Commentary on 1 Kings (part 1 of 2)

Gregory the Great (c. AD 540–604)

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Book 1

Commentaries on the First Book of Kings BOOK ONE CHAPTER I (1 Kings 1:1) There was a man from Ramathaim Zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite.

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

Considering this man, the prophet Jeremiah says: ”A woman shall encompass a man” (Jer. 31:22). Zechariah points to Him, saying: ”Behold, a man, the Rising is His name” (Zech. 6:12). The blessed apostle Peter, preaching to the Jews, says of Him: ”Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you by powers, wonders, and signs: Him, delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you killed by fastening Him through the hands of wicked men” (Acts 2:22-23). Hence Cleopas, conversing with the same Redeemer on the road, said: ”Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word” (Luke 24:19). For He was a man who both expelled the ancient enemy from the Church in this world and, dying, bound him in hell. And because He who, dying, shattered the powers of hell, rising again, opened for us the entrance to eternity, He showed us the

greatness of His virtue not only by living but also by dying and rising. Therefore, because our Redeemer is known to have done works of great virtue through the humanity He assumed, rightly is he who signifies Him in type declared to have been a man.

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

because he was speaking of the God-man, so that he might assert his divinity and humanity, and might more openly demonstrate that the person of the Word receiving and of the man received is not different, but that of God and man is one and the same: which unity, nevertheless, can fittingly be referred to the excellence of his dignity. For even if Holy Church has not had another Redeemer, through the display of virtue she has had many men. Therefore, when he is called ”one,” he is shown to be incomparable.

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

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

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

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

"What we have seen and heard, and our hands have handled concerning the word of life" (1 John 1:1). But because he had not seen the greatness of his excellence, he promises it to us in Ramatha, saying: "When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

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

and certainly the prophet, beholding her beautiful and adorned in the glory of her fruitfulness, said: "A shoot shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise from his root" (Isaiah 11:1). For concerning the fruit of this mountain, David exulting in God said: "Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you; the earth has yielded its fruit" (Psalm 67:6). For the earth yielded its fruit, because what the Virgin bore, she conceived not by material work, but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Hence it is said to that same king and prophet by the Lord: "Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon your throne" (Psalm 132:11). Hence Isaiah says: "The fruit of the earth shall be sublime" (Isaiah 4:2). For he whom the Virgin bore was not only a holy man, but also mighty God. Concerning this fruit, to the same blessed Virgin, when Elizabeth greeted her, it is said: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Luke 1:42). Rightly therefore she is called the mountain of Ephraim, because while she is raised up by the ineffable dignity of divine generation, in her fruit the barren shoots of the human condition grow green again. Therefore a man from Ramathaim-zophim was made from the mountain of Ephraim: because he who by the power of his divinity created the angels, from the flesh of the most exalted Virgin, took on the form of humanity.

And because through the humanity which he assumed, he wished to be born not from unbelievers, but from believers, there follows: "The son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph."

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

7. There follows: An Ephrathite. But why is he who is said to be from Mount Ephraim called an Ephrathite? Yet this is clear according to the letter, because evidently someone could be from Mount Ephraim who was not born from the tribe of Ephraim. He is therefore called an Ephrathite, so that he who is shown to be from that place might also be recognized as being from that lineage of descent. But since Ephrathite means "fruitful," this is rightly ascribed to the person of the Redeemer, who is proclaimed by the prophecy of the prophet: He shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, which shall give its fruit in its season (Ps. 1:4). For appearing in the preordained fullness of times, he turned the flowers of heavenly teaching into the fruits of the elect; and as many as he joined to himself from the human race, he brought forth as so many fruits unto eternity. In this passage, while the life of the Redeemer is described, the perdition of the devil is also secretly shown. For he was from Mount Ephraim, and yet was not an Ephrathite: because indeed he fell from heaven, but the bad tree did not bear good fruit. (Verse 2.) He had two wives; the name of one was Anna, and the name of the second was Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Anna had no offspring.

8. What is expressed by Peninnah, except the Synagogue? And what is figured by Hannah, except the holy Church? For the children of Peninnah are reported to have existed: because when our Redeemer appeared in the flesh, through the Law which He had given, through the prophets whom He had sent, He found children brought forth in the faith of the synagogue. But Hannah had no children, because the holy Church, then new and recently joined to her heavenly spouse, was not yet giving birth through preaching. Hence also it is said to her in the voice of the same spouse in the Canticle: Our sister is little, and has no breasts (Song of Songs 8:8). Or certainly she is said not to have had children not because of inequality of age, but through the barrenness of sterility. What therefore is the sterility of Hannah, except the hardness of Judea? For she who could not convert the hard hearts of the Jews to faith in the Redeemer was indeed barren. But it should be noted that Peninnah, who

is said to have given birth first, is named the second wife. For indeed the synagogue first brought forth children in the faith, but nevertheless she was lesser in dignity than the holy Church. Therefore she was the second wife, not in time of marital union, but in inequality of prerogative. There follows: (Verse 3) And that man went up from his city on appointed days, to worship and sacrifice to the Lord God of hosts in Shiloh.

9. For what was the spiritual city of the Redeemer, if not Sacred Scripture? This city indeed conferred upon its citizens as many defenses and fortifications as it did precepts; it provided them as many weapons as counsels of salvation. But what was it for our Redeemer to ascend, if not to reveal the heights of his divinity in the form of his humanity? And because he is known in Sacred Scripture, he is rightly said to ascend from his city. The appointed days are the promises about him placed in the Holy Scriptures. They are indeed days, because they shine for the elect to know him. They are also appointed days, because we know they were placed in that same sacred speech by the ancient Fathers. For Moses was fixing the day of his ascent when he said: ”The Lord will raise up a prophet for you from among your sons; you shall hear him as you would me” (Deut. 18:18). He too was appointing a day who said: ”The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a leader from his thigh, until he comes who is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of the nations” (Gen. 49:10). Appointing the day of this ascent, Micah says: ”And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the princes of Judah: for from you shall come forth a leader who will rule my people Israel” (Mic. 5:2). Hence Isaiah says:

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

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

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

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

10. But it should be noted that when the Ephrathite is said to go up to sacrifice, the Almighty God to whom he sacrifices is called the God of hosts. Why is this understood to happen unless because by the death of the Redeemer not only the Jewish people were redeemed, but all the Gentiles? For what are the faithful multitudes of the nations except the army of Almighty God? The Psalmist, exhorting these armies to rejoice at the triumph of their King, says: "All nations, clap your hands, shout to God with the voice of exultation" (Psalm 47). Likewise, seeing these assemble, he said: "All nations, whatever you have made, shall come and worship before you, Lord, and shall glorify your name" (Psalm 86:9). Therefore he is called the Lord of hosts, because indeed through the Lord's death not only is chosen Judea gathered together, but all nations are led to the service of Almighty God; and while they lead faithful battle lines, robust with the weapons of virtues, against hidden enemies, they arrive at the heavenly kingdoms through the glory of triumph.

11. The place of sacrifice is also declared, because it says: In Shiloh. For Shiloh is interpreted as "sent" or "sending." What indeed is designated by this sending, if not the command of obedience enjoined upon the Only-begotten by the most high Father? What also does it

mean that sacrifice is said to be offered in Shiloh, if not that he gave himself to death in no other way than as he had received command from the Father? For he would not sacrifice in Shiloh if he were to die otherwise than as he had received command from the Father. Hence he himself said: "As the Father has given me commandment, so I do" (John 14:31). Thus Paul says: "Made obedient to the Father even unto the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Therefore in Shiloh he both worshipped and sacrificed: because both in living and in dying, he did the will of his Father. There follows: (Verse 3.) "And there were the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of the Lord."

12. Concerning these men, the question is rightly asked why they are called priests of the Lord, when not much further below they are reported to be sons of Belial? But if this question is asked simply according to the letter concerning the sons of Eli, the answer is easy: because at that time they were called priests of the Lord, when priests of idols were designated by the names of false gods. Therefore, when they are called priests of the Lord, they are distinguished from worshippers of idols by the marks of faith. For by these words their faith is proclaimed, not their life: because they practiced wickedness in their deeds, but did not err in faith in the Creator. This, however, is also fittingly ascribed to the prelates of Judea at the time of the divine incarnation. They are indeed reported to be two priests, and this very fact is reported not for the praise of their virtue, but for the reproof of their cunning. Hence the Lord also threatens them through himself, saying: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27).

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

14. What day do we believe this to be, except the one which Isaiah established by the testimony of the sacred Scriptures, saying: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer shall be silent, and shall not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7)? For the day came when the brilliance of the promised oracle revealed the time of the Lord's passion. Then Elkanah sacrificed, because our Redeemer offered himself to the eternal Father in the

sacrifice of our absolution through the death of the cross. Then he gave portions to Peninnah and to her sons and daughters, because indeed he brought back to the joys of paradise the elect of Judea whom he found in the underworld. For their portions are the gifts of everlasting joys. Whence also the Psalmist, choosing the situation of his lot, says: "Let my portion, O Lord, be in the land of the living" (Psalm 141:6). But fittingly Peninnah is named separately and the sons and daughters separately in receiving portions. For Peninnah signifies the teachers of Judea, while the sons designate her stronger hearers, and the daughters designate the weaker ones, her subjects. Therefore the mother, and sons, and daughters are mentioned separately: because on account of the unequal merits of the ancient elect, their rewards were not equal. It follows: (Verse 5.) But to Anna he gave one portion sadly: because he loved Anna.

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

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

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

"To such an extent that she reproached her because the Lord had closed her womb. For she still considered it a great thing that she could not prevail to be converted to the faith. Therefore, as if the prophet were marveling at the magnitude of her blindness, he says: She is weighed down by such darkness of error that she insults the good on account of that by which she herself can no longer become good. And because Holy Church grieved for her as she perished, it follows: (Verse 7. Moreover, Anna wept

18. For he also brought forth lamentations of his own sorrow, saying: "I have great sadness, and continual sorrow in my heart: for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:2, 3). And because he did not receive joy from their conversion, it is added: (Verse 7.) And she did not take food. She would indeed have taken food if she had received the refreshment of joy from the complete conversion of Judea. Therefore she who wept did not receive food, because she who grieved over the perishing of Judea did not receive joy from its salvation. But the food of joy, which is not given to the holy Church from the conversion of the Jews, is offered through the encouragement of the bridegroom. For the words of his preaching, even if reprobate hearers do not receive them, nevertheless are not without the reward of recompense. For Almighty God both rewards what is bestowed upon the reprobate without the benefit of the reprobate; and what they inflict upon the elect preachers by way of adversity, He weighs out to them through the balance of just examination as the gain of recompense. Whence it is fittingly added: (Verse 8.) Therefore Elkanah her husband said to her: Anna, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart afflicted? Am I not better to you than ten sons?

19. Therefore, as if the Redeemer speaks to the mind of the teacher through the consolation of inner inspiration: You complain in vain about the lost gain of preaching, you who receive

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

20. For what was it then for the holy Church to eat, except to receive the food of consolation through divine encouragement? And what was it for her to drink, except to rejoice in the sweetness of inner consolation poured into her? For if food strengthens, drink cheers; therefore we take food when, having seen the eternal rewards, we are strengthened amid adversities. And we drink, as it were, after food: because when the mind of the elect strengthens itself in the contemplation of eternal goods, it rejoices all the more abundantly amid the great adversities it endures, the more it sees greater rewards stored up in heaven for its great labors. Made bold by that heavenly refreshment, she renews her strength, so that she may despise earthly things all the more strongly, the more the love of heavenly things exalts her. Rightly therefore, after she had eaten and drunk, Anna is recorded to have risen. For she rose because she reformed her mind toward the urgency of preaching.

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

22. And since we have referred Anna's drink to the joy of the holy Church, which is shown to rejoice, how is it narrated that she wept with a bitter spirit? But it can reasonably be understood that contemplation of heavenly reward had lifted her up to rejoice, and compassion for rejected Judea stirred her up by affecting her with bitterness of spirit. For caught in the whirlwinds of great persecution, with heavenly rewards revealed to her, she exulted, but she fell into bitterness because she saw the formerly chosen people perishing. Hence she is described as weeping abundantly while praying, so that by the gift of such great affection, she might be able to obtain the salvation of her people from the Lord. This whole passage can also be understood differently. For in Shiloh, that is, in the ministry to which she was sent, she ate; because even if she could not win over the entire Jewish people, she nevertheless converted many of them to faith in the Redeemer by preaching. Hence when Peter preached, five thousand men believed in one day (Acts 4:4), and on another, three thousand believed (Acts 2:41). And because what we drink we can swallow more easily than what we eat: Anna ate and drank, because she converted some with difficulty and others easily by preaching. For at Peter's aforementioned preaching, many thousands believed in one moment, but Paul did not believe until he had vehemently opposed the preachers themselves with threats and slaughter. But after Anna ate and drank in Shiloh, she arose:

because when she had taken away from Judea those who were predestined to eternal life, she prepared herself for preaching to the Gentiles. But what kind of child she desired to bear is shown by what was added: (Verse 15) And she vowed a vow, saying: O Lord of hosts, if looking you will see the affliction of your handmaid, and will remember me, and not forget your servant, and will give to your servant a male child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.

23. What does it mean that Anna requests a male child from the Lord, except that those whom holy Church desires to bring forth by preaching, she longs for them to be strong in Evangelical perfection? For in comparison with Evangelical perfection, those works of the Law which seemed strong were not strong, but weak. For there it was commanded: "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy" (Lev. 19:18). But in the Gospel the Lord commands, saying: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:44). There the uncleanness of fornication is cut away from the body, so that the strength of conduct might excel as if by the male sex; here impure thought is also cut away from the heart: "Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her," he says, "has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Therefore the Synagogue, which brought forth the Jewish people through the weakness of its precepts, did not bear the male sex, but rather the female. And so when Anna requests that a male child be given to her by the Lord, what else is she seen to desire, except to bring forth through the Gospel such ones as would appear strong, both in outward purity of body and in inward charity?

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

begets through preaching. He also gives him to the Lord all the days of his life who ascribes nothing to his own favor from the virtues in which his subject advances by improving. For the days of life of the chosen subject are the holy virtues, which illuminate his soul by their radiance lest it be darkened by the night of vices on the way to the heavenly homeland.

25. But the perfect order of the preacher, while he despises having favors from the profit of preaching, does not take away the temporal goods of his subjects by coveting them. Hence it is well added there: ”And no razor shall come upon his head. When a razor comes upon the head, it shaves the hair. For what is designated by hairs, which are superfluous to the body, except the abundant supply of earthly substance? And what is expressed by the razor except the greed of evil pastors? By which razor the head of a born son is shaved, when the goods of subjects are seized through the greed of preachers. Hence also it is said to sinning Judea through the prophet: ”Your shepherds are wolves of the evening, not leaving anything in the morning” (Zeph. 3:3). For in the evening the shepherds become wolves, because as this world grows dark and declines toward its end, they do not fear to seize the goods of their subjects. They do not leave anything in the morning, because while they gape after temporal things, as the coming of the future judgment grows bright, they do not reserve for themselves the rewards to be given. These indeed Micah denounces, saying: ”The prophets who seduce my people, who bite with their teeth and preach peace; and if anyone does not give something into their mouth, they sanctify war against him” (Mic. 3:5). For the prophets seduce the people of the Lord when reprobate preachers confuse the judgments of their hearers.

And biting with their teeth they announce peace, because in the appetite of their rapacity, while they look up to the earthly gifts of the wicked, they promise them the security of divine indulgence. But they sanctify war against those who do not give something into their mouth, because they terrify even the just with harsh sentences, who do not offer them earthly things according to their desire. These indeed place a razor upon the head of the son, because under the pretext of charity they preach heavenly things, so that they may take earthly things from them through greed. That holy Church does not have this razor for the plundering of subjects, the excellent teacher shows in himself, saying: ”I do not seek the gift, but I seek the fruit” (Phil. 4:17). Hence he also says: ”Let him who preaches the Gospel live by the Gospel. But I have not used this power” (1 Cor. 9:14, 15). For he who does not care to receive necessary sustenance from his subjects clearly shows with what sublimity of worldly contempt he would reject shameful gains and illicit gifts. Therefore when Hannah vows that a razor shall not come upon the head of her son, she openly suggests the customs of holy Church, which brings forth the elect to eternal life by speaking, but never takes away their temporal goods through avarice. But because this is said of Hannah still vowing and not yet giving birth, it is fittingly added: (Verse 12.

”And it came to pass, as she multiplied prayers before the Lord, that Eli observed her mouth.”

26. What was it for the holy Church to multiply prayers before the Lord out of desire for giving birth, except to persist in constant prayers for the conversion of the Synagogue? And

what was it for the Jewish priesthood to watch her mouth, except to lie in wait against the preaching of the holy Church? For it watched her mouth, because it strove vehemently to criticize the right preaching of the faith. And it is rightly said to have watched her mouth when she was multiplying prayers, because the more it recognized her greater desires in the urgency of her preaching, the more cunningly it strove to harm her. Finally, it would not have watched but would have heeded her mouth, if it had wished to hear the preaching of our faith for the fruit of its own salvation. It follows: (Verse 13.) Now Hannah was speaking in her heart, and only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard at all.

27. The heart of the holy Church is none other than that devout and learned blessedness of the faithful which is within her. And Anna spoke in her heart, because the preaching of the holy Church benefited only those who were to be illuminated by the true light through divine predestination. What indeed is the movement of the lips but the advancement of signs in the holy preachers? These indeed, although they seemed to speak outwardly like lips and to stand in a lowly position, while they gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead, certainly displayed great movements of merits. Hence also that great lip of the holy Church, while speaking it seemed to stand in a lowly position, because it was not only humble in word and conduct, but also sublime in the power of signs, so that by its movement it raised itself up to heaven, saying: Our conversation is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). And so Eli only saw Anna's lips moving but did not hear her voice at all, because the Jewish priesthood marveled at the works of the apostles but was not advanced to salvation by their preaching. Therefore Anna's voice was not heard, because although the holy Church was wonderful in the display of signs, when she brought forth words of preaching, she kindled strangers to love of the Redeemer. But what does Eli think of her whom he does not understand? It follows: (Verse 13) Therefore Eli thought her to be drunk.

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

(Verse 14.) And he said to her: "How long will you be drunk?" And because he tried to command her to be silent, he added: (Verse 14.) "Digest a little while the wine with which you are soaked."

29. The wine with which Anna was drunk would have been digested, if the holy Church, overcome by the threats of the Jews, had grown lukewarm from the fervor of preaching. And because they were striving to withdraw from her the understanding of preaching, Anna is commanded to digest the wine for a little while. Did not Eli then command Anna to digest, when the princes of the Jews, having beaten the apostles, ordered them, saying that they should no longer speak in the name of Jesus? But because they refused to digest the wine with which they were drunk, they answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). And again: "We cannot but speak what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). But because the holy Church preserved the virtue of meekness amid words of freedom, there follows: (Verse 15.) "Not so, my lord."

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

31. But she who despised the fleeting goods of the world says: "Not at all, my lord. For I am a woman exceedingly unhappy. As if to say: You think I desire the happiness of this passing world, but I see myself as all the more unhappy, the further I recognize the joys of my happiness to be from here. Because I believe I shall be happy there, here I consider myself greatly unhappy, since I desire no glory at all. Indeed, the holy Church is called a woman on account of her fruitfulness, exceedingly unhappy on account of her fortitude, because she was about to give birth to the world through the word, and she could not perfectly despise the glory of the world unless heavenly love strengthened her with wondrous fortitude; or she was exceedingly unhappy because she grieved not a little over the perdition of her people. The wise Solomon, greatly admiring her, says: "Who shall find a valiant woman? (Prov. 31:10). In this passage it should also be noted that she does not say "an unhappy woman," but "exceedingly I am. For she was exceedingly unhappy, whom no enticement of the world pleased. Or certainly she declares herself exceedingly unhappy, who remembers that she was expelled from the joys of eternal life through the merit of the first sin, to which she cannot return except through many tribulations of this life. For she would not be exceedingly unhappy if she could have returned to the lost joys of paradise without present tribulation.

Hence Paul, showing the inevitable hardship of this excessive unhappiness, says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21). As if therefore the holy Church, responding to the Jewish priesthood disparaging her, should say: You ascribe to me a kingdom in temporal happiness, but mine is that which is not attained except through the affliction of much tribulation. There follows: (Verse 15) "I have drunk neither wine nor anything that can intoxicate."

32. For he did not drink wine, because he did not seek temporal gains from the office of preaching. He did not drink anything else that could intoxicate, in that the concupiscence of the flesh did not overturn him into a fall of vices. According to the earlier interpretation, however, she did not drink wine, who had nothing of heretical depravity in her refreshment. She would have drunk something else that could intoxicate, if she had swelled up, deceived by eloquence of speech. But because she taught true things with right intention, adding, she says: (Verse 15.) But I poured out my soul in the sight of the Lord.

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

34. As if to say: She who speaks to you of the goods of eternal life does not deserve to be despised as an idolater. She also asserts that she is His handmaid, so that he might recognize from the name of her ministry that she desires to serve him for eternal gains. It follows: "Because out of the multitude of my grief and sorrow I have spoken until now." As if she spoke more openly and said: Recognize from this that I have nothing from an evil spirit, because I come to speak out of much pain of persecution, and I do not abandon the urgency of preaching, conquered by no sufferings. The sorrow of Anna can also be referred to the affection of holy Church, and her grief to her passion. Indeed, she spoke out of the multitude of sorrow, she who brought forth the word of preaching to the perishing Jewish people out of the feeling of compassion. As Paul implies, saying: "I speak the truth in Christ Jesus, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness to me in the Holy Spirit, that there is great sadness in me, and continual sorrow in my heart: I wished that I myself might be anathema from Christ for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites" (Rom. 9:1-2 ff.). But let him who implies that he speaks out of the multitude of sorrow

say whether he speaks out of multitude: "From the Jews five times I received forty lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned" (2 Cor. 11:24). But holy Church, patiently enduring adversities, humbly manifesting the virtue of her innocence and her truth, persuaded certain priests of Judea by speaking the good of her preaching. Therefore it is also added: 21 (Verse 17.) "Then Eli said: Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you the petition which you have asked of Him."

35. For Eli first contradicted Hannah while she was praying by uttering insults, but afterward he took pleasure in her devotion to him. What is this, except that the Jewish priesthood both opposed the preaching Church through some ministers of its office, and through others finally consented to the recognized truth of our faith? For concerning those who opposed, it is said that they flogged the apostles and commanded them not to speak any further in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40). But concerning those who consented, the same Luke recalls, saying: "A great multitude of priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Therefore Eli prayed for the vow of Hannah's fruitfulness when that great multitude of priests, obedient to the faith, desired that the number of the elect be multiplied through the preaching of the holy Church. He certainly wished her to go in peace, because he desired her to obtain the fruit of preaching without the pain of suffering. And because the holy Church took pleasure in their vow, it follows: (Verse 18) "May your handmaid find grace in your eyes." As if to say: According to the gaze of your desire, may the grace of divine dispensation follow the work of my ministry. It follows: (Verse 18) "And the woman went her way, and she ate and drank, and her countenance was no longer changed in various ways."

36. The woman went on her way, because the holy Church preached the word of faith to the Gentiles. Which the apostles also say, threatening the Jews: "Because you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). She is rightly called a woman when she departs, because through the preaching of the Redeemer she was about to produce among the Gentiles the fruit of great fruitfulness. Moreover, she ate and drank, and yet her countenance was no longer changed to various expressions, because she gained great profits from the conversion of the Gentiles, but the persecution which she had suffered in Judea, she also found among the Gentiles. But explaining the order in which she departed, it says: (Verse 19) "And they rose early in the morning, and worshipped before the Lord; and they returned, and came to their house, in Ramah."

37. But what does it mean that above it is said singularly of Anna alone: "The woman went on her way," but now in the plural: "They rose in the morning," unless that she is understood to descend with her husband? And because the husband of holy Church is the Redeemer of the human race, who had already ascended to heaven when he was leaving that same Judea overwhelmed by the darkness of its unbelief, how can what is said about Anna and her husband Elkanah now be understood as a type of Christ and the Church—that they rose together in the morning and returned equally to their city? But since we have already said that the city of Ramatha designates the heavenly homeland, how does this apply to holy Church, which did not ascend to the heavenly homeland immediately when it ceased from

preaching to the Jews? But because the Lord, rising from the dead, speaks through teachers sent out in preaching, saying: ”Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Matt. 28:20), it is not absurd that holy Church is understood to rise and return with him. For he who never abandons his elect through spiritual presence both remains with those who stand and departs with those who go away. We said that Ramatha designates the heavenly homeland, but we did not say that it can signify nothing else. What else, then, does it signify in this place, except the fulfillment of prophecy in the calling of the Gentiles?

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

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

This house is described as situated in the consummated vision, because it could not be built before the time of its calling predicted by the prophets arrived.

There follows: (Verses 19 and 20. And Elkanah knew Anna his wife, and the Lord remembered her. And it came to pass after a cycle of days, Anna conceived and bore a son.

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

39. Samuel is interpreted as ”his name is God.” Who then does Samuel more fittingly suggest to us than the order of preachers, which was called to faith from among the Gentiles? For because he is strong in conduct, exalted in power, and while the special sign of divine grace is observed in him, devoted crowds of hearers are led to veneration of his preaching, rightly his name is declared by its appellation. Hence it is said by the Lord to Moses: ”I have made you a god to Pharaoh” (Exodus 7:1). Hence also in the law, forbidding, he says: ”You shall not speak evil of gods” (Exodus 22:28). And it should be noted that he whose name is called god was a son, not a daughter, because certainly pastoral dignity, when it is weighed down by weak conduct, is not adorned with the splendor of so lofty a name. Since therefore the order of teachers, promoted from among the Gentiles to the ministry of preaching the gospel, was not unequal by the grace of merits to the excellence of their dignity, rightly it is now said: ”She called his name Samuel, because she had asked him from the Lord.” And it should be noted that in this place ”to ask” means what she obtained by asking. Therefore in plain words it is shown why Anna’s firstborn is distinguished by so great a name. This is as if to say: She gave him so great a name for this reason, because he who is born by heavenly gift was great by the grace of merits. But to show with what care the provident mother nourishes him, it follows: (Verses 21 and 22.) ”And her husband Elkanah went up,

and all his house, to offer the solemn sacrifice, and his vow; and Anna did not go up. For she said to her husband: I will not go until the child is weaned."

40. But what is the solemn sacrifice of the victim, if not that offering of love of the holy Church, by which she is joined to her Creator in eternal contemplation? To this sacrifice Elkanah ascended when our Redeemer, now triumphing over death, now overcoming the darkness of our mortality, raised to the heavens the flesh which He had assumed for our salvation. With Him His whole household also ascended, because He lifted the earlier elect of the Synagogue to the height of immortality. Then He offered the solemn sacrifice when He presented Himself to the eternal Father in heaven through the substance of His glorified flesh, and gladdened the nature of the angels both by our redemption and by their own restoration. To this solemn sacrifice Anna is invited, because the holy Church is kindled by daily desires of love through the spiritual encouragement of her heavenly Spouse toward the eternal contemplation of divine brightness. Yet she refrains from her ascent in order to nurse her son, because so that she may benefit the little ones of Christ here, she patiently endures the delay of her glory. Had not that mother been invited to the offering of this solemn sacrifice who said: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23)? But let her who is drawn by the desires of love toward the beauty of the Spouse say whether she loves to nurse her son: "To remain in the flesh is necessary for your sake" (Phil. 1:24). She also indicates that she had nourished the Corinthians with this food, saying: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2). For to nurse the little ones of the holy Church is for pastors to nourish the hearts of weak or simple hearers with the food of plainer Scripture. To whom indeed that same excellent teacher says: "I judged not myself to know anything among you, except Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

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

Therefore Anna promises both to wean her son and to lead him to appear before the sight of the Lord, because Holy Church teaches the chosen subjects whom she instructs to perfectly despise present things, and to do good, and to hasten through humility to eternal goods. And

it should be noted that he who is said to need to appear in the sight of the Lord is declared to be led from the place of weaning, because clearly it is no small part of the spiritual journey when from what we learn from heavenly teaching we advance to the practice of perfect work. But since one must never cease from the pursuit of the same good work, there follows: (Verse 22) "And that he may appear there continually."

42. For we continually appear there from where we never depart. Therefore to appear continually in the sight of the Lord is to obscure the beauty of good conduct with no shadows of life, because he who falls into no unlawful things never departs from the secret of the divine gaze; and divine goodness regards him as if placed in light, because it does not attend to those shadows of sins which it has condemned in the choice of its examination. Therefore Anna announces that she will not go up to offer the solemn sacrifice until the infant is weaned, because holy Church proposes to guard her children for as long as she is able to become secure about their perfection, so that they themselves do not afterward withdraw from the goodness they have received. However, the ascent of the solemn sacrifice can be referred to the height of holy preaching. For concerning the ascent of her husband it is written through the Prophet: "He ascended above the cherubim, and flew upon the wings of the winds" (Psalm 17:11). Indeed the Lord ascends above the cherubim, because he ascends in the sublime minds of his preachers and places the height of his knowledge there. And he flies upon the wings of the winds, because before their spiritual eyes he elevates himself to the height of wondrous understanding by the breathings of the Holy Spirit. "And he made darkness his hiding place" (Ibid., 12), because he hides the sublimity of his majesty from the reprobate. "But around him is his tabernacle" (Ibid.), because to those whom he elevates through sublime gifts, he also manifests the glory of his Majesty.

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

And so mother Church was compelled to ascend, that she herself might also become a cherub, and might draw near to the Redeemer flying above her, might take up wings, might hold him walking upon them in the height of the sacraments, and might receive from his Majesty

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

And because this knowledge of God must not only be held by faith but also by confession, and we are permitted neither to remain ignorant any longer nor to keep silent about what we believe and confess, the weaned child who is brought to the house of the Lord is declared to remain perpetually in the presence of the Lord. There follows: (Verse 23) "And Elkanah her husband said to her: Do what seems good to you; remain until you wean him."

44. What does it mean that Anna's plan is strengthened by her husband's authority, except that the purpose of holy Church is not presumed from human judgment, but from divine? For whatever holy Church wished to arrange among the nations subject to it, it only then held as ratified when it recognized from the judgment of internal truth what ought to be arranged. And because we have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), who intercedes for us, he adds and says: (Verse 23.) And I pray that the Lord may fulfill His word. 45. What is the word that is asserted must be fulfilled, except the predestined conversion of the gentiles? And because we are reconciled to God through his blood, he himself prays for the fulfilling of the word, by whose intercession our salvation is accomplished. For him to pray is also to continually present himself in his assumed humanity to the eternal Father for our salvation; and while he does not cease to offer himself thus, he opens the way for our reception into life. But because he accomplished the plan of his disposition by seeking it out, it is fittingly added: So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him from milk. Then it follows: (Verse 24.) And she brought him, after she had weaned him, with three bulls, and three measures of flour, and a vessel of wine; and she brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh.

46. For what is signified by a calf in this place, if not the purpose of imitating the life of the perfect? But it is a calf when it arises in the heart of one making progress, yet it becomes an ox when through the strength of virtue it is brought to the disposition of a great conversion. In this place it must be carefully inquired why not one calf, but three are reported to have been brought to the tabernacle. But in the three calves the infant being carried is shown, so that he might suggest the pattern of those who are being trained for the ministry of preaching. For the perfect teacher watches over both the conversion of sinners and the guarding of the just. For like a farmer of the supreme head of the household, he yokes both

oxen to the plows, so that he may not only watch over those standing lest they fall, but also raise up the fallen so they may stand firm. But let him who has two oxen in the care of those subject to him, that he may be able to be perfect, yoke a third ox in divine contemplation, so that he may both open the hearts of his neighbors with a complete yoke, by speaking as if by plowing, and always extend himself through the singular strength of love toward the vision of his Creator.

