Commentary on Tobit

The Venerable Bede (AD 673–735)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Introduction

Translated from Migne's Patrologia Latina, In librum beati patris Tobiae explanationis allegoricae de Christo et ecclesia, Vol 91 The book of the holy Father Tobias, and on the surface of the letter it is evident to the readers, as it abounds with the greatest examples and warnings of moral life. And if anyone also knows how to interpret the same allegorically, he sees its inner meaning to surpass the simplicity of the letter as much as fruit surpasses leaves. For it is proven to contain the greatest sacraments of Christ and the Church if it is understood spiritually. Indeed, Tobias himself designates the people of Israel, who, while all other nations were given to idolatry, served God with right faith and just deeds, as it is read about Tobias.

Chapter 1

Because when all were going to the golden calves, etc. For Jeroboam, who fabricated golden calves for the deception of his subjects, expresses the author of idolatry. And indeed Tobias was captured... he did not forsake the way of truth. This captivity made by the king of the Assyrians designates that captivity of the human race, by which through the king of all the wicked, that is, the devil, it was cast out from the habitation of the heavenly fatherland and was transferred into the pilgrimage of this exile. Tobias imparted all that he could have daily with the captive brothers, etc. And the people of Israel, in their teachers, ministered the alms of the word of God not only to the rough listeners of their own nation but also to those who from the nations wanted to convert to their way of life. For whatever natural good they could have, which was not taken away by the conquering enemy, all this they showed to their own as an example of virtue. But they also always gave some portion of salvific knowledge to the Gentiles; which is Tobias ministering the tithe of his substance to the strangers.

Tobias, after he became a man, took a wife, Anna, from his own tribe, etc. And the same people, after they grew up and were multiplied in Egypt, took a synagogue instituted with legal ceremonies through Moses. He begot a son from her, etc. Because he knew that Christ would be born from his lineage, as Moses said: ”The Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers, you shall listen to him” (Deut. XVIII). And the Lord said to David: ”I will place the fruit of your womb on my throne” (Psalm CXXXI). To whom he gave his name, by believing and confessing, as the father says about him: ”And I will make him my firstborn” (Psalm LXXXVIII). Just as it is said about the people, ”Israel is my firstborn son” (Exodus IV). Whom he taught to fear God from infancy, etc. By believing and confessing, because he would not sin, nor would deceit be found in his mouth, but the spirit of the fear of the Lord would fill him.

Tobias gave ten talents of silver to Gabael, his needy compatriot, under a bond. And the people of God entrusted the knowledge of divine law, which is contained in the Decalogue, to the Gentiles through the Seventy Interpreters, so that through this they might free them from the poverty of unbelief. He gave it under a bond, that is, under the condition of returning it, once he himself became rich, or the one who gave it would demand it back. But the Gentiles received the word of God from the people of Israel through interpretation, which

they now understand spiritually after the incarnation of the Lord, and they practice to acquire the riches of virtues; they repay the lender when, at the end of the world, they receive the believing Jews into the unity of the Church, commit to them the sacraments of Christ for their salvation, and also unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures.

Tobias is ordered by the king to be killed, and all his property to be taken away because of the good he had done, etc. And the devil strove to destroy the people of God with spiritual death through idolatry, and to take away all the riches of virtues from them, but he could not; because there were many holy teachers among them who provided for and protected their life and salvation. However, he fled with his son and wife. Because the enemy could neither take away the faith in the Lord's incarnation, nor the state of the synagogue, although he vehemently attacked it, which became very clear in the struggles of the Maccabees. But after the king was killed by his sons, all his possessions were restored to Tobias. Because after the devil was often overcome, and condemned for his crimes, which he generated like a wicked offspring, prosperity returned to the people of God. We also see the state of the Church fluctuating through these struggles after the incarnation of the Lord.

