutting of the plants, all hope for it of being able to grow again to life will surely perish with it. Therefore, as by a likeness from plants, he says that all hope of the lovers of

sin has been removed. And this the divine Isaiah clearly proclaims, saying ”Their worm will not die, and their fire will not be quenched, and they will be a spectacle for all flesh. And for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall arise, with healing in its wings; and you shall go out and leap like calves released from their bonds. and you will tread down the lawless, for they will be ashes under your feet on the day that I am preparing, says the Lord Almighty. The only-begotten Word of God has indeed shone forth, having appeared in this world, having put on our likeness; for he says, ”The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and while we were in mist and darkness, like a sun, he shines around us with his own rays, and sending a brilliant beam of the true knowledge of God into the hearts of believers, he has made them pure and wise and knowledgeable in every good work. And he showed us the Father in himself, through his ineffable instruction making us most skillful and wise, and having our mind full of the knowledge concerning him.

But having been brought to this brightness and been enriched, as the blessed Paul says, ”in every thing in word and in all knowledge and in all wisdom,” ”we see now in a mirror and in a riddle, and we know ”in part. But that which is perfect will come in due time, and then we shall be in the fullest knowledge, when Christ shines on us again from heaven, and abolishes the knowledge that is partial and in a riddle, but illuminates us as the most perfect, and fills our mind with a certain divine and ineffable light, and makes it radiant by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For the divinely-inspired Paul said, ”Whether prophecies, they shall be done away; whether knowledge, it shall ”cease. But we say that we shall not proceed from knowing in part to knowing nothing at all, far from it. For in what way will the time of the future hope not be a loss for the souls of the saints, if they must entirely lose even what they have, not gaining better things, not directing their mind to any of the things that are above, but rather selling off even what has already been acquired, sometimes not without hardship? But prophecies are abolished, and knowledge will cease, when that which is far superior is clearly introduced into our souls.

For just as if someone, when a single lamp is shining in a house and casting a moderate gleam on those who see it, should bring in a torch, it is entirely necessary, so to speak, that the light of the former become inactive, yielding to the immensity of the greater one; and just as when the sun illuminates the world under heaven, the brightness of the stars is left somehow inactive; so too, when a more radiant knowledge is introduced into us, the lesser will be somehow abolished. And Christ also said somewhere to the holy apostles, ”These things I have spoken to you in ”parables; the hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in ”parables, but I will tell you plainly about the ”Father. Therefore, to the saints, who have greatly feared the name of God and have become practitioners of every virtue in this world, Christ will shine forth, like a sun of righteousness, casting the rays of the most perfect knowledge, and delivering them from all sickness of the soul, and putting their former affliction as far away as possible. For this is ”Healing in his wings; as was said concerning the eagle and its young, according to that which was spoken by the all-wise Moses concerning God and those delivered from Egypt: ”As an eagle will shelter its nest,

spreading its wings, ”it received them. Therefore, he says, there will be healing in his wings. For in this age, the stirrings of the flesh in us are somehow terrible;

for it incites the mind to improper pleasures, and the law of sin rages in our members, even if it happens to be conquered through the goodness of the saints, with Christ helping. And the mind is somehow intoxicated, being tempted in another way by passions; for boasts attack, and worldly ambitions and angers and avarice and the other evils. But since through Christ we have been enriched with the pledge of the Spirit, we are accustomed to prevail over the passions, though not without sweat; but in the age to come, having the full gleam of the knowledge of God, and being rich in the perfection of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and having put off corruption and the passions of the flesh, we will serve God in every way, not being divided towards sin, nor indeed being troubled by any of the former passions, but living a pure and harmless life in equal rank with the holy angels. For it is written concerning the saints that they will forget their affliction, and it will not come up into their heart; and there will be, he says, ”and everlasting joy upon their head, ”for upon their head praise and joy and ”gladness will overtake them, pain and sorrow and ”sighing have fled away. For this reason the Prophet says, or rather God who is the worker and giver of these things, that you will both go out and leap like calves released from bonds.

For just as suckling calves, when released from their bonds, skip about the fields, leaping up and lowing in the flourishing grass; so in due time the saints almost as if released from the bonds of the affliction and care of this life, and of sweat and toils, they will come out into the gladness that befits the holy, treading upon the lawless, who are no longer fighting and resisting, but have already fallen and been conquered, and are as if laid under their feet, because the war from them has been completely done away with. ”For there shall be no lion there, nor shall any of the evil ”beasts go up there,” according to what is written; ”but there shall be a clean way, and it shall be called a holy way. For the life of the saints at that time will be without war and free from every stain. And behold, I send to you Elijah the Tishbite before the great and manifest day of the Lord comes, who will restore the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a man to his neighbor, lest I come and strike the earth utterly. A proof of God’s gentleness and long-suffering is that Elijah the Tishbite should shine forth for us in due time, when the Judge is at last at hand, heralding him to those throughout the whole world.

For the Son will descend as judge in the glory of God the Father, with angels as his guard, and he will sit ”on the throne of his glory,” judging the world in righteousness, and he will by all means render to each according to his work. But since we are in very many sins, the divine prophet usefully goes before, leading those on earth to one mind, so that all, brought into unity through faith, and having ceased from their zeal for wickedness, may choose to fulfill what is good, and thus be saved when the Judge descends. Therefore, the blessed Baptist John, arriving first, came forth ”in the spirit and power of Elijah. But just as he proclaimed, saying, ”Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,” so too the divine Elijah will then proclaim that he is near, and will be present in just a moment,

to judge the world in righteousness. And now perhaps some are divided, and a father is divided against a son, and a son against a father. For one has believed in Christ, while the other is numbered among the unbelievers, and others stand apart from one another's love, torn apart by enmity and unceasing anger, and contentions over any of the affairs of the world. Nevertheless, the prophet will restore, gathering into one faith those long divided, and restoring a man to his neighbor, lest, he says, I come and strike the earth utterly, that is, in every way and completely.

Do you see, then, the gentleness of the Lord of all? He persuades beforehand those on earth, and almost bears witness through the voice of Elijah, that a judge will be present, so that those living on the earth at that time, by correcting their own life with changes for the better, may not meet a harsh judge, who sends to the flame and to the outer darkness; but might rather hear, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Remember the law of Moses my servant, as I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with ordinances and judgments. He again persuades those who will encounter the words of the Prophet to understand that the proclamation concerning Christ was not something new or unusual, nor was it foretold only by the voice of Malachi; but from above and from the beginning, and from the first times, so to speak, in which Israel was called to the knowledge of God, when God delivered the laws in Horeb through Moses. For the God of all descended in the form of fire upon Mount Sinai, and there appeared smoke and flames darting on high, and inspiring great dread in those who saw; and there was darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and "the sound of the trumpet sounded "loud. Then indeed, having become terrified, the sons of Israel came and said to the mediator and instructor—this was Moses—"You speak to us, and let not God speak to us, lest we die.

And indeed, to these things, God says, "Rightly all that they have spoken; 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 command him. Do you see how from long ages past the sacred scripture foretold Christ? But if one would wish to examine the very shadows of the law, he will find Christ being written, and the mystery concerning him. And so he said to the Jews, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. For Christ is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, through whom and with whom, to God the Father be glory with the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Book 1

The purpose for all the holy prophets is one and God-loving, to persuade Israel to depart vigorously from the desire to wander, and to choose rather to serve the living and true God, and to delight in the boasts of righteousness, casting as far away as possible the condemnation for their wicked deeds. And many there have been, one after another, as God in a way testified beforehand, and through as many mouths as possible clearly proclaimed in advance, that if they should not choose to live rightly, nor indeed make it of great importance to practice a return to better things from then on, they themselves would pronounce judgment against themselves, and enduring a self-inflicted destruction, they would attribute the causes of their suffering to their own judgments. But if the words of the holy prophets should contain the same narratives, let no one find fault, accusing them of tautology, but rather let him clearly consider this: for there should have been no time in which there were not those able to correct sinners. And just as no one, if he had any sense, would find fault with the fact that at all times there are physicians, who check the same of our afflictions with the same appropriate remedies, so, I think, no one would reasonably rebuke the holy prophets, if they should appear to be going through the same deeds and words.

For it was one Lord who spoke to all, and who at all times showed to the wandering those who knew how to bring them back to a straight path, as it were. For they all foretell the wars, the captivities, the desolation of cities, the toils, the sorrows, the lamentations for the dead, the miseries of those who are taken away, the cruelty of the destroyers; and one might see that the narratives proceed with all harshness, for the necessary benefit of those who are wandering. For at times, that which has unrestrainedly inclined towards apostasy and sin is checked by fears. Therefore, the blessed Micah also prophesies in the times of the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah. And while Jotham was reigning, Pekah son of Remaliah campaigned against Jerusalem, and Rezin king of Syria; but when he died, Ahaz succeeded to the rule, who also, as it was extending for the war he hired the Assyrian with money, and called on him to help, since he was unable to lead out an army against the forces of the attackers; who, having come, captured Damascus and also killed Raasson. Then, at that time, when Jeroboam son of Joash, and after him Azariah, and thirdly Manaeim were reigning in Samaria, Phul king of the Assyrians came up, who, having been persuaded with difficulty by a great deal of money, was brought back to his own land. After Phul, Tiglath-

pileser the Assyrian campaigned against the land of the Jews, and he uprooted very many cities of Samaria;

and to them he added also all of Galilee as far as Naphtali. These things were therefore spoken of in detail when we composed the exegesis on the blessed prophet Hosea, and we have now made mention of them necessarily because the times of the prophecy of Micah were also set forth. For it was necessary, it was necessary for the eager listener and lover of learning not to be ignorant of the reason for which those who had reigned over Jerusalem were named, I mean Jotham and Ahaz. The time of the prophecy extends even to the reign of Hezekiah, in whose time again was Sennacherib, he also being king of the Assyrians; he took by force the city of the Samaritans, and also plundered the cities of the Philistines, that is, of the Palestinians. Then having taken Lachish—this being a city of the kingdom of Judah— from there he sends Rabshakeh to besiege Jerusalem, who also pays the penalty for his arrogance and verbal abuse against God, when one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian army died in one night. The word of the Lord, it says, therefore came to Micah of Morathi. And the word of the Lord came to Micah the Morathite, in the days of Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. It is necessary to know again that the Hebrews have written "the Morathite" instead of "of Morathi," so that it might not be designated as from a father, but as from a place.

For they say that Morathi is a village or a small town that was in the country of the Jews. The other commentators also agree with this version. Therefore, Morathi would not be the Prophet's father; but, as I said, it indicates rather from a place, and Morathite. What, then, were the words that came to him, it is necessary to examine. Concerning what he saw about Samaria and Jerusalem. For he has seen as in a vision the things that will be, and having grasped not only the knowledge of the evils that are about to come or are even at the gates, but inasmuch as it came to sight—I mean as in a vision—fearing the outcome, he necessarily makes his speech about both Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all peoples, words, and let the earth and all who are in it pay attention, and the Lord God shall be among you as a witness, the Lord from his holy house. He commands them to prepare for docility, and, as it were, inclining their ear, to understand subtly the power of the divine oracles. And that the narrative is not from human opinion or will, but from the very God who rules over all, he confirms by adding, that the Lord will be among you as a witness. For he says, as it were:

Even if I, Micah, make the speech, and even if I should happen to mediate as a man, yet the God of all things himself testifies to you, and I lend my voice to the Lord's decrees. Therefore he himself will be a witness to you, for whom you have established this renowned and illustrious temple, for whom the divine altar was founded by you, for whom you have been taught by the law to offer worship; who from his own house has always spoken to holy prophets, and before all others to the blessed Moses, who had raised that ancient tabernacle in the wilderness. For he spoke from above the mercy-seat, and as the sacred scripture says: "Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice. And now he testifies to you, it says, from

his house. Therefore hear, O peoples, and let the earth also pay attention. Similar to this is that through the voice of Isaiah: ”Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. For the Most High dwells not in those things made of in temples of stone or in sanctuaries made by hand. But since we say that the holy houses have been raised for the glory of God, for this reason we have believed that the God of all things does not disdain to dwell in them, although He fills the heavens and the earth and the things below.

And one might reasonably apply these things also to Christ, who calls to salvation not only peoples who were also of the blood of Abraham, but indeed also the whole earth. For He testified, as it were, through the voice of David, saying ”Hear these things, ”all you nations; give ear, all you who inhabit the ”world. And how can one doubt that the Word has come down to us from heaven as from His own house, which is exceedingly dear to Him? And it is in no way strange to call heaven the house of God, since the divinely inspired scriptures also call the earthly Zion, which is taken as a type of the Church, both His house and His city. For the divine David somewhere sings and says, ”Glorious things have been spoken of you, O ”city of God. Therefore, as a city, so also would be the house, the Church of Christ who fills all things according to the nature of His Divinity. For behold, the Lord comes forth from his place, and will mount upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains shall be shaken from under him, and the valleys shall melt like wax before the fire, and like water carried down a steep place. This saying is indeed very obscure and full of riddles.

But we say this of necessity, that even if things concerning God are signified in words according to our manner, yet the one who is skilled in these things, and knows how to understand ”a parable and an obscure saying, the words of the wise and their riddles,” will understand subtly, and in a way that is as fitting as possible to the divine and ineffable nature. For its establishment, and thrones, and rising are spoken of through the voice of the saints, and indeed also ways and journeys, and certain other small and human things besides these, but, as I said just now, such contemplations would reasonably be understood subtly and finely by the good and sound-minded. For the words come about as if from a likeness and metaphor of things concerning us. Therefore, when you hear the Prophet saying, For behold, the Lord comes forth from his place, and will mount upon the high places of the earth, and he adds that the mountains will be shaken, and the valleys will be melted down, then indeed, being raised a little above the things of sense, ascend in your contemplations to subtle thoughts. Here, therefore, you will understand the going forth of God as from His own place to be, as it were, a movement from rest, upon some of the things to be done.

For he all but says, He who was long-suffering for a long time has at last been moved, and will somehow no longer spare to remain quiet toward those who have offended, and having in a way left behind the gentleness dear to Him, He will at last inflict punishment. For He will mount upon the high places of the earth, that is, He will at last trample upon those in excessive preeminence, that we may understand the kings in both Samaria and in Jerusalem. And the mountains will be shaken, that is, again, they will be moved from their own dignities, those who surpass others and stand very high in glory; for such men are very

well compared to mountains. And the valleys shall melt like wax, that is, the humble and the cast down, and those who have the measure of the common herd, but although they are very hard, and do not endure to yield to the divine decrees, as if encountering the fire from the divine wrath, they will be melted down like wax; and they will become like water carried down a steep place, that is, rushing down a slope in a swift and unrestrained course. For as I have already said, the kings of the Assyrians, having savagely ravaged both Samaria itself and the kingdom of Judah, deported some of the kings, and also killed all the leaders, and like a runner and like water coming down a slope they carried away the multitude of the common people to their own land.

And this was the water carried down a steep place, and running from Samaria into the land of the Persians and Medes. And the word of God has come forth from of this place. For being God by nature He became man; and He seems somehow to have endured motion, in this respect I mean, although not knowing change, but rather being established in his own nature, and having stability as God. And He stepped on the high places of the earth, and shook mountains, and melted valleys, and caused them to flow like water carried downhill. And the high places of the earth could be understood as the intelligible powers that rise up against all, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness; and the shaken mountains as the demons who were driven from their rule over us. For they have been cast out, and we are henceforth called to be subject to the one who is by nature and in truth God. And the valleys in turn are the swarming multitude of demons, the lowly and cast-down, that which has been melted like wax, and which has flowed like water into the recesses of Hades. For the evil spirits came to Christ, and ”they begged him not to command them to depart into the ”abyss. For since others had already been sent away before, those who were still left shuddered at the event.

But if someone should wish to understand the high places and mountains and valleys as the teachers of the Jews, and indeed also the peoples under them, who on account of their insolence toward Christ were also driven from their own rule; for they were melted, and like wax coming into contact with a flame, so they were with the calamities of the war from the Romans, ”But they were made as nothing and as passing water, and as ”wax that is melted they are taken away,” according to the voice of the psalmist; he will not stray from the proper aim. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sin of the house of Israel. Saying that the God of all will step upon the high places of the earth, and that the mountains will be shaken by him, and the valleys will be melted like wax and water and will flow down, he then adds, For the transgression of Jacob is all this. See therefore how he speaks hidden mysteries, and does not limit the meaning of the preceding things to what is perceptible, but knows how to narrate indirectly the calamities that were about to befall those in Samaria and those in Jerusalem. For what terror would it hold, and how would the shaking of the mountains grieve those in Samaria, for instance, or the others? And in what way would the valleys be melted, or be like water carried downhill?

But he knows, as I said, having suitably indicated the things that would happen to those of Israel. For this reason, therefore, he necessarily brings forward the punishments, not speaking to them as if they were ignorant, as I think, but as it were rebuking them, and excellently persuading them to choose to think what is useful and more fitting. He said, therefore, that For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sin of the house of Israel, so that the entire race of Israel might be understood to have sinned against both God and men. For he seems to call the offenses against God transgression, but those against brothers and kinsmen sin. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of the house of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? Having named Jacob those who are from Jacob, I mean Ephraim who is in Samaria, he makes their accusations clear. And he says that Samaria is the form of the transgression. And we certainly do not say that he accuses the country itself; for it is utterly senseless to think this way; but by Samaria he means the things pertaining to Samaria, such as the heifers, Chemosh, Baal, and the things done in it against certain people through the greed of the rulers. For he said that ”They struck the heads of the ”poor, and turned aside the way of the humble.

And in addition to this they said, ”When will the month be over, that we may sell, and ”the sabbath, that we may open our treasures, to make the measure ”small and the weight great, and to make the balance ”unjust? He says that Jerusalem also became a sin for Judah. And thinking rightly, we will by no means accuse the city itself in these matters; but we will rather suppose that the things done in it became a sin for Judah. For God somewhere accused the Jews of their insolence, and indeed also said clearly, ”For according to the number of your cities were ”your gods, O Judah, and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem, ”you have set up altars to burn incense to Baal. Why do you speak ”to me? All of you have committed iniquity, and all of you have ”acted impiously against me, says the Lord Almighty. And He rebukes them also through the voice of Isaiah, saying, ”How has the faithful city Zion become ”a harlot, full of judgment, in which ”righteousness lodged, but now murderers. Your ”silver is worthless; your merchants mix wine with water. ”Your rulers are disobedient, partners with thieves, loving ”gifts, pursuing rewards, not judging for orphans, and ”not attending to the judgment of the widow. Therefore the things impiously done in Jerusalem have become a sin for Judah, and not so much the city.

It is necessary, then, to love God, and this from the whole soul and heart, and to cast off laziness in doing good, and in no way to harm one’s neighbor, but rather to win them over by good deeds, and to reject evil things, but rather to be devoted to the boasts of righteousness. But for those who are supine regarding such venerable things, and have chosen to be contemptuous, He will bring upon them the things of wrath, and like wax He will melt them down, punishing them in fire, and like water He will scatter them, no longer deeming us worthy of mercy and love. And I will make Samaria as a fruit-watcher’s hut in a field and as a planting of a vineyard; and I will drag her stones into chaos, and I will uncover her foundations; and they will cut down all her carved images; and they will burn all her wages in fire; and I will bring all her idols to destruction. He clearly recounts what again will be the sufferings of those who have so offended. For Samaria, he says, will be as a

fruit-watcher's hut in a field and as a planting of a vineyard. For some guard the things growing in the fields, weaving together huts and sitting in them. Then they drive away all harm from them. But when the fruits are gathered, the guards cease from their labors, they return home, and they overturn the huts themselves. This we shall find Samaria to have suffered.

For since she has transgressed not moderately, but rather has also acted impiously against the very God of all, attributing reverence to her own works, she was overturned and has fallen, those having been appointed to guard her long ago having perhaps abandoned her, I mean the holy powers and angels. The blessed prophet Isaiah also said something of this sort about her, "The daughter of Zion will be left behind, as a tent in a vineyard "and as a fruit-watcher's hut in a cucumber field. But how was she left behind? For, as I said, the attending and rescuing rational host of the orders above has departed. Therefore it will be as a fruit-watcher's hut in a field and as a planting of a vineyard. It is as if he were saying: both deserted of cities and houses and transformed into the appearance of fields. Or you will understand it in another way, if you please. The vine-dressers of the vineyards, having taken a place most suitable for them, cut it up with plows, turning it up and down. He threatens that the land of the Samaritans will suffer this, that it will become practically arable land, its cities and houses, as I said, having been removed. Because of this he says, that I will drag her stones into chaos, and I will uncover her foundations. And in addition to this, he says there will be something ridiculous.

For those whom they expected to be saviors to them as gods, these are also destroyed together with those accustomed to worship them; and her wages will be burned up, and he says all her idols will go into destruction. The wages for the idols that are burned up along with them, perhaps indicates the votive offerings. For they used to bring to the sanctuaries, distributing from their own wealth for the glory of the idols, and to those who were accustomed to being of no help, or rather having no strength, as if a wage and recompense for what they thought they received from them, they offered thanksgivings. And we remember that also through the voice of Hosea he accused the Synagogue of the Jews, saying thus, "And she did not know that I gave her the grain "and the wine and the oil, and I multiplied for her silver and gold; "but she made silver and gold things for the "Baal; therefore the votive offerings are clear. But that the senseless Israel reckoned prosperity as wages and a recompense for its zeal in going astray, you will no less understand from God saying again, "And I will destroy her vine "and her fig trees, of which she said, 'These are my wages '"that my lovers have given me.'" For, as I said, she thought that by the nods of idols she boasted in wealth and lived in luxury and prospered. Therefore, the mind of those who go astray is blind.

For surely, had it not been ignorant of the God by nature, it would have offered worship to Him rather, and not to any others; to Him it would have offered prayers of thanksgiving; Him it would have confessed as the giver and ruler of every good thing; and having determined to think thus, it would not have become like a watch-post in a field, nor like a planting of a

vineyard, but rather would have continued to be blessed with unshakable prosperity, and fortified by heavenly benevolence, having come into a good state of cheerfulness, it would have been admired. Because she gathered from the wages of prostitution, and from the wages of prostitution she amassed. The discourse indeed laughs again, and with great character derides the ignorance of the Jews; for it makes manifest the stupefaction of their inherent madness, and clearly lays bare the things that lie within their mind and heart; For yes, he says, Israel, full of sense, grateful and wise, rightly and justly offered thanksgivings to the stones; it knew those who honored it, the providers of its prosperity, those who had gathered wealth for it, and who prepared it to be in a state of well-being. For it thinks that to prosper is the wage of its spiritual prostitution; and since it has sacrificed to idols, and serves wood and stones, it will be in no want of the things it prays for.

It has gathered, as he says, and has grown rich from the wages of prostitution, it has amassed and brought together, it has an unshakable cheerfulness. Therefore, in character and irony, with a threat intertwined, we shall understand the force of what has been said. On account of this she will beat her breast and wail, she will go barefoot and naked, she will make a lamentation like that of dragons and a mourning like that of the daughters of sirens; because her plague has prevailed, because it has come as far as Judah and has reached the gate of my people, as far as Jerusalem. For since she lived, he says, in error, and in no way ceased grieving her own Master, but ascribed to carved images the thanks for which she is well-off and praised, and to this point of impiety, he says, she has now advanced, for this reason she will beat her breast and wail; and she will not grieve for any others perhaps, that is, for foreigners, shedding a tear as if from love, but being struck down by her own calamities. And the nakedness and being barefoot shows the condition of captives; so also the blessed prophet Isaiah, signifying the captivity that was about to befall them, went about Jerusalem, "naked and barefoot," God commanding this thing to happen. She will therefore imitate in her own sufferings the mournings of dragons, and the laments of sirens.

For some say that if a dragon is struck, it then laments being in danger, and signifies this by striking the earth with its tail, and is accustomed to make no moderate sound. And sirens the Greeks and their children say are winged creatures that know how to sing melodiously, and are able to bewitch their hearers with the beautiful rhythms of their songs. But the divinely inspired scripture calls sirens the most talkative and sweet-voiced of sparrows, or sometimes even the nightingales themselves, which nest in maritime bays; then, when their nest is taken by the waves, they sing a mournful song, and in a way bewail the loss of their own offspring. Thus he said Samaria will bewail the destruction of her own children. For her plague, he says, has prevailed, and has come as far as Judah, and up to the gates of Jerusalem. And the discourse in these things seems to us to allude to the war by Sennacherib, who, having taken all of Samaria, and having ravaged Judea, besieged Jerusalem, and having arrived at the gates, threatened he wished to burn it; but yet he was not able, with God defending it, during the time of the reign of Hezekiah.

Therefore, when having abandoned the one Lord who is so by nature and in truth, we are zealous to cleave to the unclean demons, then we shall by all means and in every way lament for ourselves, and wailing over our own foolish counsels, we shall be stripped of his grace and help, and we shall live a shameful and uncomely life; for this the being unshod signifies. We shall also be subject to Satan striking us, and there will be nothing anymore to prevent us from being in every evil. You in Gath, do not be magnified, you of Enakim, do not rebuild from a house of laughter; sprinkle earth upon your laughter. The saying is circumspect and the meaning of the preceding words and of those which still follow is very hard to grasp. Nevertheless, I will try to explain as far as possible. As the war overran the cities in Samaria, and others under the scepter of Judah and Benjamin were being captured, the neighbors of the foreigners and whatever nations were somewhat bordering the land of the Jews and were neighbors, laughing broadly, were mocking Israel, as having received no help from God. For they thought that the hand of the savior had to suffer weakness and be powerless against the attacks of those who were ravaging them. But it were better to understand that because they had chosen to grieve the savior and had offended God, they experienced terrible things, and were given into the hands of their enemies.

And since it was absurd for them to think to themselves, that by the power of their own objects of worship, they had remained in a good state of prosperity, while Israel had perished and been destroyed through the weakness of their savior, for this reason God also delivered the cities of the neighbors to Sennacherib for desolation. And so the Rabshakeh, speaking to those on the wall of Jerusalem, mentioned these very things, saying, ”Where is the ”god of Hamath and Arphad? Where is the god of the city ”of Sepharvaim? Was he able to deliver Samaria from my ”hand? Which of all the gods of these nations has delivered ”his land from my hand? Gath, then, is a city of the foreigners called Philistines, and a metropolis of Palestine. But Enakim is likewise another small town situated in the furthest parts of Judea, near the southern desert, yielding indeed to the scepters of Judah, yet no longer thinking the things of the Jews, but rather attached to the neighboring nations, I mean the Moabites and Idumeans. O then, he says, inhabitants of Gath, O you of Enakim, do not make the misfortunes of others occasions for a festival; do not be magnified because of these things, nor because your neighboring house is desolated, that is, that of Israel, for this reason do you laugh broadly, he says, all but dancing over the perished.

Do not build from a house of laughter, but as you yourselves are about to suffer worse things, sprinkle as with earth the mockery that will be against you, and lament your own misfortunes. For the Babylonians will dance over you, and your enemies will smile upon you when you have miserably perished. It is wise, therefore, to remember him who says, ”If your enemy falls, do not rejoice over him, because ”the Lord will see and it will not please him, and he will turn ”his anger away from him. But those also do this who do not know Christ. For when the churches are sometimes persecuted, and the saints in them are tested, then indeed, at that very time, they especially marvel at their own gods. But their laughter ends in tears, while Christ makes light of their terrible deeds, and calms the things that have been stirred up, and scares away what causes grief, and broadens gladness and joy for the

saints; for the end of labors is glory and delight. And it seems to me that the blessed David says something like this to the God of all: "We went through fire and water, and you brought us out "into a place of refreshment. She who dwells beautifully in her cities did not come forth, she who dwells in Sennaar, to lament for the house next to her; she will receive from you a plague of pain. The Seventy have rendered it Sennaar, but Aquila said Senan, but Symmachus has "prospering," perhaps this subtly indicating Senan.

But if Sennaar should be understood, we say that it is a wide region inhabited in cities and villages by foreigners, yet within the borders of Judea; but if indeed Senan should be understood, it signifies a splendid and renowned city of Egypt. And that it prospers because the land is fertile, and covered with crops, how is it possible to doubt? Sennaar, therefore, he says, or Senan, inhabiting her cities well. But the word will come against those who inhabit them; she did not weep for those near who perished piteously and miserably; she did not go out to mourn the neighboring house, that is, she has not lamented her neighbors. And Sennaar is near Judea, as I said, and certainly also Senan, that is, the Egyptian one. But when Israel was falling and being ravaged, she felt no pain, but mocked, and she herself also rejoiced, just like those from Gath and Enakim. What then of Israel? Will the neighboring nations laugh in vain, and while they are doing these things, will God forbear? Will he endure his glory being mocked by enemies? By no means, he says, but from you or on account of you, she will receive a blow of pain; that is, she also will be ravaged together with the others. And Sennaar has been ravaged, and certainly Egypt too, when Sennacherib overran it.

Therefore indeed it is necessary for him who stands well to fear lest he fall, and to cast as far away as possible the smiling upon those who have suffered, "but rather to weep with those who weep" and not to be haughty at the misfortunes of others, but rather to fear exceedingly falling into the same things. Who, dwelling in sorrows, was the first to return to good things? Because evil came down from the Lord to the gates of Jerusalem, a noise of chariots and of horsemen. O Gittites, he says, O inhabitants of Enakim, O of Sennaar or Senan, you were not struck by the misfortunes of your neighbors; the falling and perishing of the once terrible and unbearable Israel became for you an occasion for laughter. And you thought that God who saves them had become weak, but that your handmade things are strong and have reached such a point of strength as to be able to save your cities without effort. Therefore, from the facts, come, let us observe who is God by nature and in truth; who is the all-powerful, and who bestows invincible aid on whomever He may choose. For they were captured and have been ravaged, he says, both the cities of Israel and those among you, and you have endured a common misfortune, as it were. What city, then, indeed, being in pains and in fears about the utmost things—for this is what "dwelling in pains" is—has unexpectedly turned towards good things, that is, to cheerfulness and prosperity?

Was it one of yours? By no means, he says, but again my Jerusalem. For evils came down upon it from the Lord, that is, I have grieved and disciplined, and I brought the Assyrian upon them, and from my wrath the affliction against them happened. But it has been

quenched and loosed, by my conquering hand and miraculously delivering those who revere my dominion. For the distressing thing stood as far as the gates. And we know that Rabshakeh, having many horsemen, arrived indeed at Jerusalem, but all but touched its very gates, yet did not take it at all; for the Assyrian was consumed in one night. And so those in Jerusalem had lamented, as if about to die at any moment, and had spent a sleepless night weeping; but as the dawn scattered, the miracle was seen. For countless corpses lay on the ground, so that those who had miraculously conquered and been saved through God leaped up to say, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Do you see then how first and alone among the other cities she began to turn toward good things, although dwelling in pains? For God will not completely overlook his own, but having disciplined them in measure, he saves them again, and of the good repute that befits him he does not take moderate care, even if we offend.

For he said somewhere through one of the prophets, "It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord, but for my name's sake. Inhabitant of Lachish, she is the beginning of sin to the to the daughter of Zion, because in you were found the impieties of Israel. Lachish, again, is a city subject to the scepter of Judah, a neighbor and bordering the Philistines, and this one is also exceedingly bitter and idolatrous, spurning piety toward God and reverence for the law, but esteeming highly to love to wander and to destroy others besides. Perhaps Sennacherib, having taken this city first among the cities under the scepter of Judah and Benjamin, sent the Rabshakeh from there to Jerusalem. Therefore Lachish, he says, which once was well-inhabited and securely established, has become the beginning of sin to Zion, that is, to Jerusalem. For in it have been found the impieties of Israel, that is, the man-made things and no small number of falsely-named gods. What then does the saying wish to show? It makes a defense in a way to the peoples of the foreigners, and tries to persuade them to be disposed henceforth, that the saving God would not have been weak. But since the cities of Judah have acted impiously toward him, they are delivered up to their enemies. For Lachish, he says, becoming the beginning of sin to Zion, and the first pretext of apostasy, has been given to Sennacherib.

Israel therefore has perished, as it is possible to see from Lachish, not because God was sick with cowardice; far from it; but rather because he was sick with wandering, and senselessly attached to the worship of idols. Therefore you shall give ones sent away as far as the inheritance of Gath, vain houses, it became empty for the kings of Israel, until they lead away the heirs; Lachish inhabiting an inheritance shall come as far as Odolam. Israel having fallen under the impulses of wrath, and paying the penalty for its transgressions against God, those from Gath and Enakim dared to laugh at the glory of God. For they thought that, as I have already said, he did not save his own, as one being defeated by the hand of the Assyrians. Then concerning this God wished to persuade, from Lachish, that they were given to the enemies because many impieties of Israel were found upon them, and because they became the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, that is, to Jerusalem. When God said these things, the blessed Prophet, understanding very well what was being shown and before the others, accepts the words, and, as it were, crowning them into truth

with his own votes, immediately cried out: Therefore you shall give ones sent away as far as the inheritance of Gath, vain houses.

Yes, he says, O Master, they will go to their enemies, and they will be sent away by you, leaving the land that bore them, and moving to the land of the Assyrians, not only, he says, those in Samaria, but also those in Gath. For the one group became apostates and insolent, not enduring to follow your ordinances; and the others, mocking those who acted miserably, made what happened a contempt for your glory. You yourself therefore will give ones sent away as far as the inheritance of Gath, vain houses. For the houses of both Ephraim and those from Gath are vain, on account of not enduring to honor God, but assigning worship to carved images, and because they have thought only of the things of the flesh, and being attached to earthly things, they made no account of virtue. Then in the midst he becomes indignant in a way, and the blessed Prophet, as it were, strikes his hands together, coming to the thought of the things that were done from time to time in Samaria. He considers the arrogance of the kings, and that the impious deeds for which Israel transgressed were the result of their perversity. For their inventions were both the heifers and the precincts of the other idols. And they did not cease in every way provoking the Creator. The Prophet therefore, being distressed, says: It became empty for the kings of Israel, until they lead away the heirs. It is as if he were saying:

The kings did not cease from their labors unto vanity, until they had fallen into such misery, that the inheritance assigned to them by God became the possession of others. That the Assyrians were about to rule all the land of the Jews, he receives two cities in situated in the extremities of the whole country, I mean both Lachish and Odollam, which Rehoboam built, and he says, The inhabitant of Lachish, an inheritance, will come as far as Odollam. For he will inherit Lachish, although it was very well fortified; for this is what it is to inhabit; and it extends, he says, even to Odollam. Therefore, if one should choose to be wise and well-reined and hating to oppose the divine commands, he will be in long-lasting prosperity, and will be situated in the good part of his own lots; for he will be full of good hope and will shine forth with the saints in due seasons; but if he should appear harsh and intractable and not yielding to the divine laws, he will be utterly cast out from the hope of the saints and will lose his lot with God, and he will also be the lot of his enemies, according to that which is sung in the psalms concerning some, "They shall be portions for foxes," that is, a portion of wicked, crafty, and malicious powers. The glory of the daughter of Israel, shave yourself and cut your hair for your delicate children;

make your widowhood wide like an eagle's, for they have gone into captivity from you. It is as if he were to say again, O once thrice-blessed daughter of Jerusalem, who received a most glorious and conspicuous glory, Jerusalem or Samaria, your delicate children are gone, and the multitude that once lived lavishly has perished, the brilliant and luxuriously-living, who slept "On beds of ivory, and lived lavishly on their "couches; who ate kids from the flocks "and milk-fed calves from the midst of the herds; who clapped "along to the sound of instruments; who considered them "as abiding and not as fleeting; who drank strained "wine and anointed

themselves with the finest myrrh; Therefore, disrobe yourself, O daughter of Jerusalem, that is, put off your glory and be shown naked of that ancient prosperity; then, wailing widely and unusually and striving to imitate the deep grief of eagles; mourn your children, for they will go as captives, and you will be a widow and desolate. And those who are wise in these things and who study the natures of birds as much as possible, say that the eagle is a creature that loves its young; and that it laments terribly when its nestlings have fallen from its nest, or rather, have been snatched by someone.

And that the bird would not be without the character of loving its offspring, the divinely inspired Moses will also persuade us, saying, concerning both God and those of the blood of Israel, "As an eagle would shelter his nest and yearned over his young, he spread his wings and took them up and carried them on his back. You see how he said the eagle yearns over its own nestlings, and loves to place them within its wings, overshadowing what was born out of great love. Make your widowhood wide like an eagle's, therefore, he says. And one might fittingly exclaim this not only to the more ancient peoples of the Jews, but also to those who lived at the time of our Savior's sojourn, when, having handed him over to the cross, they fell into terrible and inescapable calamities; and they were scattered to every wind, enduring the pains of captivity in another way, as it were. They were devising troubles and working evils in their beds, and with the daylight they accomplished them, because they did not lift up their hands to God; and they desired fields and seized orphans, and oppressed houses, and seized a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.

Whenever the God of all makes long speeches about the punishment of certain ones, so that no one may be thought to be harsh or grievously wrathful, but rather a just Judge, weighing rightly according to the faults of each, and repaying transgressors according to their works, He immediately sets forth their accusations, and lays bare the magnitude of their impiety; Therefore, he says, they have become wicked in their ways and have finally reached such a point of awkwardness as to plan at night and to make an occupation of troubles, that is, to compose against certain ones vexations, and to work evils, that is, again to devise pretexts to fulfill and to be able to harm the weaker. Then, though they should have reconsidered and chosen to do the better thing, giving no time to their own deliberations, at dawn they brought to completion what seemed good to them, although they should rather have lifted up their hands to God, as the morning sacrifice was being offered according to the law. But for them, there were the counsels of the night and the leisurely deliberation, desires for others' fields, the overthrow of houses, oppressions and covetousness, and the plundering of both a man and his inheritance. For this reason they were justly sent away as futile houses, not knowing how to think the things that please God.