Therefore Samuel is led to the house of the Lord with three calves, when anyone making good progress proposes that through the labor of preaching he may be able to benefit his neighbors, and through the secret of quiet cling to the intimate vision of the Creator. And because an unskilled mind will never be able to exhibit this well, he is also offered with three measures of flour. For when loaves are made from flour, the preparation of refreshment is completed. But because he is offered not in loaves but in measures of flour, a good devotion proposing doctrine is shown, not exhibiting the benefit of doctrine itself. Therefore a measure of flour signifies the preparation for holy preaching. But the infant is brought with three measures of flour, because when we propose to preach, we prepare the word of knowledge for sinners unto conversion, for the just unto the state of perseverance, and for ourselves unto heavenly contemplation; or certainly one measure is, as we have said, for the conversion of the sinner, another for the instruction of the married, and the third for the excellent purity of the continent. And they are called measures on account of the measure of discretion. Whence also the blessed Paul declares, saying: Not to think more highly than one ought to think, but to think with sobriety (Rom. 12:3).

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

48. Where indeed these beginnings of virtues are to be perfected, he teaches when he adds: ”And she brought him into the house of the Lord in Shiloh.” The house of the Lord is rightly understood as the holy Church, which indeed is said to be situated in Shiloh. Now Shiloh

is the place where the ark of God is said to have remained. What else, therefore, does Shiloh signify in this place than the tradition of the old law? For it contains, as it were, the ark of God, while it displays outwardly the carnal letter, which holds spiritual knowledge enclosed in its secrets. What then does it mean that the house of the Lord is said to be situated in Shiloh, except that the holy Church is known to be founded in the sacrament of the Scriptures as in a place? Samuel is said to have been brought there, offered there, because apart from the holy Church there is no place where the merits of virtues may grow and come to the summit of perfection. But when he who was brought is mentioned, the reason for his delay is also recalled, when it is added: (Verse 24.) ”But the boy was still a little child.” For if he had not then been a little child, while he could come by himself, it would not have been necessary for him to be led here by another. It follows: (Verse 25.) ”And they sacrificed a calf, and offered the boy to Eli.”

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

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

calf together when in the heart of a subject progressing well the divine agrees with human preaching.

Moreover, three calves are brought, because when we propose to bring help to the fallen and to those standing, and to bring the assistance of guardianship to ourselves, while we attend to these things with one good intention, they are indeed three with respect to the work, but one in the gift of oblation. They are indeed three, because they are rendered toward us and toward our neighbors with different regard and at different times, but they are one calf, because they are proposed together, and are expended on God with equal devotion of oblation, and there is one cheerfulness in them, and no other is had.

50. ”And they offered the boy to Eli. In Eli are figured not only the persons of the ancient teachers, but also their doctrine. What then does it mean that the boy Samuel is said to have been offered to Eli, except what is openly understood: that whoever strives to benefit others by preaching ought not only to write new things, but also old things? Hence the Lord also says in the Gospel through a parable: ”Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth from his treasure new things and old” (Matthew 13:52). Samuel is therefore offered to Eli when the mind of a well-progressing subject is instructed in the knowledge of the law and the prophets, so that in the books of the ancients he may read the letter that kills, but also understand according to the Spirit that gives life; and so receive what sounds outwardly that, beyond the sound of the letters, he may recognize what the Spirit sounds within; and hold new things for faith, but, as often as necessary, bring forward the old Scriptures for the confirmation of the New Testament. For then he will be able to defend the new when he recognizes their reasoning from the old. Therefore Samuel is openly said to have been offered to Eli, because only he sufficiently preaches the new who does not ignore that reasoning by which the old things are to be understood.

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

51. Anna stood before Eli, because the holy Church did not fall to any persecutions from the doctors of the synagogue. This is as if the Church, glorying, were to say to the leaders of the Synagogue: Therefore I was able to bring forth the world to God through the Gospel, because I endured unconquered the adversities which you inflicted upon me. For if, overcome by punishments, I had submitted myself to antiquity, I would never have begotten for the Redeemer a new offspring of so many nations. And because she speaks humbly, she calls upon the Lord by beseeching. Because indeed she desires that the pledge of eternal life be given to her in faith in the Redeemer, she says: ”As your soul lives.” But she who gloried that she had stood spoke great things about herself. And because she had spoken

those same great things humbly, not proudly, she immediately referred them to the praise of almighty God, saying: (Verse 27.) "I prayed, and the Lord gave me my petition which I asked of him; therefore I also have commended him to the Lord."

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

In which days indeed we need the aids of divine protection all the more strongly, the more heavily we are attacked by the temptations of malignant spirits. But since in many codices it is read not "commended" but "lent," this is not without good meaning. For sons are lent by mother Church in this life. But whatever we lend, we expect to be returned to us in the faith of the one receiving it. The days are indeed the brilliances of spiritual virtues. In which days certainly Anna's son is lent to the Lord, because the holy Church offers the elect to him in the brilliance of virtues, so that almighty God may afterward present them to himself for the increase of his eternal joy in the splendors of rewards. And it should be noted that he is declared commended for all days, so that nothing may be lacking to him of what must be had from spiritual conduct, whom the chosen preacher will not be able to receive in eternal life as darkened in any part. There follows: (Verse 28. "And they worshipped the Lord there. We also, members of the holy Church, when through the scriptures of the Old Testament we are submitted to the veneration and precept of the Creator, there indeed we worship the Lord, because we hold the faith of the ancient Fathers, and we exercise that same faith through love in good work.

CHAPTER II. We have brought forth these things concerning the beginning in a typical exposition; now let us seek our instruction in the words of the same history through moral signification. (1 Kings 1:1) There was a certain man, he says, from Ramathaim-zophim.

1. In this one man, what is more fittingly designated than each new despiser of the world? For he is called a man because he is strong in purpose; but one, because he is singular in love; for he is a man because from great virtue he despises all present things; but one, because he desires to enjoy the vision of almighty God alone. For whoever perfectly despises

earthly things is a man from fortitude, but if he does not ardently desire to see his Creator, he is not one from intention. Therefore the perfection of the man is placed in the praise of unity, so that he who powerfully despises the world may not divide his mind, may yearn only for heavenly things, may sigh only for those eternal joys which come from the vision of the Creator. Such indeed was he who confessing to God said: What remains for me in heaven, and what have I desired from you upon earth (Ps. 72:25)? Hence he also says: Your face, O Lord, I will seek (Ps. 26:8). For he who desired nothing on earth was indeed a man; but he who desired nothing either in heaven or on earth except Him alone, who, spurning all things, sought only His face, was not only a man but also one. Concerning this unity the Lord speaks to Martha in the Gospel, saying: Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary (Luke 10:41-42). Hence Luke, speaking of the perfect number of believers, says:

They had one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). For they had one heart because through the intention of reason they had looked upon the Creator alone; they had one soul because through the affection of love they desired to see His face alone. Hence it is that the devoted Prophet considers within himself, saying: My soul has thirsted for God, the living fountain; when shall I come and appear before the face of God (Ps. 41:2)? For obtaining this unity, Truth teaching says: Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

2. These things also belong to us, because we who, renouncing the world, have sought the seclusion of a more remote life, are called monks. 'Monos' indeed is Greek, but in Latin it means "one. We are inscribed with this title of appellation so that the word of our name may intimate to us the height of our dignity, and our soul may raise itself the more ardently toward the vision of the Creator, inasmuch as it bears, as it were displayed on its forehead, the sublimity of that brightness in which it must always abide. But the sublimity of divine love is granted only within the catholic Church to the truly elect. Rightly therefore is the man who is called "one" said to have been from Ramathaim-zophim, from Mount Ephraim. For Ramathaim, as I have already said, is a Hebrew name, but in Latin it means "Consummated vision. This appellation indeed befits the holy Church, which was foreseen long ago by the prophets, but was established at the end of the ages in faith in the Redeemer. Therefore the holy Church is called "consummated vision" because it was raised up to the summit of religion through the Redeemer of the human race, whereas formerly it was only foreseen through the spirit of prophecy. Moreover, it is described as being built at Zophim on Mount Ephraim (above, at the beginning of the allegorical exposition), because it is most lofty in the contemplation of God and fruitful in spiritual virtues. For Zophim means "watchtower," and Ephraim "fruitful.

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

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

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

To such as these, Truth threatens in the Gospel, saying: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruit" (Matthew 21:34). Hence, under the image of the fig tree, commanding the farmer of the holy Church to reject the unfruitful soul, he says: "Cut it down; why should it occupy the land? (Luke 13:7). Hence John the Baptist, threatening, says: "Already the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9). He had also shown that they were from Mount Ephraim but not Ephrathites, about whom Truth says in the Gospel through a parable: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men and lease his vineyard to other farmers who will render him the fruit in their seasons" (Matthew 21:41). Therefore, the man from Mount Ephraim is called an Ephrathite, because all of us who hold the catholic faith within the holy Church, while we cast away earthly things through the ardor of affection and love heavenly things, must also be separated from the earthly things we despise through the labor of good work and be prepared for the heavenly

things we love. Therefore, to be in the Church and not to do good works, because it does not profit for acquiring the good of eternal salvation, the man who is declared to be from Mount Ephraim is also remembered to have been an Ephrathite.

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

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

And that man went up on the appointed days to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh.

5. Indeed, he ascends on appointed days, because he advances gradually in the splendors of eternal vision. For what are those manifestations of inner light, if not days of the elect mind? And they are indeed appointed days, because they are arranged by divine ordering for those established in the progress of spiritual life; they are also appointed days, because we cannot be admitted to their brightness when we wish, but when we are raised up by

divine condescension. For sometimes he receives us in contemplation of inner light, and sometimes he allows us to slip back even to preferring the darkness of human nature. For he raises us as if on appointed days, he who does not continually open the pleasantness of inner light, but shows it at times of his own arrangement. Therefore they are our days, because we are received in great splendors when the beauty of inner glory is revealed to us. But they are called appointed days because enjoying the innermost light is not a matter of our striving, but of divine condescension. For often through prolonged silence, urgent supplications, and frequent groans, we beg that the glory of inner light be opened to us, and we do not merit to be received into its pleasantness. Often we do nothing of this sort out of desire for it, yet suddenly divine grace anticipates us, raises us from the depths of our weakness, snatches us to heavenly things, and shows us the glory of his light when we do not hope for it.

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the zeal of each elect person is shown under the figure of the Ephrathite man, and he is said both to worship and to offer sacrifice, because the elect mind so desires to behold heavenly things that, advancing through spiritual vision, it both crushes every state of carnal life and receives the fullness of eternal joy. For even if some carnal person is not raised to this height of supreme contemplation, yet with respect to that spiritual conversation in which he advances by that ascent of contemplation, before he advances, he is in a certain way carnal. For this very thing is, as it were, carnal: to be unable to be separated from attention to corporeal things through the height of vision.

8. But, so that the rashness of human audacity might be restrained, he is said first to adore, then to sacrifice. For the ordered ascent of the contemplative is such that it should begin

from fear. And what is this fear itself but the preordained purgation of the chosen mind passing over to behold the divine glory? For the more purely it deserved to gaze upon the rays of divine light, the more, cast down by a stronger fear, it is presented purer for the vision of the innermost Majesty. Thus, therefore, the outward conduct of this Ephrathite is shown to us, so that it might be reasonably demonstrated to those tending toward perfection what must be done inwardly. Therefore, while we desire to be sprinkled with the brightness of the highest glory, let us fix the boldness of our presumption in this passage of fear, so that the more reverently we fear the almighty Lord, the more clearly we may see the glory of his kindness. The greatness of this fear is also sometimes struck into the chosen mind after the showing of a joyful vision. When this happens, it certainly does not happen to purify the mind for the vision of glory, but to guard it from pride. Hence Peter, James, and John first saw the glory of the transfigured Lord, then, when fear was struck into them, they fell down, lest being lifted up they should lose what they had humbly been taken up to deserve to see (Matt. 17:2ff.).

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

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

For while by our own effort we are suspended in meditation on divine things, they are as it were the appointed days of our ascent, because we behold certain rays of spiritual light, we ordain certain things for ourselves, we are raised up from the depth of our humanity to a certain height. But because nothing is accomplished in these meditations without divine

grace, and because we cannot prevail either to strike fear into ourselves or to exhibit the sweetness of divine delight, they are indeed days of ascent on which we resolve to worship and sacrifice, but nevertheless in them we neither worship nor sacrifice. But another day comes, and we sacrifice, because we are sprinkled with the sudden light of divine grace, and from the glory of His Majesty we receive an ineffable abundance of love. This day, therefore, is not one of those, but follows them, because indeed if we cannot receive this bounty of divine grace by our own disposition, nevertheless we never merit it unless we take care altogether that both by meditating, and by reading daily, and by praying, we dwell upon those spiritual brightnesses which we are able to. But the day is said to have come so that heavenly condescension might be designated, because when it visits elect souls, it is not of our capacity but of its own goodness. There follows: (Verses 4 and 5. ”And he gave portions to Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave one portion, sad, because he loved Hannah.”

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

But the imperfection of one still beginning is indicated when one wife of the Ephrathite is said to afflict and vehemently distress the other. For in the perfect person, the battle of wives is by no means engaged, since firm experience already knows how to arrange discretely the need for work and the intention for contemplation. For he possesses both wives as if in peace, who neither assigns the times of work to contemplation nor disturbs the leisure of contemplation through the intention of work. (Verse 6) Her rival also afflicted her and vehemently distressed her, to such an extent that she reproached her because the Lord had closed her womb.

11. Anna is afflicted by her rival, when immoderate attention to good work disturbs the quiet of inner vision. She is afflicted when she who is proved to be more noble is placed

before her, and she is greatly distressed, because the contemplation of the elect mind is narrowed when he who desires to be in the contemplation of sublime things spreads himself too immoderately in the works of the active life. For to distress is to constrict. Indeed the vision of the mind is constricted when, impeded by the occupations of works, it is by no means expanded in that immensity of inner light. And because she is said to distress her greatly, it should be noted that immoderate concern for good work also harms contemplation not a little. For Peninnah greatly distresses Anna, because when the mind is immoderately devoted to the active life, it is very difficult for it, while it occupies itself with arranging earthly things, to rise powerfully in the vision of heavenly things. Peninnah also reproaches her as if barren, because while we quickly bring forth the fruit of good works from the active life, and cannot easily attain to the joys of inner contemplation, she appears barren while we, inexperienced, despair of her fruitfulness.

Therefore while we love Peninnah for her fruitfulness, Anna is afflicted, distressed, and marked with the reproach of barrenness, because while we do not restrain the concern for good actions with the discretion we ought, we render the purity of contemplation so much more difficult for ourselves, inasmuch as we by no means retain the nobler life with excellent zeal. But because she has begun to ascend to higher things, if she is strong in her purpose, enduring such trials, she does not despair. For she strives toward those lofty heights of contemplation which she has begun, and scorns to be consoled by the food of action, she who has desired to delight in the sight of the Creator alone. And so it is fittingly added: (Verse 7. Moreover Anna wept, and did not take food.

12. For in weeping the burning desire for divine contemplation is shown, while in the disdaining of food the contempt for passing joy is displayed. For the mind that desires inward things with fervent longings, while it rejects the enticement of earthly joy, while with urgent groans it seeks the pleasantness of supernal light to be poured into it, surely weeps and does not take food. For he who said was loathing this food: ”My soul refused to be comforted” (Psalm 77:3). But he who disdained to take the food of solace from the delight of created things, because he found the banquet of his delights in the Creator alone, says: ”I remembered God and was delighted” (Ibid., 4). To these banquets indeed he was exhorting his weeping spouse when he said: ”Why are you sad, O my soul, and why do you trouble me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, the salvation of my countenance and my God” (Psalm 43:5). This same exhortation is recognized here as well, because she is asked by her husband why she weeps, and why she does not eat, and why she has an afflicted heart. As if he were saying: Why are you saddened about not having attained the perfection of contemplation, which if you do not obtain while still a beginner, you will obtain as you progress? Hence she who, afflicted by her rival, had refused to eat, when encouraged by her husband did eat;

because she who by sounder counsel despises lowly things, holds the perfection of contemplation in hope, which she does not yet hold in the power of experience. For to contemplation that is nearly failing and collapsed, the joy of renewed hope is food. Therefore at the voice

of her husband Anna is refreshed, when the intention of contemplation, shaken by temptation, is roused to hope of her progress by him who had begun to love her. Wherefore, having taken food, she rose, poured out prayers to almighty God, and vowed to him a male child, if she should deserve to receive one from him.

13. She vows her son to Almighty God who seeks the joy of contemplation for the fruit of the mind, not for the favor of vanity. But carnal superiors are accustomed to resist vehemently those who rightly seek the desire of contemplation; for they think that those desiring a more secluded life act all the more foolishly, because they themselves are ignorant of the power of interior sweetness. If they sometimes rage against spiritual subjects with the voice of harsh rebuke, they must be calmed by the most humble reasoning. For if they unreasonably rise up against those acting rightly, the reverence due to the higher order requires that they be honored even when they exceed the measure of reason. Both of these—namely carnal prelates and spiritual subjects—Eli and Anna well represent; for when he sat before the doorposts of the Lord's temple and Anna prayed, Eli watched her mouth and called her drunk. But she, who patiently endured the insults, displayed humility of response with truthful reasoning. She declared herself his handmaid, speaking from much grief and sorrow, and not only calmed his angry spirit against her, but even turned him to prayer for obtaining the fruit of her desire.

14. But because we have said these last things about the history, we are not acting amiss if we examine our learning somewhat more carefully in these words of sacred history. If therefore the order of events is sought, she first ate and drank, then had a bitter spirit, prayed to the Lord weeping abundantly, afterward made a vow, and multiplied her prayers. What does the multiplication of Anna's prayers signify, except that perfection of the elect to which the excellent Teacher exhorts us, saying: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17)? For no one can pray without ceasing except a perfect man; for to pray without ceasing is to always stand before the Creator through the affection of supplication. But he who is still weighed down by the weakness of imperfection does not beseech the Lord without ceasing, because even in the very time of prayer he slips away from His sight through wandering of mind. And rightly the holy woman is said to have made a vow before the multiplication of prayers, because unless someone shows himself entirely heavenly through the rigor of resolution, he is drawn away from the affection of supplication all the more often, as he is turned by the mobility of mind into the whirl of worldly intention, and is not held in the Lord's sight through strong guardianship.

But the elect mind will be able to vow itself to heavenly joys through spiritual resolution, if it already knows how to weep abundantly, if through abundance of tears it has already learned to taste the savor of heavenly sweetness, and, occupied in the joy of that inner refreshment of itself, disdains to look upon earthly things. Therefore Anna is openly described as having wept abundantly before her vow, because no one will be able to show himself entirely heavenly by forgetting earthly things, unless, inflamed with great weeping, he knows how to receive the sweetness of intimate delight in the consolation of a mind already dead to

the world. And because this consolation of tears is not received in the joy of the soul, unless one first afflicts oneself through the bitterness of compunction, and pierces with the dagger of salutary sorrow whatever lives in oneself from fleeting joy. Anna is reported to have wept first with a bitter spirit, and thus to have been able to weep abundantly. Which Solomon rightly suggests, saying: "The heart that knows the bitterness of its own soul, in its joy a stranger does not meddle" (Prov. 14:10). For a stranger is one who still has intention of delight from exterior goods. He certainly is not received into the joy of an embittered heart, because he cannot experience what interior joy is, unless he who perfectly cares to despise exterior things.

But it should still be noted that before all these things she is reported to have risen, and before she rose, to have eaten and drunk. What is the food of the elect soul, except according to the voice of truth: "Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4)? And what is it for her to rise, except to raise oneself to the state of heavenly intention? Therefore she is said to have risen before she had a bitter spirit, and to have eaten and drunk before she rose, because the elect soul cannot grieve over the misery of present life, if it does not stretch itself toward those things which it has lost in heaven; and it does not elevate itself to those highest things, if it fasts from the nourishment of Sacred Scripture. Therefore that we may rise, we eat and drink, because we are raised to the height of heavenly love when we are strengthened by the profound and plainer meanings of Sacred Scripture. Then if we rise, we acquire bitterness of heart, because while we are carried upward through love, the things that are below do not offer us the blandishments of joy, but the harshness of affliction.

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

15. After the multiplication of prayers with his wife Anna, to adore in the morning is among the great gifts of virtues to preserve the virtue of humility; and because the soul which is still weighed down by this burden of corruption cannot stand longer in that sublime vision, they are fittingly reported to have returned to their own city. The elect soul, when it is repelled from the contemplation of God by overwhelming weakness, in order to be able to return to the same height of vision, ought to have constructed buildings of fortification, so that, having fallen back upon itself, it may hold itself on high, from where it may again rise to the same height of intimate charity. This is also said under the type of Jerusalem

to the elect soul through the Prophet: Stand on high and see the joy that will come to you from your God (Baruch 4:36; 5:5). As if to say, even if you cannot remain continually in the contemplation of God, lest you be cast down to the lowest depths, you may be able to ascend without difficulty from the high towers of your watchfulness to contemplate him whom you desire. Indeed, he returns to Ramatha his own city, if when he is repelled from the vision of the Divine Majesty, he is retained in the contemplation of the holy angels.

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

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

17. Now the boy is led to the tabernacle with three calves, because for the abundance of spiritual gifts we ought to give thanks to the supreme Trinity. Concerning these calves the

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

But what kind, or how great is praise, if it is not devout? Therefore fittingly three measures of flour are joined to three calves, so that we may be satisfied through devotion by what we say with our mouth in praises of God. For he offers a calf without flour, who in the praises of God indeed utters words, but with a wandering mind does not attend to what he speaks. But if speaking the words of God in praising or praying, we rejoice, while we mix joy with understanding, we join an amphora of that wine which gladdens the heart of man to the flour. This indeed he suggests, who longing says: ”May God bless us, our God bless us, may God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him” (Psalm 67:7-8). He led as it were three calves to the tabernacle, who praising God, by repeating the name of his divinity, set forth the properties of the persons. But when he said ”may they fear,” he said not ”them” but ”him,” certainly he who brought three calves sacrificed one. And because he mixed flour with the calves, and wine with the flour, he glories, saying: ”To him I cried with my mouth, and I exulted under my tongue” (Psalm 66:17). For while he cried out, he led as it were a calf of sacrifice to be immolated, but he could not exult under his tongue, if he did not understand the lofty words of his prayer.

When therefore he cried out, he understood what he cried out, and when he exulted in the oblation of almighty God, he had not only a calf, but also measures of flour, and an amphora of wine. Therefore the calf, the flour and the wine are the praise of God, the understanding of praise, and the joy of a devout mind. But why are the measure and amphora named in the oblation to God, unless because they are names of measures? Paul also explains what this spiritually indicates, saying: ”Each one has his own gift from God, one indeed in this way, another in that way” (1 Corinthians 7:7). Hence the Truth says: ”A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, they will give into your lap” (Luke 6:38). Sacred Scripture has commanded us to guard this measure, saying: ”Do not lift a burden above yourself. But the chosen soul must take great care to offer these three things to almighty God with the ardor of pious devotion and with the zeal for manifest truth. Hence also the son of the same Anna is declared to have been offered to the priest. Which indeed we also do,

if when we make progress in holy conduct, when with minds now fruitful we bring forth the fruit of spiritual joys, we lead to the examination of our prelates everything that is generated in us from heavenly contemplation. And because chosen men amid their sublime gifts do not abandon the good of their humility, there follows: (Verse 28.

"And they worshiped the Lord there."

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

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

But because the holy woman knew through the spirit of prophecy that this would come to pass, and she vehemently desires it to happen, she speaks both exulting and praying. Indeed she exulted in the certainty of future things, vehemently desiring to happen what she knew by revelation of the mystery. Holy Church also recalls, proclaims, and prays the divine benefits from that source, loving and venerating them, because indeed it carries out outwardly by speaking what it inwardly desires to happen with wondrous longing, and venerates what has happened with great devotion. Therefore she says: "My heart has exulted in the Lord," because the gifts she receives for the fruit of eternal joy she does not convert to temporal gladness. There follows: (Verse 1) "And my horn has been exalted in my God."

2. What is the horn of Anna, except the power of the holy Church? This horn indeed was wonderfully lifted up when the Son of God, through His assumed humanity, made Himself a participant in our nature. Therefore in this the horn of the holy Church was exalted, in

which human nature now shines, elevated above the angels. But in that the holy Church singularly declares Him her God and Savior, she covertly shows the rejection of the Synagogue. Therefore in God our Savior our horn has been exalted, because the sublimity of Ecclesiastical power has been raised up for us in the humanity of the Redeemer. Hence also concerning the same Redeemer it is said through Zechariah: He has raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of David His servant, as He spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets (Luke 1:69-70), because when she reports that her horn has been exalted, she covertly indicates that before she had a horn that was not exalted. For the holy Church before the coming of the Redeemer had a horn, because in the patriarchs and prophets she received from God both the order of right living and the power of correcting those who transgressed. But nevertheless she did not have an exalted horn, because even if she could live justly, still she could not return to the joys of Paradise without the presence of the Redeemer.

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

My horn has been exalted in my God, so that evidently the glory of the holy Church may be designated, which obtains the singular summit of power from the presence of the Redeemer. And because she is now extended throughout the whole world, who once was afflicted by persecutions within Judea, there follows: (Verse 1) My mouth has been enlarged over my enemies.

3. For who else are to be understood as enemies of the Church than the Jews? Over whom indeed she has an enlarged mouth, because against their faithlessness she now moves the tongues of all faithful nations. Therefore the mouth of holy Church has been enlarged, because it is spread throughout the whole world, and while she instructs all nations by the preaching of truth, she reproves the foolishness of the Jews, as it were with enlarged mouth. And because she was able to do this for the reason that she joyfully received the Redeemer

of the world coming in the flesh, she sets forth the cause of her enlarged mouth, saying: (Verse 1.) Because I have rejoiced in your salvation.

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

I will rejoice in God my Jesus, and I shall conquer in his glory, he demonstrates not another God, but another person of God. These are the reasonings of holy Church, these are the invincible assertions spread throughout the whole world against the faithlessness of the Jews. Therefore holy Church has her mouth opened wide against her enemies, because now, with God as author, it is known everywhere, whereby the faithlessness of the Jews is also refuted. Therefore let those who deny the Salvation of God hear the reason for the opened mouth, and let them be struck by the argument of our Savior's joy for their own confusion. But they can be struck, yet they refuse to cease from their blasphemies. Already the world has received the Salvation of God, all flesh has seen, the Jew does not believe, because, as I said, he awaits a Savior who is not God. Therefore let them hear the curse of the prophet saying: Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and whose heart departs from the Lord (Jer. 17:5). The Jews trust in a man, who refuse to believe in the Redeemer, while they await the Antichrist at the end of the world. For their confusion the Psalmist proclaims, saying: All the ends of the earth have seen the Salvation of God (Ps. 97:3). As if he confounds the faithlessness of the Jews saying: Why do you defer visions to the future?

He whom you await has already come, he whom you held as promised has already appeared to all the ends of the earth; when you closed your eyes, he passed by; indeed you have become so blind that such great light stood before you, and you did not see. Therefore, shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth, sing, and exult, and make melody; make melody to our God on the harp, and with the voice of psalm, with trumpets of beaten metal, and with the sound of the horn trumpet. Shout joyfully in the presence of the Lord the King; let the sea be moved and its fullness, the world, and all who dwell in it. The rivers shall clap their hands together, the mountains shall exult before the face of the Lord, because he comes, because he comes

to judge the earth (Ibid. 4, seq.). As if to say: Because they are pressed by such immense blindness that they did not deserve to see, you who have seen, rejoice more abundantly. But how wonderfully and ineffably one ought to rejoice, heaping up signs of joy, he says: Shout joyfully, sing, and make melody. Also desiring to convey the celebration of gladness, enumerating its instruments, he says: Make melody to the Lord on the harp, and harp, and with the voice of psalm, with trumpets of beaten metal and with the sound of the horn trumpet, shout joyfully in the presence of the Lord the King.

What does "in the presence of the King" mean, except in the knowledge of the Redeemer? But he explains by how many this solemnity of joys is to be performed, saying: Let the sea be moved, and its fullness, the world, and all who dwell in it. O unhappy Judea, the ends of the earth have seen the Salvation of God, all the earth moved shouts joyfully, the whole world rejoices, the rivers clap with their hands, the mountains exult; but the impious hearts of the Jews do not believe, and in the darkness of their blindness they are struck with the punishment of envy. But him whom they do not fear to blaspheme, holy Church more attentively commends, saying: (Verse 2. There is none holy as the Lord is.

5. In the description of the Redeemer, all things are designated as incomparable. For the true Redeemer is shown from this: that in everything said concerning His glory, no one is compared to Him. For He redeemed all who excels all. This is rightly said against Judea, which despises the Redeemer all the more boldly because it recalls having had many men who shone with great praise of holiness. Hence it is that when reproaching the man whose sight was restored, they say: "You be His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this man is from" (John 9:28-29). Hence likewise they boast and say: "We are the seed of Abraham, and we have never served anyone" (John 8:33). But Moses was a man, Abraham was a man, Christ was a man. However, they were assumed for speaking with God; He was assumed into divinity. They were assumed for ministry; He, as the Only-begotten, was assumed to the kingdom. Hence He also speaks, saying: "All things that the Father has are mine" (John 16:15). There is none holy as the Lord is. Sacred Scripture also testifies to this, saying: "In whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Hence John says: "From His fullness we have all received" (John 1:16). There is none holy as the Lord is. Because in that He is declared Lord, the excellence of His holiness is commended.

But the Jews assert that the Christ whom they await is a mere man, and yet they believe He will be their Lord and uniquely holy. But the Psalmist, reproving them, exhorts us to the joy of faith, saying: "Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; serve the Lord with gladness. Enter into His presence with exultation; know that the Lord Himself is God" (Psalm 100:1-3). They call Him Lord who is not God. Therefore we must shout for joy, we must serve with gladness, who have such a Lord who is also truly believed to be God, who proved the majesty of divinity that He claimed for Himself by incomparable miracles. Let those who deny His invisible divinity believe in His manifest works. But how wondrous is that holiness which sanctifies sinners! Hence He says of the sinful woman: "Her many sins are forgiven,

because she loved much" (Luke 7:47). The woman with the flow of blood, recognizing this excellence of holiness, said: "If I touch even the fringe of His garment, I shall be saved" (Matt. 9:21). But who would affirm her faith if the effect of faith were not evident? For when she touched His garment, the blood stopped. There is none holy, therefore, as the Lord is, because whoever was able to be holy received from His gift that he might be able to be holy. For the holy Church, suggesting this in the following words, turns to the same Redeemer out of exceeding love, saying: (Verse 2) For there is no other besides You.

6. "Holy" is understood. Someone would be holy outside of him, if without the gift of the Only-begotten one could have had the spirit of sanctification. But who would dare assert this about men, when it is by no means established about the Angels? For it is written: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all their power by the spirit of his mouth" (Psalm 32:6). The Word of the Lord is the Only-begotten of God. The evangelist John, indeed pointing to him, says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). If therefore even the angels are believed to be sanctified in the Son, much more is it believed about men that they cannot find the grace of sanctification outside of him.

7. This can also be understood without any implied meaning. Therefore when she says: "Nor is there any other besides you," what else is designated in the Redeemer but the immutability of the divine essence? Hence he also says to the blaspheming Jews: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Intimating the same thing to Moses in Genesis, he says: "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14). For the only-begotten God's being is never to be dissimilarly. This state is certainly as far removed from all mortals as it is more clearly known that they are changed through many things at every single moment. This can also pertain to the state of justice, because the being of the elect is to remain in God through justice. And because the only-begotten of God is God, there is no one outside him, because none of the elect exists except in him. But if this is referred to his divinity, so that it in no way empties the understanding of his humanity, because one who does not have faith in the divine Incarnation cannot be just; therefore the Jews are struck by these individual words, who, while they despise the Redeemer, await the Antichrist, who is clearly proven not to be God. Hence it is also said through blessed Job: "Let the companions of him who is not dwell in his tent" (Job 18:15). The tent of the Antichrist is the love of faithlessness, by which he contradicts the faith of the Redeemer.