Chapter 2

Tired from burial, Tobias came into his house, ... and became blind. Do not be surprised, reader, that sometimes good deeds symbolically signify evil, and sometimes evil deeds signify good things. If this were not allowed, God would never be written with black ink but always with bright gold, because He is light. But even if you write the name of the devil on a white stone, it still signifies deep darkness. Therefore, blind Tobias signifies what the Apostle says, ”Blindness has happened in part to Israel” (Rom. XI). He was tired from burial and became blind, because he who persists tirelessly in good works is never deprived of the light of faith. Spiritually, he lies and sleeps tired, who neglects to watch and stand in faith, to act manfully, to be strengthened. To him well applies the apostolic word: ”Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Eph. V). Swallows, because of their light flight, represent pride and lightness of heart, whose impurity quickly blinds those over whom they rule. For it is as if one sleeps under the nest of swallows, who incautiously subjects his mind to lightness, wantonness, and pride. This blindness, however, prevailed over the people of Israel, especially with the imminent coming of the Lord in the flesh, when they were oppressed by the yoke of Roman servitude and violated the commandments of the divine law by living wickedly.

Tobias' relatives mocked him, and his wife reproached him, as if he had served God in vain. Rebuking and instructing them, he turned to God in prayer. In that people, there were some who, with foolish rashness, insulted the miseries of the people, which now differed greatly from the former happiness of the holy fathers, who once served God sublimely among them. The same people diligently cared to correct them through their teachers and chosen ones and turned themselves to implore God's mercy for the attainment of eternal life. It should not be seen as inappropriate that the same Tobias, both blind and preaching the word of God, is said to signify both the reprobate and the elect. For even the patriarch Jacob, wrestling with the angel, was made both lame and blessed; signifying, in his lameness, the unfaithful of his people, and in his blessing, the faithful.

Chapter 3

Sarah, the daughter of Raguel in the city of the Medes, who had been given to seven husbands, and the demon killed them as soon as they went in to her. This symbolically announces the multitude of nations, whose teachers only knew the life of this age, which revolves in seven days, and could say nothing about eternity. Therefore, all of them were seized by the devil, as they were slaves to idolatry, until our true spouse, the Lord, came, who joined her to himself through faith, after overcoming the enemy; just as Tobias took Sarah as his bride after the demon was bound, by the command and cooperation of the archangel, through whom the divinity of our Savior is fittingly signified, just as his humanity is signified by Tobias. Nor should one be surprised that we say that the one person of the Mediator between God and men is symbolized by two persons, namely the angel and the man, who has read in the expositions of the venerable Fathers that his one person suffering for the salvation of the world is prefigured in Isaac, who was offered by his father on the altar, and in the ram, which was sacrificed. He who was killed as a sheep in his humanity, remains impassible in his divinity with God the Father, just as Isaac returned home alive with his father. For if the ram aptly designates the humanity of Christ, the man signifies the divinity; why should not the man much more aptly signify the humanity, and the angel the divinity?

Therefore, the holy angel of the Lord, Raphael, who is interpreted as the medicine of God, was sent to free both Tobias from blindness and Sarah from the demon. The Lord was sent into the world, who said of himself, ”It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Luke IV); who also redeemed the Jewish people from the darkness of disbelief, and the gentiles from the bondage of idolatry. Of whom the prophet said: ”And his name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel” (Isa. IX).

Chapter 5

The angel appeared to Tobias and offered himself as a companion, through whom he would accomplish great things for the people to whom he was sent. And the Son of God assumed a man, in whom, visibly conversing with men, he would save the human race. Tobias brought the angel to his father, who greeted him, saying: ”May joy be with you always.” To which he replied: ”What joy will there be for me, who sit in darkness and do not see the light of heaven?” He said, ”Be of strong spirit, it is near that you will be healed by the Lord.” And our Lord, through the miracles he performed in the flesh, showed the people of the Jews, from whom he had taken flesh, that he himself is the Son of God, and the angel, that is, the messenger of the Father’s will. To whom he also proclaimed the joy of eternal salvation, saying: ”Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. III). And to those despairing of acquiring the heavenly light: ”I am,” he said, ”the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John VIII).