It is therefore better and incomparably so to rise above such things, and to depart from all wickedness, casting covetousness as far away as possible, and not desiring superfluous things, to seek food and coverings, and whatever is sufficient for the temperate for living. "For those who want "to be rich fall into many foolish and harmful desires, "which plunge men "into ruin and destruction. And in addition to this, it is harmful to spend the leisure

hours of the night on thoughts of sin; but it is good to emulate the blessed Psalmist saying to the God of all, ”At midnight I arose to give thanks to you for the judgments of your righteousness. and again ”O God, my God, to you I rise early, my soul has thirsted ”for you, how many ways my flesh for you. and again ”If I remembered you upon my bed, in the morning ”I would meditate on you. Therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I am devising against this tribe evils, from which you shall not remove your necks, and you shall not walk upright suddenly, because it is an evil time. For since they themselves devised troubles and worked evils for some, thrusting aside the lifting up of their hands to God as unprofitable and useless, for this reason I also, He says, will devise evils against every such tribe, that is, I will consider in what evils they might be, that is, in incurable calamities;

and He says the things that will be brought upon them will be so hard to bear and burdensome that those who suffer them will be in the same state as those who are bent over, and will be bent down in a certain way, being terribly and unbearably weighed down. for it will be an evil time, He says, in which He would inflict upon them the things that come from wrath. And this, I think, is what is wisely sung by someone: ”For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they have been heavy upon me. But our Lord Jesus Christ called those who were so weighed down to the laying aside of the things laid upon them, saying, ”Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy ”laden, and I will give you rest. But those who honored the one who called them by faith shook off the burden; but they have remained laboring and oppressed, and very fittingly, those who have grieved by their disobedience, both scribes and Pharisees, and the other multitude with them, who also would not be able to walk upright. And knowing this, the divine David cried out to God, ”Let their eyes be darkened ”so that they do not see, and their back ”bend down always;

so that not seeing the things above, nor indeed being able to lift up the eye of their mind to the hope of the saints and the beautiful city in the heavens, they may look only at the things on the earth, as it were, bent over and fixing their insolent and God-hating mind on temporary and fleshly things. In that day a parable shall be taken up against you, and a lamentation shall be lamented with a song, saying: We have been utterly despoiled; the portion of my people has been measured with a line, and there was no one to hinder him from turning it away. He says that two things will happen at the same time, both a parable and a lamentation. And the parable seems to signify that somehow in the mouth of all the talk against them, or about them, will arise; for there is always remembrance even of extraordinary evils, and the fame of such things visits both cities and countries, and rushes to the ends of the whole earth. But the lamentation... a tear and the wailings over them, which others might happen to make, or rather, they themselves weeping for their own sufferings among themselves. Therefore he says, We have been afflicted with misery. And what might be understood as the manner of this misery, he makes clear, saying, The portion of my people has been measured with a line, and there was no one to prevent him from turning it away.

The lot, he says, which was assigned to my and beloved people; it is clear, that is, to Israel; has been measured by enemies, that is, has been subjected to tributes and taxes. For that which is measured is under tribute and taxes. Then, when this had happened and occurred contrary to expectation, there was no one to prevent it. Where then, he says, are the heifers, Chemosh, Dagon, Beelphegor, Baal, and the manifold handmade things in the precincts of Samaria? They have fallen silent, they have not set themselves against those dividing the portion; they have not helped their own worshippers; they have not brought wrath upon those measuring the land. He says something similar also through the voice of Jeremiah concerning those from Israel, "And in the time of their evils they will say, 'Arise and save us.' And where are your gods whom you made for yourself? Will they arise and save you in the time of your affliction? But how could they save others, they who would easily suffer whatever anyone might choose to do? For they are "the works of men's hands, silver and gold," and stone and wood, deaf and senseless matter. Let the divine David therefore sing, "May all who make them and all who trust in them become like them. Your fields have been measured out; therefore there will be no one for you to cast a line by lot. He makes clear the meaning of what has been said.

For you have become disinherited, he says, and your things have been measured out to others, but it is not permitted for you to measure out your own. And we will find the arrogant Jews having suffered this at the time of the visitation. For having acted insolently toward Christ they lost the lots that had been assigned to them. For he was the firstborn, and the most wise Paul says the promises belong to them, the fathers are theirs, and from them is Christ according to the flesh. But he has fallen from the hope and from all glory in this regard; and the multitude of the Gentiles has rushed in and ascended to their lot. For the promises have become theirs, Christ is theirs, the fathers are theirs. They are called children of Abraham, following "in the steps of the faith" of his "uncircumcision"; "For not all who are from Israel, these are Israel, nor because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but 'the children of the promise, these are counted as seed'. Therefore also the divine John, bringing down the haughtiness and considerable puffing up of the Jews, says, "Produce therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say within yourselves that 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

Therefore the senseless Israel has fallen away from the inheritance, but the flock from the Gentiles has sprung up in its place, and to them Christ assigns the glorious and worthy lot of the good things from above. For they have become fellow citizens of the saints, and members of the household of God, and fellow members of the body of Christ, and made resplendent by the unity with him through the Spirit, they will live a truly much-prayed-for life, in holiness and sanctification and incorruptibility. In the assembly of the Lord do not weep with tears, nor let your eyes shed tears over this; for he who says, "The house of Jacob has provoked the Spirit of the Lord," will not put away reproaches. Are these his practices? Does he then prevent Israel from choosing to repent? Tell me, does God check his gentleness toward them, even if they should wish to learn what is most especially fitting for them, and

to do somehow now what is pleasing to him? He does not say this. But it is a custom for some, if they should happen to be convicted of having erred by one of the wise, to measure the manner of their repentance only as far as shedding tears, and to confess their sin, and by this alone to seek forgiveness; but not yet to cease from their present evils. Some of those from Israel did this, so as not even at times to spare their own garments.

But what does He say Who looks into the heart and reins? "Return to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in lamentation, and rend your hearts and not your garments. Therefore, that by merely pouring a tear from their eyes, and pretending to speak good words, while not ceasing from their own desires, they would not make the Judge favorable and gentle toward themselves, he teaches, saying, In the assembly of the Lord do not weep with tears. Do not, he says, make the divine temple a house of mourning; nor weep for this reason, so as to seem to weep only in the house of God; for such a thing is completely unprofitable; nor indeed should some say that, The house of Jacob has provoked the Spirit of the Lord. For he would by no means wipe away the reproaches for the things in which he has transgressed, even if one should choose to use such good words. Are these his practices? And what are these, he says; "They were devising troubles, and working evils in their beds, and with the day they accomplished them, and they did not lift their hands to the Lord; and they coveted fields, and plundered orphans, and oppressed houses, and plundered a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. Therefore, if such, he says, were his practices, how could he ward off the reproaches by merely pouring out a tear, and confessing and saying, The house of Jacob has provoked the Spirit of the Lord?

It is necessary, then, for those who have chosen to repent to be rid, on the one hand, of the accusations of wickedness, and thus to weep and confess to God, having already honored doing good. For God will not look simply at a tear, nor at good words, but at character and ways. And then indeed, he says, weeping will be profitable for some, when the ways of doing good appear to run together with the overthrow of wickedness. For when sin is destroyed in us, the genesis of virtue slips in. Are not his words good with him, and have they not walked uprightly? And before, my people stood up in enmity against his peace. He accuses them again, then, as being accustomed to speak excellently, but having a mind inconsistent with their words. For the words among them are upright, he says, and very good; for they confess their faults, they call God kind and good, and they dissemble in many ways, while in their deeds they have not ceased to provoke him. And one might see them having become enemies to themselves, and scaring away their own peace. For my people themselves, he says, have set themselves up as an enemy to their own peace. For though it was possible for them to be in well-being and luxury and in sure glory and to have a steadfast cheerfulness, if God had been honored, they willingly slid into apostasy.

For this reason also, having cast away remaining in peace, they stir up, as it were, a self-summoned war upon their own heads. But that it is not entirely unprofitable for those who have sinned to speak good words to God, that is, if one should choose to blush at his own failings, we shall demonstrate from the divinely-inspired scripture itself. For it is writ-

ten in the second book of Chronicles concerning Rehoboam, ”And it came to pass, when the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and when ”he was strengthened, he forsook the commandments of the Lord, and all ” Israel with him. Then Shishak the ruler of the Egyptians armed himself against Jerusalem, and with his whole army marched out from his own land. And after this, ”Shemaiah ”the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the rulers of Judah, ”who were gathered in Jerusalem from the face of Shi- ”shak, and said to them, Thus says the Lord: You ”have forsaken me, and I also will forsake you into the hand of Shi- ”shak. And they were ashamed, he says, the rulers of Israel and ”the king, and said, The Lord is righteous. And when ”the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to ”Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; I will not destroy them. Then again he says, ”And when he humbled himself, was turned away from him on him the wrath of the Lord, and not for destruction to the ”end; for in Judah, it says, there were good words.

Do you see, then, how it is not unprofitable to have good words on the tongue, if it is accompanied by reverence, and blushing for the things in which one has sinned. Therefore as Paul says ”The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,” and Christ himself somewhere openly said ”Not everyone who ”says to me ’Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, ”but the one who does the will of my Father ”who is in heaven. It is therefore in vain, then, as I just said, to say good things about God, when that which is approved in deeds does not accompany it. They have flayed his skin, to take away hope, the shattering of war. He again brings the accusations against those appointed to lead for the destruction of the flock. For whereas they should have been sufficiently able to instruct them, and to lead them to the right and uncrooked path, and to hold fast as much as possible to loving piety toward God, while rejecting as useless and a cause of ruin and putting farthest away devotion to carved images, they themselves have become destroyers and corrupters, turning the minds of those under their hand to the very opposite, persuading them to depart from God, and rather to exult in the ways of error. For this reason, offending God, they also slipped away from the hope in him, which if they had continually possessed, nothing would have prevented them from being able to crush their enemies.

Therefore he says, as of a sheep, that they flayed his skin, to take away hope, the shattering of war. It is as if he said: Having shown him naked of the coverings that come from hope, and having stripped him, as it were, of my care and assistance, they have made him vulnerable and easily captured. For their hope in God has been taken away, and this for them was the shattering of war. For just as for irrational animals the hide is a safe garment—for the naked flesh is entirely vulnerable—so also for us a safe covering and a hide, as it were, is the power of hope in God, which if we possess, in no way grieving God, we will prevail over our enemies, and we will overcome every war, both carnal and spiritual; and we will also tread ”Upon the asp and the basilisk, ”and we will trample the lion and the dragon,” according to what is written; and we will sing with confidence, ”O Lord God ”of hosts, blessed is the man who hopes in ”you. For this reason the leaders of my people will be cast out from their houses of luxury; for their evil deeds they have been driven out.

For since, he says, those who were able to benefit with their guidance and admonitions those subject to them, the guides and fathers, the shepherds and overseers, have flayed his skin, and have taken away the hope in God, through which it was easy for every war to be shattered, for this reason they will justly abandon the good things at home, and being deprived of their most beloved things, and having lost enjoyment and luxury, they will go to their enemies, and will pay a bitter penalty for their indolence and worthlessness. But that the cause of their suffering was not someone else, but they themselves were rather the cause for themselves, he makes clear by saying: For their evil deeds they have been driven out. "For not in vain are nets spread for birds," according to what is written; "for they who partake in murder, "store up evils for themselves. We ourselves then will wrong ourselves, if we should wish to do what is not right; and we are cast out even from houses of luxury. For those who offend God will not see the mansions above and in the heavens, but will remain without a share both of the hope of the saints and of eternal luxury. But the wise and good and those who have set their minds on everything praiseworthy, will not be among these; how could they? But they will have the city, the Church in heaven, and will dwell in the mansions above, delighting in heavenly goods. Approach the eternal mountains.

Arise and go, for this is not your rest. The discourse is still addressed to those appointed to lead. He speaks ironically, and as if it were a custom, introducing what is grievous as something useful. For he all but says, O you leaders of the peoples, perhaps it seems burdensome and troublesome to you to live in luxury at home, and to possess the land that bore you, and to live in peace, and to follow a way of life befitting the free. But since this, as it seems, does not seem good to you, go to your enemies, run off to the land of the Persians and Armenians. Approach the eternal mountains, he means Ararat; eternal, either because they were destined to spend long periods of time in them, or because they were famous from of old, perhaps because the ark remained in them. The argument could also apply to the Jews at the time of the Lord's coming, who, following the opinions of the scribes and Pharisees, did not accept the faith. For they were like mountains, more illustrious among them, and lifted up by the boasts of the priesthood, and coming to a share of glory. But those things were temporary; for the shadow has ceased, the worship in types has grown old, and the sacred lineage of that time has become inactive.

For the eternal mountains were then revealed, that is, the preachers and deacons of the new covenant, who speak the mystery of Christ, who are renowned and most illustrious, and who are distinguished by the heights of virtue. For God calls them mountains through another prophet, saying thus, "And the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and "all the hills shall be planted. For the word of the theologians is very sweet, and sweeter than honey itself to those who are truly most devoted to God, for whom it would be fitting to say to Christ, the Savior of us all, "How sweet are your words to my throat, "more than honey and the honeycomb to my mouth. Therefore, to these spiritual mountains, those who have not yet believed, if they should draw near, that is, in a spiritual relationship, will find rest. For they will immediately unload the sin that has come upon them, although having no rest in the life according to the law, if it is true that "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

Therefore let the Jews hear from us ourselves: Arise and go, for this is not your rest. For since you do not have rest in the law, go and move through faith to the teachings of Christ. Because of uncleanness you were destroyed with corruption. By uncleanness he means the infamous defilement of outrageous and abominable idolatry; for it is truly shameful and foul-smelling.

Another kind of filth and uncleanness is to defraud brothers, to seize what belongs to another as plunder, and injustice against many in another way. Because of this uncleanness, he says, you have been utterly destroyed, miserably corrupted with the corruption that leads to death. And those who fight against faith in Christ have also been utterly destroyed, and for no other reason than because of uncleanness. Christ himself will make this clear to us, saying to the disbelieving Jews, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if "you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Is this not, 'Because of uncleanness you were destroyed with corruption'? For they did not wash away their offenses, nor, having been freed from their ancient charges, did they partake of the salvation from Christ, as did those who received the faith. You were pursued with no one pursuing. You have endured a voluntary captivity, he says, or rather, the flight to foreigners, and it is clear that it was also to enemies. For with no one pressuring or compelling, they themselves chose to do those things, and very zealously, through which it was necessary to be punished against their will. The multitudes of the Jews, therefore, were pursued with no one pursuing. For though it was possible for them to continue prospering, and to be in every good thing, having honored Christ, they slipped into apostasy, and have stumbled in many ways: disobeying, being insolent, and what evil thing did they not do and say?

Therefore with no one pursuing we will pursue ourselves, and having become responsible for incurable evils to our own souls, we shall no longer piously blame the one of all God the Giver, but rather ourselves, if indeed we are in a good state of both mind and understanding. A spirit has set up a falsehood, it has dripped for you into wine and strong drink. Certain ones in Samaria, sitting before the precincts of idols, practiced divination in many ways, and feigning to have an accurate grasp of future events, they announced things that were pleasing and dear to those who approached, seeking cold and despicable gains, and for a few obols, or "a piece of bread," as it is written, they sold false little words. This especially corrupted and destroyed Israel. He says, therefore, that an evil spirit has set up a falsehood as a snare for Ephraim, and like one of the poisonous drugs, has instilled into wine the demonic error, and has shown him as one who is, so to speak, thoroughly drunk with incontinent impulses towards everything that is most shameful. The evil one, the apostate dragon, also instilled into the Pharisees the false opinion and outlandish error concerning Christ. For at one time he was saying, If this man were from God, he would not break the Sabbath; and at another time they dared to call him a Samaritan, and indeed a drunkard.

And if it is true that no one says, Jesus is accursed, except by Beelzebul, how is it not easy to see that especially among them a spirit has set up a falsehood? And it dripped down into their mind and heart the drunkenness that comes through error, for which they have also

justly perished, attacking like wild beasts, using every kind of audacity and slander. And it shall be from the drop of this people; Jacob shall be gathered together with all, I will surely wait for the remnant of Israel, I will make their turning away one and the same. Evil things, proceeding little by little towards increase, and having blossomed at first among a few, somehow always seize upon even more, and extend beyond their initial measures. And one might see the truth of what I say, if one chose to consider subtly what happened to Ephraim. For first Jeroboam, and some of those who thought like him, after setting up the heifers in the precincts, have worshipped them, and have heeded the words of the unholy false seers, or rather, false prophets. Then, as the evil crept on, and always added other things to the first, all of Israel was finally brought together and ran together to one purpose, and was possessed by the transgression, and no longer in part, but rather in a great multitude and in every way. Therefore, he says, from the drop which the word of the false seers might drip on them;

for very many among Ephraim were accustomed to do this. All of Jacob, he says, will be gathered together, that is, will be brought to one mind, and the disease will be spread among all. But I will not bring upon them the penalties for this in part, but will rather wait for those who will be added to those already corrupted. For this is the meaning of, I will surely wait for the remnant of Israel, and then indeed, then I will make one turning away against all. And this would be an indication of the forbearance inherent in God, who does not punish immediately, but kindly postpones, and awaits the correction and the return of those who have gone astray. But if this should not happen, but the sickness should rather appear to be on the increase, then indeed with difficulty and reluctance He turns away. And in every case, it follows upon His turning away that those who have suffered this must be afflicted. Therefore the divine David also sings in the Psalms, "Turn not your face "away from me, and do not turn aside in anger from your "servant. But it must be known that just as Beelzebul instilled into the scribes and Pharisees the false and abominable opinion concerning Christ, the disease was also distributed, as it were, among all, and the rest of the multitude concurred with the deceptions of the leaders. Therefore, having also endured one sentence, I mean that of condemnation and turning away, they have paid penalties equal to their sins.

As sheep in affliction, as a flock in the midst of its fold, they shall be utterly destroyed from among men by slaughter; before their face they broke through, and they passed through the gate, and went out by it, and their king went out before their face, and the Lord will lead them. It is a custom for the holy prophets, even in the visions themselves, often to be in the midst of things foretold as they will be in time, and to see, as it were, present and at work, things that would come to pass many years later. For example, the blessed prophet Isaiah, relating the things concerning Christ, and as it were seeing him being led away to the saving passion, says, "As a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent. And he asks, as if observing the prints of the nails, and says perhaps to him, our Lord Jesus Christ, "What are these wounds between your hands? And he said, 'Those with which I was struck in the house of my beloved.'" Moreover, the divine Jeremiah,

having foretold the coming war against Jerusalem, and already seeing a great multitude of the Jews lying dead—that is, clearly, in prophetic visions—laments, saying, ”Woe is me, for my soul faints over the slain.

So also the blessed Prophet Micah seems somehow to see the future tumult in the cities of Samaria, with many already terrified, others fleeing, leaping over walls and ditches, and the very hordes of the enemy breaking through gates, and pouring through them along with the conquerors, with God, as it were, defending and inciting those of the blood of Israel, as one who has been grieved. Therefore, he says, they will be so terrified, as if a sheep should happen to be in distress, that is, a whole flock, if it were resting in places, and then some wished to take it, one would see the animals leaping up and down, and where a breach might be made, going and fleeing through it; so, he says, it will be with those against whom the war of the Babylonians should go. And breaking through gates, while they are watching, that is before their face, they will enter and go out through them, that is, effortlessly and without any fear they will pass through into the cities, having the Lord of all as their leader; because it was not the work of their strength to overcome Israel, but rather by the decree of God who delivered Israel over. We say these things happened also to those who had acted insolently toward Emmanuel himself. For their cities and villages were sacked when Vespasian and Titus were then conquering and fulfilling the divine wrath upon them.

And he will say, Hear now these things, you rulers of the house of Jacob and you remnant of Israel. Is it not for you to know judgment? You who hate the good and seek evil, snatching their skin from off them and their flesh from off their bones. In the same way they ate the flesh of my people, and stripped their skin from their bones, and broke their bones, and chopped them up like flesh for a cauldron, and like meat for a pot; so they will cry to the Lord, and he will not hear them; and he will turn his face away from them at that time, because they have done evil in their practices against them. He who opens the gates to those who war against Israel, he who smooths all things for them, and overthrows difficulties, so that they may then go with great ease, and effortlessly seize those who resist, is the Lord their leader. He himself will also say to the rulers, and to the remnant of the people. And he has put ”he will say” instead of ”he will converse with. And to those who manage the offices he charges with indolence, and that having neglected those under their hand, they have become destroyers and corrupters; but to those who have been subjugated, and have been deceived by the perversities of the rulers, he gives to understand that for the sake of the sins against them, justice is cast upon those who have done wrong.

For the Creator of all things cares even for those who are led astray, he who created man ”for good works, which he also prepared beforehand,” as the divine Paul writes, ”that we should also walk in them. What then, Is it not for you to know judgment? And he says *judgment*, either the holy and blameless sentence passed upon them, or condemnation; but it would be fitting in these things for the knowledge of the judgment to be understood not as in learning only; for what harm would this have done to those who transgressed those things? Or how would it have grieved the impious? but as through the very experience of

what is to come; for those accustomed to transgress, paying the penalty to their punishers, are then said to learn both the excess of the power they possess and the power of the Lord's judgments. Therefore, it is necessary, he says, for you especially to learn the judgment through the things that will happen; you who are always inclined to evil, but spurn what is good; you who make a certain wild and savage assault against my sheep, and yield in nothing to the most cruel of beasts, who flay the sheep, and tear their flesh, and dismember them unsparingly, and as it were boil them in a pot. And through these things he signifies every kind of greed, insatiability, and oppression. And since they have done these things, he says they themselves will cry out; and I would not deem them worthy of my oversight;

nor if they should cry out asking for mercy, would I grant it. For they themselves dealt craftily with those under them, and inflicted on them every kind of wickedness, of bitter and unholy devices and deeds. And one might very fittingly apply such things to the scribes and Pharisees, who, being leaders of the peoples and set over the flocks, together with the common folk like certain sheep, cruelly attacked those who believe in Christ, and all but flaying them, they dismembered and devoured the saints, differing in nothing from wild beasts. Therefore they also heard God proclaiming beforehand through the voice of Isaiah: "When you stretch forth your hands to me, I will turn away "my eyes from you; and if you make many prayers, "I will not listen to you; for your hands "are full of blood."

Book 2

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who bite with their teeth and proclaim peace upon him, and when nothing was given into their mouth, they stirred up war against him. He strongly accused those of Israel of enduring destruction willingly, and of giving themselves over to self-inflicted evils, and of greatly tending towards indifference. He added that they were also greatly wronged, with the evil and unclean spirit always deceiving and tricking them. And he spoke thus: ”Draw near to the everlasting mountains; arise and go, ”for this is not your rest; on account of uncleanness ”you are corrupt with corruption. You were pursued with none pursuing. ”The spirit set up a lie, it dripped for you into wine and drunken- ”ness. For this reason he rebuked not moderately those chosen to be leaders; and he now usefully turns his discourse to their false prophets and diviners, who all but dripped for them as wine the things from the evil and unclean spirit, that is, false words and deceptions, and thus having enveloped them as with a kind of drunkenness, they drove them out of their sound mind. For they bit and wronged them not moderately, persuading them to adhere to their words, and not rather to those from God through the holy prophets; and they spoke falsely, saying that they would live their lives in peace and prosperity, and that nothing of what is naturally grievous would trouble them at all. But their one word for this was not from God.

For it would not have been given to unclean tongues to speak the things so brilliant and worthy of reception. But when they persuaded them to pay attention to them, they stirred up war against them, not themselves rousing the Assyrians to this; how so? but rather sharpening the holy wrath against them. For because they had paid attention to them, the evils from the war were justly brought upon them. This is an accusation, indeed one of the most true and fitting, against the chief priests and Pharisees, whom the wretched multitude of the Jews followed and was utterly destroyed and ruined; for it became impious and a slayer of the Lord. Therefore it will be night for you from vision, and darkness for you from divination, and the sun will set on the prophets, and the day will grow dark over them. For since, he says, you have distilled falsehood as wine and strong drink for the people, and bit them like wild beasts, while you proclaimed the good news of peace, lying to them, and prepared them to be caught in the disasters of war, for this reason justly night and darkness will be upon you, even though you pretend to see, and, as you think to yourselves,

have practiced divination excellently and truthfully. For the sun will set for you, and the very light of day will grow dark.

And we do not say, of course, that the sun truly withdrew its rays from them, or that the light of dawn was darkened, but that the magnitude of the disaster was like darkness to them and a lightless night, and a setting of the sun's ray and a withdrawal of light, and what of such things did not happen to occur? For terrible and extraordinary evils intoxicate the mind, and trouble the heart, and fill it with darkness. And one might say truthfully that for the peoples of the Jews who acted insolently toward Christ, the intelligible sun finally set, with God no longer shining upon them, nor the intelligible day dawning for them, but rather their hardening spreading over them like night. For they have been hardened, as Paul says, and "Whenever Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. "For professing to be wise, they became fools, and their foolish heart was darkened. And that these things would happen to them, Christ himself foretold, saying "While you have the light, walk in the light, lest darkness overtake you. But since they did not accept the divine light, that is, Christ, they were overtaken by darkness, and it became night for them from vision, according to the Prophet's voice.

This same thing will also happen to the inventors of heresies, who, pretending to see, and insisting that they are able to understand the mystery of Christ brilliantly, the wretches speak falsely, and they almost drip the harms from deceit into the hearts of the more simple, and then lead them away from the doctrines of truth. Therefore, for them there will be night from vision, and darkness, for they will go away into the outer darkness, "having sinned against the brothers and wounding their weak conscience for whom Christ died. And those who see the dreams will be ashamed, and the diviners will be laughed at, and they will all speak against them, because there will be no one to listen to them. For they were divining that there would be great peace, and seizing those who approached them with silly little dreams, they prepared them to be disposed to think that everything would go smoothly for them, and that their prayers would prevail. But when experience showed the outcome of events to be contrary to what they were saying, and their hopes turned out completely opposite for them, they were then necessarily condemned as false speakers, as buffoons and impostors; and indeed they slipped into such disgrace that no one wanted to pay attention to them; for how, or from where? they who spoke good things, but have cast the deceived into an unexpected disaster, and as far as possible from what was hoped for?

Unless I fill myself with strength in the spirit of the Lord and of judgment and of power to declare to Jacob his impieties and to Israel his sins. He shows that in every way and altogether It is necessary for those who have a counterfeit glory of prophecy to speak falsely. For how could one who does not speak in God, who is truth, speak the truth? For concerning Cain, Christ said somewhere, "He was a mur- derer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth, because he is a liar, as is his father; giving him as a father the one who also invented falsehood, that is, satan. How can it be doubted that it is necessary for those who speak from a diabolical spirit, saying his things, to lie? But those who are through God,

in every way and altogether, speak excellently and truthfully; for they have the truth in themselves. Therefore, how, he says, could the word of prophecy not be falsified by some, unless I filled some with power and righteousness, that is, judgment, through my Spirit, so as to fearlessly and boldly rise up against sinners and convict them? For I think those who speak the things of God need very great and good bold- ness. For at times they rebuke whole peoples, and indeed also kings, and those who are in high places, who especially gnash their teeth at those who wish to correct them, and do not consider the word of those who help them tolerable.

For the blessed prophets have labored, or rather, have been endangered, and have been slain in many ways, falling at times into the unholy rages of those being instructed. And the divine disciples were also scourged. For being full of power and judgment and righteousness, they brought to God through faith in Christ the flocks of the Jews. But they rejoiced being tortured, and left the councils exulting, having been dishonored for the name. For they knew that having suffered with Christ, they would also reign with him. Hear this now, you rulers of the house of Jacob and the remnant of the house of Israel, who abhor judgment and pervert all that is right, who build Zion with blood, and Jeru- salem with iniquities. The Creator, being exceedingly good, and then not being ignorant of the magnitude of the evils that would befall them, comes in every way, and introduces every kind of suggestion and threat, so that perhaps somehow the sinners might be persuaded and choose to repent, unlearning the more shameful things and having chosen to do right those things through which it was likely they could escape the effects of wrath without a struggle.

It is necessary for the eager learner and most devoted to words to know that while the word of the prophets is continuous in books and writings, it came about at times and in parts, so that even if they sometimes seem to say the same thing, it is still logical to understand that they did not, as I said, address such things at one time, nor to the same people, but with long intervals often inter- vening, they spoke to different people at different times. For it was necessary for all to know the things that would happen, and for the prediction of the common calamity to be for those throughout all the land. To you, then, he says, is the word, who have finally come to such a point of madness as to abhor judgment, that is, righteousness, and to declare perverted the law that directs toward good knowledge; to you who think perhaps to restore Zion with murders and unjust bloodshed, and to make Jerusalem glorious and admired. But it were better to understand that they are rather destroy- ing it, although they were appointed for building and for correction, since they were leaders of the flocks, priests and guardians of the law appointed by God. And they have truly torn down Zion with blood. For they have killed the prophets, and they added to them also the Master of all, I mean Christ. For being builders of Zion, they rejected him;

although God said clearly, ”Behold, I lay in the foundations of Zion a stone, a chosen, pre- cious corner- stone, and he who believes in him shall not be ashamed. But, as I said, the builders of Zion rejected the chosen and precious stone; yet he has been made the head of the corner; for Christ has reigned over us, and over those of the circum- cision, whom he also

created ”into one new man, making peace through the cross” and joining them like a corner into unanimity in the Spirit. For it is written that ”the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. But since they have been conformed through sanctification and faith to the most precious cornerstone, the divine Peter writes well and wisely to them, ”and you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house,” ”into a holy temple, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit; for Christ has dwelt in the hearts of those who believe. And somewhere concerning them he says through the voice of a prophet, ”For I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Its leaders judged for a bribe, and its priests gave answers for a price, and its prophets divined for silver, and they rested upon the Lord, saying, ”Is not the Lord among us? No evil shall come upon us.

Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be like a watchtower for fruit, and the mountain of the house as a grove of the forest. An abominable thing, and among those especially hated by the all-holy God, are both unjust judgment and bribery. For it is written that ”for one who receives bribes unjustly in his bosom, his ways will not prosper. For some are so defeated by accursed greed and shameful gains as to consider it nothing to pervert justice and to sell the truth. And just as those who get dust in their eyes have the activity of their power of sight weakened, so too those who receive maiming in their mind no longer see; ”For gifts blind the eyes of the wise, as it is written, and pervert just words; those who pervert justice wrong the pure beauty of the divine dignities. For it is proper for God alone to judge, and knowing this, the blessed Moses said, ”You shall not show partiality in judgment, for the judgment is God’s. He who has practiced judging unjustly all but touches the divine and highest thrones, and let him know that he has sinned against the ineffable glory itself, which knows how to judge rightly and justly. For the judgment is God’s, as I said. And besides this, it is altogether terrible to make piety a pretext for gain, and to consider the things from God a source of revenue.

For see how he does not leave blameless the prophet and priest who wish to work for hire, so as to promise to speak to those who approach, if indeed they should choose to bring wages and gifts. I think that the word here again makes mention of false prophets, and not entirely of priests of the law and true ones, but of those whose custom it was to run after such honors, and to acquire for themselves a purchasable glory. For a holy prophet, or a true priest, would not make his own soul liable to such offenses. Then, while sinning in such ways, he says, they rested upon the Lord, saying, ”Is not the Lord among us? No evil shall come upon us. For admittedly the God of all was in Israel, and he delivered them from the misery in Egypt, brought them into the land of promise, and showed them to be stronger and more valiant than their enemies. But they surely ought to have understood that when they sin terribly and are condemned for such outrageous things, God would not have endured to be with them. For the holy is incompatible with the profane, and the pure is unconnected with what defiles. That they have thought vain things, therefore, supposing that even if they should be workers of wickedness, even if they should choose to do things

beyond all evil, God would nevertheless be with them again, they will recognize, he says, from the things that will happen.

For Zion shall be plowed, and the famous Jerusalem shall be like a watchtower for fruit, that is, desolate and destroyed, and the mountain of the house itself, that is, the temple lying on a high hill, into a grove of the forest. This is like saying, a haunt of wild beasts and the holes of serpents. For just as beasts and the untamed kinds of reptiles dwell in the mountains and in the forests, So also in the deserted places, and wherever very many calamities might appear. But these things have happened to the peoples of the Jews, when they also acted insolently against Emmanuel himself. For then, then they were utterly destroyed, and not a stone has remained upon a stone, according to the voice of the Savior himself; and the once venerable and admirable Zion has finally been shown to be arable land and suitable for farmers. However, it must be known that God will also be in us, not in those having faith alone, nor in those as it were resting on him for this reason, but if there is added to faith also the being well-pleasing from works. ”For faith without works is dead” according to what is written. And with works running together with the good things from faith, then indeed then God will also be with us, and he will readily strengthen, and will consider us friends, and will gladden us as genuine, and will deliver us from every evil.

And it shall be in the last days that the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and peoples shall hasten to it, and many nations shall go to it; and they shall say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and they will show us his way, and we will walk in his paths. In these things is now clearly seen the prediction of the Church from the gentiles. With Israel according to the flesh having been, as it were, removed from the midst, and the sacrifices according to the law having ceased, and the priesthood from the blood of Levi also being at rest, and the renowned temple itself having finally been burnt, and Jerusalem having been destroyed, Christ revealed the Church from the gentiles, and as in the last time, that is, at the consummation of this age; for then he came to be among us. Therefore, he calls the Church a mountain, which is the house of the living God; and a high one, because in it there is nothing at all low; but the knowledge of the dogmas concerning God is raised on high, and the very life of those justified in Christ and sanctified in the Spirit has also been built up.

For there is not in them what is cast on the ground and trodden underfoot with respect to life, just as, of course, one might see in the case of those of the circumcision. For they were overcome by love of the flesh and of shameful gains, and they were caught murdering unjustly, and liable to very many other offenses; ”But those who are of Jesus Christ, as the divine Paul says, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. And they have so hated the need to be rich, that one might hear them crying out with boldness ”Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. And they have so abstained from murder, that even to those

who strike them on the right cheek, they turn the other also. The Church might also be understood as a mountain in another way, when compared to the doctrines of the Greeks. For they most foolishly teach that one must worship stones and wood and creation itself, but she makes manifest the God who is by nature and truly, who fashioned this universe, and holds it together for its well-being, and is Lord of all as God. Indeed, he says the mountain of the Lord has been raised up upon mountains and hills, and to be established, signifying by this that it lies and is, as it were, in great prominence.

For what is set on a mountain is conspicuous, and very easy to see, and perhaps unknown by no one, not even by those lying farthest away. And that the nations were going to rush to it very eagerly, the word of the prophecy has clearly declared. And the very outcome of events has borne witness to this, and shown it to be true. For peoples, he says, will hasten to it, clearly meaning to the Master of the house, that is, Christ. And what will they say? Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of our God, and they will show us his way and we will walk in it. Do you hear that, urging one another on, they command each other, saying, "Let us go up," both correctly and intelligently; for I would say that of those among the Greeks the lowly and rejected state of dogmas not having been ignorant, they say "Let us go up," as leaping up high henceforth, as far as it pertains to the thoughts concerning the God who is by nature and truly is. And they long for righteousness, and they have thirsted to learn the way of the Lord, and indeed they profess to go, and very eagerly, in his paths. And who might be the teachers of such things? Or clearly the disciples of the Savior, those entrusted with the divine proclamation, to whom Christ said:

"Go and make disciples "of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the "Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching "them to observe all that I have commanded you. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. and he shall judge between many peoples, and shall rebuke strong nations even to a distant land. The myriads and innumerable multitudes of the nations, those who are walking to the mountain of the Lord, that is, the Church, and longing to learn the way of the Lord, and eagerly promising to go by it, here state the reason for no longer wishing, so to speak, to be initiated into the law and to run to Judaism. For before the coming of our Savior, while the customs according to the law were still in force, some of the erring came forward, and bidding farewell to the evils of idolatry, then being circumcised in the flesh, they were eager to live by the customs and laws of the Jews. And such a multitude among them is beyond number. And so Solomon, when he was planning to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, appointed one hundred and fifty thousand stone-cutters and work- men from the proselytes; for so it is written in Chronicles. But what was done was a type of a mystery.

For they were about to build a temple to God, the true and conspicuous one, that is, the Church, not the Jews so much, but those from the nations, bearing the Jew in secret, and having a circumcision not so much in the flesh, but in the spirit. Therefore, before the advent, some of the idolaters came and lived by the laws of the Jews. But when the truly conspicuous mountain of the Lord was at last revealed, they approach it instead, rejoicing

and saying: For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And they seem to want to show, and to have proclaimed that clearly as well, perhaps, that Zion will be desolate even of the law, and Jerusalem bare of the divine words. For in a way the law and the word of God spoken through angels has departed from them. For the shadow has been abolished, and the things in types have ceased, and the sacrifices have also been taken away, and all the things through Moses have now in a way been brought to a close, as far as the letter is concerned, I mean. But that Christ was about to judge and convict many nations, they, so to speak, prophesy and foretell; but it is necessary to say how and in what manner he would judge and convict.

For by persuading them to abstain from the ways of error, and showing them clearly that they are hastening to destruction, if they should not choose to live rightly, and to wipe away the charges of their ancient transgressions, he will in a way judge and convict and not only one nation, but even to a distant land, that is, to the ends of the earth under heaven; for everywhere the saving word is sung. ”For this gospel,” he says, ”will be preached in the whole world. And the prophetic word seems to hint to us at another subtle and hidden mystery. For it relates, as it were, in what way those from the nations would be received, and leaving that ancient error they will henceforth walk to the mountain of the Lord, that is, the Church. For he says, from the Zion above, and from the spiritual Jerusalem, a law and a word of the Lord will go forth. For the Word of God has come down to us from heaven, who also has become for us a law and a lawgiver, and he himself will judge between many peoples, and will rebuke strong nations even to a distant land. But what the ’will judge’ and ’will rebuke’ might mean, I will say according to what has come to mind.