In this tent indeed the Jews now remain, because while they lovingly inhabit the position of their faithlessness, they fight against the Redeemer. They are also said to be companions of him who is not, because in their purpose they aid the devil, who, when he fell from the love of that supreme essence, immediately lost true being. For him, indeed, not to be is to be unable to return to that supreme blessed essence through participation in love. And because the people of the Jews had not only the arduous way of life of the ancient fathers, but also the display of miracles for the increase of their pride, it is added: (Verse 2) "And there is none mighty like our God."

8. As if to restrain Judea in her vain boasting, he says: Those whom you claim did great things were mere men; He whom I proclaim was not only a holy man, but also mighty God. Therefore, when strength is considered, excellence is indicated, because truly all strength of man is utterly weak in comparison to the divinity. Yet in this passage, the assertion of divinity does not prove the excellence of the work, but the incomparability of strength shows the truth of the divinity. As if to say: In this it is known that he spoke true things, because he proved the divinity which he claimed for himself by incomparable works. Hence through himself he says: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would have no sin" (John 15:24). Now indeed the works themselves must be examined. Moses divided the sea (Exodus 14:12), Elijah divided the river (2 Kings 2:8); our Lord Jesus walked upon the sea (Matthew 14:24). What then is more elegant—to provide a way for the people passing through in the dry bed of the deep, or to make the very surface of the sea a way? For they, because they were weighed down by the burden of humanity, sought a way on the solid floor of the deep by which they might proceed; but He who is known to have assumed the weakness of human nature into the height of divinity was carried upon the waters by his own power.

Moses obtained the splendor of his countenance from communion with the word of the Lord (Exodus 34:29), Joshua fixed the sun by his prayers (Joshua 10:12-13); but because Jesus is God, he shone forth before his disciples with the power of the sun. The children of Israel could not gaze upon the face of the former; those who were worthy to behold the glory of the latter fell down, so that you might openly recognize that what transcended human capacity was divine. To Him, while those others stood by on the mountain, it was said by the eternal Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5-6). And therefore also Elijah, who shut heaven so that it would not rain, and opened it so that it would rain (1 Kings 17:1)—what is he in comparison to Him who, with the heavens opened, presented the Father as witness of his divine generation? Therefore there is none strong like the Lord, because whatever power Moses was able to show, the Lord, not Moses himself, performed. But Jesus displayed everything that he did wonderfully by his own power, because he was Lord even of Moses. For it was not Moses who rained manna on the people journeying through the desert, but the Lord (Exodus 16:13ff.). It was not Moses, but the Lord who went before the people in a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day (Exodus 14:19).

It was not Moses, but the Word that came to him who brought forth water from the rock (Exodus 17:6). It was not Moses, but the Lord who provided birds to those who desired them (Exodus 16:17). Hence the Lord also restrains the Jews glorying in the strength of their fathers, saying: "Not Moses, but my Father gave you bread from heaven" (John 6:32). 46 Hence the Psalmist, not vainly extolling Moses but laudably exalting the Lord, says: "He did wonders in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan; he divided the sea and led them through, and made the waters stand as in a heap. He led them with a cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire. He brought water out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers. He commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven,

and rained down manna for them to eat, and rained flesh upon them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the sea" (Psalm 78:12ff.). But the Lord Jesus, incomparably strong, appeared not in another's power but in his own. Hence, powerful of himself, commanding the paralytic, he says: "I say to you, arise" (Matthew 9:6). Hence also it is written: "As many as touched him were made well from whatever illness held them" (Mark 6:56). And again: "Power went out from him and healed all" (Luke 6:19).

For this mark of strength neither Moses nor Elijah could have, so that while incomparable signs were made known, they might most clearly designate the coming of the Only-begotten. Rightly therefore the Synagogue is condemned to perpetual silence, when it is added: (Verse 3) "Do not multiply speaking lofty things. Let old things depart from your mouth."

9. As if to say: While you perceive incomparably new things, you reproachfully bring forth the deeds of the ancients. For those things had preceded as a shadow, as it were. But now the faithful openly and reverently adore these works of our Redeemer, because what was shadowed there by the concealment of the sacrament became manifest at the coming of the Redeemer, having awaited the body of the truth to be revealed. Therefore, if they are referred to the new things, they are not old, because understood in the Holy Spirit, they receive no oldness. Concerning that Spirit indeed who renews all things, the Psalmist prays, saying: "Send forth your spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 103:30). Therefore they are old, if they are compared with the works of the Redeemer; but when we bring forth those things spiritually to confirm these, they are renewed by the same Spirit by which we understand these. Therefore when holy Church reproves the Jews concerning the narration of old things, what else is indicated than that they understand carnally the spiritual deeds of the Fathers? For the Synagogue raises itself against holy Church all the more rashly, the more proudly it is exalted by knowledge of the law and the prophets, which it learned was divinely inspired to its fathers, but exhibited to itself only materially. Hence follows: "Do not multiply speaking lofty things, glorying. And that they might cease to be puffed up, she adds, saying:

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

God" (John 1:1). Hence Paul, intimating that our Redeemer is the Lord of knowledge, says: "Because in him dwells all the fullness of the divinity bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Therefore when she says:

"Let old things depart from your mouth, because God is the Lord of knowledge," what else is it to say, except to show to the Synagogue by clear reason that she ought to be silent all the more carefully, inasmuch as she does not know not only what those things are which she says, but also from whom they are? As if to say: That knowledge which you assert belonged to your fathers ought not to have given you arrogance, inasmuch as it was not theirs but of the only-begotten Son of God, and you do not understand that very same knowledge. Therefore she says: "Let old things depart from your mouth. So that the Jews may by no means corrupt what they are unable to understand rightly. "God," she says, "is the Lord of knowledge," so that what they prove to be truly of God, they may not falsely ascribe to men. But while Judea is reproved for words of boasting, because she is not stung by any fear, torments are also announced to her concerning the hidden movements of faithless hearts. For there follows: (Verse 3. And their thoughts are prepared.

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

12. Indeed, by the name of strength, the power of the Holy Spirit is shown. Hence the Lord, promising this same Spirit to the disciples, says: 'But remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49). And the grace of the Holy Spirit is rightly called strength, because when the elect receive it, they become strong against all adversities of this world. But who are the weak in this place to be understood as, if not the apostles? But they were certainly weak when the bow of the mighty was bent, not when they were clothed with power from on high. For in the hour of the Lord's arrest it is written of them that, 'leaving the Lord, they all fled' (Matthew 26:56). Was not Peter very weak then, when he feared the voice of a questioning servant girl and denied the Redeemer (Matthew 26:63, 74)? Already indeed the bow of the mighty had been overcome, the savagery of the Jews brought to nothing, because the Redeemer had risen after conquering death; and yet still the weak apostles feared the overcome mighty ones behind closed doors (John 20:19). But where strength clothed them, it is fitting to observe how strong it made them. For the Holy

Spirit came upon them with a sudden sound, and changed their weakness into the power of wonderful love (Acts 2:2ff.). For they began to preach Christ, now clothed with strength, who had not been ashamed to flee and hide from the threats of persecutors;

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

13. In this passage it must be noted that this is said against Judea, which despises the miracles of the Redeemer all the more proudly insofar as it recognizes that He died amid torments. She says therefore: "The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girded with strength." As if she were answering the Synagogue that slanders the death of the Redeemer, saying: Do not despise the fact that He was able to die, but rather marvel that, having died, He rose again, and by coming back to life overcame the savagery of your nation. And because she shows this concerning the past, she speaks to her not only by proclaiming but by reproaching. For as if she were rebuking one who taunts in vain, she says: What did it profit you to have killed Him whom the snare of death could not hold? You killed Him lest the whole world should go after Him; but for this very reason the whole world goes after Him, because He proved Himself to be the true Son of God — by redeeming the human race through dying, by showing Himself alive through rising again, by ascending to heaven, and by sending the promised Holy Spirit to His disciples. And because the Synagogue, on account of its deserved unbelief, was driven from participation in the promised grace, holy Church, reproaching her for this very thing, adds and says: (Verse 5.) "Those who were full before have hired themselves out for bread, and those who were hungry have been satisfied."

14. Who were previously filled, if not those who had the knowledge of God before the other peoples? Who then should be understood as previously filled other than the Jews, who were instructed in faith in the Creator almost from the very beginning of the world? They indeed hired themselves out for bread. For what do "breads" signify in this place, if not the mysteries of the divine Incarnation? And the place for finding the breads is Sacred Scripture. Hence also the Bread who descended from heaven says to those who do not know where to find him: "Search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39). They therefore hired themselves out for bread, because they had received all the Scriptures

so that in them they should have found the sacraments of the divine Incarnation. But when the Bread came, the Synagogue, which had hired itself out for bread, abandoned the place in which it should have found the bread it was seeking. It had the Scriptures, as I said, for recognizing the Redeemer, but it rejected him when he came according to the Scriptures. The hungry, therefore, were satisfied, because those from the Gentiles who believed, while they reverently receive the mysteries of the divine Incarnation, possess heavenly food for the enjoyment of interior delight. They are indeed called hungry because, before the coming of the Redeemer, cast out by the famine of unbelief, they had no food of spiritual refreshment.

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

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

but because they could not see, they had the joy of desire but did not have the enjoyment of satisfaction. For even if Scripture says: 'That bread having every pleasantness and all

sweetness, God gave to them' (Wis. 16:20), it is said to be received by them in the way it was known—in the way that, known by them through faith, it could be longed for through the desire of charity. Therefore, against the Synagogue glorying in the early fathers, those girded with strength are set above, so that while the new and lofty summit of the elect is beheld, it may no longer glory in vain. And because the food of life is never taken away from the table of holy Church, intimating things future as well as past, she says: (Ver. 6) 'Until the barren woman has borne many, and she who had many children has grown feeble.'

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

She indeed presents the Scriptures to her hearers, but because she denies the Redeemer, she never begets children for God. Therefore she is said to be weakened, to whom spiritual fruitfulness is denied. And because both the rejection of the Synagogue and the election of the Gentiles were accomplished by the incomprehensible judgment of God, there follows: (Verses 6–8. "The Lord kills and gives life, He brings down to the grave and raises up; the Lord makes poor and makes rich; He humbles and He exalts. He raises the needy from the dust and lifts the poor from the dunghill, that he may sit with princes and hold a throne of glory."

17. As if responding to someone astounded at the rejection of so chosen a people, he says: Why do you seek reason in these things which the supreme Reason does incomprehensibly? Reproving this very manner of inquiry, the outstanding teacher also says: 'O man, who are you to answer back to God? Does the thing formed say to its maker: Why have you made me thus? Does not the potter have power over the same lump of clay to make one vessel indeed for honor, and another for dishonor' (Rom. 9:20-21)? It is therefore as if he were saying: Since the Lord of all is rightly acknowledged, let us recognize that His work, both in the rejection of Judea and in the election of the Gentiles, is to be revered and not scrutinized. The Lord indeed kills, because by incomprehensible judgment He separates the once-chosen Jewish people from the knowledge of truth and condemns them forever. He

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

He makes poor and enriches, because He strips rejected Judea of spiritual virtues, and adorns the chosen Gentile people with both the treasure of faith and the splendors of good works. He is also said to humble and to exalt. For the Synagogue, by withdrawing from the Redeemer, cast down the heights of its own sublimity, and holy Church, by worshiping the Redeemer, rose from the depths of unbelief where it had lain cast down, to the height of right faith and the eminence of Christian authority. Therefore, because Judea despised the Son of God and the Gentile people merited Him, rightly the former is believed to have been humbled and the latter exalted. There follows: 'Raising up the needy from the dust, and lifting the poor from the dunghill, that he may sit with princes and hold a throne of glory.'

18. The needy and poor one is understood as the gentile people, who is said to be raised from the dust and lifted from the dung, because when he is received into the faith of the Redeemer, both his lesser and graver sins are forgiven. For since dust is easily shaken off, while filth that defiles with dung fouls horribly, dust signifies lighter sins and dung graver sins. Rightly also the needy one is said to be raised from the dust, and the poor one lifted from the dung. For he was sleeping among those things from which he could be roused by a light touch of grace. But he was lying among those things because, having fallen into graver sins, he needed the hand of great help. But now let us hear to what height of honor the needy one who is raised from the dust, and the poor one who is lifted from the dung, is advanced.

19. That he may sit with princes, and hold the throne of glory. Now who are designated as princes in this place if not the holy apostles? Concerning these princes, indeed, it is said to God through the Psalmist: You shall make them princes over all the earth; they shall remember your name, O Lord (Ps. 44:17, 18). What does it mean that the poor man sits with princes, except that the order of preachers, chosen from among the nations, obtains in the holy Church the height of apostolic authority? He sits with princes, indeed, because from the throne of heavenly teaching he sets forth the doctrine of salvation. And he holds the throne of glory, because he spreads the fragrance of good reputation among those over whom he stands preeminent in dignity. Or certainly he holds the throne of glory and sits with princes, because he both shines with the honor of sublimity and gleams with miracles. But He who is raised up to such sublime dignity indicates how one ought to use it, when He adds: (Verse 8.) For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them.

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

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

It would indeed retain a firm standing between each temptation, if it stood with such solid humility that no prosperity would lift it up and no adversity would cast it down. 52. What then does it mean when it says, "He will keep the feet of His saints," except that all human virtue is weak without the help of the Creator? For our weak humility, while it is soothed by the favor of prosperity, is overthrown by the impulse of foolish joy. Our weak fortitude, while it is struck by adversity, is easily overcome. But we are crushed by sorrows and enfeebled by joys when Almighty God abandons us to ourselves, not when He bestows the help of His protection. Therefore He says, "He will keep the feet of His saints," because Almighty God aids our weakness in bearing the burdens of those subject to us, so that neither adver-

sities wear us down nor joys seduce us. Our feet are indeed preserved by the Lord when, strengthened by divine help, we despise the joys of the world that confront us, fear no adversities, when with steadfast patience we willingly bear evils, and with unshaken humility we restrain our lofty spirit from vain delight.

22. Moreover, the feet of the saints can be understood as faith in and love of the Redeemer. By these feet indeed they walk, when they follow with love Him whom the faithful believe through faith. He who prayed was indeed asking that these feet be preserved for him by the Lord, saying: 'Set me upon the heights, that I may conquer in His glory' (Hab. 3:19). He is set upon the heights to whom the divinity of the Redeemer is revealed. And he conquers in His glory, because while he is illuminated by the rays of His glory, all the temptations of the evil spirit are destroyed. He keeps his feet set firm upon the mountain who is lofty in the contemplation of truth and kindled with love for Him whom he believes to be the Only-begotten of the most high Father. Peter indeed was set upon the heights, who, when he confessed the Lord, saying: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God', immediately heard: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 16:16–17). For founded in faith, kindled with charity, he also preached Him whom he loved. Well therefore is it added concerning the reprobate: (Verse 9) 'And the wicked shall be silenced in darkness.'

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

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

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

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

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

set forth these things by typological exposition; it remains for us to express them morally in the following volume.

Book 2

Commentaries on the Book of 1 Kings BOOK TWO. CHAPTER I. 1. In the previous book, while we were discussing the text of sacred history in a moral sense, we placed Anna's fruitfulness in the perfection of the highest contemplation, because for the mind to conceive is to rejoice ineffably in the contemplation of the supreme omnipotence of God, while to give birth is to be unable to conceal the marks of the charity conceived in the mind. Now, what does it mean for her who gives birth to sing a canticle, if not to proclaim with true praises the Creator whom she loves ineffably? She says therefore: (1 Samuel 2:1) My heart has exulted in the Lord.

2. But she who ate and drank, who had a bitter spirit, who wept abundantly, who made a vow—because that mind can worthily praise almighty God which has arrived at the heights of His love through worthy struggles—she indeed learned through long practice to despise all things; and while she casts aside all created things from her attention, she rejoices all the more in the vision of eternal majesty, inasmuch as no appearance of any creature prevails to hold her back in love of itself. She therefore says: "My heart has exulted in the Lord," she who, despising all things, loves Him alone. He had indeed come to this same affection who said: "What remains for me in heaven, and what have I desired from you upon the earth? (Ps. 72:25). Hence, exulting in God, she says: "Your face, your face, O Lord, I will seek" (Ps. 26:3). Hence the bride in the Canticles asks, saying: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (Cant. 1:1). Therefore when she says, "My heart has exulted in the Lord," what else does she glory in than that she has clung to the kisses of Him whom she ardently loves? And for this reason she alone says these things, who knows from experience what the power of love is in the bridegroom's chamber. For illuminated by victories over all passions and raised to the summit of virtues, she arrived at that height from which, through the joy of wondrous devotion and exultation, she placed her heart in God.

And because she says "my heart," what else has she declared than the freedom of her mind? The reprobate indeed do not have their own hearts, because the devil possesses them. Whence it is also said of the traitor: "When the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray him" (John 13:2). For if Judas, and not the devil, possessed his heart, he himself would rather have placed good in it than the devil evil. On the contrary, the chosen man speaks, saying: "I carry my soul in my hands" (Job 13:14).

For what else is the hand of the elect but the power of inner freedom? What then is it for him to carry his soul in his hands, but to retain the glory of inner freedom in his power? Therefore, as often as we gravely sin, we do not have our own heart. Wherefore Jeremiah also, reproaching the Jewish people for sinning gravely, says: ”Hear, O foolish people, you who have no heart” (Jer. 5:21). Hence likewise another prophet, turning back, confesses to God, saying: ”Your servant has found his heart” (2 Kings 7:27). She therefore says: ”My heart has exulted in the Lord,” to declare the freedom of mind without which she could not worthily praise God. There follows: (Verse 1. ”My horn is exalted in my God.”

3. By the horn, the intention of the elect mind is designated, which is wonderfully exalted when it arrives rejoicing at him who stands above all things. Hence she declares that her horn is exalted not in anything else, but in God. For whoever loves passing goods, his intention is assuredly lowered, not exalted, because it is fixed in the depths where it is placed by desire. Hence it is that the Lord says in the Gospel: Where your treasure is, there is your heart also (Matt. 6:21; Luke 12:34). Therefore the Lord wished to exalt our horn when he said: Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20, 33). Those to whom Paul conformed himself had an exalted horn, when he said: Our conversation is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). But whoever loves only heavenly things, if he has not known how to taste that sweetness of intimate delight, although he may be greatly exalted, he has not yet reached the height of this exaltation. He, therefore, is sublime with this exaltation who, advancing through the increase of virtues, has attained the height of supreme contemplation—not only so as to love heavenly things perfectly, but also so as to rest, in the perfection of love, in the contemplation of almighty God alone. He has his horn exalted in God who enjoys the lofty vision of the interior light, in which he glories with a certain familiar singularity. Wherefore she does not say, ”In our God,” but ”in my God.

For she says ”my” of him whom she loves familiarly and singularly. To which dignity of divine familiarity he had certainly arrived who said: You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, and I will exalt you (Ps. 117:28). Hence Isaiah says, rebuking the unbelieving: Is it a small thing for you to be troublesome to men, that you are troublesome also to my God (Isa. 7:13)? She, therefore, who is raised up by the exaltation of her horn in God, singularly proclaims him her God, because that supreme infusion of divine sweetness makes the exalted mind both receptive of itself and deeply familiar. There follows: (Verse 1. My mouth is enlarged over my enemies.

4. Who are the enemies of the elect mind, if not evil spirits? What then is it to have a widened mouth over one’s enemies, if not to reject all the persuasions of evil spirits by the most ample bounty of grace poured into oneself? For he has a narrow mouth who cannot prevail against all the deceits of evil spirits through the consideration of reason. For the mouth of the mind is reason, and to speak is to deliberate. For the mouth is filled when the reason of the mind is raised up through grace poured into it to the contemplation of the highest truth. Indeed, for it to be filled is to be imbued with the illumination of the highest truth. There it learns both what to desire eternally and what to despise temporally. And

because the highest truth is love, the elect soul is raised up by the subtlety of truth and is inflamed with love for that thing which it has learned, and it keeps the teaching all the more strictly, the more fervently the force of love embeds it within itself. To this soul, even if evil spirits suggest evil things, they are confounded by the opening of its widened mouth, because, instructed by the truth of the highest wisdom and kindled by the torches of the highest love, it now possesses against the suggestion of error the immense light of wisdom, and possesses against the offered pomp of this world an ineffable love.

In the immensity of light it sees what to reject, and through the force of the highest love it delights in rejecting the unworthy things which it knows. Through wisdom it rebukes the evil things suggested, and in the power of love it refutes the things it has detected. Therefore it widens its mouth over its enemies, because from the abundance of reason it deliberates many things against the demons, and it destroys their objections all the more keenly because it recognizes in lofty things that by which it may reject evil suggestions. Whence, immediately intimating the cause, she says: 56 'Because I have rejoiced in your salvation.'

5. Which is indeed as if she were saying: Because my horn is exalted in my God. This certainly is to rejoice in the salvation of God, namely to have one's horn exalted in one's God. This is not understood of just any joy of salvation, but of that most perfect joy by which the chosen and perfected soul, in the manner of a bride, rejoices in the bridegroom. Concerning which joy David entreats, saying: Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and strengthen me with a princely spirit (Psalm 50:14). She, therefore, who glories in having her mouth opened wide over her enemies, is described as having first rejoiced in the salvation of God, because that blessed mind will be able to powerfully reject the persuasions of malignant spirits, which, having been sublimely raised up through contemplation into the divinity of the Redeemer, receives from Him both the greatness of wisdom and the fullness of charity. Whom indeed she proclaims with worthy praises, saying: (Verse 2.) There is none holy as the Lord is; for there is none other beside you, and there is none strong like our God.

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

while this life slips away through the time of its course, that life may receive us, whose joy the departing souls of the elect from here may possess without fear of death.

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

Let it say how the most excellent and pleasing reward is its final renewal, in the joy of its perfected spirit and glorified flesh. Let it say: And there is none strong like our God. And it should be noted that Anna speaks this in a canticle of prayer. For to the chosen mind, to ask these things in a canticle is to desire such great gifts with joy. Indeed, for it to ask is to desire, and to rejoice is to sing. But she who so joyfully beholds the gifts of her dignity, how strongly she reproaches hidden enemies becomes known. For it follows, and says: (Verse 3) Do not keep talking so very proudly, boasting; let old things depart from your mouth.

7. For evil spirits speak lofty and ancient things, when they suggest to the faithful that the high things of this age, as they appear, should be sought after. Therefore, one who has already learned to exalt his horn in God, who knows how to be held in the joy of Majesty, looks down with reproach upon whatever is offered to him from the enticements of this passing age, saying: ”Do not multiply your speech, boasting lofty things; let the old words depart from your mouth.” As if he were speaking openly and saying: ”The things offered to me displease me precisely because through desire I see other things that greatly please me.”

8. Because this is indeed said to apply to one who is already recognized as fit for the ministry of preaching, these words are fittingly understood as directed both against the arrogantly wise and against those who neglect the profession of a holy life. For he speaks lofty things boastfully who glories sublimely in the knowledge he has received, priding himself on his understanding. And he speaks old things who, setting aside the words of Holy Scripture, occupies himself with secular speech. Therefore it is said to the arrogant: ”Do not speak lofty things, boasting.” By these words it is shown that he does not forbid the manner of speech, but the disposition of the intention. As if he were saying openly: speak lofty things, but

flee from glorying in what is called high. Hence Paul also piously admonishes his disciple, saying: ”Be not high-minded, but fear” (Rom. 11:20). He did not say ”Do not speak high things,” but ”Be not high-minded”; just as here it does not say ”Do not speak lofty things,” but ”Do not speak boastingly,” because the sacred words must be sought out on a deeper level, but the more deeply one advances in seeking them out, the more one ought to restrain oneself from the swelling of vainglory through the custody of humility. It is also said to those who speak idly: ”Let old things depart from your mouth.” For old things are the words of the world, because while the mind of the speaker is fixed upon them through intention, it is stripped of the beauty of its devotion. The reason why those who boast should not speak lofty things, and why old things should depart from their mouth, is shown by the cause that follows: (Verse 3) ”Because the Lord is a God of knowledge.”

9. Let the one who is knowing and arrogant therefore hear that he himself is not the lord of knowledge, but God is. For he would rightly speak boastfully if he himself, not almighty God, had been the master of the knowledge by which he is puffed up. Let us also hear, when we speak the words of the world, that God is the Lord of knowledge. For indeed the knowledge not only of the New but also of the Old Testament now renews the minds of the elect; for He came who would say: Behold, I make all things new (Isaiah 43:19). Since therefore we have so many new things which we can speak, we are by no means able to speak old things without fault. Let the old things therefore depart from our mouth, so that when the fault of condemned oldness is restrained even from speech, we may pass over into the beauty of the new man. But if indeed we despise this, let us hear: (Verse 3.) And by Him thoughts are prepared.

10. As if from a lesser fault, with the comparison understood, he terrifies us, saying: Hence let those who speak idle words consider how greatly they ought to fear the fault of speech, if he to whom one sins by speaking reserves even the excesses of thoughts for the examination of his judgment. Let the arrogant likewise hear what follows: (Verse 4.) The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girded with strength.

11. For we have already said in the allegorical exposition that unclean spirits are designated by the name of these mighty ones. Since they fell from heavenly glory through pride, they are fittingly set before proud teachers as a warning, so that they may now think humbly of themselves to the degree that they contemplate how even angels fell from supreme glory through the desire for vain glory. We recall that our Redeemer also did this with His proud disciples, who, when they boasted of having demons subject to them, immediately heard from Him: ”I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). The bow of the mighty, therefore, is the pride of malignant spirits. They are called mighty either because they thought great things of themselves, or because they overcome the human race by the force of great temptations. This bow, when impious intent stretched it, strove to hurl the arrows of its malice upward against its Creator. ”I will set my throne in the North,” said their prince, ”I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13–14). But the bow of the mighty was overcome, because God resisted the pride of the apostate spirits, cast them down from heaven, and

stripped them of the glory of their created excellence, so that in the fallen angels man might learn what to fear. For what will become of an earthen vessel, if God does not spare even golden ones that are full of the stench of pride? Hence Peter also speaks in his Epistle, saying: "God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down into hell with chains of darkness and delivered them to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). It is as though an elect and humble preacher were saying to the proud: That you may cease from your haughtiness, look upon the penalties of deserved damnation in the angels who are like you — that is, the fallen ones.

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

Therefore, that the arrogant may cease to boast, let him hear: 'The bow of the mighty is overcome.' And that, with the fault of pride condemned, they may advance in humility, it is said to them: 'The weak have been girded with strength.' For strength is bestowed upon the weak when, by the merit of subjection, the power of heavenly charity is poured into the meek. We are also girded when we are prepared for the ministry of the word. Rightly therefore the weak girded with strength are set before those who boast in lofty speech, because those spirits who are sent forth in ministry, for the sake of those who receive the inheritance of salvation, were humble before they were girded for ministry. For weakness is mentioned first, but the girding of strength afterward. Paul indeed points out to us these girded ones, saying: 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth in ministry, for the sake of those who receive the inheritance of salvation' (Heb. 1:14)? Of whom the prophet also speaks, saying: 'Thousands of thousands ministered to him' (Dan. 7:10). As if therefore she were saying: First know yourselves, and so prepare yourselves for the salvation of others, because the good of preaching is then well fulfilled when the preacher who is lofty in word strives to be humble in ministry. But because she rebukes the proud and arrogant preachers by speaking, she adds, saying: (Verse 5) 'Those who were full before have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have been satisfied.'

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

14. This, however, can not unfittingly be said against negligent ministers of the sacred altar and presumptuous receivers of the Lord's body. For those who hire themselves out for bread were filled beforehand and saturated with the food of vices, because they do not prepare their body for the reception of the Eucharist. They indeed eat and cannot be satisfied, because even though they receive the sacrament with their mouth, they are in no way filled with the power of the sacrament. They therefore fast from that power of the sacrament precisely because they had been filled beforehand. For they do not receive the fruit of salvation in the eating of the saving host, who carry in their mind the sins with which they had filled themselves. Therefore none are satisfied except the hungry, because those who perfectly fast from vices receive the divine sacraments in the fullness of their power. And because even the elect cannot be without sin, what remains except that they strive to be emptied daily of the sins with which human frailty does not cease to stain them? For he who does not daily drain off what he commits in transgression, even if the sins he heaps up are small, little by little the soul is filled, and they rightly take from him the fruit of interior satisfaction. Paul, urging us to empty ourselves of this fullness, says: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

For what does "prove" mean in this passage, except, having emptied out the wickedness of sins, to present oneself approved and pure at the Lord's table? Concerning those who are full he also adds: "For he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment upon himself. Therefore, since we sin daily, let us daily run to the laments of repentance, because that alone is the power which empties out what guilt accumulates in the belly of the soul. And then the hungry are truly satisfied, because the more diligently we are cleansed by the lament of repentance, the more abundant the fruit of divine grace we receive in spiritual

refreshment. Because this satisfaction of the elect extends all the way to the end of the world, she adds and says: (Verse 5. "Until the barren has borne many, and she who had many children has grown feeble."

15. Who therefore is signified by the name of this barren woman, if not she of whom Paul speaks, saying: "The Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother" (Gal. 4:26, 27)? Whence also shortly after he fitted to her the prophecy of Isaiah, saying: "For it is written: Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry out, you who do not travail, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her who has a husband" (Isa. 54:1). But how is Jerusalem understood as barren—namely, the holy society of the blessed angels—when according to the meaning of its name it is fruitful with everlasting joy from the eternal vision of peace? But if she is the mother of the elect among men, she was indeed barren when the human race had perished in Adam. For she was as though unable to bring forth, since she lost through the persuasions of the fallen spirit him in whom she ought to have extended the bosom of her fruitfulness. The weak are girded so long until the barren one gives birth, because we have need of the powerful ministry of the humble angels until as many as are predestined to life from the human race are gathered together, even to the end of the world. For the Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather His elect from the four winds (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27).

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

Fittingly therefore it is added: (Verse 6) "The Lord kills and brings to life."

16. In these words, indeed, the order too must be noted. For he is said first to kill, then to make alive, because unless we cease to love the world, we cannot live for God through love, as John attests, who says: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Whence also he who remembered that he had been put to death and made

alive, that he had been cast down and raised up, spoke, saying: "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). He was living, but not with the life of the world, because he said: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). Therefore it is not any of those who are girded, but the Lord who kills and makes alive. For to be put to death and made alive is to desire nothing that is present and to long for things eternal. To whom, then, thanks ought to be rendered for these gifts, she sets forth, saying: "The Lord kills and makes alive." Whence also the oft-named preacher of the nations says: "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). But in what order almighty God works these things in His elect, she sets forth, saying: (Verse 6) "He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."

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

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

18. The rich of this world therefore glory in their abundant wealth, because by the high and incomprehensible judgment of God, heavenly goods are hidden from them. The Lord therefore makes the poor, because while He reveals eternal goods to the elect, they consider themselves the poorer insofar as they see themselves driven from true riches. Whence also that king who was most abundant in worldly possession, because the Lord had shown him true riches, cried out to Him, saying: Look upon me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and poor (Psalm 24:16). Hence the prophet Jeremiah, expressing in himself the illumina-

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

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

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

what are the trappings of fleeting dignities, but dust? For by their fawning they defile the mind and blind it from true splendors.