The angel promised Tobias to lead his son to the city of Rages in the Medes, and to bring him back to him. The Lord promises to the believers from the Jewish people, although the same people are in large part blinded, that he will reveal the mysteries of his incarnation to the Gentiles, and again at the end of times, he will more broadly open the same to his people from whom he had taken flesh, accompanied and effected everywhere by the faith in his divinity. He speaks of the leading to the Medes: ”And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, etc.” (John X). The Apostle speaks of the return: ”Until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, and so all Israel will be saved” (Rom. XI). When Tobias asked the angel where he was from, he said: ”I am Azarias, the son of the great Ananias.” Azarias means ”the Lord is my helper,” Ananias means ”grace of the Lord.” And the Lord intimates to those who believe in him that he is the one whom the prophet, desiring his coming, sang: ”Be my helper and my deliverer, O Lord, do not delay” (Psalm LXIX). Of whom also the evangelist says: ”And we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John I).

Then, having prepared everything to be carried on the way, Tobias said goodbye to his father and mother, and they both walked together. With the Lord appearing in the flesh, all things that pertained to the redemption of the world and by which the faith and life of the holy Church would be nourished and strengthened, until the end of the way of this age,

were prepared; that is, his virtues, doctrine, temptation, passion, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit, faith of believers, and persecution by unbelievers. Having accomplished these in Judea, the Mediator of God and men preached through the apostles to the people and the synagogue, from whom he had taken the origin of the flesh, the joys of heavenly salvation and peace. And to those who wished to believe and receive, he granted these things through himself, and thus he came to the salvation of the Gentiles in those same his teachers.

Chapter 6

Therefore, Tobias set out, and the dog followed him. When the Lord came to save the nations, his holy preachers followed in his footsteps, because they fulfilled what he commanded: ”Go and teach all nations” (Matt. XXVIII). Indeed, the Lord first filled the house of Cornelius with the Holy Spirit, and then Peter washed it with water (Acts X). The doctors are called dogs because they defend the house, substance, and spiritual sheep of their Creator from thieves and beasts, that is, from unclean spirits and heretical men.

Tobias, guided by the angel, stayed the first night near the river Tigris; and he went out to wash his feet, and behold, a huge fish came out to devour him. Here again, the sacrament of the Lord’s passion is more clearly signified. The huge fish, which was killed by Tobias when it attempted to devour him, as taught by the angel, represents the ancient devourer of the human race, that is, the devil, who, while seeking the death of our Redeemer in the flesh, was captured by the power of divinity. The river Tigris, named for its swift current from the swift beast, the tiger, indicates the course of our death and mortality. In which the huge fish was hiding, because the invisible seducer of the human race held dominion over death. Tobias stayed by the streams of the Tigris, because the Lord, appearing in the world, lived among sinners and mortals, but the wave of sin did not touch him, nor did the prince of darkness find anything of his own in him. Tobias went out into the river to wash his feet; and the Lord accepted death, to which he owed nothing, so that he might cleanse all the faithful, namely his members, from the contagion of sin and death. The fish came upon Tobias, desiring to devour him; and the devil came to the Lord suffering on the cross, seeking if he might find any sin in his soul.

Terrified by the fish, Tobias cried out with a loud voice, saying: ”Lord, it attacks me.” And the Lord, at the imminent moment of death, began to fear and be troubled, not fearing the devil, but the death that entered the world through the envy of the devil (Wis. II), trembling with the natural frailty of the flesh; hence he prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him (Mark XII). And he said: ”Abba, Father, all things are possible for you, remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will” (Luke XXII). The angel said to Tobias, ”Take hold of the fish’s gill, and draw it to you.” The Lord took hold of the devil, and he who sought to capture him in death was himself captured and defeated by dying. He took hold of its gill so that with the right hand of his power he might separate the most wicked

head from the deceived body, that is, he might remove the wickedness of the ancient enemy from those whom he had wrongly joined to himself and made almost one body with himself, and insert them into the body of his church as a kind Redeemer. For the fish has a gill at the boundary between its head and body. Just as our Lord is the head of his church, and the church is his body; so the devil is the head of all the wicked, and all the wicked are his body and members. Therefore, the Lord took hold of the gill of the huge fish, and drew it to himself, and cast it on dry land, because by breaking the power of the devil, he confidently led them openly and rescued from the power of darkness those whom he foreknew to be children of light.