Satan has tyrannized over all, and together with the evil powers with him he waged war against the world under the sun, and placing the yoke of his greed upon all, he led astray from God the race upon the earth. But ”The Lord God has appeared to us,” according to what is written, the good shepherd then appeared on earth, and rescued those who had gone astray from that one’s greed, and condemned those who led them astray, and convicted those who did wrong, that is, ”The principalities, the authorities, the cosmic rulers ”of this age, the spiritual forces of evil ”in the heavenly places. And Christ himself makes this clear to us, saying, ”Now is the judgment of this age, ”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. For he has judged for many and innumerable peoples, that is clearly, for those who were wronged, and he has justified them in mercy and faith. He has cast out the ruler of this age, and has driven him away from his rule over us, convicting him as unjust, as unholy, as a murderer, as one who has taken advantage of the world under heaven. And with him were surely also convicted the other nations of demons, those once terrible and strong, not wandering about one city, but scattered as far as a distant land, that is, to the ends of the world under heaven.

For they had divided the earth as it were, and no one at all was without experience of their wickedness. 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; and each one shall rest under his vine, and each one under his fig tree, and there shall be no one to make them afraid, because the mouth of the Lord Almighty has spoken these things. All things have become new in Christ, and Paul speaks the truth when he says that ”in Christ, a new creation, and the old things ”have passed away. For the state of affairs itself has also changed for the better, no longer giving birth to wars and battles, which had an unbearable and truly wretched assault against all. For the reshaping of the instruments of war for the work of farmers, and for each to rest, says the Prophet, under his own fig tree and indeed his vine, and for there to be no one to frighten them, what else could this suggest to us, other than that there will be a deep and unbreakable peace, and a time without war? And these things were accomplished during the times of the visitation. And indeed Christ himself said, ”My peace I give to you, my peace ”I leave with you. But when or how did peace in the world come to be?

For since the rule and most glorious kingdom of the Romans then held sway over the world under heaven, all the nations were brought together and came under one yoke, and they ceased from war against one another, and turned to the works of peace, clearly to agriculture, and each inhabited their own cities in safety. For before the hand of the Romans held sway over them, wars and uprisings of countries and cities occurred everywhere, and it was possible for those who wished to ravage whomever they chose, to plunder the property of others as if they had conquered them, and it was necessary for those in each country and city to be well fitted with the implements of war, and to practice military tactics, to defend themselves and their children. But since the strength of the Roman kingdom was then established, such things have ceased, and the implements of war have become mattocks and sickles and indeed also plows, and they were then reshaped into certain other such things. But if someone should choose to approach the preceding things also spiritually, he will understand again that with Christ awarding us peace from his own gentleness, and abolishing the principalities and those who formerly fought against those who wish to be pious, we have ceased from fears, and we have been put beyond assault and battle, having turned to the cultivation of spiritual things, and we gather the fruits of righteousness, and we have rested at last under a fig tree and of the vine.

And the fig tree will be a symbol of sweetness, but the vine of spiritual gladness. For the word of the Savior is exceedingly sweet, and knows how to gladden the heart of man, according to what is written. And in addition to this, sweet and full of gladness is the hope for the future, which we have richly received in Christ. For all the peoples will walk, each in his own way, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and beyond. Those who have made it their business to go up to the mountain of the Lord, and who wish to learn his paths, profess docility, and accept the glories of the life in Christ, and that they will pursue with all their strength the studies of piety, they signify this very well to us through these things. For each one, he says, of those in every country and city, may travel whatever path he should choose, and may live again according to what seems good to him or is even supposed to be right; but for us, Christ is our care, and we will make his ordinances our straight path, and we will walk with him, as it were, and not only for the present and pass-

ing age, but for much longer and beyond. And the saying is true; for those who now suffer with him, will be with him forever and will be glorified with him and will reign with him.

Indeed, they make Christ their care who prefer nothing to the love for him, who cease from the vain distractions of the world, but seek rather righteousness, and what is pleasing to him, and to excel in virtues, such a one as was also the divine Paul. For he writes that, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And again, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the one that is crushed and I will receive the one that was cast off, and those whom I cast off; and I will make the one that was crushed into a remnant, and the one that was cast off into a strong nation, and the Lord will reign over them on Mount Zion from now and forever. That Israel would in no way completely slip from hope, he then indicates; for it was crushed and became an outcast, that is, it has been rejected on account of its very great impiety; for it was a fighter against God and an idolater, abominable and profane, and was held not moderately by the charges of blood-guilt. For they killed the prophets, then finally they also crucified the Savior and Redeemer of all, yet the remnant has been shown mercy on account of the fathers and has been saved, and it has also become a great nation.

For it is true that the holy multitude of those justified in Christ would be considered a very great nation, and very reasonably so. And its excellent qualities, and the things for which it ought to be admired, are the good things for the mind, the glories for the heart, that is, sanctification, hope in Christ, genuineness in faith, what is marveled at in virtues, what is worthy of admiration in endurance, and to be ruled by Christ himself and to be shepherded by him, and to make him our guide; "For one is our guide, Christ. And if indeed the dead should be raised, also "we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. And by Mount Zion he means the Jerusalem above, the mother of the firstborn, in which we will also be with Christ himself. And you, tower of the flock, parched, daughter of Zion, upon you will come and enter the first dominion, the kingdom of Babylon to the daughter of Jerusalem. Things from gentleness are announced to those who have suffered, and he said that in due time he will receive the crushed one, and will make her into a great nation. Yet in the meantime he lays blame, and that she has suffered utterly, has been crushed and cast out, he helpfully reproaches. For as the blessed Paul said, "Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.

He strikes, therefore, out of love, and because, while it was possible to experience none of the grievous things, she came to this through voluntary inclinations. But he calls Sion a squalid tower of the flock, that is, he also names Jerusalem itself, speaking as it were in character, almost even frowning at her. O Sion, that is, Jerusalem, wretched daughter, O wretched and lightless dwelling of my sheep, you will certainly be given over, even unwillingly, to your enemies. For she will come, she will come, and not long from now upon you, the preeminent and stronger of the kingdoms on earth, that is, that of the Babylonians. And he calls Sion,

that is, Jerusalem, a squalid tower and a dark dwelling, because all who were in her walked as it were in darkness, from not wishing to make the law of God a lamp, as it were, and a light, and to receive into their mind the illumination from him. For thus, and not otherwise, was it possible to traverse a straight path, and to depart from pits, and to leap over sin, and not to stumble over the evils that fall in between. Let us therefore also sing ourselves, saying to God, "Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death, lest my enemy say, I have prevailed against him.

For being illumined by divine light, and having received into our mind the brightness of the wisdom from above and from God, we shall be unconquerable by our enemies, and escaping the things from divine wrath, we shall be in the goodness of cheerfulness from above, and in Christ we shall certainly prosper. And now, why have you known evils? Was there not a king for you? Or has your counsel perished, because pains have seized you as a woman in labor? Be in labor and be strong and draw near, daughter of Sion, as a woman in labor, because now you shall go forth from the city, and you shall dwell in the plain, and you shall come to Babylon; from there he will rescue you, and from there the Lord your God will deliver you from the hand of your enemies. The first rule, he says, will therefore come upon you. But what then is the reason for which you are crushed by such terrible evils? For to know evils is to fall into evils, that is, into the things that are accustomed to do evil, I mean the calamities of war. Was there then not a king for you? Or have you not practiced deliberating wisely, and making the best decisions for yourself? But again he cleverly rebukes, and indirectly reproaches her as being utterly senseless and not refraining from offending God. And what is the manner, I will speak briefly.

God of all ruled over the children of Israel in the beginning, through the mediation of the all-wise Moses, then after him, Jesus the son of Nun was taken into the generalship; then through the judges appointed from time to time, and after them through the blessed Samuel. But when their affairs were in this state, and were arranged in the best possible order, the wretched ones contrived bitter things against themselves. And shaking off, as it were, the yoke of the kingdom under God, they went to the blessed Samuel saying, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your way, and now set a king over us to judge us, as do the other nations; and the word was, he says, evil in the eyes of Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us; and Samuel prayed to the Lord; and the Lord said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people in whatever they may say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from reigning over them. Then when the blessed Samuel announced to them the rights of the kingdom, and terrified them with very many fears, and strongly turned them away from such unsound and unholy thoughts, they no less insisted, saying, "No, but a king shall be over us, and we also shall be as the other nations, and our king will judge us, and he will go out before our face, and he will fight our war.

Therefore he brings them to the remembrance of those ancient and perilous counsels, and as it were, he speaks ironically of what has happened and says, How have you known evils? Was there not a king for you? Or has your counsel perished? "Did you not ask for a king," he

says, ”saying, he will go before our face, and will fight our war. Did you then ever deliberate well? Behold of the matters the at last showed your counsel, that it was both best and necessary. You made the yoke of the kingdom under God a thing to be cast off. Behold, birth pangs have seized you like a woman in labor. Therefore be in travail and be courageous, O daughter of Zion. Again the discourse is in a moral tone: for, O good daughter, he says, be patient in your pains, endure your sorrows, draw near to giving birth, that is, you will not be far from what is expected; but like a woman already in labor you will cry out from your toils, and having left your well-towered cities you will encamp in the plain, you will lodge, he says, in deserted places; and you will even arrive in Babylon itself; yet He does not leave her completely without comfort; for He immediately added that she will both escape and be brought back again by the mercy of God.

It is therefore most excellent to remain under God and be ruled by Him and to make Him one’s power, defender and helper, to bow the neck of the soul to Him alone, to live by His will, and to consider what pleases Him worthy of all account. Or if we do not do this, we shall in every way and altogether be under the spiritual Babylonians, I mean the opposing and unclean powers, and under the first principle, that is, Satan, and cast out as it were from the holy city ”whose architect and builder is God,” we shall inhabit the city of the Babylonians. For we shall be in confusion and turmoil, with sufficient distractions of the present life. For Babylon is interpreted as confusion. And now many nations have gathered against you, who say, ’Let us rejoice,’ and ’Our eyes will look upon Zion.’ But they did not know the reasoning of the Lord, and did not understand his counsel, that he has gathered them like sheaves of the threshing floor. Arise and thresh them, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horns iron, and I will make your hooves bronze; and you will crush many peoples, and you will dedicate their multitude to the Lord, and their strength to the Lord of all the earth. We have already said many times that while Hezekiah was governing the kingdom in Jerusalem, Sennacherib ravaged Samaria, and took many cities of Judah along with it.

Then he sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish, who babbled not moderately against the divine glory, at which time one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians perished in one night by the hand of an angel. He mentions this history again. For many nations were gathered against you, he says, almost playing wantonly and dancing over her who was not yet laid low. But they did not know what God had planned. For they were gathered as to a threshing floor, and like a sheaf they will be subject to your feet. Arise, therefore, and thresh them, for you will have horns of iron and hooves of bronze, that is, you will be difficult to conquer and invincible to your enemies, and you will all but trample down those who stand against you. For since he has made mention of a threshing floor and a sheaf, he has preserved the fitting manner in the metaphor, and as if speaking of a calf he mentions horns and hooves. But since they were not consumed and did not fall by human hand, but lay as a work of divine wrath, do not, he says, take the boasts for these things to yourself, but rather ascribe to the Lord of all the earth both their multitude and the strength of the

perished. But this is the sense of the history, and perhaps the very sudden turn of the prophetic proclamations will disturb some of those who encounter them.

For just now we heard him saying, 'The first dominion, the kingdom of the Babylonians, will come and enter upon you,' and the manner of the captivity was described to us; then immediately we see her saved, and trampling on her enemies. Therefore, there is need of a clear distinction of the times; for thus the consideration of what is said will be unconfused and clear. For while Hezekiah was reigning, Sennacherib went up against Jerusalem, then after the death of Hezekiah there were four other kings, and the fifth was Jeconiah. Then Nebuchadnezzar took all of Judea and Jerusalem itself, and carried away all Israel into captivity. And the blessed one clearly writes for us the history concerning these things The prophet Jeremiah. Now the daughter of Ephraim shall be completely hedged in: he has set a siege against you: with a rod they shall strike the tribes of Israel on the cheek. For many peoples and many nations will be gathered together against Zion, then, expecting to dance over her and mock her, they have been threshed and crushed, God casting them down at the feet of the victors as in the form of a sheaf. And the city of the Samaritans was captured and destroyed, and has been consumed by the war, and concerning her he says, that she will be fenced in and restrained, God clearly ordaining that she be in distress and must suffer it. He calls Samaria the daughter of Ephraim, that is, the populace in Samaria.

For it seems that in some way the one entrusted with kingship is in the position of a father to those under his yoke. And those from Ephraim have reigned over Samaria. Therefore, he says, the city of the Samaritans will be, as it were, surrounded and girdled by the forces of the enemies, who will all but strike her on the cheek, not slapping with merciful hands, but even crushing with rods and abusing her violently. And through these things he indicates, in addition to the dishonors, also the unbearable pain of captivity. For slaps on the cheek are an unambiguous sign of dishonor. But if it should be understood as being done also with a rod, it will certainly convey what is wicked, and what is fitting, as it were, for a slave. Therefore, he says, Samaria, which is ruled by those from the tribe of Ephraim, will be dishonored and in abuses and pains. But the hand of the one who strikes will be idle, and we will remain untouched by abuse, if with all our strength we refuse to provoke to wrath against ourselves the Lord of all by doing what is not lawful and by making a special effort for what is hateful to Him. But rather by honoring Him with kindnesses we will be in a good state of prosperity, and we will live through a life truly brilliant and worthy. 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 one who is to be a ruler in Israel, and his goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity. In these things the prophetic word proclaims to us the return of our affairs to their original state. And it also remembers very clearly the recapitulation which is said to have happened in Christ. For the things in him are a new creation, as it is written, and "The old things "have passed away, but through him new things have come to be," transforming human things and renewing them again for well-being. For he has reigned, and has again made the rule over all things desirable.

And the universal is signified also through the things that are particularly dispensed. For Israel was ruled, as I said, in the beginning by God, with the saints mediating. Then, not long after, having fallen ill with foolishness, and dishonoring acting under God, they have honored human powers more. And so they asked for Saul as king over themselves. Then they offended not moderately; for the God of all, being grieved, said to the blessed Samuel, "They have not despised "you, but they have despised me, that I should not reign over "them. But that the matter was in no way beneficial for them, but rather bitter and harmful and a cause of destruction, experience itself has shown; how could anyone doubt it? For because of this they have fallen into terrible and inescapable evils.

Therefore, bringing Israel back, as it were, to its original state, I mean to being ruled by God himself, he proclaimed beforehand Christ, who would be for them the Savior and Redeemer from Bethlehem. And it would not be off the mark even if it should seem to someone to make the statement a kind of general one. For since we on earth have fallen away from the kingdom under God, fashioning a foreign yoke for ourselves, and inscribing as master one who is not by nature a master, but rather a boaster and an apostate, I mean Satan, we have been in every evil; but, as I just said, God the Father was pleased "to sum up all "things in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things on "the earth," and "He has rescued us from the dominion of "darkness, and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of "his love in the light. Therefore, he makes the discourse to Bethlehem, that is, the house of Ephrathah. And the region is called Ephrathah, but the town Bethlehem, that is, the village in the region, from where were Jesse and David, and she again, the holy virgin, who bore to us the divine infant, her own son Jesus, "Whose government was upon his shoulder, and his name is called Angel of Great Counsel.

for he has reigned through the cross, and since he became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," for this reason, as the divine Paul says, "God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus Christ 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, amen. O then Bethlehem, he says, house of Ephrathah, though you are little to be among the thousands of Judah, that is, countless are the splendid and great cities of Judea, and teeming with a populous multitude of inhabitants, but even if very few are those who dwell in and possess you, you will become a nurse, and will be called the city of the one who rules over Israel, who is a good shepherd so as even to lay down his life for the sheep, and he will rule over all of Israel. And not at all only of Israel according to the flesh, but also of those from the promise promised beforehand to Abraham; for God said somewhere to him, "For in Isaac shall your seed be called. And the 'In Isaac,' he says, is by promise.

Therefore the promise is sure not only to those of the lineage of Israel, "but also to those who walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while still uncircumcised; for these are Israel, because "the children of the promise are counted for the seed. It is therefore as if he were to say: He will rule over everyone who believes in him and who

appropriates himself to me through him. For we have been brought to the Father through the Son, and he himself will testify, saying, "No one comes to the Father except through me. Therefore, Christ was revealed from Bethlehem, the good shepherd, "who feeds us in the gardens and among the lilies," and setting forth the fragrance of the evangelical decrees, and bringing as it were ripe flowers concerning himself, to those willing to pluck them and to be filled with their fragrance spiritually; for he said, "I am a flower of the plain, a lily of the valleys. But he says his goings forth are from the beginning and from the days of eternity, either signifying the pre-eternal existence of the Word; for he is, he is co-eternal with his own Begetter, and he himself is the maker of the ages; that is, that he became man as in the last time of the age, but the mystery concerning him was predestined in the foreknowledge of the Father even before the foundation of the ages.

Therefore, by 'going forth' he means either the timeless birth from God the Father into the Son's own existence, or his manifestation, which would be in due time, when he became flesh, even if from the beginning and from the days of eternity he was predestined and appointed by the Father as Savior and Redeemer, who was not ignorant of the intervening things that would happen to the human race on account of the transgression in Adam. Therefore you will give them up until the time of her who is in labor. She will give birth, and the rest of their brethren will return to the sons of Israel. The Prophet seems to have considered this in himself and perhaps to reason and say: God will not speak falsely, but will by all means bring to pass the things that have been promised. And if Israel is in such splendid hopes, and the ruler will be born for them, and he will rule, and will deliver from every evil, why will he be captured by the spear at all? Then, having understood the time of the promise, and perceiving it was not yet present, he in a way apologizes to himself, saying:

For since the time of the promise is still at a long postponement, and they themselves are in no small stumblings, and do not cease from sinning at all, for this reason you will give them up, that is, you will deliver them to enemies, O Master, until the time of her who is in labor, until, he says, that divine an infant from a virgin's loins. For then there will be the most complete redemption, and they will be established in sure prosperity, with nothing at all that leads to gladness lacking for them. As the Prophet was pondering these things, as I said, and as it were whispering to himself, God overhears "She will bear a son," and calls him to a firm faith. Similar to this is what was said to the prophet Habakkuk, "Yet a little while, and he who is to come will come, and will not delay. For he says that he will be born in every way and in all circumstances, and the remnant of their brothers will return to the sons of Israel. For not a few of the Jews accepted the faith in Christ, and before all others, the blessed disciples; but those who were insolent in their disobedience have slipped from hope. However, in the last times they will be brought to the others, and as if from a late start they will with difficulty run back to what it was better to have come to in the beginning.

And he will stand and see, and the Lord will shepherd his flock in strength, and they will exist in the glory of the name of the Lord their God; because now he will be magnified to the ends of the earth. And this will be peace. The phrase "he will stand," he says, is instead of

”and he will take charge. And the shepherd will be the one who works for his own sheep, not entrusting the instruction to another, as he did long ago to the blessed Moses, but he himself through himself; for it is true that ”Not an ambassador, not an angel, but the Lord himself saved us; and he will shepherd us in strength, placing us above all sweat and toil. For he will act as a shield, as it were, and will save them universally, not allowing false shepherds to wrong them through deceit, nor wild beasts to leap upon the flocks, nor permitting the wicked and opposing powers, just as they did carelessly of old, to lord it over those who have believed and to take advantage of the sanctified, but rather giving them ”to tread upon the asp and the basilisk, and to trample the lion and the dragon. For we have become glorious through him, and we have been lifted up on high, brilliant and transparent, and we have reached the ends of the world under heaven. For he himself is our strength and power, he is the mediator and reconciler, he is our peace.

For he broke down ”the dividing wall of the partition,” and abolished in his decrees ”the law of commandments,” and created the two peoples into one ”new man, making peace,” according to what is written, and binding them into unity with the bonds of love. Therefore, a fitting and true name for him is peace, even if he is called Christ. When the Assyrian comes upon your land, and when he treads upon your country, then there will be raised up against him seven shepherds and eight bites of men, and they will shepherd Asshur with the sword and the land of Nebrod in its trench, and he will deliver from the Assyrian, when he comes upon your land and when he treads upon your borders. The Hebrew version of the present chapter begins with, ”And this will be peace, when the Assyrian comes upon your land and when he treads upon your country. For this, he says, will be the manner of peace, if indeed the Assyrian should wish to attack your land and country. But in interpreting the verses, we will say that the discourse again departs from perceptible and more manifest matters, and is lifted up on high, as it were, and from a visible image subtly leads to things that happen intellectually.

For in these verses ”Assyrian” no longer signifies the man from Babylon, but rather signifies the inventor of sin, I mean Satan, or rather, to speak simply, the untamable and warlike multitude of demons, which rises up intellectually against every saint, and fights against the holy city, the spiritual Zion, ”which is the church of the living God,” and is a kind of type and a similar image of the Jerusalem which is understood to be above and heavenly. Thus also the divine psalmist remembered her, saying, ”Glorious things have been spoken of you, O city of God; for Christ inhabits the Church, and has made it a kind of city of his own, although by the nature of his divinity filling all things. This city of God, then, is a kind of land and country of the sanctified, who have been enriched with unity toward God in the Spirit. When, therefore, it says, the Assyrian comes upon your land, that is, if the barbarian and opposing powers should fight against the saints, they will not find them destitute of leaders. For there shall rise up against them seven shepherds and eight bites of men. But the meaning of the prophecy seems, from the times, that is, from the numbers seven and eight, I say, to wish to signify the saints: those before the advent, and at the same time those during it, and those who have come after it.

For before the advent, according to the Law of Moses, the sabbath rest on the seventh day was honored, and it was still the time of the shadow. Then also the company of the holy prophets was revealed, instructing toward piety and the knowledge of Christ. But when at last the Only-Begotten appeared, and endured the cross for the life of all, and rose again, having plundered Hades on the eighth day, then he commanded the holy Apostles to ”make disciples of all nations, ”baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son ”and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that he had ”commanded them. These, then, he calls the eight bites of men, signifying those who came at the time of the resurrection and after it. When, therefore, he says, the Assyrian or the foreigner and barbarian comes, then indeed he will come against seven shepherds, and against eight bites. For we will find both the saints who were in the time of the Law, whom he calls seven shepherds, and in addition to these, the Apostles and Evangelists, and the teachers of the churches in their times, always warring against and generally resisting the deceits of the demons, and setting forth their own sobriety, as it were, against the perversities of the evil one. For they save those who inhabit the holy country and land, fortifying them with admonitions and securing them with instructions unto everything that is best.

And that the choir of the saints was about to plot in a certain way against Satan, and to consume him intellectually with bites, God again made clear through the voice of a holy one, saying concerning him: ”Woe to him who multiplies for himself what is not his! For how long? ”and who makes his yoke heavy and strong. For suddenly ”those who bite him shall arise, and those who plot against you shall awaken, ”and you shall be plunder for them. Because you ”have plundered many nations, all the peoples that are left ”shall plunder you. Do you hear that he says that the one who multiplies for himself what is not his, that is, Satan, will be bitten and plundered? Then he names those who plundered him ’the remnant,’ that is, those from the remnant, or rather, those from Jacob. But if, he says, some Assyrian should come, that is, a man of a different mind and gone astray, not having the faith that runs straight, but limping, as it were, and broken in mind, they set against this one also the power of the truth, and showing the unpleasantness of his rottenness, they drive him away as a wolf, almost biting him down and making him, though unwilling, to be for a time very far away from the flock of spiritual sheep and to be carried outside. These, then, the seven shepherds, also understood as eight bites, will shepherd the Assyrian with a sword.

He says ’they will shepherd’ instead of ’they will pursue.’ For since he mentioned shepherds, he has kept what is fitting to the metaphor of the word, by saying ’they will shepherd.’ And what the sword might fittingly be understood to be, which it is the custom of the saints to use, the psalmist will make clear, saying of them: ”And ”two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance ”on the nations, and rebukes on the peoples; ”For ”the word of God is living and active, and sharper than ”any two-edged sword. And Paul also, equipping the soldier understood to be in Christ, gives him ”The ”sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. But that the divine and all-powerful sword pursues the Assyrian, that is, the Word of God, no less will the prophet Isaiah persuade us, saying ”And it shall be in that day, God will

bring ”his holy and great and strong sword upon the dragon, the crooked serpent, and will slay ”the dragon; and again ”And it shall be, when the ”Lord has finished doing all things in mount Zion and in Jerusa- ”lem, he will bring punishment upon the great mind of the ruler of the ”Assyrians, and upon the height of the glory of his eyes. ”For he said, By my strength I will do it, and by the wisdom of my under- ”standing I will remove the boundaries of nations, and their strength I will plun- ”der, and I will shake inhabited cities.

With this sword, then, they will shepherd Assyria, and all the land of Nebrod in its trench. But through these things he wishes to say this. He names the land of Nebrod the country of the Assyrians, that is, Babylon, around which, as they say, a deep trench was cast. And he names it the land of Nebrod, because he was the beginning and origin and father of the race of the Babylonians. For it is written thus in Genesis concerning him, ”And the sons of Raamah, Sheba and Dedan. And Cush begat ”Nebrod; he began to be a giant on the earth. He was ”a giant hunter before the Lord God; for this reason ”they will say, As Nebrod a giant hunter before the Lord. And ”the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon and Orech ”and Archad and Calneh in the land of Shinar. That the tower was raised in Calneh; and this is a Persian place; so says the divine scripture. Therefore, then, he says the land of Nebrod is Babylon, which is girded by a trench, just as I said recently. Thus then, he says, they will shepherd Assyria, and all the land of Nebrod, so that it remains within the trench, and no longer expands into cities and countries, but remains as it were at home, full of fear and trembling; this very thing we shall find the hordes of demons have suffered through Christ. For they no longer boast over the world under the sun, as they did long ago and before the visitation;

but they remain as it were where they are, being checked by the vigilance and good counsels of the saints, and being barred from the land of the saints, so that they might be able to live through a quiet and warless life, accomplishing what is pleasing to God, and being brightened through the good order most dear to Him. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations in the midst of many peoples, as dew falling from the Lord and as lambs on the grass, so that no one might be gathered nor stand among the sons of men. I have already said many times, that the remnant of Israel has been saved, and the race from Jacob has not utterly perished. For not a few in number have believed in Christ, and have been enriched with salvation through faith even before the others, I mean, those from the nations. But from this part that was left and preserved through faith have come the divine disciples themselves and those who struggled and suffered with them in the gospel of Christ. These then, he says, have been saved among the nations, as some dew poured out upon the fields, and putting an end to the burning heat of diabolical mischief. For just as in gardens or in fields, if the glare of the sun’s ray falls upon the grasses and lilies, it causes them to slacken into ugliness, and seem to have already withered into it;

so too the inventor of sin, when with worldly pleasures he inflames the human mind, withers it in a way and makes it appear very ugly indeed. But the Word of God sets it upright again, just as the dew does a flower or grasses. And so shall be, he says, those from Jacob among

the nations, watering the souls of those who are persuaded with some dew by their words of piety, and richly fattening them with evangelical teachings. And they shall dance upon it like lambs on the herbage, that is, they will find the most abundant and plentiful pasture; for the nations are always somehow more ready for obedience and much inclined to believe in Christ, and, I say, to choose the incomparably better life than their former one. But just as when for lambs much and flowering grass lies beside them, then indeed then they both luxuriate and rejoice; in the same way, I think, the mind of teachers also makes the tractability of their pupils and the obedience of their initiates a delight and a pleasure. And indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ made the obedience of the Samaritan woman his own food, as was fitting for him. For he said to the holy Apostles, ”I have food to eat that you do not know. Then, explaining this, he added, saying, ”My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Therefore, the work of God is food and delight for the saints.

Therefore, he says, they will leap about as though mowing common grass, that is, a flowering herb, and those of Jacob in a way feeding on the believers from the nations, and they will find the way of preaching so widened, that no one will be able to be gathered together and withstand them, that is, neither to assemble nor to resist; for this is to withstand, if some of the sons of men should choose to do evil. For many plots and attempts have been devised against them by many, but they have been harmed in no way, as God calms the anger of the powerful, and surrounds his own as with the weapon of goodwill, and paradoxically delivers and saves them from every temptation. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a cub in the flocks of sheep, in the manner that when it passes through and tearing seizes, there is no one to deliver. Your hand shall be lifted up against those who afflict you, and all your enemies shall be utterly destroyed. The good and worthy narratives, even if they should come through the same words, would not be burdensome, but rather much charm will follow them.

The remnant of Jacob, he says, that is, those of Jacob saved through faith in Christ and appointed preachers and priests of the evangelical decrees, will be as dew among the nations, and will also graze like lambs rejoicing in good and abundant grass. But they will become no less also like a lion among the beasts of the forest, roaring fiercely and dreadfully, and instilling unbearable terror even in those far away. And they will be as lion’s cubs in the flocks, clearly rising up nobly and pouncing on whomever they choose, with no one resisting, that is, able to deliver what has been seized. For our Lord Jesus Christ said to the holy disciples, ”Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves,” that is, gentle and submissive; even if some in the world should be ready to kill, and yield in no way to the cruelty of wolves, yet by my own strength I will crush the hearts of those who make war; I will make them cowardly and unmanly; and I will work a great reverence concerning you. Thus they have prevailed over their enemies, they have conquered those who resisted, they have become fearsome to the wolves, although being in the rank of sheep. They escaped the plots, ”dangers from robbers, as the blessed Paul writes, dangers from my own people, dangers from false brothers,” and the flocks of the nations were seized as if by lions;

but Satan, who had fed them for destruction by his own will, was not able to defend them, nor to snatch from the hands of the apostles what had been taken for salvation. And this was what was said to him through the voice of Habakkuk: ”Woe to him who multiplies for himself what is not his! For how long? And who makes his yoke heavy and strong. Because suddenly those who bite you will rise up, and your plotters will awake, and you will become plunder for them. Because you plundered many nations, all the remaining peoples will plunder you. For the eight bit down, and like cubs they seized what had been gathered by him; for he gathered to himself what was not his, for man belongs to God, or rather all things do, and nothing at all is his; but he was plundered by the of the remaining peoples, that is, of those from the remnant, so that you may again understand the ministers of the evangelical ordinances. Then to them the Lord who strengthens and holds them together: Your hand, he says, shall be lifted up against those who afflict you, and all your enemies shall be utterly destroyed. For they have conquered, as I said, in Christ, and were superior to every plot, and shone forth in the world, and prevailed over enemies, acquiring for God those who were lost.

And it shall be in that day, says the Lord, I will destroy your horses from your midst and I will destroy your chariots, and I will destroy the cities of your land and I will remove all your strongholds; and I will remove your sorceries from your hands, and there shall be no soothsayers in you; and I will destroy your carved images and your pillars from your midst, and you shall no more worship the works of your hands; and I will cut down the groves from your midst, and I will destroy your cities, and I will execute vengeance in wrath and in anger among the nations, because they did not listen. The discourse returns again to the sorrowful things, and for a time ceases from the brilliant and admirable narratives concerning Christ, and connects these things, as it were, to what came before, and declares the things that will come from wrath. He said therefore that ”And you, O tower of the flock, a parched place, O daughter of Zion, to you it shall come, and shall enter the first dominion, the kingdom of Babylon. At that time, therefore, at that time, he says, your cavalry will be gone, and with them the arrogance of chariots will be destroyed, and the cities will be ravaged, and you shall be desolate of your strongholds, that is, of your walls; for the Babylonians burned their cities along with the men;

And the practices of your folly, both sorceries and false divinations, and the very workshops of deceit, and the sacred precincts together with the idols will certainly be utterly destroyed, and the groves will fall from their foundations. And what follows from this? The judgment is renowned, and the manner of the punishment would not escape the neighboring nations. And they will know that it befell them to suffer all things because they did not listen, that is, the charges of disobedience. Wisdom also said something of this kind to those who have an unbridled inclination to disobedience: ”Because I stretched out my words and you paid no attention, but you made my counsels void, and you did not heed my words; therefore I also will laugh at your destruction, and I will rejoice when ruin comes upon you, and when tumult suddenly comes upon you, and your overthrow is present like a tempest; And the fruits of turning away are ”wrath and anger, tribulation and anguish” upon everyone beyond

the one who is accustomed to listen. It is necessary, therefore, and very much without delay, to follow God swiftly when he calls to what is profitable, and to fulfill what is pleasing to him; since to choose to be slow and indolent in doing the good will be a cause of great loss to us, and involves us in bitter pains. But see how God also benefits by demanding penalties for sins.

For he frees Israel from profane and abominable idolatry, and from unholy enterprises, sorcery and false divination, altars, precincts, sacrifices, and from worshipping the works of their own hands. Therefore, to be disciplined is not without profit, "provided it be in judgment, and not in wrath," according to the prophet's voice. But if anyone should say that these things happened to the Jewish peoples who had behaved insolently toward Christ, he will not err in a thought that has probability in itself. For it is true that the cities among them have been desolated, and the whole fighting class has perished, consumed by the hands of the Romans. And perhaps they have been held accountable for that ancient idolatry, even if there were those among them who still wished to worship creation and engage in sorceries. For somehow these things always tend to follow those who have chosen to practice idolatry, and there is nothing among them of the things that are excessively out of place, which has a base reputation. Hear then what the Lord has said: Arise and plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O hills, the judgment of the Lord, and the ravines, the foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a judgment against his people, and he will argue his case with Israel.

The word is indeed reproachful, and it cries out, as it were, against the insensibility of the Jews, if they should treat the divine words as nothing, which would be spoken gently and with restraint, as from a father to children, revealing the genuineness of his love, and making their obedience without excuse. But it is a custom for the benevolent God at times to frighten sinners beforehand with a foretelling of terrible things; not, however, to leave them unsoftened and harsh as though having despaired, but along with the things that are about to happen to bring in the word of comfort, and to keep a place for them, as it were, to escape, if they should choose to return to repentance. This indeed He now does again out of His innate gentleness. Hear therefore, he says, what the Lord has said. And what has he commanded me? Arise and plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. This, then, seems similar to that through the voice of Isaiah, "Hear, "O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. For he probably calls the mountains and hills the intelligible powers, which manage this whole universe according to the will of God, warding off the aggressions of demons from those on the earth.

And since these especially, even before others, recognize the excess of God's gentleness, and have learned how much care He takes for our affairs from what they effect for us, obeying the laws from Him, He commands that the judgment should take place before them. But it is likely that the prophetic word also indicates something else to us. For since the people of Israel, occupying mountains and hills, there offered rites and sacrifices to demons "under "every oak and white poplar," for this reason, then, the judgment is against the hills, on

which the crimes of the accused were manifest. It is likely that he calls hills and foundations of the earth those who are superior in glory and preeminent in honor over the common crowd, who especially have become for those under them both a path and a snare to destruction. For he said somewhere to them, ”Because the judgment is for you, because you have become a snare ”at the watchtower, and like a net spread upon Tabor. O therefore, he says, you who are raised up above the others, O foundations of the earth, that is, on whom the affairs of others are established, hear the judgment of the Lord of all against you. But he who thinks rightly psalms and says to the Master of all, ”Do not enter into judgment with your servant. For He who knows all things will surely prevail, and no one will boast that he has a pure heart, nor would he be clean from sins.

Therefore it is a very terrible thing to be judged by God. But it must be known that the edition of the Seventy has ”ravines”; but that of the Hebrews names ”hills” and ”foundations of the earth,” so that we might know through ”hills” how the leaders of the peoples were lifted up high, and how they surpassed and rose above the measure of others, and ”foundations” refers to the same people. For the leaders of countries or cities, just as they are conspicuous in glory and lifted up on high, so also would they be foundations of the earth, that is, lying as a support, in a way, and a pedestal for affairs. For the affairs of others depend on them, and are in a way established on them, as I just said. My people, what have I done to you, or how have I grieved you, or how have I wearied you? Answer me. For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage I redeemed you, and I sent before your face Moses and Aaron and Miriam. God pleads his case through the voice of the Prophet, showing the manner of apostasy of those who acted impiously against him to be without excuse, and their acts of audacity to be beyond proper reason, or rather, beyond all madness, and the magnitude of their insensibility to be unusual and strange even perhaps to the very ungrateful. For what, tell me, he says, is the pretext for the impieties committed against me?

And what at all is unbearable or at all burdensome in my ordinances? or what is grieving? he brought into the middle, showing; I have sinned, it seems, against fitting reason, because I delivered you from bitter slavery, I powerfully brought you out from clay and brick-making and the sweats that come from them; I have offended those who have received mercy when I also armed creation itself against the wrongdoing Egyptians, and saved my own. Perhaps you will even blame my instructor, I mean Moses, who leads to glorious understanding, and clearly shows what is pleasing to God, so that you might have an unshakable basis for living splendidly, and attain the height of prosperity and glory; and perhaps you will also make no small outcry against the priestly service itself; For I have anointed Aaron, and have appointed him to mediate between God and you, and to appease God with sacrifices in type. Are you yourselves distressed at this also? And what might I say of Miriam, who mocked the perished Egyptians, and led the dancing women? For she, striking the tambourine, saw both horse and rider drowned in the waters; but for you, perhaps, even victory is to be shunned, and the things of God are of no account, He who grants you to pass through the midst of the waves, but makes the sea savage for your enemies.

Therefore, he makes his complaints in character, stirring up to remembrance the good things they have had, and as it were gracefully reproaching them as having received forgetfulness of things which it were better to remember always, and to delight the Benefactor in return with obedience in all things whatsoever. But the Savior also led us ourselves out of a spiritual Egypt, that is, from darkness and the rapacity of demons, and delivered us from clay and brick-making, namely, from fleshly passions and unclean love of pleasure; and He brought across the sea the distractions in this world, and all but delivered them from the bitter waves of the dangers upon them, and He engraved the divine laws upon the mind; and He also appointed a priest, the ”author and finisher of our salvation, Jesus. And He sent forth, as it were, a Miriam, that is, clearly, the Church, who will shout triumphantly over the plot of the enemies, ascribing the glory to God who has saved. For always there are hymns and thanksgivings, and praises and proclamations of the glory of God in the churches. We ourselves must therefore be on our guard, lest indifference somehow subject us to the charges of the Jews, and lest we consider what is pleasing to God to be burdensome. For as the blessed John says, ”His commandments ”are not burdensome; and Christ himself, ”For my ”yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Let us therefore offer what is pleasing to God, for nothing from him is burdensome;

but all things are good and entirely well-ordered for those who have chosen to live best. My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised against you, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that the righteousness of the Lord might be known. He corrects them again, as having impiously acted insolently against His dominions, although having nothing to say for which it was likely that, being justly grieved, they would incline toward apostasy. For, he says, I deemed you worthy of so much forbearance and love from me, as not even to endure the thought of your being slandered. For the accursed Balak, the tyrant of the Moabites, hired Balaam the sorcerer and augur, and then called upon him to curse Israel; but the God of all accomplished something paradoxical and extraordinary, turning the tongue of the false prophet into a blessing. And when Balak made this an accusation, and blamed the augur, he immediately took him away to other hills. Then, ordering him to erect altars and to sacrifice bulls, he thought perhaps that God was not able in every place, but He blessed them everywhere, although running about from what is called Shittim; a place of Moab; to mount Gilgal. Remember, therefore, what Balak devised, and what Balaam answered. For I was checking the very slanders against you, not even allowing the augur to grieve you with words.