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

they will praise you forever and ever" (Ps. 83:5). Isaiah proclaims this seat of glory, saying: "Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of praise" (Isa. 51:3). Holy Tobias likewise, showing this same seat, says: "And its streets will be paved with every precious and pure stone, and through all its lanes Alleluia will be sung" (Tob. 13:22). But let the rescued poor man look at what follows, because he is not brought immediately to the seat of princes and the throne of glory as soon as he has been raised up: "The hinges of the earth," it says, "are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them" (v. 8).

22. Because sinners are designated by the name "earth" in sacred Scripture, these "hinges of the earth" can fittingly be understood as those in whom the world revolves through foolish desires, and leads from one to another. When therefore we behold converted sinners, let us break forth in praise of the Creator with these words of Hannah. For it is as if we say in other words: Those who were long held on the wheel of passing things by worldly desire have now begun to belong to the Lord through His grace. And when, having now abandoned the allurements of secular life, they bravely endure powerful temptations, let us say: "He has set the world upon them." For He has set the world upon them, which, before it was placed upon them, was beneath them. For they now bear as a burden of temptations that which, by flattering them, served them as if subject to them, when they reclined upon it by pursuing pleasures and delights. And because those who had great delights in it suffer great temptations from it, there is added: (Verse 9) "He will guard the feet of His saints."

23. By these words indeed the help of divine protection and propitiation is shown in such a way that the grave dangers of temptations are indicated. For it is as if she were saying: They endure such great trials from the world to which they had clung, that only He suffices

to help who cannot be absent from His faithful ones in tribulation. For to preserve the feet of His saints is to strengthen by grace the shaken affections of the elect in temptation, lest they fall. Hence also the prophet, who had wavered toward falling and yet had been preserved by the Lord, said: "But my feet were almost moved, my steps were nearly poured out" (Psalm 72:2). Hence again: "I was pushed and overturned so that I might fall, and the Lord upheld me. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He has become my salvation" (Psalm 117:13, 14). And concerning the weakness of the enemies she added, saying: (Verse 9) "And the wicked shall be silent in darkness."

24. But what does it mean that when the Lord is said to guard the feet of the saints, the silence of the wicked is mentioned, unless that we are never driven to the fall of sin except when the perverse temptations of malign spirits are suggested to us? When therefore the Lord guards our feet, the wicked are silent in darkness, because while we are protected by divine grace, the unclean spirits are utterly unable to give us the voice by which they might cast us down. Indeed they are silent in darkness, because they possess the darkened hearts of the reprobate, from whose obscurity they dare not advance toward us. Moreover, he explains why he guards the feet of the saints, saying: (Verse 9.) For a man shall not be strengthened by his own might.

25. As if to say: Therefore He holds them, because without Him they could not stand. For even if a man is recognized as a man of virtue, in his strength he has the fear of falling, he does not have the firmness of strength, and he falls by desiring unlawful things as often as his inner steps are abandoned by the Lord who holds him. Was he not indeed a man, he of whom it was sung in the chorus of young women: "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7)? Who indeed, when he was left amid his burdens to his own strength, fell driven into the sin of his flesh, and learned by experience in himself that a man does not have in himself the firmness of strength, but the fall of weakness. Whence also, fearing to fall back, he earnestly seeks Him by whom he ought to be held firm, saying: "Do not utterly forsake me" (Psalm 119:8). Let no one therefore deceive himself, as if he might find in himself the strength to stand, because even if we often overcome the great wars of hidden enemies, if we worthily pursue them by rejecting their persuasions as though turned to flight, the fleeing spirits do not then fear us, but Him whom they behold in us. Or certainly, if they also fear us, they fear us for this reason indeed: because they see us taken up into the strength of divine grace. Fittingly therefore it is added: (Verse 10.) "The adversaries of the Lord shall fear Him, and He shall thunder upon them from the heavens."

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

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

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

28. Since we referred this passage above to the Redeemer, we do not change it in the order of this explanation either. For He Himself is our peace, who made both one (Eph. 2:14). He is also the cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:4, 5, 6), in whom, while both walls of the elect are joined together, the structure of the eternal city is arranged. Let our discourse therefore maintain its custom, so that, having now set forth both the moral and allegorical understanding of the sacred canticle, both may converge in Him whom we believe by faith and whom we merit by our conduct. CHAPTER II. For the divine word follows, and says: (Verse 11.) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house.

1. We have shown that this man indeed designates the Redeemer of the human race; Anna his wife, His Church; the boy Samuel, the people of believers from the nations; and Ramatha the city, the heavenly homeland. What then does it mean that after his wife’s canticle Elkanah is said to have gone away to Ramatha his city, since Anna sang her canticle to God after the boy was born, and the Redeemer ascended to heaven before the holy Church had begotten the gentile people in faith? This question is raised only by those who are known to understand only the bodily presence of our Lord. For did not Paul, who had ascended to the Father, have Him with him when he said: ”Do you seek proof of Christ who dwells in me” (2 Cor. 13:3)? He likewise declares, saying: ”As from God, before God and Christ we speak” (2 Cor. 2:17). What does it mean, then, that He was sometimes present to the holy Church through the grace of His gift, and sometimes withdrew Himself from her through

the dispensation of trial? For He was present so that in the acquisition of the Gentiles He might abundantly pour forth the words of life; but sometimes, as though absent, He hid Himself, so that, with the gift of the word taken away, she might recognize what she was without His presence. Therefore, after the end of the canticle it is said:

"Elkanah went to his house," because the holy Church preaches lofty things from His presence, and He who withdraws Himself from mortals through dispensation continually presents Himself to the eternal citizens. For His house is that eternal fellowship of the heavenly citizens, which the Lord inhabits by loving, filling, and uniting Himself to them. He goes to it, therefore, when He leaves Anna, because He who beneficially withdraws Himself from us who are still making progress, unceasingly joins and shows Himself to the perfected and consummated citizens of the eternal homeland, for whom it is no longer necessary to be tested by His absence, since they have already been proven. Fittingly, therefore, after Anna's canticle it is said: "Elkanah went to his house," because the holy Church, which teaches the elect such sublime things, just as she is always left by the Lord's loving dispensation, so also she does not always have those lofty things to teach. But many hear the words, detest their past wickedness, and resolve upon works of amendment of life; yet when they cease to hear, they return to iniquity as if they had never heard those same words of life. The gentile people, as hearers of the holy Church, were devout in listening and ready in acting. Fittingly, therefore, it is added: The boy Samuel was ministering in the presence of the Lord, before the face of Eli the priest.

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

"I have no pleasure in you, and I will not accept a sacrifice from your hand" (Malachi 1:10). But He who cast Jewish faithlessness from His face, adding whom He gladly beholds, says: "From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations, and in every place a pure offering is offered to my name" (ibid., 11). But it must be carefully observed

that it is said: "Before the face of Eli, Samuel ministered to the Lord," because the order of the ancient teachers long before recognized by foreseeing, and proclaimed by prophesying, that the ministry of the holy Church's preachers would bring about the conversion, love, and reverence of the Gentile people concerning service to the Redeemer. For he who said the following knew this people would be devoted in the Lord's service: "All kings of the earth shall adore him, all nations shall serve him" (Psalm 71:11). Hence Haggai speaks, saying: "The desired of all nations shall come, and the house of the Lord shall be filled with glory" (Haggai 2:8). Hence Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse, who shall rise to rule the nations; in him the nations shall hope" (Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12). Hence the Psalmist says: "Praise the Lord, all nations, and praise him together, all peoples" (Psalm 116:1). Hence the patriarch Jacob says: "He shall be the expectation of the nations" (Genesis 49:10).

Before the face of Eli, therefore, the boy Samuel was a minister of the Lord, because what the Gentile people afterwards worthily offered to God, the order of the ancient teachers foresaw through the spirit of prophecy. And immediately concerning the rejected ones it is added: (Verses 12, 13. Now the sons of Eli, not knowing the Lord, and the office of the priest to the people.

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

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

4. For what is it to immolate a victim, except to offer the confession of true faith to almighty God? And what are the vessels in which the flesh is cooked for the sacrifice, except the

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

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

But it is rightly said that what the fork lifted up, the servant took for the priests, because it was a great feast for the wicked prelates if the crowd of their fawning or raging attendants could overthrow someone whom they had recognized as standing firm in the height of our faith through confession. There follows: (Verses 14, 15. "So they did to all Israel who came to Shiloh, even before they burned the fat."

5. Fat indeed is the internal richness, in which that devotion of mind is expressed by which the minds of the elect are joined to their Creator in more perfect charity. They rightly offer sacrifice with meat already cooked, because no one will be able to rise to the sublimity of charity unless he first loves the mysteries of the incarnate divinity which he believes. For to believe through the Holy Spirit that the humanity of the Lord Jesus was assumed into divinity is to cook the flesh that is to be offered to God. Therefore, before the fat could be burned, the boy hastened to seize the flesh in all Israel, because the officers of the Synagogue thought to overthrow the new confessors of Christ before perfect charity could unite them to almighty God. This the very words of the sacred history indicate more plainly, where

it says: "While the flesh was being cooked." By which words, certainly, not the completion of the cooking but the preparation is indicated. But the order of this wicked extortion is shown through what follows: (Verse 15.) "The priest's boy would come and say to the one offering sacrifice: Give me flesh to cook for the priest; for I will not accept cooked flesh from you, but raw."

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

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

8. The sin is recognized to be exceedingly great which is not washed away by the tears of repentance. For the prophet, beholding this exceedingly great sin of the Synagogue, says: "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond" (Jeremiah 17:1). Or certainly the sin was exceedingly great before the Lord because it was dragging others into sinning. Wherefore it is also added: "Because they were drawing men away from the sacrifice of the Lord." They were indeed drawing men away from the sacrifice, because they were preventing the hearts of the weak from advancing to the confession of the true faith. And it should be noted that those who are drawn away from the sacrifice are called "men," because surely if they had persisted in the true confession of our faith, the divine word would have marked them with the title of sons of God. To whom indeed the Lord says through the Psalmist: "I have said, you are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High; but you shall die like men" (Psalm 82:6–7). And there follows: (Verse 18.) "But Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy girded with a linen ephod."

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

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

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

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

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

14. In this passage it is very much to be noted that the boy Samuel is said to have been both a boy and magnified. But when he is declared to be magnified, this praise of his virtue is said to have been held not in the sight of men, but in the sight of the Lord. Why then is he called a boy, unless because he had been raised to the height of perfection? Samuel is therefore called both a boy and magnified in the sight of the Lord, because the new order of preachers, even if it has attained to the height of great conduct, has not lost the virtue of its humility. Indeed, to be magnified before God would be of no profit if one ceased to be a boy, because having lost humility, one would be unable to please almighty God by the loftiness of one's conduct. For they had already been magnified who were casting out demons from the possessed in the name of Jesus; but because they had lost the good of their childhood, the Truth rebuked them, saying: "I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Hence again, making a pronouncement, He says: "Unless you are converted and

become like little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Because, therefore, the life of the new preachers is both sublime in merit and lowly through humility, Samuel is fittingly declared to be both magnified and a boy. And because on both accounts they are greatly acceptable to God, he is said to have been magnified not simply, but in the sight of the Lord. There follows: (Verse 22.) Now Eli was very old, and he heard all the things that his sons were doing in all Israel, and how they slept with the women who kept watch at the door of the tabernacle.

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

Indeed he could be very old and yet live, since the hearts of the Jews wavered so that they neither believed the Lord Jesus to be the true Redeemer, nor openly condemned him as a blasphemer. For the evangelist John shows the weakness of this old age, saying: "Some said, 'He is good,' but others said, 'No, but he deceives the crowds'" (John 7:12). Hence the Jews themselves, bringing forth the cunning of their craftiness, say: "How long do you hold our souls in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). Hence likewise they say: "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you" (Matthew 12:38).

16. But Eli, very old, heard all the things that his sons were doing to all Israel. He certainly heard these things, because he knew them. For what we have come to know, we hold enclosed within the halls of memory. Indeed, the sacred eloquences, when consulted, bring forth from within themselves all the perfidy of the Jews written outwardly, and display it as if long preserved in memory. Amos, as it were ascribing this knowledge of hearing to Eli, says: 'The Lord God will do nothing upon the earth, which He has not revealed to His servants the prophets' (Amos 3:7). Hence Habakkuk confesses to God the Only-begotten, saying: 'O Lord, I have heard your report, and I was afraid; I considered your works, and I was astounded; in the midst of two animals you shall be made known' (Hab. 3:1, from the interpretation of the LXX). For the ancient teachers of the Synagogue to hear of the crimes of the sons is to foreknow them. But he sets forth what he foreknew, because it says: 'All the things that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they were sleeping with the

women who kept watch at the door of the tabernacle.' For to sleep with Jewish women is to be defiled by various heresies. And fittingly those same women are reported to keep watch at the door of the tabernacle. For what is the door of the tabernacle, if not the letter of the spiritual law?

But when the Jews understand sacred Scripture according to the letter alone, they established heresies at the very place from which they could have entered into the secret of the true faith. For just as one enters through the door into the interior of the tabernacle, so through the letter of sacred Scripture one enters into the spiritual knowledge of the Redeemer. Therefore, because Judea is deceived through observance of the letter, the women are reported to keep watch at the door, not inside the tabernacle. And because the Jews contradict our Redeemer in all the Scriptures, it is said that there was not one woman, but many. These things indeed the sons of Eli do to themselves, because according to the voice of the prophet: 'The soul that sins, it shall die' (Ezek. 18:4, 20); but they are said to do these things to all Israel, because while the leaders perish in the night of their error, they wrap the lesser ones in the blindness of their own darkness. The sons of Eli therefore sleep with the women, because the reprobate Jews are defiled by the mingling of their heresies even until the end of the world. They also sleep, because although they are overwhelmed by the most grievous night of their error, they are nevertheless to be awakened to faith in the Redeemer at the end of the world through Elijah (Matt. 17:11). There follows: (Verse 23.) 'And he said to them:

Why do you do things of this kind, the worst things which I hear from all the people?'

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

18. But how would the people of the Lord transgress His commandments, if they themselves were sleeping with women? But because this was happening to them in a figure, it was

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

And indeed Eli rebuked sharply and admonished gently, because Scripture, both denouncing the error of the Jewish people on behalf of the ancient fathers and rebuking it, also calls them from the night of that same error of theirs, with benevolent affection, to the day of true faith. He calls them sons, so that they may recognize that they ought to be heirs of the paternal promise, and receive the Savior of the world all the more devoutly inasmuch as they are not unaware that the promise of Him was made to the fathers. But also, desiring to call them back from the audacity of sin, he adds a reason, saying: (Verse 25) "If a man sins against a man, God can be appeased on his behalf; but if he sins against God, who will pray for him?"

19. For a man to sin against a man is for one human to do perverse things against another human. What then does it mean when he says, "God can be appeased for him," unless that such sins were light in comparison with those which the Jews were planning to commit against the Son of God? For they were sinning against God, because he whom they were plotting to kill had shown himself to be God by the most manifest light of miracles. For the Lord showed this through himself, saying: "If I had not done among them the works that no one else has done, they would have no sin" (John 15:24). And to show the implacability of God the Father, he adds, saying: "But now they have no excuse for their sin, because they have seen and hated both me and my Father" (ibid.). It is therefore as if he were saying: By whose prayer is that sin pardoned which is committed against the very one who pardons? Who beseeches the almighty Father on behalf of the one who condemns the coeternal Only-begotten to death? For he would say nothing more plainly if he were to declare openly, saying: This one whom you persecute as a mere man is also God. The law of reason therefore demands that he who persecutes the Creator be deprived of pardon. But divine mercy surpasses the strictness of reason;

for he showed the equity of the law, but did not maintain the force of the pronounced declaration in the execution of the promulgated judgment. For by the rigor of equity it was decreed that no prayer would attain the obtaining of pardon; but for those for whom no prayer of

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

20. The Lord, declaring through the prophet, says: "I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live" (Ezek. 18:23; and 33:11). How then does it befit Him to wish to kill the sinner, and yet not to desire the death of the sinner? But in the aforementioned testimony there follows that from which the truth may be recognized; for He says: "But that he be converted and live. For He who wishes the sinner to live so that he may be converted, if He knows by divine foreknowledge that this one is inconvertible, kills him. The Lord therefore wishes to kill, but those whom He foreknows will refuse to be converted. For He is declared merciful and just when the Prophet implores: "Lord," he says, "deliver my soul; our God is merciful and just" (Ps. 114:5). Through mercy indeed He awaits the conversion of sinners; through justice He condemns those who have not been converted. Through mercy He wishes sinners to be converted and to live, but through justice He wishes to punish those who have refused to be converted; mercifully He saves no one except the willing; through justice He condemns the unwilling. Therefore, when He is said to wish to kill, the greatest and incorrigible impiety of sinners is shown, which is punished by the voluntary execution of divine justice. So indeed we see the most merciful judges of secular affairs act, who would wish that no one transgressed, so that they themselves would have to punish no one;

but when crimes are boldly committed by the wicked, they willingly punish those whom they would have more gladly preferred not to have committed punishable offenses. Against this, however, it is observed in this passage that it does not say: "Because they refused to hear the voice of their correcting father," but: "They did not hear, because the Lord wished to kill them. But whoever rightly considers the equity of divine judgment thinks it makes no difference whether someone is killed, or is left in that crime in which he perishes by eternal reprobation. It is as if it said: So great was the magnitude of their guilt that they both received the admonitions of conversion and were in no way able to rise from the pit of their death; and those who had drunk the ocean of God's wrath had as the culmination of their damnation not only the punishment for the crime committed, but also the added vengeance for the preaching they had despised. But why do we marvel at this concerning the past, when we perceive it happening even now: namely, sons despising the admonishing Eli, and the Lord wishing to kill? For what else does Sacred Scripture daily suggest to the Jews other than the darkness of their error? It does not indeed so preach the Redeemer

through hidden and spiritual meanings that it does not openly show His incarnation, nativity, passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Nor are they so irrational that they cannot see that such excellent goods befit the Redeemer;

but nevertheless they are blind, so that they hear that the signs promised to their fathers have shone forth in the Redeemer, and do not believe. They are therefore blind not only in seeing what was promised, but in not believing what has been fulfilled. Why do they not hear the voice of Scripture admonishing them, unless because the Lord wishes to kill them? Nor is it surprising, however, if they perish by the judgment of Him whose Only-Begotten they killed. For it is by the strictness of innermost equity that it is dealt with the Jewish people, that they hear the admonitions of life daily as the Scriptures speak, and yet they in no way believe the Scriptures that admonish them. But, having rejected the faithlessness of the Jews, he sets forth with what successes the order of holy preachers prevails among the nations, saying: (Verse 26. "But the boy Samuel advanced and grew, and was pleasing both to God and to men."

21. Indeed, it was advancing through the gain of preaching, and growing in the number of ministers. For the Apostle boasts of its progress, saying: "From Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). Luke also recalls the manner of its growth, saying: "As the number of disciples was growing, there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the ministry" (Acts 6:1). And shortly after: "They chose," he says, "Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Prochorus, and the rest" (ibid., 5). They set these before the sight of the apostles, and praying, they laid hands upon them. Likewise, concerning this advance of the new preachers, it is written: "Their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Ps. 18:5).

22. But it must be subtly considered what is said: 'He was pleasing both to God and to men.' A teacher is pleasing to men when he presents himself as venerable to his subjects and adorned with good character. But he is pleasing to God when he refuses to glory vainly over his good conduct and desires to merit the praise of God alone. Therefore it says: 'He was pleasing both to God and to men,' because some preachers display a pretense of holiness which they do not possess. These, therefore, because even though they please men they displease God, it is now said of Samuel in the type of the new and chosen preacher: 'He was pleasing both to God and to men.' They present themselves as venerable to their subjects, and they offer to God the purity of their intention. Indeed, he had strived to please men who said: 'We are the good fragrance of Christ in every place' (II Cor. 2:15). And likewise: 'I have become all things to all men, so that I might save all' (I Cor. 9:22). He also taught his hearers to please men, saying: 'Be without offense to Jews and Gentiles, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking what is useful to me, but what is useful to many' (I Cor. 10:32, 33). But he who had indicated that he was pleasing to men commends the purity of heart, saying: 'Our glory is this: the testimony of our conscience' (II Cor. 1:12). 'He was pleasing both to God and to men.' This new order of preachers presented itself outwardly as

venerable to its hearers for imitation, and inwardly as acceptable to God through innocence of will. There follows: (Verse 27.) 'A man of God came to Eli.'

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

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

25. It should be noted that three things are indicated in the office of the priesthood itself. "That he should go up," it says, "to my altar, and burn incense to me, and wear the ephod before me. What is shown by this altar, if not that stone which the patriarch Jacob set up as a pillar (Gen. 28:18)? And what other stone is expressed by this, if not the one Paul proclaims in praise of the faithful, saying: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20)? The father Eli was therefore chosen by the Lord for the priesthood so that he might go up to the altar, because the order of the ancient teachers presided over the people subject to them for this purpose: to proclaim the restoration of the human race that was to come in the advent of the Redeemer. And he burned incense, because he joined the hearts of his hearers through desire to the one whom he proclaimed as the future Redeemer. He also wore the ephod, because through the longing of so great an expectation he displayed the adornment of a worthy manner of life. He would indeed burn incense and yet not wear the ephod if he set the hearts of his hearers ablaze with desire for the coming Redeemer, from whom he himself would differ by the inconsistency of a shameful way of life.

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

"And I gave to the house of your father all the sacrifices of the children of Israel. As if he were recounting to him with open accusation, saying: "In nothing did I fail him; I bestowed the heights of spiritual honor and power, and I supplied an abundance of earthly plenty for temporal uses. But let us hear with what urgency of inquiry he who so reasonably enumerates the gifts he bestowed now examines the audacity of his transgression. For it follows: (Verse 29. "Why do you kick at my sacrifice and my offerings, which I commanded to be offered in the temple?"

26. For "why" is not said except by a judge who urgently investigates. And he who is rebuked for having kicked away the victim of God and His gifts is judged to have done injury without the counsel of reason. It should be noted that he speaks in the plural number: "Why have you kicked away my victim," so that what is said may seem to pertain not only to Eli but also to his sons. For wild animals are accustomed to kick away things clinging to them. For what other victims did the faithful have than to persist in the praises of their Redeemer, to proclaim that Christ Jesus died for the salvation of the world, and that by rising again He restored the life of the human race? And what other offerings were theirs, except to ceaselessly offer thanksgivings to Almighty God for such great benefits bestowed upon them? These indeed the sons of Eli kicked away, because in their rejection of the new preaching, they did not follow the counsel of reason through the sacred Scriptures, but the impulse of savagery. For the Truth desired to call them back from irrational cruelty to the intention of rational counsel, saying: "Search the Scriptures, for you think that in them you have eternal life; and they bear witness of me" (John 5:39). Whence here also it is said: "Which I commanded to be offered in the temple.

For in the law, the psalms, and the prophets, it had been written concerning the passion, the resurrection of the Lord, and the state of the universal Church. Therefore the leaders of the

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

27. As if openly rebuking, he says: They have driven others away, and you have honored those who drive them away. He honored his sons more than God, because while he despised their openly wicked deeds, he provided them with temporal gains. Hence he also adds: (Verse 29.) That you might eat the firstfruits of every sacrifice of mine. 28. By which words indeed he seems to reproach the greater order of teachers, who for this reason consented to the Redeemer's death, because they feared losing the profits of the old offerings. Whence also, having taken counsel with the Pharisees, they said: What do we do, because this man performs many signs? If we let him go on like this, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation (John 11:47, 48). And again: See that you are gaining nothing; behold, the whole world has gone after him (Ibid. 12:19). He therefore honored his sons so that they might eat, because he fell silent from the intention of preaching, lest while he asserted the truth of the new offering, he would no longer be able to have the old things for the indulgence of his own pleasure. Since therefore he has set forth the greatness and character of the guilt, let us now see with how great an equity of examination he suggests the measure of punishment. For adding he says: (Verse 30.) Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: Speaking I spoke, that your house and the house of your father would minister in my presence, henceforth and forever. But now far be this from me.

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

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

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

32. Now he is without an arm, because he who lost the temple and the tabernacle does not extend his hand for the offering of the old sacrifice. And because He was speaking to Eli, that is, to the chief priests of the Synagogue, He threatens to cut off not only his arm but also his house, so that He might clearly indicate the universal destruction of the old rite, and so that we might perceive that what we now see accomplished in the new age was ordained in ancient times. Therefore the Lord cut off both his arm and his house, because He utterly removed both the high priests of Judea and the lesser priests from the old sacrifice. Whence it is fittingly added: 'So that there shall not be an old man in your house.' By old men we should understand priests, whose office, because it is carried out with the weight of great dignity, is emptied of no childish levity by the burden of religion. His arm, therefore, and the house of his father were so cut off that there is no old man in his house, because the rite of the old priesthood so vanished that absolutely no one remained who could any longer sacrifice according to the old custom. For after the Redeemer of the human race offered Himself for our sins in the new manner of sacrifice, being a priest according to the ancient custom ceased. But he who suffers the losses of a forfeited priesthood bears the torment of

a greater punishment from the pain of envy. Wherefore it is added: (Verse 32.) 'And you shall see your rival in the temple, in all the prosperity of Israel.'

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

34. For He would have entirely removed the man from His altar, if He had admitted none to the unity of our faith. Therefore He did not entirely remove him, because even though He rejected the reprobate priests of the Synagogue, He nevertheless mercifully brought many of them to the knowledge of Himself. Of these indeed Luke makes mention in the Acts of the Apostles, saying: 'A great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7). For those were found worthy of so great and new a ministry, who were unwilling to remain in their old state with the lost. But because not only the elect preachers from the Gentiles, but also those who believed from Judaea, were a source of tormenting envy to the Jewish priesthood, there follows: (Verse 33.) 'But one to make your eyes fail and your soul to waste away.' 35. Or for this reason He did not entirely remove a man from His altar descended from him, so that Eli's eyes might fail and his soul waste away, because indeed He did not wish to take up the elect from Judea for the ministry of the new preaching, so that, with them removed, guilt might hold the reprobate fast unto punishment. For the eyes of Eli failed when the supreme priesthood had the truth of faith on the lips of preachers within its hearing, and did not recognize it. His soul also wastes away, because indeed through the punishment of its rejection it withered, when it lost the grace of the Holy Spirit. There follows: (v. 33.) 'And a great part of your house shall die when they have reached manhood.'

36. The age of manhood is the time of the Lord's Incarnation, which indeed the Apostle indicates, saying: "When the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem those who were under the law, and that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). What then were the precepts of Judea, if not certain instructions of infancy? The Apostle likewise indicates the time of this childhood, saying: "When we were little ones, we were serving under the elements of this world" (Ibid., 3). In the age of manhood, therefore, she died, because in the fullness of time she raged

against the Redeemer of the world, and pierced herself through with the sword of unbelief. But it is well that not the whole house, but a great part of his house is foretold as about to die, because some of them believed in the Redeemer. And adding the cause of greater grief, he says: (Ver. 34.) "And this shall be the sign to you, that which shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. In one day they shall both die."

37. We have shown above that in the two sons of Eli the twofold order of the old priesthood is designated. They certainly died on one day, because they came together simultaneously in the death of the Redeemer. Moreover, the death of the priests is fittingly recorded as placed as a sign of the house that was to die, because when the shepherds perish, it is necessary that the flock follow to the same destruction. And because they were deceived by a false reasoning, they are said to die in the day. Of the falseness of which light blessed Job speaks, saying: 'So in darkness, as in light they walk' (Job 24:17). But He who cast out the old prepared a new priesthood. Whence it is also added: (Verse 35.) 'And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest.' 38. For when the sons of Eli were dead, the Lord raised up a faithful priest for Himself, because when the leaders of the ancient people were destroyed in their faithlessness, He chose elect ones to carry out the ministry of our redemption. He is indeed called a faithful one who was taken up, because the old one, whom he succeeded, was rejected on account of unfaithfulness. And because that faith of his is ascribed to the praises of the priest, which works through love, the very works of love are indicated by the words that follow. For it continues: 80 (Verse 35.) 'Who shall do according to my heart and my soul.'

39. For the ineffable divine substance wished to be signified through the parts of a human being, which ought not to be understood according to the letter as referring to God Himself. And so He said: "Who shall act according to my heart and my soul." Not that the incorporeal and uncircumscribed substance of God has a heart and soul, but He speaks to man as a man is accustomed to speak to a man, so that through what a person recognizes from hearing His word, he may openly know what God also wills. This indeed could have been said more simply: "Who shall do my will." And He sets forth the rewards of the work, saying: (Verse 35.) "And I will build him a faithful house."

40. For what else is this house understood to be, if not the eternal homeland? Which house indeed the Lord, commending it, speaks of: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions' (John 14:2). But this house is now said to be built, because it is prepared through the actions of a pious life. Nevertheless, for meriting it, the work of man is unworthy if the grace of a merciful God does not accomplish this. Rightly therefore, when the building of the house is set forth, the Lord promises to build it for him, because indeed human powers fall short of so great a work if they are not divinely aided. Hence Paul says: 'It is God who works in me both to will and to accomplish' (Phil. 2:13). Hence again he says: 'It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who has mercy' (Rom. 9:16). He was promising to build this house when He said: 'I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and will receive you to myself, that where I am, you also may be' (John 14:2, 3). But because he

was going to devoutly follow, from the freedom of his will, the grace calling him, it is added: (Verse 35.) 'And he shall walk before my Christ all his days.'

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

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

43. For by the name of bread, He is expressed who says of Himself: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). The cake of bread, therefore, is the flesh of the Redeemer, afflicted with sufferings. For the prophet, beholding this cake of bread, said: "Truly He has borne our griefs, and He Himself has carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). And because it is said by a certain wise man: "If you sit down at the table of a powerful man, wisely consider what is set before you, for you must prepare similar things" (Proverbs 23:1–2, according to the LXX), Judea then offers a cake of bread and a piece of silver when she proclaims our Redeemer with open confession, and for the love of Him whom she proclaims, does not refuse to endure torments from the faithless. And because she is greatly delighted in this imitation of the Passion and refreshment of sweetness, there follows: (Verse 33.) "And let her say: 'Send me, I beseech you, to one of the priestly portions.'"

44. "Dismiss me," she says, as if to say: Do not reject me as infamous and stained with the blood of the Redeemer's death. She also begs that one priestly portion be granted to her, because she desires to be joined to the true priests, so that she may be able to share in the joys of those whose offerings she desires to imitate by offering herself. Hence, setting forth

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

CHAPTER III.

45. We have run through these matters from sacred history by way of typological explanation, so that we might seek out something of moral understanding in the same words of sacred history. And so the boy Samuel is declared a minister in the sight of the Lord; yet this ministry is recorded as being rendered to the Lord not absolutely, but before the face of Eli. By these words, therefore, what is shown is not the perfection of ministry, but of humility. For the face of Eli represents the judgment of each one's instructor. For he ministers to the Lord before the face of his teacher who does not follow the reasoning of his own judgment in the performance of his ministry, who walks along that path of work which is foreseen for him by the knowledge of his master. For all perfect men, and those taught by God (John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13), are indeed ministers in the sight of the Lord, but are not His ministers before the face of man, because the divinity itself teaches them inwardly how they should be ordered outwardly also in life, conduct, and teaching; whence also it is promised to the forerunner of the Redeemer with the praise of a paternal oracle: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76).

He is described as going before the face of the Lord who in his ministry was not going to follow the judgment of a superior man, but the inspiration of the divinity. Therefore Samuel is said to minister to the Lord before the face of Eli, so that all who are subject may be taught by his example, that they should strive to please their Creator in their ministry in such a way that they do not presume to do anything contrary to the judgment of their superiors. For he who is declared a minister of the Lord before the face of his instructor, if through pride he disdains to go before his face, does not exist as a minister in the sight of the Lord, because he is proved to be ignorant of the Almighty, whom he disdains to please through his instructor's judgment—the Almighty who subjected him to that authority so that he might

please Him. Whence the sons of Eli are said both to be sons of Belial and not to know the Lord, and not to know the office of the priests toward the people. For sons are those who are subjected to spiritual fathers for instruction. Who indeed, when through pride they disdain to follow the counsels of those same fathers, are rightly called sons of Belial, because they become imitators of that apostate spirit who fell from heaven through pride. Who certainly are ignorant of the Lord all the more grievously, the more arrogantly they ascribe knowledge of Him to themselves.