When he had done this, the fish began to thrash about on dry land before his feet. When the Lord, having overcome the wickedness of the malignant enemy, brought it to light and made it manifest to all, the proud devil still endeavored to stir up persecution against His chosen ones, who are His feet; because through them the Lord walks on earth, who reigns above all in heaven. Then the angel of the Lord said to him, ”Gut this fish, etc.” The Lord gutted the fish when He revealed the devil’s wickedness more broadly to the saints, and as if eviscerated the hidden schemes of his plots. He kept the heart for Himself, because He wrapped up his cunning in the holy books; about which it is written, ”Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field” (Gen. III). And Paul also said of this heart: ”For we are not ignorant of his designs” (II Cor. II). He also kept the gall, because He wanted it to be written and preserved how furiously he raged against the human race for the sake of caution. He also kept the liver, because He deigned to make known to us, through the doctors of truth, the devil’s malicious plans against us. They say that by the heat and power of the liver, the hidden parts of consumed food are digested and reach the stage of digestion. When we diligently inquire by careful thought how the things we intend to do should be accomplished, it is as if we digest the food taken into the stomach by the heat of the liver.

These things are necessary for useful medicines. The cunning and malice of the devil, the ancient enemy, known to us, help towards healing; for the more we thoroughly investigate them, the more cautiously we avoid them. Tobias roasted the fish’s flesh, etc. Whatever they took from the fish signifies those who are transferred from being members of the devil to being members of Christ, that is, those converted from unbelief to faith. What they left behind signifies, on the other hand, those who, having heard the word of God, prefer to remain among the dead and decaying members of their deceiver rather than return to the fellowship of the Savior. He roasted its flesh in those whom he found carnal, but by the fire of his love, he made them spiritual and strong. Indeed, the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles in the appearance of fire. ”The rest,” he says, ”they salted,” which pertains spiritually to the teachers, to whom it is said: ”You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. V). They salted them, that is, Tobias and the angel; for the same Mediator between God and men both taught the apostles humanly by speaking and divinely gave them the salt of wisdom in their hearts.

They took with them what was sufficient for them, etc. Because the Lord gathered enough from Judea into the faith, who were sufficient for the example of living or for the ministry of preaching, until He also laid the foundations of the Church among the Gentiles. The angel suggests to Tobias that, upon entering the house of Raguel, he should ask for his daughter Sarah as his wife. Raguel signifies the people of the Gentiles, whom the Lord deigned to visit through His preachers, so that He might take a bride for Himself from among them, that is, make the Gentiles His Church. The name Sarah is also fitting for the Church, due to Sarah, the wife of the patriarch Abraham, who gave birth to Isaac, the son of promise, that is, the free people of the Church. The name Raguel, which means ”God’s pasture” or ”God’s friend,” designates the people who, having overcome the deceit of the devil, bind themselves and theirs to the fellowship of the Lord, who can say: ”The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23). And who deserves to hear: ”I no longer call you servants, but friends” (John 15).

”To you belongs all his substance.” And the Father to the Son: ”Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession” (Psalm 2).

Chapter 7

They entered Raguel's house, who received them with joy. The Lord visited the people of the nations through the teachers of His word, who were gladly received in many places, as the Acts of the Apostles testify. When asked for his daughter, Raguel at first feared, knowing what had happened to those seven men; but the angel teaching that the unclean could not possess her, while Tobias, who feared God, could, he soon consented to give her. The people of the Gentiles, hearing the word of faith and admonished by the apostles to make the Church of Christ from their progeny throughout the world, could not accept the laws and customs of the new faith without certain exploration; knowing that for many former times they had teachers, who, as if comprehended in the number seven, knew only the joys of this life, saying nothing certain about eternal things, and therefore, without the hope of immortal life, the destruction of eternal death had seized them. But with the inner truth itself teaching, which sounded outwardly through the mouths of the doctors, they finally understood that it was necessary for fools to say foolish things and for those who did not know the true Lord to perish; but by right, the Creator of the world coming into the world should take up the governance of the world. And confessing faith in Christ, they rejoiced to be sanctified by His sacraments.