But you also having been unmindful of these things, you have assigned the glory fitting for me to lifeless matter, crying out and saying to the golden calves, ”These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, while God distributes to us good things out of love, and enriches us with the greatest generosity, and shakes our enemies, and paralyzes their attempts against us, what should we ourselves do, we who have chosen to think rightly, except that very thing by which we ourselves might also be seen as beloved of God. And this is, to follow His will, and to accomplish very well what is

pleasing to Him, having, so to speak, drawn near by the disposition of our mind, to say that which is in the Psalms, ”My soul has clung close to you.”

Book 3

With what shall I take hold of the Lord? Shall I lay hold of God most high? If I shall take hold of him with whole burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Will the Lord accept thousands of rams, or ten thousands of fat he-goats? If I give my firstborn for my impiety, the fruit of my womb for the sin of my soul? Has it not been told to you, O man, what is good? Or what does the Lord seek from you, but to do judgment and to love mercy and to be ready to walk with the Lord your God? After God showed that the apostasy of those from Israel was without excuse, and in a certain way judged and clearly convicted them, that while He had been a benefactor in countless ways, they, having driven to immeasurable insensibility, grieved not moderately the one who saved them, the person of the penitent is immediately introduced, as if weeping over the things already sinned, and seeking to learn in what way he might put aside the charges, and hold fast to the pursuits most dear to God. He says then, With what shall I take hold of the Lord? For what shall I offer, he says, and what shall I do now, having thus offended? Will I be clean by sacrificing young and tender calves? And will God praise me if I should choose to make a burnt offering? And I might find him; that is, I will be near, and I will be received into spiritual intimacy;

even if I should dedicate a great multitude of cattle? But leaving those things, I will take hold of the fruits of my womb; and will I be well-pleasing, having sacrificed to him the choicest of my children, that is, the firstborn? While someone is, as it were, considering and saying these things, the Prophet answers again, and says in the spirit: The matter is not obscure, nor is it to be obtained with sweat. You surely know the good will of God; you have heard what seems good and is dear to Him. Therefore, do you doubt, O man? For what else does the God of all seek from you, than only to do judgment and to love mercy and to be ready to walk with the Lord your God? Now to do judgment is to work out and fulfill righteousness; for judgment is righteousness; and to love mercy has the boasts of love for one another, and enriches the glory of love for the brethren. And to be ready to walk with the Lord your God, signifies being obedient and tractable in everything whatsoever. And the blessed Paul said that we also must put on ”the breastplate of righteousness, and have our feet shod with the readiness of the Gospel of peace,” that is, of Christ; and he further commands, saying, ”Put on tender mercies,” and indeed the Savior Himself says, ”Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

These things are a dear and acceptable sacrifice to God, an odor of spiritual whole burnt offerings beyond blood and smoke and frankincense. For those things were in in types; but the truth itself makes it fragrant to God, who also says through another prophet ”I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God ”rather than burnt offerings. But observe how the person of the repenting one considered fulfilling the sacrifices according to the law; but God, showing beforehand that it is indeed powerless, and the law is incapable of purifying from sin, and that much better and incomparably superior is the power of the way of life in Christ, as it were, He makes unacceptable the things according to the law, and said that what is pleasing to God is, to do justice and to love mercy and to be ready to walk with Him. And these are the boasts of the life in Christ. The voice of the Lord shall be called upon to the city, and He shall save those who fear His name. And in another way He makes it clear, that there is no fruit from the offering of blood, but the power of spiritual worship would benefit someone not moderately. And in these things He has placed the voice instead of the name, that is, of the invocation. It is as if he were to say, perhaps, ”If the name of God were proclaimed to the city, it will be saved in every way and altogether.

For do not think, O man, He says, that I delight in sacrifices of blood, nor consider a city impious and lawless if it does not offer calves for a burnt offering; but I would not save it at all when in danger, having chosen to sacrifice oxen, even if it should stain the altar with the slaughter of sheep, and should choose to offer flocks of rams, but it will be more sufficient for its salvation for the name of God to be called upon. For mine altogether is she who honors my dominions, and chooses to do diligently and to think the things pleasing to me. Then I will save those who fear me. Therefore, when we are called God’s, then we also fear Him, and are saved by Him, and the power of spiritual worship might reasonably be understood as such. The God of all said something like this also through the voice of David, ”Hear, my people, ”and I will speak to you; Israel, and I will testify to you; God, ”your God, I am. I will not reprove you ”for your sacrifices, for your burnt offerings are before me ”continually. Then, adding to these things, that He will not eat the flesh of bulls, nor will He drink the blood of goats, again He says, ”Offer to God 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 shall glorify me.

Hear, O tribe, and who shall adorn the city? Is it fire and the house of the law- less, treasuring up treasures of lawlessness and with insolent injustice? For according to tribes and families they have inhabited the land of the Jews, and indeed also Samaria, those of the blood of Israel, the land of promise being allotted to them as an inheritance by Jesus, who is called the son of Nun. Therefore God speaks not to one tribe, but as it were to all, that is to each, the word being fitting both specifically to each one, and to all. Hear then, O every tribe, a city is saved upon which the name of God might be proclaimed. For He will by no means overlook those who fear Him, but will be an unbreachable wall, and an adornment and glory to those who wish to do what is pleasing to God. But if you wish, He says, to see the opposite, what will adorn a city? The house of the lawless, or injustice with insolence? Is it then, He says, if a city, because of much sin, is consumed by fire, having been captured

by the hands of enemies, will it be seemly and beautiful, and would a house of the lawless, the one treasuring up treasures of injustice, render it splendid and most glorious, and will injustice with insolence profit it? But no one of those accustomed to thinking rightly would doubt, that such things render it inglorious.

For a city would not have been captured and consumed by fire unless it had altogether stumbled because of much sin. Why then, He says, having abandoned the things by which a city might be saved and beautified, have you rather made enviable the things that are by nature destructive, and have honored the things by which it might be seen as shameful and unlovely, having wicked inhabitants, lovers of money and unjust and treasuring up lawlessness? And shall the lawless be justified with a balance, and in a bag the weights of deceit, from which they filled their wealth with impiety, and its inhabitants spoke lies, and their tongue was exalted in their mouth? For do you think, he says, that the lawless man will be justified in the balance? That is, if I should test and, as it were, weigh the life of each one, have you believed that I, the lover of virtue, would ever endure to cast a vote of righteousness for the unrighteous? And have you considered that those with treacherous weights in a bag, that is, those wishing to be rich from greed and inequality and unseemly avarice, are able to escape my wrath? For from such gains they have filled their wealth with impiety. They have also become liars and boasters. For the love of lying always follows the lovers of inequality, and those overcome by shameful gains and avarice; and boasting and arrogance follow those who have already become rich.

And the inventors of unholy doctrines also have treacherous weights in bags, those who "pervert all the right paths," and who undermine the mind of the more simple with deceits and tricks, and who become rich by ensnaring many; yet they gather for themselves such wealth full of impiety, they speak confessedly nothing true, but counterfeit and false things, and as it were colored with elegances from deceit. And such men again lift up their own tongue, "speaking iniquity against God," according to what is written, and "uttering pompous words of vanity," to whom it is fitting to say, "Hear, O tribe, and what will adorn a city? Shall not fire, or a house of the lawless treasuring up treasures of lawlessness, and iniquity with insolence? For the fire of punishment will be for them not for adornment, but for judgment. And since they have become houses treasuring up lawlessness, they will be for a curse and judgment and will fall into every evil. And I will begin to strike you and I will destroy you in your sins. You will eat and not be filled, and I will cast you out from within yourself, and you will be caught and not be saved, and whoever may be saved will be given over to the sword; you will sow and not reap, you will press the olive and not anoint yourself with oil, and wine and you will not drink, and the statutes of my people will be destroyed.

And you have kept the ordinances of Zimri and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you have walked in their counsels, so that I may give you over to destruction and its inhabitants to hissing, and you will receive the reproaches of peoples. For since they have become houses of the impious, treasuring up lawlessness and gathering wealth from injustices, he then threatens judgment, and says that the attack of things expected to be has somehow already

been placed in its beginnings, so that the destruction will be upon them in proportion to their offenses. And he usefully terrifies, and with the fears of things to come, as with a kind of bridle, he turns them to choose to do better things, and to appease God with secondary considerations. And he enumerates, as it were, and places the plagues before their eyes. For he says they will be punished with famine, and with lack of necessities, and they will be destroyed among themselves, and will be caught, but not able to escape completely. But even if any should be able to escape the immediate harm, these will be caught, and not long after, and will become the work of another's sword. And he seems to us to declare this through this. For very many wars have been stirred up against those of Israel, that is, against all of Judah, yet not always by enemies;

but they also armed themselves against each other, so that at one time Ephraim, that is, the ten tribes, rose up against Judah, and at another time those in Jerusalem themselves made war against Ephraim; and not a few cities were destroyed, so that they were often cast out from among themselves; and in this way, being driven from cities, they seized others, yet were captured at times, either when the Syrians and the kings of Damascus invaded, or perhaps even by the Persians and Medes themselves. This, I think, is the meaning of, I will cast you out from within yourself, and you will be caught and not be saved, and whoever may be saved will be given over to the sword. That also being deprived of the fruitfulness of the fields, and in the want of necessary things wasted away, they will live wretchedly, but they will pay the penalty for the impious things done by them, he makes it clear through what follows. For you will sow, he says, and you will not reap, God, I think, destroying the fruits, and you yourself will press the olive; for the country of the Samaritans is olive-bearing; but you will be so in want of oil, he says, that not even if you wished, would you perhaps be able to find any for anointing. And though your country is exceedingly rich in vines and produces abundant wine, so as even to distribute it to other cities, you yourself would not find any to drink.

And the statutes will cease, he says, which you have established for the idols, offering to them the first-fruits of your harvest. For what offering of first-fruits will there be then, if all your fruit has perished and the things in the fields have been destroyed? Or what thank-offerings will you bring, and for what, reasonably, you who are falling wretchedly and being consumed? Then, teaching that not another would be considered responsible for his misfortune, but he himself will be convicted of having wronged himself, having emulated the ways of those who were most impious, he adds and says: And you have kept the statutes of Zimri and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you have walked in their counsels, so that I may deliver you to destruction. Zimri was king over Israel, and he is the father of Ahab, but as the holy scripture says, he walked "in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat," who made Israel to sin; "and he did evil above all who were before him. Therefore he was also consumed by fire, having himself set fire to his own house over himself; for it is written thus. And the house of Ahab, as it seems, he calls Jezebel; and in her were murders and robberies and the practices of persecuting saints. These things, then, you have kept, he says, so that I may justly destroy you, and make you a laughingstock and a reproach to others.

But we will apply such a word also to the enemies of the truth, who, emboldened by their own eloquence, and gathering heaps of wretched thoughts, grow rich as if by injustice, collecting for themselves things that are not theirs, and being accustomed to ravage the flocks of the more simple like enemies, and carrying them away into monstrous error. Let them hear God saying, then, "And I will begin to strike you and I will destroy you for your sins. You will eat and not be satisfied. For encountering the divine scriptures, then not being filled with the dogmas of the truth, although seeming to eat, they are destroyed by famine, and thinking they are grasping the way of salvation, they would not find it, and sowing, as they suppose, they will find no reward for their labors, and pressing out the spiritual olive, that is, the holy scripture, they are in no way fattened by the grace of the Spirit, and thinking they are gathering wine, they will be far from spiritual gladness; for they have kept the statutes of Zimri and all the works of the house of Ahab, that is, they have done evil, they have been greedy, and they have worked persecutions against the saints. They will be, then, for destruction, and they will truly come to a reproachful and accursed end. Woe is me, for I have become as one gathering stubble in the harvest and as a gleaning in the vintage, when there is no cluster to eat the first-ripe fruits.

Out of love the Prophet bewails Israel, as it will presently go away to destruction, and will henceforth come to such a number, that very few and scarcely any will be left, and that they will be like the ears of corn that fall, which the hands of the reapers pass by, and these are few and rarely caught by those gathering the stubble. And to be no less like the so-called gleanings, which the sickles of the vintagers passed over. But I think that through these things he also indicates that the saints are hard to find, as being among the few remnants at that time, and being found in such a way, as if a single ear of corn in reaped fields, or even among the first-born clusters the offshoots of the second crop. For when the air is warm, the cluster which is at the beginning and first is brought forth from the vines. But as time goes on, there is sometimes also a spurious one and a second gathering of grape clusters follows after them. These are indeed hard for the vintagers to find, both because they are easily hidden in the abundant foliage, and because they are in small clusters. Those who follow the vintagers gather these, not without sweat, casting their eye more carefully into the vines. It seems, therefore, that the prophetic word laments to us in these things the scarcity of the decent.

But that this matter became a loss for those of Israel, I mean, being in want of the saints, how can one doubt? For sometimes He cares for both lands and cities, and He forgives very many charges, the Master being philanthropic, when scarcely five saints are found in them, and even the cities of the Sodomites would have been saved at one time, with God taking pity out of respect for the saints, though very few, and checking his wrath. Woe is me, O soul, for the pious one has perished from the earth, and there is no one who acts uprightly among men; they all lie in wait for blood, each one oppresses his neighbor with oppression, they prepare their hands for evil; the ruler asks, and the judge has spoken words of peace, the desire of his soul. The word, as it seems to us, is precise. For the Prophet laments that there is no pious person in all the earth, that is, clearly, the land of the Jews, although it

once boasted of very many heads of saints, who had a manifest glory. For this reason God also says through the voice of Isaiah, ”How has the faithful city ”Zion become a harlot! She was full of judgment, in her righteousness ”lodged, but now murderers.

For what was most burdensome and caused them to rush to the extreme of depravity was that they were judged for blood and murdered savagely, and that doing good was completely cast aside as stale, so that they also made it a necessary endeavor to have their hands ready only for doing evil to others. For nothing is unattempted by those accustomed to live this way, even if it is punished by law, even if it is decried by the ways of freedom. Has then the subject part in these matters grown weak, while the ruling part is strong, and the judging part is healthy? Not at all, he says; for the ruler asks and the judge has spoken words of peace. Many times, many of those appointed to rule have become unholy and most avaricious, and they easily sell their own judgments to those willing to corrupt them. But even if they have already inclined to seem thus conquered by gains and bribery, they somehow turn away and hasten to adorn their own ways with a good reputation; but to have finally come to this point of wretchedness of mind and shameful ways, so as to all but hold out one’s hand, and even if one does not receive, to corrupt the word of justice when judging, and to threaten shamelessly, how would this not be beyond all abomination? With emphasis, therefore, is the word, and as if crying out against greed: The ruler asks and the judge has spoken words of peace.

Would one then blame him who brings together into peace those who are divided into disagreement? Then how would it be true that ”Blessed are the peacemakers,” and what is their reward? But the boasts from this are preserved for the arbiters of peace. However, he who judges rightly interprets what seems right to the divine law, and he will convict the wrongdoers, and will certainly speak in favor of those who have been wronged. But when we speak peaceful words to wrongdoers, not convicting them as having sinned, then indeed we shall clearly undermine what seems right to the Lawgiver. For He said that ”The priest’s mouth shall keep judgment, and they shall seek the law ”from his mouth. But it always somehow follows for those accustomed to taking bribes that they are neither able to judge rightly, nor indeed to convict sinners with boldness, but rather to advise things that lead to peace, even if they inflict the greatest possible greed on some. And making the cause of the disease clear, the Prophet says, It is the desire of his soul; for what has happened outrageously is perhaps pleasing to him, he says. Then how will he rebuke those who have done wrong? For what he has praised has, how could he still find fault? Truly, therefore, greed and the oppression of others are an unholy and harmful thing.

And in addition to this, it is accursed to be overcome by shameful gains, and to come to such ill-counsel as to then disregard even ways leading to uprightness, and to judge without taking bribes, and not to hold it of great account, but rather to incline towards those accustomed to doing wrong, and to share their impiety with them, and thus to partake in the sins of others. But that he who gives himself over to such terrible offenses will in every way and manner be subject to wrath and justice, how could anyone doubt, if he should

choose to think rightly? And I will take away their good things as one who eats up moths, and walking by a rule as in a day of watching. He threatened to bring upon them a twofold manner of justice. For he said that, "And I will begin to strike you, and I will destroy "you for your sins. You shall eat, and shall not be "filled, and I will cast you out from among you, and you shall be caught and shall not "be saved. And he added that "You shall sow and shall not "reap, you shall press the olive and shall not anoint with oil, and "wine and you shall not drink.

Therefore, that the abundance of the good harvest from their fields will be gone for them, and that the means of life will fail, and they will be oppressed by a lack of the most necessary things, he teaches by saying, as if in the form of a moth he would consume all their good things, that is, those things in which it was likely they luxuriated not moderately, and possessed the breadth of prosperity. And that they were about to be struck and destroyed, and cast out, as if even among themselves, that is, to be destroyed along with one another, and to be piteously sent out from their own homes and cities, he makes clear by saying "And walking by a rule as in a day of watching"; for "I will take away their good things," he says. And not only "as one who eats up moths," but also "walking by a rule as in a day of watching. And the saying is quite difficult to grasp, but I myself think it could not be understood by us in any other way, unless a clear preliminary narration of the histories that look to this matter were given, which indeed I will try to do. Geba, then, is a certain village, or rather a small town in Judea, situated on a hill, and it was allotted as an inheritance to those of the tribe of Benjamin, and it is named both hill and watchtower.

And we remember that a Levite man, as is written in the book of Judges, when his concubine was violated by those of the tribe of Benjamin in the very land of Gibeah, cut up the body into twelve pieces and sent them to all the tribes, making the offense of the tribe of Benjamin manifest to all. Then it happened from this that the other tribes rose up against the tribe of Benjamin according to the law of war, and a number not easy to count fell, with the tribe of Benjamin being victorious at first, but later the other tribes completely destroyed them. The prophet Hosea also mentions this history. For he says, "They have set up madness in the house of the Lord, they were corrupted "according to the days of the hill. For since, he says, idolatry and false prophecy—for madness indicates these things to us here—they established in the house of the Lord, for this reason also they were corrupted as in the days of the hill, that is, of Gibeah. And that the hill, or Gibeah, is also called a watchtower, you will learn clearly from what is written in the third book of Kings. For Asa was king of Jerusalem, and Baasha of Samaria at the same time.

But since they were divided into discord, and being angry with one another armed themselves with the law of war, "Baasha," it says, "king of Israel went up against Judah, and built "Ramah, so that there would be no one going out or coming in "to Asa king of Judah. And as Adad was overrunning the Samaritans, Baasha was moving out of Ramah, rising up against the enemy. And Asa ran out of Jerusalem, and then having come to Ramah, "He commanded," it says, "all Judah in Enacim, and they take the stones of "Ramah and its

timbers which Baasha had built, and ”with them king Asa built every hill Ben- ”jamin and the watchtower. Therefore Gabaa was called both a hill and a watchtower; for Gabaa is thus interpreted, because it was raised high, and situated on a mound and a watchtower. ”I will begin, therefore, to strike you, and I will destroy you for ”your sins,” and in no other way, than that very one in the day of the watchtower. For I will walk as if by a rule, and I will not turn to the right nor indeed to the left, coming on the path of judgment against you. And again the prophetic word seems to suggest some such thing to us. For Micah prophesies in the days of Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah. But Jotham was a pious man, while Ahaz was abominable and hateful and one of those most notoriously accused of impiety.

And during his rei- gning Pekah the son of Remaliah, then reigning over Samaria, made war on Judah, having as an ally Rezin the king of Damascus, and he killed a great many in one day. For it is so written in the sec- ond book of Chronicles concerning Ahaz ”And the Lord his God deliv- ”ered him into the hand of the king of ”Syria, and he struck him, and took many ”of them captive, and brought them to Damascus, and ”into the hands of the king of Israel he delivered him, and ”he struck him with a great blow, and Pekah ”the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, killed in Judah, in one ”day one hundred and twenty thousand mighty men of valor, because ”they had forsaken the Lord their God. It must be known, therefore, that by offending God we shall immediately be in want of every good thing, and a terrible famine of divine and spiritual goods will consume us, and we shall consume one another as if by biting. For Christ does not award his own peace to those who do not love him, which is seen to happen especially to the enemies of the truth, among whom it is not possible to find a spiritual gift, but as it were cannibalism and str- ife, contention and contentiousness and schisms; and concerning them God would say ”For I have removed my peace from this people, ”and they will die by a morbid death” and strength and concord not to them; whence?

but distributing to those who revere his things, and to whom he would reasonably grant the good of peace, to those who honor the power of truth, and who do not tolerat- ing being cut off by strange and foolish counsels, but are eager only to admire the beauty of the truth. Woe, woe, your vengeances have come, now will be their wailings. Do you hear how he also imitates the voices of those who mourn, not expecting the calamities any longer, but as if they had already happened, and they were weeping like women? For he says, your vengeances have come, that is, the time of judgment is at hand, the war is in our hands, the trouble is at the gates. For by add- ing that Now will be their wailings, he has shown clearly that the things of the prophecy are not for a long postponement, but lie as it were before our eyes. For indeed immediately after Jotham came Ahaz, wicked and an apostate, and a slayer of his own children, whom he offered on the altars of demons. In his time ”in one day one hundred and twenty thousand” from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin fell. But it must be known that at that time Israel itself also paid the penalty.

For while Pekah was reigning, Tiglath-pileser, king of the Assyrians, came up against Samaria, and very many of its cities he dest- royed, and he took Damascus, and kill- ed

Rezin himself, so that at one time it happened that Judah and Benjamin were des- troyed by the ten tribes in Samaria, and that those in Samaria themselves suffered what they had done at the hand of the Babylonian. Do you see, therefore, how almost running through the rule of wrath, that in the time of the hill, or of the watchtower, he has punished the sinners. But those things "happened to the ancients as a type, and were written "for our instruction," so that by always avoiding being caught in the same offen- ses, we may continue in a state of well-being, having the God of all as gracious and friendly and our protector. har- and he might be angry, and very rightly so, with those who pervert what is right, and paralyze the faith of the more simple, and we ourselves so to speak, Woe, woe, your vengeances have come, now shall be their lamentations. "For by sinning against the breth- "ren and wound- ing their weak conscience, "you sin against Christ. and that in every way and altogether they will give an account to the Judge, and "will eat the fruits of their own impiety," how is it possible to doubt? "For because "they wronged infants, they will be slain, and examination "will destroy the impious," as it is written.

Do not trust in friends, nor hope in leaders, from your wife beware of entrusting anything to her; because a son dishonors a father, a daughter will rise up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, all the men in his house are enemies. Those of Israel, sinning in many ways, and bringing down upon themselves to wrath the Master of all, then learning beforehand through the holy prophets that they would be in inescapable evils unless they chose to appease the Master with kindnesses, though it was necessary to choose to think rightly, and to tame the aggrieved one by returning to what is better; this the wretched ones did not do; from where could they? but rather they slipped into such ill counsel, as to suppose and believe that they would be safe from the divine wrath, and would prevail, and very easily, over every war, if they had the aid of the neighboring nations, and the conspiracies and promises of the rulers. But that they have put their trust in cold and vain deceits, and will have a completely unprofitable hope, the Prophet tries to teach them, saying, Do not trust in friends, nor hope in leaders; for the thing is precarious and completely unprofit- able.

For when the Babylonian came to ravage Samaria, then indeed the leaders of the neighbor- ing nations, although they had promised them the greatest possible aid, having no small struggles on their own behalf, consid- ered it welcome just to be saved, but the need to also help others, they perhaps did not even take into mind at all. Therefore do not trust in friends, nor hope in leaders; but know, he says, that when God moves things out of wrath against you, not even the law of nature itself nor the power of innate affection will grant you goodwill, even from those close by blood and kin according to the flesh, but they too will imitate enemies. And a wife will then disregard her husband, and sons will rise up against fathers, and indeed daughters against mothers. For he himself, he says, who engraves the laws of affection on nature, could easily persuade and change it towards indifference. Ex- cept that the manner of our indifference in these things would not be understood as one and the same, but twofold and different. For some stumble against the laws of affection, impiously attacking their own parents, while others do this both pleasing God and saving

their own souls. And so the Savior said, ”Do you think that I came to give peace ”on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from ”now on five in one house will be divided, three ”against two and two against three.

Father will be divided against ”son and son against father, mother against daughter and daugh- ”ter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law ”and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Therefore with a right judg- ment we will crown such a splendid lack of affection. for it makes one familiar to God, even if it cuts some off from kinship according to the flesh, so as to sing very well that which is by the voice of ”David, For my father and my mother have forsaken ”me, but the Lord has taken me up. But I will look to the Lord, I will wait for God my Savior, my God will hear me. This would be fitting, and very rightly so, for Zion as she repents and foresees that the end of the toils of captivity will come in due time. For Cyrus took the city of the Babylonians, but with difficulty he sent up in that Israel, being a remnant, along with the sacred vessels, he commanded to go home and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. For then, as if escaping from darkness and unbreakable bonds, they came into the light, as God had mercy, and were somehow brought up to the freedom from above most fitting for them, being released and rejoicing. I therefore, he says, will look upon the Lord, very late indeed and after the experience of those things whose attack one ought to avoid.

Nevertheless, he says that he will have his hope in God, and will wait for salvation from him, and be firmly disposed, because being a lover of mankind, he will be an attentive hearer of her laments and will accept her prayers. But the beginning of salvation, I think, would be understood as putting away for a time the mind from the ancient deceit, and choosing hereafter to think rightly, and to consider the Lord of all to be the provider and governor of salvation, and not to assign so excellent a good to assistances from men, or rather, most foolishly and ignorantly to expect it to be a gift from the most powerless multitude of idols. For of old they would go down to the Egyptians, and they departed also to the Assyrians, purchasing alliances and aid from both for no small amount of money. And they would approach lifeless idols, offering sacrifices, and in addition to this, offering up prayers for themselves. But now they say that they will look upon the Lord, and they will wait for him, that is, they will await the salvation and grace from him, and indeed that they will be heard by him, offering their supplications clearly to him and no longer to others. And this was Zion, as I said, becoming sober again, and seeing already what was necessary, to cast off that ancient error, and to change her mind for the better and choose to do what is useful. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy:

when I fall, I shall arise; for if I sit in darkness, the Lord shall give me light. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. The speech of Zion seems to me now to have been most gracefully fashioned against the harsh and insolent and arrogant city, clearly that of the Babylonians, which was in a way mocking the land of the Jews as having been sacked. For do not exult, she says,

over me as one who has fallen. For you have conquered, not by being stronger yourself, but by casting down me who was sick from stumbling against God, and for this reason lying prostrate. But a time will come, when I shall also rise again, even if I have been, she says, in darkness, 'Saying to a stock, Thou art my God; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth' and uttering the saying about the heifers; for I said, I said in my frenzy, 'These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt;' but I shall even come into the light, I shall know the Lord, the savior, the helper, the provider of strength;

and I will endure the things that have happened, and I will bear the terrible things, and I will in no way cry out as though God were unjust, but I will rather be disposed as one upon whom he has passed a right sentence, even if he has sent me into captivity. For I have transgressed, and I bear the consequences of his wrath, until he vindicate my cause, that is, until having measured out a punishment equal to my transgressions, he at last has mercy, and makes bright her who was formerly darkened by the mist of error, by causing her, through the knowledge of the true God by nature, to be in the light as it were; and he might be justly marveled at, she says, showing upon me the purity of his own righteousness. For just as he did not punish her for transgressing without justice, so in the same way will he account her worthy of care, having now suffered and repented, and will have mercy on her as she lies prostrate. Therefore the Lord of all is good, and to those who turn to him he distributes mercy without delay, and he gladdens them very richly with the good things that come from his gentleness, forgiving without remembrance the sins committed long ago. And mine enemy shall see it, and will be clothed with shame, saying to me, Where is the Lord your God? my eyes will look upon her; now she will be for trampling like mud in the streets;

a day of plastering brick, that day is your erasure. The land of the Jews was indeed captured, and Israel was carried away captive by the spear to Babylon and the Medes at different times, not because their conqueror prevailed by his own powers, but rather because God who saves was turning away from him as one who had sinned, and, as it were, bringing him under the hand of his enemies, because he chose to worship lifeless idols, and to shake off the law long ago established through Moses, and simply to incline towards everything that is amiss, and to leave no manner of wickedness unpracticed. Then the Babylonians, having taken them, and attributing the victory to their own powers, behaved insolently even against the divine glory, and they thought they would conquer Judea, even if the God of all chose to save them; and having taken the sinners under their hand, they tormented them with terrible and unbearable labors, imposing a harsh servitude upon them. And so God said somewhere through the voice of Jeremiah to the unholy multitude of the Assyrians, that is, to Babylon, "Behold, I am "against you, O insolent one," and yet also concerning those of Israel, "I gave them into your hands, but you "showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your "yoke very heavy, and you said, 'I shall be a queen forever.'" For there was no mercy with them, no sparing of age, no reverence for old age, no bowels of compassion.

For this very reason, therefore, they themselves were justly given into the hands of both Persians and Medes, under the generalship of Cyrus, who captured Babylon. And perhaps concerning them the prophet Jeremiah says somewhere, ”They shall set upon ”you, and you will be captured, O Babylon, and you will not know it; you were found ”and taken, because you opposed the Lord. The Lord has opened his ”treasury and has brought out the instruments of his wrath. And by instruments of wrath he means those who sacked her. It happened, then, that the city of the Babylonians was taken by Cyrus, and Israel was released from captivity. For this reason the redeemed say, that my enemy will see it and will be clothed with shame. For when she sees her own children lying on the ground, having perished miserably and unexpectedly, and those once under her hand rejoicing and set free, and finally running back home, how will she not in every way and altogether be clothed with shame, although she once said, ”Where is the Lord your God? For I will look upon her like mud in the streets, cast down and trampled under the feet of enemies. Then the word says to Babylon herself, ”That day is your erasure,” meaning, ”The time in which you will be,” it says, ”under the feet of your enemies,” that is, Cyrus trampling and crushing the boastful and insolent one like mud.

Therefore, as far as it is necessary to understand such things again historically, our account has been made sufficiently well and properly. But one could no less apply these things also to the spiritual Zion, that is, to the Church, which prevails over its enemies and tramples on its persecutors and mocks the powerlessness of those accustomed to warring against her, even if at times they seem to overcome and prevail. For many indeed are those who impiously gnash their teeth at her and whet their angers and contrive every kind of plot; on the one hand, the children of the Greeks, striving not moderately with their own foolish inventions, and generally contending for the deceit of idols; on the other hand, the heretics who especially rage against the saints, and perhaps rage more harshly against those who have chosen to think rightly, than even those who have not accepted the faith. For when at times the all-powerful God trains the saints, and allows them to fall into temptations, and tests his genuine worshipers as if in a fire, the wretched ones raise their arrogant brow against them, and when they see them suffering, so to speak, they foolishly cry out the ”Where is the Lord your God? But she... a wise and all-pure and holy virgin, the one having no spot or wrinkle, would reasonably say, ”But I will look upon the ”Lord, I will wait for God my Savior, my God will hear ”me;

and that he will trample down those who oppose him as the mire of the streets, and how can one doubt that those accustomed to tempt her would not rejoice at all over her, even if she were somehow shaken? ”for she is founded upon the rock,” and her support is Christ, an unshakable foundation, and continuous security, Savior and Redeemer. And I suppose the human soul might say, ”Do not rejoice over me, my enemy, ”because I have fallen,” and all that is harmonious with this, having transgressed and been condemned, but turning somehow to the need to repent and awaiting the grace of salvation through Christ. for she will say as to an enemy, the sin that tyrannized her, Do not rejoice over me; for I have admittedly fallen, having transgressed what seemed good to God, and having cast down my

own mind to worldly pleasures. but I am not far from the hope that I will also rise again, even if I have somehow been in mist and darkness; for I myself will find Christ as a light, and the sun of righteousness rising in my mind will show me whitened. ”I will bear the Lord’s wrath, because I have also sinned against ”him. For if indeed I have been, he says, for a short time out of his presence, and have been given over to a reprobate mind, yet I shall be wise, and having justly suffered rejection I will know the judgment, and indeed I say it has happened rightly;

for I have not been punished in vain. But since I have paid the most fitting penalty, ”I will see his ”righteousness. And what else could the righteousness of God the Father be, but Christ? For thus God the Father calls him to us, saying, ”My righteousness is near to come, ”and my mercy to be revealed. Then such a soul, having likely understood the grace of righteousness in Christ and the destruction of sin, will wisely and keenly cry out, And my enemy will see and shame will cover her who says to me, Where is the Lord your God? My eyes will look upon her; now she will be for trampling like the mire in the streets; a day of smearing a brick, that day is your erasure. For since Christ has come, justifying sinners by faith, the mouth of lawlessness has been stopped, and its inventor has been put to shame as well. And he has been driven out, and has fallen from his rule over us, and it has finally been trampled like mire in the streets, having been, as it were, subjected to the feet of the saints. And the day of Christ has also become its erasure, on which he declares each of those who come to him clean from their old accusations through holy baptism, and seals them with the Spirit for sanctification, and enrolls them among the children of God. And that day will cast away ordinances;

and your cities will come to be leveled and to a division of the Assyrians, and your fortified cities to a division from Tyre to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to the mountain. and the earth will be for destruction with those who dwell in it, from the fruits of their deeds. The person of Zion is placed in the midst, that is, of Jerusalem already somehow turned to repentance, and having placed her hope in God, and disposed that she will also be redeemed, and will see that of the Babylonians trampled, although it says to her out of arrogance, ”Where is the Lord your God? But one would apply the meaning of what has been said not so much to the intermediate things, but to what comes shortly after; and what these things were, we will recall in a few words. For he has commanded them not to trust in friends, nor indeed to hope in leaders. And it showed that even a wife will disregard her husband, and a child will neglect its father, and daughters will be unsparing of respect for their mothers, the terrors of war calling them to this. For wherever the fear of suffering might appear to run equally against all, there indeed surely for each one the more urgent concern will be for his own life, that of another being in every way neglected.

According to Therefore, he says that of the time, that is, on that day, on which sons might become neglectful of their affection for fathers, and daughters in turn of that for mothers, the customs will be cast aside, that is, the principle of what is fitting will then also grow weak; for a father will not have the leisure to accuse his son as having neglected the laws of

nature, nor indeed will a grieved mother subject her daughter to the punishments of duty, another care being imminent, or rather of destruction and the ultimate evils. For the cities will go into desolation, and into division and destruction. For some will campaign against that city, others against its neighbor, and others against the one bordering it, and they will overrun the whole land from mountain to mountain, from east to west, as from north to south, so that the entire land is simply ravaged to its ends, from Tyre to the river and from mountain to mountain. And it is likely again to speak of "customs" in these things as the festivals established by custom in the precincts of idols, that is, the sacrifices. For with their cities having been destroyed, and their houses and all things in them plundered, who will still fulfill the customary rites, and bring worship to the statues and temples of the idols? And the argument might go, and very likely, also against those, if one should choose, who are heterodox and would-be-wise and who distort the correct doctrines of the Church.

For they were captured like cities, and became a portion for the enemies; clearly, that is, for the world-rulers of this age; and they have become portions for foxes, as it is written, having divided among themselves impiety and the ways of blasphemy and the rejection of the truth. And these things also happened to the peoples of the Jews, when, having wickedly insulted Emmanuel, they cast him out of the vineyard, as it is written, and handed him over to the cross, although saying and having recognized that he is the heir. Therefore they have been sacked and have perished ingloriously, not for any other reason, than from the fruits of their own practices. For though it was necessary to admire the Creator for his love for the world, because "He gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life," this they did not do; how could they? But being puffed up to arrogance they killed the Master, returning to him evil for good, as it is written, and wickedly practicing every form of impiety. Therefore let them hear, "Walk by the light of your fire and by the flame which you have kindled," and indeed also this, "You shall eat the fruits of your own practices. Shepherd your people with your rod, your tribe, the sheep of your inheritance, who dwell by themselves in a forest in the midst of Carmel, they will graze Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

And according to the days of your exodus from Egypt you will see wondrous things. The discourse is again applied to what lies in between, and turns toward the good, urging toward the better with the hope of the good things understood in Christ and changing very well toward choosing to live rightly. For it has disturbed not moderately with the prediction of grim things those who easily go toward negligence, but it recovers them again, inserting very well that which knows how to cheer, so that those to whom the discourse of admonition is made, not despairing, might rush down a cliff, irrevocably and unbridled. For it is written, "When the wicked man comes into the depth of evils, he scorns. Therefore there is introduced either the very person of God the Father, saying to the Son "Shepherd your people with your rod, your tribe, the sheep of your inheritance," or else again for us the prophetic person in a certain way crying out to Emmanuel himself, that he must shepherd with a rod his own people or inheritance. And the people of Christ, and indeed also the sheep of his pasture, might be understood as both those who believed from the circumcision, and those

called to holiness from the multitude of the Gentiles. For he created the two peoples into one new man, making peace and he reconciled both through His body to spiritual union. And so Christ Himself said, "And other sheep I have; namely those of the circumcision;

"them also I must bring, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. Therefore, the people of Christ, both tribe and sheep and inheritance are those "not by works of the law," but rather justified through faith. For the one group was under a curse, according to the voice of the blessed Paul; but the other might say, speaking truly of themselves, "Blessed are we by the Lord who made heaven and earth. The Lord is God, and has appeared to us. But Christ shepherds His own with a rod, not striking them with one of iron, and shattering them like a potter's vessel, according to the voice of the psalmist, but turning them back in gentleness, and like a good shepherd, checking with moderate fears the impulses towards indolence of those who have believed; for thus says the Master of all, as in the person of David, fashioning the discourse concerning the Son: "If his sons forsake my law, and do not walk in my judgments; if they profane my statutes, and do not keep my commandments, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with scourges; but my mercy I will not scatter from them. Therefore, He shatters, as if striking with an iron rod, the unbridled, the disobedient and arrogant, and the one who does not accept the faith;

but He kindly instructs those who have believed, and pastures them among lilies, and brings them to a good pasture and a rich place, clearly the divinely-inspired scripture, making plain through the Spirit to the more intelligent the things hidden in it, so that they may "ascend to a perfect man, and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," having a rich and well-nourished mind, and revelling in intelligible delights. But we, the chosen and the elect, dwell apart, having withdrawn from the others, who mind only the things upon the earth and have prized the possession of temporary things, and being clothed in the pleasures of the flesh, have immoderately inclined towards everything that is amiss. Therefore, having a quiet mind, and freeing it from vain and detestable turmoil, we are placed somewhere outside, and we live a revered and admirable life, and we are alone, just as indeed was the prophet Jeremiah. For he said that, "O Lord Almighty, I did not sit in the council of those who were mocking, but I was cautious because of your hand; I sat alone, because I was filled with bitterness. And we dwell alone as in a thicket and on a mountain. And you will understand the thicket as the two-fold discipline, well-wooded and flourishing, I mean both moral and dogmatic, and the mountain as that which is, as it were, lofty and exalted. For nothing of what is philosophized among us, and deemed worthy of zeal in the Church, is lowly.