For it comes about that they are ignorant of what they ought to know all the more dangerously, because, not knowing what they think they know, they do not care to learn. And because they cannot love the invisible Creator whom they do not know, in their appetite for visible things they squander the very ministries of God which they have usurped for themselves. Whence those who are reported as priests who do not know the Lord are also said not to know the office of the priests toward the people.

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

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

Creator through the ineffable sweetness of that love, a festive devotion is presented at the heavenly altars.

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

"I gave you milk to drink, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2). Therefore let the mother bring a small tunic to her small son, and let the measure of the garment be stretched according to the size of the body, so that while he fights with the virtue of a temperate way of life, the enemy may not overthrow him with an unequal burden of arms.

4. And because God multiplies for the preacher the gains of converts through the discerning zeal of pastoral care, Anna is said to have been visited by the Lord, and through the grace of the divine gift to have merited the grace of fruitfulness in sons and daughters. She bears sons when she gains through the word those through whom she bestows the seeds of preaching to others. She bears daughters when she calls back to the service of almighty God those minds which, although they are not suited for preaching, nevertheless diligently nurture the seed of the word of God received from preachers, which, as if giving birth, the daughters afterwards bring forth through good works as an example to their neighbors. But since Samuel is first said to have been girded with a linen ephod, and then the mother's fruitfulness in the multitude of children can reasonably be understood as what we observe happening daily—namely, that from the good reputation of a chosen disciple, the gains of converts increase for the master. Hence after the birth of brothers and sisters, Samuel is said to have been magnified before the Lord, because indeed those are already great before the Lord who through the examples of their devout way of life turn the hearts of their neighbors to the service of almighty God.

5. But a great fear is struck into us, because Eli is condemned for the fault of his sons, though no sins of his own are reported. For good subjects, living well suffices for salvation, but for prelates their own life does not suffice. For he is truly very old who always strives

to live blamelessly. Whence it is also written: ”For venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years; but the understanding of a man is grey hairs, and the age of old age is an unspotted life” (Wisdom 4:8). But some excel by living well, who have none of the authority that leadership demands. For even if they are eager to rouse their subjects to do good, they are yet ashamed to oppose offenders through zeal for righteousness. Who indeed, even if they sometimes come forth to reprove them, harm rather than help by speaking, because they do not confound their obstinacy with fitting severity. For Eli himself heard the crimes of his sons, and how they slept with the women at the door of the tabernacle; who, as though beginning with a harsh rebuke of authority, declared that he had heard the worst things from all the people. But he who ought to have pursued the faults he had set forth softened them through his subsequent words, saying: ”Do not, my sons.

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

but if a man sin against God, who shall pray for him?”

6. For a man to sin against a man is for people to harm one another in matters of passing things. But to sin against God is to take away from Him those things which He established for eternity. Therefore whoever draws either his own or another faithful person’s soul into sinning is convicted of sinning against God, because he strives to take away from Him what is properly His. This is shown to be a sin all the more grave, inasmuch as one who might stand as a worthy intercessor for its absolution is more rarely found. For under the question ”Who will pray for him?” it is not said that the remedies of repentance are denied even to such persons, but that the deeper wounds of sins are healed with greater difficulty.

7. However, this can be understood to have been said because the priests are being rebuked. For a man sins against a man when he offends whose fault looks to the judgment of a superior person for correction. Therefore, since the sins of the subject people, which pertain

to the priests, are wiped away by the prayers of those same priests, when the priest falls into fault, there is no superior person by whose prayers he may be expiated. And the Truth Himself intimates this, saying: "If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted?" (Matt. 5:13). Let him therefore say: "Who will pray for him?" As if to say, who remains as intercessor for him, when the one who was ordained to intercede for others casts himself down by transgressing? By this indeed the magnitude of the guilt is shown, because many of them are cast by the Lord into the darkness of an impenitent heart, and they do not come to their senses by any human exhortation. For this reason it is fittingly added: (Verse 25.) "They did not listen to the voice of their father, because the Lord willed to kill them."

8. Now the boy Samuel is recorded as both advancing and growing, and as pleasing both God and men, so that the zeal of the chosen hearer may be indicated—one who directs his efforts toward the heavenly homeland by the path of an upright life, as he grows stronger toward greater things. Hence it is also said through the Psalmist: They shall go from strength to strength; the God of gods shall be seen in Zion (Psalm 83:8). Therefore, advancement in conduct means to grow in merits; to please God and men belongs to consummate perfection. And because conduct pertains to works, and merit proceeds from charity, those hearers advance but do not grow who perform good works out of a desire for vanity and do not have charity. We therefore advance and grow if, together with a more exalted manner of life, we are raised up through better works, and from that very sublimity of work we direct our attention solely to the joys of eternity. Moreover, to please both God and men belongs to great virtue, because very often we offend our neighbors by our good work if we do not perform those same good works with great caution. He therefore pleases both God and men who is careful in the good work that he devotes to the service of Almighty God—who so takes care to please God that he offends no one through God's ministry.

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

10. Now a man of God is described as having come to Eli, who, being about to bring forth the severity of the divine sentence, carefully enumerated how many gifts He had bestowed upon him. And because he finally announces the punishment of the vengeance that he deserved, what does this give us to understand, except that the faults of pastors are judged

more strictly? And not only do their sins increase the punishment of retribution, but also the gifts that were granted. Likewise, because he recounts those same gifts one by one, he indicates something more serious: that each individual gift comes to be a torment, when it is proved to have been poorly preserved. For he poorly guards in himself the gifts of almighty God who defiles the splendor of the pastoral summit through the stains of wicked conduct. Whence also the house of Eli is fittingly rebuked for having kicked away the gifts and sacrifices of the Lord with the heel. The heel indeed is that part of the body by which we touch the ground. In this lower part of the body, therefore, is shown that disposition of the soul by which earthly things are desired.

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

The gifts are kicked aside, because the affections of charity grow cold in the minds of many who already love heavenly things, while they see their prelates seeking the heavenly homeland through no desires of love, but lying bound by the coldness of the body in the lowest pleasures. Among whom indeed there are some who bestow spiritual honors in a carnal manner, and attribute to kinship what is owed to merits. Who would surely tremble at the guilt of their presumption, if they carefully considered what the Lord complains about concerning Eli the priest. (Verse 29. ”You have honored your sons more than me,” He says, ”so that you might eat the first portions of every sacrifice of my people Israel.”

12. For he honors his sons and relatives more than the Lord, who chooses persons for sacred orders not from the integrity of their conduct, but from love of kinship. Therefore the sons are said to have been honored, so that they might eat the firstfruits of the sacrifice, because carnal prelates bestow the heights of spiritual honor upon their carnal relatives for this reason: that they may be enriched with ecclesiastical resources and heaped with an abundance of plenty in the loftiness of their office. Nor do they care what sort of persons come to the spiritual ministry, but only that they may advance in temporal dignity those

whom they embrace with carnal affection. He is therefore accused of having honored his sons—but wicked ones, who ought not even to be held as close by carnal kinship, if they in no way shine forth in the conduct of ecclesiastical teaching. But those who promote the reprobate are shown to confound the very order of promotion, since it says he honored his sons so that they might eat the firstfruits of the sacrifice. For the priest does not preach in order to eat, but rather he ought to eat in order to preach. This Paul also suggests, saying: "Let him who preaches the Gospel live from the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). Hence he says again: "Do not muzzle the ox that treads the grain" (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; Deut. 25:4), so that, namely, the preacher of the holy Church may supply nourishment to his body for this reason:

that he may be able to bear the labor of preaching. Therefore those who promote their relatives are proven to pervert the right order of promotion—not for the purpose of ministry, but for the pursuit of dignity. This they certainly would not do if they did not love themselves and their relatives in a carnal manner while in a spiritual position. But if they understand the rejection of Eli, let them also fear the judgments of their own guilt. For by the divine voice it is said: "You have honored your sons more than me, so that you might all eat the firstfruits of my people Israel. (Verse 30. "Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: I spoke and declared that your house and the house of your father would minister in my sight forever. But now, far be this from me."

13. Behold, Eli is deposed from the height of his dignity by divine sentence, who is convicted of having honored his wicked sons for the eating of the firstfruits, so that indeed the preachers of holy Church may understand that if through carnal love they knowingly commit spiritual ministries to the reprobate, they have fallen by the equity of the internal Judge from that summit on which they appear outwardly to stand. And because He subsequently added: (Verse 30.) But whosoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify.

14. Their audacity also secretly suggests that He was dishonored. To whom indeed Paul also, reproaching this very thing, says: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom. 2:24). For because they stain the beauty of the dignity they received through the filth of a wretched reputation, they indeed dishonor the Lord. For he is rightly driven from the height of honor who does injury to the one by whom he is proved to have been honored. Against which He affirms with a general promise, saying: "But whoever glorifies me, I will glorify him. For the pastor glorifies God who shines by the example of good works for the imitation of the faithful, who from the height of governance radiates with the great light of an excellent manner of life, who, regarding the mirror of sacred orders, does not accept the persons of reprobate ministers, but chooses for the pattern of the subject flock those whom everyone who looks to imitation, because he follows the true light in them, does not stumble against. To whom indeed Truth speaks through Himself, saying: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

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

15. As if he were speaking openly, saying: Even though they display the nobility of their dignity under the pretext of religion, they are nevertheless ignoble, because they do not match the excellence of the glory they possess through sublimity of life. But since all of this is promised in the expression of the future tense, it can not unfittingly be referred to the merit of the coming retribution. About which indeed John says: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Hence the evangelist Mark, affirming, says: "Then they shall see the Son of man coming with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26). Moreover, when he declares that he will glorify the one who glorifies him, he assuredly promises him the glory of his own likeness. For the Lord glorifies the one who glorifies him, because he rewards with eternal sublimity those who now within holy Church shine in the eyes of the elect through the examples of good works. But the despisers will be ignoble, because they do not deserve to be received into the glory of the elect. For because they now clothe themselves in the image of the fallen angel through their reprobate way of life, they will then be ignoble with him, when they are joined to him in internal punishment. For the Prophet, beholding the glorification of the former and the ignobility of the latter, says: "The saints shall exult in glory, they shall rejoice in their resting places.

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

their tyranny. Whence here also it is added: (Verse 31. ”Behold, the days are coming, and I will cut off your arm, and the arm of the house of your father.”

16. For the arm of the scorner is temporal strength. And because he departed from the household of the supreme Father by transgressing, the fallen angel began to have him as a father, now cast out from heavenly glory. Therefore the house of his father is that society of subjects which favors him in evil. Of whom indeed it is said above: ”You have honored your sons more than me. The arm of the scorner, therefore, and the house of his father is cut off when, with the intervention of the death of the flesh, both the prelate and his subjects alike lose the violence of their tyranny. For then he is without an arm, when he can in no way exercise violence in the oppression of the little ones. Whence it is also decreed by the equity of the eternal Judge: ”Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the outer darkness” (Matt. 22:13). In whose house also there shall be no old man. For the house of a condemned man is hell. But true old age is the maturity of wisdom. Therefore in his house there shall be no old man, because in hell no counsels of salvation can be found. Whence also sacred Scripture stirs us to works of true wisdom, saying: ”Whatever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly, for there is neither reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the underworld, where you are hastening” (Eccles. 9:10). Hence Paul says: ”Behold, now is the acceptable time;

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

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

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

"There shall be no old man in your house," because the condemned is instructed unto salvation neither from the experience of punishments which he endures, nor from the knowledge of another's happiness, nor from the experience of punishments which he does not endure. Sometimes, however, the elect are born as children through the teaching of reprobate pastors. The guilt of pastors does not hold these bound, because they follow the encouragements of good preaching that they hear, and not the perverse works that they see. Whence it is also added: (Verse 33. "Nevertheless I will not entirely remove from you a man from my altar."

17. For they are men who shine forth from the lofty citadel of strict conduct. As if therefore He were saying: For this reason I do not remove them from My altar, because they are men. For according to the merit of their conduct, strength and loftiness of power is preserved for them. Whence also through the prophet the Lord proclaims the decrees of equity, saying: 'The soul that sins, it itself shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father that of the son' (Ezek. 18:20). The Lord would therefore justly remove a man from His altar on this account, if the son were to bear the iniquity of the father. But from this very fact that a chosen hearer is seen in glory, punishment is heaped upon the reprobate teacher. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 33.) 'But that your eyes may fail, and your soul may waste away.'

18. For his eyes fail, because those who fulfilled what he perfected by his exhortation are put to shame by his life. His soul also wastes away, because he is compelled to grieve all the more abundantly, while he knows that the good which he taught flourishes through the glory of recompense in his subjects, and yet he himself did not take care to practice it. In these words it should also be noted that he who promises that he will not entirely remove a man from his altar is found to be rare in whom he receives, because indeed of a reprobate teacher there are more hearers who follow the wicked things he does than the right things he teaches. Whence here also a great part of his house is declared to be about to die in the prime of manhood.

19. For the age of manhood is the time of administering the priesthood. Therefore the imitator of the reprobate teacher is brought to manhood when he is promoted to the height of holy orders. When indeed he has reached that age, he dies, because whoever has approached so great a ministry unworthily, or has lived unworthily in it, is condemned. Whence Paul

also, making mention of the Lord's body and blood, says: "He who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). Therefore they die in manhood, because they perish from the presumption and boldness of a higher ministry. Hence therefore, hence indeed let the reckless take heed, and let them not eagerly seek but rather dread to undertake the burdens of so great a ministry. For he who is foretold to die when he reaches manhood lives until he reaches it, because indeed all who are weak and unequal to so great a ministry, if they consider the measure of their own smallness, have a place in the holy Church in which, guarding themselves, they may live. Whence the Lord also declares through Moses, saying: "If a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned" (Exod. 19:12; Heb. 12:20). Hence it is also that when Lot went out from Sodom, he refrained from ascending the mountain and turned aside to Zoar, a small city (Gen. 19:20ff.), lest while still small he strives for higher things and, striking against manhood, dies. For we leave Sodom when we turn away from the fires of burning desire.

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

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

They are deserving of a punishment all the graver inasmuch as they openly see that they do not die alone from the vanity they love, because while they drink down death under the pretext of worldly gladness, they transmit the poison of their drink to the multitude of those who follow them. Yet by these words the brevity of the present life can be made known to

reprobate teachers. For they die in a single day, because when they reach the end of this life, all that they have lived is seen to have been brief. Hence it is said by a certain wise man: "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment" (Job 20:5). Again, blessed Job speaks of the lovers of this world, saying: "They spend their days in prosperity, and in a moment they go down to hell" (Job 21:13). But when the reprobate are snatched away to punishment, wise and chosen pastors are raised up for the care of the Lord's flock. Wherefore he adds next: (Verse 35. "And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest."

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

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

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

of His dispensation, but the precepts of love. But because he is chosen not in vain, but for the profit of the people subject to him, he adds and says: (Verse 35) "And I will build him a faithful house."

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

It should also be noted that the Lord raises up a faithful priest for himself, so that the hearts of subjects may not presume to attribute to their own merits the very fact that they are governed by an excellent ruler. It should also be noted that the Lord calls the priest whom he raises up faithful to himself, but the house which he builds for him he says will be faithful to the priest himself; because indeed the preacher owes obedience to God, and the subject to the prelate. But then the prelate rightly walks before the subject if truth itself is seen to direct all the paths of his life. Therefore it follows: (Verse 35. And he shall walk before my Christ all his days.

24. But the Christ of the Lord is the Redeemer of the human race. Who indeed, because He is now believed to have ascended to the heavens, is seen by His faithful not with bodily eyes, but with the mind. Therefore he walks before Him all his days who does nothing from sudden impulse. For in order to place right steps outwardly in action, he looks inwardly to Christ, whom he carries in his heart through contemplation. But because He still speaks to the reprobate pastor, He adds, saying: (Verse 36.) And it shall come to pass that whoever remains of your house shall come that it may be prayed for him.

25. For someone is said to be about to remain from his house, because a great part of it is declared to be about to die. For from the house of the wicked pastor, he remains whom the consciousness of sin does not extinguish from the hope of obtaining pardon. He remains, therefore, because the weight of conscience is lightened through the resolution of repentance by the hope of obtaining life. He indeed comes so that prayer may be offered for him, and hastens through repentance to God, from whom he departed by sinning. He comes, therefore, so that prayer may be offered for him, because he who has made himself unworthy of God requires a worthy intercessor, so that he who is recognized as unable to be cleansed by his own prayers may be expiated by the prayers of others. Whence James also devoutly

admonishes, saying: Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved (James 5:16). Hence again: The persistent prayer of a righteous man avails much. But prayer avails for him who, while he restrains himself from the uncleanness of sin, restores himself to the likeness of God, of which he stripped himself by sinning. Whence here also it is added: (Verse 36.) That he may offer a piece of silver.

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

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

But because there are some within the Church who come to the satisfaction of penance only at the end of their life, and it is said by the judgment of Truth, 'At whatever hour the sinner is converted, he lives', it is often greatly asked by some whether those who commit sins during the great span of their life and only at the end of life accuse themselves of

having acted wickedly immediately find life after the death of the flesh. To which it must be said that by the power of conversion the magnitude of the crime is blotted out. But the power of conversion is the affection of charity infused into the heart by the visitation of the Holy Spirit. And it is written of the same Spirit: 'That he himself is the remission of sins.' For when he graciously visits the hearts of the elect, he powerfully purges them from all uncleanness of sins, because as soon as he pours himself into the mind, he immediately and ineffably stirs it into hatred of sins and vices and into love of virtues. He makes it immediately hate what it loved and ardently love what it had hated, and greatly groan at both, because it recalls that it damnably loved the evils it now hates and hated the good things it now loves. For who would dare to say, even though one is weighed down by every kind of burden of sins, that anyone visited by the grace of the Holy Spirit can perish?

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

But let the sinner who has merited to be saved there through fire fulfill here through the affliction of the flesh what he recognizes is lacking to him in the power of love. (Verse 36.) 'And a cake of bread.'

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

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

He was therefore twisting bread to be offered, who, while declaring the shameful deeds he had committed, was thinking about how he might blot them out. And because the desire for praise is wont sometimes to creep upon penitents from the austerity of their way of life, the intention of the truly converted sinner is indicated by what is added next: (Verse 36.) 'And let him say: Send me, I beseech you, to one of the priestly portions.'

28. For the priestly portion of each one is the reward of the elect in eternal life. For all His elect are priests of God, because they never cease to offer sacred gifts to Him whom they unceasingly serve through the offering of their ministry. Whence also those rejoicing in the kingdom say: 'You have redeemed us to God in your blood, and have made us a kingdom and priests to our God' (Rev. 5:9, 10). Therefore, for the converted sinner to say: 'Let me go, I beseech you, to one priestly portion', is from the austerity of life and penance to await only a portion of eternal blessedness, so that he may find the security of delight, which he may possess in perpetual enjoyment, and never drag behind him the torments of penance. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 36.) 'That I may eat a morsel of bread.'

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

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

crucifies harmful pleasures prepares for himself perpetual refreshment at the banquet of eternal joy. There follows:

CHAPTER IV. (1 Kings III, 1.) Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli.

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

And she, being pregnant, is said to have despised her mistress, because she now disdains to submit herself through obedience to the will of her superior who is set over her. But she who despises her mistress is declared to be a handmaid, because proud subjects are also weak through their arrogance, and they do not attain to the number of the children of God. Moreover, Samuel's progress is set forth because it was said above: "But the boy Samuel advanced and grew and was pleasing both to God and to men" (1 Kings 2:18). With what sublimity of life he accomplished these three things has been explained above. Since, therefore, even now he is mentioned as ministering before his master, what does this mean except that he provides a pattern for chosen hearers, so that the higher the life to which they advance, they never forget to preserve the good of obedience? For they truly advance if they strive toward the height of merits both by the strength of their works and by the virtue of humility.

2. In this passage there is another thing that ought to be noted: because Samuel is shown to be ministering to the Lord before Eli at the very time when Eli himself is rebuked by the Lord for his negligence regarding his sons. For some subjects, while they consider the measure of their own strength, prefer to be severe judges of their superiors rather than pious listeners. These indeed, because they are accustomed to exaggerating and scrutinizing the lives of their superiors, if they observe stains of even the slightest fault in their conduct, refuse to submit to their authority by obeying. But they would be truly strong if they humbly bore what they consider to be the weaknesses of their superiors. For before God, that person is known to be great in merit who submits himself in good obedience to one who does not seem venerable in some respect. For behold, Eli is rebuked by the open sentence of God for

the guilt of his committed negligence, yet the boy Samuel is recorded as ministering to the Lord before him, so that one may indeed reflect within himself what kind of person he is who despises his superior for a lighter fault, if Samuel submitted himself in obedience to one whom almighty God condemned with such severity of his judgment. But because Eli is rebuked for having honored his sinning subjects too greatly, the very dignities of the sacred orders must be weighed.

For a ruler ought not to honor a sinning subject unless he has been corrected, but the subject ought not to despise his superior even when he recognizes himself as just and the other as a sinner, because the eternal Judge has given the judgment of subjects to the rulers of Holy Church, but has reserved those same rulers to be examined at his own judgment. Yet this very thing ought to be greatly feared by rulers, that they are reserved for God's examination, because they must prepare all the more exacting accounts of their life and teaching as the Judge whom they face is wiser. Nor should they fear his future judgment in the life to come only, as though it were placed far off, lest he who is everywhere present strike the unwary from close at hand. For negligent pastors, in order to escape the punishment of future vengeance, count on the long stretches of present life before punishment comes; but the Judge, who is everywhere, inflicts retribution from close at hand, because he first withdraws from them the light of contemplation, then snatches them away to torments through death. Whence also concerning the same Eli, who a little further on dies with a broken neck, it is added: (Verse 1. In those days there was no manifest vision.

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

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

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

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

6. For the boy Samuel is called by the Lord whenever the secrets of divine counsel are revealed to humble subjects, and they acquire by the merit of their humility the light of contemplation, which proud preachers lose as the recompense of their pride. But it should be noted that this is shown to have happened on a certain day, on which Eli is reported both to have been lying in his place and to have been unable to see. For he is called in the daytime who is raised up to know the secrets of heavenly wisdom for his own and others' salvation. On the contrary, Solomon received wisdom in the night, so that the darkness of the time might indicate that he would not receive that same wisdom with perseverance (1 Kings 3:5, 12). This can also be understood in another way, since the darkness of Eli is mentioned. By the setting of the daytime, the greatness of his blindness is shown, because he surely had great darkness who did not see in the day. Now also, if we look to the state of the Church, there is a general grace of light. For He came who, scattering the rays of true brightness,

would say: ”I am the light of the world; he who follows me does not walk in darkness” (John 8:12).

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

To stand is also the mark of the just man. Whence Paul also says: ”For by faith you stand” (2 Corinthians 1:23). To lie down therefore also pertains to the negligence of a more lax life. Thus Eli lies in his place when a reprobate preacher rests in the seat of the just man through a fall into wickedness. Therefore the eyes of one lying in his place grow dim, because those who do not carry out works of virtue from the height of the pastoral summit, but are immersed in the allurements of a more lax life, are unable to see the highest things. He is indeed called the lamp of God no longer in the truth of praise, but as a reproach of derision. For he who bears the title of lamp of God and is reported to be unable to see is rather mocked by so great a name by which he is called. For in true praise of the just man it is said: ”He was a burning and shining lamp” (John 5:35). For the radiance of the true light which he had drunk in by loving, he poured forth by speaking. Even the carnal preacher is called a lamp by his office but blind in his intention, because he holds the dignity of providing light but fixes his mind on the darkness of vanity.

7. His thoroughly consummate perversity is indicated by the fact that it does not say ”he did not see,” but ”he could not see. For this reason also, when the Lord mentions the bad tree, He says: ”A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit” (Matt. 7:18). The lamp of God, therefore, cannot be seen when he who stands preeminent in pastoral dignity is pressed down by so great a thickness of worldly love that he is raised by no inspiration of grace toward the vision of interior brightness; when, that is, cast out by the just indignation of God, he is left in the blindness of his own darkness, so that he is never again visited by the infusion of heavenly light. But it is well said: ”Before it was extinguished. For not to see is the punishment of a sinner still living in this present age, but not to be able to see

belongs to the dead wicked man already condemned to eternal punishment in the age to come. Hence also, by the judgment of the Creator, he is commanded to be shut in outer darkness, so that he may never be brought back to the sight of light. Therefore, when the reprobate preacher, still living in this present age, is said to have been unable to see before the lamp was extinguished, he is likened to the wicked man already condemned to perpetual blindness. Now the lamp is extinguished when the pastor dies.

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

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

9. For to call is to rouse through the force of a greater grace. For the Lord calls one who is sleeping, because He stirs up those who are resting from earthly pursuits to an increase of heavenly knowledge. For while we keep watch through concern for outward things, we do not perceive what is inward and spiritual. The setting aside of earthly care, therefore, is our preparation for receiving heavenly grace, because in the elect the outpouring of the divine gift becomes more abundant in proportion as the mind has been purer through the keeping of interior meditation. There follows: (Verses 4–9.) And the Lord called Samuel. Who answering, said: Here I am, and he ran to Eli and said: For you called me. Who said: I did not call you, my son; go back and sleep. And he went away and slept. And the Lord

again called Samuel once more. And rising up, he went to Eli and said: Here I am, for you called me. Who answered: I did not call you, my son; go back and sleep. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord been revealed to him. And the Lord called Samuel again a third time. Who rising up, went to Eli and said: Here I am, for you called me. Eli therefore understood that the Lord was calling the boy, and he said to Samuel: Go and sleep, and if He calls you henceforth, you shall say: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

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

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

11. For true obedience neither examines the intention of superiors nor distinguishes between commands, because he who has submitted all judgment of his life to a greater re-

joices in this alone: that he carries out what is commanded him. For whoever has perfectly learned to obey knows not how to judge, because he considers this alone to be good: that he obeys commands. But in such great glory of his perfect way of life, our own life is put to shame. For behold, we have resolved to set out for the heavenly homeland under the leaders of the Christian army, yet we murmur when we are ordered to perform various tasks even at various times. For who would restrain himself from murmuring, who would hold back from anger, if he heard himself called two and three times, and yet perceived from the caller's response that he had not actually been called at all? We suffer indeed this darkness of our slothfulness because we do not see with what brightness of reward so great a virtue of goodness corresponds. For obedience is the sole good for the recovery of life, if the fault of disobedience was a sufficient evil for bringing about death. If therefore death prevailed through the evil of disobedience, we are restored to life as many times as we obey.

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

On the other hand, let the disobedient observe that the first parent of the human race fell from the joys of paradise not by theft, nor by robbery, nor by adultery, nor by murder, but by disobedience regarding the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). From this it is also fittingly gathered that if small things—as they seem—when the commands of superiors are despised, separate us from inward joys, then even the least things that are carried out in obedience prepare life.

12. Therefore the diligent worker of the communal life, and the pious emulator of those serving God together with him, if he desires to obtain a greater reward of eternal merit through the good of obedience, let him recognize that he excels in this alone: if above all others he has subjected his own will to the judgment of his superior. For neither the great gains of fasting nor the pursuits of an austere life are to be greatly weighed by devoted soldiers of Christ against the command of their superiors. For a meal enjoined by charity is of greater merit than a fast undertaken by one's own deliberation. For he who, being com-

manded, refreshes the flesh, has unwillingly earned the reward of fasting through devotion, and has obtained a greater reward of obedience by eating. Therefore God called the boy, but with a voice similar to the master's, so that He might indeed indicate the manner of His speaking. He was silent about the reason for the calling, so that the chosen boy might show by what humility of obedience he would be exalted. He endured going to his master, so that he might offer the gift of his devotion. He is allowed to return to the rest of sleep, so that indeed we may not despise even the things that are least. He rouses him again, so that He might show that he whom He wished to set as a pattern for the elect would not be wearied even by the urgency of commands. Through him who was to be rejected he learned how he ought to respond, so that indeed we may know that the commands of superiors are to be venerated even when they themselves do not have a praiseworthy life, because their teaching, which through wicked conduct can become worthless to the proud, causes humble hearers to arrive at the height of divine intimacy.

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

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

through obedience, while he is led to the height of contemplation, is said to have long been ignorant of the Lord, because He is found as if from the truth of His presence, who before seemed as if unknown by report and not known as if present.

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

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

15. For now the boy, having been instructed, is sent to the knowledge of divine speech, when the chosen one, subject to the counsel of his superior, is prepared for knowing spiritual things. And indeed for him to sleep is to rest in the desire of eternal life, when, that is, to the soul now thirsting for heavenly things alone, all present things are held in contempt, so that the more eagerly everything corporeal is driven from its attention, the more abundantly it is filled with the love of invisible things. And it should be noted that he is now commanded to return to the rest of sleep four times, because while we carelessly occupy ourselves with this world regarding visible things, we are awake in deed, speech, and thought. Therefore we are commanded to sleep three times, so that we may be prepared for the knowledge of heavenly things through rest from works, silence of the mouth, and the rejection of superfluous thoughts. But in the fourth place we are sent to sleep when by the permission of our superiors we are commanded to cease even from useful ministry, so that while we are hindered by no care of anxiety, the mind may gather itself entirely to the contemplation of the heavenly vision.

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

17. By these words indeed, because what is known to pertain to a body is said of the incorporeal and invisible divine substance, it is necessary that it be understood in a rational manner. For where does he come who is everywhere? In what way is he said to stand and speak who is not formed of bodily substance? But while that substance governs all things, the words of our poverty are employed, through which we may be able to rise to knowing the mysteries of his working. For the Lord's coming is to touch the hearts of the elect by the presence of his grace; his standing is, by the abiding gift of his grace, to retain the minds he touches with the unwavering gift of his grace. His calling, moreover, is to arouse the chosen mind to the increase of greater grace. For the Lord comes and does not stand when the hearts of the negligent are touched by grace, and yet they do not at all persevere in the affection and love of the grace that touches them. For he is as it were present when coming, and departing when not standing, when from the present touch of divine grace they suddenly resolve to do good, and immediately, being abandoned, they forsake the intention of that same good resolve.

But if this is referred to the power of contemplation, the Lord comes and stands when he both suddenly touches the hearts of the elect by grace and does not suddenly abandon them once touched, so that by coming he may visit, by standing he may confirm, and he who is shown to the joy of the mind beloved to him may not himself depart before that mind is satisfied in its living experience. But because he is said to stand, it is indicated that he will at some point depart, because even if he sometimes satisfies chosen souls in his revelation through a brief lingering, he withdraws the sweetness of his presence, so that they may more

ardently desire what has been withdrawn. The Lord therefore comes by visiting, stands by sweetly showing himself, and calls by arousing through most ardent desire toward the love of his revealed glory. Hence also the boy was aroused so many times by the repeated name. He is called because a calling by name designates the affection of great charity and intimacy. Hence he also speaks to Moses, saying: ”I know you by name” (Exodus 33:12, 17).