Chapter 8

Tobias, being brought into Sarah's chamber, took out part of the liver from his bag, etc. And the Lord, about to receive the Church from the Gentiles, in the first beginning of its dispensation, commands that in each believer Satan and all his works, and all his pomps be renounced; and then to confess the faith of the Holy Trinity for the remission of sins, which is to burn the innermost bowels of peace with living coals. When these things were done, the angel, seizing the demon, bound him. For after the renunciation of the devil, and after the confession of the right faith, follows the remission of sins, the demon having been expelled through the water of baptism. He bound him, because he restrained him from harming the faithful; though he is sometimes permitted to tempt them, so that they may be tested, he is nevertheless forbidden to overcome them lest they fall away from the faith.

He bound him in the desert of Upper Egypt. Both the desert and Egypt signify the hearts of the unbelievers, which are deserted, that is, abandoned by God, being unworthy of His habitation. And these are the same as those darkened by the shadows of their infidelity, according to the interpretation of the name Egypt. And rightly, the one who is deserted by the grace of divine light is filled by the prince of darkness. Therefore, the angel, having seized the demon who wanted to kill Tobias, bound him in the desert of Upper Egypt; because restrained from seizing the faithful, who are members of their Redeemer, the same Lord and Redeemer permits the devil to dominate only the unbelievers. In whom He also keeps him bound; for he is not allowed to harm even those impious ones he possesses as much as he desires with his insatiable fury.

Meanwhile, around the crowing of the rooster, Raguel, fearing that Tobias might have been killed by the demon, dug a grave with his servants; but when he soon learned of his safety, he ordered the grave to be filled again. The crowing of the rooster is the sound of the preachers, who, when they were proclaiming to the world that the morning and true day of faith would come after the darkness of error, there were some among the Gentiles who doubted whether the Lord had truly conquered the ancient enemy, and therefore thought it better to bury and hide the faith of His name; but afterwards, when they recognized the light of truth, as the dawn was advancing and the crowing of the rooster, that is, the voice of the doctors, became more frequent, who were accustomed to lift themselves up with the flight of an eager heart

to heavenly desires, they drove away all the clouds of doubt from their minds, and truly recognized that Christ, having overthrown the enemy, is the spouse of the holy Church.

Raguel, rejoicing over the life of Tobias and the union and marriage of his daughter, had two fat cows and four rams killed, and prepared a feast for all his neighbors and friends. The Gentile people, rejoicing over the faith of Christ and the calling of the Gentiles to God, were so advancing in the Lord that even from their number some became teachers, and later also martyrs. They are indeed cows because they bear the light yoke of the Gospel; because they also beget and nurture those who advance to bear the same yoke by preaching. They are also rams because they are fathers and leaders of the peoples, about whom it is said: "Ascribe to the Lord the offspring of rams" (Psalm 29). They are fat cows because the doctors are filled with the grace of heavenly delight. Of which the Psalmist prays: "My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness" (Psalm 63). The two cows are killed because whoever for Christ either voluntarily mortifies their own body to become a living sacrifice or hands it over to the infidels to be killed: such have learned to stand against the enemy with the weapons of righteousness, on the right and on the left, that is, in prosperity and adversity. The four rams are killed because the holy doctors and martyrs preserve the four books of the holy Gospel in faith and work, because they are fortified with the four principal virtues, prudence, courage, temperance, and justice;

because they establish the flock of Christ throughout the whole world, which is distinguished by four regions. Raguel had the cows and rams killed because the Gentile people taught those who came to the faith from their stock to be such that the excellence of their virtue would make them temptations for the enemy, and when tempted, he would not overcome them but make them victorious martyrs. Or certainly, he himself caused to be killed those who taught to crucify their flesh for Christ with its vices and desires. By whose death he prepared a feast for all his neighbors, because the progress, life, passion, and crown of the saints bring joy to many, and they receive them as if they were a feast, being refreshed by their examples.

And Raguel urged Tobias to stay with him for two weeks. We also implore our Lord, praying that He may remain with us until we attain the perfection of holy rest through the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that we may rest from servile acts, that is, sins in the body, and from evil thoughts in the mind; and may He rest in our heart and body, He who said, "On whom will my spirit rest, but on the humble and quiet one who trembles at my words?"