But that such pasture is rich and good for grazing, he indicates again as from more concrete examples, saying that those who are instructed by Christ will graze in both Bashan and Gilead; and these are regions which cause to gush forth for the flocks a very great and abundant pasture, and are richly crowned with varied grass. Therefore, leaping up wisely from things corporeal and lying, as it were, in the senses, to things spiritual, we also understand the inner and hidden contemplation, that by delighting in the theorems of the

divinely-inspired scripture the mind of the saints is preened, and is filled as if with a certain richness, having partaken abundantly, as I said, of practical and theoretical virtue, not for a certain short and contracted time, but as the Prophet says, as the days of the age, that is, for a long and endless time. For the things that delight the flesh fall with it and wither and, passing by like shadows, after a short time are contracted; but the participation in the good things from above and spiritual things is extended through long ages; for the possession of such things cannot be lost. And he said that you shall see wonderful things according to the days of your exodus from the land of Egypt.

just as For when the God of all was freeing Israel from the slavery in Egypt, he punished with various plagues those who wished to oppress and wear him out with clay and brick-making, so also the Savior, placing us who have believed outside the hand of the devil and spiritual slavery, bound the strong man, as he himself says, and cast out the ruler of this age. And just as Pharaoh was drowned and perished together with his own shield-bearers; so again Satan, together with the unclean spirits, has all but been submerged, cast down to Tartarus with chains of darkness. And just as Israel were baptized into Moses, yet in the cloud and in the sea; so we also have been baptized into Christ. For he is the spiritual cloud, which waters the world under the sun, as with rains, with the evangelical proclamations. And just as for them he sent down the manna in the desert, so also to us he gives himself for food, ”the living bread which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world. And they were brought into the perceptible land; but we inherit the city above, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of the firstborn; and the Savior says this is the land which he also promised to the meek. Therefore, as from the likeness of things that happened of old to Israel you will learn clearly the power of the things accomplished in us through Christ.

But since it is necessary for us to provide from every source what tends to the benefit of the hearers, come, let us go another way, and speak, taking from the interpretation of the names. For Carmel is interpreted as knowledge of Circumcision, Bashan as shame, and Gilead as transference of the Covenant. And the argument has very much plausibility especially in these things. We shall be, therefore, with Christ as shepherd, in knowledge of circumcision, that is, the one understood in the Spirit. for we have been circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, and we bear the Jew who is one inwardly, while Israel according to the flesh has only the perceptible one and the one in letter, and not at all the one in the heart through the Spirit. For this is the true circumcision, making those who receive it known to God. Therefore the prophetic word also said to us: ”Be circumcised to God, and circumcise the hardness of your heart, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. We shall be, then, in Carmel, with Christ shepherding, that is, in knowledge of circumcision, and we shall be no less also in Bashan, that is, in shame and disgrace, not being convicted for sin, but because we have transgressed, for this very reason repenting, and finally coming to an awareness of the things sinned in ignorance; and this thing is a way of salvation.

For a clear proof of the utmost insensibility is for some to choose to live with a hard and shameless heart, and least of all to blush at their own faults; and to lie perhaps even in

ignorance of the things sinned. Therefore, those in the knowledge of the spiritual and divine circumcision will blush at their own faults, and having come into an awareness of that which is naturally unjust, they will by all means turn to that which is most fitting for them. And such people will be also in Gilead, that is, in a change of legislation, or rather, of a covenant. for we, having come under Christ, shall live as citizens, no longer according to the law, but we shall live rather evangelically, and running past the crudeness of the letter, we shall perform spiritual worship to God, and being transferred to what is incomparably better, we shall exchange the types for the truth. Nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might, they shall lay their hands on their mouth, their ears shall be deafened. They shall lick the dust like serpents dragging themselves on the ground, they shall be confounded in their confinement.

By nations in these words he means the abominable and unclean hordes of demons, who in every way and altogether, whenever they see those called in Christ to justification, to sanctification, to redemption, to adoption, into incorruption, into glory, into a relaxed and free life, then indeed then they will be put to shame, being thrust out from their dominion over them and seeing their own strength failing and growing weak. For our Lord Jesus Christ has given us ”to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Therefore they will lie under the feet of those who have believed, those who formerly conquered, having grown weak in their cowardice and being enervated through Christ. And they will put their hands on their mouths, no longer being permitted to accuse the sinners; ”For it is God who justifies, who is he who condemns? according to what is written. And the blessed David said somewhere that ”All iniquity shall stop its mouth. Therefore they will be silent, and not willingly, he says, those who are clever at accusations, and as if struck by thunder by the wonder concerning us, that is, they will be deafened.

For the report concerning us is extraordinary, and like a great and truly supernatural crash, if it is true ”That while we were still sinners, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly,” so that we who were formerly entangled in terrible and unbearable offenses, might now be sanctified, and ”Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but” by mercy and grace, we who were formerly grieved and as far as possible from all hope, now beloved, bright and conspicuous, ”heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Therefore, he says, they will be deafened, having become, so to speak, even thunderstruck because of God’s serenity toward us and the excess of his wondrous goodness, they will lick the dust, creeping on the ground like serpents, that is, they will not find food. For it is the custom of serpents, if they should be in want of things to eat, at times to knead the dust with their tongue, and to consider whatever they happen upon as food. And he says that the unclean demons will also be in equal want. For those accustomed to revel of old and to utterly devour all upon the earth, will no longer find one who endures to suffer this, because all have been saved by Christ, and have henceforth come to such spiritual strength, as not to endure those ancient bites, but rather to tread upon the asp and the basilisk, according to what is written.

Not only will they lick the earth, but they will also be confounded in their confinement, that is, being constrained by weaknesses and griefs, and as if besieged by the power of the one afflicting them, I mean, of Christ, they will not be in moderate terrors. And it is likely that the confinement hints at something else for us in these things. For when the Only-begotten became as we are, he worked countless wonders, but I suppose the things unseen were more numerous than the things seen. For he commanded the unclean spirits to go down to Hades, and to be shut up henceforth in the abyss, so that he might rid the earth of the bitterest beasts. And we have seen an image of this matter in the more ancient writings; for when Joshua son of Nun took the lands of the nations, he shut up five kings in a cave, and rolled a stone over its mouth, prefiguring, as I said, in himself the power of the Savior's dispensation. And indeed the demons "begged him not to command them to go into the abyss. Therefore, he says they will be confounded in their confinement, as if being shut up henceforth into Hades, and cast into Tartarus with chains of darkness, so that, as I said, he might henceforth deliver the human race from the bitter and savage beasts. They shall be amazed at the Lord our God, and shall be afraid of you. Who is a God like you?

taking away iniquities and passing over injustices for the remnant of his inheritance, and he did not keep his anger for a testimony, because he is a willer of mercy. he will turn again and have compassion on us, he will sink our injustices and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. He will give truth to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, as he swore to our fathers in the days of old. For the mystery of Christ is truly an ecstasy, and all- the superiority of the gentleness towards us is beyond the power of words for one who knows how to marvel. And indeed the divine Habakkuk, being astonished at the manner of the incarnation, cried out clearly, "O Lord, I have heard thy report, and was afraid; O Lord, I have considered thy works, and was amazed. For being in the form and in the equality of God the Father, the Only-begotten, and being rich as God, became poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might become rich; that he might save that which was lost, heal that which was sick, bind up that which was broken, give life to that which was corrupted, cleanse that which was defiled, release from judgment that which was condemned, declare blessed that which was cursed, and adorn with the honor of adoption that which was by nature a slave. Therefore let him hear from all, "Who is a God like unto thee? that is, good and forgiving, pardoning iniquities for the remnant of his inheritance;

and the remnant of his inheritance would be understood as those from Israel who believed, since the other multitude was destroyed because they did not believe. And Christ said somewhere, "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Son of God. He therefore leaps over sins and passes over iniquities and has not kept his anger for a testimony. The phrase "for a testimony" means "to the end," or "forever. For we were cast out in Adam, but we were received in Christ. And he cursed in the one, but blessed again in the other; "For as," he says, "by one man's offense many died," so also by the one man's righteous act shall the many live. He has therefore ceased from his anger, because he is a desirer of mercy; and in the time of the conversion of all, that is, of the incarnation, he will, as it

were, baptize the sins of all in the sea. And since to the holy fathers, I mean Abraham and Jacob, he promised to multiply their seed as the stars of heaven, he says he will give them the things promised. For they will be called fathers of many nations, their children being counted not only among those of the blood of Israel, but also among those of the promise.

And these are they of faith, also called the uncircumcision, being mixed, as it were, into spiritual unity with those of the law and circumcision. For it is written that ”They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: But, the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For as many as are ”of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. And the manner of the blessing would be understood as the grace which is in Christ, through whom and with whom, to God the Father be the glory with the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Commentary on the Prophet Nahum

Book 1

Each of the holy prophets was taken up at times for some useful and necessary matter to minister to the divine commands, and to convey the voices from above to men. And some, frightening the sinning Israel, announced the calamities that would befall them, and if they did not choose to do what was pleasing to God, they openly threatened that they would fall into terrible and inescapable evils; others, bringing into the open the very things that had happened, and grieving with those who had suffered, skillfully persuaded them to be willing to live more equitably, and thus finally to ward off the wrath; while others nourish the suffering Israel with good hope, and prepared them to be disposed to believe that, having fared miserably because of their own sins, they would prosper again when their affairs were restored to their original state, by the mercy and grace and power of God who easily reshapes all things to whatever he wishes. We shall find some such purpose now also in the treatise before us. For since the land of the Jews was captured, and were carried off as captives into the land of the Persians and Medes, those who by their outrageous apostasies had grieved God who always presides over and champions them and shows them to be superior to their adversaries, some, having already suffered this, continued to be held in the evils of captivity and to have an unbearable misery;

while others, who had barely managed to get out of the snares and escape the savagery of the Babylonians, were in unceasing terrors and in great suspicion, lest somehow they too should fall into the same or even worse evils, with the all-powerful God being wroth with them, not yet having let go of His indignation; and they came to such a point of fear as to be scattered in the lands of the neighboring nations, and to all but serve others, and these foreigners and idolaters. And this matter was not without penalty for them; for they learned to live by their customs, and among whomever each was found, to make their worship in the place of God. For this reason also the God of all, when Jerusalem had been burned at times by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, commanded those who had been saved not to go down to Egypt, but rather, having settled at home, to hold to their ancestral worship, with His help. So that, therefore, having the hope of returning in due time, those from Israel might not remain too disheartened, and that those who had become captives might rather reject

despair, and might always be intent on prayers, and choose to worship Him who is mighty to deliver and able to redeem; and that those dwelling in Judea might no longer mix with the lands of the nations; the Prophet receives the vision from God against Nineveh; this is the chief city of the Assyrians;

and he foretells that it will fall, with the whole country also being devastated with it, which indeed was also accomplished when Cyrus the son of Cambyses and Mandane armed the Persians and Medes and Elamites and certain other nations with them against Nineveh. For he took it by force, and released Israel from captivity, and commanded them to go home together with the sacred vessels. This, then, is our purpose for the present treatise; and we shall add the subsequent parts, as is possible, and in detail. The burden of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. First, he defines the purpose of the prophecy, and usefully clarifies what and where it looks to; then he makes clear who is speaking and from where. For he says "burden," that is, the prophecy that has been received and set forth and is at hand would be understood not about any others, but against Nineveh, or in other words, let the burden of the prophecy be understood as Nineveh. And the book is inscribed "The Vision of Nahum of Elkosh. This is doubtless a village somewhere in the land of the Jews. For we shall take 'of Elkosh' not as from a father, but rather as from a place. And we say this, having the tradition from the readings. God is jealous and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges with wrath; the Lord avenges his adversaries, and he cuts off his enemies.

The Lord is long-suffering and his strength is great, and he will by no means clear the guilty. The saying is profound, and not easy to grasp, except only for those who are willing to examine closely the things in it. And if it should be understood as having been directed to the Jews, we will find the exhortation suitably mixed with moderate rebuke. But if someone should think it was made and spoken against Nineveh, the mind will be turned to another of the interpretations, and to those who have suffered the devastation it gives and confirms the hopes of recovering again. We shall therefore make the purpose of the meaning for both as clear as possible. For the Jews, having spurned love for God, and holding the genuineness of piety toward Him in no account whatsoever, descended into polytheism and strange error and a life outside the law, and they built altars, they set up precincts to the works of their own hands, they brought rites and sacrifices to Astarte, to Chemosh, to Baal-peor, to the golden calves, and what is even more irrational than these, to them they dedicated songs of thanksgiving. For the wretched ones said out of their madness, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of E- gypt.

But by such terrible impious acts they have forgotten themselves, sharpening against themselves the God who of old presided over and saved them, to whom they have become enemies, and have been placed in the portion of adversaries, assigning themselves to gods that are not so by nature, although Moses long ago cried out concerning God, that He is a jealous God, and a consuming fire, and that He would not endure those who chose to grieve Him. For He proclaimed beforehand that, "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. And I will move them to jealousy

with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. Having therefore offended in many ways, they have also rightly perished. This is what the Prophet now says, practically rebuking and at the same time comforting the people of the Jews who are vexed at what has happened. For yes, he says, you are grieved, having suffered unexpectedly the desolation, driven out of homes and country and cities, although you were always conquering your opponents; but you have fallen under the feet of enemies. How then was it not necessary to understand before the experience, that God is a jealous God, and the Lord avenges with wrath, avenging His adversaries, and taking away His enemies?

But if we have been taken away, he says, and removed from the midst, and are under the hand of our foes, yet we have stood as enemies, we have impiously warred against the one who is all-powerful, and we have gone to everything whatsoever that is discordant to Him. But you will say, that the Master is long-suffering. Yes, I myself agree, for He is such by nature. Nevertheless, He will not acquit the guilty, that is, He will not completely free from charges and justice those who have offended Him, and this unceasingly and beyond measure. For He defers His wrath out of His innate gentleness, and sometimes bears with those who transgress, awaiting their repentance; but those who delay and long put it off, He finally punishes and subjects to penalties as those who have become hardened. Thus then our discourse will be and be understood as being so, if it looks towards the Jews; but if it should be brought against Nineveh, we will understand it differently. For the Assyrians took the country of the Jews, God granting the victory to them, because the people of Israel were held by very many transgressions. But they were savage and arrogant and had a completely boorish mind, and they did not at all cease from practically trampling upon the very glory of God with harsh and accursed words. For they thought that they had conquered even against His will, and along with the Jews had overcome the hand that defended them.

And so the Rabshakeh used blasphemous words, saying those things to those on the wall of Jerusalem which would befit only the impious foul mouths of those who do not know the God who is by nature and truly God. But he immediately paid the penalty for his arrogance. However, after capturing the cities in Samaria, the men with Shalmaneser, and also burning others in addition to these, boasted over the conquered, and acted insolently toward the divine glory. The Prophet therefore comforts the people of the Jews who are not moderately distressed, and that the God of all will in every way and entirely bring punishments upon those who warred against them, he teaches, saying, A jealous God and the Lord avenges with wrath, avenging His adversaries and He Himself taking away His enemies. The Lord is long-suffering and His strength is great. For He will somehow prevail, he says, having invincible power, and will overcome those who have caused grief. For even if He is long-suffering, and is seen for a time as forbearing, yet in the end He will not acquit; for He is jealous. And we will find the God of all Himself not moderately moved at what the people of Israel have suffered through the cruelty of the Babylonians. For He said through the voice of Jeremiah to the multitude or city of the Babylonians, ”I gave them into your hands, but you showed them no mercy.

And indeed also through the voice of Zechariah again He says thus "I have been jealous for "Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and with great "anger I am angry against the nations that join in the attack, "because I was a little angry, but they joined in "for evil. But the phrase 'a jealous God' and what follows, would fittingly apply also to those who are unwilling to go the gentle and God-loving path, but have rather turned aside to choose to live carnally. For that he will take vengeance, subjecting the unruly and sinful to punishments and penalties, how can one doubt, if it is true that "we must all appear "before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive "the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good "or bad. No less would the saying fittingly apply also to the teachers of the Jews, I mean the scribes and Pharisees, who, thrusting away faith in Christ, were found destroying both themselves and others. For they have thought hostile things, and have warred against the economy in the flesh of the Only-begotten, and they took the key of knowledge, as he himself says, and neither entered themselves, nor indeed allowed others to enter. Therefore, even if he is long-suffering, yet he will by no means clear those who have warred against the true faith. The Lord's way is in destruction and in shaking, and clouds are the dust of his feet.

As the Prophet is about to proclaim beforehand the capture of Nineveh for the comfort of those who have suffered, and to make clear to the wronged that it will be shaken down by God, he usefully recounts first the all-powerful nature of the divine, and that for it, when it chooses to accomplish anything whatsoever, there is nothing that resists, but rather everything follows easily, and what seems good to it will prevail, even if some earthly matter seems difficult for us and for those like us to accomplish. For the Jews thought that the Babylonians would be most difficult to capture, and possessed a hand so invincible, that not even if God wished it, could they be weak against their enemies. For I think the things dared by them cruelly and savagely throughout their whole country called them to this despair. Therefore, so that they might know that they will lie down without a struggle when the wrath of God rises up against them, and they will be captured, and very easily, he necessarily says, The Lord's way is in destruction and in shaking, and clouds are the dust of his feet. For if, he says, you should plan against some—for this is the way—it will surely run down upon them as in an earthquake. An earthquake and destruction are an invincible and altogether inescapable thing, and in addition to these, clouds flying like dust and covering the sky.

And the Prophet seems to be bringing them to the remembrance of the flood that happened against the whole race of men in the time of Noah, for then God went forth, as it were, in destruction and in an earthquake against all, raising up clouds and, as the sacred scripture says, opening the floodgates of heaven, and inundating the world under heaven with irresistible rains. He, therefore, he says, who easily prevailed against the whole earth, and with a single decree destroyed all who were in it, how could he be weak against one nation, the Babylonian? And very fittingly for God he says, Clouds are the dust of his feet. For as it is easy for a man to stir up soil and dust with his foot, in the same way, I think, it is easy also for the God who has power over all things to cover the sky with a storm and clouds. But

if it is fitting also to investigate the secret meaning of what has been set forth, I will think it necessary to say this, that we say the Only-begotten Word of God has made the way of the economy in the flesh, that is, its fulfillment, in destruction and in shaking. For since he became as we are, he has brought to an end and shaken "principalities and powers and the world-rulers of this age," driving out their advantage over us, and scaring away that ancient strength, having overthrown both the dominion of death itself and, in addition to this, sin.

And clouds have become the dust of his feet. For just as dust flies up before one who is walking, so of the economy in the flesh The intelligible clouds went before the Only-Begotten, that is, the blessed prophets, using a more obscure and not very manifest word, yet with life-giving proclamations watering the mind of those able to understand. Rebuking the sea and drying it up, and laying waste all the rivers. He composes the account of the narrative from what they knew and had experienced, setting it apart from things too ancient. For when the protecting God brought Israel out from the impiety of the Egyptians and their unbearable greed, he led them through the middle of the sea, and commanded them to walk as on dry land; "for the waters were solidified like a wall," according to what is written. Therefore, he rebuked the sea, and it was passable like dry land. But if someone should wish to connect the first things with these thoughts, I mean the phrase "The Lord, in consummation and in shaking is his way," he will think what is fitting in this way too. For the Lord of all but consummated and shook the land of the Egyptians through the signs that happened in it and the death of the firstborn; for they perished in one night, and all things, as he said, were filled with lamentation and wailing; he led Israel through the middle of the sea, with the cloud from heaven suspended over them.

The blessed David also said something like this. For he sings thus: "O God, when you went forth before your people, when you passed through the wilderness, the earth was shaken, and for the heavens dropped down. And by the earth being shaken, as I suppose, he means that of the Egyptians. But that a cloud also was hanging over, going before the sons of Israel, is unclear to no one, and the divine Paul will also confirm it, saying that all the fathers of Israel were baptized "in the cloud and in the sea. And the Prophet added to the drying up of the sea, also the laying waste of the rivers, recalling to memory another miracle. For when they were being brought into the land of promise, with Jesus presiding after Moses, then the Jordan stood again in its place, as the all-powerful God checked the flow of the streams with ineffable commands and bonds. And the blessed David esteems these things worthy of the greatest wonder, saying thus: "Come and see the works of God, how he is terrible in his counsels above the sons of men; who turns the sea into dry land, they shall go through the river on foot. For again they crossed the Jordan on foot. And if indeed he should say that all the rivers are dried up, he commands us to be disposed to the idea that what happened to one will also happen to all, if God so wills.

But to some it seems to apply to the sense of the preceding things in another way. For if the Master of all, he says, should choose to make a raid against Nineveh, he will do it indeed with consummation and shaking; for he will consummate it and shake it easily; and since

it is broad, and like a sea causing wars to surge against the other nations, he will dry it up without delay. And even if, he says, the nations from it should come up like torrents, they will in every way and altogether be laid waste. And we say that the sea and rivers that flood and drown are no less the wicked and opposing powers, and before all others, Satan. But Christ has dried up their whole power, and though it was once invincible, he has subjected it to the feet of those who worship him. Bashan and Carmel are diminished, and the flowering things of Lebanon have failed. The mountains were shaken by him, and the hills were moved, and the whole earth was removed from his presence, and all who dwell in it. And the discourse immediately comes through other proofs, testifying to the all-powerful and invincible authority of the divine nature. For Bashan is a flourishing and fertile land; and Carmel and Lebanon, the one a mountain of Phoenicia, the other of Judea, are both very well-wooded, and boast of abundant forests.

But all these things, I mean Bashan, and the country itself lying beside the mountains, terrible and most warlike races inhabited it, and sons of giants, as it is written. Yet they have been removed and conquered by the sons of Israel, with God as their champion, and they have inherited their land. It is therefore as if he said again: The regions once teeming with terrible and most mighty men, and as it were proud with many forests of warriors within them, are gone and have been plundered, having suffered the desolation of their inhabitants. For this, I think, is what it means to say they have become few. Then how would the renowned Nineveh not be captured with God's assent? And besides Bashan and Carmel, the blossoms of Lebanon also failed. Lebanon, then, as I said, is a mountain of Phoenicia, but by it he means the entire land lying under it and around it. By the blossoms of Lebanon, then, he means those who reigned from time to time in Damascus and Phoenicia, who have also been given into the hands of the sons of Israel; for they too were conquered at times, although having a very great force, puffed up with terrible and irresistible reinforcements. And going through the books of the kingdoms, we will find the kingdom of the Damascenes plundered at times, by those who reigned from the tribe of Judah.

Thus, the blossoms of Lebanon have failed, that is, the chosen ones of Phoenicia, or Lebanon, have been removed and have perished many times, that is, those who held power there. And why do I say these things, he says, when even very easily, if God wills it, the mountains themselves would be shaken and the hills will be moved, and the whole earth with its inhabitants will be destroyed, that is, it will pass into non-existence, and will be again as though it did not exist? For he who made it in the beginning will surely destroy it with ease, and great things are absolutely nothing to him. And the blessed David also seems to have understood and spoken in harmony with what is set before us: "What is it to you, O sea, that you fled? And you, O Jordan, that you turned back? The mountains, that you leaped like rams, and the hills like lambs of the flock? The earth was shaken at the presence of the Lord. For as he already said, "His way is in an earthquake. But that the whole earth is nothing, and the things in it would be considered of almost no account, if one were to measure the divine and ineffable glory, the prophet Isaiah will testify, saying, "If all the nations are as a drop from a bucket, and were considered as the turn of a scale, and will be reckoned as spittle;

and Lebanon is not sufficient for burning, and all the four-footed beasts are not sufficient for a whole burnt offering, and all the nations are as nothing, and were reckoned as nothing; to whom have you likened the Lord, and to what likeness have you likened him? But again, it seems right to others if these things were reckoned obliquely even of Nineveh itself. For they wish to compare it both to Bashan as an excellent and renowned country, and again to Carmel and Lebanon, as distinguished and most conspicuous mountains; and Nineveh was wonderful and distinguished. And he says it has become few, as it is about to be ravaged along with the blossoms in it, that is, the leaders and generals and the most illustrious of the other peoples. For since he made mention of mountains and of a very wooded country, I mean Bashan, he has maintained the figure of speech throughout the discourse; he called the richest and most flourishing those who were perhaps more distinguished by wealth, or preeminent in bodily strength, or in some other way raised above the others in superiority. But if one examines the audacious acts of the Jews against Christ, and the desolation brought upon them and their complete crushing and destruction, after he came back to life and ascended into heaven, one might reasonably apply these things to them as well. For Judea might reasonably be understood as Bashan and Carmel and indeed Lebanon;

and Bashan, since it has also been named a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of wheat and oil and vineyards; and Carmel and Lebanon because it was raised high in glory, and became conspicuous and prominent, and as it were with unending forests to rejoice for its inhabitants. But he says that it has been diminished; for they have been consumed by the hand of the Romans, and having encountered, so to speak, dreadful and most mighty woodcutters, they have fallen just like plants. And the blessed prophet Isaiah hints at something of this kind, speaking as if to Jerusalem: ”Open ”O Lebanon, your doors, and let fire devour your ”cedars. Howl, O pine, because the cedar has fallen, ”because the great ones have been greatly afflicted. Howl, you oaks ”of Bashan, because the dense forest has been torn down; and somewhere else he says more clearly: ”And the mourning ”of Jerusalem will be like the mourning for a pomegranate grove in a plain that is being cut ”down; for since he again compares Jerusalem to Lebanon, he said that the falling cedars and pines are the exalted men in it, and he calls them oaks of Bashan; but the figure of speech, as I said, is metaphorical. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can withstand the fierceness of his anger? His fury melts rulers, and the rocks are shattered by him.

He seals these words as truth for those who have experienced the divine wrath, saying that it is something bitter and hard to encounter. For I think that, falling upon them like fire, it would easily melt away principalities and powers, both earthly and spiritual, and it would effortlessly shatter even rocks, that is, those who have become hardened like rocks, and who have a relentless mind. And we shall find that such were the kings of the Assyrians, and indeed also the leader of the unclean spirits himself, Satan, about whom holy scripture says: ”His heart is hardened like a stone, and it stands like an anvil ”that cannot be hammered. But that the leaders of the Jews and those appointed among them to rule were also hard and obstinate and had become sick with the greatest insensibility, I mean the priests and the profane crowds of the unholy scribes and Pharisees, how is this not evident to all? They

were also consumed by the war from the Romans, melting like wax in incurable misfortunes, but being exceedingly hard, they were shattered by evils, and they paid the penalty for their drunken violence against Christ. And in another way our Lord Jesus Christ also crushed for our sake "Principalities and powers and the world rulers "of the darkness of this age, the spiritual forces "of wickedness," so that he might deliver us and save us. And knowing this, the blessed David sings in a psalm: "You are fearsome, and who "will withstand you from the time of your wrath?

From heaven "you made your judgment heard; the earth feared and was still, when "God arose to judgment, to save all the meek "of the earth. And he has given us "to tread upon snakes and scorpions, "and over all the power of the enemy. For he melted rulers, he shattered like rocks the arrogance of the unholy spirits. And as he was angry on our account and for our sake with those who had done wrong, it was necessary for them to give way, even unwillingly. The Lord is good to those who wait for him in the day of affliction, and he knows those who fear him. And in a flood of passage he will make an end; darkness will pursue those who rise up and his enemies. He admonishes usefully and very skillfully, neither cutting off the hope of prosperity, through which he said he would be good to those who wait for the Lord, nor yet permitting a dissolute and dissolute life; but rather leading one to good order and to choosing to live according to the law, by saying again that if he should make his way against some as in a flood, he will create something like a shock, and just as the rush of many and unbearable waters going down a steep place is something dreadful and altogether hard to escape, so if he should rush against certain people with things from divine wrath, he will utterly destroy all against whom he might go and be carried.

Indeed, he says that his enemies will be pursued and overtaken by darkness. And certainly not entirely by the darkness of night, but I think of another, a spiritual darkness, conceived as a way of suffering. For he knows how to darken the human mind, and relentless a misfortune and a bitter and unexpected suffering, which indeed happened to the ancients, being carried off into captivity, and their land being captured. Therefore God, likening such evils to wine and strong drink, said very well to the blessed Jeremiah "Take the cup "of this unmixed wine from my hand, and you shall make "all the nations drink to whom I send you, "and they shall drink and vomit, and be mad because of "the sword that I send among them; and indeed also through the voice of Isaiah to her "For you have drunk and drained the cup "of stumbling, the bowl of wrath. He says, therefore, that those who think hostile things toward God will be seized by drunkenness and darkness, very well frightening them toward choosing to think what it was better for them both to know and to do. And the God of all has also advanced against the Jews in a flood of marching, and has consumed them, exacting the penalties for what was done to Christ. And they have been in darkness, and being utterly deprived of the divine light, the wretched ones remain foolish and blind.

For they were not willing to follow Christ when He cried out "While you have the light, "walk in the light, that darkness may not overtake you. But since they were disobedient and unruly, for this reason then, as the prophet says "When they waited for light, there

was "darkness for them, and waiting for brightness, they walked in gloom. For they became enemies of the divine light, and unholily rose up against the glory of Christ. What do you devise against the Lord? He will make a full end; he will not take vengeance twice on the same thing in affliction. I have already said also at the beginning, that when Shalmaneser king of the Assyrians had sacked Samaria, and had also ravaged with it other cities and villages subject to the scepter of Judah, then those who were left from the war were in unbearable fears and fleeing to the lands of the neighboring nations; for they thought, as was likely, that they would fall into the same evils a second time when the Babylonians returned against them; God made the exhortation necessary through the voice of the Prophet, promising these two things: that He would have mercy in due time on those already taken by the war and in unbearable misfortunes, and would release them from the bonds of captivity, and that He would deliver Nineveh to desolation and destruction.

So that, therefore, expecting to fall into the same evils again, they might not now make their flight from Judea to foreigners an easy matter, He, so to speak, inquires, saying what it is they are devising and have resolved to think about the Lord; Do you think, he says, that the Master of all is harsh and grievously wrathful, so as to demand double penalties for the same offenses? But you are very much mistaken about what is fitting. For if you have added nothing of all that is outside the law and provokes the law's establisher to wrath, He would not still inflict a second blow. He has afflicted you sufficiently for the impieties in which you were already caught. Stop the sin, and He will check his wrath. He has chastened sufficiently; He will now have mercy on those who have chosen to be prudent. The discourse is therefore mixed, and has a blended exhortation. For at the same time it both persuades them to choose genuinely to do what is pleasing to God, and gives courage to those who have chosen to do this, that He will be good to them, not letting loose unbridled wrath upon them, as they themselves thought. But observe how the discourse has again preserved the remnant for Israel. For that God will not make a full end of them, he has clearly proclaimed beforehand, speaking as if in a question, What do you devise against the Lord? Will He Himself make a full end?

For he says He will not make a full end, nor, having shaken Israel from its very foundations, will He deliver it to utter destruction. But He will spare them for the sake of the fathers, and they will be saved in due time, entering after the gentiles through faith in Christ into sanctification and intimacy with God through the Son in the Spirit. For up to their foundations they will be laid waste, and as a bindweed intertwined, it will be devoured, and like a stalk full of dryness. From you shall come forth a thought against the Lord, plotting wicked things, contrary things. Having shown through many things that the ability to accomplish all things easily belongs to the God of all, and that nothing is at all impossible for him, he transfers the discourse now to Nineveh itself, and says that even if it should advance to such a point of splendor as to appear equal to the most wooded of mountains, I mean Lebanon and Carmel, boasting in its many and innumerable peoples; and even if it should lack nothing of Bashan, yet a time will come when it will be completely desolated. For I think this is what it means to be laid waste to its foundation, the discourse having maintained the

trope as of mountains and earth, of woods and timber. He says it will be devoured when the Persians and Medes are in a way distributed. For these took Nineveh, when Cyrus was commander.

And he compares the multitude of the Assyrians to bindweed, for they dwelt in Nineveh. And what could be the reason for such a thing again? For bindweed is an ivy-like plant, and it always creeps upwards and sends forth thin shoots, and it seizes upon the plants standing near, so that often even the tallest of trees are choked by it. And the Assyrians did this too, ever leaping upon countries and cities, and as it were choking and overwhelming them with the entanglements of wars and with unbearable tyrannies. And he said that it would be burned up, and like a stalk full of dryness. And the stalk is a thing most ready to be consumed by fire. And so, to Nineveh, as it were, being set on fire and suffering the things of wrath and being consumed, the Prophet then exclaims and clarifies the reason for suffering such things, saying, From you shall come forth a thought against the Lord, plotting wicked things, contrary things. You are destined for desolation, he says, and you will be like a wasteland, and indeed you will also be burned with fire, for you will devise dreadful and arrogant and contrary things against God. For the God of all, punishing a sinning Israel, made it vulnerable and brought it under your feet. But you will not be so disposed yourself, but you will think rather that you have taken Judea, and not with his consent.

For we shall find the Rabshakeh's superfluous speech to be of this sort, when he mocked the glory of God, saying to those sitting on the wall, "Let not Hezekiah deceive you with words that will not be able to deliver you; and let not Hezekiah say to you that God will deliver Jerusalem from my hand. To this truly most senseless and unholy loose-tongued speech, God answered through the voice of Isaiah, saying, "Shall the axe glorify itself without him who hews with it, or shall the saw be exalted without him who pulls it? For just as the axe, even if it were very sharp and of good bronze, would not be effective in cutting down trees, unless someone were to wield it with his own powers against something, and likewise the saw will accomplish nothing at all at its own task, with no one pulling it down or up; so also the power of the kingdom of the Ninevites, or rather of their army, would not have conquered Samaria, had not divine wrath brought it against its cities and villages, and used it as a tool, which is moved by another and is useful when taken for service, but would do nothing by itself. Nineveh is therefore punished for devising wicked things against God and contrary things rather than what the nature of the matter truly held. For the God of all handed over a sinning Israel, and she did not rather take it while God was defending and still wishing to save them.

Thus says the Lord, who commands many waters: And so shall they be scattered, and your report shall no longer be heard. The discourse, then, is to the arrogant and God-fighting Nineveh. And he says that waters in this context are the innumerable multitudes throughout countries and cities and nations, poured out easily like rivers or the sea, of whomever God should choose. For he himself is their commander, as Creator, as Lord and God of all,

as one who steers by his own commands the things that have come to be by him, and who changes the inclination of all hearts toward what seems good to him, thus distinguishing and shaping in whatever way he himself might wish. For this reason he says, O Nineveh, you will finally cease from being terrible, all-powerful and famous. For the report of you will no longer be heard, that is, there will no longer be much talk about you among all people. For long ago you were splendid, and on the tongues of all were great stories about you; but now no longer, but they will sound a mournful song over you. There will be nothing great and worth hearing about you any more. And now I will break his rod from off you, and I will burst your bonds, and the Lord will give command concerning you. Again the word of the Prophet has shifted to Israel.

It is as if he were to say, Having put away the memory of those former transgressions, I will finally have mercy, as one who has paid the penalty; as one sufficiently punished I will release you from their greed, and you will in no way be subject to the rod of the Assyrians, that is, to their scepter or their kingdom; for the scepter is a symbol of kingship; and I will release you from the bonds of fears and slavery, and I will bring you again into the good day of freedom. As for the phrase, The Lord will give command concerning you, you will understand it thus. For to whom does he give command? Is it to good spirits and the armies of angels, which have been appointed by God to watch over Israel? Or rather, he gives command perhaps to the very one who at the appointed time released them from captivity; and this was Cyrus, the son of Cambyses; and he gives command not at all as speaking to a holy man and a prophet, but by putting his own will into his mind, and making him a minister of what seems good to him, although he was profane and an idolater. For just as he commanded the sea monster to swallow Jonah, and again the gourd to spring up over his head and to shade him, and indeed also the morning worm to strike the gourd; so we say he also gave command to Cyrus. And this is the historical sense;

but God the Father might also proclaim to Jerusalem, which had become the killer of the Lord, that is, to the land of the Jews ”That it shall be laid waste to its foundations, ”and like intertwined bindweed it shall be devoured, and like a ”stalk full of dryness. Out of you will come a calculation ”against the Lord, plotting evil things in opposition. For it has been burned and laid waste, and like a dry stalk it has been consumed. For they dared to devise evil things against the Lord, and indeed to use an unbridled tongue; for at one time they called him a Samaritan and wine-sodden and born of fornication; and at another time they even said that ”he is misleading the crowd,” although for this very reason he was sent by God the Father, that he might deliver from wandering what was wandering and bring to God what had leaped away from him, and that he might bring through faith what had in many ways slipped into apostasy, and that he might enlighten what was in darkness, and bind up what was broken. But since he did not utterly destroy Israel, but, as I have already said many times, the remnant was preserved for him; for not a few even from the Jews have believed, and mingled with the Gentiles they glorify Christ; let those of the circumcision according to the flesh hear that I will break his rod from off you and I will burst your bonds and the Lord will give command concerning you.