The name of the one called is therefore repeated when the mind of the one who sees is now received into great intimacy with the interior Majesty, and is elevated by its burning desires toward the love of the one who calls, so that nothing may please it beyond what it hears, and it may desire to dwell perpetually in the joy of what it has heard. Hence it is also openly added here: ”Samuel therefore said: Speak, Lord, for your servant hears. He who therefore said ”Speak” was compelled by necessity. For it is as if he were saying in plainer words: I answered ”Speak,” because I could not have answered otherwise. For what else can a mind desire that has been taken up into that joy of the speaking Majesty? For to say to God in the mind ”Speak” is to desire always to hear that ineffably sweet speech. He therefore says ”Speak” who would wish that he never be silent. Hence it is also added: ”for your servant hears. As if to say: because that which I receive by the experience of interior affection, I desire to enjoy in eternal perception. He therefore asks that he speak, who desires that he never be silent in his interior affections, lest he who is lifted up by such sublime exultation when the Lord speaks be cast down, when he is silent, to endure the straits of condemned humanity.

For if we are raised from the darkness of our corruption when he speaks, when he is silent to us through the withdrawal of grace, we are subjected to those same darknesses. Rightly therefore, having been raised to such a height, he says to the Lord ”Speak,” because he takes pleasure in that joy of interior hearing in which nothing in his outward circumstances pleases him; and he would desire all the more ardently to remain with the one conversing with him, the more gladly he would have wished never to be cast down to his own infirmities.

18. Indeed, when by God’s authorship we say ”Speak” to the Lord, we say it by His own gift; yet we cannot express with what affection the more perfect elect say this to Him, because what belongs to ineffable desire is not expressed by the utterance of reason. Peter indeed well suggests this affection, who, when he stood by the Lord transfigured on the mountain, and beheld His face shining like the sun, and had seen His garments gleaming white like snow, said: ”It is good for us to be here; if You will, let us make here three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (Matt. 17:4; Luke 9:33). For he who says, ”It is good for us to be here,” would never have wished to be taken away from that vision of such great glory, if he could have remained. For when Peter says, ”Lord, it is good for us to be here,” and Samuel says, ”Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears,” the words indeed are different, but the affections are equal. For Peter signifies on the mountain, with the Lord transfigured, what Samuel signifies when he is called by the Lord coming, standing, and standing a second time. But even though Peter is reproved by the Evangelist as one not knowing what he was saying, this does not seem contrary to this meaning.

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

Hence also, when Samuel is raised to the intimacy of divine speech, not joyful things about the progress of the elect are announced to him, but terrible things about the downfall of the great. For it continues: (Verse 11) "And the Lord said to Samuel: Behold, I am doing a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it shall tingle."

19. For among sublime gifts, the elect mind is restrained from pride all the more cautiously, the more it perceives through the justice of almighty God that even those who seemed to be supported by more sublime gifts have been cast away. For this reason also, concerning the word which the Lord threatens He will accomplish, the ears of those who hear are declared to ring. For the ears of the body ring when they are struck by an unbearable sound. For when a cry is poured into the ear beyond the capacity of hearing, the narrowness of its function converts the sound it rejects into a ringing, because while the voice hisses through the caverns of the ears, having been poured in all at once, it does not pass into the interior. But to the ears of minds, the unbearable cry is the rejection of some great preacher. Therefore the magnitude of the outpoured cry is not grasped, because while the sublime gifts granted to the rejected preacher are recalled, it remains unknown by what examination of divine equity he is cast out. Therefore the magnitude of the outpoured voice is converted into a ringing of the ears, because even if the judgment of God by which it happens is not grasped by the mind's attention, while it is long weighed through consideration, hearts are struck with terror by that consideration. For just as ears ring from the confined sound of a great voice, so the hearts of the righteous tremble greatly from the long-considered rejection of great men.

But both ears are said to ring, namely the right and the left. And because by the right eternal life is signified, and by the left the present life, and through the ear we hear what is said, what do we understand by the left ear except the attention to pious works, and

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

But fittingly, only the ears of those who hear are declared to ring. For in the Gospel too He warns of this, saying: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:8). For those who with all their attention are watchful for outward things do not know this ringing of fear, because they in no way weigh the height of divine judgments above them. But behold, upon him who refused to weigh God's subtle judgments above himself, how sharp the sentences of those judgments are now unfolded. For He adds, saying: (Verses 13 and 14) "For I foretold that I would judge his house forever because of iniquity, in that he knew his sons were acting unworthily, and he did not correct them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated by victims and offerings forever."

20. For since the sentence of just severity is usually tempered by clemency, it is a judgment of great strictness where the sentence of punishment is affirmed by repetition. For He foretold above to Eli when, through a man of God, without naming him, He announced the sentence of his rejection. But because now too He swears that He will do the same thing, He indeed repeats the judgment of condemnation. In this matter it should also be noted that he who did not correct his sons when they acted wickedly is reproved for having committed an iniquity that will never be expiated by sacrifices and offerings. What then will be the severity for one's own iniquity, if the negligence of caring for others is an irremediable fault? For if the uncorrected sins of subjects bind us with perpetual guilt, with what punishments does the boldness of our own iniquity bind us? Rightly therefore do the ears of the hearer tingle, because indeed the minds of the elect, which consider this attentively, tremble at such great severity. Rightly do the ears of the hearer tingle at this, because it indeed possesses an immensity of outcry that chosen hearts can scarcely endure. And indeed the right ear of the hearer tingles, because even if anyone raises himself by the merit of his perfection to contemplate heavenly things, yet he does not trust in the loftiness of his life. The left ear also tingles, because even if one has the gift of knowledge to order temporal things perfectly, yet he has no confidence in the perfection of his ministry. For amid sublime gifts they hear a word from whose outcry each ear suffers a ringing, under which, as long as this life of

uncertainty is led, one does not cease to tremble. Whence also it is fittingly added: (Verse 15) Samuel slept until morning.

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

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

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

For even if a negligent preacher deserves rebuke and threats on account of his own guilt, the loftiness of his order demands the fear of reverence. There follows: (Verse 15.) And he opened the doors of the house of the Lord.

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

24. For he who is said to have been compelled to speak by such great urgency of entreaty is shown to have been bound by a great strictness of silence. And because some subjects are accustomed to keep silent not so much for the preservation of purity as from the obstinacy of impudence, Samuel showed the pattern of a chosen subject, who kept silent reverently, but when commanded to speak, was afraid to keep silent. And so he shone with the twofold light of his conduct, since he who had kept silent by the virtue of filial fear gained by speaking the benefit of speaking. There follows: (Verse 18.) And he answered: It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes.

25. He who considers this response of Eli more simply than he ought thinks that he responded as rightly as he did humbly. For as it is heard outwardly, what could he have responded more humbly, he who heard his own reprobation and offered to God who was threatening—indeed, promulgating the sentence of his reprobation—whatever He wished to do concerning him? But certainly if this humility of response is examined more carefully, it is not true humility. For that is recognized to be true humility which accompanies the good of obedience in carrying out the commands of a superior. He would therefore truly have been humble if he had offered himself for the amendment of the fault for which he was being rebuked. But perhaps he would have been even more truly humble if, when rebuked, he had not responded at all, but had applied to his wicked sons the correction he had neglected—if even then he had persisted with pastoral zeal and had punished the crimes of the flagitious priests with fitting vengeance. Therefore, when he says, "He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes," he is recognized to have uttered a word of his own choosing rather than a response of humility, because indeed he preferred to incur the causes of God's threats rather than condemn his sons for the iniquities they had committed. Oh, how many are still imitators of Eli, who, though they daily perceive from sacred Scripture that

Almighty God threatens them, nevertheless tremble at displeasing men and do not fear to incur the threats of divine indignation, and while they dread the enmities of men as though they were implacable, they presume upon God's mercy even while sinning!

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

27. For Almighty God, although He is just in equity, is nevertheless believed to be more abundantly compassionate in mercy. Whence it is also said through the Prophet: "His mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 144:9). Hence it is that through the prophet Jonah He brought forth threats of overthrow against the Ninevites, and yet spared the penitent from the punishment of destroying the city (Jonah 3:1, 2, ff.). Hence it is also that to King Hezekiah (IV Kings 20:1, ff. the punishment of death was promised through the oracle of the prophet (Isaiah 38:1, ff.), but because the king, fearing death, afflicted himself before the Lord with tears of repentance, he did not find the death by which he was to die with Him whom he feared. And above indeed the Lord declared that He had spoken so that the house of Eli and of his father should minister in His sight forever, but He who had spoken good things concerning one who acted well changed His sentence concerning the house now become reprobate, saying: "But now far be it from me" (1 Kings 2:30). If therefore Almighty God revokes good things promised, because those to whom He had promised them are changed for the worse, how much more does He withdraw the execution of threats, when He sees those well converted to whom He had announced the punishment of retribution for their committed iniquities? What then do we say to these things, we who sin daily and are unconcerned in the bondage of our guilt?

Therefore this very thing, that we do not apprehend the severity of divine justice, is greatly to be feared by us, because behold, he who is cast off by divine indignation is reported to have been troubled by no fear for the fault of his perpetrated negligence. But since we have learned of the reprobate preacher's rejection unto fear, let us hear of the progress of the elect. For there follows: (Verse 19. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him."

28. If this is read according to the historical sense, it is indicated that the boy Samuel grew in bodily age; but if, as with the rest, we examine these things by spiritual investigation, the Lord is described as being with him who is recorded to have grown. But he grows who

advances in the age of mind toward a perfect man. Whence also through the Prophet it is said of the elect who are advancing: 'They shall walk from virtue to virtue; the God of gods shall be seen in Zion' (Psalm 83:8). Hence Paul says: 'Until we all come to meet him in a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13). But there are some who, while they grow in virtues, fall through pride. These indeed appear to grow, but nevertheless the Lord is not with them, because by thinking lofty things of themselves they cast away from themselves him whom, when established in the progress of virtues, they could have had with them through humility. Or if he is understood to have grown through outward dignity, the Lord is recorded as being with him, because indeed many are devout in a humbler rank; but when they suddenly reach the summit of dignity, they abandon their first works together with humility. Samuel therefore both advanced and in advancing had the Lord with him, so that he indeed displayed the manner of the elect preachers, who when they obtain gifts and dignities by which they may benefit others, do not neglect to please God in themselves, and from that source they multiply the gifts which they received for others, whereby they show forth in themselves the good which they desire to spread among them by speaking. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 19.) 'And none of all his words fell to the ground.'

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

And so of all his words not one falls to the ground, because everything lofty that the perfect preacher of Holy Church speaks is also proclaimed by him through his sublime manner of life, since, as though stationed on a high watchtower, he both instructs the wise by his word and shows the simple by his works the path by which they ought to enter the eternal homeland. Hence it is also added: (Verse 20. "And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord."

30. For what is designated by Dan except the simple, and what by Beersheba except the wise? From Dan even to Beersheba Samuel is acknowledged as the faithful prophet of the

Lord, when the life of a chosen preacher is set forth to the simple as an example of salvation, and to the wise the mysteries of Holy Scripture are revealed through his teaching. But since Beersheba is interpreted as "the seventh well," by Beersheba can be designated not only the wise, but also the righteous. For what is the seventh well except the grace of the sevenfold Spirit? By Dan the life of sinners is shown, because it is said through the ancient prophet: 'Let Dan be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, biting the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward' (Gen. 49:17). Therefore from Dan even to Beersheba Samuel is known as the prophet of the Lord, since the life and teaching of a chosen preacher is venerable both to sinners and to the righteous—so that in him, namely, the fallen may see the good by which they may correct themselves through repentance, and the good may marvel at the loftiness of life toward which they may daily grow stronger by advancing. There follows: (Verse 21.) And the Lord continued to appear in Shiloh.

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

32. For He then revealed Himself to him when He opened to him the secret of His counsel concerning the rejection of the reprobate priest. This is indeed affirmed to have been accomplished according to the word of the Lord, so that what had been said above, not very long before, through the man of God to Eli might be perceived to have been fulfilled also according to the historical sense: 'And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall act according to My heart and My soul, and he shall walk before My Christ all his days' (1 Kings 2:35). And again: 'You shall see your rival in the temple, amid all the prosperity of Israel' (ibid., 32). But if we search according to the spiritual understanding, how does the Lord "add" so as to appear to the elect, unless because He who marvelously terrifies His elect through the contemplation of His justice also ineffably soothes them through the display of His glory? For He who, by appearing as just, strikes the hearts of the saints with terror, "adds" that He may appear, when the sweetness of His loving-kindness is poured back into the terrified heart. For this is why He did not always appear to Moses in fire,

but sometimes in fire, sometimes in a cloud. In fire, indeed, there is the terror of judgment. Whence also concerning the second coming of our Redeemer it is said through the Psalmist: 'Fire shall go before Him, and round about Him a mighty tempest' (Ps. 49:3).

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

Hence also, marveling at the added apparition, he said: 'How good is the God of Israel to those who are upright in heart' (Ps. 73:1).

33. But we must attentively consider what is added next: According to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord, therefore, must be known before we deserve to attain to the appearing of the Lord, lest an unjust and indiscriminate vision of fire and cloud not only fail to show us the perfection of the heavenly journey, but drive us into the submersion of error. For Origen, while he wished to see the Lord appearing without the word of the Lord, beheld the vision of the cloud in a disordered way, because he shrank in horror from the appearing of the fire. For while he denied or diminished the justice of God and preached His excessive clemency, he asserted that God would not only spare all condemned men, but would even at some point free the reprobate angels from eternal punishment. Novatus, however, loved to gaze more upon the vision of fire, for while he called the severe justice of almighty God implacable, he took away from sinners all hope of obtaining pardon and every remedy of repentance. Therefore the Lord appeared neither to Novatus nor to that other one, because each of them did not behold the almighty Lord according to what is perceived through the truth of sacred Scripture. The Lord therefore appears according to His word when He reveals Himself to the mind by that manifestation which the faith of Sacred Scripture does not reject. Hence it is aptly added next: (Verse 21.) And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

34. For the word of heretics does not come to pass. For the word of Novatus was that a just God by no means spares the faithful who have once fallen. The word of Origen was that the merciful Lord permits no rational creature to perish through eternal damnation. But because sinners who are converted to the Lord by no means perish, and the angels who once

fell and sinners who died in their sin are never saved, the word of heretics assuredly does not come to pass. Therefore the word of Samuel came to all Israel, because the preaching of a catholic man is fulfilled, which is rightly recognized in the truth of sacred speech. And it should be noted that the word is said to have come to him to whom the Lord is reported to have added His vision, because surely his preaching is true to whom the terror of divine justice is so shown that the abundant grace of His kindness is not concealed; namely, so that the truth beheld may so terrify the mind of the one seeing it that the kindness also shown may not permit the terrified mind to fall into despair; so that one may so trust in His kindness as not to rush headlong into the boldness of transgression. But let these things that have been discussed in the second book of the present work suffice, so that while we arrange to begin what follows with a new starting point, our zeal for speaking may also be renewed through devotion.

Book 3

Commentaries on the Book of 1 Kings BOOK THREE. CHAPTER I.

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

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

2. But this ministry, which he performed for the Lord, he also performed before Eli, because he added, saying: For David says: "Because You will not abandon my soul in hell, nor will

You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27; Psalm 15:10). Therefore Samuel is fittingly said to have ministered to the Lord before Eli, because the chosen preachers of holy Church, while they were raising up the structure of the new faith by preaching, confirmed by the authority of the ancient Fathers what they had endeavored to assert by reason.

3. And at that time the word of the Lord is said to have been precious. For indeed a precious thing cannot be bought at a small price. Now the price by which the word of God is bought is the labor of holy work. For we buy, as it were, with a price the thing we wish to have, when through the word of preaching which we receive we put forth the labor of work. But at that time the word was precious, when it was not given for any amount of labor of work, when everyone who killed a buyer of the word thought he was rendering service to God. Therefore at that time the buyer of the word needed a great price, because without great labor he could not preserve the word of faith, since he who believed arrived at torments on account of what he believed. For it was then a time when the word that was being bought exhorted not by a figuratively shaped type of morality, but by the precept of open speech, saying: "Whoever wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Hence likewise he says: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). And: "Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). And so when the ministry of Samuel is set forth, the word of the Lord is said to have been precious, because assuredly in the beginnings of the faith, those who believed the teachers preaching eternal life must be believed to have expended works of great labor for the word of faith they received. And because the Jewish people had already lost the light of divine knowledge, there follows: (1 Kings 3:1) "In those days there was no open vision."

4. For his vision would have been clear, if he had believed in the Redeemer whom he had heard had come to visit him. Concerning this blindness of his, it is added: (Verse 2. Now it came to pass that Eli was lying in his place, and he could not see the lamp of God before it was extinguished. For the vision of Eli is not clear, because the priesthood of the Jews is buried in the blindness of its own faithlessness. Eli therefore lies in his place, because he both possesses the letter of the law, and yet in the law and the prophets he does not have the standing of light, but the fall of blindness. For the place of Eli, that is, of the Jewish preacher, is the sacred law. Because therefore the Jewish priesthood still possesses Sacred Scripture, it is in its place. And because, not knowing the power of Sacred Scripture, it is not raised up to the standing of faith, it is rightly said not to stand in its place, but to lie down. Because likewise it has been cast out until the end of the world, it is recorded as being unable to see the lamp of God.

Hence also, when they daily receive so many exhortations of preaching from holy Church, when the Jews, overcome by so many assertions of the sacred faith, still do not believe, what else is this but what we read about them in Sacred Scripture, and also hold through experience — namely, that they have been cast out, not only so that they do not see, but so that they cannot even see? Hence also the apostles, reckoning as futile the labor spent on

those who could not see, say in their Acts: "Because you have made yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). But he who is reported as unable to see is called the lamp of God. For the ministry of the Synagogue was the lamp of God, when in the chosen Patriarchs it shone both through the light of true preaching and through the promise of the coming Redeemer. Which lamp indeed could not be seen while Samuel was ministering, because at the time of the new preaching, the authority of the Synagogue incurred the punishment of perpetual rejection.

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

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

7. And it should be noted that it does not say "he slept" [dormivit], but "he was sleeping" [dormiebat], because indeed he strove to maintain that same watchfulness of his mind not in passing, but in the endurance of perseverance. The sleep of Samuel therefore signifies a perfect contempt of the world in the mind of the teacher. The preacher therefore sleeps in the temple when, having thoroughly driven worldly anxiety from himself, he conceals himself in his mind through the contemplation of spiritual things. For Peter had chosen

the rest of this sleep when he said: "It is not right that we should leave the word of God and serve tables" (Acts 6:2). Hence Jethro the Midianite rightly reproved his kinsman Moses, saying: "You will be consumed with foolish labor; but hear my words, and the Lord will be with you. Be you for the people in those things that pertain to God, that you may bring what is said to Him" (Exodus 18:18, 19). Hence Paul calls the Corinthians back to the sleep of the temple, saying: "Already indeed it is a fault in you that you have lawsuits among yourselves. Why do you not rather suffer fraud?" (1 Corinthians 6:7). For he had perceived that those whom the preoccupation of lawsuits was drawing back from spiritual meditation were unable to sleep in the temple of God. He who was sleeping in the temple is therefore said to have been called by the Lord, because that teacher was taken up to know divine secrets who, through the attention of his heart, was dwelling not in outward things but in inward things. There follows: (Verses 4, 5.) Who answering, said: "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said: "For you called me." Who said: "I did not call you, my son; return and sleep."

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

9. Sometimes God speaks through Scripture, and sometimes through hidden inspiration. He speaks by hidden revelation when things to be done or taught are disclosed to the chosen mind through the Spirit. And so Samuel, when he heard the Lord calling him, ran to Eli, because the chosen order of preachers of the holy Church sought in sacred eloquence to determine the nature of what it had come to know by God's revealing. For the rule of right understanding is set forth in the books of sacred Scripture, because the divine counsels have been expounded there through our venerable Fathers, who possessed the Holy Spirit. Therefore Samuel, called so many times by the Lord, ran to Eli, because the order of preachers consulted the sayings of the ancient Fathers in everything it learned by spiritual revelation, so that it would only then believe something had been revealed to it by the Lord when it recognized that it in no way differed from what it read in sacred Scripture. For he is easily deceived who does not know how to examine in the clear truth of holy Scripture the nature of what he gathers by hidden contemplation. Hence the Apostle also warns, saying:

"Satan transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). But how are false things discerned in the brightness of true light? Samuel therefore runs to Eli every time he is called by the Lord, because the holy preachers, lest they be deceived by the image of false light in inward contemplation, examine the manner of hidden revelation in the open truth of holy Scripture.

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

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

13. Samuel was therefore called three times by the Lord, because when the order of preachers, still young in the Church, stretched itself toward heavenly pursuits, it sought truth in the reasoning of counsel, goodness in the choice of the will, and true joy in the intention of the affections. He also went three times when called to Eli, because concerning every desire of his he consulted Sacred Scripture with the eagerness of meditation. Likewise three times he heard that he was not being called by him, because through meditation he learned that our Fathers handed down to us the sacred words written for our instruction; nevertheless, they are utterly unable to give us spiritual gifts. What then does it mean to say "I did not

call you," except "I did not give you the desire for spiritual gifts"? For if Sacred Scripture, or any one of the writers, could confer spiritual gifts, then as many as read the sacred words, as many as heard the expositors of Holy Scripture, would be adorned with spiritual gifts. But in truth, since many read Sacred Scripture and hear preachers expounding, and after the pursuit of reading and the exhortation of preaching, some remain in the old coldness of their vices while others burn through grace with love of holy virtues, it is plainly evident that the order of venerable Fathers shows us the gifts of virtues through the Scriptures they produced, but the love of the virtues they set forth is bestowed upon us by the Creator alone.

Therefore James also devoutly admonishes, saying: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Hence Paul says: "Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). What else then does it mean to say "I did not call you," except to show by plain instruction that the fact that a faithful soul is raised to heavenly desires is produced solely by the infusion of divine grace? Because therefore he is called three times by the Lord and three times ordered by his master to return to sleep, he indicates how those three degrees of love are acquired. For since we have applied counsel to the heart, and counsel indeed desires to find truth, a great sleep is certainly necessary, lest the lover awaken before the sought truth is found. Let the boy therefore return and sleep, so that he who desires to find the light of truth may, through rest, take care not to admit the darkness of errors into himself. Let him also sleep a second time, so that he may devote the service of love to almighty God with his whole mind, that the good things he loves may shine with pure simplicity and not be obscured by any veil of evils. Because this indeed is recognized only by the great subtlety of discernment, the boy, called by the Lord, is ordered by Eli to return and sleep.

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

He also slept a third time, so that while he perceived the supreme joy from divine contemplation, he might be able to reject vain gladness with a deliberate mind. And because this is said of Samuel while he was still advancing, it is fittingly added: (Verse 7. "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him."

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

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

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

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

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

But to him, because he had now proved all things by examining them, "Go" is said, because he was now being sent with secure intention to possess what he had come to know. Why then is sleep first commanded without speech, but now sleep with speech, unless because it was not permitted to say "Speak" except to one who was certain with true knowledge that the one speaking to the affections of his mind was God? Therefore it is not said to one who is still examining, because unless he perfectly discerns the one speaking within, he ought not to desire spiritual speech still uncertain to him, nor receive it as though it were certain. For to say to God in one's mind "Speak" is to receive his interior inspiration with security. Therefore this belongs to one who knows perfectly, not to one still testing, because before the judgment of interior examination, just as divine speech is not proved, so what is unknown to us concerning God is not received as certain and known. For it was said to Samuel "Go and sleep," because when the order of holy preachers has learned spiritual gifts through the testing of sacred Scripture, it has come to know by the instruction of that same holy

Scripture how to rest more securely through love in those same gifts, the more clearly it has recognized their power by open reason.

He was also commanded to say to God when he called, "Speak, Lord," because he was taught by the study of sacred speech not only to hear the Lord devoutly speaking through the grace of interior visitation, but also to implore him with great desires when he was silent, that he might deign to speak. (Verse 9. So Samuel went and slept in his place.

17. The preacher of the holy Church has as many places as he has advances in life. Whence also blessed Job, consecrating the places of his advancement with divine praises, says: "At every step of mine I will proclaim Him" (Job 31:37). For he is not placed in a position of examination, but certainly of knowledge, when he is raised to higher things. For the place of the preacher is the certain knowledge of the things to be known. For concerning reprobate preachers the Lord says: "Those who held my law did not know me" (Jeremiah 2:8). Samuel therefore slept in his place, when the order of teachers retained the knowledge of spiritual things with the certainty of truth. But to what degree he advances is shown, because it is suddenly added next: (Verse 10.) "The Lord therefore came and stood."

18. Because the Lord is said not to return but to come, the abandonment of Judea and the visitation of the holy Church is signified. Hence He is described not only as coming but also as standing. He indicates that He came to visit Judea, saying: "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). But having come, He did not stand, because He abandoned her as she despised the good of her own salvation. Hence He also threatens the rulers of the Synagogue, saying: "Your house will be left to you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Again, declaring this, He says: "Amen, I say to you that the kingdom will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits." Therefore He came to Samuel and stood, because He once took up the preachers of the holy Church, from whom He no longer departs through the guardianship of His grace. For He had come to Samuel when, presenting new preachers to the world, He said: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15ff.). But let Him who came say whether the Lord ought to stand: "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Therefore the Lord had come not to depart but to stand, because He chose new ministers of the faith, whom He protects even to the end of the world as they succeed one another through the patrimony of holy virtues devoted to Him. But let us hear what He adds—He who comes visiting through grace, who stands persevering through the unchangeableness of His election. (Verse 10.) "And He called, as He had called the second time, Samuel, Samuel."

19. For he called a second time, because he provided him with a twofold office in the ministry of preaching: namely, that by repelling the pride of the Synagogue he might crush it, and that by calling the humility of the Gentiles to the faith he might raise them up. Or indeed he is called a second time because he is roused both to the destruction of the old man and to the building up of the new. He was called once when he was being instructed through the

Spirit as to how he might be able to blot out sins and vices in the hearts of sinners; he was called a second time when God instructed him by the teaching of the interior Master, so that, having destroyed the edifice of impiety in the minds of the converted, he ought to raise up a new structure of holy virtues. And indeed, because the order of holy preachers both gladly learned this teaching and devoutly offered themselves to obey, there follows: (Verse 10.) Samuel therefore said: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

20. To hear God speaking is to fulfill His precepts by works. On the contrary, in the Gospel, Truth itself says to the reprobate: He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God (John 8:47). But to the one listening, He adds what He desires to make known; for it follows: (Verse 11.) And the Lord said to Samuel: Behold, I am doing a thing in Israel, at which both ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle. And opening up this same word, He says: (Verses 13 and 14.) For I have foretold to him that I would judge his house forever for the iniquity, because he knew that his sons were acting unworthily, and he did not correct them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated by sacrifices and offerings forever.

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

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

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

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

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

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

24. What other house of the Lord is there but the holy Church? And what are the doors of this house, if not spiritual virtues? For Samuel opened the doors of the house of the Lord

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

25. For how did he learn from the executor of the divine sentence the vision of his own rejection, he who heard this not so much from one threatening as from one who was rather compelled by prayers? But let those who inquire about this first understand that we are discussing these things not according to the letter, but according to their spiritual and typological meaning. For in this passage, the coming of Eli is referred neither to a bodily movement of the Jewish priesthood nor to a disposition of the mind, but rather his coming was this very thing: that the rational creature of God appeared to the preachers. He came, therefore, when he was seen in human nature and moved the hearts of the teachers to compassion toward himself. Therefore, Eli's coming is not, among the ancient people, an approach of mind or of body, but a manifestation of the human condition. Or perhaps his coming was from the fact that he was chosen from among all peoples for the worship of God. He also called him "son"—he who is regarded by the one who is remembered as having been the founder of the holy Church among the chosen Fathers. He therefore calls him "son" not out of affection in the address, but as a display of lost dignity. And because he is seen in the darkness of blindness, he is reported to have asked that the vision be revealed to him.

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

26. By these words, indeed, what else is more clearly recognized than the faithlessness of the Jewish people? For he who calls the almighty God Lord still considers himself to be serving Him. When therefore his rejection is made known to the Jewish people by the doctors of the holy Church, he says: He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes. Because while he believes himself to please God through the old institution, he is in no way frightened by the threats of the holy Church. For it is as if Jewish faithlessness were to assert with a more open voice, and were to say to the preachers of the holy Church who threaten them: You strike no terror into us by your threats, inasmuch as we believe ourselves to minister in faith to Him from whose grace you proclaim we have fallen. When therefore he adds: Let Him do what is good in His eyes, he mocks the doctors of the holy Church rather than offering himself to the divine judgment. As if he were speaking with another intention, and saying: He does no such thing to us, inasmuch as He is our Lord, the very one whom you set before us for vengeance. There follows: (Verse 19.) And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him.

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

He gives forth fragrance to the whole world through his life, but he draws the odor of life from him whom he reveals, saying: 'We are the good fragrance of Christ in every place' (2 Cor. 2:15). John indicates that all things come from the presence of the Redeemer, for he says: 'Of his fullness we have all received' (John 1:16). Therefore, when Samuel is said to have grown, the Lord is recalled as being with him, because when the order of teachers shone throughout the whole world with the grace of great holiness and teaching, it was able to appear so great because of him who did not abandon it while it was placed in the world. There follows: (Verse 20.) 'And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord.'

28. By these names of the land, indeed, the whole of Judea is designated. What then is designated in all of Judea except the entire Church? The whole of Israel, therefore, recognizes

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

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

31. For the word is known to come when the promise of our preachers is fulfilled. For the promise of the word is joy that will endure without end. Therefore the word of Samuel came to all Israel, because the entire multitude of the holy Church arrives at the joy of eternal blessedness, and what is now promised in the faith of the word by its holy preachers is bestowed upon it in truth in the heavenly kingdoms. For the word of the teachers in the promise of the faithful is: Everyone who believes in him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life (John III, 15). Or certainly the word of the teachers in the promise of gifts is: What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ascended into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him (Isa. LXIV, 4; I Cor. II, 9). And so the word of Samuel came to all Israel, because whoever believes the holy preachers both urging a devout manner of life in the present and promising eternal joys to the just, has passed by dying in the flesh

to those eternal joys which he had awaited by living piously. Whence he in whose faith he had promised also affirms, saying: Amen I say to you, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Mark XIII, 31). Or certainly the word of Samuel has now come to all Israel, because through the effect of divine punishment the general rejection of the Jews is recognized as fulfilled. Whence, expounding more broadly the order in which this same word came to all Israel, he says:

CHAPTER II. (1 Kings IV, 1-3.) For Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle, and encamped near the Stone of Help. Moreover the Philistines came to Aphek, and drew up their battle line against Israel. When the battle was joined, Israel turned their backs, and about four thousand men were slain in that battle scattered throughout the fields. And Israel returned to the camp.

1. The blessed Apostle shows that there are spiritual battles, when he exhorts the camp of holy Church to victory, saying: ”Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Concerning these battles, also providing counsel for obtaining victory, he says: ”And take up the shield of faith, with which you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (ibid., 16, 17). Hence Peter, exhorting, says: ”Be sober and watch in prayers, because your adversary the devil goes about, seeking whom he may devour; resist him, strong in faith” (1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8). Therefore, while battles are related to the Israelites according to the letter, internal and spiritual battles are signified. For ”Philistines” is interpreted as ”falling by the cup”; by which name indeed the reprobate angels are expressed, because through a more abundant draught of pride they lost the state of eternal life. For to fall as if by a cup was for them to take up the draught of pride without any delay of reconsideration. For what is drunk is easily consumed. Of the prince of these fallen ones, the Lord speaks as if of one drinking: ”Because he did not stand in the truth” (John 8:44). For he fell as if by a draught, who, drunk with the swiftness of his own pride, did not stand even for a moment in the truth in which he had been created.