Chapter 9

Tobias asks the angel to take animals or servants, go to Gabael in Rages of the Medes, give him his promissory note, and receive the money from him, and invite him to his wedding, and he agrees. The faithful, namely the members of Christ, ask the Lord to take some of the believers and entrust them with the duty of preaching the word, and that He Himself might come in them to gather into His faith the nations that have not yet received the mysteries of faith, but have only heard of it by reputation; and He might graciously grant that they, through obedience of faith, return the talent of the word they learned by reputation; and they too might be gathered to the wedding of the holy Church, in which Christ is the bridegroom, in which He made new wine from water, that is, gave the spiritual understanding of the law, by believing and living rightly. And the Lord does not refuse, but receiving the prayers of those who ask well, daily gathers new peoples into the Church. It can be understood spiritually, as said above, about those nations which received the letter of the law through the seventy translators: and therefore they could sooner accept the faith, as they held it in known books.

Therefore, Raphael, taking four of Raguel's servants and two camels, went to Rages of the Medes; and, informing him about everything concerning Tobias, received the money and brought him with him to the wedding. Raguel's servants and camels are preachers chosen from among the Gentiles, through whom the Lord also gathers others. Servants, because they serve the necessity of those to whom they preach the gospel. Camels, because they bear the burdens of their weaknesses with fraternal submission of charity. Why there are four servants and two camels was shown above, where two cows and four rams are killed. Such, with the help of Raphael, bring Gabael to Tobias's wedding when holy preachers, with divine assistance, gather new peoples into the unity of the Church of Christ.

Chapter 10

Because of Tobias's delay due to the wedding, his parents were saddened that he did not return to them on the appointed day. And now, as Christ tarries among the Gentiles through faith in the Church gathered from the Gentiles, whoever among the Jews individually converts to faith in Him are greatly grieved; because the Lord delays His coming to save them, being retained among the Gentiles. This well suits what his mother, poor and as if bereft of both husband and son, said with much sorrow: "Alas, alas, my son, why did we send you to travel, the light of our eyes, the staff of our old age, etc." And Tobias, consoling her, responds: "Be quiet and do not be disturbed, our son is safe, etc.," suits those same ones who now believe among the Jews; who still console themselves and their own with this, that truly a time will come when the Lord will return to them, and then all Israel will be saved; knowing that the Lord, who promised this, is faithful. For as we taught above, the same Tobias, by his blindness, signifies the unbelievers, and by his faith, the believers, according to the customary manner of the Scriptures.

Raguel asks Tobias to stay with him for a longer time, but he is not heard, with Tobias saying: "I know that my father and my mother are now counting the days, and their spirit is tormented within them." And when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, no one will be able to prevent God from granting salvation to Israel and removing the blindness that has happened in part. For divine mercy remembers that there is great sadness and continuous sorrow of heart for those who believe from among the Jews because of the blindness of the unbelievers, who are their relatives according to the flesh, who are Israelites. Therefore, Raguel sent Tobias back to his parents, giving him Sarah with much substance. In the end, the teachers of the Church send Christ back, with the Church itself full of the riches of virtues, to enlighten with faith and enrich with the substance of good works the Jewish people, from whom He took His flesh.

Chapter 11

The angel and Tobias went ahead to his parents; then his wife followed with substance and her family. After the divine grace, the illuminator, precedes to enlighten the blindness of the Jewish people, and they recognize in their writings that Christ is true God and man, and after the acknowledgment of the true faith, as if seeing the angel and their son whom they had not seen for a long time, rejoicing greatly; thus finally they join themselves to the holy Church, which is gathered from the Gentiles, in the participation of heavenly mysteries.