But what rod, he says, or what bonds at all, how is it not necessary to say? For they were subject as to a kind of scepter, being weighed down by the folly and savageness of the scribes and Pharisees, and being held, so to speak, in bonds by their commandments, they did not accept the faith. But the rod, that is, the rule, has been taken away, and the bonds have been burst, and finally with a free mind they have run to Christ, so to speak, headlong, calling out to one another, and saying that which is from the psalmist's lyre: "Let us break their bonds, and cast away their yoke from us. And besides those, let the gentiles no less hear, And now I will break his rod from you and your bonds I will break apart and the Lord will give command concerning you. For of old, yoked under the scepters of the devil, and bound tight with the chains of worldly pleasures, they used to worship "the creation rather than the creator; they did not know God who is so by nature and in truth, and differing little from irrational beasts, they were enslaved to the pleasures of the flesh, living a pitiful and most irrational life.

But they too have been set free, since Christ shattered that ancient rod and tore apart the bonds, and drew them out of sin, and transferred them from error to the knowledge of God, and justified them by faith, and henceforth gave command concerning them, clearly to the holy angels. For it is written that "He who dwells in the help of the Most High will lodge in the shelter of the God of heaven. For He will command the holy angels to guard us in all our ways and to take us up in their hands, lest we strike our foot against a stone. And it is true that "The angel of the Lord will encamp around those who fear him, and will deliver them. No more shall your name be sown. This is like saying again: You will no longer be scattered among all the nations, or taken captive by the spear and a wanderer and far from the land that bore you, enduring very harsh servitude in the cities of enemies, pitifully and wretchedly and miserably scattered. But it should be noted that the Prophet Nahum was before the second captivity in Babylon, and after these words of the Prophet, Judah was captured and went into captivity and served the Assyrians.

For while Hezekiah was reigning in Jerusalem, Sennacherib campaigned against Samaria, and after plundering the cities in it, and burning others besides, he sent Rabshakeh from Lachish, who let loose his boorish tongue against God, and then by the hand of an angel one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the army of the Assyrians fell; but after the reign of Hezekiah, when no little time had passed in between, when Zedekiah, who was the son of Josiah, was reigning, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, having first plundered all of Judea, and then having taken the holy city by force, and having burned that famous temple, he deported Judah and added them to those who had been carried away from Samaria by Sennacherib. Does, then, the God of all falsify the promise, saying through the Prophet to those of the blood of Israel, 'No more shall your name be sown?' Then how is it not ignorant, but rather would reach the limit of all evil, to think God speaks falsely? For the divine is in no way prone to error in speech, far from it; but it will prove true in this way. For having first recalled the release which happened in due time, when Cyrus the Persian had destroyed the empire, he then says that after this Israel would no longer be a wanderer and an exile. For having been recalled to their own lands and having returned to Judea, they dwelt securely.

And wars were indeed stirred up against them by Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes, and by certain others after him;

however, they did not depart into captivity; but, as I said, they have dwelt securely in the land that bore them. Thus, then, 'No more shall your name be sown' might be understood concerning Israel according to the flesh; but the spiritual Israel will also hear it, and very fittingly, that is, those who with the eyes of the mind see God and are amazed at the glory of the Only-begotten: 'No more shall your name be sown.' For before faith they were under the hands of enemies, having yoked the neck of their mind to Satan and the wicked powers with him, and having been bound in the evils of the love of the flesh. But henceforth the oppression of those who formerly held sway has been removed, sin has been shaken off and has fallen along with them, the power of the passions has been taken away. For Christ has set us free, He has gathered us through faith into holiness, although we were scattered in many ways into manifold and fleeting passions, and into immeasurable polytheism. But we will no longer be scattered, but we will remain in every way in Christ, having one faith, one baptism, and one Lord, Savior and Redeemer, and through him we are bound to God the Father in spiritual unity. From the house of your God I will destroy the carved images, and I will make the molten images your grave.

Israel had stumbled not moderately, having inclined to apostasy, and having unholily departed from the God who saved them, but adhering to the worship of idols, for this reason also, having become captive, he has gone to his enemies, and was thus carried away to Nineveh. And those who were left behind in Jerusalem were no less indifferent towards the love of God, and insecure in reverence, and rejecting what is pleasing to God, and shaking off the yoke of slavery under him; but still sacrificing to Baal and to Astarte and to the host of heaven. But since threats came through the holy prophets, with God saying clearly that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and that its inhabitants would go captive along with the others in every way and altogether into the hands of foreigners, some of those who had reigned in it sobered up at times, and tore down the sacred precincts, overturned altars, and consumed the carved images with fire. But Josiah especially excelled among the others in these things, about whom the man of God also spoke to Jeroboam son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, while he was once sacrificing. For he was standing to offer sacrifices to the golden calves; but he says to the altar by the word of the Lord, "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 sacrifice upon you, and he will burn the bones of men upon you. But that what was promised has come to pass, the sacred scripture has clearly testified. And it is written thus in the fourth book of Kings concerning Josiah: "And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the threshold to bring out from the house of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal and for the grove and for all the host of heaven, and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and he took their ashes to Bethel, and he deposed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained, and they burned incense in the high places and in

the cities of Judah and in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal and to the grove and to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord outside Jerusalem to the brook of Kidron, and he burned them in the brook of Kidron, and ground them to dust, and cast their dust on the grave of the sons of the people.

Do you understand then, how the molten images were in a way made a grave, and the carved images were destroyed from the house of the Lord? And another scripture will confirm the word on this. For it said thus in the second book of Chronicles, "In the eighth year of his reign," clearly that of Josiah, "while he was still a boy, he began to seek the Lord, the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year of his reign he began to cleanse Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves and from the molten images, and they tore down in his presence the altars of the Baals, and the high places that were on them, and he cut down the groves and the carved images, and he broke in pieces the molten images and ground them to powder and scattered it on the face of the tombs of those who had sacrificed to them; and he burned the bones of priests on the altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. Therefore they were destroyed in their very precincts, as I said, and altars, and they were all but buried together with the molten images, according to the word of the Prophet. And it should be known that Nahum prophesied during the times of Hezekiah. Then from Hezekiah was born Manasseh, who reigned for fifty-five years;

and the son of Manasseh Amos, who lived for barely two years, and after him Josiah, in whose time the things of the prophecy were fulfilled, as the discourse has just shown us. For behold, swift upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news and proclaims peace. The sons of Israel, having become captives, were indeed living in Babylon, yet they were in hopes of being brought back again in due time, and would return before long to their noble lineage from above and from their fathers, as this had been promised by the holy prophets as if God were speaking. And the time of their hope was the reign of Cyrus, who was about to take Nineveh by force, and this again Isaiah had proclaimed to them beforehand. For he said, "Thus says the Lord God to my anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, that nations might hearken before him, and I will break the strength of kings, I will open doors before him, and cities shall not be shut. I will go before you, and I will level mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze, and I will shatter the bars of iron. And after other things, again, "This man shall build the city of Jerusalem, and he shall bring back the captivity of my people, not with ransom nor with gifts, said the Lord of hosts.

Therefore, he says, a messenger of peace will come to those of Israel, signifying the expedition of Cyrus, when they also shook off the yoke of captivity, and broke the rod of their rulers, and having broken the bonds of their unaccustomed servitude, they returned home again and were saved. But if someone should choose to apply the meaning of the preceding words to the proclamations of the holy Baptist, he too would rightly take this course. For he spent his time in the desert, and as if crying out in the mountains he proclaimed the

good news of peace, that is, Christ. Beautiful, therefore, and swift are the feet of him who says, ”Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. Celebrate your feasts, O Judah, pay your vows, because they shall no longer continue to pass through into ruin. Since the law had commanded that one must not sacrifice outside the holy and divine court, but ”in the place which the Lord your God shall choose for his name to be called upon it,” the people of Israel, being in a foreign land and inhabiting the country of the Persians and Medes, were in every way, I suppose, inactive and inert concerning their established customs, not fulfilling their customary feasts, not offering sacrifices, nor first-fruits, nor thank-offerings according to the law, not slaughtering the lamb in the new month; perhaps even hesitating at mere doxologies. And we say this from the inspired David, as speaking in the person of the people in Babylon:

”By the river of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hung our instruments. And in addition to these things, also, ”How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? For, as I said, since they were outside the holy land, outside the temple and tabernacle, and not having the sacred place, it was necessary for them to be inactive regarding the things of the law. But since the time for release was then revealed, someone fittingly proclaims to them, either the messenger of peace, whose feet are swift, or the Prophet himself, that it is possible for them to fulfill feasts, to kindle songs of thanksgiving, and to carry out very well the things in their vows, that is, their promises. And he also promises the imminent destruction of their enemies. For they shall not, he says, continue to pass through into ruin, that is, they will not remain for long times, nor indeed will they have a prosperity that grows old, that is, unending. For it will cease and come to an end, being curtailed. But let the spiritual Judah also hear such voices more fittingly. ”For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men but from God.

Such a one, therefore, will celebrate splendidly, having his faith firmly fixed, clearly that which is in Christ, sanctified by the Spirit, and by the shining with the grace of adoption. He will offer spiritual sacrifices to God, dedicating himself as a fragrant aroma, and practicing every kind of virtue: prudence, self-control, courage, patience, love, hope, love for the poor, kindness, long-suffering; ”For with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Let the spiritual Judah know, however, concerning every enemy and those who formerly prevailed, that they will no longer pass into old age, that is, they will be removed from the midst, being sent, clearly, to punishment. This Christ has fulfilled, commanding the unclean spirits to depart into the abyss, and giving to those who love him [the power] to rise up against their enemies, and to act manfully against passions and to overcome sin and ”to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. It is finished, it is taken away; he has come up breathing into your face, delivering from affliction. As it was already fixed, and in every way and altogether about to happen that Nineveh must be destroyed, he says that it is finished, indicating by this its coming to an end, as it were. And indeed also that it is taken away, that is, that it has been cut off completely and utterly destroyed.

And very well indeed he says "he has come up" concerning Cyrus, signifying something emphatic, I think, such as the prophet Jeremiah also said about him, foretelling what would happen in due time to Nineveh: "A lion has come up from his den, a destroyer of nations has set out, and has gone forth from his place, to make your land a desolation, and your cities shall be laid waste, so that none shall dwell in them. For like a wild beast leaping upon Nineveh, he devoured those in it. But to them he was a terrible and relentless enemy, and became unyielding in his wrath, but to those of Israel he was breathing into their face and delivering from affliction, that is, releasing them from their unusual servitude, loosing their bonds, recovering them as captives, by sending them home, and also commanding that the divine temple be rebuilt for them. But he says "breathing into the face" as from a Jewish tradition and custom. We will find mention of such things at times in the divinely inspired scriptures, such as the Jews thinking it necessary to tear their garments at blasphemies against God. And so Caiaphas, when Christ said he was the Son of God, tore his robe, crying out and saying, "He has blasphemed. And the divine disciples Paul and Barnabas also did this. For they were in Lycaonia.

And when they had freed one of the sick from his suffering, and the thing was marvelous to those who saw it, the spectators of the divine sign wanted to sacrifice to them. For they said, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men! They called Barnabas Zeus, and Paul Hermes, because," it says, "he was the chief speaker. But since what was being done was a kind of blasphemy, they tore their own garments, still following Jewish traditions and unwritten customs. But the custom has been disparaged, as not being from the law, and completely useless. And so the God of all said to the Jews who were fashioning such things and straying far from true piety: "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and with weeping and with mourning, and rend your hearts, and not your garments. Just as, therefore, it was a custom for some to tear their garment when someone had blasphemed, so also was the practice of breathing into the face of the sick in some way or another. Those who were accustomed to exorcise and with curious incantations, pretending to release the weary from spirits and pains, did this especially, and quite strangely. He takes, therefore, the example from their custom, and says, "He has come up breathing into your face"; that is, Cyrus; "and delivering you from affliction. For some pretended to be able to accomplish this, as I said, by breathing on others.

But it is wise and true to say that both that of the devil and that against us the power of sin which tyrannized has been curtailed, and death has been captured as it were, and corruption has been entirely removed. For Christ has risen from Hades and lived again, who breathes on the face of the holy apostles and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit. For in this way we have been delivered from all evil, and having become partakers of the Holy Spirit, we are being restored to the ancient beauty of our nature, and are being mentally re-stamped into the first image. For our Lord Jesus Christ is being formed in us through the Spirit. Watch the road, brace your loins, be exceedingly courageous in your strength, because the Lord has turned away the insolence of Jacob, as the insolence of Israel. To those about to go very soon into Judea, and intending to go home, he necessarily adds that it is needful for

the future both to watch the road and brace their loins, that is to be ready and prepared for the toils of the journey, and to be courageous against all hesitation, and to be seen to love being superior to long distances, using invincible eagerness for this. A sign of readiness is to have one's loins, as it were, well-ordered and girded. And indeed our Lord Jesus Christ says to the holy apostles, or rather to all who believe in him, "Let your loins be girded.

For the posture is that of a traveler, and is most especially fitting for those who preach the divine gospel, and have their feet most ready for this. Therefore, he says, brace your loins, instead of, be prepared and, as it were, ready for a journey. For the Lord has turned away, he says, the insolence of Jacob as the insolence of Israel. Observe again in these words the distinction that is necessarily introduced. For by Jacob he means those who dwelt in Samaria, that is the ten tribes, over whom reigned those from the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh, who came from Joseph, who was from Jacob; but by Israel he names those in Jerusalem, I mean Judah and Benjamin. And since, when Sennacherib had sacked Samaria, Jerusalem was not captured, as God at that time defended it and destroyed the Assyrian by the hand of an angel; and Cyrus released not only the captives from Samaria who had been carried away to Nineveh, but also those from Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar had captured the land; the Prophet necessarily says that the Lord turned away the insolence of Jacob as the insolence of Israel. And by insolence he means slavery or servitude. And that God will release all, not defending some while allowing others to languish in their toils, he teaches by saying thus: He turned away the insolence of Jacob as that of Israel is also turned away. For all, as we said, ran back to Judea, having escaped the harm of captivity.

But I say that it is necessary, and very rightly so, for those who have been redeemed in Christ to no longer wish to live uncircumspectly; but rather to survey the road of the way of life that pleases God and to go on the good path and brace their loins, that is, to be seen to be superior to the belly and love of pleasure, "and to make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires," and to be courageous against passions and all hesitation; for in this way they will come to the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, and there they will offer spiritual sacrifices to God, and having shaken off the yoke of their former slavery, they will live a glorious and free life, delivered from all worthlessness. Because emptying they have emptied them out and their branches. They destroyed the weapons of their power from among men, mighty men mocking in fire. The reins of their chariots on the day of his preparation, and the horsemen shall be thrown into confusion in the ways, and the chariots shall be thrown into confusion and shall clash together in the broad ways; their appearance is like torches of fire and like lightnings running to and fro. As the God who knows all things sounded in the holy prophets the things that would be at various times, they necessarily announced them according to what seemed good to him. And many times they occurred even in the very with visions of things.

Therefore they were astonished, and seeing them all but fulfilled, they made their pronouncements about them; something of which sort the Prophet now seems to have experienced concerning the inhabitants of Nineveh, and those who shielded themselves with

Cyrus, that they both shook them off and their branches. But the account is made as from what is accustomed to happen to vines. For the cluster is shaken off and spits out the grapes, either when a most violent wind attacks, or when a scorching heat burns it, or when any other harm befalls it, so that the branch itself appears with the fruits, stripped even of its blossom. So then they shook them off like vines. And their weapons have been destroyed, that is, their power; for 'weapons' sometimes signifies power. But he says that being terrible horsemen, and knowing the battles from chariots, they were in such unbearable terrors, that they were turned to flight, and entangled with one another, and were shattered dashing against each other, and he thought he so gazed upon the phalanxes of the enemy, that they yielded in no way to torches, or even like lightning consumed them, darting with a swift and unrestrained course. And their nobles shall be mindful, and they shall flee by day and shall be feeble in their going, and they shall hasten to the walls, and shall prepare their defenses.

When the war weighs heavily upon even the most powerful of them along with the others, he says, they will receive into their mind what they did when they took Judea, that is, the outrageous things they have said, uttering reviling words, and, as it were, slinging down the glory of God with their own unbridled mouths, the wretches. Then, being brought to the remembrance of these things, they will know at last that they have God as their enemy, who is putting them under the feet of those who war against them, although they were formerly exceedingly terrible, and had practiced making their attack completely irresistible against whomever they went. But if indeed they should turn to flight, finding the matter difficult to escape, and having grown weak in their journeys, they will betake themselves to other counsels. For they will take care of the walls, and will place guards upon them. And by these things he shows that they are at a loss in every way, and do not know at all what it is fitting to do, because their mind has been darkened, and all but drunk as with wine on the unmixed calamities, they lament the failure of their salvation and are scattered everywhere, changing easily from these things to those, and from those to others, and having unprofitable labor in all these things. But if he also says, 'And they shall flee by day,' I think it means this.

For being terrible, as I said, hard to conquer and harsh, they will have sunk at last to such cowardice as to choose to flee openly, and to do this now without concealment, although formerly they refused it and were accused of it only by bare suspicions. But the wicked powers also have been defeated by the majesty of Christ, and being unable to act against his divine commands—on our behalf, that is—they were broken by terrors and have truly fled, no longer being saved by any security. For when God brings on punishments, who could escape? Or what manner of thing will deliver those who have offended? The gates of the cities have been opened, and the palaces have fallen, and the substance has been revealed. And she went up, and her handmaids were led away as doves, moaning in their hearts. The nobles, therefore, he says, finding flight impossible, will hasten to the walls, and will prepare their defenses. But their plan will be unprofitable for them, as God opens the gates of the cities to their adversaries, and delivers up the palaces, that is, the houses of

the kings, revealing the things hidden in them, and setting forth their substance for plunder. And he calls 'substance' the wealth clearly gathered from plunder and greed against others.

Then again, as being in contemplation of what will happen, being dragged now looks toward captivity, both the ruling city, I mean Nineveh, and those under it and around it, which he also calls handmaidens, because they were yoked and subject, perhaps, and served it. And he says they speak as doves in their hearts, that is, not openly but secretly. For it is the custom of the bird to cry out in its heart something heavy and grievous. Indeed, for those who have fallen into the hands of enemies, and are then being dragged off into captivity, it is not at all unlikely that something of this sort happens. For they lament their own misfortune, almost suppressing their lamentations within themselves, since at times it is not even free for them to weep. And Nineveh is like a pool of water, her waters, and they themselves fleeing did not stand, and there was no one who looked upon them. They plundered the silver, they plundered the gold, and there was no end to her adornment; they have become heavier than all her desirable vessels. He compares Nineveh to a pool both filled and poured out, because of the very great multitude inhabiting it, and the countless tribes of nations flowing in to assist.

And he is astounded, as it were, or rather, he scoffs, as it were, at those who flee, that though they were very many and beyond number, they departed in cowardice, although long ago with their populous hand they had been confident in every war, and raised a high brow over themselves. But it was the God of all who was loading down their mind with cowardice and bringing it to baseness, and paralyzing their fighting spirit. For it is true that "A king is not saved by a great "force, and a giant will not be saved by the greatness of his "strength; but rather the Lord of all saves whomever He might choose, and very easily. Then what does the Prophet say? they plundered the silver and they plundered the gold; and these things were their substance; And there was no end to their adornment, and in this he seems to also name the Indian stones, with which he says she was especially weighed down, although she was also disheartened by other vessels. For it was the custom of the Assyrians, that is, the Ninevites, to make a great and zealous collection of stones, and to adorn themselves like girls, so that even in battles themselves they strove for the splendor of adornment and were seen decked with flowers.

But the Prophet speaks very concisely in these matters, according to a plan, and at one time he depicts in his account them falling, at another time entangled with one another, and at a loss for flight, and having their guards to no avail, and at another time even plundered, cutting short the sorrows of those in captivity, and artfully charming them with the prediction of such things, and leading them to cheerfulness with the sweetest narratives. ΔAnd satan has also been plundered, first through the Savior Christ, then after him through the holy Apostles, concerning whom the prophet Jeremiah also said somewhere, "Because suddenly those "who bite him will arise, and your plotters will awaken, "and you will be plunder for them. And Christ has also introduced the narrative as in the form of a parable in the evangelical preachings, for he said, "Or how can one enter "the house of the strong man and

plunder his goods, ”unless he first binds the strong man, and then plunders his ”goods? For those who worship satan, his choice and precious vessels, have run to the faith, as the Savior of us all, Christ, transfers them to the worship of God, and as the holy Apostles themselves persuade them to walk in this way. A shaking out and a shaking up and a boiling over and a breaking of heart and a loosening of knees and pains upon every loin, and the face of all as the scorching of a pot. He says every kind of crushing will be crushed.

For what else could being shaken out and shaken up and indeed boiled over signify to us, but this? For what is shaken and shaken up is scattered everywhere. And he says a breaking of heart will follow, God clearly crushing them into cowardice, and a loosening of knees, that is, weakness and paralysis of bodies, and upon these things, pains, clearly those from unpleasantness; for how were they not going to be in such evils, who had been brought down to everything that is accustomed to grieve God? And in addition to these things he affirms, And the face of all as the blackness of a pot. For the faces of those in despondency are always darkened, and the assault of terrors terribly takes away the brightness of their eyes. And speaking the truth, we say that such things happened both to Satan himself, who tyrannized over us, and to the evil powers with him. For since they were being cast out from that ancient honor and glory, how was it not likely that they would suffer such things in every way and altogether? Where is the dwelling place of the lions, and the pasture that was for the cubs? Where the lion went to enter there; a lion’s cub, and there was no one to frighten him? The lion seized enough for his cubs and strangled for his lionesses, and he filled his den with prey and his dwelling place with plunder. He calls Nineveh the dwelling place of lions.

for in it have dwelt, and made for themselves a splendid and admirable habitation and a secure palace, those who reigned over it at various times: Pul and Shalmaneser and Sennacherib and indeed also Nebuchadnezzar; for these have warred against Judea. But the ”Where is it” is not, I think, of one asking a question; for I think one must reject the simple-minded view; but rather of one mocking, and showing through this that it has been utterly destroyed, so that it is no longer even seen where it once was. for it has been finished and taken away, as he himself says. where then, indeed, he says, is the dwelling place of the lions, that is, Nineveh? And where is the pasture of the cubs? And cubs, as I think, he calls those acting and placed under the greatest king, and holding an honorable position with him in glory, I mean satraps and generals; and their pasture he calls those under their hand and subject to them, and paying tribute and making a collection of money; ”For the poor are the pastures of the rich,” according to what is written. Since, therefore, Nineveh has been completely taken away, and all the surrounding country, where then, he says, is the lodging of the lions? And where is the pasture of the cubs?

But that Nineveh had become, as it were, a secure base of operations for the kings of various times, he has shown by saying, Where the lion went to enter there, a lion’s cub, and there was no one to frighten him. For the wall of the city was impregnable, having been very well made with works of magnitude beyond description. But since Nebuchadnezzar, having

ravaged all Samaria, and Judea itself, and the holy city, I mean Jerusalem, carried away those of the blood of Israel to his own land, and so disposed of those once captured under his authority, as to make some his own and hold them in bonds, and to give others to others and sell them, and to have his own country and city full of captives. For this reason he says that, The lion seized enough for his cubs and strangled for his lionesses and filled his den with prey and his dwelling place with plunder. And again the word is formed as from what naturally happens. For beasts, simply seizing what falls in their way, then having eaten enough, with the remainder they nourish their cubs, lending their own labors to them. And such things might be said again also of Satan himself, Christ having destroyed both him and his things, and having taken away his prey from the earth. For he broke the molars of the lions, according to the voice of the psalmist, "The Lord has shattered the molars of the lions.

Behold, I am against you, says the Lord Almighty, and I will burn up your multitude in smoke, and the sword will devour your lions, and I will destroy your prey from the earth, and your deeds shall no longer be heard. God Himself opposes them, and rises up as the agent, turning them to despair of their salvation. For when God wills to do harm, who is there still to save? Or who will turn away the one who wills to ravage the Lord of hosts? "For who shall turn back his mighty hand? according to what is written. He says indeed that he will burn up her multitude in smoke, so that we may again understand something of this sort. Beekeepers from time to time, when they wish to dig out the honeycombs from the hives, light a fire and drive away the bees with smoke, so that they may not fight and wound them with their stings, flying around them in a swarm. Something like this has also happened to those summoned to aid Nineveh in its danger. For they departed and fled as the smoke of war fell upon them, terrifying them into cowardice and casting them into unbearable fears. Indeed, he calls lions the most valiant and bold, who perhaps even took courage in their resistance; nevertheless, they have become the work of the sword of Cyrus.

Since the discourse has brought to our minds the memory of lions, it necessarily says that their prey will also be utterly destroyed, so that nothing among them worth hearing of will any longer exist. For it was their habit to attack cities and countries, and to leap upon them beast-like, on whomsoever they might happen to choose, and to do countless things, so that the misfortunes of the sufferers became a song and a lament for many. Therefore, he says that their prey will be utterly destroyed. For how or whom were they going to hunt any longer, when the common folk were terrified and had fled as from smoke, and the most warlike had fallen, who like lions attacked those who resisted them? And the God of all has been roused against the Jews who killed the Lord, so that the multitude of the common folk was scattered to every wind, and those more distinguished than others, like savage beasts, were destroyed along with the many. For they have acted impiously in an intolerable way against the Savior of all, Christ. Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and injustice. He has called it a city of blood; for those who had reigned in Nineveh were most ready for murder and exceedingly bloodthirsty; and those in it were otherwise warlike, and always eager to

make their attacks untamable against whomever they might go. And he says ”full of lies,” because it was also full of idols, in which falsehood is especially not unproven.

For they are falsely named, and the handmade gods steal the glory of divinity, ”Silver and gold, according to what is written, the works of men’s hands. And the wise Jeremiah somewhere also called it a land of graven images. But ”full of lies” might also be understood in another way, with falsehood being understood as villainy and guile and deceit hateful to God, with injustice clearly running alongside. For where there is deceit and guile, there injustice will surely follow. And a city of blood, full of lies and injustice, is also Jerusalem, which killed the Lord. For we remember Christ saying, ”O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. And he said somewhere through the voice of the prophets, ”Woe to them, because they have departed from me; they are miserable, because they have acted impiously against me; I redeemed them, but they have spoken lies against me. For they have spoken against the glory of Christ, at one time saying that he casts out demons by Beelzebul; at another time calling him a winebibber, and in addition to this, a Samaritan, and things much more shameful. For it would be fitting for their foul mouths alone to babble those things which they have dared to say. The prey shall not be handled.

The sound of whips and the sound of the rattling of wheels, and of a pursuing horse and of a jolting chariot, and of a horseman mounting, and of a gleaming sword and of flashing weapons, and a multitude of slain and a heavy fall; and there was no end to her nations, and they shall be weak in their bodies from the multitude of fornication. The discourse is again made from what naturally happens. For fowlers, covering the leafy bushes densely with nets, often seize those hidden beneath them by touching them with their hands. And this is a skill of theirs. Therefore, he says, the prey will no longer be handled by them, that is, they could no longer hunt as they did before some, that is, those who plunder the things of others for themselves, would not become a snare and a noose for the weaker, since another care has come upon them, and the struggle for the ultimate things is imminent. For there will be in it the sound of whips. And again the Prophet seems to me to be clearly describing the turmoil from the war, as if it were set before his eyes. For he sees the city as if it were resounding with horses, and being battered by the wheels of chariots, and those who ravage it flashing in brilliant armor, and the slain being beyond number, and the houses in it shaken down; for he also mentions a heavy fall.

But he is astonished that while the multitude of the nations gathered in it is very great, they are all unmanly and strangely afflicted with cowardice, and far too prone to timidity. And he immediately gives the reason, saying that they will be weak in their bodies from the abundance of fornication. For since they have become base and wicked in their ways, and moreover idolaters, and have turned aside to error in an extraordinary way, for this reason they will justly be weak and terrified, not even enduring so much as to speak or even just to think of resistance. A beautiful and graceful harlot, a mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotry and tribes through her sorceries. Praise for shameful things

is an intensification of the accusations, as for instance if someone should choose to say about one of his associates, that he is a skillful thief and a brave robber and an ingenious sorcerer. Therefore, even if it were said of Nineveh, "A beautiful and graceful harlot," the matter will not be for her praise—far from it—but rather will make the condemnation more severe. For courtesan women then especially seem to practice much grace, when they appear to be both talkative and elegant in speech. Such also was Nineveh, skilled in evildoing, and not incapable of capturing cities and countries, and persuading them to think what seemed right and pleasing to her. And these things were sorceries and false divinations and profane rites and the trifles of idols.

For it reached such a point of foolishness as to make a claim of good repute out of seeming already to be a mistress of sorceries, and to make a boast of things so shameful and deserving of the utmost outcry. And it was the custom of some in it to sell nations and countries through their sorceries. But how or in what manner, we will say as we are able. It was the custom for the Assyrians, when they wished to make war and take up arms against others, to hasten to learn in advance what was to come by the arts of the magi, who, eagerly seeking honors from the king, commanded them to be of good courage for every war, and by their own practices they falsely claimed to have hamstrung their opponents beforehand. Something of the sort that Balak, the king of the Moabites, wished to do. For he hired the wicked Balaam and even brought him up to a mountain, "saying 'Come, curse Israel for me.'" For they thought that events would follow the curses of the magi. Therefore, in these matters he calls the art of sorcery and magic "fornication," by which those wise in these things sold nations and tribes, always promising victory to those who brought them wages. Behold, I am against you, says the Lord God Almighty, and I will lift your skirts over your face, and I will show the nations your shame and the kingdoms your disgrace;

and I will cast abominations upon you according to your uncleannesses, and I will make an example of you. That her word is not against man nor indeed her war, but rather the Lord of hosts has become angry, and is raising up against her Persians and Medes, he indicates again. But to the God who has authority over all and who holds power over all things, who can lead out an army against him, if he should choose to make war on some? Then he says that I will also lift your skirts over your face. And again the saying has been spoken as if about a courtesan woman, who, as far as her face and external adornment are concerned, seems to be lovely to those who see her; but if indeed she should suffer the disrobing and the removal of her adornment, she will surely be disgraced by her naked body, of her members showing its ugliness without concealment. Therefore, he says, I will uncover your backside, that is, everything that is unseemly in you, and I will show it to you before others. For what else could "to your face" signify to us than this? He said he would no less reveal her dishonor plainly to nations and kingdoms. For Nineveh seemed to be beautiful and lovely, proud in the arts of magicians, and seizing rule and dominion over all, exceedingly strong and taking victory from all without a fight.

But when she was captured and fell, she appeared unseemly and unpleasant to those who knew her, who then considered her an abomination, having condemned her for boasting about nothing and for foolishly trusting in the help of magicians, or rather, in their impostures and deceptions. And it was affirmed that she would also be set forth as an example, so that some might sometimes say, if a city or country were destroyed, that it has been plundered and has fallen, just like wretched Nineveh. But, as I said, the God of all has also at times waged war against the Synagogue of the Jews, and exacted penalties for its impiety towards Christ, revealing it as naked and unseemly and utterly devoid of the covering from above. And he proclaimed this beforehand through the voice of Hosea, saying, "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 that they may not cover her shame. And now I will uncover her uncleanness before her lovers, and no one shall deliver her out of my hand. For the church from the Gentiles will give glory, saying, "Let my soul rejoice in the Lord; for he has clothed me with a garment of salvation and a tunic of gladness;

but the other, as I said, is henceforth seen as naked and unseemly and ugly, not having the covering of the divine gifts, and has become both an example and most abominable, afflicted with every kind of worldly impurity. And it shall be that everyone who sees you will shrink from you and will say, Wretched Nineveh, who will bemoan her? From where shall I seek comfort for her? If someone, he says, of those who formerly knew your dominions were to see you fallen and desolate, he will lament greatly and depart quickly, saying this: Who will bemoan her? For as if there were no one, that is, left behind, who was even able to merely lament, he says such things. And very wisely he has added to this: From where shall I seek comfort for her? And the meaning of what has been said is something like this. When war and battle are joined against cities or countries, a part is sometimes wronged, but another part is saved and perhaps has escaped the victors; and this is a comfort to the inhabitants. For either not all of it has been burned, and a portion has remained unsacked, or some have fallen, but another multitude has been saved; but in the case of Nineveh, from where could one find comfort? Or what manner of thing will console her? For all of her was captured and all of her was sacked and everyone in her has perished. But "Who will bemoan her? might be understood again in another way;

for it is like saying: Will there be any artist so skilled in laments and funeral odes as to say something worthy of what has happened, and to shed a sufficient tear for her sufferings? Have you prepared a portion, have you fitted a string, have you prepared a portion of Ammon, who dwells among the rivers; water is round about her, whose dominion is the sea and water her walls; and Ethiopia her strength and Egypt, and there is no end of your flight, and the Libyans became her helpers; and she herself will go into exile as a captive, and they will dash her infants to the ground at the head of all her streets, and they will cast lots for all her glorious things, and all her great men will be bound in manacles. The meaning of what is set forth is very obscure, and could not be understood otherwise, unless there were some preliminary narrative of the history in it; and it is as follows. When Israel turned to apostasy, and worshipped idols, and through countless impieties sharpened against itself

the God of all things, Nebuchadnezzar was armed against Judea and against Jerusalem, with divine wrath stirring him to this. Then, when it was necessary for those of Israel to cease from the impiety at hand, and to refrain from desiring to worship other gods, but to overturn altars and burn down sacred precincts and shatter the molten images, and by their zeal for repentance and clemency to appease God and call upon him for aid.

The wretched ones did not do this; but they thought that by being aided by the help of men, they would both be superior to the Babylonians and would prevail over their enemies, even if God should not choose to save them. Therefore they hired many of the neighboring nations, and sent embassies also to the Egyptians, and to the city called On, that is, Ammon, which is now Alexandria. And they promised to fight alongside them, and to be able to easily drive away the Babylonians, and they became an occasion for those of Israel to think that even if God would not save them, they themselves would be sufficient for this, needing nothing. But when Nebuchadnezzar took Judea, with God defending and subduing his opponents for him, he proceeded after this also against the land of the Egyptians, with divine wrath sending him, and he took all of it, and On itself, that is, Ammon; for so Alexandria was named at times, as I said; which indeed, more than the other cities of Egypt, was exceedingly splendid, and a safe and secure base, on account of being girded everywhere with water, and having the sea on its northern side, and on the southern side a wide and long and, as it were, another sea, I mean Lake Mareotis, and being fortified also by other rivers and surrounding marshes. And the inhabitants of neighboring Libya also assisted it, a land extending as far as the land of the Ethiopians, to the west and south;

these are the Garamantes, situated behind the land of the Africans; and some of the Ethiopians to the east and south also took up arms with them, who inhabit Meroë, the innermost city, and possess a wild and black land. But let the account of the history end here for us, and let us now proceed to the clarification of the meaning of the contents. *Prepare a portion*, he says, as if he were to say, O wretched Nineveh, choose a portion for yourself; for since you have grown very proud, and think that you will be in every way and altogether impregnable on account of being surrounded by great walls and having countless men willing to fight alongside you; like which of the regions do you wish to be, which have been sacked by you, although they possessed, he says, the greatest aptitude for being able to be hard to capture and unconquerable. *Tune a string*, that is, become yourself a song and melody for cities and lands, having suffered such things from the Persians and Medes, as you yourself have done to others. *Prepare the portion of Ammon*, let Ammon, he says, be your portion and lot; what you have done to her, it is necessary for you to suffer the same things. And what was Ammon, she who dwells among rivers?

That is, she who was very well fortified by sea and rivers, she who boasted in the aid of the Egyptians and the archery of the Ethiopians, she who possessed the most valiant multitude of the Libyans. But even though she was so well-situated and strong and had outside help, she has gone into exile, and she has become a captive, and her infants have been dashed to the ground, and her illustrious men have become lots, and her most glorious men the

portions of the conquerors, and they have been bound with manacles. Therefore, just as you took Ammon, impregnable as she was with respect to aid and position; for it was God who delivered her up; so you too will certainly be given into the hands of enemies, even if you are very proud of the multitude of your warriors and your walls. For I am against you, and no one will turn back my hand. And you shall be drunken and shall be overlooked, and you shall seek for yourself a refuge from enemies. For in the same way, he says, that Ammon has suffered, enduring the arrows of your savagery and the calamities from your attack, so you too will be dizzy with darkness, and you will become as if drunk, not a refuge having, that is, being shaken and falling by enemies, and deprived of the oversight from above. For whom God would visit, He certainly pities and makes them stand in the things according to their prayer.

But she is drunk, just as was the God-fighting Jerusalem, not being sober, because of not being illuminated by the divine light, nor indeed willing to hear Christ saying, ”I am the light of the world. and again, ”While you have the light, walk in the light, that darkness may not overtake you. Drunkenness could be understood as darkness in the mind and night in the heart, the ignorance of what is profitable, and the inability to perceive from anywhere the way of salvation. But that she is also shaken, and does not have a firm standing for the works of righteousness, how or from where could anyone doubt? For she has fallen from the foundation of all things, and does not have the unbreakable foundation, that is, Christ. And she has been overlooked and given over to enemies, either to the Romans perhaps, that is, to those who carry one away into any passion whatsoever, I mean, to the unclean spirits. Therefore, Christ, and faith in him, will deliver us from every evil, and will make us superior to the wickedness of our enemies, and sets us in the eyes of God. For He will in no way overlook those who love him. All your strongholds are fig trees with first-ripe figs. If they are shaken, they will even fall into the mouth of the eater. The ripe figs fall off easily if the plant is shaken, and they almost leap into the hand of the one shaking it, and they come automatically to those who need to eat.