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

our Redeemer. And it should be noted that it is said of the rejected people: Israel went out. Then he rightly went out when he abandoned the monuments of sacred faith. Whence also concerning those who by erring had deviated from the mysteries of Holy Scripture, John says:

They went out from us, but they were not of us (1 John 2:19). Therefore for Israel according to the flesh to go out is to pass beyond the boundaries of right faith by erring. But because they do not cease to expect another Christ, they pitch camp beside the Stone of Help. Rightly therefore Israel is said to have turned their backs, because he is also reported to have gone out. For if he had remained within, he could in no way have been conquered, because if he had kept himself within the fortifications of faith, he would have vanquished the armed spirits of error. And because he is overcome by fraud, the Philistines are reported to have drawn up their battle line at Aphek. For, for malign spirits to draw up a battle line is to arrange arguments of deception against the unwary hearts of the Jews. But when battle was joined, Israel turned their backs, because while he fears to die, he does not resist malign spirits. For indeed fugitives from battle turn their backs to the enemy, lest by resisting they die. But because the Jews tremble at dying if they believe in the Redeemer, for this reason they do not resist, so that they may live, because they do not believe in the Redeemer, so that they may be saved in the old circumcision. For they would resist malign spirits if they had held the arms of their strength in faith in our Redeemer.

But therefore they flee lest they die, and therefore because they flee they die. For the pursuing enemy kills the one fleeing all the more easily, because he who is struck while fleeing does not resist the sword of his impending conqueror. Whence also in that same battle four thousand of the Jews are recorded to have been slain. For what are these four thousand, except those who refused to receive the truth of the four Gospels? For this reason they are also reported to die in the fields, because they linger in the breadth of their errors. And because they do not yet at all abandon the hiding places of their error, Israel is said to have returned to the camp. For, as I have already said, he still thinks he has a contest with malign spirits when he rather obeys their will than opposes it.

3. But because ”cup” is also taken in a good sense, those falling by the cup can be understood as the preachers of holy Church. Of this cup, indeed, the Prophet boasts, saying: ”You have anointed my head with oil, and my inebriating cup, how excellent it is!” (Ps. 22:5). For the inebriating cup is the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, which is fittingly called a cup because by its fullness the hearts of the elect are inebriated in an instant. Hence it is also said of the first pastors of holy Church: ”Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty spirit, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2). By this cup, indeed, the preachers fall, because while they abundantly receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, they entirely abandon the state of carnal life. For daily, drinking as it were excessively from this cup, they fall, because even if carnal impulses sometimes raise them up toward committing faults, yet by the power of the Spirit they have drunk, they are not found standing in a state of sin. And because the Jewish people indeed has with these

preachers a contest of faith against those Philistines, carnal Israel daily goes out to the field of battle.

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

But while some were slain, others returned to the camp, because some from Judea were led to the knowledge of the Redeemer by the ministry of the preachers, but the fullness of that same nation more boldly opposes the assertions of the holy Church, the more deeply it is cast into the darkness of its unbelief and is not led to the light of truth. Indeed, for it to return to the camp is not to cease opposing. And because they accuse those who had believed as if foolish and overcome by no sufficient reasoning, there follows: (Verse 3. And the elders of Israel said: "Why has the Lord struck us today before the Philistines?"

5. For "why" in this place is not an interrogation of inquiry, but a complaint of amazement. They ask about the defeat, then, with amazement, because they were unable to arrive at the reason by which they had observed that the men of their religion had received the faith of the Redeemer. And it should be noted that those who ask with amazement are recorded to have been the elders of Israel, because indeed all the proud, glorying in their own wisdom, were in no way able to arrive at the knowledge of divine mysteries. Whence also in the Gospel the Lord speaks to the Father, saying: "I confess to you, Father, King of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the prudent and wise, and have revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11:25). They indeed complain that they were struck, because while they observed that through those who believed the old custom of the law was being dissolved, they supposed that certain wounds of a blow had been inflicted upon them by the incomprehensible judgment of God, which they might proclaim with shared grief. But those who complain that others have fallen add by what plan they prepare themselves to resist: (Verse 3.) "Let us bring to ourselves the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh, and let it come into our midst, and let it save us from the hand of our enemies." And concerning the

carrying out of this same counsel it is immediately added: (Verse 4.) "Therefore the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts sitting upon the cherubim."

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

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

8. Indeed the Philistines hear the sound of the land and the shouting of the camps, because those who in the holy Church have been refreshed by the cup of the Holy Spirit recognize both the talkativeness and the vain devotion of Jewish perfidy. And because they hold their estimation in the contempt of derision, it is added: (Vers. 6, 7.) And they recognized that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, and the Philistines were afraid, saying: God has

come into the camp, and they groaned. It is said ironically that the ark had come into the camp of the Hebrews, and that those falling by the cup were afraid and groaned, because for the conflict of the holy Church the sacraments of the old law are expounded carnally by the carnal defenders of the Synagogue. For they dispute about that which, if they understood according to the Spirit of God, they could have been truly terrible to their enemies, if they had any. Therefore when those falling by the cup are said to have been terrified and to have groaned, Scripture does not show the passions of minds in the holy preachers, but the mockery of Jewish disputation; which is known to be all the more contemptible and worthy of laughter, inasmuch as the Jewish people received a spiritual law from the Lord for spiritual conduct, and did not attend in the spirit to what they had received by the gift of the spirit. Wherefore, adding also the words of the same Jewish derision, they say: (Vers. 8.) Woe to us, there was not so great an exultation yesterday and the day before. And because they are to be more abundantly derided, they add saying: (Vers. 8.) Who will deliver us from the hand of these sublime gods?

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

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

11. Against the vain assertions of the Jews, the doctors of holy Church prepare nothing stronger anew, precisely because whatever is falsely asserted by the Jews concerning con-

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

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

13. For concerning their spiritual plague, the Lord says to the disciples sent out for preaching: Whoever does not receive you, as you go out from the house or city, shake the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you: it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that city (Matt. 10:14). Hence He says again: He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned (Mark 16:16). He also indicates a great plague according to material striking, when He speaks to Jerusalem, saying: Days shall come upon you, and your enemies shall surround you with a rampart, and hem you in on every side, and dash you and your children to the ground, and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another (Luke 19:43, 44). Hence, as He was setting out toward the condescension of His passion, He speaks to the women who were suffering with Him and weeping, saying: Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep over me, but weep over yourselves and over your children, for behold days shall come upon you in which

they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that did not bear, and the breasts that did not nurse. Then they shall begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry (Luke 23:28 ff.)?

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

For by God's will, the old people lost the city, the temple, and the ark of the covenant, so that the new people of the holy Church might recognize all the more fully the mystery of the true and new sacrifice, inasmuch as it observes that among the Jews, with the new things appearing, the old things have utterly failed. The ark of God is therefore said to have been captured by the Philistines, because, with the practice of the old Scripture destroyed, the sacraments are faithfully received by the Gentiles according to the truth of the Spirit. For he captures the ark of God who comprehends the mysteries of divine knowledge in sacred Scripture through the truth of understanding, with devotion of mind. But when the ark was captured, Eli's two sons immediately die, because indeed priests of both the higher and the lower order nowhere live in the office of the old sacrifice. For they are said to die who have entirely ceased to offer sacred rites. There follows: (Verses 12, 13. And a man of Benjamin, running from the battle line, came to Shiloh on that day, with his garment torn and his head sprinkled with dust. And when he had come, Eli was sitting upon a seat, watching toward the road. But the man, after he had entered, reported the news to the city, and the whole city wailed.

14. What is represented by that man who fled from the battle line, if not that part of the Jewish people which, by coming to the knowledge of the Redeemer, abandoned Jewish faithlessness? For his running was to cease from the depravity of his error with the swiftness of devotion. Because he resolved to act bravely in professing the Redeemer, he was a man. He indeed runs from the battle on the day he was defeated, because by that illumination of faith by which he abandoned the darkness of faithlessness, he came forward to preach

the truth he had come to know. Hence he is also said to have come to Shiloh, because he is sent to preach. He tore his garment, because he stripped off the old man; he sprinkled his head with dust, because he did not at all grow proud on account of the splendor of the new man with which he clothed himself. For the torn garment pertains to the beauty of holy conduct, and the sprinkling of dust to the esteem of humility. Because therefore for holy preachers neither purity of life without humility nor humility without holy conduct suffices, the man who came as a type of the teachers to announce the destruction of Israel both tore his garment and sprinkled his head with dust. For was it not with head sprinkled with this dust that he who spoke to the Lord carried himself, saying: "I will speak to my Lord, though I am dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27)? Likewise with head sprinkled the Prophet spoke when he supplicated, saying: "Remember, O Lord, that we are dust" (Ps. 103:15). He had also torn his garment who, confessing, said: "You have torn my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" (Ps. 30:12).

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

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

what kind of hearer he himself is becomes known in what follows: (Verse 15.) Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes had grown dim, and he could not see.

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

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

19. But we who according to the spirit seek spiritual meanings even in the things done carnally among the Jews, let us attend to that man whom we introduced speaking a little above. For the Church had heard that he who once persecuted was now preaching the gospel, as it is written of him already evangelizing: "When he had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, and they all feared him, not believing that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Likewise, the Lord appearing at Damascus to Ananias the disciple said: "Arise, go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul of Tarsus, and lay your hand upon him, that he may receive his sight" (ibid., 11 and 12). And he immediately answered the Lord, saying: "Lord, I have heard from many how much

evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, and he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon your name" (ibid., 13 and 14). Therefore, when he was preaching to the Jews the one whom he had been accustomed to attack with threats and slaughter, he was indeed coming from battle. But since all the disciples feared to join themselves to him as he preached, they doubted whether he had fled from the battle line. He was indeed coming from battle, since it had been said by the calling Lord to him who was cast down to the ground:

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

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

And because the Jewish teaching establishment, though not with the intention of knowing the truth, yet with the eagerness of curiosity, wished to hear the assertions of the holy preachers, there follows: (Verse 16. He said to him: "What has happened, my son?"

20. For under the description of one he speaks to all, because he saw the men of his nation, whom the teaching of the Law had once instructed. Or perhaps he called him "son" not from the affection of love, but from the flattery of cunning: so that he might the more easily capture him through deception, the more he showed that he loved him with fatherly affection. He therefore calls him "son," from whom he desires to know what had been done: so that the other, in return for the honor of flattery bestowed upon him, would pervert the sequence of truth. The honor of the title, therefore, is not referred to love, but to cunning. But he who rejected the favor of offered praise steadfastly revealed the truth. Whence it is also added: (Verse 17.) And he who brought the news answered and said: Israel has fled before the Philistines, and a great slaughter has occurred among the people. Moreover, your two sons are dead, Hophni and Phinehas. And the ark of God has been captured.

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

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

carnal way. He therefore falls from his seat, because, once the spiritual sense is known, he does not presume to boast of his carnal mastery. But because he hears the truth preached sublimely and does not at all believe, while he is confounded and not saved, he falls and dies. Indeed he falls from his seat, because he ceases to be exalted by his learning. But in falling he dies, because if he is overcome by reason, he nevertheless does not merit, by the judgment of that same reason, to attain to eternal joys.

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

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

25. For he was an old man, and advanced in age by the length of his years. He presided for forty years, through the fear of legal commandments. Indeed, the number forty pertains to sinners. Hence also the season of Lent in the holy Church is consecrated with the same number of days, so that we may strive to wash away by repenting the sins which we commit. The number forty is completed from the numbers ten and four. And because, by sinning, we transgress the Decalogue of the divine Law, and we contract the very capacity for sinning from the combination of the four elements of which we consist; under the number forty, as long as we exist in sin, we are contained. Therefore Eli judged Israel for forty years, because he displayed the authority of the Synagogue and the stern discipline of the Law for the fear of the subject people: so that he might hold the material of the human condition, fragile

through concupiscence, in the state of justice through fear. But now Eli is dead, now he lies with broken neck beside the door; yet the poison of his wicked teaching remains in his seed. For already, whoever among the wise men of the Jews does not believe has been judged; but because in his instruction minds conceive the seeds of depravity, those who are born as sons of his doctrine do not abandon the madness of his faithlessness. Wherefore it is also added: (Verses 19, 20.) Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, and near to delivery: who, having heard the news that the ark was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, bowed herself and gave birth. For sudden pains rushed upon her. And in the very moment of her death, those who stood beside her said to her: Do not fear, for you have borne a son. She did not answer, nor did she pay attention.

26. But who was the daughter-in-law of Eli, if not the people of the Jews, subject to reprobate priests? Because she had received the seeds of unbelief in her mind through their preaching, she was pregnant. And because she was also thinking of pouring forth the malice she had conceived, she is said to have been not only pregnant but also near to giving birth. But what does it mean that, upon hearing of the capture of the ark and the death of her father-in-law and her husband, she is said to have given birth, except that the remnant of the Jewish people, when it recognizes that the spiritual mysteries of the Scriptures have passed over to the instruction of the Gentiles, when it now sees that the wise men of the Synagogue have perished along with both priesthoods, does not cease to pour forth by speaking the seeds of its heresy, which it had conceived? For her to give birth is to disclose to others by speaking the depravity she had conceived. And because she preaches reprobate things, while she is said to give birth, she is recorded as having bent over. For those who speak of heavenly things give birth, as it were, without bending over, because in the standing posture of faith they raise the hearts of their hearers to the pursuit of good works.

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

”Do not fear, for you have borne a son. For she bore a son because she trained up a people hardened in wickedness and unconquerable. But what are the women who stand near her, if not minds bound by an equal order of impiety? They stand, indeed, not by the truth and rectitude of faith, but by the presumption and boasting of religion. Therefore they encourage her not to fear, because she has borne a son — so that, namely, she may not fear to die in the old tradition all the more securely, the more she sees that even those whom she knows to have been trained by her teaching are hardened and unconvertible in it. But while she is driven more abundantly by pain within herself, she counts as nothing whatever others have gained from her instruction, whence it is added: ”She did not answer, nor did she take heed. For when she begins to experience the bitterness of eternal pain, that which she temporarily held authority over others does not bring delight. Or certainly she does not rejoice over the boy who is born because he who is brought forth by her instruction is seen to be in captivity. Whence it is also added: (Verses 21, 22. ”And she called the boy Ichabod, saying: The glory of the Lord has been taken away, because the ark of God has been captured.”

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

CHAPTER III. (1 Kings V, 1-3.) Now the Philistines took the ark, and carried it away from the Stone of Help to Azotus. The Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the temple of Dagon, and the Azotians rose the next day, and found Dagon lying before the ark, face down on the ground.

1. What does it mean that the ark is carried away from the Stone of Help, except that the heralds of truth take away the mysteries of the Scriptures from that Christ whom the Jews await with a false expectation? For while they turn the testimonies of Holy Scripture toward the knowledge of the true Redeemer, they indeed take the ark away from him in whom the Jews had placed the hope of their help. And because the mysteries of faith are entrusted to the Gentiles, the ark of God is brought to Azotus. And indeed the ark is brought into the temple. What then was the temple of Dagon, except every unbelieving soul, once polluted by the superstition of idolatry? What does the image of Dagon signify, except the superstition

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

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

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

3. For what is Dagon, that is, the head of idolatry, other than the devil himself, the very origin of all iniquity? And what are the palms of his hands, if not all the works of idolatry? Dagon therefore lost his head, because through the worship of idols the malignant spirits cease to reign in the hearts of the Gentiles. The palms of his hands were also cut off, because vain sacrifices are nowhere offered to idols. And because his deformity is everywhere beheld by all the faithful, the trunk of Dagon is recorded to have remained in its place. But the head and hands, cut off and placed upon the threshold, are mentioned because indeed whoever

enters into the true faith is commanded to repel the beginnings of diabolical persuasion and to renounce all the works of that same Satan. These were therefore placed on the threshold so that they might be trampled upon by those entering, because one truly cannot be faithful who does not resolve both to oppose the wicked counsels of the malignant spirit and to resist his iniquitous works. For he who avoids crushing the head and hands of Dagon, even if he seems to be counted among the number of the faithful, is in a certain way proven to be an idolater. For in the delight of demons, not only outward sacrifices but also iniquitous desires are offered by their worshippers. He therefore who has been received into the knowledge of the true faith and has not been removed from unclean desires and wicked works, because he disdains to crush the head and hands of Dagon, makes an offering to the malignant spirit—whom he disdains in the oblation of ceremonies—through the uncleanness of inward concupiscence and outward life. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 5.) For this reason the priests of Dagon do not tread upon the threshold to this present day.

4. For they present themselves as priests of Dagon, who do not tread upon the threshold. In these words it must be carefully observed that he did not say "the threshold," but "upon the threshold," so that the head and hands of Dagon are taught to be what must be trampled upon, which are reported to have been cut off upon the threshold. The reason, moreover, that the priests do not tread upon the threshold is that they avoid crushing his severed hands and head with their foot. For the priests of Dagon remain even to this day: because those who sacrifice to the ancient enemy through unclean desires still exist. They indeed refuse to tread upon the threshold of the temple: because they resist neither unclean suggestions nor evil works. Therefore they are priests of Dagon, because even if they do not humble themselves before handmade idols, they nevertheless bow down to the images of their lusts through wicked works. There follows: (Verse 6.) The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people of Ashdod.

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

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

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

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

7. For when they saw temples destroyed, sacrifices ceasing, wives separated from husbands and husbands from wives, sons separated from parents and fathers from sons, what else could they think but that the hand of the Lord was heavy both upon them and upon their

superstition? But what was done next follows: (Verse 8.) And they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and the Gittites answered: Let the ark of God be carried around.

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

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

"Let the ark of God be carried around," because they preached divine things more attentively to those whom grave error had inflamed to hatred of the truth. And because through the ministries of the holy preachers, great gains from even such people were brought to the heavenly kingdoms, there follows: (Verse 9. "But as they were carrying it around, the hand

of the Lord came upon each city with an exceedingly great slaughter, and it struck the men of every city from the least to the greatest, and their protruding intestines rotted away."

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

10. Moreover, by the fact that the Azotites say, "Let the ark not remain among us," the perversity of those from the same Gentiles who both heard the word of faith and, being by no means predestined to eternal life, refused to believe, can be signified. For the satraps to lead the ark of God around was for the holy preachers to withdraw from them the word of truth and to reveal the mysteries of faith to those who were worthy. The ark was therefore led around, because the sacraments of our faith were removed from the knowledge of some and revealed to others. And so, as it was led around, an exceedingly great slaughter is reported to have occurred in each city, because wherever they brought the word of faith, the grace of conversion was multiplied. And because wherever they preached, among those who believed there were some who were not predestined to eternal life, there follows: (Verses 10, 11.) They sent the ark of God to Ekron. And when the ark of God had come to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, saying: They have sent the ark of God to us, to kill us and our people. Therefore they sent and gathered together all the satraps of the Philistines, who said: Send away the ark of the Lord to its own place.

11. The satraps, as we have said, are understood as the holy preachers. The Ekronites, who are interpreted as "barren," designate the unconvertible Gentiles. These indeed gave the preachers the counsel of releasing the ark, so that if they refused their own salvation from the divine preaching, they would not stand in the way of the faithful who were journeying toward the eternal homeland with the sacraments of faith. For the place of the ark, that is, of the divine sacraments, is recognized to be there where whatever is now said about almighty God through the mystery of the Scriptures is afterward revealed to us in open knowledge. For he knew the proper place of the ark who said: "We see now through a

mirror in an enigma, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also have been known" (1 Cor. 13:12). The counsel of the satraps, therefore, was to allow the ark of God to return to its own place: so that, namely, those who bore no fruit of faith from the preaching of the word would at least release it to those who would prepare for themselves from it a fruit in eternity. Rightly, therefore, those who accept the counsel of sending back the ark are called Ekronites. For the Ekronites are interpreted as "barren. Because indeed from the truth of the faith they had heard, they had produced no fruit of belief or of good work, they were barren.

Therefore the princes gave the counsel of removing the ark, but from barren ones—so that the seed of the word of God, which could not germinate in the worst soil, might be preserved for the best soil, which from this labor of winter would bring forth a hundredfold fruit of summer in everlasting life. And they immediately show the reason for releasing the ark, when the preachers add: (Verse 11) "Lest it kill us together with our people."

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

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

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

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

14. Their cry indeed ascended to heaven because almighty God mercifully receives the groans of the converted. And because at the time of the conversion of the Gentiles there was a great rush to the faith, the cry is said to have ascended not from any one city but from many cities. Hence the prophet also pleads in the person of the universal Church, saying: "Attend to my prayer, from the ends of the earth I have cried to you" (Ps. 60:2–3). And showing that the cry of the one crying from the ends of the earth ascended to heaven, he says: "He heard my voice from his holy temple, and my cry came before him into his ears" (Ps. 17:7). When therefore each city is said to have cried to heaven, the universal penitence of conversion is commended. But if the striking is referred to conversion, while the cry is referred to the devotion of divine praise, then we certainly read in the mysteries of the Scriptures what we see. For each city cries out in the praises of almighty God, because the entire world by no means keeps silent about the proclamations of the Redeemer; it does not preach him in secret, but extols him with the jubilation of ineffable joy. For what else was he doing but urging all cities to cry out, who said: "All nations, clap your hands, shout to God with the voice of exultation, for God is most high and terrible, and a great king over all gods" (Ps. 46:2–3).

Hence again admonishing, he says: "Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps. 99:2). Hence again, he expresses both the plague of the biting mice and the cry of the cities, saying: "Let all the earth be moved before his face; say among the nations that the Lord has reigned" (Ps. 95:9–10). For he had said before: "Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord all the earth" (ibid. 1). Indeed the shaking of the earth pertains to the pain of penitence; to sing to the Lord, or to announce among the nations that

the Lord has reigned, pertains to the zeal of preaching and to the devotion of divine praise. The cry of each city ascends to heaven, because throughout the whole world both the truth of preaching and the praises of devotion are proclaimed by the faithful of the holy Church, and these are received up to the height of the heavenly hearing through the acceptance of divine favor.

CHAPTER IV. (1 Kings VI, 1.) So the ark of the Lord was in the region of the Philistines for seven months. 1. What do these seven months signify, if not the entire length of the present life? Although the Azotites and Ekronites cried out, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried around, and let the ark of God not remain among us," nevertheless the truth of the sacred history tells us — that we may recognize in the type of the holy Church — that the ark of God was in the region of the Philistines for seven months. Therefore it was not the will of evil and impious men, but the dispensation of God that was fulfilled in the salvation of the Gentiles. Already indeed the impious have been removed from paganism, already those who persecuted the confessors of Christ have died, and yet the ark of God is not taken away from the region of the Philistines: because the divine sacraments are preserved with zealous care among the Gentiles, who have been made drunk with the cup of the Holy Spirit. And it is rightly said "seven months," because the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures will endure with the faithful of Christ until the end of the world. But whoever grasps the mysteries of that same Holy Scripture through the grace of intimate charity was concerned not about the place where the ark is temporarily left, but about that place where it is eternally established. Therefore it is added: (Verse 2.) And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying: What shall we do with the ark of God? Tell us in what manner we should send it back to its place.

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

because they entrust themselves to those who both show the uprightness of the heavenly way by the sublimity of their knowledge, and are worthy intercessors before almighty God for those under them, through purity of life. Therefore they inquire about sending the ark back to its place: because from that knowledge of the Scriptures which they receive in the mysteries of words, they desire to pass over to the perfect knowledge of God in eternity. For the ark is, as it were, sent back when this small knowledge is fulfilled through the passage of the present life. And we behold the glory of God's ark displayed in its place when, from beneath the lofty coverings of figures, we gaze upon the appearance of the divine majesty with unveiled face. Concerning this return of the ark to its place, it is said through the prophet: "And a man shall no longer teach his neighbor, saying: Know the Lord; for from the least to the greatest they shall know me" (Jeremiah 31:34). Hence John promises, saying: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). But let us now consider what counsel the priests and diviners give to those who inquire about sending back the ark. For there follows: (Verse 3. What did they say?

"If you send back the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it back empty, but render to him what you owe for sin, and then you shall be healed, and you shall know why his hand does not withdraw from you."

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

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

but the distress of a wound from the striking of demons? For as if in the pain of a wound still sharply stinging, that converted man was sighing when he said: "I was turned in my anguish while the thorn was fastened in me" (Psalm 31:4). For what does "anguish" suggest but the affliction of penance? But he declares himself turned in that same anguish while he feels the piercing of the thorn. As if to say: While I am stung by the memory of my shameful deed, I do not cease to pay my debt to the ark.

For the thorn is fastened in when, through the dispensation of Almighty God, the soul of the converted is inflamed to tears by the memory of their crimes. And the debt to the ark is paid when the measure of lamentation is now extended according to the gravity of the crime: when after prolonged tears the light of inner consolation is poured into the long-afflicted mind, and by the divine gift it is relieved from the weight of the inward blow; when Almighty God draws near through the grace of His inspiration to the now purified mind, and gladdens it with the confidence of obtained forgiveness, which He supplies to it from the grace of His presence. For the soul is then healed, as it were, from its wound, when through the grace of poured-forth forgiveness the greatness of pain is removed from the afflicted mind of the penitent.

4. Whence also he who was being turned about in distress, while he was being pierced by the thorn, in the same psalm joyfully addresses almighty God as the author of his healing, saying: "You are my refuge from the trouble that has surrounded me, my exultation" (Psalm 31:7). For he calls the very heavy hand of the Lord a pressure. Of which stroke of the most heavy hand Paul also speaks, saying: "For the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings" (Romans 8:26). He who therefore indicates that he has found the Lord's refuge and exultation from pressure, shows that he has been healed from the blow of inward grief by the joy of divine mercy. Hence likewise, still grieving, he confesses, saying: "Against you alone have I sinned, and done evil before you" (Psalm 50:6). But because he presumes upon healing, he adds, saying: "You will give joy and gladness to my hearing, and the humbled bones will exult" (ibid., 7). Therefore the debt is paid to the ark for sin, when sinners are afflicted through the knowledge of Sacred Scripture, and strive by torment to wipe away the faults they contracted through the delight of the flesh. Moreover they are healed when, the measure of affliction now being fulfilled, they are lifted up to confidence in divine mercy through the help of inward consolation. Whence the Psalmist also speaks, saying: "You will feed us with the bread of tears, and give us drink in tears by measure" (Psalm 79:6).

For he gives the drink of tears by measure: because indeed the sinner, even if he is pierced with compunction for his fault by God's inward inspiration, is relieved from the same affliction of compunction by the consolation of that same God. Whence also the Lord says through Moses: "I will kill, and I will make alive: I will strike, and I will heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39). For he strikes and heals: because those whom he wounds through compunction, he cures through the assurance of pardon. Therefore it is rightly said to those now healed: "And you will know why his hand does not withdraw from you. For before he heals, they

cannot know why the hand of the Lord does not withdraw from them: because they then understand the good of repentance, when in a now purified heart they recognize the grace of the Holy Spirit, and long for the gifts of divine mercy, over which they rejoice with ineffable exultation. For he had perceived that they knew the reason why the hand of the healing Lord had not withdrawn from their affliction—he who expresses the exultations of those who were struck, speaking to God and saying: "We were filled in the morning with your mercy; we exulted and were delighted for the days in which you humbled us, the years in which we saw evils" (Psalm 89:14–15).

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

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

For in the likeness of a tumor, the member that emits stench is seen; and yet, because it is a likeness, not the reality, it is no longer stained by any stench. And because it is made of gold, this indeed suggests that by the splendor of beauty the appearance of deformity is

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

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

And as if compelling them to look upon the likenesses of tumors, he added, saying: "What fruit then did you have in those things, of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. Therefore the likenesses of tumors are made for our shame: because indeed we bring the stains of our foulness to memory so that we may be confounded by those same stains. But they are gilded for our security: because indeed while we cover over our deformity with the brightness of the heavenly life, we await the scrutiny of the divine judgment with a certain security.

6. The mice also, which demolished the land, are commanded to be made of gold: because the unclean spirits, who suggest the enticements of corruption to our flesh, are remembered for our justification. For what is it to make likenesses of mice, except to remember those

victories which malign spirits have had over us? But the likenesses of mice are also gilded, when we sigh over their broken powers. For while we lament that we were conquered by their deceits, we indeed hold golden likenesses of mice, since we hold the past counsels of demons not in the allurement of their work, but in the contempt of reprobation. Therefore the likenesses of mice are made of gold, because the past deceits of demons advance us toward the splendor of a good life. For we are now so much more humble, inasmuch as our members shine through the splendor of heavenly conduct; and we ourselves, who now by the help of almighty God do mighty things, see that we were prostrated by the deceits of unclean spirits. This counsel, because they offer it to many, they also show the reason for it, because they say: "For the plague was one for you and for your rulers." As if they were saying openly: Because you were all subject to sin, it is necessary that you equally prepare your hearts for the pursuit of a better life. Whence Paul also says: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace" (Rom. 3:23).

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

And when the people prostrated themselves before God with bitter lamentation at the voice of the prophet Joel, they brought it about that He who seemed difficult to appease softened His anger. For immediately it is written therein: 'The Lord was zealous for His land and spared His people' (Joel 2:18). The hand, therefore, is lifted when the mind, powerfully pierced with compunction in repentance, is raised up by divine inspiration to the gift of obtained mercy. And because, as I said, in the beginning of the nascent Church, just as there was a general conversion of sinners, so also there was a general reconciliation of the converted: the hand of God, which is declared to be lifted, is said to be lifted both from the hearers, and from their gods, and from the land. For by "gods," sublime and wise men are designated. For the Lord also says to Moses: 'I have made you a god to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1). And in the commandment of the Law it is also prescribed: 'You shall not speak ill of gods' (Exod. 22:28). By "land," indeed, the life of the simple is expressed: for when they receive

the preaching of their superiors, like rain from heaven falling upon them, from the watering of the word they bring forth the fruit of good work.

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

And because all these things are still prescribed by counsel—yet some devoutly carry out the counsel of preachers, while others despise it—those who extol the good with praises for the splendor of a good life are inflamed against the proud through the force of rebuke. For there follows: (Verse 6.) 'Why do you harden your hearts, as Egypt and Pharaoh hardened theirs?'

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

And you shall take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart, and the golden objects which you paid to him as a guilt offering you shall put in a box at its side, and send it away that it may go. And you shall watch: if indeed it goes up by the way of its own border toward Beth-shemesh, then he has done us this great evil. But if not, we shall know that it was not his hand that struck us, but that it happened by chance."

9. For what is designated by the name of the cart, if not either the whole holy Church together, or the individual soul of each faithful person? The wheels of this cart are indeed the two Testaments. For while the holy Church, or any chosen mind instructed through the Old and New Testament, presses onward toward eternal life, it is carried aloft to its appointed place as if upon lofty wheels set before it. But the cart is commanded to be made new, so that, namely, whoever desires to arrive at eternal joys may be clothed through the commandment of love with the splendor of the new man. Indeed, the Lord was commanding this cart to be made new when He said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Hence Paul commands, saying: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who was created according to God" (Ephesians 4:23). Hence, addressing the Romans, he says: "Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in strife and jealousy, not in debauchery and impurity, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:13). Therefore, he makes a new cart who both rightly understands each Testament and, clothed with the splendor of holy conduct, stretches himself upward toward heavenly desires.

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

"The yoke shall decay because of the oil" (Isaiah 10:27). And well does the progression of the meanings agree with the order of the words: because even if they are free from hostile domination, it is necessary that they always be watchful concerning their future conduct.

The cows therefore are both without a yoke, and yet their calves are shut up at home: because the holy preachers rule over adversarial spirits by virtue, but they do not withdraw their attention from subduing wicked desires, since they cannot have perpetual security in this life from the holiness with which they see themselves adorned. And because to such persons the grace of divine knowledge is more widely opened, it is fittingly commanded that the Ark of the Lord be taken up and placed upon the cart. Moreover, that the Ark is commanded to be placed upon the cart for the listeners — this indeed suggests that in the holy Church we find many orders of prelates: because while some are worthier than others by prerogative, they also obtain the authority of commanding at the summit of a higher order. When therefore the Ark of the Lord is commanded to be brought back, it is said to be placed upon a new cart: because he rightly advances toward the eternal homeland with knowledge of spiritual mysteries, who does not abandon what he has learned from Holy Scripture through the beauty of a new way of life.