As they approached the house, the dog that had been with them on the journey ran ahead and, as if acting as a messenger, joyfully wagged his tail. The figure of this dog, which is a traveler and a companion of the angel, is not to be despised. The dog represents the teachers of the Church, who, as we taught above, often fight against heretics, driving away the grievous wolves from the fold of the Chief Shepherd. To them, it is fitting that dogs naturally repay kindness with gratitude and keep vigilant watch for the safety of their masters. Therefore, the dog runs ahead because he first announces salvation to the house, and then the Lord, the illuminator of the world's hearts, follows. It beautifully says "as if acting as a messenger" because indeed every faithful teacher is a messenger of the truth; it beautifully says "wagging his tail joyfully," for the tail, which is the end of the body, signifies the end of good work, that is, perfection, or certainly the reward which is given without end. Thus, the dog joyfully wagged his tail when he revisited the home of his masters, from whom he had been away for a long time. The teachers rejoice in the fulfillment of their work when they understand that Judea will be gathered by the Lord through their ministry. They rejoice in the reception of the eternal life reward and in this same reward, which is common to all the elect, they gladden the hearts of those to whom they preach, while they promise them the immediate coming of Christ's grace.

Therefore, when the dog announced that Tobias had come, his blind father, rising, began to run, stumbling with his feet. Hearing the word of salvation from the teachers, the Hebrew people rise from the long slumber of their infidelity and run with love to the Lord; although stumbling in their works, until the fullness of faith and good work, they receive the light, being regenerated and instructed in Christ. And taking the hand of the boy, he ran to meet his son. The blind man takes the hand of the boy so that he may run with unimpeded steps to the Lord; even if he himself does not fully understand the path of faith, he still

strives to give his assent to the one who knows the light of truth well, so that he may reach the Lord. And receiving him, he kissed him with his wife, weeping for joy. Judaea, in the end, joyfully receiving the union with Christ, joined weeping to its joy: rejoicing because it believes; grieving because it came to the Lord so late.

Then Tobias, taking some of the fish's gall, anointed his father's eyes. And the Lord reveals more openly to believers how great is the malice of the ancient serpent, who once eagerly sought to devour Him in His passion; but by this, he himself was rather killed, losing his members, that is, those he previously held.

A sort of membrane, like an egg, began to come out of Tobias' eyes after they were anointed with the fish's gall, and he regained his sight. And the people of the Jews, after they recognize the bitter malice of the most wicked enemy, will regain the lost light. The membrane, which had covered his eyes, signifies the folly of self-pleasing. For they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. X). And as it says again: Seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God (Ibid.). For the black pupil sees, the white one is darkened. And those who seem wise to themselves, saying, "Are we also blind? (John IX), the truth is not in them. But those who are conscious of their own frailty and ignorance and know how to say, "My God, enlighten my darkness" (Psalm XVII), these will enjoy the light of life in the Lord. Moreover, the membrane was like an egg, for eggs signify hope; because it is not yet alive, not yet animated, but is separated from the bird that laid it, waiting to live, proceed, run, and fly. And the Apostle says: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom. VIII). Hence, in the evangelical parable, under the name of bread, fish, and egg, the three highest virtues, faith, hope, and charity are expressed.

Therefore, the people of the Jews still have a veil before the face of their heart, so that they do not understand the grace of Christ. They have a cataract, because they seem to themselves white and just above all. But they have this cataract like the membrane of an egg; because they endure the blindness of the mind under the most foolish and vain hope of Christ being born in the flesh and delivering them and giving them a great kingdom throughout the world. But to any of them from whom the mist of error is removed, they will recognize that Christ has already come and redeemed the world with His blood. It aptly fits what follows:

Because, having received sight, Tobias glorified God with his wife, and all his acquaintances, saying, "I bless you, Lord God of Israel, because you have chastised me, and you have saved me," etc. The seven days signify the light of spiritual grace, which is taken as sevenfold. Therefore, after seven days, Tobias, having been illuminated, his son's wife enters, because after Judaea has been illuminated through faith, after receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Church will enter it, so that there may be one fold and one shepherd, and one house of Christ founded on one cornerstone. The livestock and camels also entered, and the wife's considerable wealth. Many faithful persons and many virtues of the Church will then be gathered among the Jewish people. But also the money that he had received from Gabael.

The knowledge of the Scriptures, which they once lent to the Gentiles, will then be returned to them.