Therefore, since Cyrus was attacking and already besieging Nineveh, and was setting up siege engines or battering rams against its walls, the defenders were guarding the battlements; then the attackers, shooting arrows, easily brought them down to the ground. He takes the likeness from what naturally happens with ripe figs. For this reason he says that all your strongholds, that is, the walls, are fig trees with first-ripe figs, which rush into the hand of the one wishing to eat, and very easily, if one only shakes the plant. And so also will be every soul that falls away and is deprived of help from above, easy and vulnerable and taken without a sweat by the devouring Satan. For it is written that ”His foods are choice. Behold, your people are like women in your midst; the gates of your land will be opened wide to your enemies; fire will devour your bars. He shows their hope to be in vain. For they thought that they would never be captured, having gathered an innumerable multitude of those fighting with them, and inhabiting a city fortified with unbreakable walls. But he has clearly proclaimed beforehand that these things would be completely useless to them, saying that the defenders would fall into such cowardice as to differ in no way from

weak little women; and he says that the gates will be opened, with the enemies clearly forcing their way in. For it is true that, "Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Therefore, we must have security from above, and trust least of all in ourselves, but rather in God who saves, and not boast in help from men, nor indeed think that we can escape wrath, if God should be provoked. For no one will deliver from trouble and evils the one against whom the Lord of all is wroth. And the divine David was very wise, singing and saying, "I will not trust in my bow, and my arm will not save me. "For I will find strength in God," according to his voice again. Draw for yourself water for a siege. They say that when Cyrus and those with him were ravaging the surrounding lands of Nineveh, and cutting off all their aid beforehand, the Ninevites, now fearing the sack of the city, then cut many long ditches in the areas around the city, and indeed they made them difficult for the enemies to cross, by diverting rivers, and filling them with water, and making the land full of marshes. But the attackers were superior even to such attempts, or rather, the will of God handing them over. Therefore, that this effort of theirs will also be nothing, he shows by saying "Draw water for yourself for the siege. But it seems to some that "water drawn" here means the gathering or multitude of the summoned nations for assistance. For in this way too our interpretation will not be off the mark, for in many places the multitude of the nations has been called waters. Strengthen your fortifications;

go into the clay and tread in the straw, make it stronger than brick. God would not encourage such things; but since He knew beforehand what was to come, He mocks their plan, and that, as I just said, all their effort will be in vain, He shows through these things. For since it happened that the walls needed battlements, that is, some other care, they were making bricks, evidently from clay, but very strong ones; for a baked brick is most necessary for construction, and would not be easily crumbled. Therefore, it says, "tread in the straw, and make bricks. Become then so bold and unyielding for battle, just as indeed the brick itself is; for even so you will be easily captured, and by no means unbreakable, but very easy for those who know how to shake you down, and who have an impulse stronger than your hardness. There fire will devour you, the sword will destroy you, it will devour you like a locust, and you will be weighted down like a locust larva. You will understand "there" instead of "then," for we will accept the word in a temporal and not a local sense. For if indeed these things should happen, he says, and you should make bricks, you will be consumed even so as if by fire, and the enemy will portion you out and your land, in the manner of a locust. And you will be shackled by hesitation and slow to flee like a locust larva weighed down.

For they say that when hail falls and rains pour down, the locust larva is inactive for flight, its wings having been weighed down. Therefore, he indicates again the Ninevites' helplessness in flight from what happens to the locust larvae. You have multiplied your trade beyond the stars of heaven; the locust larva attacked and flew away; your mixed multitude was driven away like the grasshopper, like a locust that has settled on a fence in a day of frost; the sun rose, and it flew away, and its place was not known. He seems to mean

”trade” here not as transactions involving money, for profit and gain, but rather that which has come about from the gathering and assembling of nations. For, as I said, they hired the neighboring nations, trading, as it were, for those who were about to die, and gathering for battle those who would very soon perish; and these were very many and beyond number. Therefore they are also compared to the multitude of the stars. But even if they have been gathered, he says, and have run together, they will be terrified by the war, and will run away again like a locust larva and like a grasshopper. This is a type of small locust, which whenever it falls on fences or the walls of gardens, when there is frost, as I said, and rain pouring down, it is still and quiet, its flight taken away by the force of the moisture;

but when the sun rises and sends a warm ray upon them, they make a swift departure, and fly away as is their custom. So, he says, will your mixed multitudes be. For they will fly away and run back home again, having made your hope void. ”It is therefore good and true to trust in the Lord, rather than to trust in man,” according to the voice of the prophet. Woe to them. Your shepherds have slumbered, O king of Assyria, he has put your mighty men to sleep; your people were scattered upon the mountains, and there was no one to gather them. He laments the crowds, as having slipped into such cowardice and fear, so as to be faint at the mere attack of war, and to leap up to the peaks of the mountains, and to make the difficult places a sort of rampart against the danger. Then giving the cause of their terror, he makes an elegant narrative of the destruction of those allotted to lead; as if speaking in character, instead of ”they have been destroyed and utterly perished,” and ”they have become helpless in the arts of strategy,” the phrase ”they have slumbered” placing, and that those in powers and authorities and the demagogues and those who have obtained high and conspicuous honors have fallen asleep. And they have suffered this drowsiness by the king of Assyria, that is, one who has his lineage from them. For Cyrus is a native, and of Persian blood.

And the prophetic word to us feigns, in short, to lament, that is, to smile at those easily given to panic. For he says, your people were scattered upon the mountains and there was no one to gather them, that is, one who holds them up to courage, one who cuts short the cowardice of the fugitives, and is able to rally the inactive and shield-throwing multitude of the traitors. For those accustomed to do this have perished beforehand, and the masters of skill in war. And it might be understood, and very likely, concerning the flock of the Jews, the ’Woe to them.’ Your shepherds slumbered, the king of Assyria has put your mighty ones to sleep. For woe indeed to those who killed the Savior and Redeemer of all, and who unholily added to the blood of the saints even that of the Lord. And it happened that they suffered this, on account of the leadership and those taken up in the rank of shepherds having greatly slumbered towards ill counsel, I mean the scribes and Pharisees and those crowned with the boasts of the priesthood, whom the Assyrian king, that is, Satan, spiritually put to sleep. For the rule of the Babylonians is often taken for his person. And that the shepherds and the rulers among them slumbered, how is it possible to doubt, when the divinely-inspired scripture from top to bottom attributes the perdition of the peoples to them? For it is written, ”O shepherds who scatter and destroy the sheep of the pasture.

And again, "The priests did not say, Where is the Lord, and those who handle the law did not know me and the shepherds were impious against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal; And Isaiah again says, "How has the faithful city Zion, full of judgment, become a harlot? In which righteousness slept in her, but now murderers. Your silver is dross, your vintners mix wine with water, your rulers disobey, companions of thieves, loving gifts, pursuing reward, not judging orphans and not attending to the judgment of widows. There is no healing for your fracture, your wound has festered. When something dreadful happens, if it proceeds with measure, and not at all beyond what is due, there is good hope for those who have endured the suffering, that they will be able to recover as from sickness to be able to live strongly and that they will pass over to prosperity, their affairs having been brought up to a better state. But when their affairs have come to the end of misery, then indeed the misfortune is hard to escape, or rather, completely indelible. This having happened to Nineveh, he says that it was both crushed and destroyed, with the hope of being able to obtain healing having been taken away, and as it were, the evil miserably festering and seeking the final cut upon itself. And that the Jerusalem that killed the Lord has come to this, is true to say.

For it was often struck, with its enemies running it down, but healings followed, as God had compassion and, as it were, soothed the wound that had befallen them. But since they have acted insolently against the Master of all, it has been crushed and has fallen and there was no healing, according to the voice of the Prophet, and the inflammation of what happened to them has remained unsoothed. Therefore the blessed prophets also said, comparing it to that of the Babylonians, "We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed; let us each forsake her, and go to his own land, for her judgment has reached to heaven, and has been lifted up even to the stars. And the judgment is to heaven and the transgression on high. For they have acted insolently, as I said, not simply against one of the saints, but against the Master of the saints. All who hear the report of you, will rejoice and clap their hands over you; because upon whom has your wickedness not come continually? A decree that has become just from God, destroying the rule of the Babylonians, will testify brilliantly that absolutely no one is sad for her; but rather they applaud, and rejoice and smile at her lying fallen, on account of having endured unbearable calamities and greed, and having come to the experience of things most accustomed to cause grief. For she was burdensome and unbearable to all, sending even to those far off the sense of the perversity within her.

And I would say that even the inventor of sin, that is, Satan, who widens the net of his own perversity everywhere, and has ensnared the world under heaven into error, and bound them in the snares of perdition, would fittingly hear, having been deposed by Christ, and driven out from his tyranny over us: All who hear the report of you will rejoice and clap their hands over you, for upon whom has your wickedness not come continually?

Commentary on the Prophet Obadiah

Book 1

Obadiah again prophesies indeed in times, as it seems, in which also Joel, and he almost shares the vision with him, and the narrative is divided. For the divine Joel, at the very end of his prophecy, "Egypt, he says, will be for destruction, and Idumea for a "plain of destruction because of the injustices of the sons of Judah, for which they poured out righteous blood in their land. And he narrates in detail, in due time, in what manner and how the destruction of Idumea will be. But since it is profitable for those who will encounter the composition of the book to learn accurately and before all else, who Idumea is, what happened to it, and for what reason indeed it has been subjected to calamities from divine wrath, come, let us speak, as is possible, explaining such things clearly in detail to the lovers of learning. The Idumeans, then, are called and are those descended from Esau. For since he was named Edom, that is, earthly, on account of selling his birthright, and of disregarding the honor owed to him from it, and of preferring the serving of one meal, and that a most worthless one, for this reason they also named the ones born from him Idumeans. The land of the Idumeans is called both Seir and Teman; Seir, because its inhabitants were said to be hairy, and Esau was also hairy, for he was covered with hair; and Seir is interpreted as hairiness, or hairy.

And there was also a mountain in the land of Seir. Teman, on the other hand, because it is very southerly. For Teman means south in the Hebrew language. But to some it seems that it was called Teman for another reason. For they say that a son, Eliphaz, was born to Esau in due time, and from Eliphaz came Teman, from whom the land is also called Teman. And this is sufficient concerning Idumea and those in it. But they perished for such a reason as this. For when Jerusalem was being besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and had come to the last extremes of evil—for countless men were falling, consumed by the swords of the nations—some were saved with difficulty, and were carried off to the lands of the neighboring nations; and most of those from Israel went down especially to Idumea, as it was their neighbor, and they thought that they would sympathize with them as brothers, and would remember the kinship of blood, and would grant aid to those who had fared miserably. But they, although they ought to have pitied them as brothers, received them

into their own land, but slaughtered them, running around the borders of Idumea in the manner of robbers, seizing them while they were in turmoil and terrified. And they were so inhuman as to surpass even the savagery of the Babylonians. For they went against them, as I said, as they were perishing, mocking and making the calamities of their kinsmen an occasion for a festival.

The Judeans, therefore, at that time departed into the land of the Persians and Medes. But when the seventy years had already passed, God had mercy; for they were brought back to Judea; they made haste both to rebuild the city itself and to raise up again the temple in it. But the Idumeans, again, their brothers and neighbors, were consumed with envy, and wished to prevent such undertakings, gathering the like-minded and neighboring barbarians, and indeed they even went to battle. And they fell and perished in the valley of Jehoshaphat, with God defending those of Israel. And since the Idumeans had become more burdensome than the foreigners, those of Israel overran their country, and killed those in it, and searching the holes of the rocks and caves and hiding places of the earth, they slaughtered those who were found. The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God to Idumea: I have heard a report from the Lord, and he has sent a command to the nations: Arise, and let us rise up against it to war. In these words he interprets for us the whole purpose of his own prophecy, that is, of his vision, and makes clear where it is aimed. For he tries to fully convince that his vision is about the things that are to come upon Idumea.

For he confirms the hearers in faith, and tries to persuade them that what is spoken will in every way and entirely come to pass, saying that the words are least of all his own, but rather God's. He said, then, that he heard a report from God against Idumea. And what this might mean, he himself immediately clarified, adding that a command to the nations he sent forth. But what nations? Those of Idu- mea. For he says the surrounding, or siege, that is, the enclosure, was sent against them, with the divine judgment compel- ling them of necessity to suffer desolation. Or also in another way. For he commanded the nations around Idumea to carry out the surrounding, or the siege. And he commanded not altogether clearly, but as it were arousing as God, and sharpening them against them, which things, persuaded by divine nods, they say, having been driven on, almost shouting one to another, "Arise, and let us rise up against her to war. For they invaded along with those from Israel who were ravaging Idumea and the neighboring nations. Behold, I have made you small among the nations, you are greatly dishonored. The pride of your heart has lifted you up, you who dwell in the holes of the rocks, who make your habitation high, saying in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the earth? Though you soar aloft like the eagle and though you set your nest among the stars, thence I will bring you down, says the Lord.

He says he was made small among the nations and dishonored because they had become altogether few in number, if they were compared to the multitude of those attacking; for very many, as I said, were sharpened against them. Or he says they became few, as the war had spent them, and had altogether reduced their race to a few. And from very great foolishness, the prophetic word implies to us that the Idumean used empty boastings. For he

thought he would be hard to capture by his enemies, not because of his inherent strength and skill in war, but because the roughness and inaccessibility of the country was going to suffice for their salvation. For there were hills every- where, and dreadful overhanging crags of rocks, and the wildness of mounds, and the heights of mountains. Why then, he says, do you boast in vain against the hand of those who are coming? For even if you have dwelt in a country which has received much inaccessibility, and is lifted on high, and even if you were to become an eagle, having its nest, as it were, in the air—and the word is again hyperbolic—yet from there you will be dashed down, as God drags you down; for absolutely nothing is impossible for him. If thieves had come to you, or robbers by night, where would you have been cast off? Would they not have stolen what was enough for themselves? And if grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings?

How Esau has been searched out, and his hidden things have been seized! We have already said before that even by searching the clefts of the mountains, and the caves and chasms in the rocks, and the thickets, the foreign peoples who invaded and attacked along with those from Israel slaughtered the Idumeans, so that very few, or no one at all, was able to escape. The word therefore mocks them, and in a way speaks ironically and says: If you had experienced a robber's raid, and tribes of thieves had visited you, would they not have been content to take what was likely to be enough for them? And if indeed some were harvesting like a vine, would not the gleaning have escaped notice, even though the eye of those accustomed to harvest is exceedingly curious? But it was necessary for this to happen to them, and not by their own will, because for thieves, fear always commends flight, and to get away unnoticed, and if they snatch any of the things at hand, it seems to be enough for their satisfaction; but for harvesters, the foliage is always an obstacle to their search, taking away and concealing what can be hidden. But to you, he says, O Esau, that is, O Idumean from the blood of Esau, it has happened to suffer worse things; for the hidden things were seized, and no one escaped notice, and flight was useless, and the very inaccessibility of the places. They sent you forth to your borders;

all the men of your covenant have stood against you, the men at peace with you have prevailed against you; those who ate with you have set a trap under you, there is no understanding in them. In that day, says the Lord, I will destroy the wise men from Idumea, and understanding from Mount Esau. And your mighty men from Teman shall be dismayed, so that every man may be cut off from Mount Esau, because of the slaughter and the impiety toward your brother Jacob; and shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever; From the day you stood opposed, on the day that foreigners took his power captive, and strangers entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you also were as one of them. When those from Israel wanted to hinder them from building the temple and fortifying the holy city, those of the blood of Esau made covenants of unanimity with the neighboring nations, as we have already said. But when it happened that their country was captured by the campaigning forces of Israel, then those who were once genuine and conspirators and allies of all the others became more burdensome, ravaging and fighting. Therefore, he says, the war has sent you forth to your borders, that is, it has prepared you to disappear; for this is the

meaning of "has sent you forth": not by invading parts of your country, but by taking the whole of it by force, and bringing it to desolation up to its very borders.

But they stood against you and have made war on you, he says, those whom it was perhaps very likely, according to your hope, to feel pain for you in your suffering. But they have laid snares under you, from whom you expected to be saved. But in the phrase, "There is no understanding in him," some such meaning is conveyed. They called wise and understanding men the false prophets and buffoons, the deceivers and augurs, and those who pour forth the false fables of the stars, who have come to such a point of nonsense as to foolishly suppose that from these things they can grasp the knowledge of future events. Those who were cast into the worship of idols were greatly excited by this. The Idumeans, being sick with this along with the others, when the war was about to be proclaimed, considered the outcome of what was to happen; and gathering the wise men in these matters, they commanded them to report where the affairs of the war would lead for them. And they, as was likely, prophesied victory for them, but they were captured and have fallen, their art having failed them; and the wretched ones were proven to be utterly without understanding, speaking falsely.

And that although the men of Teman were formerly bold, these same Idumeans will be unmanly and terrified, he indicated by adding that "your mighty men from Teman shall be dismayed, so that every man from Mount Esau may be cut off," that is, until they perish down to the last one from Idumea. He therefore makes clear the cause of the disaster brought upon them, that it was "because of the slaughter and the impiety toward your brother. For since you have slain, he says, the one near in blood by kinship, that is, Jacob, or those from Jacob, you will be consumed by war, and you will be completely destroyed, full of shame and disgrace. And that they will have an irreversible fate, and will remain in such terrible disasters, he has signified by saying, "And you shall be cut off forever. And in "From the day," he recalls the time when the Babylonians had taken Judea, and were plundering the things in it, and had received by lot the things gathered from Jerusalem, they themselves lay in wait for the fugitives and slaughtered them, and as it were collaborated with the foreigners and with those who were carrying off the descendants of Jacob into captivity. So they were caught exulting in the disasters of their brothers, and yielding little to the Babylonians in savagery.

And do not look on the day of your brother in the day of strangers, and do not rejoice over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction, and do not boast in the day of affliction, nor enter into the gates of the peoples in the day of their troubles; nor should you look upon their assembly in the day of their ruin, nor join in attacking their power in the day of their destruction; do not stand at their crossroads to destroy their survivors, nor shut up their fugitives in the day of affliction. He then enumerates again the charges against the Idumeans, the harsh showing that they have become merciless. The word is fashioned, as if to those already being struck and tortured, with God exclaiming and reproaching the manner of their sin. To look upon is to laugh at and rejoice over suffering brothers, and to make the misfortunes of others an occasion for delight, although the divine scripture

says that one must not smile at all at those who suffer. And in 'do not rejoice' and the rest, he again enumerates the crimes of the Idumean, showing that he had become harsh and merciless, and this toward brothers. For he says, do not you yourself hasten inside the gates along with the Assyrians, not extending a helping hand, as to brothers, but rather to plunder. And do not look upon the assembly being miserably destroyed; nor indeed add burdens to those greatly oppressed by you;

nor indeed be a snare to those who flee, guarding the exits and setting traps, so that no one, caught in your lack of affection, might be saved, even if he should escape the sword of the enemies. Everywhere the word accuses the inhumanity of the Idumeans, so that again the divine judgment might be seen as truly holy and blameless, with those who have committed those transgressions being justly punished. Because the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations; as you have done, so shall it be to you; your recompense shall be returned upon your own head. Because as you have drunk upon my holy mountain, all the nations shall drink wine, they shall drink and go down, and they shall be as though they had not been; but in mount Zion there shall be salvation, and it shall be holy. He proclaims again the time of war, during which the neighboring nations, gathered together with the Idumeans in the valley of Jehoshaphat, have paid bitter penalties. And he calls it the day of the Lord. For it was God who delivered to those of Israel those who had unrighteously wronged them; and that they will be punished by a holy judgment, he makes clear, saying, As you have done, so shall it be to you. For the divine nature weighs the faults of each, and in every way brings a corresponding punishment, for those things in which each might be found to have transgressed.

And in 'because as you have drunk,' he indicates something like this: It is perhaps a custom for those who have conquered their enemies, to boast over the conquered, to hold feasts and drinking parties, and indeed to shout out cries of victory and to fulfill the works of drunkenness. As you therefore mocked, he says, and danced upon those of Israel, drinking and dancing in exultation, and making the misfortunes of your brothers an occasion for a festival, so all the nations shall drink and dance in exultation over you; and they shall come down against you, that is, they will overrun your country. And you yourself shall be counted among those who do not exist. For you shall be so destroyed, as to seem somehow never to have existed. The divinely-inspired scripture calls the Church mount Zion; for it is truly high, and truly a watchtower, and holy in addition to these things, since it is the house and city of the all-holy God. And the house of Jacob shall possess those who possessed them; and the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, but the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall be kindled against them, and shall devour them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, because the Lord has spoken. And they in the Negeb shall possess the mount of Esau, and they in the Shephelah the Philistines;

and they shall possess the mount of Ephraim and the plain of Samaria and Benjamin and Gilead. The senseless Idumean thought that he would have the house of Jacob as an inheritance, that is, those from the seed of Jacob, and indeed he divided up the land, having

helped to ravage it. But, he says, the matter will be unexpectedly reversed for them. For they shall be an inheritance for those of Jacob. And they will be consumed in such a way, as stubble would be by a flame. For the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph will be in no way inferior to the powers of a flame. Therefore they shall be completely devoured, so that one would not be able to find a single survivor from an entire tribe or nation. And it seems that the the account, following the trope, speaks of them as fire-bearing, for it named the house of Jacob fire, and in turn the house of Joseph a flame. And the house of Jacob would reasonably be understood as those from Judah and Benjamin, while the house of Joseph, those in Samaria, that is, the ten tribes, whose kings from time to time were from the tribe of Ephraim, and Manasseh and Ephraim were from Joseph. But in the phrase, 'those in the Negeb shall inherit,' this is signified.

For when the Babylonians, leaving their own land, came against Jerusalem, with Nebuchadnezzar rousing them to battle, it necessarily happened that the entire land of the Jews was ravaged, and was consequently brought to such misery as to be reduced to a complete wilderness and seen stripped of its inhabitants. But when, God having taken pity and having loosed the snares of captivity, they were brought back again to their own land, he says they will be so enlarged, and will increase to such a numerous multitude, that the lands of the neighboring nations will also be allotted, as Judea would likely be too small. And this would be a very clear sign of blessing from God. For 'those in the Negeb,' he says, that is, those in the south; for Negeb is interpreted as south; 'shall make the mountain of Esau their inheritance,' that is, Idumea. For since it is southern, those who inhabited the southern parts of Judea will by all means take possession of it as a neighbor and borderland. And those in the Shephelah, that is, those in the plain—and this part of the land of the Jews is certainly somewhat more northern—'shall inherit the land of the foreigners.' He means the Philistines, or Palestinians. And they shall possess no less the mountain of Ephraim, Samaria, Benjamin, and Gilead. These are allotments that were distributed at various times to the tribes of Israel, when Jesus who came after Moses was general.

But since they had been desolated by the hand of the Assyrians even before Nebuchadnezzar arrived, by the kings Pul and Shalmaneser, for this reason he says that these places too will be inhabited and will escape the desolation that had occurred long ago. And this is the dominion of the captivity for the sons of Israel, the land of the Canaanites as far as Sarepta, and the captivity of Jerusalem as far as Ephrathah; and they shall inherit the cities of the Negeb. And men who have been saved shall go up from mount Zion to take vengeance on the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's. Here he calls 'captivity' those who were transported from Jerusalem, that is, from all of Judea, to Babylon. And he says that their 'dominion' will be the inheritance that will be under their hand and authority; just as one might speak of the 'rule' of so-and-so in the case of a ruler. Therefore, he says, for those formerly transported, the land of the Canaanites will be both a dominion and an inheritance; he means Arabia, and as far as Sarepta, which is of Sidonia, so that by this you may understand the land of the Phoenicians. And he says it will be extended as far as Ephrathah, that is, as has been rendered by the other interpreters, even to the Bosphorus,

which is the southernmost parts of the east. And he says they will bring under themselves the cities of the Negeb, that is, of the south.

And through these things, the discourse seems to us to signify the nations of India; for the Indians and their lands are very far to the south. It is as if he were saying, for instance: 'All things will be full of them, those to the south, to the north, to the east, to the west, and they will simply possess every city and land.' And in the phrase 'and men shall go up,' the purpose of the prophecy is in a way recapitulated. For the inhabitants of Zion, he says, having been saved by God, and having broken the bonds of captivity, shall in due time go up and execute vengeance upon the mountain of Esau. For they made war, as I said, against the Idumeans after the times of the captivity, and God of all has reigned over them, although formerly He had rejected this, and had departed from Judea on account of their apostasy. For they had served idols, and the golden calves. But when they returned, He received them again and reigned over them; for the Master is philanthropic and benevolent, and easy to be reconciled with those who offend; if only we show some small turning towards him; to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Book 1

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo the Prophet, saying. The blessed Zechariah prophesies in Jerusalem, I think at the same times as Zephaniah. For after the return from captivity, Israel no longer dwelt divided and in parts in both Judea and Samaria, but all were gathered together into one city, that is, Jerusalem, and throughout all Judea, with Zerubbabel from the tribe of Judah reigning over them, and indeed with Joshua the son of Jozadak, the great priest, preeminent in the priesthood. And he weaves the word of prophecy very artfully. For since most of those from Judea, that is Samaria, who were carried off into captivity, returned there, knowing all the things that had been dared by the Babylonians against Jerusalem from time to time; and in addition not being ignorant of, the things at which God was grieved;

But those born in the land of the Persians and Medes, neither knew what or of what sort Jerusalem was, nor did they know Judea, nor indeed the things brought upon their fathers from the divine wrath, nor for what reasons at all they had paid such harsh penalties, except perhaps from neglected accounts, necessarily the God of all appoints the blessed Zechariah to them who had been redeemed and were quite young as a kind of tutor and governor, being of sacred blood, that is, from the tribe of Levi, and being from his father Berechiah according to the flesh, but being called according to the spirit also son of Iddo the Prophet. For he had been nurtured, as is likely, in his ways, and of the same he has become an imitator of virtuous deeds. What then is the message of his prophecy, and through what narratives does it come, how would it not be right to say in due measure? For he imposes the penalty under which they are upon those who have been redeemed, since they have not moderately neglected the divine commandment and are accustomed to disregard the things decreed through the all-wise Moses; and terrifying them not moderately, he persuades them to change toward the need to choose rather to be well-esteemed through ready obedience and submission to everything whatsoever. He adds that if some are not good and well-reined, and yielding to the divine laws, they themselves will also suffer things more burdensome than what happened to their fathers.

And broadening, as it were, the words of instruction, he tries to teach what the practices of the fathers were of old, and for what things divine wrath came upon them, and in what way

they were destroyed, and indeed how they were redeemed, and having shaken off the yoke of captivity, were brought back to Judea; and he adds to this that, just as I said just now, they will suffer worse things if they are zealous to follow in the footsteps of their fathers' godlessness. He remembers everywhere the redemption through Christ that will be in due time, and he describes for us the mystery concerning him in many ways. It is necessary, therefore, for those wanting to investigate each of the parts of the prophecy, not to consider the things in it a tautology and a superfluous narrative of what has already happened; but rather to remember that for those who have returned from captivity to Judea, the narrative of what has already happened is most necessary. For he was correcting those who knew what they had already suffered, bringing it to their remembrance; but for those quite young, and not knowing the things of old, he was providing security, so that they might not be caught in the same evils, loving a profane and most lawless life. The Lord was angry with your fathers with great anger.

Do you understand how he strikes terror with his narratives, and by setting forth for explanation to the very young the things that happened to those before them, he frightens them toward what is better, threatening, as it were, that being subjected to equal or even more grievous evils, they will lament bitterly, if they do not choose prudently to reject the ways of those men, but to deem what is pleasing to God worthy of all care and account. And he says that God, who has power over all things, was angered with a great anger, not leaving the statement unproven as to its truth, but showing from what they have already experienced and suffered, that he is not one who speaks falsely. For it would be an indication of no ordinary indignation to have permitted the Babylonians to ravage all of Judea, and with it Samaria, and to burn down the holy places themselves, and to raze Jerusalem; and to make the chosen Israel an exile, serving pitifully and wretchedly in a foreign land, and enduring unbearable hardship, no longer taking part in sacrifices, not entering within the sacred court, not bringing thanks offerings according to the law, or tithes, or firstfruits; but being prevented, as by necessity and fear, even from having to celebrate its customary and dearest feasts. Therefore the Lord was angry with their fathers with a great anger. And one might exclaim such things also to the Jewish peoples, if one chose to initiate them into the mystery of Christ.

For since they killed the prophets, and "crucified the very Lord of glory," they have been captured and sacked. And the famous temple itself was shaken down, and what was said through the voice of Hosea has now been fulfilled upon them: "For the children of Israel shall sit for many "days, there being no king and no ruler, there being no sacrifice and no "altar, nor priesthood, nor manifestations. And that they are captives, and for the time being under the hand of the devil, having offended God, and cast off, and having become outside of all mercy from above, how could anyone doubt? But if indeed they should be redeemed in due time, having accepted the faith, and acknowledging Christ as both God and king and Lord, then indeed, and very much so Reasonably, one might make a wise exhortation to them, saying these things at the opportune time: The Lord was very angry with your fathers. And you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Almighty: Return to me, and I will

return to you, says the Lord Almighty, and do not be like your fathers, whom the prophets before them reproached, saying, Thus says the Lord: Turn from your evil ways and from your evil practices, and they did not pay attention to hear me, says the Lord.

For, as I said, having been called back from captivity and returning to Judea, they became slothful concerning what seemed good to God, and for the time being they did not resort to idols, nor indeed did they accept the ancient error; yet in other ways they were found to be provoking. For as it is written in Ezra, they also mingled with foreign women and, bringing in those from the neighboring nations, became fathers of foreign children, even though the law forbade this practice to them as improper. They were also negligent in celebrating feasts and fulfilling sacrifices, and indeed they were found to be unenthusiastic about the need to rebuild the divine temple. Therefore, just as it is written in Haggai, he struck them with blight and with mildew and with hail in all the works of their hands. And they put twenty sata of barley into a bin, and it became ten, and again they would go in to draw fifty measures, and it became twenty. He promises them, therefore, that if they should choose to change for the better, and to return to him, by choosing to do what seems good and pleasing to him, then he himself will also return to them, that is, he will refrain from his anger against them, and will return to mercy, and will deem them worthy of forbearance and compassion again.

He certainly declares that choosing to emulate those who came before them is a cause of destruction, to whom was given the greatest possible exhortation and encouragement from him through the holy prophets, calling for them to turn away from their shameful practices, but the matter was rendered very unprofitable indeed by those who turned to disobedience. Ridiculous, then, are those who follow the ignorances of their fathers, and always put forward ancestral custom as an irrefutable defense, even if they are censured for the worst evils. This is a custom especially of the worshipers of idols. For when called to the knowledge of the truth, they everywhere remember the deceit of their fathers, and embracing their ignorance as if it were a paternal inheritance, they remain blind. And I think that even if someone were to advise those of the circumcision to unlearn the more shameful things and to choose to honor what is beneficial, they too take refuge in the custom of their fathers. It is useful, therefore, to proclaim to those who are wandering: Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty, and moreover to this: Do not be like your fathers, who were wandering, that is, and remained in ignorance to the very end. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, will they live forever? But receive my words and my statutes, which I command in my spirit to my servants the prophets, which overtook your fathers.

And they answered and said, Just as the Lord Almighty has determined to do according to your ways and according to your practices, so he has done to you. Before Judea was captured, and Jerusalem itself, some, putting on the name of prophecy for themselves like a mask, spoke to the ancients things ”from their own heart,” as it is written, ”and not from the mouth of the Lord. These, speaking falsely, used to say that the holy city would never be captured by enemies, nor would Israel ever be an easy conquest for those wishing to ravage

it; but it would have firmly-established prosperity, and would lie in unshaken luxuries, with God defending it, and always honoring and loving the chosen one race. But they said such things, as I just said, the wretched ones speaking falsely, and making Israel, who was indolent, even more supine, although it was necessary to persuade them to appease God, and casting as far away as possible the things at which he was grieved, to choose to turn towards what seemed good to him. But for them, the word of truth was of little account, and being overcome by small and most paltry gains, they have deceived Israel.

And so the prophet Jeremiah strongly accused them, saying thus, ”O Sovereign Lord, behold their prophets ”prophesy and say, ’You shall not see the sword, and ”famine shall not be among you, for I will give truth and peace ”upon the land and in this place;’” But God said to this, ”The prophets prophesy lies in my name; ”I did not send them, nor did I command them, nor did I ”speak to them, for they prophesy to you ”false visions and divinations and omens and the choices of their own heart. And indeed, elsewhere he says again, ”I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; nor did I ”speak to them, yet they prophesied. Therefore, as I said, Israel has been deceived, foolishly carried away by the deceptions of the false seers. But they would never have been captured by enemies, nor have experienced such a bitter and burdensome slavery, had they given their mind to the prophets from God, who both foretold that such things would happen to them, and said expressly, that they would certainly be brought to the test of evil, since they had chosen not to do the things pleasing to God. For this reason he calls to remembrance both the unholy false prophets and those who were deceived, and says, ”Where are your fathers? And the prophets, will they live forever?

It is as if he were to say, Your fathers have perished, and this miserably, in captivity, and with them the false-speaking and deceiving ones, who made a trade of the name and reality of prophecy. But if they were still living, perhaps they would have made you better by constantly lamenting over what had happened, and by making no small outcry against the false prophets who were among them. But they, as the wage of both indolence and disobedience, have had the fate of perishing along with those who deceived them; but you, receive the words of the holy prophets, and hold in high esteem the oracles given through them. For they have spoken also to those before you, that the Lord has set himself to do it, meaning clearly the captivity and the miseries that would happen in it. And they refuted them, saying openly, that ”according to your ways and according to your deeds, so has he done to you. For the God of all does not punish in vain, nor indeed does the divine and unerring and most just judgment render its verdict on anything unexamined; but after being exceedingly longsuffering, then indeed it weighs out for the sinners what is most fitting for them.

It is a wise thing, then, to be tractable, and what will deliver us from all evil is to follow the divine laws, and to honor the predictions of the saints, and to deem the voices of the Spirit worthy of faith, understanding that in every way and entirely what has been foretold will come to pass, to be transformed for the better and to turn to repentance. For in this way we will put away the things that come from wrath, and we shall meet with a gentle Master;

for he justifies the ungodly, and releases from punishment those who through ignorance or weakness have fallen into sin. On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the Prophet, saying, ”I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and he was standing between the two shady mountains, and behind him were red and dappled and piebald and white horses. And I said, ”What are these, Lord? And the angel who was speaking in me said to me, ”I will show you what these are. And the man who was standing between the mountains answered and said to me, ”These are they whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.

And they answered the angel of the Lord to the one standing between the mountains, and they said, ”We have gone through all the earth, and behold, all the earth is inhabited and is at rest. In part and at various times, God would reveal the visions to the holy prophets. For we do not say that the grace of the divine vision and the revelation of things to come was supplied to them always and frequently and completely without interruption; but rather at various times, those fitting for each matter, and according to what seemed good to the one revealing the hidden things. and sometimes this, sometimes that, they were instructed in many and various ways. For sometimes they received simple knowledge, with the Holy Spirit speaking within them; and sometimes, in addition to this, they were also in the very visions of the things being done, with God at different times in different ways shaping for them and enigmatically revealing mysteries. For the blessed Isaiah says he has seen ”the Lord of sabaoth sitting on a throne, high and lifted up,” with the Seraphim standing around him and praising him in turn. And the divine Ezekiel says he has seen a throne upon a firmament, with the Seraphim underneath. And he said that he saw the one sitting on the throne as of a double nature, such that the parts below the loins were clearly seen in the form of fire, and the parts above in the appearance of electrum.

And deep and long would be the account on each point, if one should choose to investigate the reasons why the visions from God to them became multifaceted. Thus therefore the blessed Zechariah also, having clearly defined the time and days and month, says he has seen the Lord in a form like ours. for ”behold a man,” he says, ”riding on a red horse. and through this he signifies one who is, as it were, experienced in war and knowledgeable in tactics. For to sit on a horse, and that a red one and having a color as if from blood, I think, for my part, signifies some such thing. For the God of all things fights against those who oppose him, and like a warrior arms himself against the disobedient and arrogant who raise the neck of their mind against him. And those of the blood of Israel did this, and very rashly, both those inhabiting Judea and Jerusalem itself, and also those holding the country of the Samaritans, that is, the ten tribes. For they turned to polytheism, and offering worship to handmade things, they would cry out to the golden calves, ”These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,” and in addition to this, having completely disregarded the ordinances of the law, they rashly turned to what seemed pleasing to each. For this reason, therefore, the God of all things, as if on horseback against them, as in a form like ours, enigmatically appears.

And he stood between the two shady mountains. And I think by shady mountains he means that of Judea, that is, Zion, and also that of Samaria. For God said somewhere concerning them, "Woe to those who despise Zion and to those who trust in the mountain of Samaria. And both are shady on account of being crowded with an innumerable multitude of inhabitants, perhaps, and imitating a dense and abundant forest. And behind the one riding the red horse, other horses were also coming, and not of one appearance, for they were red, and also dappled and speckled and white. And they also signify kings, or nations that are warlike and most pugnacious, and not content to possess only their own land, but scattering as it were over all the earth, and eager to bring under themselves all that is under heaven, such as the kings of the Babylonians became, first Pul, who took the tribes beyond the Jordan. then after him Shalmaneser, who sacked Samaria, and third Sennacherib, who savagely laid waste the remnant of Samaria, and also burned many of the cities of Judea. fourth Nebuchadnezzar, who also took Jerusalem itself, and carried Israel away into captivity. But that the horses were seen in various forms perhaps signifies the difference in each one's mind; and the different color in them, one might accept as an enigma of the thought of each, and very rightly so Reasonably. The Prophet, then, was perplexed and asks for a revelation;

and he learns that these are they whom the Lord has sent forth to patrol all the earth, and those who were sent say this themselves, affirming that they have patrolled the whole [earth], and that it is indeed at rest, unable to oppose their acts of greed, and enduring the yoke under them, unwillingly indeed, but necessarily. And the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, which you have overlooked this seventieth year? When the sent horses, that is, both nations and kings, had patrolled the whole earth, and then clearly stated that it is inhabited and at peace and endures the yoke necessarily imposed upon it, the blessed angel immediately turns to supplications on behalf of Jerusalem and Judah, who had perhaps been appointed by God to guide the nation of the Jews. And we shall find that also when they had fled from the land of the Egyptians, the frantic Pharaoh terrified them with dreadful fears, armed for the law of war, then while attempting to pursue, the angel of the Lord, it says, stood between them, "and they did not come near one another all night. But also the law itself was spoken through angels, as Paul, the expert in the law, said. And the power of the evangelical parable suggests something of this sort.