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

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

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

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

13. Bethshemesh, as we have already said, is interpreted as ”house of the sun. The preachers observe the released ark to see whether it proceeds on a straight path toward Bethshemesh, because even when subjects are released to their own judgment, prelates must examine whether they convert the good of liberty to the advancement of the heavenly journey. But it must also be carefully noted that the ark rightly ascends toward Bethshemesh when it does not abandon the road of the border territory while traveling. For our neighbors are the elect who came before us; neighbors indeed are those who have properties arranged next to one another. The neighbors of the elect, therefore, are the perpetual co-heirs of the eternal kingdom. For they dwell as if with properties arranged next to one another, those who, called into the same fellowship of the eternal homeland, have received the rights of eternal inheritance from the one and same majesty of the

Creator. Or they are called neighbors for this reason: because when the elect arrive from a good manner of life to the joys of everlasting life, those who live rightly in this world are close to the heavenly citizens. What then is the road of the border territory, if not temporal affliction? The Lord Himself demonstrates this road to Bethshemesh, saying: "Narrow is the way that leads to life" (Matt. 7:14). He likewise commends this road when, rebuking the disciples, He says: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe!

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

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

(Verses 10, 11.) 'They did in this manner, and taking two cows they yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home, and placed the ark of God upon the cart, and the small chest which contained the golden mice and the likenesses of the tumors.' Since these things

have been more fully expounded above, let us now see what the journey of the ark itself contains in terms of spiritual instruction. For there follows: (Verse 12.) 'And the cows went straight along the way that leads to Beth-shemesh, and they walked along one path, going and lowing, and they turned aside neither to the right nor to the left.'

15. To go straight along the road that leads to Beth-shemesh is, in the pursuit of heavenly perfection, to maintain affliction of the flesh through the virtue of discretion. For the cows by no means walk in a straight line if discretion is not preserved in the affliction of the flesh. For when the flesh is afflicted beyond measure, that same flesh, utterly spent, is unable to render aid to the spirit. And if it is not worthily afflicted, while it grows proud, it disdains, as though free and untamed, to serve the mind. Rightly therefore, while the cows are reported to go straight along the road to Beth-shemesh, it is added: "They turned aside neither to the right nor to the left." To turn aside to the right is to press immoderately upon the virtue of abstinence: because through what appears to be a good, we abandon the way, when we so pursue the necessary virtue of abstinence that we withdraw from ourselves the other helps that come from the flesh. To turn aside to the left is to indulge the flesh too abundantly. For through the vice of open laxity we are deflected from the road to Beth-shemesh, when we lead the flesh through delights—we who had known that the way to paradise was appointed in affliction.

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

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

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

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

and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). For he who says that he will manifest himself only to those who love him, and that he loves those who keep his commandments, openly teaches that he does not grant the light of his hidden vision except as a reward for good works. There follows: (Verse 13. Now the Beth-shemites were reaping wheat in the valley.

19. For who can the Bethshemites be more rightly understood as than those who are already perfect men in the sublimity of contemplation? For they are as if from the house of the sun, who, having despised all earthly things, are illuminated by the splendors of the true light. They are indeed from the house of the sun, who, already buried to the whole world, burn with the flame of wondrous love to see the glory of their Creator. They ascend to their city in two ways: they who are led to the glory of the heavenly homeland both now through contemplation and in the end through the truth of glory. Now they fly to the house of the sun

by contemplating; but what they now behold through purity of mind, they will then grasp the truth of eternal recompense through present joy. Therefore the ark of God is brought to Bethshemesh when the chosen mind is raised to eternal joys, either through the height of contemplation or through the reception of recompense. Since therefore we cannot know that eternal and ineffable resting place of the ark, let us hear the things that are said about this one which we know. What then does it mean that the Bethshemites were reaping wheat in the valley, except that those devoted to the contemplative life gather the delights of inner refreshment in the virtue of humility? For indeed in sacred Scripture the valley signifies the lowliness of the humble, as the Psalmist testifies, who speaking of the Lord says:

"Who sends forth springs in the valleys" (Psalm 103:10). For He pours the infusion of heavenly grace into minds disposed through humility. The Bethshemites therefore reap wheat in the valley: because those devoted to contemplation, while they behold heavenly things more clearly on account of the merit of humility, bind sheaves of joys for the sweeter refreshment of their minds. For wheat bread, just as it is whiter in appearance, so also is it more delightful in taste.

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

21. For they raise their eyes: because while they do not think lofly things of themselves, they are, in their own estimation, as if on level ground. They raise their eyes: because those whom they see made worthy by divine grace, they contemplate as placed on the lofty summit of merits. But raising their eyes, they see the ark: because the more humbly they cast themselves down in their own estimation, the better they can recognize the good qualities

of their neighbors. For that Truth which abandons the hearts of the proud of itself, also hides from them those very gifts which it bestows upon the humble; so that, as if utterly blinded, they do not even see the sun already spread across the earth—they who have ceased to behold the rays of its brightness in heaven. But since we have referred the return of the ark of God to the purpose of the contemplative life, the raising of the eyes can also be fittingly referred to the pursuit of discerning spirits. For the Bethshemites raise their eyes when, in the purpose of a more secluded life, they consider with careful examination the gifts of those flocking to them; when with attentive mind they examine whether those approaching pursue the purpose of a higher life, which they seek by drawing near, with right and strong intention. To raise their eyes, therefore, is for them to consider more deeply the spirit of the newcomers. But raising their eyes, they behold the ark of God: because while they examine more carefully the conduct of those persons, they discover that they shine with the grace of spiritual virtues. And because through the affection of love they rejoice over the good qualities they have recognized in them, it is fittingly added: (Verse 13.) And they rejoiced when they saw it. There follows: (Verse 14.) And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, and stood there.

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

23. But the more hidden life has its delights in the pleasantness of vision, and has immense labor in the vigor of struggle; because indeed, just as we obtain divine rewards from triumph, so also we guard them by fighting strenuously. Well therefore is it added concerning the cart of Jesus coming into the field: 'And it stood there.' For to stand pertains to the guarding

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

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

25. What are the wood pieces of the cart of the Ark of God, if not the statements of Holy Scripture and the examples of the righteous? For the Bethshemites cut up the wood when those set over the more secluded life more subtly open the meanings of the Scriptures to the minds of their subjects, when they bring forth the more excellent examples of the Fathers for their imitation; so that the flame of heavenly love may burn all the more fervently in their hearts, the more quickly they supply the fuel of the fire, like cut-up wood. They are indeed the wood of the cart, because the mind, renewed through the grace of God, retains them through memory. Concerning these pieces of wood the holy lawgiver decrees, saying: "Fire must always be on my altar, which the priest shall feed, adding wood each morning every day" (Lev. 6:12). But because the wood is recorded as having been cut up, this more openly indicates that for those seeking the purity of the contemplative life, not common things from sacred Scripture, but rather the higher and more excellent things must be laid open; so that they may raise themselves up more powerfully in beholding lofty things, the more the nobler goods they hear please them. Hence it is also well added: "That they placed the cows upon it as a holocaust to the Lord. For a holocaust is called a whole burning. Therefore, when the wood is cut up, holocausts are made with the cows placed upon it:

because those who receive extraordinary things from the Scriptures with a devout mind, the higher they extend themselves into heavenly desires, the more nothing is left in them that is not consumed by the flame of divine love. And then indeed it is necessary for the teacher to take care that his religious subjects contemplate lofty things, and yet do not hold

lofty opinions of themselves through their own estimation; lest, the higher they advance by beholding the highest things, the more dangerously they are dashed down by falling through pride. Hence here too it is added: (Verse 15. "But the Levites took down the Ark of God, and the small chest that was beside it, in which were the golden vessels, and they placed them upon the great stone."

26. The Levites are interpreted as "the assumed." Who then are the Levites, except those who are so confirmed by divine grace that they can never be forsaken by the Holy Spirit? Indeed, the Levites set down the ark when perfect preachers admonish their subjects, so that spiritual knowledge may in no way puff them up. They also set down the box with the golden vessels when they likewise address them concerning the splendor of life, so that they may think more humbly of themselves, inasmuch as each of them has learned that our Redeemer attained the reward of His exaltation because He did not vainly think lofty things of Himself. Well therefore is it recorded that the ark was set down and the golden vessels placed upon a great stone: because amid sublime gifts, those can more truly think humbly of themselves who have learned more frequently to recall the greatness and humility of the Redeemer. For he wished to set down the ark of God and place it upon a great stone, who said: 'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and found in appearance as a man; He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil. 2:5). But those who sacrifice to God a victim of love from the hearts of their subjects through the ministry of preaching also present from their own minds far more excellent gifts of offerings. Whence it is also added: (Verse 15) 'And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices on that day unto the Lord.'

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

to enjoy divine sweetness, and in all that by which they already make themselves wholly heavenly, they are ignorant of pride. (Verse 16.) 'And the five lords of the Philistines saw, and returned to Ekron on that day.'

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

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

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

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

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

that those also make satisfaction to God for their fault who have not only been rescued from sins by the grace of God, but have also been taken up into His tabernacle through the great heights of holy virtues? There follows: (Verse 19) "But the Lord struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked upon the ark of the Lord, and He struck down seventy men of the people, and fifty thousand of the common folk."

30. Who are the struck-down Beth-shemites, if not heretics deceived by false contemplation? For the Beth-shemites existed not in truth, but in presumption. Therefore, while they presumed to look upon the ark on the stone, they were struck down: because when they, being unworthy, scrutinized the sacraments of our Lord and Redeemer, they were cast down into the snares of eternal damnation through the deceit of their own error. But what does it mean that seventy men of the people, and fifty thousand of the common folk, were struck down? But since under the designation of "people" even the nobles of cities are included, while "the common folk" is the remaining populace without nobles, this can be gathered:

that some among the heretics stood out among others as if noble, who perished by error alone while maintaining purity of works; but the rest, as if following the rusticity of the common folk, were darkened with the filth of depraved conduct along with the error of faith. Hence some are expressed by the number fifty, and others by the number seventy: because the latter carried out their conceived crimes through the five senses of the body; while the former, by falsely ascribing to themselves the gifts of the sevenfold Spirit, were buried under the eternal darkness of blindness. And because the true faithful were saddened by their striking down, there follows: (Verse 20. And the men of Beth-shemesh said: Who is able to stand in the sight of the Lord, this holy God?

For it is as though the true faithful, yet simple ones, were saying: If such wise men and philosophers are deceived in the knowledge of the highest truth, when can the unlearned and simple come to the knowledge of Him? But even if they lack confidence in their own measure, nevertheless they do not lack confidence that the gift of divine knowledge is present to the Church. Wherefore it is also added: (Verse 20. And to whom shall He go up from us?

31. For the Lord ascends from us when that which is hidden from us concerning the knowledge of Him is preached through the voice of the chosen faithful. For His ascending from us is, as it were, to reveal to lofty hearts through humility what He has hidden from the simpler or weaker ones concerning eternal contemplation. What then does it mean to say, "To whom shall He ascend from us," except to seek a worthy teacher who so preaches divine things that he does not stray from the way of truth? In these words also, if we seek the historical sense, we clearly recognize that those who died because they looked upon the ark of the Lord were indeed not worthy of that vision. Rightly therefore, those who behold the stricken say: "Who shall be able to stand in the presence of this holy Lord God? For if those who are unworthy die by seeing, how shall those who handle sacred things live? The Bethshemites in the holy Church are dead priests and reprobate ministers of the sacred altar, because they are of the house of the Sun of justice by the dignity of their ministry, not by the virtue and grace of holiness. They are indeed Bethshemites, because through the office of sacred oblation they dwell in the house of God;

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

the highest sanctification of virtues, so that they may stand before God through the office of so great an oblation. There follows: (Verse 21) "They therefore sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying: The Philistines have sent back the ark of the Lord; come down and bring it up to you."

32. Kiriath-jearim is called their city. What is the city of the saints, if not that Jerusalem which is above? Who then are its inhabitants, if not perfect men separated from the love of the world by their lofty manner of life? Of whom indeed one, more effective than the rest, says: 'Our conversation is in heaven' (Phil. 3:20). To these, of course, messengers must be sent to receive the ark of God: because for the election of priests, holy men must not only be received but also invited. And it should be noted that to these more exalted men it is said through messengers: Come down and bring it back. For they come down because they obey: for they would by no means come down if they refused with a proud mind to render what brotherly love seeks from them. Then indeed they are truly exalted, when they do not withdraw themselves from Christ; when they do not reject what is imposed upon them by the judgment of their brethren. Whence it is fittingly added:

CHAPTER V. The men of Kiriath-jearim therefore came and brought back the ark of the Lord, and they carried it into the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to guard the ark of the Lord.

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

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

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

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

The ark of God is also looked upon wrongly from the outside, to one’s destruction, when wicked leaders, overcome by the outward appearance of persons under their charge, are drawn into carnal desire. The men, beholding with fear the vast multitude laid low by the weapon of desire, say: ”Who shall be able to stand in the sight of the Lord, this holy God? For he stands in the sight of God who is strong in the order of divine ministry. Indeed, to stand is a matter of fortitude; to minister is a matter of service. He is therefore said to stand in the sight of God who arranges the order of heavenly office at the height of a worthy way of life; who in the ministry he performs is deceived by no appetite for ecclesiastical honor, and is overcome by no carnal desire. But because such fit ministers are rarely found, they rightly say: ”Who shall be able to stand in the sight of the Lord, this holy God? And because the little ones of Christ leave so great a burden to stronger men, they add: ”And to whom shall it go up from us? Now, how they sent to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, how they brought the ark of God into the house of Abinadab, and how they sanctified Eleazar, we do not change from what was set forth above. (Verse 2. And it came to pass from the time the ark of God remained in Kiriath-jearim, the days were multiplied.

If we look to the historical sense, the days of the ark’s sojourn were multiplied because it was there for a long time. Hence it is also added: (Verse 2. For it was the twentieth year. And to what purpose he introduced this multiplication of days, he adds, saying: (Verse 2. And all Israel rested after the Lord. This rest among that ancient people is to be understood

not as one of good works, but of good devotion. For it follows: (Verse 3. And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, saying: If you return to God with your whole heart, put away the foreign gods from among you, Baalim and Ashtaroth; and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve him alone, and he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.

3. Those who had not removed the foreign gods from their midst, except by good will, how were they resting after the Lord? All of which things, if they are investigated spiritually, the days of the ark's sojourn are multiplied. But when it remains in Gibeah; when it remains in the custody of Eleazar; because when the care of faithful souls is entrusted to devout preachers, the perfection of religion, which is bestowed through lofty doctrine, is fulfilled by the pursuit of good works. Whence also the twentieth year was then reported to be at hand. For if the number ten designates the perfection of the old Law, what does twenty signify, if not the more splendid religion of the new life? For the number twenty is ten doubled. Which number is certainly perfected in the conduct of the elect, when through love they avoid what the Law forbids and fulfill the lofty commandments of the Gospel.

4. But because we have referred the journey of the ark to the perfection of the contemplative life, the ark of God remains in Kiriath-jearim when the learned minds of contemplatives perfect the gift of that same learning of theirs in the delight of the heavenly brightness revealed to them. For the ark of God remains there now for twenty years, because chosen souls, raised to the summit of intimate exaltation, have the number ten in the perfection of knowledge, and the number twenty in heavenly delight. The multiplication of days can also be referred to the increases of spiritual virtues. Therefore, when the reason why the days are multiplied is stated more expressly, it is said to be the twentieth year: because, namely, the chosen minds of contemplatives, the more abundantly they are nourished by heavenly contemplation, the more fully they are illuminated by the splendors of spiritual virtues.

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

6. But since, with God as our guide, we have followed the ark on its journey all the way to the place of its exaltation, let us see with what zeal the preacher keeps watch over the correction of those subject to him. For it continues: 'And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel: If you return to the Lord with your whole heart, remove the foreign gods from your midst.' Now what does Sacred Scripture customarily call foreign gods, if not demons, which dwell in handmade idols? We have said that in Samuel the new preachers of holy Church are signified. Rightly, therefore, he commanded the whole house of Israel to remove the foreign gods from their midst: because among the Gentiles coming to the faith, the order of preachers demanded not only the truth of right progress, but also the condemnation of ancient superstition. For it would profit them nothing to honor the truth by professing it, or by rendering obedience to it, unless they had first abandoned what is false as worthy of detestation. Whoever even now is placed within holy Church through faith, yet is rebellious against God through wicked conduct, must be admonished to remove the foreign gods from his midst. For even if he detests handmade idols, he is nevertheless subjected to the commands of demons through depraved action. But he casts the foreign gods away from his midst who is so converted to God that he never venerates unclean spirits through evil works.

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

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

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

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

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

there they may not fall into the hands of such great enemies, and may pass securely to life, they who, among the treasures of their salvation which they accumulate here by living well, carry with them no works of death. Moreover, the conduct of the elect is indicated by what follows: (Verse 4.

"Therefore the children of Israel put away from their midst the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and served the Lord alone."

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

11. Mizpah is interpreted as "watching" or "contemplation." The blessed Paul explains this contemplation when he says: 'For now we see through a glass, darkly' (1 Cor. 13:12). For to watch is, for us, to contemplate eternal goods from the heights of the Scriptures. For we watch, as it were, what we already know by the truth of faith, yet do not yet see with unveiled face. For converted sinners to gather at Mizpah is to trust, through the attention of the mind, in the mercy of almighty God. But let them so presume upon the mercy of God that they nevertheless do not neglect to wipe away through penance what they recall having done wickedly. Whence it is also suddenly added there: (v. 6) 'And they drew water and poured it out before the Lord.' 12. For what is it to draw water, except to bring forth streams of tears from the deep confusion of a penitent soul? For we draw water, as it were, when, considering how deep the iniquity into which we have fallen, we lament. And indeed we pour out this water in the sight of the Lord, if when we are pierced with compunction through repentance, we do not seek from the weeping of that compunction the favor of the world, but only the fruit of divine appeasement. But also when the mind is pierced with compunction through weeping, it is necessary that the flesh too, which was subject to pleasures, be afflicted. Whence it is also added: (Verse 6.) And they fasted on that day.

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

Rightly therefore it follows: (Verse 6) 'And they said: We have sinned against you, O Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah.'

14. For the priest judges in Masphath when he follows not human judgment but divine; when in everything that must be decided he raises himself up in lofty contemplation, and in judging his subjects he decides what he recognizes to be just in the heavenly vision. For this is why Moses consults the Lord in the tabernacle of the covenant in nearly every matter (Exod. XXXIII, 8): because indeed the preacher of holy Church ought to look into the innermost contemplation of truth, so that he may be able to order the life of his subjects outwardly in a blameless manner. For he can more truly both retain sins and remit them when, in the secret place of contemplation, he hears what the Lord speaks. Hence also the Lord, rising from the dead, first breathed upon the face of the disciples, and afterward granted them the authority of remitting and retaining sins (John XX, 21, 23): so that He might clearly show that whoever does not have that contemplation of mind ought not to be a judge of souls. For the Lord's breathing upon the face of the chosen preachers is to reveal to them through the Holy Spirit the inmost and secret ways of spiritual examination. Hence Paul says: "The spiritual man judges all things" (I Cor. II, 15). Hence likewise, commending the bounty of divine grace, he says:

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

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

recently converted are accustomed to tremble greatly: for suddenly they find themselves on a field of struggle, beyond the experience of their custom. On one side they behold desires armed against them, which had long served them peaceably; on the other side, heavenly love invites them not to abandon the good things they have begun. On one side the spirit elevates the mind, on the other the flesh weighs it down; and since they cannot know the measure of their end, they are greatly terrified by the uncertainty of their election. Whence it is also fittingly added here: (Verse 7.) When the children of Israel heard this, they were afraid before the face of the Philistines.

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

As if He were saying otherwise: Because you by no means tremble at the face of the Philistines, when their pursuing forces rush upon you, you cannot find the refuge of salvation. Then indeed fear is present, but He who might help is not present. The punishment of wickedness is given without hope of deliverance; and those who desired the blandishments of the Philistines' face in the love of the world feel how horrible are the Philistines' consequences. Rightly, therefore, it is said of the Israelites, in the type of the elect: "They feared from the face of the Philistines": because, namely, while they skillfully order for themselves a manner of living, they do not resolve to fear eternal evils when they come, but they tremble at temporal desire, on account of which those evils are inflicted. And because they believe they can obtain this not so much by their own merits as by the intercession of their elders, there follows: (Verse 8. "And they said to Samuel: Do not cease to cry out for us to the Lord our God, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

17. But good pastors also confer upon their afflicted subjects not only the aids of prayers, but also of sacrifices. Whence it is added: (Verse 9.) 'And Samuel took a suckling lamb, and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord, and Samuel cried out.' What is the cry of Samuel, if not the great power of desire in the supplication of the priest? Whence to Moses,

silent on his lips, yet desiring the salvation of his subject people with fervent devotion, it is said by the Lord: 'Why do you cry out to me' (Exod. XIV, 15)? But who is the suckling lamb, if not the one whom his forerunner pointed out, saying: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world' (John I, 29)? And he is called suckling, because in his innocence true humanity is proclaimed. But one lamb is offered, because apart from him, no one is found who might take away the sins of the world. And indeed he offered the lamb whole. For the wholeness of the lamb pertains to the soundness of the catholic profession. For it is as though one divides the lamb, who is separated from the rule of faith by the sword of error. The lamb, therefore, is so called on account of innocence; suckling, on account of the assumption of our nature; one, on account of the singularity of his power; whole, on account of the most firm soundness of our faith.

18. But if anyone wishes to refer these things not to him, but to his imitator, he may do so. For we offer a lamb when, through the good of chastity and innocence, we are conformed to our Redeemer; and when we are fed by the teaching of our innocent Fathers, we suck as it were at the breasts by which we are nourished unto eternal life. We also offer one lamb if, after the beginnings of religious conversion, we are polluted by no stain of wickedness. For he offers one lamb who does not flow away from the purpose of innocence to the stains of a polluted life, from which he would have to return through the repetition of good works. To offer a whole lamb is also to prepare for eternal life not only continence of the flesh but integrity of the mind. He by no means offers a whole lamb to the Lord who consecrates his flesh to God through continence but does not restrain the secrets of his mind from the wantonness of impure thoughts. For he steals away, as it were, a part of the lamb from the sacrifice, who does not join purity of heart to continence of body. Whence the Lamb himself, teaching his disciples to offer a whole one, says: "You have heard that it was said to the ancients: You shall not commit adultery; but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28).

Hence also the foolish virgins are noted in the Gospel, who prepared their lamps but did not prepare oil (Matt. 25:3). For they have lamps prepared who preserve the good of modesty in the body; and they also have oil who maintain the brightness of purity in the watchfulness of their mind. Let it therefore be said of Samuel: "He offered a whole lamb to the Lord," because for the good of modesty to suffice for divine appeasement, it must be preserved not only in the brightness of the body but in the splendor of interior purity. Rightly therefore it is added: (Verse 9.) — "And the Lord heard him."

19. For he who prays for others can be heard by the Lord, who is not in any respect hateful to the Lord to whom he makes supplication. For if he is still weighed down by his own weakness, he is by no means heard for obtaining the strength of his neighbors; and he does not raise his desire to the heights of divine majesty, because he himself does not at all strive to ascend from the depths where he lies through his fall by the effort of more fervent zeal. But the manner of being heard is also set forth, when it is added: (Verses 10-11.) It came to pass, while Samuel was offering the burnt offering, the Philistines began battle against

Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great crash on that day upon the Philistines, and terrified them, and they were struck down by the children of Israel. And the children of Israel went forth from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down even to the place that was below Beth-car.

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

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

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

21. Well indeed, those who slay the Philistines are said to have gone forth from Mizpah. For in Mizpah, which is called "watching," those dwell who persist in the contemplation of

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

holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who has no need, as priests do, first to offer sacrifices for his own sins" (Hebrews 7:26–27). What then is the place below Beth-car, to which we must slay and pursue the Philistines? But if Beth-car signifies the perfection of the Lord's life, the place below Beth-car expresses the common highest sanctity of the Saints, who both humble themselves by obeying the same Redeemer, and draw near to his glory through the pursuit of an innocent life. For the place which is shown to be situated below Beth-car is recognized as both inferior to and near the place beneath which it lies: because holy men, the nearer they are to God through the height of their life, the more they are subject to him in humbler thought. Therefore, while the triumph of new believers is shown under the deeds of the Israelites, the foreigners are said to have been slain as far as the place below the house of the lamb: because indeed through unceasing effort of struggle, we must strive toward the citadel of perfection, where we may be all the more terrible to our enemies, the nearer we are to our Redeemer. For there is already a certain security there which cannot be disturbed by fear of enemies. For the Lord, pointing out the gifts of granted power to such as these, says: "Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

Hence also he who had reached the place near to the house of the lamb says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger" (Romans 8:35), or other such things? The house of the lamb can also designate the heavenly homeland. Hence John also says: "I saw upon Mount Zion a lamb standing, and with him one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). What then is the place that is below the house of the lamb, if not the boundary of temporal life, from which the elect are taken up to the joys of the heavenly homeland? For we who are led to the boundary appointed for us, which we cannot pass beyond by living, come as it were to a place from which we may be transferred elsewhere.

But the boundary of the elect man's life is shown to be situated below the house of the lamb: because from where he is plunged down through the straits of mortality, from there he is raised up to the joys of unfailing life. For even the Lamb himself, who joyfully inhabits his own house amid harpists playing and singing, before he was led to the joy of this house, was below the house. For hence it is that at the time of his sacrifice he says: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34).

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

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

And because they now wage war against us in this life, fittingly when the time of our victory is declared, the stone is said to be placed between us and them: because when we receive the rewards of our warfare, their battles are never again renewed against us. Moreover, Samuel places this stone in their midst, because the teacher of Holy Church shows us the goodness of our Redeemer. And because everything that is accomplished prosperously by us in all our life is ascribed to divine grace, the stone that is set in the midst is fittingly called by him the Stone of Help. For he himself is the Stone of Help; if he were unwilling to come to our aid, we could be conquered but could never conquer. Of this stone, now placed in their midst, it is said: "Thus far the Lord has helped us," because his protection follows his elect even to the time of eternal recompense. And because, as we have said, once we

have been received into eternal rest, no battles are stirred up by our vanquished enemies, there follows: (Verse 13). "And the Philistines were humbled, nor did they come anymore into the territory of Israel."

23. These things indeed so express the deeds of each of the elect, that they indicate both the battle array and the joys of recompense of the holy catholic Church. For blessed Paul showed this victory of the universal Church as yet to come after the glory of our resurrection; who, as though present at the future incorruption, taunted death, saying: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55). He also saw the Philistines humbled, because, making mention of the apostate angels, he kindled the elect to love of their future dignity, saying: "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3). For then indeed the Philistines are humbled, when the demons are cast into the fires of eternal flame prepared for them from the foundation of the world. And they no longer attempt to come into the borders of Israel, because they do not go out to tempt the hearts of the elect. But what are the borders of Israel, if not the heavens? And how shall the evil spirits come into the borders of Israel, who are so condemned in the depths of hell that they never rise up from the submersion of their punishments? Because, therefore, they are cast down by eternal oppression, it is fittingly added: (Verse 13). "And the hand of the Lord was upon the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

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

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

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

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

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

one, wishing to open the path of light by his voice, grows dark in his actions. For he who had devoted all the days of his life to judging Israel says: 'I do not dare to speak of anything that Christ has not accomplished through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed' (Rom. 15:18).

Let the teacher judge, then, but one who has illustrious days of his life—so that he may first nourish in himself the rays of spiritual virtues by living well, which he dispenses by speaking for the guidance of his subjects' paths. For a lamp is then usefully displayed to those who are in the house if it is first well filled with the light that it is about to spread. There follows: (v. 46) 'And he went around each year to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in the aforesaid places.'

29. Bethel is called the house of God; Gilgal, a wheel; Mizpah, as has already been repeated above, is interpreted as a watchtower. What then does Bethel signify, if not men appointed to the office of the sacred altar, who, while they devote themselves to spiritual pursuits, are as it were intimates and members of the household of almighty God? And what does Gilgal, which is called a wheel, designate, if not the order of married persons? For they go around as if on a wheel, since they cannot be entirely free from the cares of this changing world. And what is expressed by Mizpah, which is interpreted as a watchtower, if not those who, devoting themselves to divine contemplation, burn with desire for heavenly joys alone? What then does it mean that Samuel is said to travel around to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and to judge Israel in those same places, if not that the chosen preacher follows the examples of all the orders of the elect, so that he may be a learned judge of the faithful who are subject to him? For he will not be able to render fair judgment if he disdains to take from the examples of the elect who came before him what he decides. But let him also travel through these places each year, so that as a prudent teacher he may examine one by one the perfection of each order: so that the more carefully he has observed the virtues of his predecessors, the more fittingly he may arrange present affairs.

There, therefore, there let him judge Israel, so that the faithful subjects whom he instructs toward the vision of God, he may correct by the righteousness of those whom he undoubtedly believes to have been pleasing to God. Bethel, which is called the house of God, can also designate the entire Church of the elect; and Gilgal, which is interpreted as a wheel, can designate Sacred Scripture. Whatever indeed a teacher brings forth for the advancement of his subjects, he receives either from the example of the elect, or from the teaching of sacred eloquence, or from the revelation of inner and secret contemplation.

30. Samuel therefore goes around Bethel, since the preacher of the Church seeks the authority for arranging his works from the examples of the elders. He goes around Gilgal, that is, the wheel, when he derives the authority of his teaching from the instruction of Holy Scripture. He also goes around Mizpah, when through the meditation of secret contemplation he merits to receive the revelation of truth. For there he judges Israel: because whatever he sets before his subjects as a rule of righteousness, he receives either from the examples of the elect, or from the teaching of sacred eloquence, or from the revelation of interior con-

templation. By these words indeed it is shown not only what the perfect teacher does, but also that he is not perfect if he cannot do these things. For if someone knows only the examples of good men, or if someone is even learned in Holy Scripture yet lacks the revelation of contemplation, he will not be a perfect man in the order of preaching. For contemplation is a virtue through which not only is Scripture itself, once composed, recognized, but through which what has not yet been composed would be composed: and through which what has been composed is daily ordered according to the will of God. Rightly therefore it is said: And he judged Israel in the above-mentioned places. For not only in Bethel and Gilgal, but also in Mizpah:

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

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

because the holy doctors of the Church, whatever they now receive from the examples of the elect, whatever from the instruction of the sacred books, whatever from the height of heavenly revelation—they examine these things in passing, having them as an aid for the journey, not as the object of love for their reward. But what they love in the heavenly city they have not for the advancement of the journey, but for the sufficient—indeed, for the abundant—generosity of their reward. And because all good things are gathered there, it follows: (Verse 17). ”He also built an altar there to the Lord.”

32. For what is the altar of the Lord, if not the heart of the just man? Moreover, by the judgment of Truth it is said: ”Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). But he who does good works out of love for the heavenly homeland, while he ardently desires to arrive at those things which he stores up above, assuredly builds an altar upon which he may kindle the sacrifices of daily desire. And it is well said: ”He built there an altar to the Lord,” because from the increase of heavenly zeal, just as the flame of good desire grows in the heart, so also, as if by the addition of stones, an altar is built upward where holocausts of love may be offered to God. This can also be fittingly applied to the gaining of souls. For the teacher builds an altar to the Lord in Ramah when he places the merits of his subjects in heaven, and while through his daily zeal chosen souls ascend to the heavenly kingdoms, they are sent, as it were, as stones for the construction of the heavenly altar. Let it therefore be said of Samuel, let it be said: ”He built there an altar to the Lord,” because surely the zeal of the teacher is altogether idle if through what is done by him on earth the heavenly edifice is not increased.

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.