Tobias' relatives came, congratulating him on all the good things the Lord had done for him, and they feasted with him for seven days. This is what Moses said in the song: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people" (Rom. XV). They feast together for seven days; because they rejoice in spiritual gifts and virtues. The angel, about to return to heaven, more openly explains to them who he is, why he came, and that he is returning to God. And the Lord will then reveal more broadly to that advancing people the gifts of His knowledge, opening and showing to all that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. Therefore, the angel returns to God, and Tobias remains with his father. And the Lord is understood by the elect, equal to the Father in divinity, consubstantial with us in humanity.

Chapter 13

Then the elder Tobias, opening his mouth, blessed God. Confessing His severity and mercy, and at the same time admonishing His faithful to always proclaim His benefits, to fear His scourges; imbued with the spirit of prophecy, he chants many praises concerning our heavenly mother, Jerusalem. And the people of the Jews, converted at the end of the world to faith, will have many teachers and prophetic men who will inflame the minds of their neighbors with heavenly desires, while they frequently resound with the perpetual joys of the heavenly fatherland.

Chapter 14

The elder Tobias, at the hour of his death, called to him his son Tobias and his seven grandsons, and said to them that the destruction of Nineveh was near and the restoration of Israel. And then in Judea, faithful and just teachers seeing this, when they are about to leave the world, admonish their relatives that the world is now approaching its end and the goods of the future life are soon to come. They especially admonish those whom they see reborn through the grace of the Lord and filled with the gift of the sevenfold Spirit; this is to be the sons of the younger Tobias in the number of seven, and these young men, that is, strong in faith and overcoming the evil one. ”Direct your steps, so that you may leave Nineveh. For I see that its iniquity will bring about its end.” And this is to say to the faithful to their hearers: ”Direct the intention of your heart, so that you may leave behind the desires of this world and earthly life, and seek heavenly things with your whole mind. For it is evident that the multitude of the wicked and the transgression of God’s commandments throughout the world are such that they can only be ended by the destruction of the world itself, just as it was once terminated in the flood and the abolition of the entire human race.”

So Tobias left Nineveh with his wife, sons, and grandsons, and returned to his in-laws, finding them in good old age. This is what the Lord does daily, and will do until the end of the world: He turns away from those whom He recognizes are not His own, to visit and enlighten the hearts of those whom He has predestined to eternal life. He finds these in good old age, rejoicing that they have long been devoted to good works by His grace. Otherwise, He sees them in bad old age and passes them by, as those who, living far from the divine, are not mature in counsel, not venerable with the whiteness of good action like gray hair, but are bent under the burden of vices. Of such, Isaiah says: ”The child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isa. LXV). Rightly, they will be subject to a curse for their sins, who, although living many years, never cared to abandon the levity of a childish mind.

He finds them in good old age and unharmed, etc. And our Lord and Savior takes care of those whom He knows to persevere in the safety of good works. He Himself, closing their heart’s gaze to the delight of this present life, lifts them to the contemplation of eternal light. He Himself leads them to heavenly places after the end of this life. His is the inheritance, of which the prophet sings to Him: ”Arise, O God, judge the earth, for you shall inherit all

nations" (Psalm LXXXII). And having completed many years in the fear of the Lord with joy, all his relatives buried him. The burial of Tobias signifies the faith of the whole world when our Lord, with His whole body, which is the Church that He has redeemed, enters into eternal rest, with angels rejoicing in the fellowship of redeemed men and placing each member of their Creator in various mansions of the heavenly homeland according to the diversity of merits.

And all his generation remained in good life and holy conversation. This is one generation throughout the whole world and throughout the whole time of the world, seeking the Lord, seeking the face of the God of Jacob (Psalm XXIII). Of which it also says: "The generation of the upright will be blessed" (Psalm CXII). What better life, what holier conversation is there than to remain forever in the glory of their Creator? So that they were accepted by both God and all the inhabitants of the earth. Men brought to the heavenly homeland will be accepted by God, by whose grace they have been redeemed; they will also be accepted by the angels, whose number they will complete, to whom they will be joined in perpetual fraternal society. These are indeed the inhabitants of that earth, of which the Lord says: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. V); which the Psalmist, desiring to see, said: "I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm XXVI).

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.