For Christ said somewhere concerning the Synagogue of the Jews, showing enigmatically what was about to happen to it, "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his field. And since it was fruitless, he wished to cut it down, and indeed he ordered this to be done, saying to the vinedresser, "Cut it down; why does it even make the ground useless? But he says to this, "Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure; and if it bears fruit in the future; but if not, you shall cut it down. For what else does the person of the vinedresser suggest to us in these things, except that of the presiding angel, who was commanded, as I said, to guide it? Therefore, since God had set the time of the captivity at the seventieth year, while the time had not yet come to an end, it was necessary to be

silent, so that he might not seem to oppose the Master's commands. But when the time was already completed, he makes his supplications, and with the suspicion of giving offense having been, as it were, removed from the midst, and knowing that the Master is true, he asks to learn whether the things from wrath have been completed for the sinners according to what was formerly decreed for the seventieth year; that is, whether there will be another postponement because of added sins, and the things of their misery be extended for them yet longer.

For this reason he says, "How long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, which have been overlooked now for this seventieth year? There is, therefore, a good and undoubted hope for those who worship God, that if they should happen to offend out of weakness, yet they have with God those who supplicate on their behalf, not only men, but also the holy angels themselves, who render God gracious and mild, assuaging his wrath with their own purity, and, as it were, appeasing the displeased Judge. But then, an angel made the supplications on behalf of the Synagogue of the Jews; but we, who have believed and have now been sanctified in the Spirit, "have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. And as the divine Paul writes, "God set him forth as a propitiation through faith," delivering from sins those who approach him. And the Lord Almighty answered the angel who was speaking in me with good words and comforting words. And the angel who was speaking in me said to me, "Cry out, saying, 'Thus says the Lord Almighty: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and I am very angry with the nations that are attacking together, because I was indeed I was angry a little, but they helped for evil.

It is true to say that according to the voice of the psalmist, "The Lord is compassionate and merciful," and the very experience of things would cry out, that this is so and not otherwise. But see how He immediately accepts the supplications for those who have acted wretchedly, and have been crushed in a foreign land, and have endured the yoke of captivity, and He almost anticipates the request of the one entreating, and immediately answers with good words and comforting words; and by comforting he means those things able to restore and console the afflicted. For during the whole time of their captivity, having perhaps spoken no good word, nor having deemed them worthy of any of the customary consolations, He begins to speak kindly, and lays the foundation of His gentleness toward them. Therefore, out of exceeding joy, the divine angel commanded the Prophet to cry out henceforth and to minister to all the things from God. For He says He is zealous for Jerusalem with a great zeal, not putting the zeal in her, as when she was formerly carried away to strange worships, but on her behalf against those who had sacked her, with whom He says He is angry, not as with a simple and measured emotion, perhaps, but as with an unrestrained and unstoppable wrath. For I, He says, was disciplining my people, and I did not wish them to suffer anything beyond measure;

but they dreadfully and unbridledly brought on the savagery of their own mind, omitting nothing that led to cruelty and inhumanity. This I think is the meaning of "I was angry a

little, but they helped for evil. For God of all disciplines sinners out of love, and bringing upon us commensurate torments, or labors, He drives us toward the better. But those who have been taken for this purpose, sometimes leap upon those being disciplined like wild beasts. But God is angry with them with a great anger. For He, as a father, wished to correct with torments; but they, as with all sails and shaking every rope, were borne with unstoppable impulses against the weary. When the Church suffered this, the persecutors were ignorant that they will pay the price for their savagery against her, and will be required to give a bitter account by the presiding God. Therefore thus says the Lord: I will return to Jerusalem with compassion, and my house shall be rebuilt in it, says the Lord Almighty, and a measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem yet. He has shown that having suffered the turning away of Him who is mighty to save, she has slipped into this state of wretchedness and hardship, but she will be again, without a struggle and very easily, in the state she was in before, when the one who was provoked has been turned to gentleness; clearly, that is, God who is mighty in all things;

and He almost returns to her, by deeming her worthy again of mercy and love, and by forgiving her offenses without remembering them. For He promises to raise up the house, and to make Jerusalem very long. For the temple had been burned, and the very walls of the city had been torn down, so that it seemed altogether small and constricted, and had few inhabitants. But, as I just said, He promises to restore her to her former state, which indeed was also accomplished, when Cyrus released them from captivity, and Darius also commanded the temple itself to be rebuilt, and allowed the city itself to be fortified with walls. But we see that God, sometimes training the faith of the saints and the love of those devoted to Him, at times allows the Church to be persecuted. But after she has suffered a little, He immediately raises her up, and builds her walls again with assistance, and with grace from above He crowns His own house. And each of those who have chosen to be pious is both a city and a house of God. And he is often tested, when both carnal pleasure and worldly care provoke him to depravity, so that the soul of the one who suffers seems to have been burned down and to be left destitute of walls, that is, of safety.

but when God takes pity, and is turned to gentleness by the prayers of the saints, is built again ”into a holy temple, into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit,” and indeed with all uncleanness driven away, it is walled anew by God, and becomes the city of the great king, that is, Christ. And the angel who spoke in me said to me, Cry out, saying, Thus says the Lord Almighty: My cities shall yet be poured out with good things, and the Lord will yet have mercy on Zion and will yet choose Jerusalem. As the time of the captivity was prolonged, the cities of Judea, and no less also those of the Samaritans, were completely desolate. For houses were burned and, so to speak, crying out against the cruelty of the Babylonians, and the very forms of the cities were destroyed and completely overturned. With very few people inhabiting them, it was not possible to see a man who was prominent or otherwise distinguished, nor any who were in comfort, but all were dejected, weighed down by famine and poverty. An end to all these things is promised. For he says, cities will be poured out with good things, that is, they will be in their ancient prosperities, and with an abundance

of good things laid before them, they will change their appearance, and will run up again in the things they prayed for. For the Lord will yet have mercy on Zion and will yet choose Jerusalem.

But observe how skillfully the word of the prophecy proceeds for us. For he does not promise to have mercy on her completely, nor indeed to choose her for all time; but he says, Yet, as if promising a measured time of gentleness. For after this she was to be caught in even worse evils, condemned for her drunken outrages against Christ. Therefore the word Yet, so to speak, measures out the time of gentleness, holding a hidden threat of the things that would happen to her at the times of the coming of our Savior. And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns. And I said to the angel who spoke in me, What are these, Lord? And he said to me, These are the horns that scattered Judah and Israel. And the Lord showed me four craftsmen. And I said, What are these coming to do? And he said to me, These are the horns that scattered Judah and broke Israel, and no one of them raised his head; and these have entered to sharpen them with their hands, the four horns, the nations that lift up a horn against the land of the Lord to scatter it. The prophet comes to another vision, and not after a long time, so that he might not be instructed about the future by word alone, but also, by being amidst visions of the events themselves, he might know subtly and accurately the things signified.

What, then, is the meaning of the vision, I shall try to explain as best I can. The horn in the divinely-inspired scripture is always taken on the one hand as an image and type of strength, that is, of a kingdom; but it very often also signifies arrogance, as when the blessed David said to some, "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, nor speak unrighteousness against God. And he also sings somewhere about Christ, "His horn will be exalted in glory," that is, his kingdom, and the strength and authority to rule over all things. Therefore the Prophet sees four horns, that is, four nations, both harsh and very strong, able to easily gore both cities and countries. And some say these are the kingdom of the Assyrians, and besides this, that of the Babylonians, and thirdly, that of the Macedonians. For Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, being from Macedonia, ravaged Judea. And to these they also add that of the Romans, which after the cross of the Savior, took Jerusalem by force. But since the divine angel, interpreting the vision for the Prophet, said about the horns that these are the horns which scattered Judah and crushed Israel, I think it necessary now to leave those aside and come rather to the nations that have crushed Israel. Therefore, there have been four powers, through which this we shall find that Judea suffered.

For Phul was the first, as I said, to capture the tribes beyond the streams of the Jordan; then after him Shalmaneser, and third Sennacherib, and last after them Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, it might be more appropriately understood of them, that these are the four horns that scattered Judah and Israel. Then, as God showed and revealed the vision to the Prophet, four craftsmen are seen. He asked again, where they were going and for what purpose; then the angel speaking in him says that the four horns that had crushed and scat-

tered Judah and Israel came to sharpen them. What then shall we say is again signified by this? For were those who had already ravaged Israel incited against them, and did God make fiercer those who had been brought against them in anger? And yet He is seen crying out and saying, ”I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, ”and with great wrath I am angry with the nations that joined in the attack, ”because while I was but a little angry, they helped ”for evil. How then does He who was angry a little and in measure, and who vents his jealousy on the ravagers because they have committed deeds beyond reason against the captives, command the horns to be sharpened against them? Therefore, they are sharpened, but not against Israel, but against themselves. For they rose up against one another, and the Persians and Medes made war on the Assyrians and Babylonians when Cyrus was king, as has already been said before.

Therefore, if the horns had not been sharpened, and the power of the Babylonians had not been destroyed, Israel would not have been freed from slavery, would not have been released from bonds and from unbearable misery. The four craftsmen, then, who sharpen the horns in their hands, that is, of those who have them, or rather of those who rule; so that we may understand them as the kings of the Persians; might be understood as angels, commanded to carry out very well what seemed good to God. This, then, was the capture of the Babylonians, and their falling under the hand of the Persians and Medes, concerning whom the Lord God of all says somewhere else, ”They are sanctified, and I bring them: ”giants are coming to fulfill my wrath, rejoicing at the same time ”and insolent. And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold a man, and in his hand was a measuring line. And I said to him, Where are you going? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see how great is its width and how great its length. And behold, the angel who was speaking in me stood still, and another angel went out to meet him, and said to him, Run and speak to that young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as a fruitful land because of the multitude of men and cattle in the midst of her;

and I will be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for a glory in the midst of her. That the horns were not sharpened against Israel, but rather against those who had captured and ravaged both Jerusalem and indeed Judea, the neighboring vision would show, and very easily. For the Prophet again lifts up his eyes, and not at all those of the body; for such visions are invisible to the eyes of the flesh; but rather the inner and spiritual ones, it is clear that they are those in the heart and mind. Then he says that he saw someone in the form of a man, holding a measuring line, and he asked again for what purpose he was going, and what his intention was. And when he said, To measure Jerusalem, to see how great its width is and how great its length, another angel again commanded another angel to go and report to him that Jerusalem would be inhabited as a fruitful land because of the multitude of men and cattle that are in the midst of it. For since Jerusalem was desolate, and the divine temple itself had been burned down, and the houses and cities throughout all Judea had been overturned, the hope that it could ever revive again was somehow taken away.

But God shows that when the horns were sharpened, that is, the nations, that is, of the kingdoms, and they having organized war against each other, Israel will be let go, and will dwell again in an enlarged Jerusalem, fortified by divine power, and, as it were, girt about by an invincible flame with benevolence from on high. Therefore the angel runs to measure Jerusalem, and, as it were, to mark it out as wide and very long. And these things, historically; but I would say that the vision might reasonably be understood also of Christ's Church itself. For Satan had tyrannized over all who were on the earth, and we had become captives, subjected to his yokes. But the grace of the Savior crushed his horn, and shattered his arrogance. For he has triumphed over the principalities and powers of the world-ruler and the opposing forces. And he rescued us, and freed us from his bonds; he raised up for us the Church, the truly holy and renowned city, the wide and very long one, which we have inhabited fruitfully, both men and beasts, that is, those who are already rational, and those who have not yet come to this measure, but are about to and are being initiated; and we have inhabited a city, which Christ Himself walls, consuming those who oppose with ineffable powers, and filling it with his own glory, and standing, as it were, in the midst of those who inhabit it;

for he promised, saying, "Behold, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age. Of this holy city the prophet Isaiah also made mention somewhere, saying, "Your eyes shall see Jerusalem, a rich city, tents that shall not be shaken, neither shall the stakes of its tent be moved, nor shall its cords be broken," and to it he says, "Enlarge the place of your tent and of your curtains; fix, spare not, stretch forth yet to the right and to the left. For the Church of Christ is enlarged, and is extended to an immense measure, always receiving the countless ones who worship him. Oh, oh, flee from the land of the north, says the Lord, for from the four winds of heaven I will gather you, says the Lord; be saved to Zion, you who inhabit the daughter of Babylon. He frowns, as it were, upon those who suffered captivity, as they endure an unbearable hardship, and indeed he commands them henceforth to separate themselves from the country of the Chaldeans, since it is now possible for them to do this, with no one hindering, and He Himself gathering from every place those who had been scattered by the assault of the war. He calls the country of the Chaldeans the daughter of Babylon and the land of the north. For the metropolises are placed in the rank of mothers to the others, which would act under them. And the country of the Chaldeans is somehow more northerly and situated toward the east.

And let these things be said by us again, as concerning matters from history. But the discourse passes over to spiritual contemplation, and the person of the Savior is now somehow introduced, grieving in a way, and all but weeping for those upon the earth, because all had submitted to the worship of the tyrant Satan, and had endured a slavery so harsh as to be seen weighed down by his desires. He urges them, therefore, to flee as from the land of the north, that is, as from the chilled country, so that through this we may understand obliquely a certain disposition and worldly condition of character, which if anyone should have, and be seen inhabiting it, he would not be fervent in spirit, nor would he have dwelling in himself the fiery word of God. For the blessed David somewhere sings to God, "Your word

is exceedingly refined, and your servant has loved it. And he himself said somewhere to the blessed prophet Jeremiah, ”Are not my words like a burning fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? Therefore, he who does not have the fervent and fiery word of God would be chilled and dead. For the love of many will grow cold because lawlessness will be multiplied, as the blessed Paul also said. And the daughter of Babylon will be called sin, and very reasonably, if it is It is true that Babylon is interpreted as confusion;

and sinning would be the work, not of a stable and steadfast mind, but rather of one that is confused, and as it were somehow intoxicated by inclinations towards wickedness. Therefore, one must depart from such things and, as from a foreign land of a cold and dead disposition of the mind, move to Zion, that is, to the truth, so that we may understand the Church of Christ, in which, having been born, we shall see what is pleasing to God, and we shall contemplate the doctrines concerning the holy and consubstantial Trinity, and we shall find Christ himself gathering us in every way, and binding us together spiritually into unanimity. For he said somewhere concerning us, that ”And other ”sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must ”bring, and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd. For thus says the Lord Almighty: After glory has he sent me to the nations that have plundered you, for he that touches you is as he that touches the apple of his eye. That Christ both defended and redeemed the peoples of old, no one would doubt, if indeed he had a mind that loved accuracy. For if he was the rock that gave drink to the thirsty Israel in the desert, and he is the one through whom are all things from God the Father, how is it possible to doubt that through him also every redemption at its proper time, and every manner of assistance was accomplished?

However, in this we say that he addresses those who have been justified by faith and sanctified in the Spirit, and signifies the manner of his incarnation. For he says that he was sent after glory. And he would in no way speak falsely. For if God the Word, who exists in the form of God the Father and is from him and in him, ”thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” as it is written, yet came down even to the form of a servant, and humbled himself, becoming as we are, how has he not come after the dignity that is most fitting for him? What then is the reason for his needing to suffer this temporary dishonor? For he came to plunder those who had pillaged and subjected to their own yokes those on the earth, that is, us, whom the wicked and opposing powers were relentlessly despoiling. And now they are plundered, as our Savior of all, Christ, gathers us through faith to himself, and makes his own worshipers those who were burdened by their covetousness, and extends to us such security, that he who wishes to harm us, is all but touching his own pupil; for the outcome of things is always somehow turned to the complete opposite. To those who persecute the Church it might be said in each case what is in the Psalms: ”He has dug a pit, and has dug it out, and he shall fall into the ”ditch which he has made.

His mischief shall return upon ”his own head, and his iniquity shall come down upon his own ”pate. He who plots against the souls of those who have believed in me, he says, will therefore touch himself. This, in fact, he also says through the voice of the psalmist: ”Touch

not my ”anointed ones, and do my prophets no ”harm. For if we are the ”body of Christ, and members in ”particular,” how could he abandon his own body to the lovers of sin? Or how will it be permitted to fill the members of Christ with evil? Or rather, how would they not pay the ultimate penalty, those who unholily plot against those who have become his? For behold, I bring my hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to those who served them: and you shall know that the Lord Almighty has sent me. For Christ laid hold of the world-rulers of this age, and with an unbearable hand he crushed the heads of the murderous dragon, and has given us ”to tread on serpents ”and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. And those who were once terrible and most difficult, and whose attack was hard to meet, have become spoils for those who had been enslaved to them.

For we who were formerly tyrannized by sins have been justified in Christ, and have now at last arrived at this point of spiritual strength, so as to be able to excel through every virtue, and the one in and to Christ to live a righteous, evangelical life, then to be filled with the gifts ”from him, and to receive authority over unclean spirits, and to rebuke unholy demons, with Christ subduing and crushing under the feet of the saints both Satan himself and the evil powers under him. And in another way one might plunder those who once held sway. For when we overcome our own passions, and consider it of the utmost importance to overcome worldly and carnal pleasures, and every misplaced and foul desire, then we have conquered those who once held sway. and if we see ourselves having become so in these things, then indeed then we shall know also through experience itself, that the Word, being God, was sent with flesh into this world by God the Father, and came after glory for no other reason, than to bind up that which was broken, and to strengthen that which was weak, to raise up that which was cast down, to render strong that which was feeble, to heal that which was sick, that he might save that which was lost. Rejoice and be glad, daughter of Zion, for behold, I am coming and will dwell in your midst, says the Lord.

And many nations will flee to the Lord on that day, and they will be his people, and will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. And the Lord will inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land, and he will yet choose Jerusalem. And from this you may learn that the presence of the Savior on earth will be the occasion for the highest joy. For he has commanded the spiritual Zion to rejoice and be glad, ”which is the Church of the living God,” that is, the most holy multitude of those saved through faith. and he promised that he would come and would be altogether in her midst. For the divine John says to us, ”He was in the world,” and the Word, being God, did not remove himself from his own creatures, but it was he who gave life to those that partake of life, and held all things together for well-being and life; but ”the world did not know him; for it worshipped creation rather than him. But he became with us when, having taken on our likeness, he was born of the holy virgin; then also ”He was seen on earth and conversed with men; and the divine David will testify, saying, ”God shall come manifestly, our God, and shall not keep silence; then he also became a refuge for the nations. For no longer was the race of Israel alone instructed by that ancient commandment;

but rather the world under heaven was gilded with the evangelical proclamations, and in every nation and in every country ”his name has become great. For he was the ”expectation of the nations,” according to the voice of the prophet, and to him ”every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. For they have run together to him through faith, and with him they have dwelt in the holy and spiritual Zion, those from the ends of the earth, and they have known clearly, that ”God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For the Father sent to us his Son from heaven, a Savior and a redeemer, so that believing in him, we might marvel at the Father in him and seeing as an exact image of the one who begot him the one who is from him by nature, we might perceive the archetype. Then indeed then Judah also became the inheritance of Christ, that is, everyone who confesses and glorifies him; for Judah is interpreted as confession;

for as Paul says, ”He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God. Therefore, as many of us as have been enriched with circumcision in the spirit through Christ, have become his inheritance upon the holy land, that we may conceive of the city above, the spiritual Jerusalem, ”whose craftsman and maker is God,” making her beloved and elect. for he says he will yet choose Jerusalem. And it is not unlikely again, if one should choose, to think that Jerusalem is now named the Church, which the divine David also calls the city of God, saying ”As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God. Let all flesh be reverent before the face of the Lord, because he has been raised up from his holy clouds. This is a beautiful and beneficial exclamation, and a good summons for those who wish to be well-pleasing, whether it comes from Christ himself, or as from the person of the Prophet. But that must be considered. For since those who would not believe in him would in every way and altogether perish, he commanded them to be reverent.

Christ himself also proclaimed this to those from Israel who did not accept faith in him, ”Truly, truly, I say to you, if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. and again, ”He who believes in the Son is not judged, but he who does not believe is already judged, because he has not believed in the name of the Son of God. For this reason Christ has been called ”a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. For just as it is admittedly good and salvific to crown him with faith, so it is a cause of destruction not to revere him who for our sake became as one of us, and for no other reason than to save what was lost, to turn back what was wandering, to give life to what was corrupted, to enlighten what was in darkness, to declare clean of offenses what was liable to sins, to make healthy and strong what was weak.

And we will understand that he was raised up from his holy clouds again, as having come from the ancient quiet and silence to the motion of care for us, having indeed been born

from the seed of the holy Abraham, Jesse, and David, and of those genealogized with them, whom he also calls clouds, because the mind of the saints is borne on high, and they reject things on earth and a base mindset, seeking rather the things above and in the heavens, and indeed, in the manner of clouds, watering others with intelligible rains. But that it is not unlikely to understand the resurrection in this sense, I mean, the movement of the ineffable nature to care, the Savior himself will again confirm, saying thus through the voice of the psalmist, "From the affliction of the poor and from the groaning of the needy, now I will arise, says the Lord. Therefore, he has been raised up, that is, he has now been moved to help those on earth who have fared miserably. And he is the release of all, and the end of the ancient curse, and the beginning of all good, and the giver of hope for the age to come. And the Lord showed me Jesus the high priest standing before the face of the angel of the Lord, and the devil stood at his right hand to oppose him. And he said to the devil, "May the Lord rebuke you, devil, and may the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you;

is this not a brand plucked from the fire? The narrative is a vision, but it has a historical account, entering enigmatically, and prefigured again as in an image of Jesus. But it should be known that the Prophet speaks about those things in the visions that have come to pass, and in no way tells idle tales, nor does he come after the results and pile up a crowd of superfluous narratives for us; but, as I said at the beginning, what he has seen before the events, these things he makes it his business to report, making Israel wise and secure, so that it might not fall into the same offenses and be captured a second time, knowing that it was saved with toil, and that the redemption and grace for them became a care even for the angels in heaven. He said, therefore, that he saw the angel standing, and before his face also Jesus the son of Jozadak, the high priest; and the angel stood as an image and type of Christ; but the priest might be understood as in place of all the people; for he is so taken in the divine in the scriptures. And so God said somewhere to Moses, "And I, "behold, have taken the Levites instead of all the sons of Israel, "they are a gift given to me; our discourse then does not depart from a fitting aim, in accepting the priest in place of all the people.

For since Israel had come from the presence of God, having worshipped idols, and dishonored the law itself given through Moses, then after the just wrath against him was fulfilled, he has been shown mercy by God, and is called again into his sight. And this, I think, is enigmatically the standing of the priest before the face of the angel of the Lord. For in wrath he turns away and removes his eyes from those accustomed to be contemptuous; but in pitying he looks upon and visits them. And so the divine psalmist prayed, saying, "Turn not thy "face from me, and turn not away in wrath from thy "servant. And again, "Look upon me and have mercy on "me. But the God who is by nature good and merciful was freeing Israel from sin; but Satan, who had cast him into it, stood again opposing and resisting him, and still accusing, and, as far as was possible for him to say what he thought, not permitting him to be pitied, as one being in transgressions, and held by the charges of impiety, and having nothing on his right. For he stood, it says, at his right hand, in a way paralyzing the right things; for he wars not with our left-hand deeds, but with those on the

right and praiseworthy. The blessed David invoked this to happen to one of those who had been impious towards Christ, saying thus, "And let the devil "stand at his right hand.

Satan therefore opposed, but was rebuked by the voice of an angel; for he heard him say, The Lord rebuke thee, O devil, and the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. For observe how he showed him at once to be fighting against God, and unholily opposing the decrees from above. For when God was pitying and already absolving Israel from transgression, and receiving and making Jerusalem in some way elect, he does not cease accusing, and dares to condemn those who have been shown mercy. Therefore he rebukes his insatiable wrath, saying, Is not this as a brand plucked out of the fire? This is as if he might say, Israel has admittedly transgressed, and is seen to be entangled in your fault-findings. But he has paid no small penalty, he has endured the calamities, and was plucked out with difficulty, like a half-burnt firebrand from the fire; for he has not yet shaken off the dust of the damage from the captivity; just now and with difficulty has he escaped the flame of incurable misery. Cease then accusing those who have been shown mercy. "For it is God who justifies, who is he that condemns? And Jesus was clothed in filthy garments, and stood before the face of the angel. And he answered and said to those standing before him, saying, Take the filthy garments from him. And he said to him, Behold, I have taken away your iniquities. And clothe him with a full-length robe, and place a clean turban on his head.

And they put garments on him, and they placed a clean turban on his head. Since the one chosen to serve as priest was accepted once for all in the person of all the people, it is sufficient, I think, to say this much, that the filthy garments would be a not incongruous symbol of the impurity of the people. For as if clothed in their own sins, and having the stain of impiety hard to wash off, they continued in captivity, subjected to punishments, and paying the penalty for the unholy things transgressed by them. But since God had mercy, he commanded that they be freed from sin, be liberated from the filthy things, and in a way be reclothed with justifying grace. And he grants them an end to their toil and a release from what has happened. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there will certainly follow the need to be freed from the things brought upon them on account of it. Therefore, in the person of God, the blessed angel commanded those standing and ministering to him to remove from them the defiled garment, and indeed he says, Behold, I have taken away your iniquities. Then he said it was necessary that a long robe and a clean tiara be given to him for his head, so that by this we may understand how the glory of the priesthood always somehow coincides with the conditions of the peoples.

For the purity of those under their charge is a boast for the priests, and they hold the renown of the priesthood in splendid boasts when the people are well-pleasing, and go blamelessly to what seems good to God, and submit the tender neck of their mind to His decrees; on this account one sees God as benevolent and friendly toward him. But an accusation and a reproach of those yoked under them is slothfulness and unthinkingly rushing into transgression. For just as when the people were in sin, the priest's garments were also somehow filthy; so if he were seen to be well-pleasing again, the state of the priesthood will be pure

and transparent, and in great confidence before God. And so the divine Paul, having ministered the gospel of Christ to the gentiles, and seeing them pleasing in their progress toward the better, and having firm faith in him, writes saying, ”I swear by your boasting, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus,” and again, ”My joy and my crown. And the angel of the Lord stood by and testified to Jesus, saying, Thus says the Lord Almighty: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charges, then you also shall judge my house, and if you will also keep my court, then I will give you access among these who stand here. As a type, indeed, of our Savior of all, Christ, we have accepted Jesus the high priest; for Aaron also was appointed for this in the beginning;

but in the present matters we say that what was spoken to him, the son of Jozadak, was ”Thus says the Lord Almighty: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charges, then you also shall judge my house,” and what follows these things. For such things would not have been said to Christ; for he himself is the way, he himself is the righteous ordinances of God the Father, he himself judged his house, ruling over it as a son. For the divine ”Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house; but Christ as a son over his house; whose house we are. Therefore let such things have been said to the son of Jozadak, but no longer to Christ. But God promised to the priesthood according to the law that it would still prevail even after the times of the captivity, so that those serving as priests would rule over Israel, and manage the holy tabernacle. For since the captivity had occurred, and the holy things had been burned, and sacrifice was no longer offered, some thought that the things of Moses would be completely gone toward ruin, and that the law would no longer be practiced, although the time was not yet present in which it was necessary for the Only-Begotten to be revealed incarnate;

for this reason God, persuading them that Israel would again be subject to the ancient customs, and would be under the hand of the priests, just as before the captivity, necessarily says, that if Jesus became a genuine keeper of the law, he himself would again judge his house, and he will be established in his former glory, with holy angels ministering with him. For we do not say, I suppose, that the old law was destitute of rational powers. For even if the things in the law were in types and shadows, yet they were performed for the glory of God. This, I think, is what is shown by ”I will give you access among these who stand here,” that is, angels all but ministering as priests and serving with him. But see how everywhere the holy scripture says that the holy angels are standing, indicating by the word ”standing” that they do not sink down into sloth, but that they have a mind that is, as it were, always upright and not tolerating weakness, and standing with God. So also in Ezekiel we will find it written concerning the Cherubim, that ”their legs were straight. For the mind of man is bent, and very easily, and is prone to wish to be sick with sloth. But the holy multitude of the spirits above stands, as it were. For this reason also it was said by God to Zion, ”Stand ”yourself, Zion.

And somewhere the blessed David also offered up thanksgiving odes, saying thus, ”He set my feet upon a rock. For by the word ”standing” the Spirit-bearer signified the unwavering

and firm character of the mind in these matters. Hear now, Joshua the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are men who are portents, for behold, I am bringing my servant the Branch? for the stone that I have given before Joshua, upon this one stone are seven eyes. Through the things just said by us, it was promised to Joshua, or rather, what is truer, to the priesthood according to the law, that he would judge his house, and still rule over peoples, and bring to completion the types of the worship according to the law. But consider for me also the economy, and the exceeding skill of the divine counsels. The things in the law were about to be transferred, and not in the distant future, to the true worship, and the unloveliness of the types to be refashioned into a desirable and spiritual way of life. The husbandmen who killed the Lord were about to be driven from the vineyard, and the field to be given to others, that is, to the holy apostles and evangelists, who were to make it fruitful and flourishing, deeming it worthy of the most urgent care; "A righteous king was about to reign, and rulers to rule with judgment," according to the voice of the prophet;

another high priest was about to arise, not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek, "a minister of the holy things, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For our Lord Jesus Christ entered into the holy of holies "not through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, having found eternal redemption," and "by one offering he has perfected for all time, according to conscience, those who are being sanctified. Therefore, so that God might not appear false of speech and a teller of idle tales, by promising to the priesthood according to the law that he would always and forever watch over and judge his house, he makes necessary the prediction of the mystery concerning Christ and that the things in the law will cease, and he himself will judge his own house through his own offspring, that is, the Son. For this reason he all but testifies to Joshua himself and his companions and those sitting before him, so that we may understand the Levites and priests. For when the high priest was ministering, the Levitical order stood by; but the elders and priests, as being still better and more sacred than they according to the law, were also honored with a seat in the council. Yet he calls them portent-gazers, that is, always seeking to see signs and desiring wonders. For by nature the nation of the Jews is somehow always like this.

And indeed, when Christ, "having made a whip of cords, drove them all out of the temple, saying, 'Take these things away from here; do not make my Father's house a house of trade,'" they came up saying, "What sign do you show us for doing these things? "And who gave you this authority? And we shall find others also coming up and saying to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you. Therefore, since they are men who are portent-gazers, he says, let them learn along with you the things that are to come, and the all-powerful accomplisher of the signs they are always asking for. And who is this? behold, I am bringing my servant the Branch. Now the Only-begotten was revealed as God by nature and from God the Father, and being this, he is free, but he emptied himself, according to the scriptures, descending to what he was not, and has been called a servant, on account of his humanity, although he is Lord of all as God. But even so he was the Branch, that is, the Sun of Righteousness. For

he arose and shone upon us who were living as in darkness, and all but stupefied by worldly pleasures as if in night and sleep, and with the eye of the mind darkened, he roused us to sobriety, and made us bright by his own grace. Therefore also the wise one charges us Paul, declaring this very thing, "The night is far gone, the day is at hand.

Let us therefore cast off "the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light, "that we may walk becomingly as in the day. and again, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ "will shine on you. Therefore he proclaims beforehand the splendid achievements of our Savior's advent. He calls him a servant, because he arrived in the form of a servant; and Dayspring, because he is the true light, dawn and day, and the bright morning star, rising in the mind, and brightening hearts. In addition to this he also names him a stone, and indeed says that it was given before the face of Jesus, and he strongly affirms that he has seven eyes. For it was especially necessary for the priesthood according to the law, for which we have set Jesus as a type, to have, as it were, before its face and before its eyes always the chosen stone, the cornerstone, the precious one, for the foundations of Zion, the pearl of great price, that is, Christ, who watches over all things with many eyes. For the number seven is always somehow indicative of that which is perfect. Indeed, the barren woman is said to have borne seven. And that the divine and ineffable nature of the Son watches over all things with countless eyes and oversees our affairs, no one would doubt;

"For the word of God is living and active, and "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the "division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of "marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and "no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked "and exposed to his eyes," as it is written. Behold, I am digging a pit, says the Lord Almighty, and I will search out all the iniquity of that land in one day. He has shown our Lord Jesus Christ to be both light and dayspring, and that he will shine like the dawn on those in darkness and in the shadow of death, that is, on those who have gone astray. But it was necessary also to proclaim beforehand the end of the economy, that is, the death for us all, which he willingly endured, delivering his own body to the cross, at which the nation of the Jews also stumbled, and was cast out from intimacy with him. For since the wretched ones did not understand the mystery of the economy with the flesh, they became deicides; for this reason and quite rightly they were lost to hope, and the wicked perished wickedly, caught in terrible and inescapable calamities. Therefore, he compares the cross of the Savior to a pit. For those who shed the Lord's blood have fallen as if into a pit, having dared to deliver the author of life to the cross.

But if the Father himself should be said to have dug the pit, let no one be scandalized; let him rather consider how the saying is somehow filled with economy. For this is like that which was said wisely and truly through Christ, "For judgment I "came into this world, that those who do not see may "see, and those who see may become blind. And yet, how is it not true to say that he did not come for this reason, that some might become blind; but the depravity of those who do not understand has, as it were, slandered the manner of the best economy. For they did not wish to see, although it was possible for them to share in the divine light.

Thus you will understand it here also. For the Father sent the Son, ”that the world might be saved ”through him. But because of the folly of those who did not understand, he who was sent became a pit and a snare to those who crucified him; and perhaps he who sent him is also thought to have dug the pit. Therefore he says, I will dig the pit and I will search out all the iniquity of that land in one day; He says, ”I will search out,” instead of ”I will seek and I will examine minutely. For they killed the holy prophets, and they attacked savagely the servants who were sent from time to time. For some they insulted, some they stoned, and some they killed. But God was still long-suffering;

for those who suffered were servants and fellow-servants with those who killed them. Since indeed they rushed to this with unbridled impulses, and seeing much into impiety, and they have acted outrageously against the Son Himself, and have slipped into the pit of the cross, He did not leave their sin still unfelt. For He sought out and subjected the impious to punishments, decreeing the destruction of the whole land of the Jews in one day, on which they said, when they brought Him to Pilate, ”His blood be on us and on our children. For even if the things from divine wrath did not immediately come to pass; even if they were not required to pay the penalty without delay, nevertheless the just sentence from God has come upon them, pouring out destruction, as I said, upon the land of the Jews. And so, the Savior was being led away to the cross, and women followed, mourning and weeping; then what did He say, turning to them? ”Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For they are handed over to destruction and slaughter, and what was said through the voice of Isaiah has happened to them: ”Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence strangers devour your land, and it is desolate, overthrown by strangers. In that day, says the Lord Almighty, you shall call, each one his neighbor, under his vine and under his fig tree.

That indeed they will be in every evil, their sin being felt, those who were brought down as into a pit for having crucified Christ, he has clearly foretold. But that for those who believe and have loved Him the matter will not be unprofitable, but rather will lead to gladness and holy delights, he usefully prophesies. And the just Simeon will also bear witness to these things. For when he saw the divine infant and took Him in his arms, he prophesied, saying, ”Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against. For those who poured the righteous blood upon their own heads have fallen, as though cast down and lying on the ground, and being under the feet of the devil; but those from the Gentiles were set upright. And Christ Himself somewhere proclaims beforehand to the holy disciples the passion on the cross; but when He saw that they were dejected, He comforted them, saying, ”A woman has sorrow when she is in labor, because her hour has come; but when she has delivered the child, she rejoices with joy, because a man has been born into the world. And you indeed have sorrow, but later you will see Me and your heart will rejoice.

Thus also, having been raised from the dead, He addressed the women weeping in the garden with ’Rejoice.’ And it would be fitting for each of those who love Him, concerning both

the cross and the resurrection, to say, ”You have turned my mourning into joy for me; you have torn off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness. For how has not mourning departed, and ”every tear from every face” been wiped away, according to the prophet’s voice, since Christ was raised and destroyed the power of death? For He was life by nature, as God, even if He appeared in the flesh. Therefore, ’in that day,’ he says, that is, at that time in which He would come back to life from the dead, those who crucified Him having been cast into the pit, ’you shall call, each one his neighbor, under his vine and under his fig tree.’ And if one should wish to accept such a meaning as simple and obvious, he will affirm that the things named are symbols of spiritual delights. But I say it is not implausible to say in addition to this that he seems to call the Church a fig tree and a vine, which the divine psalmist also mentions, speaking enigmatically to the bridegroom from above and from heaven, that is, Christ: ”Your wife as a fruitful vine in the inner parts of your house. And He Himself somewhere said, ”The vines are in blossom, they give forth fragrance, the fig tree has produced its unripe figs.

For as the churches had already begun in the world to be fragrant through faith in Him, he said the vines are in blossom, and indeed the unripe figs are appearing; and these might be understood as those who have just believed, the not yet ripe and a sweet multitude, becoming so little by little, and going toward this by improvements for the better. For having matured, and having ascended ”to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” we shall be like sweet fruits to God, just as clinging to the Church as to a mother. Therefore, with the churches being understood through the fig tree and the vine, we shall be under them, and in them we shall lodge, hurriedly saying to one another that prophetic word: ”Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will announce to us his way, and we will walk in it. And if it should happen that we attain this, we will deem worthy of all praise those who have called us to this, saying again that word: ”I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. For the matter would rightly be considered the fruit of the highest delight for us. Therefore we shall say again according to the holy psalmist: ”One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after:

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to visit his holy temple.”

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.